Measurement in Social Research

Constructs, Concepts, Variables

Operationalization
Measurement

Goal:

We want to construct an explanation for a social phenomenon that we can trust.

Problems:

(1) How do we know we can trust our explanation?

(2) What do we mean by “trust?”
The Theoretical and Empirical Dimensions of Research

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Measurement in the Abstract

IDEAS/SOCIAL THEORY

ANALYTIC FRAMES

IMAGES

EVIDENCE/DATA

CONSTRUCT

CONCEPT

VARIABLE

OBSERVATION

From Charles C. Ragin, 1994
Constructing Social Research
The Measurement Process

How do we link theory and data?

Conceptualization = defining the meaning of a construct

Operationalization = specifying a way to measure a concept
Conceptualization and Operationalization

Independent Variable

Abstract Construct

Conceptualization

Conceptual Definition

Operationalization

Indicator or Measure

Hypothetical Causal Relationship

Dependent Variable

Abstract Construct

Conceptualization

Conceptual Definition

Operationalization

Indicator or Measure

Level of Theory

Operational Level

Empirical Level