Conceptualization, Operationalization, & Measurement

- Conceptualization:
  - process of coming to an agreement about what terms mean
  - Mental process whereby imprecise notions (concepts) are made more specific and precise.
Construct—theoretical creation; cannot be observed directly or indirectly

Indicator--An observation that we choose to consider as a reflection of a variable we wish to study. (attending religious services as an indicator religiosity)
Should also focus on how terms are used by people under study

- Initially complicates concepts but enriches study

Dimension: a specific aspect of a concept

- Example: Dimensions of learning
- Genocide as a distinct from violence—four distinct phenomena
Specification—process through which concepts are made more specific

Real Definition—statement about the “essential nature” or “essential attributes” of some entity

Nominal Definition—assigned to a term w/o any claim that it represents a “real entity”

Operational Definition—specifies exactly how a concept will be measured, provides increased clarity to concept under investigation
Conceptualization is a continuing process—refined throughout data collection & interpretation—Why?
Operationalization

- Development of Specific research procedures (operations) that will result in empirical observations representing those concepts in the real world
- Range of Variation
- Variation Between the Extremes
- Determining the Relevant Dimensions of Variables
- Deciding on Appropriate Level of Measurement
Nominal--Gender

Ordinal—Not very important/Fairly Important

Interval--IQ

Ratio--Income

Always be open to reexamining your concepts and definitions
Measurement

- Measurement focuses on precision and accuracy
- Reliability: that quality of measurement method that suggests that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomenon
Validity: a term describing a measure that accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure