

# Concept Specification

## Finding the Right Items

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# A Common Problem

“The research objectives of many studies are surprisingly ill-defined.

Asking a researcher what exactly should be measured by a question for which purpose frequently elicits vague answers – if not different answers from different researchers involved in the same project!”

Schwarz, N. (1997), Questionnaire Design: The Rocky Road from Concepts to Answers, in: Lyberg et al, *Survey Measurement at Process Quality*, New York: Wiley.

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## Planning Your Survey

- (a) What is your research question?  
How do you envision the results?
- (b) Translate concepts into questions!
- (c) Check the fit!
- (d) Appraise questions for common pitfalls!

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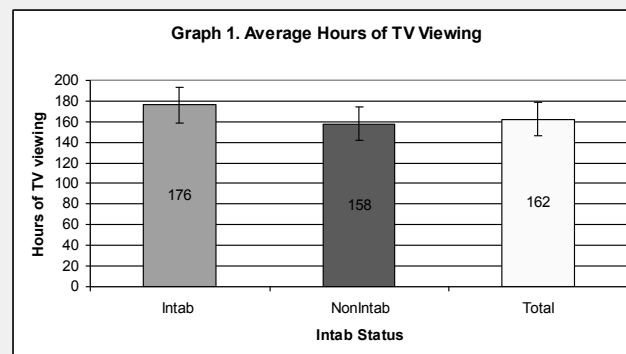
## Example – Nielsen Media Research

*“Do households that Nielsen samples – but from which no tuning and viewing data are gathered – have television tuning and viewing patterns that are meaningfully different from those households that cooperate and comply by joining Nielsen’s samples?”*

Nielsen Memo 02/20/06

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## Analysis Example: Hours of TV Viewing – (fictitious data)



**Question:** Do households that Nielsen samples – but from which no data is gathered – spend more or less time watching TV than those that complete the Nielsen Diary?

**Note 1:** Overall sample of targeted 7,800 respondents (= 6,300 mailables + 1,500 Unmailables).

**Note 2:** Nonintab group includes No Good, No Return and Unavailable cases, whereas Intab includes only Intab cases.

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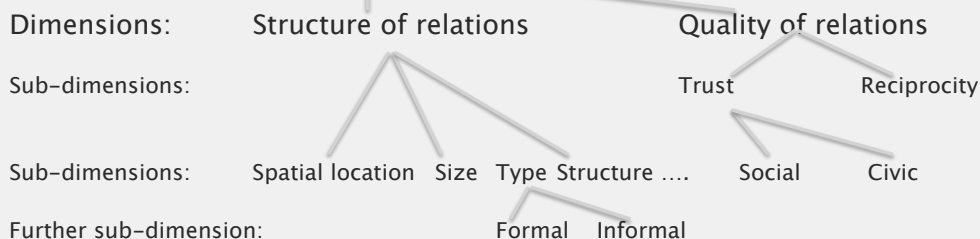
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# Concept Specification

Abstract concept: Social Capital



de Vaus, D. A. 2002. Surveys in Social Research. 5th ed. London: Routledge.

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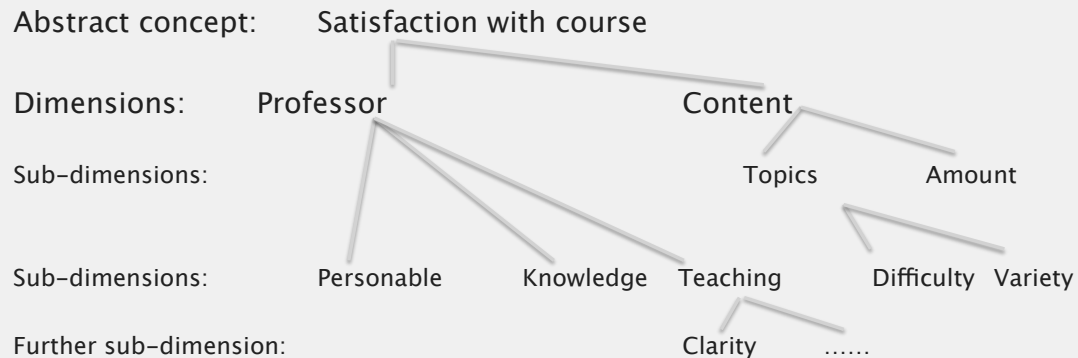
- Satisfaction with Employer
- Satisfaction with Current Government
- Class evaluation
- Eating 'healthy'
- Household consumption
- Your topic

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Think about the dimensions and sub-dimensions!

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## Ask Yourself:

- (a) Which variables do you want to combine as measure of satisfaction? Statistical requirements?
- (b) What subgroups do you want to report for?
- (c) Will you want to explain difference? What variables will you use to do so?
- (d) Remove everything you don't need!!

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## An Analysis Plan Will ..

- Decrease the likelihood that critical items are left out of the final questionnaire
- Decrease the likelihood that the questionnaire includes everything in the kitchen sink and creates excessive response burden
- Help identify which topics are most important and need space in the instrument

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## Next Segment

Response Process