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How to Craft Intermediate Categories of Political Regimes

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The notion of convergence around a single political model, a matter of much discussion in the heady days of 1989, increasingly seems to run counter to political realities in the post-Cold War era.¹ Thus, even as scholars have recognized the unprecedented shift toward democracy—for the first time in history it is credible to claim that more than half the countries in the world fulfill the requisites of a minimalist definition of democracy—they have also grappled with the variety of ways that politics is practiced around the globe. One important strand of thinking has focused on the quality of democracy (O’Donnell 2004, Diamond and Morlino 2004, Munck 2004: 450-56). Another potentially fruitful literature, which serves as the point of reference for this chapter, has focused on cases that have been variously characterized as instances of semi-democracy (Case 1996), illiberal democracy (Zakaria 1997), semi-authoritarianism (Ottaway 2003), authoritarian democracy (Sakwa 1998), competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2002), electoral authoritarianism (Schedler 2002a) or, more generically, hybrid regimes (Karl 1995, Diamond 2002).

¹ This paper is forthcoming in a volume edited by Andreas Schedler, *Unfree Competition: Rulers and Opposition Parties under Electoral Authoritarianism*. I would like to thank Richard Snyder for extensive feedback on this paper.

This literature on hybrid regimes seeks to exploit a key insight: a considerable number of countries seem to be neither fully democratic nor blatantly authoritarian and thus are best characterized with intermediate categories. Yet, even as this literature calls attention to the broad variety of current political regimes and exposes the limitations of concepts that are conventionally used to describe political practices, it suffers from its own problems. Methodologically, it tends to ignore standard practices that have been refined in the literature on measurement and that for some time have been used to generate large-N data sets on regimes and democracy. Substantively, it largely overlooks an established theoretical literature on democracy and political parties that offers key insights relevant to the methodological choices involved in the creation of measures that envisage intermediate categories. In short, though this literature focuses on a real world problem of great import, it has still not proposed a clear and methodologically appropriate way to generate data, let alone presented systematic data that could be used to conduct a rigorous empirical analysis.

This chapter seeks to show how the insight at the heart of the literature on hybrid regimes might be developed by focusing on the methodological issues involved in crafting intermediary categories of political regime. It emphasizes basic issues regarding the methodology of measurement. But it also argues that new thinking about core methodological issues is called for. Specifically, the central point of this chapter is that the measurement of each regime dimension requires an appreciation of the fundamental role of equivalence/difference relationships that upsets the deeply ingrained perception that researchers must choose between measures that highlight distinctions of kind or of degree. A secondary point is that more attention needs to be given to the decisions involved

in the aggregation of measures of multiple regime dimensions and to how these decisions revolve around a distinct type of part/whole relationships. These are complicated matters and it is important to be sensitive to the manner in which methodological discussions can turn into a long detour that slows down progress in responding to pressing questions about politics. But it is equally important to recognize that circumventing methodological issues most likely leads to unwarranted knowledge claims. Thus, it is advisable to tackle these methodological questions head on and to build on the accomplishments of existing scholarship, drawing whenever possible on clues offered in the substantive literature as to how various methodological choices might be confronted.

1. Drawing Boundaries and Establishing Intermediate Categories: Some Preliminary Considerations

From a methodological perspective, a central issue raised by the recent literature on hybrid regimes concerns the identification of thresholds that establish boundaries between categories and between cases and, relatedly, the development of measures that include multiple thresholds and thus entail intermediate categories and cases. This is, of course, not a new issue in political science. After all, Aristotle's classical typology is based on a dichotomous distinction regarding the use of power (the common good vs. private interest) and a tricotomous distinction regarding the number of power holders (one vs. few vs. many). But students of political regimes have still to address in a satisfactory way the methodological issues that are relevant to drawing boundaries and exploring intermediate categories.

One of the main obstacles to devising better measures of political regimes and, hence, to improving our ability to describe regimes in a systematic and nuanced manner,

is the widely held view that scholars face a choice between generating dichotomous and continuous measures (Collier and Adcock 1999). The oft-repeated phrase that there are distinctions “of kind” and “of degree,” and that they should not be confused, indicates how deeply this stark choice is ingrained in current thinking. Even self-consciously methodological discussions of measurement focus on the pros and cons of choosing dichotomous or continuous measures without ever addressing the wisdom of this dichotomous choice. Yet this supposedly critical choice is based on a false dilemma fallacy.

This fallacy is rooted in a failure to grasp a deceptively simple point: the most basic decision in measurement, the drawing of a boundary that establishes an equivalence/difference relationship, underlies *each and every level of measurement that could possibly be used in constructing a scale*. Indeed, all measures involve first and foremost classifications that distinguish between cases that are relatively similar to each other and relatively different from other cases in terms of some category. Understanding this point is critical to grasping why, in fact, scholars do not have to weigh the virtues of dichotomous vs. continuous measures and why, as Carl Hempel (1952: 54-57) argued, it is always preferable to have more advanced, higher-level measures.

Put in different terms, measurement *is* quantification because it consists of assigning numbers to objects according to rules. Yet measurement is also necessarily qualitative, because each number, inasmuch as it is theoretically interpretable, can always be linked to a class of phenomena. Thus, the proper distinction to draw among scales concerns not whether the scales are qualitative (i.e., “of kind”) or quantitative (i.e., “of degree”), but rather the mathematical properties of the relationship among the numbers.

Indeed, efforts to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative scales lack meaning and are based on arbitrary choices.² It follows that, even if we should not strive to “replace qualitative distinctions by quantitative ones” (Cohen and Nagel 1934: 290), because quantitative distinctions are necessarily rooted in qualitative ones, assuming that all measures are of equal validity, higher level measures are always preferable because they offer more information than lower level measures.

--- FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE ---

With these basic points about measurement in mind, the following discussion seeks to show how this false dilemma fallacy can be overcome. It focuses on Robert Dahl’s (1971: 6-7) concept of political regime, disaggregated into the twin dimensions of participation and contestation (Figure 1). Thus, it takes the choice of conceptual attributes used to define a political regime as a given. Moreover, the discussion is further circumscribed because it treats participation and contestation in fairly narrow terms, as involving the right of suffrage and the right to compete in elections respectively. The point is not to offer a full assessment of how to measure political regimes but, rather, to highlight how the introduction of thresholds, or cut-off points, generates categories that provide a foundation for increasingly more powerful scales of participation and contestation.

2. Disaggregate Measures: Building on Equivalence/Difference Relationships

2. i. Participation: The Right of Suffrage

² Sartori’s (1976: 273-99) strongest argument for separating distinctions of kind from distinctions of degree, and for using this distinction as a basis for separating classification from quantitative measurement, is that certain thresholds pinpoint discontinuous, exogenous change whereas others identify continuous, endogenous change. As suggestive as this idea may be, no change is either entirely driven by exogenous or endogenous forces and, thus, the distinction collapses.

The construction of a scale of participation that uses the right of suffrage as an indicator can take as its starting point a threshold that distinguishes cases that do not allow elections or do not recognize the right of suffrage from cases that allow elections and recognize the right of suffrage to some degree (see Scale I in Figure 2). Note that this is not a simple dichotomy, in that it includes information about order but is also based on the identification of an endpoint, the absence of the right of suffrage.³ But this 2-point ordinal scale with an endpoint has a stark limitation: it relies on a definition *a contrario*, that is, by contrast, and thus generates a residual category—“electoral regime”—that does not differentiate among varieties of electoral regimes. It is quite easy, however, to improve on this simple scale.

--- FIGURE 2 AROUND HERE ---

More nuanced scales can be built by adding points to this ordinal scale. One way to do this is by identifying thresholds that subdivide the category electoral regime. For example, by using universal male suffrage as a threshold, the category of electoral regime can be replaced by two, more informative categories: “male-based electoral regime” and “cross-gender electoral regime.” Another way to build a more discriminating scale is to add a second endpoint, the full presence of the right of suffrage.⁴ In this case, the resulting scale is a closed scale, anchored at either endpoint by the categories of authoritarianism and democracy, electoral regime serving as an intermediary category.

³ Scales can establish relationships of order (e.g. 1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high), relationships of distance (e.g. 2 = midpoint between 1 and 3), or involve the identification of the endpoints of a scale (e.g. 0 = absence, 1 = full presence).

⁴ The full presence of the right of suffrage is harder to define than the absence of the right of suffrage due to ongoing debates about who should be included in the *demos* and who should have the right to vote. But there is nevertheless a sound theoretical basis for defining full suffrage (Dahl 1989: Ch. 9). In other words, even if the standards countries adopt change over time and old problems may take new forms, there is still a basis for defining in abstract terms what is meant by full suffrage in a manner that will stand the test of time and will not lead to censoring at the high end of the scale.

Thus, starting with an ordinal scale with just one endpoint, improvements are made either by subdividing the category of electoral regime or setting an upper bound to it (see Scales II and III in Figure 2).

These two basic strategies—building ordinal scales with either one or two endpoints—can be pushed further by introducing more thresholds and thus developing ordinal scales that include further information. Indeed, fairly sophisticated measures can be obtained using these relative simple strategies. But neither strategy can be used to identify the threshold that marks a boundary between authoritarian and democratic levels of participation. This boundary has a special status. Indeed, it has long figured prominently in theorizing about democratization. Thus, the need for even more powerful scales is apparent.

The task of identifying a threshold separating authoritarian from democratic levels of participation can be articulated quite easily. What is needed is a new type of scale, one that involves not just ordered categories but, more demandingly, categories that are separated by *equal intervals of distance*. Or, more specifically, what is needed is the identification of a midpoint between the endpoints defined by the absence and full presence of the right of suffrage. The practical difficulties of actually identifying this threshold are quite great, however.

These difficulties can be seen in a cursory review of just a few efforts to determine at what point the extent of the right of suffrage crosses from an authoritarian to a democratic level. On the low end are proposals that this threshold should be established at 25 or 30 per cent of the adult population or, more precisely, when the proportion of adult males with the right to vote reaches 50 per cent (Huntington 1991: 16, Boix 2003:

66) or 60 per cent (Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992: 303). On the high end are suggestions that the threshold should be set at 90 per cent of all adults (Dahl 1971: 232-33, 246-48).⁵ In light of these disparate views and the explicit claim by some authors that their choice of threshold is arbitrary (Vanhanen 2000: 257),⁶ one might legitimately wonder whether it is possible to build a scale that distinguishes authoritarian from democratic levels of participation. But we do have some useful leads for dealing with this thorny problem.

First, the literature offers some guidance concerning the most vital issue: the theoretical grounds for making a decision about the location of the threshold that distinguishes authoritarian from democratic levels of participation. What is at stake in the extension of the right of suffrage is whether the views of groups likely to have conflicting interests are included or excluded from the political process (Dahl 1971: 28-29, 246-47, 1998: 76-78; Valenzuela 1985: 28-35, 2001: 251-56). Moreover, democratic theory provides good reasons for defining the threshold separating authoritarian from democratic levels of participation in terms of the extension of the right to vote to *two groups*, one of which must be a mass, non-elite group. These are important insights and they can be formalized in a fairly simple coding rule (see Scale IV in Figure 2).

Second, various attempts at measurement offer lessons regarding how this core insight might be further operationalized. In this regard it is important to emphasize that

⁵ Dahl (1971: 232, 248) does not explicitly state what percentage of adults with the right to vote he uses to distinguish “near polyarchies” from “non polyarchies,” the relevant threshold. Nonetheless, the exclusion of Ecuador from his list of near polyarchies seems to be based on its failure to extend the suffrage to 90 per cent of all adults.

⁶ An additional issue is the proposal by the same authors of different thresholds. For example, Vanhanen (2000: 257, 2004: 19) uses a threshold linked with actual voter participation in elections and has set it either at 10, 15 or 20 per cent of the entire population. The usual rationale for using different standards—that democratic standards regarding the right to vote change over time—reflects a relativist fallacy and thus is highly dubious. Though an interesting topic for a study of changing public opinion, the issue of changing standards has no place in measurement exercises.

the shortcoming of the standard approach, which is to pinpoint the key threshold in terms of a fixed percentage of citizens who enjoy the right to vote. The problem is that such a landmark is unlikely to travel well across countries, for what is at stake is not just a certain percentage of potential adult voters or male adult voters, or even the extension of the right to vote to a certain percentage of the working class.⁷ Indeed, cross-national variation in the structure of societies and the relative salience of non-class cleavages will alter the precise percentage of enfranchisement that would guarantee that the right to vote has been extended to at least two groups, one of which is a mass, non-elite group. Thus, establishing equivalent indicators requires that we get beyond the commonly employed, yet deceptively simple, criterion of identifying a certain percentage of the adult population that can vote.⁸

2. ii. Contestation: The Right to Compete

Measuring contestation, understood here in terms of the right to compete in elections, involves a distinct set of challenges. And responding adequately to these challenges is central to research on regimes. Contestation is the aspect of regimes that is at the heart of some of the most significant contemporary political struggles. Indeed, as

⁷ An understanding of society as divided into social classes offers a justification for taking the working class' right to vote as an indicator that divergent views, including those of mass, non-elite segments of the population, are being included (Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992: 303, 47-48). But it is necessary to consider whether this model of society, which has offered a solid basis for thinking about democratization in Western Europe and Latin America, can be used without adjustment in other societies, or whether ethnic, gender, linguistic, religious or territorial identities would have to be considered on a par with class identities.

⁸ The problem of distinguishing authoritarian from democratic levels of participation can be solved with a dichotomous scale in which a 0 would refer to everything on one side of the threshold that distinguishes authoritarian from democratic levels of participation, and a 1 would refer to everything on the other side of this threshold. Nonetheless, the value of more nuanced measures should be underscored. For example, focusing only on the democratic side of such a scale, the proposed "two-group" threshold between authoritarian and democratic levels of participation can be crossed without women having the right to vote, without minority groups enjoying the right to vote, and even with significant shares of majority groups lacking the right to vote. Therefore, it is normatively important to record systematically the progressive inclusion of different groups into the polity, and it is analytically important to construct scales that allow us to test the causes and effects of the exclusion/inclusion of different groups.

formal and overt restrictions on the right of suffrage become harder to sustain politically, variation in political regimes today appears to hinge increasingly on the rules and conditions under which actors compete for access to political power (Przeworski 1991: 10, Przeworski et al. 2000: 15-16).⁹

Moving directly to the task of constructing a scale with two endpoints, it is relatively easy to anchor the scale by defining the absence and full presence of contestation. On the one hand, the absence of the right to compete in elections is indicated by the lack of elections or, alternatively, by elections in which only candidates from one party can run.¹⁰ On the other hand, the full presence of contestation is denoted by elections in which only anti-system extremist groups are banned.¹¹ However, building a scale of contestation that adds further information is a complicated task.

Some important insights can be drawn from the literature, especially with regard to a criterion for establishing the half-way point between these two endpoints. As various authors have stressed, the critical threshold that distinguishes authoritarian from democratic patterns of contestation hinges not only on parties and candidates losing elections but, more precisely, on the *possibility* of all parties and candidates losing elections.¹² This point clarifies what is theoretically at stake and offers a handy way to define coding rules (see Figure 3). Moreover, by highlighting how measurement decisions ultimately rest on an assessment of a “non-event”—usually framed as the

⁹ The extent of variation in recent times on the participation dimension, understood in narrow electoral terms, is a matter of some dispute. Certainly elections were held without the full extension of the suffrage to all adults even after the end of World War II. Moreover, a variety of formal and non-formal barriers to the effective use of the right to vote continue to be of relevance, especially inasmuch as they are targeted against certain classes of citizens. See, for example, Boneo and Torres Rivas (2001) on Guatemala.

¹⁰ This would correspond to what Sartori (1976: Ch. 2, 221-30) calls no-party states and one-party states.

¹¹ On the democratic nature of such bans, see Linz (1978: 6) and Hermet (1982: 25).

¹² On this point, see Sartori (1976: 217-21), Linz (1978: 6), Hermet (1982: 26), Rouquié (1982a: 58), O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 57, 61), Przeworski (1991: 10), and Przeworski et al. (2000: 15-18).

possibility of an incumbent's electoral defeat that did not, in fact, transpire—it also offers a basis for distinguishing unproductive from fruitful attempts to measure contestation.¹³

--- FIGURE 3 AROUND HERE ---

An example of an unproductive proposal is one that seeks to pinpoint this key threshold in terms of the percentage of votes garnered by the winning party. Such a proposal fails because it simply does not capture the concept of interest, confusing competition with competitiveness (Sartori 1976: 218-19). In addition, such a proposal is likely to lead to frequent misclassifications, either by counting as competitive elections that are not or by counting as noncompetitive elections that are actually competitive.¹⁴ In contrast, an example of a fruitful attempt to measure contestation is Giovanni Sartori's (1976: 192-201, 230-38, 283) distinction between systems with a "hegemonic party" that permits other parties to exist but only as "second class, licensed parties," thus foreclosing the possibility of an electoral loss by the hegemonic party, from a "predominant party system," where parties other than the predominant party exist and contest elections, yet, in spite of the possibility of winning elections, fail to defeat the incumbent party.¹⁵ Thus,

¹³ Framing the question in terms of the possibility of an incumbent's electoral defeat amounts to equating contestation to a matter of the right of opposition. The reason for highlighting this right is that the government is seen as having an intrinsic advantage in terms of access to resources, including the power to coerce (Dahl 1966: xiv-xv), and this chapter essentially adopts this perspective. But its limitations should be noted: it is conceivable that opposition forces are stronger than the government and thus important to consider potential abuses of democratic norms of competition by both the government and the opposition

¹⁴ For example, if one adopts the criterion that elections can be considered democratic if the winning party wins less than 70 per cent of the vote (Vanhanen 2000: 257), elections would be classified as democratic even if a party won election after election with 69 per cent of the vote, committed blatant fraud and never relinquished power. Likewise, such a criterion would misclassify cases of democratic elections where winners win more than 70 per cent in verifiably free elections.

¹⁵ On this basis, two systems that fail to meet the easy tests of whether or not contestation exists (i.e., no elections or no parties indicating "no contestation," and electoral loss by an incumbent indicating "contestation") can be classified as systems with a hegemonic party, if they fall on the authoritarian side of the contestation scale, or, alternatively, as predominant party systems, if they fall on the democratic side of the scale.

this clarification of what needs to be measured helps researchers avoid dead ends and identify contributions that provide a foundation that can be built on.¹⁶

These important leads notwithstanding, two important challenges remain to be tackled adequately. One concerns the basis for judging whether or not the possibility of a loss by incumbents exists. Adam Przeworski and his collaborators (2000: 23-28) offer a useful discussion of the difficulties of making coding decisions in the absence of clear observables, and their proposed coding rule for getting around this problem—the “alternation rule”—is a valuable point of reference. But it falls short of providing a solid basis for coding. Specifically, the proposal to use information in a retroactive manner gives more weight to the certainty of the information at hand than to the direct relevance of the information.¹⁷ Indeed, it would probably be a mistake to use the indisputable evidence that the PRI relinquished power in Mexico in 2000 to infer that it was equally willing to have given up power in the past, in spite of obvious evidence to the contrary, such as the reports of fraud in 1988 or the decision by the opposition to boycott the 1976 election. Thus, with regard to the central issue of assessing whether or not the possibility of a loss by incumbents exists, further work is needed to establish criteria for systematically using all available information and to weight the reliability of this information.¹⁸

¹⁶ Other valuable efforts, which frame the issue in terms of the possibility of parties losing elections, include Hermet (1982) and Przeworski et al. (2000: 14-29).

¹⁷ Przeworski et al. (2000: 24-25) argue that if a ruling party relinquishes power after winning several successive elections, this serves as proof that the rulers would have accepted electoral defeat in all elections held since they first came to power. Likewise, a ruling party that holds elections yet subsequently closes down the electoral process, is considered *not* to have faced the possibility of a loss in the prior elections.

¹⁸ A relevant concept that is used by observers of elections is that of credible elections, as assessed by the degree to which domestic actors accept electoral results. Other useful insights can be gleaned from Hartlyn, McCoy and Mustillo’s (2003) effort to measure the “quality” of elections.

A second challenge concerns the development of a scale of contestation that adequately distinguishes among degrees of contestation that lie on the democratic side of the threshold separating authoritarian from democratic levels of contestation. This is a significant gap in current research. After all, existing scales either simply distinguish contested from non-contested elections (Przeworski et al. 2000: 28-29) or, if they go further, only introduce distinctions among cases with non-democratic forms of contestation (Sartori 1976: 283, Hermet 1982: 27-29). Yet the need for such nuanced measures is suggested by the multiple ways in which contestation can be restricted short of totally preventing the possibility of an electoral loss by incumbents. Some restrictions operate through legal restrictions on parties and candidates, including bans on the formation of parties or on their right to compete in elections, bans on certain classes of candidates (e.g., based on class, racial, or gender characteristics), and bans on specific candidates. Others manifest themselves in failures by the state to guarantee the conditions for contested elections, such as the physical safety of candidates and their right to campaign throughout the entire territory of a country. But all these restrictions undercut the democratic principle that all citizens should be eligible to be both electors and candidates and, in turn, that all candidates should have the opportunity to reach voters with their message and run for office on a level playing field. Thus, the implications of these restrictions for a scale of contestation cannot be taken lightly.

The range of variation produced by these restrictions is unlikely to fit easily in the category of “semi-democratic” contestation (see Figure 3). For example, the banning of the communist party in Chile in the late 1940s and early 1950s was of a different scope than the banning of the Peronist party in Argentina and of APRA in Peru in many

elections from the 1930s through the 1960s. Likewise, the assassination of presidential front-runners, such as Galán in Colombia in 1989 or Colosio in Mexico in 1994, had a different impact than the assassination of party activists. To capture such distinctions, a scale with further thresholds would have to be constructed. Yet how such new thresholds might be best established remains largely an unexplored matter.¹⁹

In sum, the development of scales of participation and contestation hinges on complex methodological choices, many of which can be illuminated by an established theoretical literature and many of which remain to be addressed in future work. The tasks at hand, to be sure, are quite demanding. But the pitfalls of short-cuts, usually associated with the identification of an easily observable quantitative milestone, are also apparent. Unless the methodological choices discussed above are consciously confronted and each decision is duly justified, one of the most basic goals of the social sciences—the elaboration of theoretically meaningful and systematic descriptions—will not be fulfilled.

3. Aggregate Measures: Adding Part/Whole Relationships to the Picture

Measurement can involve, in addition to the construction of scales as those just discussed, the creation of composite measures. The distinction between disaggregate and aggregate measures is frequently overlooked and the issues involved in generating composite measures are poorly understood. Hence, it is worth considering how, having disaggregated a concept (e.g. political regime) into distinct parts (e.g. participation and

¹⁹ Beyond these blatant restrictions, further work is needed on a range of regulations that affect the conditions of entry into, and success in, the game of political competition. These regulations include thresholds for the formation and continued recognition of parties, bans on candidates that are independent of parties and, probably most importantly, the rules of party and campaign financing. Talk in the United States of a “money primary” that narrows the field of candidates before voters cast their first vote in a caucus or primary attests to the impact of money on electoral competition.

contestation) and measured these parts, one might proceed from these partial measures to generate a measure of the whole. To this end, three issues deserve consideration.

The first issue is whether it is even desirable to reduce multiple measures into one single measure. Aggregation entails a gain in parsimony that is offset by a loss of information. Thus, what is critical to assess is how great the loss is and whether it is worth incurring. This can be done by considering the underlying dimensionality of the measures that are candidates for aggregation and by assessing how closely correlated the disaggregate data are. The idea is quite simple. In terms of the example in Figure 4, the closer the data are aligned on the diagonal line linking the bottom left corner to the top right corner of the property space, the more correlated the data are,²⁰ and the less a loss of information is incurred in aggregation or, in other words, the less the view of the trees will get lost in the picture of the forest.

--- FIGURE 4 AROUND HERE ---

An assessment of the relationship between the dimensions of contestation and participation goes beyond the scope of this paper. But the implication of some empirical studies deserves mention. Dahl (1971: 33-40) emphasizes the alternative paths to polyarchy countries have followed, contrasting the way in which contestation and participation were variously sequenced in England, France and Germany. And subsequent works offers further evidence that progress along the dimensions of contestation and participation does not fit one single pattern (Higley and Gunther 1992, Dix 1994, Dogan and Higley 1998, Collier 1999). Thus, some research suggests that these dimensions are weakly correlated and that the common tendency to reduce complex

²⁰ In the example in Figure 4, the data might be represented as follows (0,0; 1,1; 2,2; 3,3), indicating that the scores on one dimension perfectly predict the scores on the other dimension and thus are perfectly correlated.

data to a single aggregate measure comes at a cost. At the very least, the trade-off in pursuing parsimony should be recognized.

A second issue, if a decision to aggregate is taken, concerns the rule of aggregation that is used. This issue hinges on the way the relationship between the indicators used to measure a concept and the concept being measured is theorizing. The broadest options are to consider indicators either as “effect” or “cause” indicators of the concept, that is, as indicators that are generated by or that influence the concept being measured (Bollen and Lennox 1991).²¹ Moreover, if the indicators are seen as “cause” indicators, standard options to specify the relationship between indicators and concept include linear or nonlinear models. Thus, the decision to aggregate the measures of multiple regime dimensions opens up an inescapable set of choices that should be deliberately confronted and justified.²²

Finally, another issue concerns the interpretation of aggregate data. At least three distinct inputs affect the data and must be kept in mind. The interpretation of aggregate data depends first and foremost on the initial construction of valid and interpretable scales for the disaggregate dimensions. It is affected by the degree of correlation among the disaggregate data and complicated by the lack of a strong correlation—the lower the correlation, the less a particular aggregate score will correspond to a unique configuration at the disaggregate level. And it also hinges on the theory that is invoked to justify the

²¹ Of course, a third possibility is that indicators are both a cause and an effect of the concept being measured.

²² Numerous scholars have seen indicators of contestation and participation as “cause” indicators and, more specifically, as necessary conditions (Dahl 1971: 2, 1998: 38, 84, 93, 99; Przeworski et al. 2000: 28-29; Mainwaring et al. 2001: 41, 47-48; Valenzuela 2001: 252; Schedler 2002b). Thus, an important degree of consensus has developed regarding this issue. But it is important to emphasize that much hinges on the specific indicators used to measure contestation and participation. For example, if participation is measured in terms of the right to vote, one might consider it a necessary condition. However, if participation is measured in terms of voter turnout, the theoretical justification for considering it a necessary condition would be significantly weaker.

choice of an aggregation rule—as a result of different rule of aggregation, the same aggregate score can again correspond to different configurations at the disaggregate level. In short, aggregate data are summaries, which synthesize various distinct, individually intricate inputs, and the interpretation of aggregate data requires attention to each of these inputs.

4. Conclusion

Abraham Kaplan (1964: 24-25) warned about “the myth of methodology,” the view that “the most serious difficulties which confront behavioral sciences are ‘methodological,’” and he associated this myth with an unhealthy diversion of efforts from substantive to methodological problems. This warning may, in many circumstances, be relevant, and the statement that “methodology is very far from being a sufficient condition for scientific achievement” is certainly accurate (Kaplan 1964: 24). There is plenty of methodologically sophisticated work that is substantively flat and offers superficial, trivial results. But Kaplan’s (1964: 24) admonition to resist “the notion that the cultivation of methodology is...necessary...for successful scientific endeavor” goes too far. Indeed, good research depends on the marriage of methodological and substantive knowledge and, thus, one of the necessary conditions for scientific progress is the availability and proper use of adequate methodological tools.

The implications of the methodological questions addressed in this chapter are quite direct, affecting how we describe the world, the questions we choose to ask, and the way we learn about these questions. For a long time the literature on regimes and democracy has insisted that scholars face a choice between analyzing democratization

with dichotomous or continuous measures. And this choice has led to the development of two literatures that do not talk to each other very much. But this choice is a false dilemma which, with due attention to certain methodological issues, can be overcome. Although there is merit to the claim that the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime is distinctive and marks a kind of political quantum leap, acknowledging this point does not, in fact, require that democracy be treated as a dichotomous variable. Rather, the insight behind this notion of a quantum leap can be retained at the same time that we develop more nuanced measures that allow us to analyze democratization as a process consisting of multiple thresholds.

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Figure 1. Dahl's Regime Property Space. An Adaptation

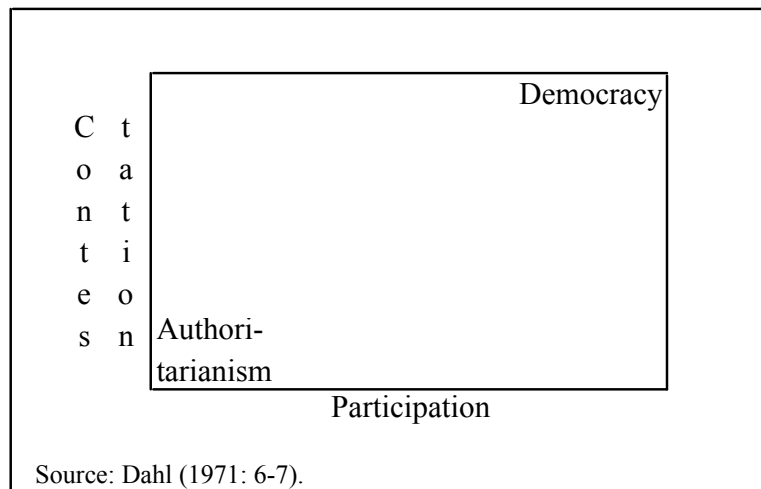


Figure 2. Participation Scales

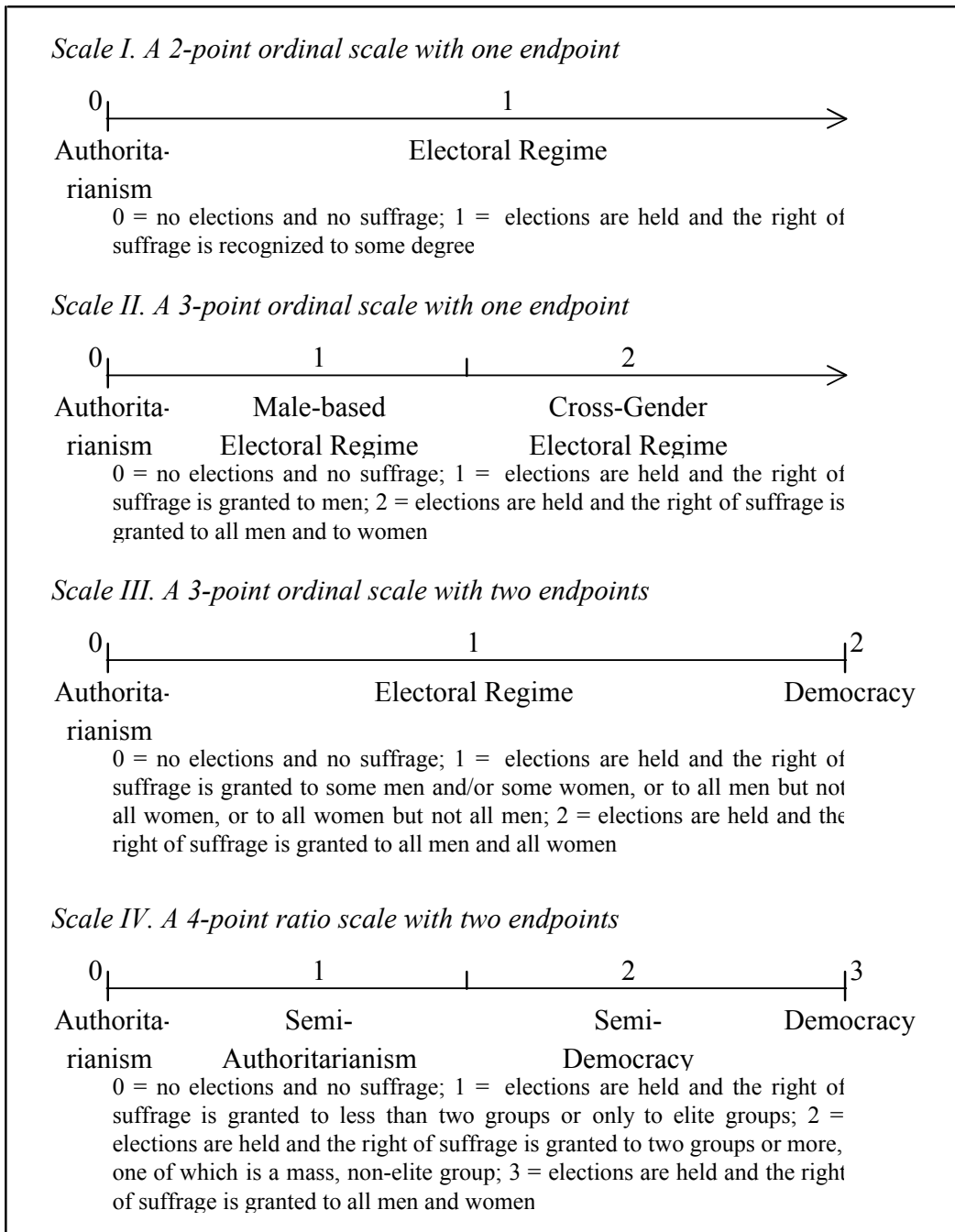


Figure 3. Contestation. A 4-point Ratio Scale with Two Endpoints

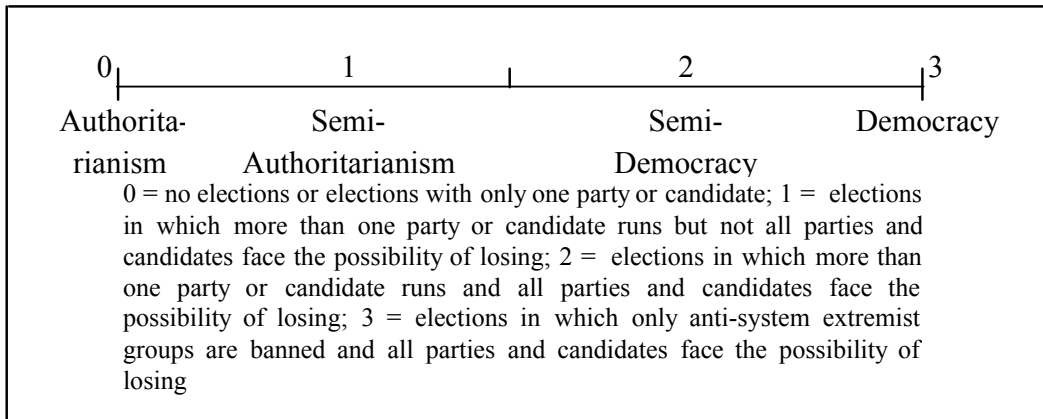


Figure 4. Aggregation and Dimensionality

