

## Chapter 4: Measuring Attitudes

### Guttman Scale

- Scale progresses from items easiest to accept to those most difficult to endorse
  - Those who get a high score on a Guttman scale agree with all items (Look at yours. You could not say yes to the last questions without saying yes to the first ones.)
  - Those with moderate attitudes agree with questions that are easy and moderately difficult to endorse
  - Those with mildly positive attitudes agree only with items that are easy to accept
- What are some potential downfalls of this scale?
  - Difficult to construct
  - Difficult to administer

### Semantic Differential

- Participants rate an object based upon bipolar adjectives.
- Explored the meanings people attach to social objects, focusing on the emotional aspect of the attitude.

### Likert Scale

- a series of opinion statements that asks individuals to rate their agreement or disagreement with each statement along an individual scale.
- assumes each item taps the same underlying attitude and there are significant interrelationships among items
- Presumes there are equal intervals between categories.
- Most researchers prefer 5 to 7 point scales. This allows for shades of grey but not so many items that the participant is overwhelmed.

### Some Negatives in Attitude Scales

- All attitudes and people are different so there will never be a perfect scale.
- Inaccuracies could result from factors such as:
  - respondent carelessness in answering questions
  - social desirability
  - tendency to agree with items regardless of content.
- Language: How the question is asked can influence the response
- Context: survey questions early in the questionnaire can influence responses later on.

### Non- Attitudes

- The middle position
- If you are answering from 1-7 is 4 a "In the middle" or "I don't know/care"
- How do you counter that?

### Ask Good Questions

- Use word respondents can comprehend

- Write specific and unambiguous questions (Be Clear!)
- Avoid double negatives
- Pretest items to make sure people understand your questions
- Ask questions in different sequences to check out order effects
- Avoid politically correct phrases that encourage socially desirable responses
- Write items so they take a positive and a negative point of view (don't just represent one side)
- Take extra consideration when items deal with sensitive or threatening issues
- Include many questions to tap different aspects of the attitude

#### Practical Implications

- The way a question is worded on political surveys can shape the contours of policy debates. (ex. death tax vs. estate tax)
- Manipulation of statistical information is a routine and accepted way of doing the business of political persuasion in a democracy.

#### Language Matters

- By framing an issue one way rather than another, certain aspects may become salient or promote a particular way of looking at the problem.

#### Polling

- Language is how polls about the same thing can get drastically different responses.
- Many people don't have a formed or strong attitude about the issue.
- Attitudes are then formed on the spot based upon what happens to be on their minds at the time, how the question is asked, etc.

#### Other Measurements

- These can be used with attitude scales to clarify and attempt accuracy
- Open Ended Measures
- Unobtrusive Measures
- Physiological Measures
- Indirect Measures

#### Open-Ended Measures

- Individuals read or view a message then list their cognitive reactions.
- Will later be coded by researchers based upon strict criteria.
- Often asked to write their feelings about message, objects, etc.

#### Unobtrusive Measures

- Without the individuals knowledge
- Using behaviors as surrogate for attitudes
- Useful in cases where self-report can't be administered or won't work due to things like dishonest responses

### Physiological measures

- Mind and body are connected. Can use physiology to draw inferences to what is happening in the mind
- OSU has one of (maybe the) Best Communication and Psychophysiology Labs in the country
- Measures we use include: Heart Rate Variability, Skin Conductance, Facial Electromyography and Eyetracking

### Physiology

- We have two nervous systems: Sympathetic and Parasympathetic
- Sympathetic- fight or flight response. Characterized by increased skin conductance and faster heart rate
- Parasympathetic- attention response. Slower Heart Rate, frowning, lower skin conductance

### Indirect Measure

- One of the most popular is the Implicit attitude test
- Measures response time
- assumes the longer it takes someone to access their attitude, the less developed or strong the attitude is