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Asking comparative questions : the impact of the direction of comparison

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Author(s) WANKE, M; SCHWARZ, N; NOELLENEUMANN, E

Author(s) at UniBasel [Wänke, Michaela](#) ;

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Questions assessing comparative judgments are often phrased as directed comparisons, that is, a stimulus A (subject) is to be compared to a stimulus B (referent); for example, "Is tennis more exciting than soccer or less exciting;" Tversky's work on judgment of similarity indicated that comparing A to B may result in different similarity judgments than comparing B to A, The four studies reported in this article extend this work from judgments of similarity to evaluative judgments in general. The results demonstrate that the direction of comparison elicited by the wording of the question can have a strong impact on the obtained results. In some instances, a reversal in the direction of comparison (i.e., comparing A to B vs. B to A) resulted in a reversal of the ordinal ranking. Implications for question wording are discussed.

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