

Operationalisation

Sociology

The move from concept to indicator, and the two ways it goes wrong.

A concept is not measured until you name the indicator, and every indicator is narrower than the concept it stands for.

Social class

Misses wealth

Occupation code

Religiosity

Misses private faith

Attendance rate

Crime level

Misses unreported

Recorded offences

THE COMMON MISTAKE

× **The indicator moved, so the concept moved.**

✓ **The indicator moved. Whether the concept did is a separate argument.**

Recorded crime can rise because reporting rose. Treating the indicator as the concept turns a measurement change into a false social finding.

Validity: does it measure the concept? Reliability: does it repeat? A measure can be highly reliable and still invalid.