Methods in Social Research
Michaelmas Term Week 2 - October 20
Conceptualisation and measurement

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- Concept formation

- Measurement quality

- Reading questions 1-4

- Small group exercise on measurement

- Reading questions 5

- Key points

"Concept formation" generally refers to three aspects of a concept:

(a) the events or phenomena to be defined [..],

(b) the properties or attributes that define them [..], and

(c) a label covering both a and b (the term).

Concept formation is thus a triangular operation; good concepts attain a proper alignment between a, b, and c.

(Gerring 1999: 357-8)

Social remittances (Levitt, 1998):

"*the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities. They are the north-to-south equivalent of the social and cultural resources that migrants bring with them which ease their transitions from immigrants to ethnics.*"

Article citations:651 (1,693 for 2001 book)

Google scholar hits: 2,100 (Google hits: 16,200)

Super-diversity (Vertovec, 2006):

"named so in order to underline the fact that such a permutation marks a level and kind of complexity surpassing what Britain has previously experienced. Compared to the large-scale immigration of the 1950s-early 1970s, the 1990s-early 2000s have seen more migrants from more places entailing more socio-cultural differences going through more migration channels leading to more, as well as more significantly stratified, legal categories [..], and who maintain more intensely an array of links with places of origin and diasporas elsewhere."

Article citations:951

Google scholar hits: 2,800(Google hits: 56,000)

- Migrant

- Diaspora

- Transnationalism

- Integration/assimilation

- Multiculturalism

Timing of conceptualisation

Before data collection:

- Start conceptualisation

During data collection

- *Qualitative research*: reconsider conceptualisation

- *Quantitative research*: -

During data analyses

- Reconsider conceptualisation

Conceptualisation: key points

- Always clarify how you are using existing concepts

- Do not overstretch concepts

- Only introduce/create new terms if existing ones are inappropriate

- Reconceptualisation can be an important research output but avoid redefining terms away from common usage

From concept to measurement

Operationalising: developing concrete measures for concepts

Operationalisation is _not the same_ as concept formation, but the two do support each other:

Concepts that cannot be effectively operationalized, or can be operationalized in too many different ways, cannot be differentiated (Gerring, 1999:379)

Measurement

Why important to report/read information on measurement?

- Theory testing

- Theory generating

- Replicability

What needs to be examined?

- Indicators/measures

- Scores (where applicable)

Measurement quality determined by:

- *Reliability*: consistency of measurement
- *Validity*: accurately reflects what it is supposed to measure

Concept: Remittance

Definition: money transfer to family members in the origin country

Measurement: How often do you send money via Western Union or other transfer companies?

Problems:

- Does not specify who the money is send to
- Ignores remittances send via other channels, potentially underestimating remittance

<u>Measurement quality</u> determined by:

- *Reliability***:** consistency of measurement
- *Validity*: accurately captures what it is meant to measure

<u>Measurement error:</u>

- Random (mostly associated with reliability)
- Systematic (bias)

Common problems:

- People are very bad at estimating amounts, duration, sizes
- Social desirability / audience/interviewer effects
- Terms of answers categories are ambiguous
- Questions or answer categories are suggestive/leading

Solutions:

- Multiple measures
- Support respondents in estimates
- More direct measures
  - Lisa Peters measure of social network

Banting et al (2006) Does multiculturalism erode the welfare state?

Multicultural Policies:

- *Focus on the treatment of ethnocultural groups*

- *Excludes non-discriminatory access to civil and political rights for individuals*

- *Policies that go beyond the protection of traditional individual rights of citizenship to provide some additional form of public recognition or support or accommodation of ethnic groups, identities, and practices*

Multicultural Policies towards immigrant groups:

1. Constitutional, legislative or parliamentary affirmation of multiculturalism, at the central and/or regional and municipal levels;

2. The adoption of multiculturalism in the school curriculum;

3. The inclusion of ethnic representation/sensitivity in the mandate of public media or media licensing;

4. Exemptions from dress codes, Sunday closing legislation etc. (either by statute or by court cases);

5. Allowing dual citizenship;

6. The funding of ethnic group organizations to support cultural activities;

7. The funding of bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction;

8. Affirmative action for disadvantaged immigrant groups

Each country

- a score of 1.0 if it had explicitly adopted and implemented the policy for much of the period we are examining (1980 to 2000),

- 0.5 if it adopted the policy in an implicit, incomplete, or token manner,

- and 0 if it did not have the policy.

This generates a total possible score of 8.0:

- *Strong*: at least 6.0 out of a possible 8.0

- *Modest*: between 3.0 and 5.5

- *Weak*: under 3.0

1. Key concepts

- Religiosity

- Gender role attitudes and gender role behaviour

- Turks and Germans

2. Definition and 'conceptual goodness'

- Religiosity

- Gender role attitudes and gender role behaviour

- Turks and Germans

3. Measurement

Religiosity:

- attendance at religious services at least once a week;

- agreement that religious ceremonies are important;

- religion mentioned as one of the three most important socialization goals for children (out of a list of eleven).

'multidimensional', taking into account differences between religions and men & women??

Strong religious commitment if at least two of three

3. Measurement

Gender role attitudes:

1) On the whole, men make better political leaders than women (agree coded low);

2) When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women (agree coded low);

3) Do you think that a woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled or is this not necessary? (agree coded low);

4) If a woman wants a child as a single parent but she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove? (disapprove coded low).

5) Taking care of household and children is just as satisfying as to work for money (agree coded low).

3. Measurement

Gender role behaviour:

"the division of household tasks between the partners. Gender division of labour is labelled 'traditional' if the female partner is responsible for typical women's tasks (doing the dishes and cooking) and the male partner does typical men's tasks (maintenance repairs and paying the bills). All other forms of household division of labour (man does typical women's tasks and vice versa, third party does the work, man or woman does all the work) are categorized as 'nontraditional'."

3. Measurement

Turks: first and second generation with Turkish passport

Germans: people living in Germany? German citizens??

1. Key concepts

- Undocumented migrant

- Youth

- Migration project?

- Agency?

- Immigration strategy?

2. Definition and 'conceptual goodness'

- Undocumented migrant:
  - no right of residence in the UK (p1288)

- Youth
  - a social process, not simply a biological or demographic status, mediated by the tension between the social significance of age, which gives young people a common status, the significance of other social divisions and the multiplicity of competing, and sometimes contradictory, discursive regimes championed by different social groups (p1289)

3. Measurement

4. What are the similarities and differences between concept formation and measurement in qualitative and quantitative research?

Differences

- Timing of concept formation

- Degree of flexibility in measurement

- Number of measurement decisions

- Can work from different paradigms

Similarities

- measurement (questions) matter

Views on assessing validity and reliability in qualitative research

- Different paradigms
  - Existence of objective reality and researchers' ability to capture this
  - Importance of context
  - Importance of member checking

- Similar recommendation: transparency!

Exercise:

In groups of 3 (or 2):

- Read the case
- Develop measure(s) of 'immigrant groups': questions and answer options
- Write down your final version on A4 paper (landscape) and bring it to me

Time: 15 minutes

Are these measures:

- Reliable?

- Valid?

- Analytically useful?

> *"the **best** measure [..] depends on what our theoretical objectives are." Kellstedt & Whitten (2009:92)*

5. What do the articles by Bakewell and Simon tell us about the power of concepts and definitions in social research?

Simon (2012:1368): *"Official (and scientific) statistical categorizations both <u>reflect and affect</u> the structural divisions of societies, as well as mainstream social representations."*

➢ Categories can become *reified*

A view from France:

*..we already have information on nationality and country of birth (sometimes of the parents) [..] it is therefore **possible** to measure discrimination [..] Going beyond this and asking people to state their ethnicity, their 'race', their religion [..] is useless in the fight against discrimination. **Ethnic statistics are dangerous**. Far from presenting an image of existing diversity they **outrageously oversimplify** it [..] It invents groups that do not exist, creates divisions where there is reconciliation, suggests homogeneity where there is diversity, places boundaries where there are continuums. **Ethnic statistics would lead to a justification of the notion of 'race' of which everybody recognises its non-scientific character and danger of creating communal clashes....***

(open letter signed by a range of prominent French social scientists published in Libération 23-2-2007)

5. What do the articles by Bakewell and Simon tell us about the power of concepts and definitions in social research?

Bakewell (2008:433): *"reliance of academic researchers on policy categories tends to obscure and render invisible some population groups, causal relationships, and questions that are methodologically difficult to capture"*

➢ Uncritically copying concepts from policy makers can inhibit understanding of social processes

- Concepts and measurements are the building blocks of theory development and theory testing

- Measurement choices can have a far-reaching implications

- The quality of measures should always be evaluated in light of the chosen conceptualisation and theoretical framework

- Measurement quality (validity, trustworthiness) is important in both quantitative and qualitative research

- Researchers should consider the social implication of their chosen measurements and be critical in reproducing policy categories

- Researchers need to engage with policy categories

References

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