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Taking Stock:
Pretesting in Comparative Contexts

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Cross-cultural Survey Guidelines for Pretesting

- Definition: "…a series of activities designed to evaluate…

  - "a survey instrument's capacity to collect the desired data

  - "the capabilities of the selected mode of data collection

  - "and/or the overall adequacy of the field procedures"

- Common language

  - **Pretest**, field test, **pilot**, dress rehearsal

- List of tools

  - Cognitive tests, behavior coding, IRT, etc.

- References

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A Benchmark

- Methods for Testing and Evaluating Survey Questionnaires (Presser et al, ed, 2002)

- No definition

- No common terms

- Cognitive interviewing appraisal (Willis)

- Description of cross-cultural problems (Smith), translation agenda (Harkness)

Progress

- Translation

- Cognitive interviewing

- Vignettes

- Paradata

- Analysis

- Documentation?

Lack of Progress

- Experiments

- Mode

- Technology

- Dissemination ?

Barely Mentioned

- Usability testing

- Prototyping

- Scenario testing

- Regression testing

- Database testing

- Life cycle ?

Translation as a Metaphor for Comparative Methods

- A translation can never exceed the quality of a source document, but it can reveal problems with the source.

- Comparative pretesting methods cannot exceed the quality of pretesting in a monolingual/monocultural environment, but it can reveal problems with the basic methods.

Toward a "Unified Theory" of Pretesting

- Where we started

- Where we are now

- Where we hope to go

- Quality Assessment
  - "Fitness for use"

- Computer Systems Development
  - Risk assessment and management

"…no expert can write a perfect questionnaire…

"If you don't have the resources to pilot-test your questionnaire, don't do the study."

Sudman & Bradburn, 1982

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