Gender Distrust and Intimate Unions among Low-Income Hispanic and African-American Women

Abstract

This article investigates levels of generalized distrust of men among low-income non-Hispanic African American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican and non-Hispanic White women in a three-city survey. The results reveal substantial variation. Hispanics’ overall levels of distrust are found to be higher than levels for either African Americans or Whites. Among Hispanics, however, Dominicans are the most distrusting group followed by Puerto Ricans, whereas Mexicans report levels of distrust that are comparable to those of non-Hispanic African Americans and non-Hispanic Whites. Married women are less distrusting than cohabiting women, who in turn are less distrusting than noncohabiting women. Nevertheless, distrust is not a significant predictor of a woman’s total number of lifetime marital and cohabiting relationships, and distrust only marginally predicts a woman’s desire to be in a steady relationship. We suggest that studies of trust in this population should focus more on attitudes displayed in specific encounters than on overall, generalized attitudes about gender distrust.

The full article is available at jfi.sagepub.com, Journal of Family Issues. 31 (4): 475-498.