# Measurement

**Doing Political Research**

# Introduction

- We have our theory, which is a set of relationships between concepts

- We have defined our concepts, ensuring that they are at the right level of abstraction

- Next, we need to *operationalise* our concepts, turning them into something we can measure
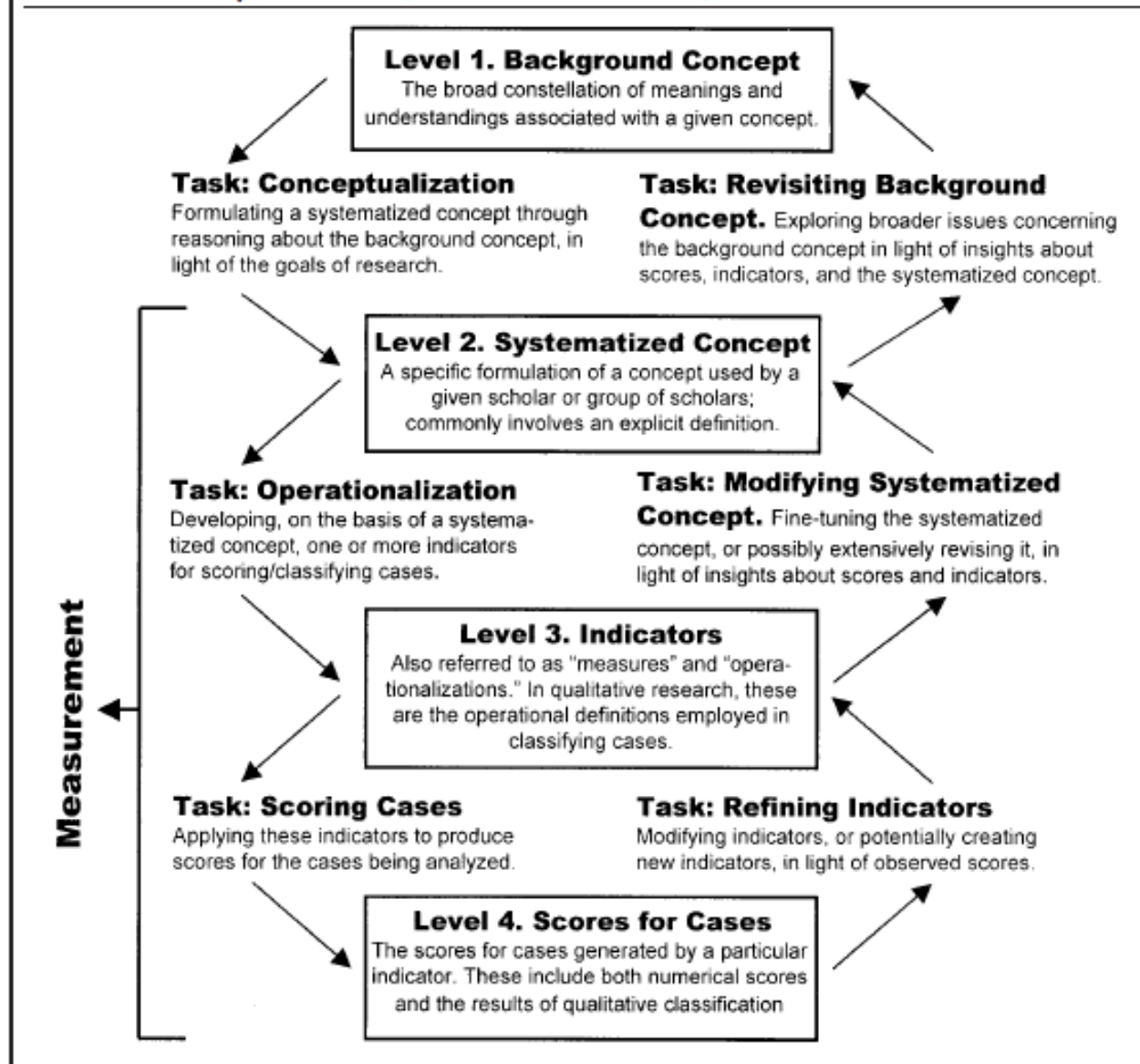
# Types of Measurement

| Classification | Quantification |
|---|---|
| • Associated with qualitative research<br>• Classifying empirical phenomena into categories<br>• For example, classifying democratic transitions as 'elite-led' or based on 'distributive conflict' (Haggard and Kaufman) | • Associated with quantitative research<br>• Assigning numbers to empirical phenomena<br>• For example, a survey measuring the percentage of people who support the death penalty |

FIGURE 1. Conceptualization and Measurement: Levels and Tasks

**Level 1. Background Concept**
The broad constellation of meanings and understandings associated with a given concept.

**Task: Conceptualization**
Formulating a systematized concept through reasoning about the background concept, in light of the goals of research.

**Task: Revisiting Background Concept.** Exploring broader issues concerning the background concept in light of insights about scores, indicators, and the systematized concept.

**Level 2. Systematized Concept**
A specific formulation of a concept used by a given scholar or group of scholars; commonly involves an explicit definition.

**Task: Operationalization**
Developing, on the basis of a systematized concept, one or more indicators for scoring/classifying cases.

**Task: Modifying Systematized Concept.** Fine-tuning the systematized concept, or possibly extensively revising it, in light of insights about scores and indicators.

**Level 3. Indicators**
Also referred to as "measures" and "operationalizations." In qualitative research, these are the operational definitions employed in classifying cases.

**Task: Scoring Cases**
Applying these indicators to produce scores for the cases being analyzed.

**Task: Refining Indicators**
Modifying indicators, or potentially creating new indicators, in light of observed scores.

**Level 4. Scores for Cases**
The scores for cases generated by a particular indicator. These include both numerical scores and the results of qualitative classification.

Measurement

Conceptualisation (Adcock and Collier)

# How Do We Measure?

- Political research uses many kinds of data and evidence, for example surveys, documents, interviews, experiments

- Type of data collection: Active vs Passive

- Level of measurement: Micro vs Macro

# Key Issues in Measurement

## Validity

- Accuracy of the measure
- Does the measure capture the concept?

## Reliability

- Consistency of the measure
- Will the measure be the same if different people measure it?

# Conclusion

- Concepts can be operationalised in many different ways
- It is important to be clear how we do so, and so ensure our measurements are valid and reliable