Instance Variable:

Physical, Logical, or Both?

This document describes discussion within the Data Description group regarding the best way of using the Instance Variable class in the DDI 4 model. Currently, there is a 4-level “cascade”:

Conceptual Variable (UnitType, Concept)

Referenced by: Represented Variable (adds substantive Codes and Categories, and sentinel Categories)

Referenced by: Instance Variable (adds a value and a Population, provides codes for sentinel categories)

Referenced by: Value Mapping (adds information about physical layout at the variable level)

There were two viewpoints, which as such things can be, were mutually exclusive:

One group felt that the Instance Variable is more at the physical than the logical level. The argument behind this is that the experience of DDI Lifecycle is that maintaining parallel logical and physical objects in tandem is difficult and annoying. The proposed change was to move the properties of Value Mapping up to the Instance Variable.

The alternate view was that DDI has always maintained the distinction between physical and logical, and that the Instance Variable should contain no physical information (the codes for sentinel values).

No decision was made, but it was felt that a discussion should include a broader group of people within the DDI 4 development.