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

Theoretical

Theory
Explanation
Think
General
Abstract
Essential
Reductionist
Ivory Tower

Empirical

Practice
Experience
Do
Specific
Concrete
Varied
Complex
Real World
Measurement in the Abstract

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