

UNIT IX

MULTIPLE METHODS

Previous units have illustrated a variety of approaches to social research. Much of the time, investigators use only one of these approaches. In the long run, though, the best strategy is to address a research question with multiple methods.

The wisdom of this strategy is conveyed by the concept of **triangulation**, a term social scientists have borrowed from the field of navigation. To understand its conventional usage, imagine that you are lost deep in the woods of Maine and need to pinpoint your location for the local rescue team. Assume you have an old cell phone *without* GPS. Using your phone, you could call members of the team stationed at two different places, A and B. The team member at each position would then use a directional antenna to get a bearing on your location, which is represented by each of the dashed lines running from A and B in Figure IX.1. Neither direction by itself would provide enough information because you could be located anywhere along the A or B lines. But the point where the lines intersect would pin down your location. (Incidentally, GPS is based on a more sophisticated form of triangulation from satellites: see Resources.)

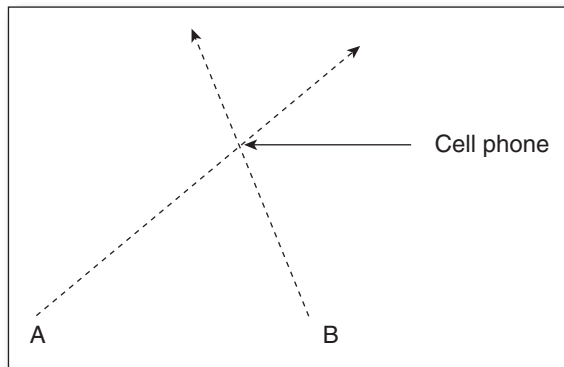
Triangulation in social research refers to the use of two or more dissimilar methods to address the same research question. Each method is analogous to the different vantage points in Figure IX.1. All methods are subject to error or bias, but dissimilar methods are not likely to

share the same weaknesses. Therefore, we become more confident in a result when the methods separately zero in on the same findings. In effect, the strengths of one method offset the weaknesses of the other.

An example of how triangulation can strengthen research findings is an experiment to assess the health benefits of writing about a traumatic event. The psychological stress of a traumatic experience can increase one's susceptibility to illness; confronting the experience, such as by openly expressing one's thoughts and feelings, may reduce stress. To test this idea, James Pennebaker, Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, and Ronald Glaser (1988) asked undergraduates to write about either traumatic, upsetting experiences (e.g., death of a loved one, sexual abuse, parental problems) or trivial topics. Triangulation occurred in measuring the healthful effects of the writing exercise. Rather than rely on a single measure, the experimenters used three divergent indicators: (1) number of health center visits, (2) participants' self-reports of their level of psychological distress, and (3) immunological data based on blood samples. Although the three indicators reveal markedly different aspects of "physical health," all of them pointed to the same outcome: a positive impact of writing about traumatic experiences.

The logic of triangulation applies to many different research activities, including the use of multiple survey questions to measure the same underlying concept, two or more observers to

FIGURE IX.1 Triangulating the Location of a Cell Phone From Two Points, A and B.



record observations in the same field setting, and two or more studies or approaches to test the same hypothesis. Comparing experimental and survey data, the first study in this unit shows how attitudes expressed in a survey may provide misleading evidence of racial discrimination in practice.

Aside from validating research findings, which is the aim of triangulation, multiple methods may provide complementary information. For example, in-depth interviews sometimes are used to probe the meaning of survey responses. In the second selection, the investigators describe how they used an iterative process of gathering and analyzing data that integrated survey and field research. Survey data provided useful leads that were explored through field research; in turn, a deepened understanding from fieldwork led to hypotheses that were tested with the survey data.

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RESOURCES

Why Triangulate?:

<http://blogs.ubc.ca/qualresearch/files/2008/01/why-triangulate.pdf>

- In this brief article from *Educational Researcher*, Sandra Mathison traces historical origins of the term in social research, outlines the various forms that it can take, and then presents an alternative conception of triangulation. Because data sources and methods do not always converge, she argues that triangulation should not be construed merely as a means of *increasing validity*. Rather, when data are inconsistent or contradictory, triangulation “provides more and better evidence” to “*construct meaningful propositions* about the social world.”

Multiple Methods in ASR:

<http://www.asanet.org/footnotes/dec05/indextwo.html>

- Both of the articles in this unit were published in the *American Sociological Review (ASR)* under the editorship of Jerry Jacobs. A proponent of multi-method research, Jacobs points out in this December 2005 essay that one quarter of the papers accepted for publication in *ASR* under his editorship drew on more than one research method. He then “highlights some of the ways” that these papers have provided “a more informative account of the social world.”

Understanding GPS Technology:

<http://www.beaglesoft.com/gpstechology.htm>

- For those who want to learn more about the triangulation in navigation, this site explains how GPS is based on triangulation from satellites.

Selection 17

Surveys are a very good strategy for measuring what people think and how they feel about something; however, they are less effective in measuring actual behavior. Still, researchers continue to use verbal reports of what people say they would do as indicators for what they actually do. Showing how this may be

particularly problematic in studies of discrimination, Devah Pager and Lincoln Quillian compare the results of a field experiment on hiring discrimination, described in Selection 10, with a telephone survey of the same employers. As you read, note the methodological differences in the two approaches.

WALKING THE TALK?

What Employers Say Versus What They Do

DEVAH PAGER

LINCOLN QUILLIAN

In 1930, Richard LaPiere, a Stanford professor, traveled twice across the country by car with a young Chinese student and his wife. The purpose of the trip, unbeknown to his travel companions, was to assess the reactions of hotel and restaurant proprietors to the presence of Chinese customers. During the course of 251 visits to hotels, auto camps, restaurants, and cafes, only once were they refused service. Six months later, LaPiere mailed a survey to each of

the proprietors in which one of the questions asked, “Will you accept members of the Chinese race as guests in your establishment?” More than 90 percent of the respondents indicated unequivocal refusal. The discrepancy between these proprietors’ responses to the surveys and their actual behavior is indeed striking. Although nearly none of the proprietors expressed a willingness to accept the patronage of Chinese customers, virtually all of them did so when

Source: “Walking the Talk? What Employers Say Versus What They Do,” by Devah Pager and Lincoln Quillian, 2005, *American Sociological Review*, 70, 355–380. Copyright 2005 by Sage Publications. Adapted with permission.

confronted with the situation (LaPiere 1934). If we were to make generalizations based on either the survey results or the field study alone, we would develop radically different views on the level of racial hostility toward the Chinese at that time in history.

LaPiere's study provides a much needed reality check for researchers who rely on expressed attitudes for insight into the nature and causes of discriminatory behavior. Unfortunately, there have been very few efforts to provide the kind of comparison offered in LaPiere's study. Measures from surveys often are accepted as an adequate proxy for behaviors, with little effort to validate this assumption.

RACIAL ATTITUDES, DISCRIMINATION, AND CONTEMPORARY LABOR MARKET INEQUALITY

In the years since LaPiere's study, much has changed about race relations in the contemporary United States. In present times, it would be extremely rare to find respondents willing to state racial objections as candidly as those reported in LaPiere's survey. Indeed, trends in racial attitudes demonstrate steady movement toward the endorsement of equal treatment by race and the repudiation of direct discrimination. According to surveys conducted in the 1940s and 1950s, for example, fewer than half of whites believed that white students should go to school with black students or that black and white job applicants should have an equal chance at getting a job. In contrast, by the 1990s, more than 90 percent of white survey respondents endorsed the principle that white and black students and job applicants should be treated equally by schools and employers (Schuman et al. 2001).

Consistent with these trends, many indicators of social and economic status show that African-Americans have made great strides in approaching parity with whites. In fact, these positive indicators have led some prominent academics to proclaim the problem of discrimination solved.

Economist James Heckman, for example, has asserted that "most of the disparity in earnings between blacks and whites in the labor market of the 1990s is due to the differences in skills they bring to the market, and not to discrimination within the labor market." He went on to refer to labor market discrimination as "the problem of an earlier era" (Heckman 1998:101–102). Indeed, for many observers of contemporary race relations, the barrier of discrimination appears to have withered away, leaving blacks the opportunity to pursue unfettered upward mobility.

And yet, despite the many signs of progress, there remain important forms of social and economic inequality that continue to differentiate the experiences of black and white Americans. According to many indicators, blacks, and black men in particular, continue to lag far behind their white counterparts. Some indicators show black men doing steadily worse. African-Americans, for example, experience roughly double the rate of unemployment experienced by whites, with very little sign of change over time. Likewise, rates of joblessness among young black men have been rising over time (Holzer, Offner, and Sorensen 2005).

How can we explain the discrepancies between these varied measures? On the one hand, the progressive trends in racial attitudes may reflect a genuine openness among white Americans to racial integration and equality. On the other hand, traditional survey measures of racial attitudes may not accurately reflect the degree to which race continues to shape the opportunities available to African-Americans. Indeed, a great deal of evidence suggests that racial stereotypes remain firmly embedded in the American consciousness, affecting perceptions of and interactions with racial minorities even among respondents who overtly endorse the principle of equal treatment (Devine and Elliot 1995). Substantial levels of discrimination have likewise been detected by experimental field studies, which find consistent evidence of racial bias against black applicants in housing, credit, and employment markets (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Turner, Fix, and Struyk

1991; Yinger 1995). As a further reflection of lived experience, the large majority of blacks continue to perceive discrimination as routine in matters of jobs, income, and housing (Feagin and Sikes 1994).

Given the available information, it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which direct discrimination plays a role in shaping the opportunities available to blacks in contemporary society. Surveys of racial attitudes portray one optimistic picture, whereas indicators of economic and social inequality present more mixed results. It is only through direct comparisons of these differing measures that we can assess how and why they may project such divergent conclusions.

In this article, we focus on the specific issue of employment discrimination. Substantively, we are interested in assessing the degree to which employer preferences or biases influence the opportunities available to stigmatized workers. Methodologically, we seek to assess the degree to which choice of measurement strategy affects our understanding of these processes. In our analysis of survey data and behavioral outcomes, we engage with LaPiere's central concern about the correspondence between measured attitudes and behaviors.

Explicit Studies of Prejudice-Discrimination Correspondence

The recent literature on the specific attitude-behavior case of prejudice and discrimination (in sociology) is virtually nonexistent.¹ Indeed, we turned instead to research in psychology for guidance in these matters.

Psychological research has provided several important insights into the correspondence between different types of attitudes and behaviors, pointing to, for example, varying relationships between explicit/conscious attitudes, implicit/unconscious attitudes, and various forms of behavior (Dovidio et al. 2002). From a sociological standpoint, however, these studies have some important limitations, most notably those arising from a reliance on

behavioral measures obtained in laboratory settings. For instance, the studies Fiske (2004) reviews use outcome behaviors such as ratings of perceived friendliness in interaction with a mock interviewer, subtle behavioral measures such as the number of blinks and the length of eye contact, or the results of role-playing situations. These outcomes often are far removed from the actual decisions made in their social contexts—to hire, to rent, or to move, to name a few—that are most relevant to understanding the behavioral processes that produce disadvantage among members of stigmatized groups.

For our purposes, the most relevant studies comparing prejudice and discrimination are those that assess these factors in realistic social settings, focusing on forms of discrimination that produce meaningful social disparities. Unfortunately, the three studies that fit this description each were conducted more than 50 years ago (Kutner et al. 1952; LaPiere 1934; Saenger and Gilbert 1950). We have very few means by which to assess the correspondence between contemporary racial attitudes and the incidence of discrimination.

Employer Attitudes and Hiring Decisions

The current study provides an opportunity to investigate these processes in a contemporary context. Bringing together a unique combination of data, we present a direct comparison of self-reported attitudes and corresponding behavior in the context of real-world setting with important implications for inequality. The substantive focus of this study is on employers' willingness to hire blacks and/or ex-offenders for an entry-level position in their company. In both cases, the sensitive topics under investigation lead us to question the use of employer reports alone. By calibrating the estimates we received from surveys with behavioral measures from an experimental audit study, we are able to gain insight into the consistency between these two important indicators of group preference.

Measures of attitudes come in many forms, ranging from abstract statements of feelings (e.g., “I don’t like members of group X”) to more concrete statements of intended action (e.g., “I would not hire members of group X”). The latter, referred to as behavioral intentions, are considered the form of attitude that should most closely correspond to observed behavior, because of their conceptualization in terms of specific measurable action (Fishbein 1967; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Schuman and Johnson 1976). Thus a weak relation between behavioral intentions and behavior suggests an even weaker relation between the behavior and more general attitudinal measures. In the current study, we rely on the behavioral intentions expressed by employers as an indicator of their attitudes about blacks and ex-offenders. Comparing what employers said they would do in a hypothetical hiring situation with what we observed them doing in a real hiring situation forms the basis of our current investigation.

METHODS

In the first stage of the study, employers’ responses to job applicants were measured in real employment settings using an experimental audit methodology [see Selection 10]. Between June and December of 2001, matched pairs of young men (testers) were sent to apply for a total of 350 entry-level job openings in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. The two white testers (one with a fictional criminal record and one without) applied for one set of randomly selected jobs ($n = 150$), and the two black testers (using profiles identical to those of the white pair) applied for a second set of jobs ($n = 200$). The preferences of employers were measured based on the number of call-backs to each of the applicants, as registered by four independent voice mail boxes. Additional voice mail boxes were set up for calls to references listed on the testers’ resumes. For a more detailed discussion of the research design, see Pager (2003).

The findings of the audit showed large and significant effects of both race and criminal record

on employment opportunities. Call-backs were received by 34 percent of whites with no criminal record, 17 percent of whites with criminal records, 14 percent of blacks without criminal records, and 5 percent of blacks with criminal records (Pager 2003). Thus, overall, blacks and ex-offenders were one-half to one-third as likely to be considered by employers, with black ex-offenders suffering the greatest disadvantage.

The second stage of the study provided employers with the opportunity to express their hiring preferences verbally in the context of a telephone survey. Several months after completion of the audit study, each of the 350 employers was called by interviewers from the Michigan State Survey Research Center and asked to participate in a telephone survey about employers’ hiring preferences and practices (see Pager [2002] for more detailed discussion of the survey instrument and results). Calls were directed to the person in charge of hiring for each establishment. The final survey sample included 199 respondents, representing a 58 percent response rate.

During the course of this survey, employers were read a vignette describing a job applicant with characteristics designed to match closely the profile of the testers in the audit study. Employers who had been audited by white testers were read a vignette in which the hypothetical applicant was white, and employers who had been audited by black testers were read a vignette in which the applicant was black. In this way, the survey design mirrored the split-ballot procedures used by Sniderman and Piazza (1993) and Schuman and Bobo (1988), avoiding direct racial comparisons within the same survey.

The wording of the vignette was as follows:

Chad is a 23-year-old [black/white] male. He finished high school and has steady work experience in entry-level jobs. He has good references and interacts well with people. About a year ago, Chad was convicted of a drug felony and served 12 months in prison. Chad was released last month and is now looking for a job. How likely would you be to hire Chad for an entry-level opening in your company?

Employers were asked to rate their likelihood of hiring this applicant with the following range of responses: very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, and very unlikely.

The vignette presented in the survey was designed to correspond closely to the profile of the testers in the audit study. Chad, the hypothetical applicant, was presented with levels of education, experience, and personal qualifications similar to those on the resumes presented by the testers. The type of crime was identical, although the prison sentence in the vignette (12 months) was shorter than that reported in the audit study (18 months). Thus the vignette aimed to measure employers' self-reports concerning how they would respond to such an applicant, whereas the audit measured how they actually did respond to an applicant with almost identical characteristics. The parallel scenarios of the vignette and audit should maximize the correspondence between the two measures (Schuman and Johnson 1976).

In the current study, the primary outcome of interest represents the employers' willingness to hire an applicant depending on his race and criminal background. As described earlier, in the survey, employers were asked to report how likely they would be to hire the applicant described in the vignette. In the actual employment situations, by contrast, we measured the number of employers who responded positively to testers after they had submitted their application. In most cases, this simply involved the employer inviting the tester to come in for an interview, although in a few cases, the applicant was offered the job on the spot.

RESULTS

Figure 17.1 presents the key results from both data sources. The first two columns represent the percentage of employers who reported that they would be "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to hire the hypothetical applicant, depending on whether he was presented as white or black. We include the "somewhat likely" group here to

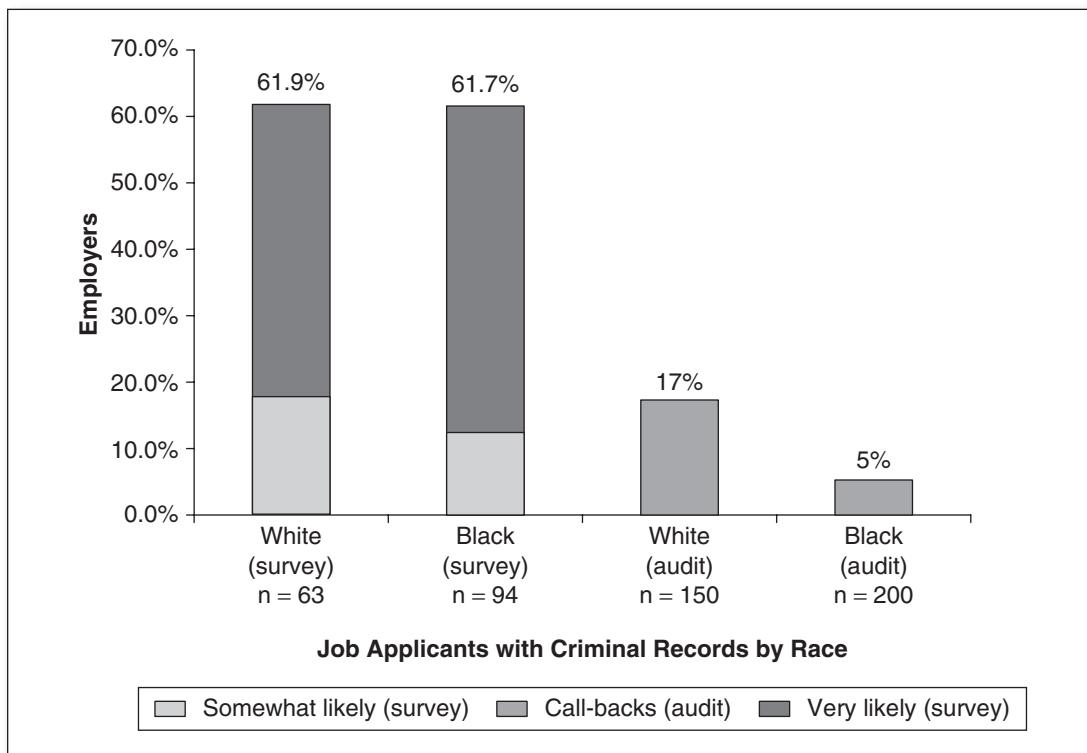
correspond to our behavioral measure, which is a call-back rather than an actual hire (see discussion below).

The second two columns represent results from the audit study, illustrating the percentage of call-backs received by each group. In the audit study, call-backs also can be considered a measure of "willingness to hire," given that this represents a first cut in the hiring process. Although a call-back is by no means a guarantee of employment, given that employers typically call back several applicants before selecting their preferred hire, it does indicate a favorable initial review.

The results of the two outcomes, however, are anything but comparable. As Figure 17.1 shows, employers reported a far greater willingness to hire drug offenders in the survey than was found in the audit. In the survey, more than 60 percent of the employers said they were somewhat or very likely to hire a drug offender irrespective of the applicant's race. In the audit, by contrast, only 17 percent of white and 5 percent of black applicants with drug felonies actually received a call-back.

The disparities apparent in these results are extremely consequential for our understanding of the social world. In the survey data, employers' responses present a view of openness to blacks or applicants with drug felonies that is far greater than the reality measured in actual hiring situations. Accepting the survey results as an accurate indicator of the opportunities available to blacks and ex-offenders would grossly understate the barriers to employment they face.

A possible objection to this comparison is that the very framing of the vignette item may artificially exaggerate the difference between survey and audit results. When considering a hypothetical applicant, employers do not have to take into account alternative possibilities among the applicant pool. Thus the hypothetical applicant may exceed the minimum threshold for acceptability even if in actuality there tend to be other applicants who are better qualified. By contrast, the tester in the audit study is competing with a pool of real applicants of varying quality.

FIGURE 17.1 Expressed Willingness to Hire a Drug Offender According to Employer Survey and Audit

Note: Survey results include employers who said they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to hire the hypothetical applicant (with “very” at bottom of columns). Audit results represent the percentage of call-backs for each group. Differences between within-race comparisons of survey and audit results are significant on the basis of a two-sample test of proportions ($p < .05$).

To the extent that real applicants provide better qualifications than does the tester’s profile, the tester will receive few call-backs for reasons unrelated to race or criminal record.

An alternative way of presenting the information that addresses this concern is to calculate the likelihood that a tester with a criminal record will receive a call-back *relative to* a white tester without a criminal record. White testers without criminal records in this case represent a kind of baseline, presenting a given set of qualifications common among all testers, but without the handicaps of minority status or a criminal record. Employers who made call-backs to white testers without criminal records signaled

that this level of education and experience was sufficiently desirable to make the first cut. Relative to this baseline, we can assess the proportion of blacks and whites with criminal records who received call-backs, thereby reducing the effect of employer nonresponses attributable to extraneous factors.

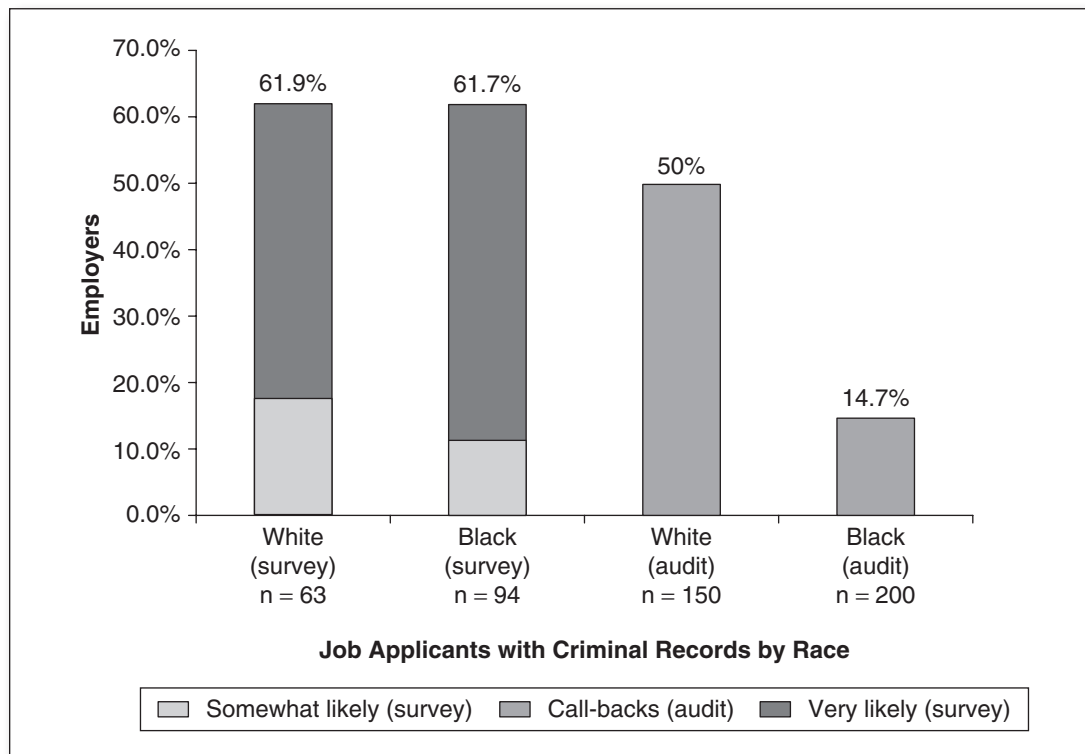
Figure 17.2 displays the results of this procedure, comparing the likelihood of hire based on the survey and audit results with audit results recalculated as a ratio of the percentage of testers in the offender condition who received call-backs to the percentage of white testers with identical qualifications but no criminal background who received call-backs. Overall, 34

percent of white applicants with no criminal records, and with the given set of human capital characteristics presented by all testers, received call-backs. This group serves as our baseline (denominator) for calculating the relative call-back rates for the other groups. Only 17 percent of white testers with identical characteristics plus a criminal record received call-backs, indicating that white testers with a criminal record were 50 percent as likely to receive call-backs as those without a criminal record (Figure 17.2). Black ex-offenders were the least likely to continue in

the employment process—only 5 percent received call-backs—indicating that they were just less than 15 percent as likely to receive a call-back as a similar white tester without a criminal record.

The differences between self-reports and behaviors in this comparison, although smaller, remain consistent when call-back frequency is judged relative to that for white non-offenders. In the case of white ex-offenders, the distance between the survey and audit results has narrowed substantially, although it remains

FIGURE 17.2 Expressed Willingness to Hire a Drug Offender According to Employer Survey and Recalibrated Audit



Note: Survey results include employers who said they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to hire the hypothetical applicant (with “very” at bottom of columns). Audit results represent the ratio of the percentage of call-backs for each group to the percentage of call-backs for white nonoffenders. Differences in within-race comparisons of survey and audit results are marginally significant for white applicants ($p < .06$) and significant for black applicants ($p < .05$) on the basis of a two-sample test of proportions.

marginally significant statistically. The case for black applicants, on the other hand, maintains a clear and dramatic difference. Even relative to contemporaneous call-back rates for white testers, the call-back rate for black ex-offenders (14.7) remains far short of the survey estimates of hiring likelihoods (61.7). For black ex-offenders, the survey and audit measures provide dramatically different indications of willingness to hire.

Whatever measure is used, two main findings remain clear. First, whereas the survey responses present a rather benign view of the employment barriers facing ex-offenders, the audit results tell a very different story. Employers indicate a high level of willingness to hire drug offenders, but in actual employment situations, they are less than half as likely even to call back such applicants relative to those without criminal records. This result underscores the importance of using great caution in relying on employers' self-reports as an accurate reflection of behavior.

Second, the degree to which race is a factor in hiring decisions is virtually undetectable in the survey results, in sharp contrast to what we find in the audit study. In the survey, although separate employers were asked the vignette in

which the hypothetical applicant was white or black, the estimates of hiring likelihoods for both applicants were virtually identical. By contrast, actual behavioral measures in the audit show that white ex-offenders are more than three times as likely to receive consideration from employers as black ex-offenders. These results suggest that employer surveys, even those with split-ballot designs, do not always provide an effective way to gauge the degree to which sensitive characteristics such as race affect actual employment opportunities.

Finally, we turn to the issue of individual-level consistency between survey reports and audit results. Even if the *levels* of openness to hiring ex-offenders are inconsistent between survey and audit, it remains possible that a *correlation* exists between the two: Employers who indicate willingness to hire ex-offenders may be more likely to hire an ex-offender than employers who do not indicate such willingness, even if the overall openness to hiring ex-offenders is strongly overstated in the survey results. This final analysis allows us to compare the survey responses with the audit outcomes at an individual rather than an aggregate level. The results of this cross-tabulation are presented in Table 17.1. Consistent with the results reported

TABLE 17.1 Individual-level Consistency Between Employers' Self-reports and Behavioral Outcomes

	<i>Audit Results (for Testers Presenting Drug Felony)</i>	
<i>Survey Results</i>	<i>No Call-Back</i>	<i>Call-Back</i>
Likely to Hire Drug Offender		
No	56 (93.3%)	4 (6.7%)
Yes	89 (92.7%)	7 (7.3%)

Note: This table includes all employers who responded to the survey. Call-backs in the right column above represent calls to the tester in the criminal record condition only.

earlier, we find that the survey responses have very little connection to the actual behaviors exhibited by these employers.

Among those who reported a favorable likelihood of hiring an applicant with a prior drug conviction in the survey, 7.3 percent made calls to the tester with the criminal record in the audit study, relative to 6.7 percent of those expressing an unfavorable likelihood. This difference is in the expected direction, but is only slightly greater than zero (0.6 percent), and far too small to reach statistical significance.

These results cast strong doubt on the accuracy of survey data for indicating relative likelihoods of hiring. Individuals who report a higher likelihood of hiring an ex-offender are only trivially more likely to do so. Confirming the aggregate findings described earlier, the individual-level associations presented here appear to be no better at establishing a relationship between attitudes and behaviors.

RETHINKING THE ROLE OF ATTITUDES

What can we conclude from these results regarding the usefulness of data on attitudes? Should we disregard all employers' self-reports? Certainly, it would be premature to advise such a radical stance. In fact, despite the large discrepancies between the self-reports and behaviors measured in the current study, we believe that survey results remain useful, even if they cannot be viewed as an alternative procedure to the measurement of actual discrimination.

Even in cases in which expressed attitudes have little relationship to measured discrimination, survey data can nevertheless tell us something useful about how employers *think* about important hiring issues. Responses to the survey suggest, for instance, that many employers who discriminate against blacks do not necessarily do so because of a principled belief that black employees should not be hired. In fact, we think it likely that many employers genuinely believe their own responses to surveys, professing the value of equal opportunity, while simultaneously

justifying their behavior in hiring situations on grounds other than race (e.g., assumptions about the family/social/educational backgrounds of black applicants; see Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991). In this case, the difference between employers' self-reports and their actual behavior represents a meaningful discrepancy between two legitimate realities. The resolution of these differences represents an important focus of sociological investigation in its own right. Although low correlations between attitudes and associated behaviors often are viewed as a purely methodological test of survey questions, in many cases, these discrepancies actually may provide clues toward a better substantive understanding of the cognitive-emotional basis for action.

Furthermore, it remains possible that survey research may provide a better proxy for behavior in situations that are less complex and subject to fewer contextual influences than hiring. Action in any real social situation is the result of many factors other than the actor's attitude toward the object, including norms, perceived consequences of the action, and implicit or unconscious attitudes toward the object. The many complex influences on hiring decisions make these situations exactly the sort for which survey measures are least likely to be an effective substitute. Indeed, the three "classic" studies that found very weak associations between expressed behavioral intentions and behaviors all were studies of discrimination in social situations (Kutner et al. 1952; LaPiere 1934, Saenger and Gilbert 1950). We believe it possible that survey responses may provide a much more effective proxy for behavior in other contexts, such as those that involve voting (Traugott and Katosh 1979), signing of a petition (Brannon et al. 1973), or patterns of consumer behavior (Day et al. 1991), in which the link between behavioral intentions and actual behavior is less subject to contextual influences apart from the respondent's attitude or intention.

Finally, we have focused on only a few of the many survey techniques that have been developed to measure prejudice and discrimination. Though

our measure of behavioral intentions was designed to offer the closest match to the audit context, it remains possible that other more abstracted measures of racial bias may in fact correlate more closely with measures of discrimination. There is an extensive literature that attempts to investigate modern or subtle forms of racial attitudes using survey questions (National Research Council 2004, chapter 8), and certain of these alternative approaches could prove more effective at capturing behavioral outcomes than what we found in this study.

CONCLUSION

LaPiere (1934) showed a striking inconsistency in the way hotel and restaurant proprietors reacted to Chinese customers in person, as compared with how they responded in surveys. The current study notes a similar discrepancy between employers' self-reported likelihood of hiring a particular applicant and their actual hiring behaviors when faced with a nearly identical candidate. We found an especially large and robust disparity between the reported likelihood of employers hiring black ex-offenders and actual rates of hiring. The low correlation between expressed and observed hiring outcomes presents an epistemological worry: our assessments of the degree of disadvantage faced by black ex-offenders would be substantially underestimated on the basis of the survey results alone. Moreover, we found little correlation between greater expressed likelihood of hiring ex-offenders in the survey and actual increased rates of call-backs for ex-offenders in real hiring situations. Given that most research on hiring preferences and practices comes from the self-reports of employers themselves (Downing 1984; Holzer 1996; Husley 1990; Jensen and Giegold 1976; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Wilson 1996), these results indeed have serious implications.

In terms of the methods used to measure discrimination, these findings suggest that sociologists may need to reevaluate what is learned from studies that use vignettes of

hypothetical situations to study behaviors toward stigmatized groups. Although we believe that these vignette studies often do tell us about respondents' abstract beliefs, in some cases these beliefs may have relatively little influence on the behavior of interest. Feelings and evaluations in a concrete social situation may be very different from those in the abstracted situation of the survey, but the two often are treated as nearly identical. An important next step in evaluating the contribution of survey measures for understanding behaviors of interest is to relate these items to actual behavior.

More broadly, these results suggest the limits of survey questions alone for understanding the changing nature of racial inequality. Survey questions indicating a liberalizing of racial attitudes among white Americans have been cited widely as evidence supporting the declining significance of race in American society. But if the items analyzed in this study have any bearing on survey responses more generally, we have reason to question that changing public opinion on matters of race has any necessary correspondence to the incidence of discrimination. Rather, our results support the perspective that there has been a growing gap between the principled statements and beliefs of white Americans in favor of racial equality and their concrete actions. Survey questions provide one important perspective on American race relations, but they must be combined with other information for a complete picture.

NOTE

1. Prejudice refers to negative judgments or opinions about a group (attitudes). Discrimination refers to unfavorable treatment directed toward members of a group (behavior).

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QUESTIONS

1. How do previous surveys and field experiments project different conclusions about the present state of racial equality in the United States?
2. Compare the outcome measures in the survey and field experiment. How are they similar and how are they different?
3. Carefully describe how the job applicant in the audit study was similar to the job applicant in the vignette. Why is this similarity an important aspect of the research design?
4. How do the results shown in Figure 17.2 augment the findings in Figure 17.1?
5. Should one conclude from this study that attitudes generally are a poor predictor of behavior? Explain.

Selection 18

To understand the influence of physical and sexual abuse on marriage and cohabitation among low-income women, Andrew Cherlin and associates combined data from a survey and an ethnography (a type of field research). Surveys can describe populations with a high degree of accuracy; however, unless repeated over time, surveys may not provide enough information to

trace the history of events or to establish causal direction. Based on small samples, ethnographic findings have limited generalizability. But this type of research is usually carried out over an extended period so that the order of events becomes apparent. As you read this selection, note how the strengths of one method offset the weaknesses of the other.

THE INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE ON MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION

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Across all social classes, Americans are more likely to cohabit prior to and after marriage, marry at older ages, divorce more, never marry at all, and have children

outside of marriage compared to a half-century ago. In this article, we examine the role of an often overlooked factor in the scholarly and policy discourse on the decline of marriage: the trauma

Source: "The Influence of Physical and Sexual Abuse on Marriage and Cohabitation," by Andrew J. Cherlin, Linda M. Burton, Tera R. Hurt, and Diane M. Purvin, 2004, *American Sociological Review*, 69, 768–789. Copyright 2004 by Sage Publications.

of physical and sexual abuse that some women experience in childhood and adulthood. Although there is extensive literature on abuse and on marriage formation, few studies have explored the connection between them (Macmillan 2001).

Our central claim is that, for many women, the experiences of physical abuse and sexual abuse influence intimate relations in ways that reduce the likelihood of stable, long-term unions. (By a “union,” we mean a marriage or a cohabiting relationship.) Physical and sexual abuse may affect union formation in several ways. Exposure to physical abuse by intimate partners in adulthood can create a wariness about relationships with men that leads women to be cautious about making long-term commitments (Edin 2000) and, in some circumstances, to avoid relationships altogether. At the same time, physical and sexual abuse beginning in childhood can predispose women toward more frequent sexual unions and multiple, transient relationships, some of them abusive (Butler and Burton 1990; Loeb et al. 2002; Noll, Trickett, and Putnam 2003). Using both the ethnographic and survey components of a study of low-income families in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio, we identify patterns of union formation and test hypotheses derived from our collaborative multi-method research and from the literature on physical and sexual abuse.

BACKGROUND

Our exploration of the relationship between union formation and the experience of physical and sexual abuse among low-income women is the result of an iterative collaborative process that integrates demographic and ethnographic approaches. We began by analyzing the survey data to study the empirical relationship between patterns of union formation, on the one hand, and reported experiences of physical and sexual abuse. When an association was found we looked to our ethnographic data to identify detailed patterns of abuse and union formation with the intent of using the ethnographic results to deepen

our understanding and to develop hypotheses that could be tested with the survey data. Generally speaking, our ethnographic analysis suggested that the timing of abuse—whether it occurred in childhood, adulthood, or in both periods—and the form of abuse—whether it was sexual or physical—were strongly related to distinctive union patterns. The extant literature on sexual abuse and physical abuse also guided the development of hypotheses, although not in ways that were as specific as the ethnographic findings.

THEORETICAL MECHANISMS AND HYPOTHESES

Our ethnographic data, as we will discuss, showed that some women seemed to have withdrawn from serious relationships with men altogether, a pattern we will call *abated unions*. Even among women who do have intimate unions, the experience of past abuse could lead to emotional distance from partners and hesitancy to make long-term commitments (Hoff 1990; Kirkwood 1993). Because it is easier to leave a cohabiting relationship than a marriage, women who have experienced abuse and wish to maintain an exit route from relationships may prefer cohabitation to marriage.

In addition, the personal and social resources that women can draw upon may influence union-formation patterns. Women who successfully resist abusive men must be resourceful (Johnson and Ferraro 2000): They must actively solve problems, respond quickly, and negotiate firmly. Those who bring more psychological resources to their adult intimate relationships and who have more social support in adulthood will be more likely to separate themselves from potentially abusive men. Childhood abuse may erode psychological resources by engendering feelings of self-blame, guilt, low self-esteem, and depressive symptoms (Wolfe, Wolfe, and Best 1988). In adulthood, a support network of kin and friends may provide a crucial social resource that allows women to avoid and escape from abusive relationships.

These perspectives and our preliminary analyses led us to expect the following associations between abuse and patterns of marriage and cohabitation in our ethnographic sample:

1. Women who have never been abused will be more likely to show a pattern of sustained, long-term unions than women who have experienced abuse.
2. Women with a history of childhood abuse, particularly childhood sexual abuse, will be more likely to manifest a pattern of frequent, short-term nonmarital relationships, compared to women who have not experienced childhood abuse.
3. Women who were not abused in childhood but encounter abuse in adulthood will be more likely to show a pattern of abated unions, relative to women who were abused in childhood and who also encounter abuse in adulthood.

The survey data we will present is cross-sectional and measures only union status at the time of the survey: married, cohabiting, or single (not cohabiting or married). Nevertheless, the survey data should correspond to the ethnographic data in the following ways: women with a lifetime pattern of sustained unions should be overrepresented among the currently married at the time of the survey; women with a lifetime pattern of frequent, short-term nonmarital unions should be overrepresented among the currently cohabiting; and women with a pattern of abated unions should be overrepresented among the currently single. We therefore formulated three hypotheses that we could test with the survey data:

Hypothesis 1: Women with no history of abuse are more likely to be currently married than to be cohabiting or single, compared to women who have been abused.

Hypothesis 2: Women with a history of childhood abuse, particularly childhood sexual abuse, are more likely to be currently cohabiting than to be married or single, compared to women who have not experienced childhood abuse.

Hypothesis 3: Women who experience physical abuse in adulthood are more likely to be currently single than to be married or cohabiting, relative to women who have not experienced adult physical abuse.

THE THREE-CITY STUDY

Study Design

The data are drawn from a study of the well-being of children and their families in low-income neighborhoods in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio that included both a random-sample survey of 2,402 children and their caregivers and an ethnographic study of 256 additional children and families, recruited non-randomly, who were not in the survey sample but resided in the same neighborhoods. The survey was conducted as follows. In households in low-income neighborhoods with a child age zero to four or age 10 to 14, with a female primary caregiver, and with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty line, interviewers randomly selected one child and conducted in-person interviews with that child's primary caregiver (a mother in over 90 percent of the cases). If the child was in the 10-to-14 year-old age group, he or she also was interviewed. Interviews were conducted between March and November of 1999 with 2,402 families, including an oversample of families receiving benefits from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the main cash welfare program. The response rate was 74 percent. Thirty-seven percent of the families were receiving TANF at the time of the interview, and an additional 20 percent had received TANF in the two years prior to the interview.

Families were recruited into the ethnography between June 1999 and December 2000. Recruitment sites included formal childcare settings (e.g., Head Start), the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, neighborhood community centers, local welfare offices, churches, and other public assistance agencies. Of the 256 families who participated in the ethnography, 212 families were selected if they

included a child age two to four. The other 44 were recruited specifically because they had a child aged zero to eight years with a moderate or severe disability. To gather ethnographic data on the families the method of “structured discovery” was used, in which in-depth interviews and observations were focused on specific topics but allowed flexibility to capture unexpected findings and relationships (Burton et al. 2001; Winston et al. 1999). Families were visited an average of once or twice per month for 12 to 18 months and then every six months thereafter through 2003. In addition to these interviews, which were primarily conducted with the biological or adoptive mother or primary caregiver (e.g., grandmother or aunt) of a target child age two to four, ethnographers engaged in participant observation with the family. The latter often involved accompanying the mother and her children to the welfare office, doctor, grocery store, or workplace, and taking note of the interactions and contexts of those places.

Demographic characteristics of the survey and ethnographic samples of families are roughly comparable. Both samples are heavily African American and Hispanic (including, but not limited to, substantial numbers of Mexican Americans in San Antonio and Chicago, Puerto Ricans in Boston and Chicago, and Dominicans in Boston). The survey sample is slightly older and better educated. The ethnographic sample was more likely to be receiving TANF at the start of the study and to be working outside the home. The children in the ethnographic sample tended to be younger. The majority of caregivers in both samples were neither married nor cohabiting at the start of the study, although the ethnography included a greater percentage of cohabiting caregivers than did the survey.

MEASURING ABUSE

Ethnography

Sixty-four percent (N = 147) of the mothers who participated in the ethnography and had

complete information disclosed that they had been sexually abused or experienced domestic violence in childhood, adulthood, or both. These disclosures occurred at various times and in varying fieldwork situations during the ethnographers’ monthly visits. Approximately 12 percent of these mothers told ethnographers of sexual abuse and domestic violence experiences during the first three months of their involvement in the study. Twenty-nine percent disclosed having experienced abuse during months four through six, 40 percent during months seven through nine, and 19 percent during months 10 through 24. The range in disclosure times reflects variation in what we would call turning points, the moments when participants trusted the ethnographer enough to share intimate, highly sensitive, and often painful information about abuse.

Reports of abuse were obtained under one of three circumstances. Only 10 percent of the disclosures occurred in response to specific questions about abuse in a semi-structured interview on intimate relationships that the ethnographers generally conducted during the third through sixth month of the study. In contrast, 71 percent unexpectedly revealed information about abuse when they were asked about related topics such as health or seemingly unrelated topics such as transportation, family demographics, and intergenerational care-giving. For example, general questions about health, particularly stress and coping, often triggered mothers’ disclosures of sexual abuse and domestic violence experiences. During a health interview conducted during the seventh monthly visit, the ethnographer asked Darlene, a 26-year-old Latina mother of four, how she coped with stress. She responded:

I used to keep a journal of my life, because, when I was younger, I was molested. And so was my sister, so you know, one of our things of therapy was, you know, to write down what we felt for the next time we [would see] our counselor, and I was just like, alright, you know, well, and then I just kept a habit of constantly writing.

Finally, 19 percent disclosed abuse when the ethnographer unexpectedly encountered a violent

situation when visiting the participant or when the participant experienced an episode of abuse shortly before the ethnographer’s regularly scheduled visit. In both instances, the abuse situation was fresh in the minds of mothers and they chose to discuss it with the ethnographers in great detail. For instance, the ethnographer for Patrice, a 28-year-old European American mother of two, described the circumstances that led to Patrice’s crisis-related disclosure:

I arrived at Patrice’s house 10 minutes before the interview only to find the streets covered with cops, patrol cars, and an ambulance. “Oh my God,” I thought, “What has happened?” They were taking one man out of Patrice’s house. He appeared to be shot or stabbed. Patrice was on the porch screaming, her face bloody and cut. The kids were running

around everywhere screaming and crying. . . . When I visited Patrice three weeks later the floodgates opened without me asking. I listened as she told me everything about the incident and about other incidents of physical and sexual abuse that she had experienced since childhood nonstop.

Based on disclosures under all these circumstances, we coded mothers’ reports of rape, molestation, parentally enforced child prostitution, and witnessing of incest-acts as sexual abuse. Physical beatings, attacks with weapons, and witnessing consistent physical violence among parents, partners, and children were coded as physical abuse. As Table 18.1 will show, most women who reported sexual abuse also reported physical abuse, suggesting that sexual abuse often occurs in the context of physical violence.

TABLE 18.1 Union Patterns by Abuse Categories: Ethnography Sample

<i>Union Patterns</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Childhood Only</i>	<i>Adulthood Only</i>	<i>Childhood and Adulthood</i>
A. By Timing of Abuse, %				
Sustained unions	88	54	29	18
Transitory unions	9	31	25	72
Abated unions	4	15	46	10
Total %	101	100	100	100
N	81	13	63	71
	<i>None</i>	<i>Sexual</i>	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Sexual and Physical</i>
B. By Type of Abuse, %				
Sustained unions	88	33	27	24
Transitory unions	9	50	15	72
Abated unions	4	17	58	4
Total %	101	100	100	100
N	81	6	59	82

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Ethnography sample total $N = 228$ (28 cases were not included in this analysis because of insufficient data).

Survey

In the survey, specific questions about several sensitive topics, including physical and sexual abuse and sexual activity, were asked using the audio computer-assisted self-interview (Audio-CASI) method: Respondents were given a laptop and provided with earphones. They saw and heard questions that no one else in the room could see or hear. They responded to these questions by pressing number keys on the laptop, as instructed by the program. Studies have shown that this technique raises substantially the reported rates of injection-drug usage, violent behavior, risky sex (Turner et al. 1998b), and abortion (Turner et al. 1998a). Given the possibility that the perpetrators of abuse were in the home during the interview, we viewed this method of improving confidentiality as essential. Nevertheless, it is possible that these reports are incomplete.

Sexual abuse.

Women were first asked the following question: Before you turned 18, did anyone—a stranger, friend, acquaintance, date, or relative—ever try or succeed in doing something sexual to you or make you do something sexual to them against your wishes?

Twenty-four percent said yes. All women were then asked the following:

Since you turned 18, did anyone—a stranger, friend, acquaintance, date, or relative—ever try or succeed in doing something sexual to you or making you do something sexual to them against your wishes?

Eleven percent said yes. Childhood and adult abuse were correlated: Among women who were sexually abused as children, 37 percent reported being sexually abused as adults and 84 percent reported experiencing serious physical abuse (defined later in this article) as adults.

Physical abuse.

Women also were asked about physical abuse as a child: Before you turned 18, were you ever hit, beaten up, burned, assaulted with a weapon, or had your life been threatened by an adult in your family or household?

Twenty-one percent said yes. Women were also asked a series of questions about physical abuse that they may have suffered as an adult. We use a scale composed of affirmative responses to four questions about the more serious forms of violence.¹ Forty-four percent of the women reported experiencing at least one of these four forms as an adult, and 19 percent had experienced three or four of them.

All told, 52 percent of the women responded that they had been sexually abused or had suffered serious physical abuse as a child or an adult. Thus, a majority of women in the survey reported that they had experienced abuse at some point. Table 18.2 will show that, as in the ethnography, most women who reported sexual abuse also reported physical abuse. Two thirds of the women who reported abuse (sexual or physical) in childhood or adolescence also reported abuse as adults, suggesting continuity through the life course in experiences with abuse.

MEASURING UNION STATUS

Ethnography

The detailed information that the ethnographers obtained allowed us to examine patterns of union formation in adulthood. We attempted to classify these patterns in ways that could capture the fluidity that some women's histories showed. A thorough, systematic analysis of the ethnographic data indicated that many mothers could be classified as showing one of two union-history categories that we expected a priori and a third pattern that emerged from the data during the analysis. The defining characteristic of sustained unions is that the woman has been in long-term unions most of her life with only one or two men. About half of the women had union histories that fit this category. Transitory unions may be sequential unions with different men or they may take the form of a long-term involvement with a man that cycles between living together and breaking up, with the woman living with other men during the break-up periods. Women in this category experience unions as short-term partnerships and rarely

TABLE 18.2 Current Union Status by Abuse Categories: Survey Sample

Current Union Status	None	Childhood Only	Adulthood Only	Childhood and Adulthood
A. By Timing of Abuse, % ^a				
Married	42	24	20	24
Cohabiting	4	11	6	9
Single	54	64	74	67
Total %	100	99	100	100
N	1,139	224	539	494
	None	Sexual	Physical	Sexual and Physical
B. By Type of Abuse, % ^b				
Married	42	32	23	18
Cohabiting	4	9	6	11
Single	54	59	71	72
Total %	100	100	100	101
N	1,139	149	669	439

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Survey sample total $N = 2,396$.

^a $\chi^2 = 133.2$, $df = 6$; $p < .0001$.

^b $\chi^2 = 125.9$, $df = 6$; $p < .0001$.

live without partners for substantial periods of time. About one-third of the women had union histories that fit this category.

In addition, about one-sixth of the women had not lived in a union for at least one year prior to the field period, did not begin a union during the field period, and told the ethnographers that they did not currently want to be involved with a man. We classified them as having *abated unions*. These women indicated that they are not interested in forming another union with a man and have effectively taken themselves off the market.

Survey

As mentioned, in the survey, women could be classified only according to their union status at

the date of the interview, because the survey did not include enough life history information to construct complete union histories. Thus, the data allow only for a cross-sectional analysis of the determinants of union status at the interview date. We classify each woman as being married, cohabiting, or single (i.e., not cohabiting or married) at the time of the 1999 survey.

RESULTS

We will present comparable tables from the ethnography and the survey that cross-classify union history (or current union status) by the timing and the type of abuse a woman has experienced.

Ethnography

Panels A and B of Table 18.1 present cross-tabulations of union history patterns by timing of abuse and type of abuse, respectively, for the ethnographic sample. Both panels show strong relationships. Consider Panel A of Table 18.1 first. Eighty-eight percent of women who had never been abused showed a pattern of sustained unions. Women who had been abused in either childhood or adulthood, but not both, were less likely to experience sustained unions, and women who were abused in both childhood and adulthood were the least likely to experience sustained unions. Note also that women who had been abused in adulthood only were substantially more likely to show a pattern of abated unions. Thus, the patterns of union formation differed sharply across the categories of abuse history.

Panel B of Table 18.1 reports union patterns by type of abuse. Note that among women who had experienced sexual abuse, either alone or in combination with physical abuse, the most common pattern was transitory unions. In contrast, among women who had been abused physically but not sexually, the most common pattern was abated unions. To be sure, a modest number of women who had been abused reported a pattern of sustained unions. Further analysis showed that the majority of women in this category were first generation Mexican American immigrants and were distributed fairly equally across the three cities.

Overall, Table 18.1 suggests that the timing and nature of abuse are strongly associated with union patterns. Women who had experienced abuse were much less likely to have sustained unions. Women who experienced abuse beginning in childhood or who reported sexual abuse (alone or in combination with physical abuse) were more likely to develop a transitory union pattern in adulthood. Women who did not experience abuse in childhood but later experienced physical abuse in adulthood were more likely to display the abated union pattern than were other women. Let us illustrate these findings with some brief ethnographic profiles

that show links between mothers' abuse histories and their current intimate relationship patterns.

Sustained union pattern.

Channel, a 27-year-old African American mother of one said that she never would have married her husband, Reginald, if "abuse had been anywhere on the radar screen." She notes,

I was poor all my life and so was Reginald. When I got pregnant, we agreed we would marry some day in the future because we loved each other and wanted to raise our child together. But we would not get married until we could afford to get a house and pay all the utility bills on time. I have this thing about utility bills. Our gas and electric got turned off all the time when we were growing up and we wanted to make sure that would not happen when we got married. That was our biggest worry. We never worried about violence, like hitting each other because we weren't raised that way. We worked together and built up savings and then we got married. It's forever for us. Fighting and slapping each other around is not how we do business. No matter how hard it is, we just don't roll like that.

Transitory union pattern.

Marilyn is a 45-year-old European American woman with four children—two teenage daughters and a daughter and son in middle childhood. Marilyn's history of abuse is long-standing. She was sexually and physically abused as a child and adolescent and witnessed frequent domestic violence involving her parents. As a young adult and now as a woman in mid-life, Marilyn continually enters and exits relationships with men, moving them into her household only a few days after meeting them and allowing them to stay for a maximum of six to eight months. Most of the men that Marilyn has invited into her home, her life, and the lives of her children have abused her or abused her children. Marilyn appears unable to recognize the pattern of revolving-door relationships and the risks that these relationships create for her children.

Abated union pattern.

Mary, a 33-year-old African American mother of one indicated that she has taken herself “off the marriage market.” She divorced her husband after he “went crazy,” beating her and causing her to lose the child she was pregnant with. Mary’s parents supported her through the divorce, acknowledging that they would not allow “any man to beat on their child.” Since the divorce, Mary has moved three doors down from her parents and has adopted a little girl whom she adores. Mary indicated that all her energy and time will be spent mothering her daughter and that there is no room for a man in the “new order” that she was creating in her life.

Survey

Let us now turn to the findings from the survey sample. Panel A of Table 18.2 shows a cross-tabulation that is analogous to Panel A of Table 18.1: current union status by timing of abuse. It shows an association between being currently married and never having been abused. Forty-two percent of women who said that they had not been abused were currently married, compared to 20 to 24 percent of women who reported abuse. Panel B displays a cross-tabulation according to type of abuse. It suggests that women who had experienced physical abuse (alone or in combination with sexual abuse) were most likely to be currently single. The associations in Table 18.2 are consistent with the ethnographic findings, and chi-squared tests reject the null hypotheses at the $p < .0001$ level; nevertheless, the relationships between union status and timing and type of abuse are not as strong as in the ethnographic tables.

DISCUSSION

We have used information from an ethnography and a survey of low-income families in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio to investigate the

relationship between experiencing sexual or physical abuse and patterns of union formation. Both sets of data suggest that women who have been abused are substantially less likely to be in sustained marital or cohabiting unions. Both sets of data also suggest that different forms of abuse have distinctive associations with union formation. Childhood abuse, and particularly childhood sexual abuse, is associated with a pattern in which women are less likely to be in a stable marriage or a long-term cohabiting relationship but are instead more likely to experience multiple short-term unions. Adult abuse, and particularly adult physical abuse, on the other hand, is associated with a reduction in the probability of being in either form of union.

The ethnographic data analysis identified a group of women in the sample who had not been abused as children, for the most part, and who subsequently experienced adult physical abuse and then withdrew from having relationships with men. We called this pattern abated unions. However, women who *had* been abused as children and who then experienced adult abuse were less likely to withdraw from relationships; rather, they tended to have a series of them—a pattern we called transitory unions. Since the distinction between abated and transitory union patterns emerged somewhat unexpectedly from our analysis, we do not presume to have a full understanding of the role of abuse in the formation of these patterns. Nevertheless, our ethnographic observations and the research literature lead us to suggest the following possible explanation: Women who have not been abused as children are more likely to have families, or to be in networks of friends, that they can draw upon for emotional, material, and protective support if, as adults, they are abused by romantic partners. These women are also more likely to have clearer ego boundaries, self-protective capacities, and other psychological resources necessary to recognize and exit from relationships with abusive partners. On the other hand, women who were abused as children often have strained ties with families and friends who

have fewer emotional and material resources. These women are also more likely to have weaker, highly permeable relationship boundaries and a greater incidence of undiagnosed depression and other mental health issues, all of which make it more difficult for them to avoid repeatedly abusive romantic entanglements.

NOTE

1. The four questions asked whether a romantic partner had ever “slapped, kicked, bit, or punched you,” “beaten you,” “choked or burned you,” or “used a weapon or threatened to use a weapon on you.” We did not include affirmative answers to the categories “thrown something at you” or “pushed, grabbed, or shoved.”

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QUESTIONS

1. Explain what the researchers mean by *abated unions*. From what data source did they develop this concept?

2. (a) How did the researchers measure abuse in the ethnography? (b) How did they measure it in the survey?

3. *Union status* has different meanings in the field study and survey. How did the methodological approach determine the definition or measurement of union status?

4. How do the effects of child abuse on union formation differ from the effects of abuse in adulthood?

5. Explain how the concept of triangulation applies to: (a) observing or measuring abuse with two different methods; and (b) carrying out the study in three different cities.

