Surveying Cultural & Linguistic Minorities

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Overview

- What are cultural and linguistic minorities?
- What are hard-to-reach (H2R) minorities?
- Challenges and potential solutions
- Research outlook
Minority Populations

• Various governmental definitions
  – e.g., United Nations
• But these have weaknesses
• Our definition of a minority:

  A group of residents in a nation state, which is a distinct subgroup of that state’s resident population. It is in a non-dominant position, endowed with cultural or linguistic characteristics that differ from other groups. The subgroup has an internal cohesion based on its distinct characteristics.
Linguistic Minorities

• Using or preferring a language other than the majority or dominant language

• 6,909 known living languages (Lewis 2009)
  – 193 internationally recognized sovereign states
  – Majority of languages are minority languages
Linguistic Minorities

• Other considerations
  – Language proficiency and diversity
  – Immigrant linguistic minorities
  – Linguistic isolation
Cultural Minorities

• Culture is the realm of values and value systems
  – Social theory definition (Mohler 1978; Parsons 1991)
  – e.g., members of a religious denomination
• May or may not be linguistically different
• Defined by differences perceived by majority and the minority itself
  – Different values and beliefs
  – e.g., religion, customs, social behavior
H2R Minorities

• Groups numerically a minority, but equal or dominant societal role are not included
  – e.g., German, French, and Italian linguistic groups in Switzerland

• Non-dominant position in the cultural and/or linguistic fabric of the larger social unit
  – Lower social status
  – Access to fewer resources (e.g., social capital)
  – Possible stigma and exclusion
### H2R Minorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| Immigrant Populations           | • Spanish-speaking immigrants (US)  
                               • Turkish immigrants (Germany)                                       |
| Native/Indigenous Populations   | • American Indians (US)  
                               • First Nations (Canada)  
                               • Aborigines (Australia)                                              |
| Culturally Distinct Groups      | • Basques and Catalans in Spain  
                               • Travellers (UK)                                                      |
| Tribal or Ethnic Groups         | • Groups in highly linguistically diverse countries (India, many African countries) |
H2R Systematic Literature Review

- Systematic search of databases of the academic literature
- Largely limited to western and industrialized context
- Supplemented with own experiences and those of colleagues
Survey Research

Challenges
- Rare
- Widely dispersed
- Mobile
- Resist contact
- Language barriers
- Other stigma

Hard to
- Define
- Identify
- Access
- Create instruments

Source: Cross-cultural survey guidelines: http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/
Questionnaire Design (1)

• Follow best practices for general questionnaire development
• Be aware of how different groups may differ systematically in how questions are understood and answered
Questionnaire Design (2)

• Adaptation (Harkness et al. 2010)
  – Applies only to studies with source questionnaires
  – Change content, format, response options, and visual presentation to fit new population
  – Make “culturally relevant”
    • e.g., local political system, religious beliefs system

• Translation
  – Use TRAPD translation procedure
  – Do not use “on the fly translation”
Questionnaire Design (3)

• Culture, cognition, and response
  – Individualist vs. collectivist (Uskul & Oyserman 2006; Schwarz et al. 2010; Uskul et al. 2010)
    • Beware of priming effects
  – Comprehension stage
    • Errors from ambiguity (inherent, translation, adaptation)
    • Culturally-based pragmatic meaning – e.g. what is means “to be clear” (Uskul & Oyserman 2006)
Questionnaire Design (4)

• Culture, cognition, and response
  – Retrieval stage
    • Standard retrieval errors
      – e.g. autobiographical memories
    • Individualist – Collectivist
      – Individualist: characteristics and experiences prominent
      – Collectivist: social relations and roles prominent
      – Culturally prominent details may be more easily recalled or repressed
Questionnaire Design (5)

• Culture, cognition, and response
  – Judgment and estimation
    • Cultural differences in need to estimate, the influence of response scales, and use of subjective theories
    • Collectivist: emphasis on “fitting in”; rely less on estimation or cues from response scales
Questionnaire Design (6)

• Culture, cognition, and response
  – Reporting
    • Language barriers may prevent response to open-ended questions
    • Cultural variation in favorable self-presentation
      – Individualist: focus on positive self-image
      – Collectivist: focus on harmonious relationships, modesty, and “fitting in”
    • Cultural variation on what are sensitive topics
  – More empirical research needed
Other/Complementary Methods

• Qualitative studies
  – Case studies, focus groups, in-depth interviews, ethnographies
  – Not representative data

• Mixed-methods research
  – Combine quantitative (surveys) and qualitative methods

• Community-based methods
  – Collaborating service providers or community groups of the target population
  – Help gain access, overcome trust, identify target population, and develop appropriate instruments and protocols
Outlook

• Documentation of methods often poor
  – Substantive results currently focus, methods secondary
  – Good methods for quality data
  – Good documentation to assess data quality and what methods work
  – Hard to replicate studies due to lack of documentation (H2R)

• Document survey lifecycle

• Collect metadata and paradata
  – Study documentation, process data (e.g., key strokes)
Thanks!
Pretesting

• Essential for identifying problems
  – Evaluate questionnaire design, adaptation, and translation

• Pilot studies, cognitive interviews, focus groups, expert reviews, behavior coding, etc. (Caspar & Peytcheva 2011)

• But groups may respond differently to pretesting (Pan et al. 2010)

• More research needed
Data Collection

- Particularly challenging with H2R
- Nonresponse and measurement errors
- Choose mode carefully
  - CATI – phone density (landline vs. mobile)
  - Web/mail – literacy prevent some modes (Canales et al. 1995)
  - Unfamiliarity issues
    - Interviewers can motivate participation, handle inquiries, and assuage concerns of respondents (De Leeuw 2008)
- Cultural-media to recruit and publicize research (Han et al. 2007)
- Group input in creating recruitment materials
- Interviewers - ethnically or culturally appropriate interviewers (Greenfields 2012; Han et al. 2007; Garter 2003)
Ethics

• Proper human rights issues
  – IRB review translations

• Special permissions
  – legal and cultural (e.g., tribal advisory boards) (Lavelle et al. 2009)

• Privacy settings
  – Recognize considerations of privacy varies by culture (Pennell et al. 2010)