

Error Tradeoffs in Cross-National and Comparative Surveys: Questionnaire Design from a Total Survey Quality Perspective

Gordon Willis, Ph.D.
Applied Research Program
Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences
National Cancer Institute
Willisg@mail.nih.gov

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Competing Perspectives on Error in Comparative Surveys

1) *Questionnaire Response Error orientation:*

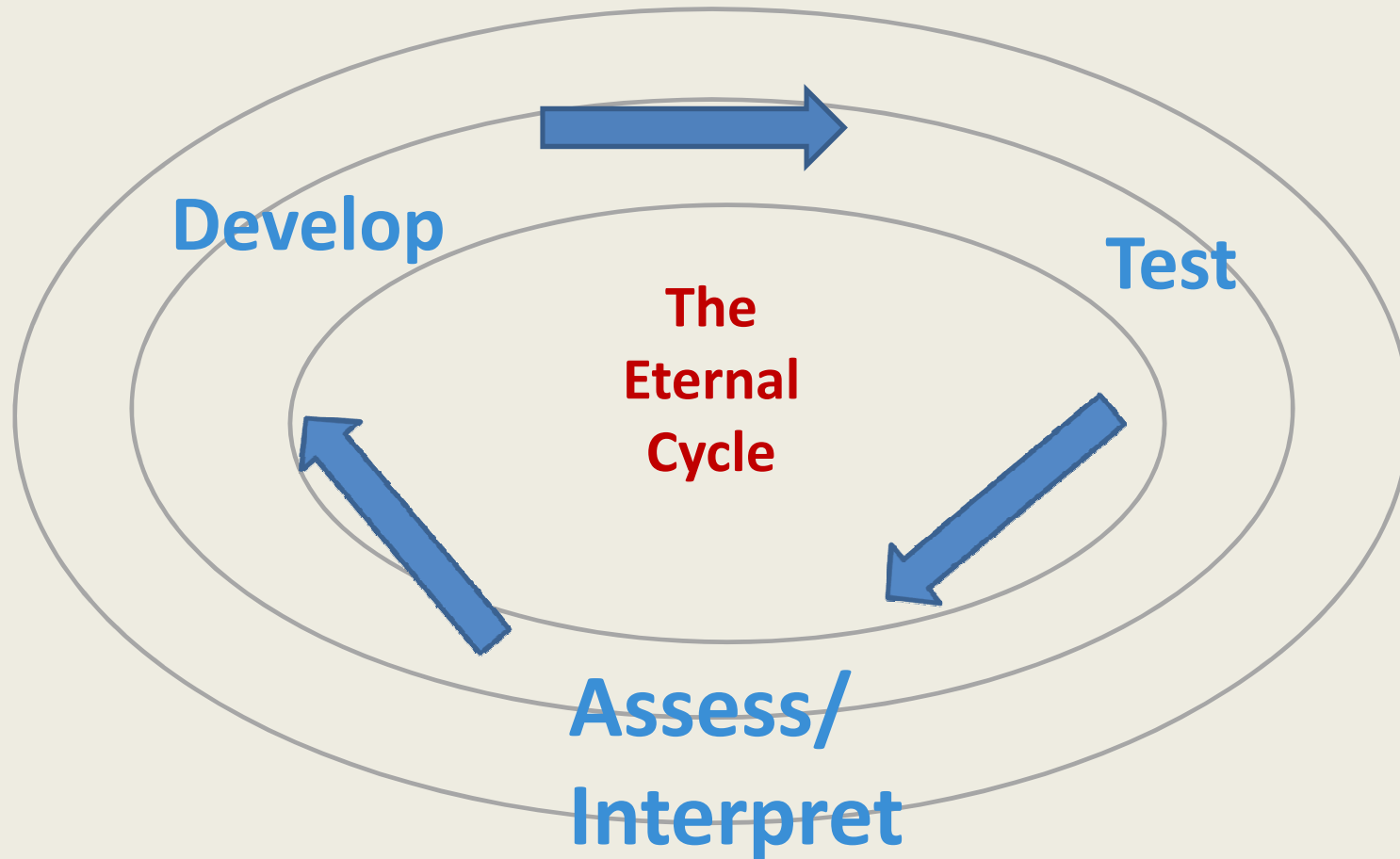
- **Cross-Cultural Comparability:** (Mohler & Johnson, 2010, Ch 2)
- **Lyberg & Stukel (2010, Ch 13):**

Considerable resources must be allocated to translation and adaptation of survey materials, including the questionnaire

- **Willis, Newsome, Levin, Kudela, Shariff-Marco & Breen (2012, CSDI/DC): CHIS Discrimination Module**
 - Heroic efforts to develop multicultural instrument on self-reported racial/ethnic discrimination
 - State-of-the-art pretesting: Cog interviewing, behavior coding, psychometric /IRT analysis, mixed-methods approach
 - ***BUT: Three years later, we're still not ready for prime time (fielding) ...***
 - Is this the best use of limited resources?



Our Challenge: Orbital Model of Instrument Development... Are we ever done?



Perspectives on Error in Comparative Surveys

(2) Total Survey Quality (TSQ) orientation:

Balance a number of components of quality-



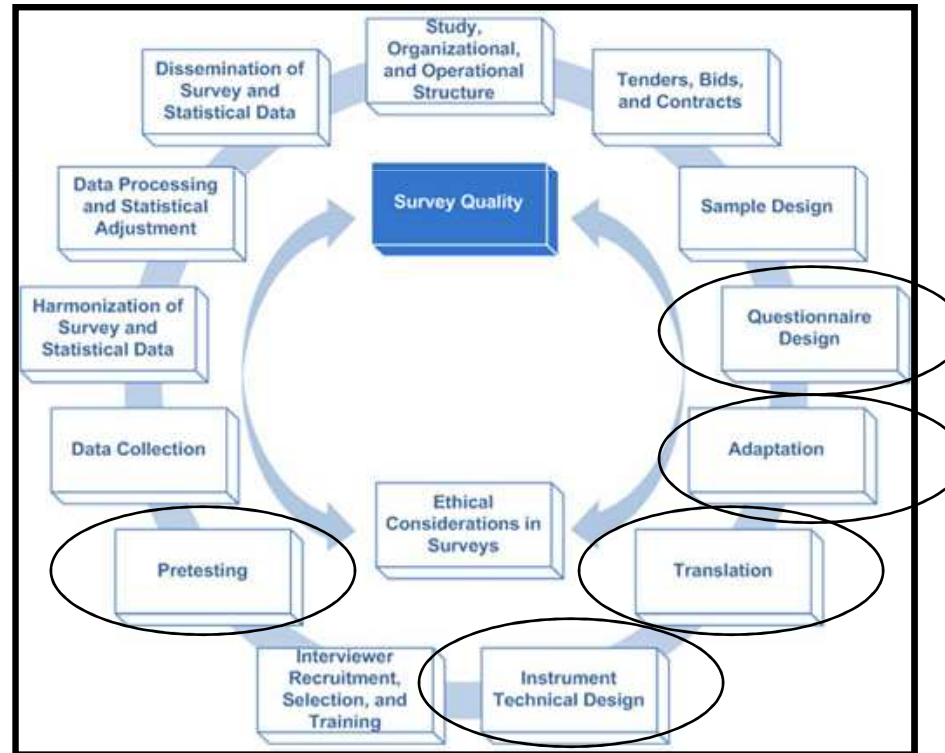
- **Miller (CSDI):** Rather than perfecting questionnaire through pretesting, focus on quality assessment
 - Groves: ‘Measurer’ rather than ‘Reducer’
- **Consider timeliness, analyzability, “fitness for use” ...**
- **Lyberg & Stukel (2010):**
 - “So far, there has been very little research associated with controlling the quality in cross-national surveys. One possible explanation is that most resources have gone toward developing concepts, survey materials and in targeting equivalence”
- ***ITSEW provides a forum for considering how to resolve this tension***



What components of the survey process should we be balancing?

U Michigan, Cross-Cultural Survey Guidelines (2010):
<http://ccsq.isr.umich.edu/quality.cfm>

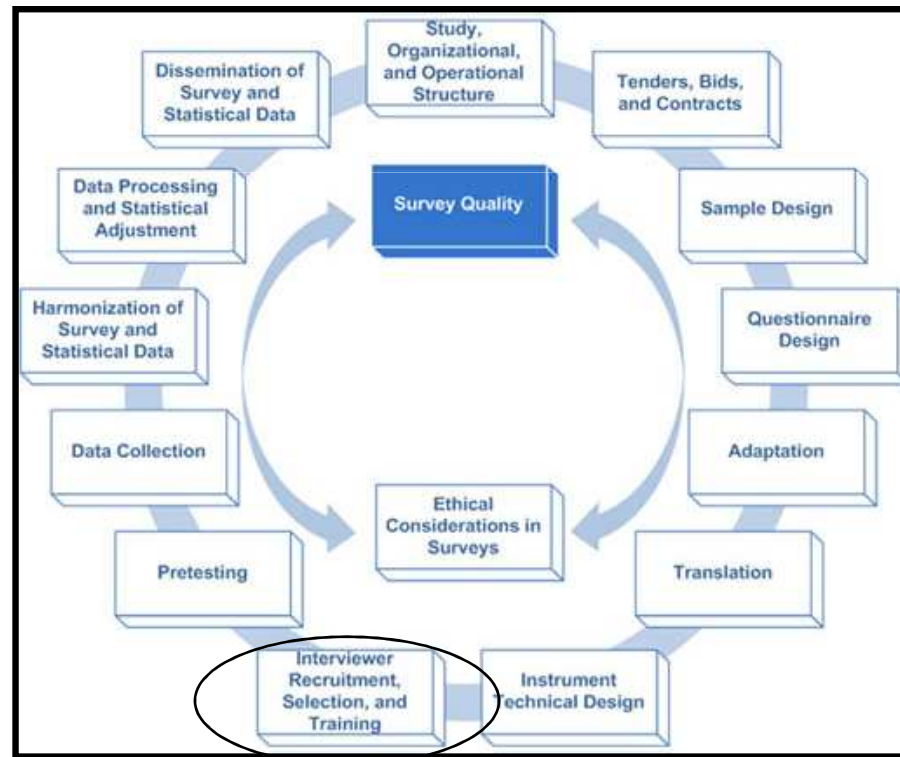
- Includes a number of components of quality:



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- Includes a number of components of quality:



Interviewer selection, training, and monitoring

For Interviewer-Administration (IAQ):

Respondent Behavior = Instrument X Interviewer

Cleland (1996): “The quality of the demographic data depends more on the skills, training, and supervision of the field staff than on the design of the data instrument.”

Age
Gender
Race
Language proficiency
Training

- **CHIS DM: We have not grappled with this factor**
- **We might increase/understand quality through:**
 - *Matching Respondent/Interviewer (Reduction)*
 - *Random assignment or R to I (Measurement)*
 - *Record Interviewer characteristics (Measurement)*

Challenges in Cross-National Data Collection

Pennell, Harkness, Levenstein, & Quaglia, 2010, Ch 15

“The current practice in many cross-national studies is to try to standardize mode across locations, even if this results in sub-optimal choices for some locations” (p. 276)

Ralph Waldo Emerson: “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds”

Local accommodation can be useful

- Yuling Pan (US Census):

Cultural accommodation of interviewer approach:

Obtaining respondent cooperation may differ for Chinese

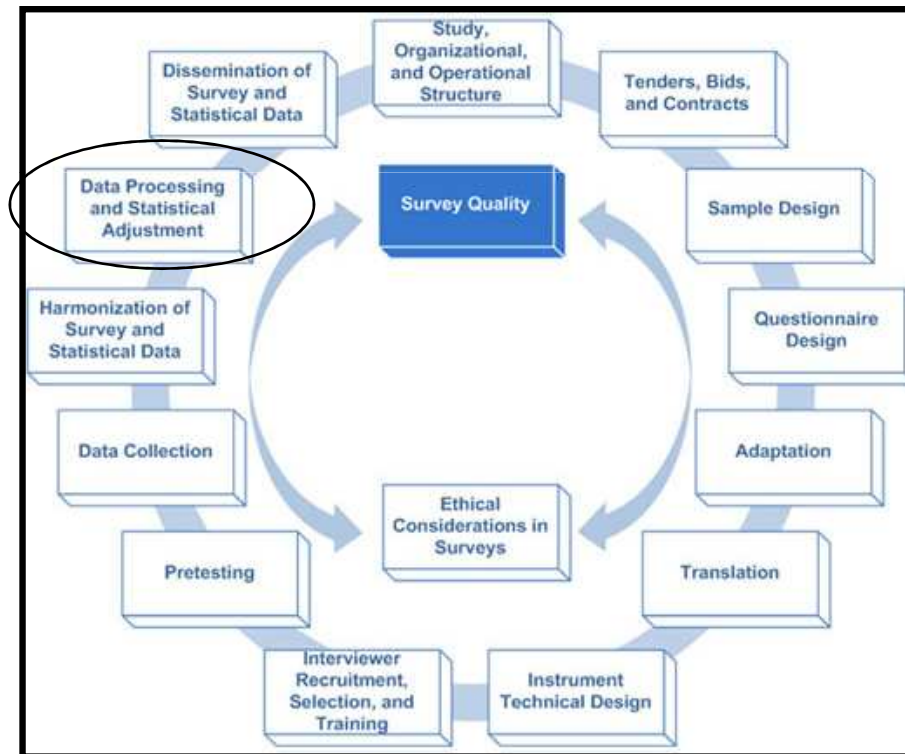
CHIS DM:

*Perfecting under telephone-based mode may be too restrictive
Consider developing questionnaire more generally for multiple modes?*

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- Includes a number of components of quality:



Issues in Data Processing

Howell, 2010: Cross-National Data Cleaning (Ch 30)

“Data cleaning and quality checks do not end with the vetting of the individual national files.”

- ***Look for inconsistency in use of coding systems***

Especially for open-ended questions

- ***Look for outliers***

e.g.: Failure to code Body Mass Index = 99 → missing



Revisiting CSDI 2012

Bob Tortora – Gallup (host)

- Described Gallup's use of a procedure that involved...
Back-Translation
- He received considerable criticism from attendees for this heresy!



Gallup World Poll (Tortora, Srinivasan, & Esipova, 2010, Chapter 31):

- Describes comprehensive survey development process
- Careful attention to multiple stages of survey, *balance*

My conclusion: Maybe we should consider the whole picture, rather than focusing on particular 'red flags' in an isolated manner

See the whole process through!



Source:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/7702913.stm