Working with Concepts

David Collier is an influential thinker on conceptualization, which is foundational to social science inquiry. A prominent political scientist, he specializes in mixed methods and comparative politics. *Working with Concepts* brings together Collier's most influential research on concepts and measurement, refined and reframed, to offer a systematic approach to concept analysis. Edited by Zachary Elkins, the book serves as a reference book for both students and seasoned scholars grappling with concepts. Collier's essays are accompanied by commentaries by fifteen scholars who connect his contributions to ongoing innovation in the field. The commentaries open up new lines of research and provoke ongoing scholarly reaction and debate. Tightly organized with the aim of moving the discussion forward, this collection of essays explores some of the contours of the field and its milestones to show how careful work with concepts is a foundation of good methodology. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 08:04:40, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009551250

Note on the front cover. The interplay between well-bounded concepts and gradations is a basic theme in this volume. This theme is reflected in the eagles and African antelopes (elands) on the cover, images inspired by Escher. One might separate out the well-defined images at the top and the bottom as the only real representation of eagles and elands – in parallel to discussion of the only real democracies. Alternatively, the focus could be on gradations among all the images – in parallel to gradations of democracy. These depictions likewise reflect two other basic themes: part–whole relationships and the complex intertwining of concepts. The front cover images were designed by Yellin Yuye Lin.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 08:04:40, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009551250

Working with Concepts

Foundational Essays by David Collier, with Research Notes on Innovation in the Field

Edited by
ZACHARY ELKINS
University of Texas at Austin

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 08:04:40, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009551250

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009551274
DOI: 10.1017/9781009551250

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception of the Creative Commons
version the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781009551250
under a Creative Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC 4.0 which permits
re-use, distribution and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial
purposes providing appropriate credit to the original work is given and any
changes made are indicated. To view a copy of this license visit
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009551250

First published 2026

Cover image: Front cover design and images by Yellin Yuye Lin

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

*A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the
Library of Congress*

ISBN 978-1-009-55127-4 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-55130-4 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal,
56, 1°, 28003 Madrid, Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 08:04:40, subject to the
Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009551250