

Binational migration surveys

Representativeness, standardization, and the ethnosurvey model

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Introduction

The popularity of surveys for the collection of data on individuals and households hinges on two scientific strengths: statistical representativeness—based on proper sampling—and standardization—the principle of using the same tools to collect comparable data from different subjects. The most desirable properties of survey data, such as maximum validity and reliability and minimum or no bias, are thought to be achieved when representativeness and standardization are secured. A third advantage of collecting data from a sample of the population is of a practical nature. Surveys cost only a fraction of what their alternative, a population census, costs. These themes are thoroughly addressed in survey methodology textbooks.

In the present essay, I address some specific survey developments as they pertain to the study of international migration. First, I review the barriers to creating bi- or multinational sampling frames while addressing the challenges of representativeness and standardization. Then I describe how a specific type of migration survey, the ethnosurvey, provides bi- or multinational data and responds to those same challenges. After reviewing the ethnosurvey, I introduce a number of research projects that have employed the ethnosurvey methodology, often introducing important variations. I close by considering two recent developments in social survey research that are of central interest to migration survey practitioners.

Let me list as well what I do not do. As the focus of this essay is surveys, I do not consider other sources of immigration statistics, including censuses and government administrative records. While I do refer to specific survey migration research projects, I do not attempt to offer a catalog of all of them. I do not discuss the advantages and disadvantages of surveys for the study of international migration, the many substantial challenges faced by migration surveys, and issues of questionnaire design. As a comprehensive treatment of these issues, the volume by Bilsborrow, Oberai and Standing (1984) remains a primary reference text for migration survey practitioners. Kalton (2003) is a good starting point for those seeking technical guidance on sampling mobile populations, and Beauchemin (2014) provides a recent thorough review of multi-sited migration surveys. Finally, while I briefly refer to studies conducted elsewhere, the emphasis is on surveys addressing migration to, or immigrants in, the United States.

Migration process and migration outcomes

International migration is a vast field of scientific inquiry. It ranges from the study of the conditions that generate migration at origin or attract migrants to a destination, to the process of migration itself, to the various eventual outcomes of the process. Considerable research focuses exclusively on outcomes, and in particularly one type of outcome: permanent settlement. When the focus is on permanent settlement, studies are largely concerned with immigrant incorporation and use censuses and representative survey data collected in the host country. It must be noted that a thorough understanding of immigrant incorporation must be informed by the insight that knowledge of the migration process provides. Yet policy proposals often stem from a single focus on immigrant incorporation and migration effects on the host country while substituting assumptions for actual knowledge of the migration process.

The main organization collecting data through social surveys is the government, but non-governmental entities carry out surveys as well. In the United States, two government surveys commonly used for the study of immigrants are the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the American Community Survey (ACS). The CPS is a monthly survey of about 60,000 households and is the main source of information on the characteristics of the U.S. labor force. The ACS produces population data for small areas annually—an improvement over the 10-year gap between censuses. Assuming no significant omissions of specific subpopulation groups, both surveys produce statistically representative data for the United States. Representativeness is a useful statistical property for the study of immigrant incorporation, but it does not mean that the data are sufficient for the study of the migration process. An example of non-governmental large survey is the New Immigrant Survey (NIS), a nationally representative multi-cohort longitudinal study of new legal immigrants and their children, which samples its subjects from government administrative records on newly admitted lawful permanent residents (Jasso et al. 2000). The NIS has information on an impressive array of variables, many more than the CPS and the ACS, but while the latter lack information on legal status, the NIS does not have undocumented immigrants in its sample frame to begin with. The NIS was fielded in 2003, with follow-up interviews in 2007 and 2009.

In short, the major surveys available for the study of immigrants in the United States provide a wealth of data but are also affected by significant constraints. The importance of these constraints depends on the questions that guide the analysis. When those questions focus on the experience of immigrants in their host country, national surveys are likely to be useful, but when the questions pertain to migration as a process that contemplates the experience of people before and after migration, they are less helpful. The same can be said of a number of Mexican government-sponsored surveys that collect data on the context of emigration and the migration experience of those who have returned to Mexico. While U.S. surveys omit returned migrants, Mexican surveys omit those who remain in the United States. As forcefully argued by Beauchemin (2014), the migration process can be best studied with multi-sited data. As he notes, multi-sited data can be procured without multi-sited data collection, but the latter offers the advantage of recording data from the subjects of interest rather than from proxies. I turn now to the Mexican Migration Project (MMP), the most prominent and longest-running migration research project involving multinational data collection through surveys.

A binational approach to the study of Mexico–U.S. migration

The MMP began in 1982 with the goal of gathering a wealth of social and economic information on both sides of the border to better understand the complexities of the Mexico–U.S.

migration process. The first product of this endeavor was the volume *Return to Aztlan* (Massey et al. 1987), which reported findings from the first four MMP surveys in as many survey sites (called “communities” in MMP terminology) in Western Mexico. Data collection resumed in 1987 and, since then, surveys have been fielded every year. As of this writing, the MMP has produced data from surveys in 154 Mexican communities. Each Mexican survey is followed by interviews of members of that same community who have settled in the United States. These are located via chain referrals—or “snowball sampling”. Typically, each Mexican survey consists of 200 households from the selected site, with the goal of interviewing 20 migrants from the same community for a matching U.S. sample—a goal that has been at times impossible to meet. As of today, the MMP has compiled data on 162,293 individuals (16% of them with U.S. migration experience) and 25,658 households, of which 957 were located in the United States.

Over time, the MMP has diversified the location and size of the communities it samples so that it has achieved a more or less balanced coverage of the rural–urban continuum and of places both with and without a tradition of migration to the United States. However, the MMP communities are neither chosen at random nor part of a stratified sample design. Adding that the U.S. samples are drawn from contacts in a snowball fashion, it is clear that the MMP data cannot claim statistical representativeness. It might strike some as odd that the largest continuous survey data collection effort on Mexico–U.S. migration does not benefit from one of the two main strengths of survey research, but lack of statistical representativeness is inevitable in surveys that shed light on the migration process. This constraint is not unique to the MMP, but present in all bi- or multinational migration surveys.

Far from resembling a one-time definitive move, international migration is most often a nuanced process that involves multiple locations and transitions. Once international migration is understood as a process, migrant communities—such as those Mexican *barrios*, towns and *ranchos* where migration to the U.S. is commonplace—must be conceptualized as transnational communities. When only one border is involved, we can think of them as binational communities. Since each of these binational communities has a fixed location in the country of origin but diffuse locations in the country of destination, assembling a sampling frame is an insurmountable challenge and probabilistic sampling becomes logistically impossible or prohibitively expensive. Simply put, there is not, and in all likelihood there will never be, a statistically representative survey of transnational communities.

Data diversity cannot properly substitute for representative data. A large sample size cannot help either. Each MMP survey is only representative of the community where it was fielded—in fact, it is only representative of the survey site, which may be a subset of the community in question, especially when the community is a medium-sized or large city. When pooled together the MMP samples are not representative of Mexico. The MMP provides a set of weights to account for different sampling fractions in each survey site, but that is unrelated to statistical representativeness. Hence, the MMP data are not appropriate to produce national-level estimates. What the MMP survey is best for is to study migration as a social process and to do so from a binational perspective (Massey and Zenteno 2000). Statistical inference of population characteristics using the MMP is inappropriate, but data diversity and large sample size are very helpful for statistical modeling of social processes, a legitimate and customary use of the MMP data.

These features of the MMP are generalizable to all multinational migration surveys. The population of interest in all such surveys spans multiple sites and they all must include sampling at destination, for which a sampling frame cannot be assembled. It follows that statistical representativeness cannot be achieved, but this is not a fatal flaw. Since representativeness is needed for proper population inference, population inference will be bypassed. Instead, the analyst

should focus on statistical modeling of migration as a social process. Not ideal, but the best we can do given the constraints associated to a mobile population in a transnational community.

In addition to its binational approach, the other defining characteristic of the MMP challenges the second established strength of survey research that I mentioned at the outset: standardization.

Criticisms of survey standardization

The standardization principle is ingrained in the survey research ethos. As a prominent methodologist put it: “Standardized measurement that is consistent across all respondents ensures that comparable information is obtained about everyone who is described” (Fowler 2002: 4). This principle governs every aspect of the interview process, including the environment in which the interview takes place, the interviewer’s behavior throughout the interaction and the formulation of the questions:

Survey questions are supposed to be asked exactly the way they are written, with no variation or wording changes. Even small changes in the way questions are worded have been shown, in some instances, to have significant effects on the way questions are answered.

(Fowler 2002: 119)

The standardization principle has been criticized on validity grounds. Formulating the same question in exactly the same way to two different respondents does not guarantee that they will interpret the question in exactly the same way. The traditional approach to standardization seeks to eliminate any undue influence of the interviewer over the respondent by denying the interviewer any freedom to depart from the script, even when the respondent asks for clarifications. This “prohibition against interaction” intends to ensure reliability, but it potentially undermines the validity of survey data (Suchman and Jordan 1990). On the other hand, a closer look at interviewing as it takes place in leading survey laboratories in American universities would reveal that there are many interpretations of the standardization principle. In practice, interviewers and their supervisors adopt a more flexible approach than what standard methodology textbooks suggest (Viterna and Maynard 2002).

Experimental research suggests that validity may improve with some relaxation of standardization, such as a “personal” as opposed to a “formal” interviewing style (Dijkstra 1987), a flexible interviewing approach (Schober and Conrad 1997), or question clarification provided by the interviewer even when the respondent does not request it (Schober, Conrad, and Fricker 2004). After much debate and experimentation, survey methodologists now favor an approach that maximizes the advantages of structured interviews while allowing for some flexibility in interviewing techniques (Maynard et al. 2002).

Standardization and the ethnosurvey

The MMP method, known as the ethnosurvey, was conceived in the early 1980s, at a time when the standardized approach to interviewing was under sharp scrutiny (e.g. Cicourel 1974). The perennial concern over validity was augmented by the sensitive nature of some of the questions in the MMP survey, including those on illegal border crossings, legal status while in the U.S., and financial matters. In this context, the ethnosurvey did not reject the survey approach but sought to complement it with components of the ethnographic method. In combining the quantitative approach of social surveys with the qualitative approach of anthropological inquiry, the ethnosurvey sought to employ the strengths of each to minimize the weaknesses of the other (Massey 1987).

In the ethnosurvey, the scientific rigor of random sampling is applied in a small number of study sites to conduct a number of household interviews, typically 200, which pooled with interviews from other sites adds to a sizable data set, especially if the process continues over time. Community data gathered from local archival records supplement the interview data. The research team may add other elements of qualitative inquiry, such as in-depth interviews with key community informants. As mentioned earlier, the ethnosurvey acknowledges the binational nature of migrant communities by implementing parallel sampling, i.e. sampling the community of origin in Mexico and migrants from that community who have settled in the United States (Massey 1987).

When it comes to the interview interaction, the ethnosurvey “yields an interview that is informal, non-threatening, and natural, that allows the interviewer some discretion about how and when to ask sensitive questions; yet it produces a standard set of data” (Massey 1987: 1506). In practice, the interviewer does not have a questionnaire with scripted questions, but a set of forms that she/he needs to fill in. To correctly fill in each cell of these forms, “it is absolutely essential that interviewers understand clearly what information is being sought in each table of the questionnaire” (Massey et al. 1987: 13). Given this, considerably more time needs to be allotted for interviewer training in an ethnosurvey than in a mainstream social survey.

The ethnosurvey interview lies somewhere between the standard social survey interview and the qualitative in-depth one. Fundamental differences with standardized surveys include: (a) the survey instrument is not fully structured and the questions are not worded in advance; (b) instead of being banned from departures from the interview script, or even following any script at all, the interviewers have freedom to conduct the interview in the way they deem best; (c) instead of focusing on procedure, interviewer training is mostly concerned with securing the fieldworkers’ correct understanding of the information that needs to be captured. Yet for all these departures from standardization, the ethnosurvey is not an in-depth ethnographic interview, fundamentally because: (a) the interviewer does not have an interview guide, but an actual set of constructs—future variables in a data set—on which he/she needs to collect specific information, (b) the meaning of the constructs is defined in advance, i.e. there is no meaning-construction work to be shared between interviewer and respondent (as in Holstein and Gubrium 1995), (c) the data are to be used in a quantitative manner, which makes precision in the information collected a primary concern and recording/transcribing of interviews unnecessary. In short, instead of standardizing the interview interaction, leaving interpretation of scripted questions up to the respondent (Schober et al. 2004) the ethnosurvey standardizes the meaning of constructs and trains interviewers to understand them, leaving the development of the interview interaction up to the interviewer.

Other studies based on bi- or multinational approaches

A number of international migration studies have followed the MMP model. Riosmena (2016) mentions three elements of the ethnosurvey that can be found in all these studies. First, as discussed above, each survey at origin is representative at the local level. Second, a basic sociodemographic profile and information on the first and last international trip are collected for all household members. Finally, a retrospective life history is recorded for at least one member of the household, accounting for the fundamental events in the life of the respondent, including employment, migration, marriage, fertility, and property ownership.

The MMP co-directors, Douglas Massey and Jorge Durand, followed in their own footsteps with the Latin American Migration Project (LAMP), which carried out the first round of data collection in Puerto Rico in 1998. Since then, the LAMP has fielded surveys in the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Haiti, Peru, Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia,

and Ecuador. The surveys in Paraguay and Guatemala were made possible by association with other research projects, and all of the surveys benefited from collaboration with local scholars. As of the end of 2016, the LAMP has data on 57,433 individuals (9.6% of them migrants) who are members of 10,687 households in 63 communities throughout these countries. The surveys in Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica included parallel sampling with households interviewed in the United States. One of the Dominican surveys was also followed by a sample in Spain. Surveys in Argentina supplemented the Paraguay surveys and the Colombian surveys were followed by surveys of migrants from these communities in Spain. The rest of the LAMP surveys have not been binational.

Ethnosurvey-inspired research projects have also been carried out in other regions of the world. The Migrations between Africa and Europe (MAFE) study, which began its data collection in 2008, seeks to explore migration patterns from Senegal to France, Italy, and Spain; from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Belgium and the United Kingdom; and from Ghana to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The MAFE study design builds on the MMP and the Push and Pull Factors in International Migration project, mentioned below. It used randomization for the selection of the survey sites in the country of origin, subject to some constraints—for example, in most African countries the survey was only implemented in the capital city (MAFE 2010). For the surveys at destination, the MAFE study relied on a variety of sampling techniques. For example, for the Senegalese surveys, municipal population registries in Spain provided an ideal sampling frame, including both documented and undocumented migrants. In France and Italy, however, there were no registries available and the researchers had to resort to quota sampling, recruiting respondents through a variety of channels to minimize biases (Beauchemin and González-Ferrer 2010).

Another example of a survey research project methodologically linked to the MMP ethnosurvey is the Polish Migration Project (PMP), started in 2005, which explores migration from Poland to Germany (Massey, Kalter and Pren 2008). Unlike the MMP, however, in the PMP the interviews were conducted in an almost fully standardized fashion. In addition, the PMP secured a balance between migrants and nonmigrants by means of a stratified sample design. Finally, the PMP included follow-up interviews, allowing for prospective longitudinal data (Kalter and Will 2016), in addition to the retrospective life histories collected initially. There was a precedent of ethnosurvey with prospective longitudinal data: the Health and Migration Survey (HMS), set up to examine the health consequences of migration from Mexico to the United States, conducted surveys in six Mexican communities and two U.S. cities (San Diego and Houston) in four waves fielded between 1996 and 2002 (Kanaiaupuni et al. 2005). See Riosmena (2016) for a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of retrospective vs. prospective longitudinal data in migration surveys.

The Gender, Migration, and Health among Hispanics study introduced another variation over the MMP methodology. This project sampled Mexican immigrants at destination in Durham, North Carolina, first (Parrado, McQuiston, and Flippen 2005). The sample frames were produced by field teams that canvassed residential areas that were selected based on census information and reports from members of community-based organizations in order to maximize the likelihood of interviewing a significant number of immigrants from the target population. The interviews in the United States provided information on the communities of origin of the migrants, which the researchers used to subsequently field surveys in eight of them (Flippen and Parrado 2015). Thus, instead of selecting communities at origin and later locating migrants at destination, this study started with the interviews at destination and determined the communities of origin afterward. It must be noted that canvassing is not the only choice for sample-frame construction at destination. Other choices, such as census-based random sampling in targeted

blocks, a snowball sample using community groups to select the seeds, and an intercept–point survey collected at community gathering sites are reviewed in an experiment conducted by McKenzie and Mistiaen (2009).

Above I mentioned the Push and Pull Factors in International Migration project. This seminal project generated a large volume of research informing the dynamics of migration from Africa to Europe. It focused on the migration flows from Morocco and Senegal to Spain; Ghana and Egypt to Italy; and Turkey and Morocco to the Netherlands. The surveys in the African countries were fielded in 1996–1998. The selection of countries of origin secured the coverage of both long-established and more recent migration flows, a sizeable migration flow in each case, regional differentiation in socioeconomic development and access to migrants from these countries in Europe (Schoorl et al. 2000: 14). As in the case of the MMP and the MAFE, then, constraints on statistical representativeness were countered with an emphasis on diversity of study sites. Like the MMP, the study sampled respondents in both the country of origin and the country of destination, but there was no link between them. The reader seeking more background on early migration surveys in Europe should consult the Push and Pull Factors study 2000 report (Schoorl et al. 2000: 10–12). Groenewold and Bilsborrow (2008) offer a discussion of methodological considerations concerning the study.

Shifting to a different region of the world, the China International Migration Project (CIMP) is explicitly modeled after the MMP, including the multimethod approach, multiple survey sites and parallel sampling, multilevel data collection, and an ethnosurvey questionnaire applied to 200 households in each community (Liang et al. 2008). The surveys were fielded in eight towns of Fujian Province between October 2002 and March 2003. The U.S. interviews—all of them in New York City—of migrants from the selected towns were conducted in the summer of 2003. The CIMP's ethnosurvey questionnaire is very similar to the questionnaires employed by MMP and LAMP, with modifications appropriate to the Chinese case. For example, it includes questions on cadre status and limits detailed inquiry on migration trips to the U.S. sample—due to low levels of return migration, respondents in Fujian were typically not the migrants themselves but relatives who knew no more than very basic information about the trip. This low prevalence of return migration, in turn, led the researchers to conduct a higher proportion of interviews in the United States than is typical in MMP surveys: 25 to 40 interviews in the United States for every survey site in China—the typical MMP target is 20 U.S. interviews.

Finally, and most recently, the Bangladesh Environment and Migration Survey (BEMS) added South Asia to the roster of regions where variations of the ethnosurvey have been implemented. The study follows the MMP template closely, collecting data on international migration, but only from those who remained in, or returned to, the home communities. Budgetary constraints precluded interviews of migrants outside Bangladesh. The BEMS contains demographic and migration data on approximately 1,800 households in nine villages in the low-lying southwestern region of the country, and retrospective migration and employment histories from more than 3,000 residents of those households. The location makes this data set ideal for the study of environmentally induced migration (Donato et al. 2016).

Two recent developments

Most recently, two developments stand out. First, community-based participatory research (CBPR) has taken a prominent place in the study of immigrants in the U.S. through social surveys, especially when unauthorized immigrants are included in the sample frame. CBPR integrates members of the community under study into all stages of the research project in a mutually beneficial partnership with the researchers. From the point of view of the community,

this partnership secures that the new knowledge produced by the study is relevant and efficiently used to target community needs and improve its members' well-being. Thus, it is not surprising that CBPR has been mostly applied to health research—or, in the case of migration studies, research concerned with the health of migrant populations (Marcelli 2014). From the point of view of the researchers, the account from Parrado and colleagues serves as an apt example: “In our case, community involvement was of key importance to gain access to a difficult-to-reach population, develop a flexible survey instrument, increase data quality, and ground our findings within the cultural realities of Durham migrants” (Parrado et al. 2005: 211). In short, community involvement legitimizes both the research methods and the research results. This legitimacy addresses a fundamental problem raised by Josephson (1970), who reported significant resistance to a survey for a public health research project in a low-income neighborhood of New York City when community members questioned the intentions of the survey and trusted neither the institution responsible for it nor the researchers in charge. It is clear that CBPR can be particularly useful for survey research projects that need to reach undocumented immigrants, a population with a justified instinct to avoid disclosing sensitive information to strangers.

The Gender, Migration, and Health among Hispanics study, mentioned above, is an example of CBPR. So are the surveys of Brazilian and Dominican immigrants in the Boston metropolitan area conducted between June and September of 2007 (Marcelli et al. 2009a, 2009b). The study in North Carolina combined CBPR, targeted random sampling and parallel sampling in sending and receiving areas to sample a difficult-to-reach migrant population and study a sensitive issue: HIV risk. The similarities with the MMP approach are apparent. The novelty is the mix of the ethnosurvey with CBPR. There is a precedent worth reviewing in a survey of an “underground”, hard-to-reach population of largely uncertain documentation status: Haitian immigrants in Southern Florida (Stepick and Stepick 1990). The researchers spent about five years engaged in anthropological work in the community prior to their survey, an involvement that explains the high response rates to the survey. The researchers were able to obtain representative results by drawing random samples from a map of census blocks where the community was concentrated. They also hired Haitians to conduct the interviews—being trilingual was a crucial requirement for interviewers in this case—and the interviewers had considerable flexibility in the implementation of the survey instrument as a way to increase rapport as well as gain acceptance to do the interviews in the first place. Even though Stepick and Stepick did not explicitly call their study an “ethnosurvey” or a “community-based participatory study”, their research was indeed a combination of both.

CBPR rests on the assumption that members of the community under study can constructively participate in the research process, and that this participation will be effective by virtue of their being part of the community. Since they are part of the community, they presumably possess background knowledge that should be useful for the study, they would know how to relate to the research subjects, and so on. Their proximity to the survey setting should be valuable. This thinking is consistent with results from an experiment reported by Sana and Weinreb (2008), who formulated the following question: given survey errors, specifically data inconsistencies, who is best suited to fix them? Using carefully altered MMP data in an experiment involving MMP personnel and data users, they showed evidence that fieldworkers have an advantage over those who have never been to the field, even when the latter were regular users of the MMP data. They concluded that field experience gives fieldworkers an instinctual edge that results from their familiarity with the setting and culture where the data were collected. Thus, solving inconsistencies is not simply a matter of common sense.

The evidence then points to likely data quality gains that arise from closer proximity of the interviewers to the survey setting—which implies closer proximity, or less social distance,

between the interviewer and the respondent. While this expectation would strike many as commonsense, it questions a norm established since the early development of survey research. The “stranger-interviewer norm” (Sana, Stecklov, and Weinreb 2016) posits that, in order to collect unbiased and valid data, the interviewer must have no prior social relationship with the respondent. CBPR practice questions this norm: the involvement of community members in the survey process implies closer proximity between interviewers and respondents than condoned by the stranger-interviewer norm, even if a direct relationship between the interviewer and the respondent is absent. The same can be said of the popular practice of matching interviewers and respondents along key demographic attributes such as gender, race, or ethnicity. There is an undeniable tension between a long-established norm that dictates that interviewers must be strangers, and the practice of employing interviewers who stand closer and closer to the respondent in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, community membership, or social distance defined in a variety of ways.

Social surveys, including the MMP ethnosurvey, have traditionally assumed that more valid data are collected when there is no prior relationship between interviewer and respondent. In no CBPR survey of which I am aware did the researchers allow the interviewers to interview people they directly knew, even though the interviewer was someone from the same community as the respondent—which in the case of the Durham and Boston surveys meant someone from the same ethnic group, who spoke the same language, and lived nearby. Working with data from a (non-migration) survey in Kenya where local interviewers were used and in which a significant number of interviews accidentally violated the stranger-interviewer norm, Weinreb (2006) found that validity seemed to be improved, and social desirability bias reduced, in interviews in which the interviewer was the ultimate insider: namely, when the interviewer and respondent were not just from the same community, but actually knew each other prior to the interview. As he eloquently argues,

the basic proposition that respondents are more honest with strangers than with insiders (. . .) draws on assumptions about microsocial relations that at best are inconsistent with and at worst antithetical to a large body of social theory at the micro level.

(Weinreb 2006: 1016)

In short, everything we believe we know about trust, truth-telling, intimacy and deception suggests that people are more likely to practice the first three of these with those whom they know well, and more likely to resort to the latter with those whom they do not know.

In the summer of 2010, Alexander Weinreb, Guy Stecklov, and I set out to test the validity of the stranger-interviewer norm by means of a systematic, controlled experiment fielded in a town in the Dominican Republic (Weinreb, Sana, and Stecklov 2018). Our survey instrument was a composite of typical household surveys but our stratified and random sample design was unique. We manipulated the assignment of interviewers to generate three types of interviews: outsider interviews (where the interviewer was from out of town), local-stranger interviews (where the interviewer was local but there was no prior acquaintance between interviewer and respondent), and insider interviews (where the interviewer and respondent knew each other prior to the interview). Empirical results indicate that insider interviewers were more successful at eliciting greater respondent effort and more honesty than outsider interviewers. They also suggest that insider interviewers collected more accurate responses to questions that are sensitive to the degree of trust between interviewer and respondent.

Of particular interest here are our findings concerning attitudes toward three stigmatized groups: gays and lesbians, sex workers, and Haitian immigrants. In general, respondents reported less prejudiced attitudes when interviewed by outsiders, who were all from the capital city of

Santo Domingo and could be seen as representing progress and modern values. If respondents do have a tendency toward ingratiation with the interviewer (Back and Gergen 1963), then it is possible that they were presenting themselves in a more cosmopolitan, tolerant light, producing downward-biased estimates of prejudice. This finding has clear implications for survey research that attempts to measure attitudes toward immigrants, in particular the undocumented.

Most of the analyses that we conducted had to rely on indirect measures such as the likely direction of social desirability bias, but we were able to directly validate answers to up to 18 questions per respondent by checking official documents in their possession (Sana et al. 2016). Contrary to expectations derived from the stranger-interviewer norm, respondents were more reluctant to show the documents needed for validation when the interviewer was an outsider. When the validation documents were provided, we found no difference in accuracy by type of interviewer. A separate analysis also showed no differences by type of interviewer when ten sensitive questions, including one on unauthorized migration to the U.S., were asked by means of a self-administered questionnaire, but prior familiarity between interviewer and respondent did lead to lower nonresponse rates to those questions (Rodríguez, Sana, and Sisk 2015).

Taken together, these empirical results seem to weaken the foundational assumptions of the stranger-interviewer norm considerably. Once one opens the door to revisiting the quality of data gathered by strangers, some long-established empirical patterns may come into question. For example, it has long been accepted that prejudice diminishes with education (Hyman and Wright 1979), but in our data, statistical modeling of prejudice as a function of education shows results that are conditional on interviewer-respondent familiarity. As expected, those interviewed by outsiders report less prejudice with increased education. However, prejudice increases with education in insider interviews, and shows no variation by education level in local-stranger interviews. In a different analysis using the same data, we show that the long-established high sterilization rates in the Dominican Republic could be mostly a result of the data having been gathered by stranger-interviewers (Stecklov, Weinreb, and Sana 2015). In sum, survey researchers might want to consider not just establishing productive partnerships with local communities, as recommended by the CBPR approach, but also hiring members of the community as interviewers without constraining them to interview only people they do not know.

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