

Social and Cognitive Psychology

Attitude Measurement:

One of the appeals of attitudes is that they can be measured and that as they can be measured we can assess how they might affect behaviour and how things like time and social pressure change them.

There are several ways of measuring attitudes, but the most popular are the self report versions:

Likert Scales: are type of scale in which a statement about something is made and is then followed by a series of numbers which people can choose to show how much they agree with something. For example:

The Police are always impartial in their treatment of suspects.

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly disagree.

If you then sum the numbers for several statements and you can come up with a score that represents the person's attitude towards the subject.

Semantic Differential Scales: A single attitude may include different meanings or qualities of evaluation. For example, a negative attitude about cigarette advertising or the Tory Party might be made up of several beliefs or values. This can be tested in the following way:

A statement is made followed by a series of scales. E.g. Cigarette advertising is:

Good		1	2	3	4	5		Bad
Creative	1	2	3	4	5		Ugly	
Honest		1	2	3	4	5		Dishonest
Healthy		1	2	3	4	5		Unhealthy

Projective Techniques

PROJECTIVE TESTS

These tests have been developed out of the psychoanalytic tradition of research and therapy. They are based on the Freudian notion that when we are confronted by an abstract or ambiguous picture, some of our inner thoughts, protected because they produce anxiety, are partially revealed by the way we project our interpretations onto the display.

The Rorschach ink blot test is a set of abstract designs rather like children produce with 'butterfly' paintings. The test-taker reports what he or she feels they can see in the picture.

Similarly, the Thematic apperception test (TAT) is a picture, often of people with their emotional expressions ambiguous or hidden, about which, the test-taker is asked, 'What is happening?'

These tests belong in the unstructured, disguised section of the quadrant formed by these two dimensions. It is claimed that their open-endedness produces richer information and that their disguised nature provides genuine data, unbiased by people guessing the researcher's (or therapist's) intent.

It is argued that the tests can be used to measure such factors as the affective, usually hidden, component of attitudes. They have very often been used to assess concealed aggression, hostility, anxiety, sexual fantasy and so on in hypothesis testing work. Levin's study, mentioned in Chapter 8, used Rorschach tests.

Weaknesses of Projective Techniques

1. Being open ended and initially qualitative, the tests are suspect for their reliability. In other words if one person uses this test to ask questions will they score it in the same way as someone else.
2. Even if reliability is good, can we be sure that the test is measuring what it is supposed to be measuring. In other words, if we use a Rorschach ink blot test and the responded says that they are not sure of the gender of the people that they can see in the blot, does this mean that they are unsure of their own sexuality?

Your task is to investigate the validity of these scales. In other words, if you use one to measure an attitude do you get a correlation with the scores when you use another method to measure the same attitude?

In groups of three or four choose an attitude that you wish to measure. It might be how people feel about the police, are teachers supportive, and so on. Devise a Likert questionnaire, a Semantic Differential Scale and a Projective Test to determine attitudes. The Likert questionnaire and the Semantic Differential Scale should each have at least ten statements and the Projective test should have at least three blots with questions about feelings attached.