

## **JPSM Distinguished Lecture Series**



### **Do survey respondents lie? Situated cognition and socially desirable responding**

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Survey researchers commonly assume that people know what they do, know what they believe, and can report on it “with candor and accuracy,” as Angus Campbell put it. From this perspective, many findings suggest that survey respondents are less than “candid”. The best known example is the observation that answers to racial attitude questions vary as a function of the interviewer’s race. Challenging this interpretation, a large body of social psychological research shows similar context effects under conditions that do not lend themselves to this interpretation, including conditions that use implicit attitude measures, which are not subject to deliberate “faking”. From a situated cognition perspective, such findings reflect that attitude questions assess context sensitive evaluations that respondents form on the spot, drawing on information that is accessible at that point in time. The underlying processes operate in daily life as well as in survey interviews and reflect the situated nature of human judgment rather than a deliberate attempt to report a socially desirable answer. I review relevant findings and discuss their implications for survey measurement.

**Friday, March 30, 2012, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**  
**2205 LeFrak Hall, University of Maryland, College Park**

*Discussants:* [Paul Beatty](#), NCHS and [David Cantor](#), Westat

*Please join us for a reception afterwards. For direction see [www.jpsm.umd.edu](http://www.jpsm.umd.edu)*