



Third-party presence in multi- national interviews: Determinants and implications in SHARE

Galit Gordoni, Howard Litwin and Noam Damri

Israel Gerontological Data Center

The Hebrew University, Israel

Objectives

The present paper focuses on:

- Privacy violation in interviewer administered face-to-face surveys among elderly respondents
- Predictors of third-person presence
- Implications of non-privacy for reporting of sensitive subjective questions

Introduction

- Privacy during the interview is a common requirement in interviewer administered face-to-face surveys that deal with sensitive matters (Mneimneh, et al., 2015; Zip and Toth 2002)
- Sensitive questions can decrease a respondent's willingness to give reliable and valid responses due to the perceived negative implications of true reporting in the presence of a third-person
- The design requirement for privacy is intended, therefore, to prevent misreporting because others were present in the interview (Tourangeau and Yan 2007)

Privacy violation – Empirical trends

- Privacy during the interview is dependent on the willingness of household members to adhere to this request
- Cross-survey comparisons show that despite the design requirement for privacy, there is often significant presence of third-person during the interview:
 - National Election Studies in the U.S. 1966 - 1982: presence ranged from 45 to 57 percent
(Smith 1997)
 - British Household Panel Study –first wave in 1991: presence varied between 40–50 percent
(Zipp and Toth 2002)
 - 1999 Living in Ireland Survey: average of 49 percent
(Cantillon and Newman 2006)

Privacy violation and response

- Type of relationship that exists between the respondent and the third-person are assumed to effect responding when the relationship is significant to the respondent
- In case of meaningful relationship, the respondents might change their answers in order to present a more desirable image in the presence of the third-person

(Aquilino, 1997; Pollner and Adams, 1997, Mneimneh, et al., 2015)

- Thus, negative implications of third-person presence in privacy-designed interviews, on validity of sensitive information, is suspected

Age and third-person presence in privacy-designed interviews

- In different interview contexts, age of respondents is associated with third-person presence, with older respondents being more likely to be interviewed in the presence of a third-person, mainly the spouse

(Aquilino 1993; Mneimneh 2012)

- A growing body of research on the characteristics of the elderly population, rely on major research infrastructures, such as HRS, ELSA and SHARE
- Rising awareness of potential embarrassment or sanctions for the elderly respondents due to privacy violation, lacks empirical tests on third-person presence in the privacy-designed interview:
 - determinants
 - implications for responding among the elderly

Age vulnerability and social desirability responding

- Social desirability responding is assumed in interviews with vulnerable older persons (Boeije, 2004)
- Implications of third-person presence in the interview, as a potential source of fear of disclosure and trigger for social desirability responding is studied mainly in qualitative studies and among specific disabled populations (Boeije 2004; Caldwell, 2013)

Age vulnerability and social desirability responding

lack of knowledge on:

- Determinants of third-person presence in large scale surveys among older population
- Implications for responding to sensitive questions

is all the more significant due to the potential vulnerability of older adults to the effects of dependency relations in the household which come into play during the interview

Vulnerability of elderly respondents in the survey interview

- Decrease in health and social resources might limit one's independence in daily functioning and social involvement
- Lacking resources and being dependent on others in basic tasks, may result in higher concerns of negative implications of self-disclosure, such as embarrassment or harm from the third-person with whom one continues to be dependent after participation in the interview. Respondents may not wish to jeopardize the delicate balance of their existing relations.

Potential Implication of third-person presence -
increased risk of biased reporting

Study aims

- To examine whether the likelihood of third-person presence in the interview differ by respondents' age, health status, social resources and survey participation status
- To clarify whether third-person presence effects responding to sensitive measures which are central in contemporary research on the aging population

Hypotheses

- **H1. Likelihood of third-person presence will be higher among:**
 - Older respondents
 - Respondents with lower health status
 - Respondents with lower social resources
 - New participants in the longitudinal survey.
- ***H2. Lower depressive symptoms will be reported when a third-person is present, quality of life and life satisfaction will be reported as higher.***
- **H3: Interaction between respondent's vulnerability level and third-person presence: Reporting differences on subjective well-being due to third-person presence are expected to be larger among:**
 - oldest-old respondents (aged 80 and older, compared to those aged 65-79)
 - respondents with more mobility limitations
 - respondents with lower cognitive ability



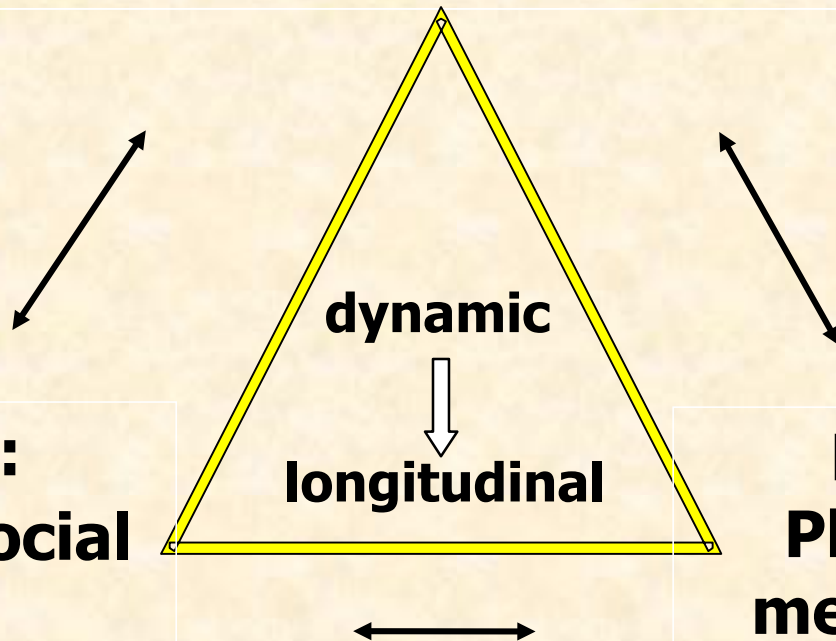
The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) collects data about Europeans aged 50 and older in order to shed light on population aging.

The main innovation of the SHARE project lies in its multidimensional design which combines

- **interdisciplinarity**
- **cross-national comparability**
- **longitudinality.**

The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe

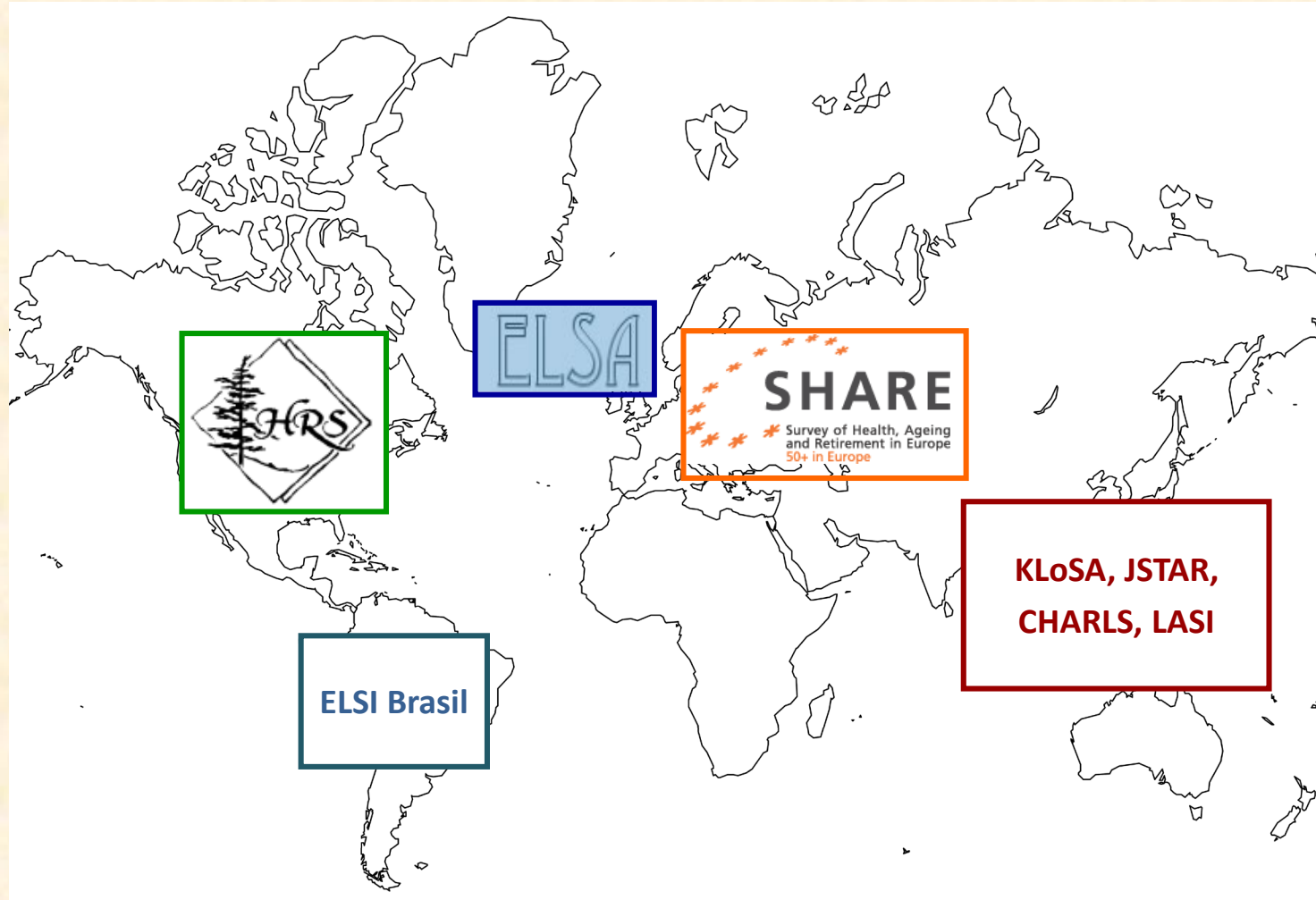
Economics: Income, wealth, pensions



**Sociology:
Family and social
support**

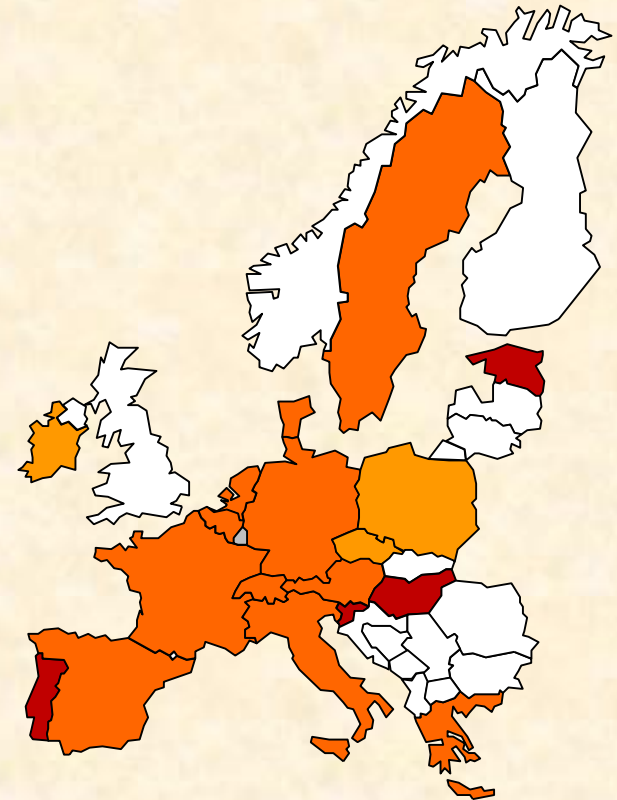
**Medicine:
Physical and
mental health,
longevity**

Co-operation: a global laboratory



SHARE in the field

- ▶ **Wave 1, 2004-05**
SE, DK, NL, DE, BE, FR, CH, AT, ES, IT, GR
- ▶ **Wave 2, 2006-07**
+ (IE), CZ, PL, IL
- ▶ **Wave 3, 2008-09**
Retrospective life histories
- ▶ **Wave 4, 2010-11**
+ PT, SI, HU, EE / - GR
- ▶ **Wave 5, 2013 + LU (- HU, PT, GR)**
- ▶ **Wave 6, 2015 + HR**
- ▶ **Wave 7, 2015 All 28 EU countries, CH and IL**



220,000 Interviews from 19 countries released!



Method

Using data on respondents aged 65 and older from the 5th wave of SHARE, we predict the likelihood of bystander and test the effect of such presence on reporting of three well-being measures:

- Depression
- CASP
- Life satisfaction

Privacy violation was measured by two items at the end of each personal interview:

Presence of third-person and role-relation of third-person/s to respondent:

" Were any third persons, except proxy respondent, present during (parts of) the interview with [--Respondent Name--]?"

1. Nobody
2. Spouse or partner
3. Parent or parents
4. Child or children
5. Other relatives
6. Other persons

In the multivariate analysis, the variable was recoded into a dummy variable, with any third-person presence coded 1.

EURO-D scale (Prince et al. 1999)

An inventory of 12 symptoms in the last month:

Depression

Pessimism

Suicidality

Guilt

Trouble sleeping

Loss of interest

Irritability

Change in appetite

Fatigue

Difficulty of concentration

No enjoyment

Tearfulness

The total score was the sum of items, each coded as 1 when the symptom was present (range=0-12).

***Quality of life* was obtained from the CASP-12**

A measure of subjective well-being with four domains:

Control

Autonomy

Pleasure

Self-realization

***Life satisfaction* was measured on a single measure:**

How satisfied are you with your life?

On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means completely dissatisfied and 10 means completely satisfied.

Results

- Third-person was present during parts of the interview in 29.4% of interviews among respondents aged 65 years and older (6,576/ 22,333).
 - Third-person was only the spouse or the spouse with additional persons in 90.3% of these interviews
 - In 9.7% of the interviews without privacy, the spouse was not present

First step:

Predicting privacy violation during the interview:

- Table 1: Odds ratio from Logistic regression predicting presence of any third- person during the interview (n=22,333)

(Adjusted for country; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$)

Variables	Third-person present during the interview	
	Model 1	Model 2*
Age	1.055*	1.019***
Mobility limitations	1.026***	1.037***
Max. grip strength	1.019***	.999
Cognition	.730***	.784***
Education	.846***	.889***
Frequency of social activity	.915***	.924***
HH income	1.126***	1.007
First time in SHARE (1)	1.844***	1.483***

* Adjusted for: has partner (1), number of children, household size number of rooms and country (see next slide).

Variables	Third-person present during the interview	
	Model 1	Model 2*
Has partner (1)		5.687***
Number of children		1.053***
Household size		1.451***
Number of rooms		.969*
Nagelkerke R ²	.098	.272

* Adjusted for country

Predicting privacy violation during the interview

Main result:

Third-person presence is more likely among vulnerable older adults in terms of lower health and social resources

Second step:

Testing for social desirability responding after controlling for differences in characteristics between respondents with and without privacy:

Only significant predictors of third-person likelihood were included in the regression:

- **Mobility limitations**
- **Cognition**
- **Education**
- **First time HH in SHARE**
- **Age: 80+ (reference group: aged 65-79)**
- **Gender**
- **Has partner**
- **Number of children**
- **Household size**
- **Number of rooms**
- **Country**

OLS Regression predicting self-report of subjective well-being measures
 β estimates (n=22,333)

Variables	EURO-D depression scale		CASP quality of life scale		Life satisfaction	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
3rd person present	-.004	-.001	.009	.004	.018*	.009
Interaction: 3rd-person*age: 80+ ¹		.001		.002		-.009
Interaction: 3rd-person* mobility		-.007		.009		.025*
Interaction: 3rd-person*cognition		-.018***		.019**		.002
R-square	.233	.233	.353	.354	.201	.201

Conclusions

- Third-person presence, which is assumed to have negative implications for honest reporting in sensitive questions, does not matter in the case of measuring subjective well-being among the general 65 years old and older population in the 5th wave of SHARE.
- Effect of third-person presence is evident for vulnerable respondents, i.e. those who are limited in terms of mobility or cognition.
- Efforts should be made during face-to-face interviews with vulnerable elderly respondents to enable them to freely express their subjective well-being without fear of disclosure in the presence of a third-person.

THANK YOU