


CHAPTER 6

INDEXES & SCALES



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- Why use composite measures?
 1. Complex concepts can't be understood with a single indicator
 1. Example: age vs. views on abortion
 2. Efficient for data analysis

Index versus Scale

- Commonalities
 - Both scales and indexes are ordinal measures of variables.
 - Both scales and indexes are composite measures of variables – measurements based on more than one data item.



□ Differences

- Index – A type of composite measure that summarizes and rank-orders several specific observations
- Scale – A type of composite measure composed of several items that have a logical or empirical structure among them

Logic of Indexes

Index-Construction Logic

Here are several types of political actions people may have taken. By and large, the different actions represent similar *degrees* of political activism.

To create an *index* of overall political activism, we might give people 1 point for each of the actions they've taken.

Wrote a letter
to a
public official

Signed a
political
petition

Gave money
to a
political cause

Gave money
to a political
candidate

Wrote a
political letter
to the editor

Persuaded
someone to
change her or
his voting plans

Logic of Scales

Scale-Construction Logic

Here are some political actions that represent very different degrees of activism: e.g., running for office represents a higher degree of activism than does simply voting. It seems likely, moreover, that anyone who has taken one of the more demanding actions would have taken all the easier ones as well.

To construct a *scale* of political activism, we might score people according to which of the following “ideal” patterns comes closest to describing them.

Ran for office	No	No	No	No	Yes
Worked on a political campaign	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Contributed money to a political campaign	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Voted	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	0	1	2	3	4

Index Construction

- Item Selection
- Examination of Empirical Relationships
- Index Scoring
- Handling Missing Data
- Index Validation

Make an Index: Tradition

- Respondent's Traditional Index: GSS
- FEPRESH: Preschool kids suffer if mom works
 - Agree = 1 Disagree = 2
- FEFAM: Better man works, woman tends home
 - Agree = 1 Disagree = 2
- FEPOL: Women not suited for politics
 - Agree = 1 Disagree = 2
- Add answers
 - 3 = very traditional 6 = very nontraditional

Three Types of Scales

1. Bogardus Social Distance Scale
2. Lickert Scale
3. Semantic Differential Scale

1. Bogardus Social Distance Scale

- A measurement technique to determine the willingness of people to participate in social relations with other kinds of people.
- Example:
 1. Are you willing to let sex offenders live in your country?
 2. Are you willing to let sex offenders live in your community?
 3. Are you willing to let a sex offender live next door to you?
 4. Would you let your child marry a sex offender?

2. Likert Scale

- Best known for his item format:
- strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree
- Clarity key– not kind of agree, sort of, really agree....

3. Semantic Differential Scale

- A questionnaire format in which the respondent is asked to rate something in terms of two, opposite adjectives.

	very much	some- what	neither	some- what	very much	
enjoyable	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	boring
likeable	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	repulsive
uninteresting	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	fascinating
believable	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	ridiculous