



Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement

Chapter 5

Tanja Hajdinjak

MEASURING ANYTHING THAT EXISTS

- Variables in social science vs. real life,
- Mental image of things (what you have been told and what you have observed),
- Mental map=conception,
- Conceptualization=process of coming to an agreement about what terms mean; result is called concept,

MEASURING ANYTHING THAT EXISTS

Abraham Kaplan – 3 classes of things scientists measure:

1. Direct observables (things that can be observed simply and directly),
2. Indirect observables (things that require subtle, complex observation),
3. Observables consistent of constructs (theoretical creation based on observations that cannot be observed directly or indirectly).

“The bridge from direct and indirect observables to useful constructs is the process called conceptualization” (Babbie 2001: 121).

CONCEPTUALIZATION

- "Gives definite meaning to a concept by specifying one or more indicators of what we have in mind" (Babbie 2001: 123),
- Concepts can be understood in different contexts-that is why we group them into dimensions,
- Interchangeability of indicators-"if several different indicators all represent, to some degree, the same concept, than all of them will behave the same way that the concept would behave if it were real and could be observed" (Babbie 2001: 124).

CONCEPTUALIZATION

- Emile Durkheim-studied suicide “using government publications and drawing conclusions about individualistic and personal act without having any data about individuals engaging in it” (Babbie 2001: 126).
- Used concept of anomie as a characteristic of societies (others after him used it to describe individuals).
- A tip for making a research: use established measures – they were pretested and debugged, you can compare results from previous researches.

DEFINITION IN DESCRIPTIVE AND EXPLANATORY STUDIES

- Definitions are more problematic for descriptive than for explanatory research,
- Descriptive-unemployment rate (definition depends on defining labour force),
- Explanatory-political conservatism (no agreement about definition-not a big problem).

OPERATIONAL CHOICES

- Operationalization="the development of specific research procedures (operations) that will result in empirical observation representing those concepts in the real world" (Babbie 2001: 132).
- Tips for studying:
 1. think of range of variations you would like to study,
 2. Pick one or more aspects,
 3. Have to know which population,
 4. Be clear about dimensions you study.

OPERATIONAL CHOICES

- Variables and attributes,
- 4 levels of measurement:
 1. Nominal measure,
 2. Ordinal measure,
 3. Interval measure,
 4. Rational measure,
- Example of age (rational, ordinal and nominal variable).

A faint, grayscale background image of a person's face, likely a woman, looking slightly to the right. The image is centered and serves as a backdrop for the text.

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
PATIENCE**