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**Keynote title**

Response distortions in self-reported and other-reported measures: Is there light at the end of the tunnel?

**Presenter**

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**Abstract**

Asking people to assess themselves or others on a set of psychological characteristics is by far the most popular method of gathering data in our field. We use this method either because it is the cheapest, or the best there currently exists for measuring the target characteristic. However, respondent-reported data are commonly affected by conscious and unconscious response distortions. Examples include individual styles in using rating options, inattention or cognitive difficulties in responding to reversed items, tendency to present self in positive light, halo effects, distortions driven by political pressures etc. The extent to which respondents engage in such behaviors varies, and if not controlled, the biases alter the true ordering of respondents on traits of interest. Response distortions, therefore, should concern everyone who uses respondent-reported measures.

This talk provides an overview of research on biasing factors evoked by responding to questionnaire items with different features and in different contexts, discussing the evolution of views on the problem. I will discuss the emerging methods of statistical control, which explicitly incorporate biases in the models of item-level response processes (e.g. Böckenholt, 2012; Johnson & Bolt, 2010). These methods offer a great promise as well as natural limitations in their applicability and scope. Alternatives to statistical control include prevention, and there have been advances in this area too. Special response formats are one of the bias prevention methods, with the forced-choice format being particularly promising. During the past 10-15 years we have acquired methodology that enables modelling forced-choice data. This enables comparing the effectiveness in bias control of the two methods – statistical control versus prevention. I will report latest findings in this regard and share some of my own views and recommendations for the use of these methods depending on the context and stakes of assessments.

I will argue that despite some significant progress, we are still far off bias-proof assessments. In order to create a breakthrough in this area, we must invest in research of test taker cognitions, mixing qualitative and quantitative methods. Few available studies of test taker behavior (e.g. Kuncel & Tellegen, 2009; Robie, Brown, & Beaty, 2007) show that the test takers have conflicting motives, and complex cognitions when it comes to sitting our assessments. Only when we understand these factors, can we hope to create better assessments.