

Measurements of Attitudes

How do we know what people's attitudes are? How do we measure attitudes? How would you measure someone's attitude towards the re-introduction of the Death Penalty?

Projective Techniques (Indirect Measures)

Take advantage of the fact that people often project their own attitudes on to others. Example, Thematic Apperception Test (TAT): subjects are presented with a series of pictures and are asked to fill in speech bubbles to describe what is going on. How they are interpreted reveals people's attitudes.

Advantages

- Easy to conduct quick indication of person's attitudes
- No pressure to conform
- More specific to the individual

Disadvantages

- Experimenter bias (interpretation subjective)
- Not precise enough
- Vague expectations of what to do
- Qualitative rather than quantitative

Likert Scale (Direct Measures)

A set of approximately 30 statements are prepared about a topic, representing both a pro and anti-social views. The subject rates each statement on a 5 or 7 point scale. The attitude is scored by totalling the scores from each statement.

Advantages

- Item analysis - break down into different items
- Quantitative information

- Easy to gather and sort out information
- Find out information with direct questions (demand characteristics answering what your think is expected of you)

Disadvantages

- Interpretation of undecided
- Tendency to middle answers, follow down the middle
- Lie and bias results
- Social desirability
- Differences in individual interpretations of questions

Semantic Differential Technique

Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957) provide a measure of attitude strength to the individual. This involves the rating of an attitude object (person or thing) on a seven point scale. This is made up of numerous pairs of bi-polar adjectives (extreme opposites of each other)

Advantages

- Shows the feelings of the individual affective
- Shows if feelings are powerful or weak
- Shows feelings on various aspects of a topic

Disadvantages

- Doesn't give much information
- Not accurate/unclear and subject may lie
- Difficult to measure attitudes if feeling is neutral

Why is there discrepancy?

- Specificity, Davidson and Jaccard (1979) how specific we are in measuring attitudes behaviour. La Piere " letters, measure general prejudice. Behaviour, measure specifically.

If measure of attitude and behaviour is specific less discrepancy

- Behaviour is singular - compared with general attitudes
- Attitudes and behaviour need to be at the same time (not 6 months later) - Schwatz (1978)
- Personal and situations factors - example, peer pressure