Numeracy-Related Responding to Numeric Self-Report Scales
Amanda K. Montoya, Stephanie M. Smith, Pär Bjälkebring, Adam Tapal UCLA, Ohio State, Ohio State, Masaryk University

The Ohio State
UNIVERSITY

## Numeracy

Numeracy is the ability to process basic probability and numerical concepts (Peters et al., 2006). It can be divided into two classes:
Objective Numeracy (performance on numeric tasks)
Subjective Numeracy (self efficacy /preference for numbers) Numeracy has been linked with important outcomes:

- Risk Assessment (Health/Finance)
- Educational Outcomes
- Susceptibility to framing effects

We often measure these on numeric response scales

In this research we investigate if numeracy is related to the way that individuals interact with numeric self-report scales.

H1: Participants lower in objective numeracy will overuse mid/endpoints.
H2: Differences in numeracy based response style will be more pronounced with more response options

## Response Styles and IRTrees

A response style is a systematic difference in responses that persists after accounting for the variable measured by a scale with three previous studied styles:

- Extreme responding (tending toward endpoints)
- Midpoint responding (preference toward middle of a scale)
- Acquiescence (preferring the "positive" side of the scale)

IRTrees are a method for modeling response styles which simultaneously model the latent variable of interest and the response style variables. These models break down each item into pseudoitems (PI), modeling each response using simultaneous IRT models.


| Verbal Label | Strongly <br> Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree <br> nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| PI 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| PI 2 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 1 | 1 |
| PI 3 | 1 | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| PI 4 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 | 1 |

## Methods

$N=578$ Mturk Workers in final sample (26 excluded because of error)
PANAS: Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988) "Indicate the extent to which you feel this way right now" Excited, Strong, Enthusiastic, Proud, Active Excited, Strong, Enthusiastic, Proud, Active
Distressed, Upset, Guilty, Scared, Hostile Distressed, Upset, Guilty, Scared, "Hostile
Numbered response scale from "Very slightly or not at all" to "Extremely" Randomly Assigned
$\stackrel{\infty}{0}$ Greenleaf (1992) "Please indicate your agreement with the following items" ( 16 items)
I am a homebody. I am a homebody.
Advertising insults my intelligence
A college education is very important for success in today's world.
Numbered response scale from "Definitely Disagree to "Definitely Agree"
SNS (Fagerlin et al., 2007) 8 items
"How good are you at working with fractions?" (8-items)
$\geq$
ONS (Weller et al., 2013) 8 items
"Which of the following numbers represents the biggest risk of getting a disease?" 1 in 100,1 in 1000,1 in 10 Symbolic Number Mapping (Siegler \& Opfer, 2003) 24 items

Where does the number 23 belong on this line?
0 — 1000


## IRTree Results

Results are for Greenleaf data only

| Correlations | Subjective <br> Numeracy | Objective <br> Numeracy | Symbolic Number <br> Mapping |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Midpoint Response | -.210 | -.754 | -.293 |
| Extreme Response | -.087 | -.321 | -.120 |

Higher scores on all measures of numeracy are related to lower extreme and midpoint responding.


Contrary to what we hypothesized, more response options resulted in less extreme and midpoint responding.

## Conclusions

We found some evidence that numeracy is related to the way that people respond on numeric scales. Individuals lower on numeracy are more likely to respond at the mid/endpoints of a scale.
We found that extreme and midpoint responding are reduced with more response options. We are unsure if these results are conflated with number of response options influencing the model.
Future Directions:

- Replicate with more people and with only 7 options
- Examine effects of verbal labels on relationship between numeracy and extreme/midpoint responding
- Simulate results to examine how numeracy-response style connection could influence research findings.


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