



## checklist

- Remember that indicators of attitude objects with high face validity are those that non-specialists will readily see as reflective of the attitude. If you cannot defend the indicators you choose to people outside of your field of specialisation, the research will have a narrow impact outside of a small cadre of experts, and, in the face of low face validity, social scientists are also likely to have questions about content validity.
- When designing indicators that you hypothesise to be reflective of an attitude object, following a number of rules will help minimise measurement error. These include avoiding so-called 'double-barrelled questions', posing the indicators to the respondents in a bipolar format where possible, and, when attempting to measure the over-time reliability of the indicator, ensuring that the wording of the indicator or survey question does not change.
- Remember that even the most experienced experts are not likely to develop perfect indicators of attitudes. However, the quality of the indicators you develop will improve if you begin by defining clearly the attitude object you wish to measure and pay attention to the various facets of validity and reliability discussed in this chapter.



## projects

**Project 1:** The 2012 US General Social Survey (GSS) had many questions asking about government's role in economic affairs and taxation. Suppose you were a researcher who wished to tap respondents' attitude towards the role of the state in managing the economy – which of the following indicators do you believe would be valid and reliable measures of this attitude? Justify your answers.

Available indicators:

- a) Respondents are told: 'In general, some people think that it is the responsibility of the government in Washington to see to it that people have help in paying for doctors and hospital bills. Others think that these matters are not the responsibility of the federal government and that people should take care of these things themselves. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you made up your mind on this?' Respondents are shown a three-point scale with the following options: (1) 'I strongly agree it is the responsibility of the government to help'; (2) 'I agree with both answers'; or (3) 'I strongly agree that people should take care of themselves'.
- b) Respondents are told: 'Some people think that the government in Washington is trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and private businesses. Others disagree and think that the government should do even more to solve our country's problems. Still others have opinions somewhere in between. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you made up your mind on this?' Respondents are shown a three-point scale with the following options: (1) 'I strongly agree that the government should do more'; (2) 'I agree with both answers'; or (3) 'I strongly agree that the government is doing too much'.
- c) Respondents are told: 'I'd like to talk with you about issues some people tell us are important. Please look at the hand card. Some people think that the government in Washington should do everything possible to improve the standard of living of all poor Americans; they are at Point 1 on this card. Other people think it is not the government's responsibility, and that each person should take care of himself; they are at Point 5. Where would you place yourself on this scale?' (Respondents can choose anywhere between 1 and 5).

- d) Respondents are told: 'Some people think that the government in Washington ought to reduce the income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising the taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor. Others think that the government should not concern itself with reducing this income difference between the rich and the poor. Here is a card with a scale from 1 to 7. Think of a score of 1 as meaning that the government ought to reduce the income differences between rich and poor, and a score of 7 as meaning that the government should not concern itself with reducing income differences. What score between 1 and 7 comes closest to the way you feel?'
- e) Respondents are told: 'I would like to talk with you about some things people think about today. We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money or about the right amount. Are we spending too much, too little or about the right amount on assistance for childcare?' Respondents can select (1) 'Too little'; (2) 'About right'; or (3) 'Too much'.
- f) Respondents are asked 'Are we spending too much, too little or about the right amount on education?' Respondents can select (1) 'Too little'; (2) 'About right'; or (3) 'Too much'.

**Project 2:** A person's sense of political efficacy is defined as a belief that they can understand and influence politics. The first wave of the 2014–2015 British Election Study developed a battery of indicators designed to measure political efficacy. The data and **code books** can be downloaded here: [www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-objects/panel-study-data/](http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-objects/panel-study-data/). Your tasks are as follows:

- Look at the indicators of political efficacy and evaluate their face validity.
  - Suppose you wanted to evaluate the criterion validity of the indicators. Are there questions in the first wave of the survey that should (not) correlate with the indicators? If so, what are the questions and why do you believe they should (not) be correlated with the indicators of political efficacy?
  - If you have the capability to do so, analyse the efficacy questions using a statistical software package (e.g. R or SPSS) and work through the following:
    - a) First, as was done in Table 14.1 of this chapter for the foreign policy attitudes, create a table that presents the distribution of responses to each of the efficacy indicators. Are Britons politically efficacious?
    - b) Building on what you have done in part a) of this exercise, evaluate the criterion validity of each of the indicators by running their correlations with variables you believe should be related to the attitude of political efficacy. This should follow Table 14.2 in the text. What do the results suggest?
    - c) Run an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), designating each of the indicators as reflective of a single efficacy dimension. Do the results from the EFA suggest a single dimension?
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