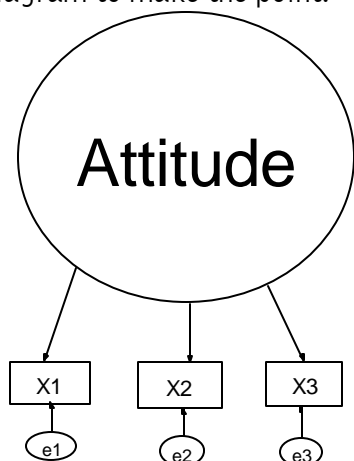




## What Are We Measuring?

Attitude research is not just about asking a long list of attitude questions. A common fault in segmentation and positioning research is throwing such data into the computer to see what happens. The smart researcher realizes that individual attitude questions are at best indicators of underlying (but unobservable) attitudes.

How a person answers an attitude question is shaped by at least one underlying attitude plus other random effects. That one question may be an unreliable measure of what you think you are measuring! Psychometricians use the following kind of diagram to make the point.



The X's stand for answers to three actual survey questions (i.e. observed data). We have hypothesized that the answers are all influenced to some degree by the underlying Attitude plus other unique effects (the e's).

Nice theory, but what do you do with it? What you should do is a more deliberate job in writing survey questions and in analyzing the data. Not all will agree, but we advocate drafting survey questions to measure specific underlying attitudes. This requires that you have some idea of

what the underlying attitudes really are. This process is in contrast to tossing in everything you heard in focus groups.

In the analysis of attitude surveys, we then need to develop composite measures of the underlying attitudes. This usually involves some form of factor analysis. It is not unusual to throw all the items into a factor analysis and then use the resulting factor scores. However, this may cause other problems because those scores (which are composites) are forced to be uncorrelated with each other.

- Segmenting with a set of uncorrelated variables may give weird, disappointing results
- Is it logical that attitudes about such matters as product quality, service quality, etc. will have no relation to each other?

We argue that it is better practice scientifically to develop composite (factor) scores for the underlying attitudes, one at a time. This is not something you should try at home, but when done correctly will provide segmentation and other outcomes that are more meaningful and thus more useful to your clients.

## A.R.T. Forum

Your reporter will be attending the AMA's 10<sup>th</sup> annual Advanced Research Techniques Forum in June. Chances are you will be reading about some of the ideas presented there in this space.

A new feature, introduced by Conference Chair Lynd Bacon, is a pair of "poster sessions" in which authors post brief papers and are available to discuss them. The ART Forum has always been about open exchange of ideas.

## Employee Research

Marketing researchers—that's us—are asked with increasing frequency to investigate employee attitudes. "Pure" human resource questions are in someone else's domain, but companies are finally realizing how much difference the morale of employees can make to the bottom line. It's not a matter of being "happy." It's a matter of being motivated and productive.

An interesting new book by Gallup researchers should be immediately useful here. First, *Break All the Rules* was co-authored by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. The authors have isolated a dozen key measures of employee attitudes that predict their productivity. Marketers and general managers would do well to research employees using these measures.

---

## Some Internet Sites

Many of us know Survey Sampling, Inc. as a leading purveyor of random telephone samples. They also maintain a web site of general interest to researchers at:

[www.worldopinion.com](http://www.worldopinion.com)

A new but potentially valuable service is a conference or forum for trading opinions with fellow professionals.

Few of us know what colleagues in other parts of the world are doing. The easiest way to broaden your horizon a little is through the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR). Most of their conference proceedings and other publications are available in English. Their site is at:

[www.esomar.nl](http://www.esomar.nl)

Another important organization is the Marketing Science Institute. Funded by dozens of major corporations, the Institute sponsors and publishes a variety of research on current issues. Look for their stuff at:

[www.msi.org](http://www.msi.org)

## Just Say No

Have you ever had a research supplier advise against doing a project you had suggested? The willingness to say "Don't spend your money" is a hallmark, we feel, of a good professional. We are supposed to be the experts at applying the voice of the consumer to business decisions. If we cannot come up with a design to connect those decisions to data, we will tell you.



## Touch-Tone Interviewing

An emerging method of survey data collection relies on touch-tone responses to pre-recorded questions. Sometimes called Interactive Voice Response or IVR, the method's proponents cite the relatively low cost per interview as its greatest advantage. It also offers a degree of anonymity, which can be useful for sensitive topics.

Respondents may be invited to call an 800 number or be transferred to the system by a "real" interviewer. Open-ended answers are recorded and then coded at a later date. All other data are captured electronically and thus available for immediate analysis.

The limitations of IVR should be obvious. The projectability of any call-in sample is unknown, and there are biases in who will willingly use touch tone phones for this purpose. We see it as a very specialized tool, but one of which researchers should be aware.

