# Dissertation Defense

## Interview Privacy and Social Conformity Effects on Socially Desirable Reporting Behavior: Importance of Cultural, Individual, Question, Design and Implementation Factors

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Socially desirable reporting is potentially a major source of measurement error in surveys. It is a response behavior exhibited by respondents when they perceive the information they are requested to provide as sensitive to disclose. The literature investigates many of the factors that lead respondents to perceive survey responses as sensitive to disclose, but lacks a framework that integrates these factors. We present a framework that displays how these factors relate to one another and lead to socially desirable response behavior. We also demonstrate the importance of integrating these factors by specifically investigating the respondent's cultural background, the respondent's need for social conformity, interview privacy, and their effect on socially desirable reporting.

We present three studies on these factors. The first and second studies focus on predictors of interview privacy and its effect on socially desirable response behavior. Findings from the first study reveal a significant variation across cultures and across interviewers in establishing a private interview setting. A country's wealth, level of individualism, and masculinity significantly affect the privacy setting of the interview, either directly or by interacting with respondent and third party-level characteristics. The second study demonstrates that third-party presence during the interview interacts with the respondent's need for social conformity and his or her cultural background to either decrease or increase the odds of reporting undesirable or desirable outcomes. Ignoring such interaction effects could result in misleading conclusions about third-party presence influences on reporting sensitive information. Study three generates a topic-specific measure of social conformity that integrates both respondent-level and question-level parameters using mixed Rasch models. It demonstrates the importance of using respondent-level topic-specific measures of social conformity rather than a one-time measure, as social conformity could be affected by external stimuli ( such as the questions themselves) that vary across the course of the interview. We conclude by discussing design implications for interview privacy measures, interviewer training, and measures of social conformity, along with recommendations for further research. We also discuss the possible use of mixed models as the backbone for adaptive measurement tools to capture in real time the respondent's activated need for social conformity and ultimately reduce measurement error.