

# Preface

*C-OAR-SE rocks.*

—Alan G. Sawyer (a realist)

*[A]nd in many Cases one with amazement hears the Arguings, and is astonish'd at the Obstinacy of a worthy Man, who yields not to the Evidence of Reason, though laid before him as clear as Day-light.*

—John Locke (1690), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter XXXIII, para. 2.

Social scientist and would-be social scientists of all persuasions: this is the most important book you will ever read. I make this claim because social science *knowledge* is dependent—entirely—on valid *measurement*, and that is what we have lacked up until C-OAR-SE.

C-OAR-SE is my rational-realist measurement theory that I hope will drive out and replace psychometrics. It is an acronym for the essential aspects of the theory, which are Construct definition, Object representation, Attribute classification, Rater identification, Selection of item-type and answer scale, and Enumeration and scoring rule. Readers familiar with C-OAR-SE theory from the original article (Rossiter, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 2002a) should note that there are some very important improvements and updates of the theory in this book. The book newly includes a valuable chapter on *qualitative research* measurement. Also, the examples in the book come from *all* the social sciences, not just from marketing as in the journal article.

The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer said, “*reality* is a single will to existence and that *music* uniquely expresses that will” (Griffiths 2006, p. 710). When I want to get real—to get back in touch with the real mental and physical events that drive us—I listen to country music: Hank Williams, Patsy Kline, Dixie Chicks, or recent Australian-of-the-Year, Lee Kernaghan. However, I prefer to study and write while listening to wordless music: Brahms, Beethoven, or Schubert’s *Impromptus*, or to post-Traditional and up-to-Coltrane jazz—music that is more ethereal, and in which the themes are deliberately difficult to detect so they don’t interrupt you with reality. I am going to interrupt *you* with reality in this book. In my book, psychometrics is analogous to classical music or jazz, elegant but obscuring of reality. The

latest derivation of psychometrics, structural equation modeling, I consider to be just a Bartokian or Ornette-Colemannish noisy distraction.

Roamin' around, looking down on all I see.  
—Kings of Leon,  
“Use Somebody”

Those who know me as an academic know me as a fierce critic (attendees at Australian conferences call me “Dr. No”). My mentor in psychometrics—the late, great and delightfully radical Australian psychologist Jim Lumsden—said many times during research seminars when I was a psychology undergraduate (and see Lumsden 1978) that destructive criticism is sufficient. Jim used realistic anecdotes such as “It’s sufficient if you let the driver know that his brake-light isn’t working . . . you are not obliged to fix it.” But I received my subsequent academic training in the U.S.A., where, if you’re solely destructive you won’t get published. That’s why my C-OAR-SE theory ended up in a European journal instead of the leading U.S. journal, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, where the paper was first sent. I was in fact *very* constructive in that paper, but the conventional academics whose work I criticized couldn’t see this for the red in their eyes! They still can’t; I’ve had far more rejections of C-OAR-SE-based articles than on any other topic, and I’ve had more acceptances of journal articles than I’ve had years in my life. Never, never underestimate paradigm inertia if you’re an innovator. And never get deflected by reviewers’ discomfort if you’re a critic. Just fight them, and if necessary send your article elsewhere—or write a book.

In this book, as I said, I attempt to destroy psychometrics, the dominant conventional approach to measurement in the social sciences, and to constructively substitute my C-OAR-SE theory of measurement. C-OAR-SE is a “rational realist” theory—totally opposite and opposed to the empirical and unreal “latent construct” approach that dominates social science measurement at present.

You can’t teach an old sheep new tricks.  
—Fabled Australian adage

The book is targeted in hope toward younger, more open-minded doctoral students, toward starting academics, and starting applied researchers in the social sciences. I have written off all my older colleagues who have built their careers on the conventional approach and who, quite obviously, are not about to adopt such a new and different approach. The only two people—both younger academics—who have *understood* C-OAR-SE are Lars Bergkvist and Tobias Langner, a Swede and a German, both free of U.S. academic indoctrination not surprisingly, and the only person who has *used* part of it (single-item theory, see Bergkvist and Rossiter, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2007) is Lars. That the believers are but several is the reason for my allusion to the despair of one of the world’s most famous prophets in my dedications (“Ye of little faith . . .”). I must add that Sara Dolnicar, my ex-European and now Aussie colleague at our research institute, has given constant

support to my radical approach, though I don't think she fully agrees with it. But that's cool and I'm working on converting her.

My thanks to Marilyn Yatras (my administrative assistant) and Mary O'Sullivan (my lovely partner) for the typing, organization, and, in Mary's case, sanitary editing of my R-rated first draft of this book while leaving in my many tilts at political correctness. And to Wollongong's City Beach and Dancespace Dance Studio—my two escapes—and Litani's coffee shop, just around the corner from my home, for all those long-black coffees, *baklava*, and, I have to admit because I'm a realist and too many people know, cigarettes, that fuelled the writing. My smoking, incidentally, makes me a rationalist gambler—see Chapter 7. I am rewarding myself with a few of the excellent new *Bluetongue Aussie Pilsener* beers as I write this preface to usher in the New Year and, hopefully, a new era of rational-realist measurement.

It's proof-reading time now and the book is about to go to press. I add my thanks to Nick Philipson at Springer for his welcome encouragement throughout the entire project. I've now switched to *Fat Yak* ale and *Camels* (see p. 145).

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