

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

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



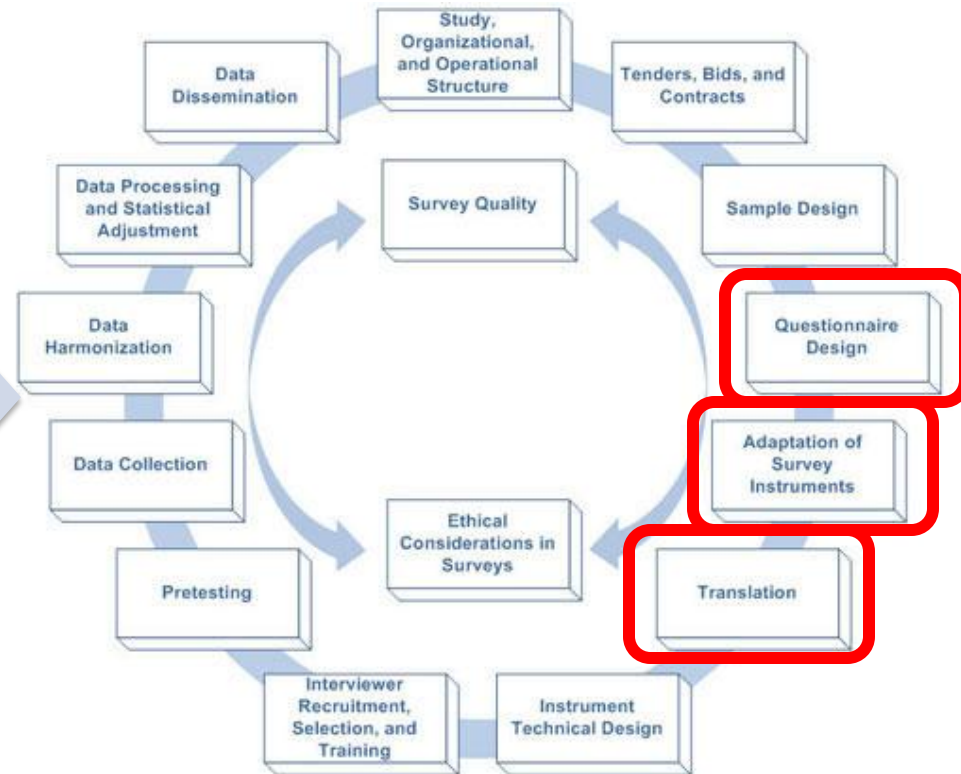
Survey Research

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)



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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)

