

# Envisioning The Survey Interview Of The Future

## Sliders for the Smart: Type of Rating Scale on the Web Interacts With Educational Level

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### Abstract

Slider scales and radio buttons scales were experimentally compared in horizontal and vertical orientation. Slider scales lead to statistically significantly higher break-off rates (odds ratio = 6.9) and substantially higher response times. Problems with slider scales were especially prevalent in participants with less than average education, suggesting the slider scale format is more challenging in terms of previous knowledge needed or cognitive load. An alternative explanation, *technology-dependent sampling* (Buchanan & Reips, 2001), cannot fully account for the current results. The authors clearly advise against the use of Java-based slider scales and advocate low-tech solutions for the design of Web-based data collection. Orientation on screen had no observable effect on data quality or usability of rating scales. Implications of item format for Web-based surveys are discussed.

### Keywords

web experiment, online questionnaire, web survey, slider scales, radio button scales, interaction of scale type with education, horizontal orientation, vertical orientation

### Introduction

Participation in a survey is a special kind of indirect communication between respondent and researcher. As in self-administered studies, no interviewer is present to provide situational clarification aids, respondents use various elements in a questionnaire as cues to infer further information from. In turn, questionnaire design elements and rating scales can be used to help respondents to understand a question in a certain desired way, reducing the variance of perceived question meaning and increasing the data quality. In this article, we focus on *rating scales and spatial orientation* as a means of design in a Web-based questionnaire (e.g., Couper, 2008; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009; Reips, 2000) and how the design may interact with respondent variables such as education (Buchanan & Reips, 2001).

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