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Democracy with Adjectives

Conceptual Hierarchies in Comparative Research

David Collier and Steven Levitsky

The global wave of democratization in the final decades of the twentieth century presented scholars with the challenge of conceptualizing a diverse array of post-authoritarian regimes. The national political regimes in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the former communist world that emerged in the democratic third wave (Huntington 1991) exhibited important attributes of democracy. Yet these regimes differed profoundly both from each other and from the democratic regimes of advanced industrial countries. Indeed, scholars considered many not to be fully democratic.[1]

This chapter argues that researchers responded to this challenge by pursuing two potentially contradictory goals. On the one hand, they attempted to increase *analytic differentiation* in order to capture the diverse regimes that had emerged. On the other hand, they sought to avoid the *conceptual stretching* that may occur when the concept of democracy is extended to cases for which, by relevant scholarly standards, it is not appropriate (Sartori 1970; Collier and Mahon 1993).[2] The result was a proliferation of alternative conceptual forms, including a surprising number of subtypes involving democracy with adjectives.[3] Examples from among the hundreds of subtypes that appeared in the scholarly literature were neopatrimonial, illiberal, delegative, managed, and low-intensity democracy.

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[1] Schedler (2002) writes of the "foggy zone" with regard to regime types. See also the other articles in the April 2002 issue of the *Journal of Democracy* on hybrid regimes.

[2] See Chapter 1, this volume.

[3] A parallel expression, "democracy without adjectives," appeared in debates in Latin America among observers concerned with the persistence of incomplete and qualified forms of democracy (see, for instance, Krauze 1986).

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The proliferation of subtypes occurred despite efforts by leading analysts to standardize usage based on procedural definitions of democracy, in the tradition of Joseph Schumpeter (1947) and Robert A. Dahl (1971). This standardization succeeded in important respects. Yet as democratization continued and attention focused on an increasingly diverse set of cases, scholars introduced even more subtypes and additional conceptual innovations. The resulting conceptual confusion served as a strong reminder that tools for understanding and clarifying concepts are crucial to the social science enterprise.

We seek to refine available tools for concept analysis, focusing on the concepts employed in studies of democracy at the level of national political regimes, with particular attention to work on Latin America. The goal is to examine the strategies of conceptual innovation that emerged and to explore tradeoffs among them. Our perspective builds on the fundamental contributions of Sartori, at the same time that it is in part a sharp departure from his approach.

This chapter (1) introduces a framework for analyzing two forms of conceptual hierarchy that are central to these strategies – the *kind hierarchy* associated with *classical subtypes* of democracy, and the *part–whole hierarchy* associated with *diminished subtypes* of democracy. Next, we (2) address the *root concept* of democracy in this literature, that is, the basic conception of democracy that animated this research. We then go on to examine specific forms of conceptual innovation: (3) moving up and down a kind hierarchy, (4) moving down a part–whole hierarchy, (5) shifting the overarching concept, and (6) changing the definition of democracy itself, which involves making explicit features of democracy that might otherwise be taken for granted.

A central objective of the chapter is to encourage more careful definition and use of concepts. This is an important goal, given that the diverse conceptual forms examined here typically were central to the researchers' main substantive arguments. These concepts served as data containers (Sartori 1970: 1039), grouping together cases that fit within the boundaries of a given concept. In order adequately to describe these newly formed regimes, these data containers had to be employed with care.

Improved description, in turn, was essential for assessing the causes and consequences of democracy – a central goal in this literature. Many studies treated democracy as an outcome to be explained, including major works of comparative-historical analysis and studies focused on the "social requisites" of different regime types.[4] Other analyses looked at the impact of democracy – and specific types of democracy – on economic growth, income distribution, economic liberalization and adjustment, and international conflict.[5]

[4] Lipset (1959, 1994), Moore (1966), Luebbert (1991), Rueschemeyer et al. (1992), Londregan and Poole (1996), and Przeworski and Limongi (1997).

[5] Bollen and Jackman (1985), Remmer (1986), Stallings and Kaufman (1989), Sirowy and Inkeles (1990), Przeworski and Limongi (1993), Russett (1993), Stepan and Skach (1993), Linz and Valenzuela (1994), O'Donnell (1994), and Brown et al. (1996).

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In these studies, the results of causal assessment could be strongly influenced by the definition of democracy employed.[6] We hope that the present discussion serves as a step toward greater consistency and clarity of meaning, which in turn will provide a more adequate basis for assessing causal relationships.

HIERARCHIES

Conceptual hierarchies have long played a key role in comparative research. Giovanni Sartori's classic work reshaped thinking about comparison by formulating the idea of a *ladder of generality* (Sartori calls this the ladder of abstraction: see Glossary). This ladder or hierarchy – which posits a vertical array of concepts – was crucial in efforts to pursue the twofold goal of increasing analytic differentiation and avoiding conceptual stretching. The present analysis focuses centrally on this form of hierarchy, which will be referred to as a kind hierarchy. In addition, we will look at a parallel – yet quite different – form of hierarchy, the part–whole hierarchy.[7] This section briefly introduces this distinction, which is then extensively developed throughout this chapter.

Kind Hierarchies and Classical Subtypes

A kind hierarchy is a nested set of concepts in which the subordinate concepts or subtypes represent a qualitative variant of the superordinate concepts. These are called *classical subtypes* (Lakoff 1987: *passim*; Taylor 2003: chap. 2). Each subordinate concept has the attributes of the superordinate concept, *plus* attributes that differentiate it. An example is Sartori's (1970: 1042) discussion of conceptual choices in the field of comparative administration, which in important respects draws on Weber. Taking as a point of departure the concept of administration, we may argue that bureaucracy is a kind of administration, and civil service is a kind of bureaucracy. Looking up the hierarchy, administration is in turn a specific kind of staff (Figure 2.1).[8] Collier and Mahon (1993: 846) also suggest an example from Weber:[9] Taking the concept of authority as a point of departure, they observe that traditional authority is a kind of authority, and patrimonial authority is a kind of traditional authority. Again, looking up the hierarchy, authority is a specific type of domination (i.e., it is legitimate domination). Yet another example is

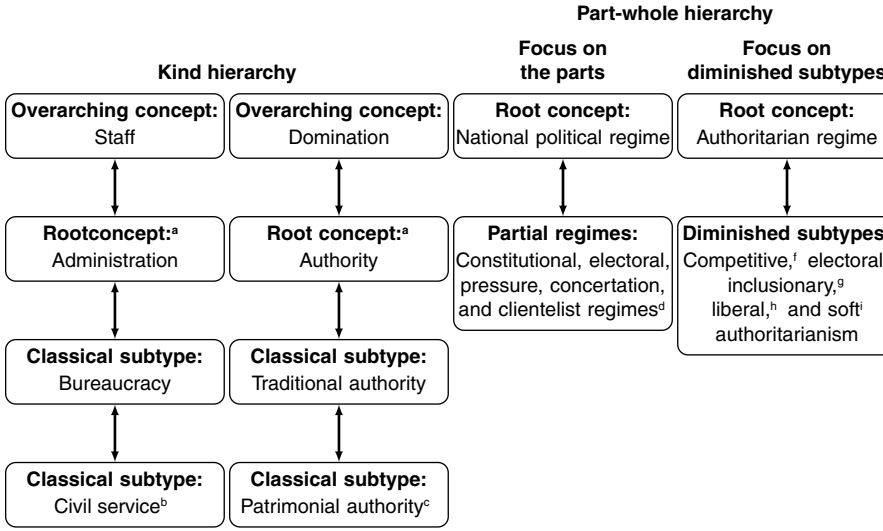
[6] Bollen and Jackman (1989: 613–16), Russett (1993: 15–16), and Paxton (2000).

[7] This distinction can readily be linked to a wider literature on concepts and conceptual change. In linguistics, a kind hierarchy is called a hyponymy, and a part–whole hierarchy a meronymy (Cruse 2004: 148–54). For a discussion of how these two forms of hierarchy play a role in the conceptual change associated with scientific revolutions, see Thaggard (1990, 1992).

[8] That is, staff in Weber's sense, involving the individuals who support the work of a given leader or executive.

[9] For Collier and Mahon, see Chapter 1, this volume.

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[a]Authority and administration are treated here as the root concepts. See discussion in the accompanying text; [b]Sartori (1970: 1042); [c]Weber (1978: 212–254); [d]Schmitter (1992: 426–430); [e]Levitsky and Way (2002); [f]Schedler (2006); [g]Bagley (1984: 125); [h]Jowitt (1999: 225); [i]Means (1996).

FIGURE 2.1 Kind hierarchy and part–whole hierarchy.

found in the literature on corporatism: Corporatism and pluralism are seen as specific types in relation to an overall system of interest intermediation (Schmitter 1977).

In discussing a kind hierarchy, it is helpful to distinguish the root concept, overarching concept, and subtypes. The root concept occupies the level in a conceptual hierarchy that is the central point of reference in a given study or line of analysis. Thus, in the literature cited earlier on corporatism, the root concept is corporatism. In relation to this root concept, the system of interest intermediation is the overarching concept, in that corporatism is a *kind of* in relation to this overarching idea. The subtype is subordinate to the root concept. Following this pattern of overarching concepts and subtypes, analysts can shift up or down the hierarchy as research moves forward.

Three points about kind hierarchies should be underscored here – points that converge with the standard understanding of Sartori's framework.

(1) **Well-bounded concepts.** A key issue arises here concerning well-bounded concepts. Within a kind hierarchy, each classical subtype is deemed a full instance of the superordinate concept. Thus, a federal democracy is fully a democracy, and the subtype incorporates the overall definition of democracy being employed. Assuming that the concept of democracy is well-bounded – a position to which Sartori is strongly committed – then this well-boundedness will carry over to the subtype. As we will see, this stands in sharp contrast to the patterns that emerge with diminished subtypes.

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(2) **Inverse variation**. The relationship among levels in the kind hierarchy is characterized by a pattern of inverse variation.[10] Further down the hierarchy, the concepts have more defining attributes – that is, greater *intension*; and they encompass fewer cases – that is, more limited *extension*. By contrast, further up the hierarchy, concepts have fewer defining attributes and encompass more instances – that is, more limited intension and greater extension.

(3) **Trade-off**. Correspondingly, we find a basic trade-off between avoiding conceptual stretching and achieving more fine-grained analytic differentiation. For instance, in Weber, designating a particular form of rule as domination would avoid the conceptual stretching that could arise from inappropriately calling it a system of authority (i.e., *legitimate* domination). At the same time, designating it as a system of domination provides less analytic differentiation than calling it a system of authority.

Part–Whole Hierarchies and Diminished Subtypes

Part–whole hierarchies build on the idea that we can meaningfully identify *parts of* many phenomena and entities. For example, in Schmitter's (1992: 426 ff.) analysis of "partial regimes," a national political regime has five parts: the constitutional, electoral, pressure, concertation, and clientelist regimes (Figure 2.1).

The idea of part–whole hierarchies is crucial in the present analysis because it is the basis for understanding what we call *diminished subtypes*. Here, the focus is on instances in which one attribute of the root concept is missing – yet other attributes are present. For example, in relation to democracy we find the diminished subtypes of illiberal, oligarchic, and electoral democracy. An illiberal democracy is understood as one in which civil liberties are evaluated as being inadequately protected, but other attributes of democracy are present. This is therefore a diminished subtype.

While the focus of this chapter is on the concept of democracy, these ideas have wide application. For example, we find diminished subtypes of authoritarianism, as with inclusionary or competitive authoritarianism.

Overall, we see important contrasts between kind versus part–whole hierarchies, which may be summarized by the criteria just enumerated in the discussion of classical subtypes.

(1) **Key concepts may not be well-bounded**. In contrast to the subtypes in a kind hierarchy, diminished subtypes do not represent full instances of the superordinate concept. Thus, with an illiberal democracy the element

[10] This pattern of inverse variation is a standard feature of conceptual structure, and for present purposes it is a basic and valuable point of reference. However, in some contexts this inverse pattern does not hold (Copi and Cohen 2002: 116).

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of civil liberties is eliminated or greatly weakened, thereby attenuating the boundary of the concept *democracy*. Given Sartori's argument that democracy is a well-bounded concept, this is an important shift.

(2) **Inverse variation does not hold**. With kind hierarchies, one finds the pattern of inverse variation. Thus, moving to the subtype *increases* the number of defining attributes (intension) and *decreases* the number of cases encompassed by the type (extension) – and conversely. With a part–whole hierarchy, moving to the subtype decreases the number of defining attributes, and it may increase, decrease, or leave unchanged the number of cases, depending on the context of analysis.

(3) **Trade-off eliminated**. Correspondingly, and this is crucial, we no longer face the basic trade-off between achieving more fine-grained analytic differentiation and avoiding conceptual stretching. Diminished subtypes can yield fine-grained differentiation among cases. Yet they also sidestep conceptual stretching. As is clear with the analysis of democracy, the diminished subtypes avoid over-extending the concept of a democratic regime in that they specify that a given case is only a partial instance. This is a great advantage, in comparison with the classical subtypes on which Sartori focused.

Building on these fundamental contrasts, we now explore how these two forms of conceptual hierarchy were employed in research on the third wave of democracy. To do so, we first introduce the definition of democracy that was the point of departure for this literature.

DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

In his famous analysis of essentially contested concepts, W. B. Gallie argued that democracy is "*the* appraisive political concept *par excellence*."[11] Thus, it involves a fundamental component of normative evaluation. Correspondingly, one finds recurring disputes over appropriate meaning and definition. However, the goal of Gallie's analysis was not simply to underscore the importance of such disputes, but to show that recognition of the contested status of a given concept opens the possibility of understanding each meaning within its own framework.

The definition of democracy in the literature on the third wave was anchored in a *procedural minimum* definition, which focused on democratic *procedures*. It was *minimal* in that it deliberately focused on the smallest possible number of attributes that still were seen as producing a viable standard for democracy. Not surprisingly, there was some disagreement about which attributes were needed for the definition to be appropriate. For example,

[11] Gallie (1956: 184, italics in the original). Also Collier, Hidalgo, and Maciuceanu (2006); see Chapter 10, this volume.

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most (but not all) of these scholars differentiated what they viewed as the more specifically political features of the regime from characteristics of the society and economy. They argued that the latter were more appropriately analyzed as potential causes or consequences of democracy, rather than as features of democracy itself (Karl 1990).

The procedural minimum definition most widely used in this literature presumed genuinely contested elections with full suffrage and the absence of massive fraud, combined with effective guarantees of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, and association.[12] However, some variants on this definition were also important. Certain scholars, for example, created an *expanded* procedural minimum definition by adding (in a sense making explicit) the criterion that elected governments must, to a reasonable degree, have effective power to govern vis-à-vis the military and other powerful, nonelected actors. As we will see later, this was a crucial issue in some countries.

STRATEGIES OF CONCEPTUAL INNOVATION

We turn now to specific strategies of innovation. These strategies employed the kind hierarchy and classical subtypes; the part–whole hierarchy and diminished subtypes; shifting the overarching concept within a kind hierarchy; and changing the definition of democracy to encompass features that were not stipulated in the prior definition, but were seen as critical to the wider understanding of the concept.

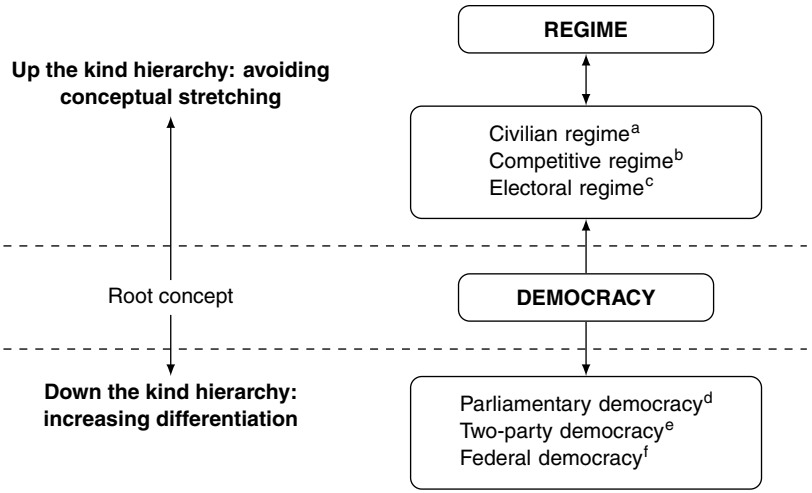
Working with Classical Subtypes in a Kind Hierarchy

As argued in the introduction, key analytic goals in the literature on the third wave were to achieve analytic differentiation among the diverse forms of democracy that emerged, while at the same time avoiding conceptual stretching in analyzing these countries.

In the tradition of Sartori, greater analytic differentiation that captured these diverse forms of democracy could be achieved by moving *down* a kind hierarchy to classical subtypes that had more defining attributes and fit a narrower range of cases. Thus, each concept further down in the hierarchy encompassed all the defining attributes of the concept immediately above it, plus a further differentiating attribute. These subtypes provided more fine-grained distinctions that were often invaluable to the researcher. Earlier, we noted the example of federal democracy – that is, a democracy with the further differentiating attribute of having a federal system (Figure 2.2). Within Latin America, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela had traditionally been understood to have federal systems.

[12] O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 8), Diamond et al. (1989: xvi), and Di Palma (1990: 16); see also Linz (1978: 5).

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[a]Booth (1989: 26); [b]Collier and Collier (1991: 354); [c]Petras and Leiva (1994: 89); [d]Linz (1994: 3); [e]Gasiorowski (1990: 113); [f]Gastil (1990: 35).

FIGURE 2.2 The kind hierarchy: increasing differentiation versus avoiding conceptual stretching.

However, subtypes formed in this manner may leave analysts more vulnerable to conceptual stretching. These subtypes presume that the cases under discussion are full democracies, a condition that may not hold. One standard approach to avoiding this problem is to move up the kind hierarchy to concepts that have fewer defining attributes and correspondingly fit a broader range of cases. For example, if researchers had misgivings as to whether a particular case was really a *democratic* regime, they could move up the hierarchy and simply call it some other type of regime – for example, a *civilian*, *competitive*, or *electoral regime* (Figure 2.2).

An obvious trade-off arose here. Shifting to a concept as general as regime, even with the introduction of these subtypes, entailed a loss of analytic differentiation. The subtypes remained more general than the concept of democracy, encompassing not only democracies but also some nondemocracies. While with these subtypes scholars thus achieved some analytic differentiation in relation to regime, they did not specifically commit themselves to the claim that the cases under discussion were democracies. A similar pattern was followed when scholars used a related term for regime, such as *civilian rule* or *competitive polity* (Karl 1986; Wilson 1993).

To summarize, although climbing the hierarchy in this way helped to avoid conceptual stretching, it produced a sharp loss of analytic differentiation. These two strategies of moving down and up the kind hierarchy could advance one or the other of these goals, but not both at once.

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Working with Diminished Subtypes in a Part–Whole Hierarchy

An alternative strategy of conceptual innovation, widely employed in this literature, was to use diminished subtypes within a part–whole hierarchy. This approach had the merit of simultaneously avoiding conceptual stretching and increasing analytic differentiation. Examples included *limited suffrage democracy* and *tutelary democracy*. Unlike classical subtypes in a kind hierarchy, diminished subtypes achieved both goals discussed here. First, because these subtypes served to designate partial democracies, analysts were less vulnerable to conceptual stretching in that they made a more modest claim about the extent of democratization. The second point concerned differentiation. The distinctive feature of diminished subtypes was that they generally identified specific attributes of democracy that were missing, thereby establishing the diminished character of the subtype. At the same time, they stipulated other attributes of democracy that were still present. Given this focus on specific combinations of attributes, these subtypes increased differentiation.

Table 2.1 presents examples of the numerous diminished subtypes that were generated in relation to the root concept of democracy. For the purpose of illustration, we focus on examples in which the author was reasonably careful in isolating a single missing attribute.

The subtypes in the first group (1a) refer to cases where the missing attribute was full suffrage. Here, we find terms such as *male* or *oligarchical democracy*, which were used to distinguish contemporary cases from

TABLE 2.1 *Part–whole hierarchy: examples of diminished subtypes*

1. Diminished from procedural minimum definition		
(1a)	(1b)	(1c)
Missing attribute:	**Missing attribute:**	**Missing attribute:**
Full suffrage	**Full contestation**	**Civil liberties**
Limited democracy[a]	Controlled democracy[d]	Electoral democracy[g]
Male democracy[b]	De facto one-party democracy[e]	Hard democracy[h]
Oligarchical democracy[c]	Restrictive democracy[f]	Illiberal democracy[i]
2. Diminished from expanded procedural minimum definition		
Missing attribute:		
Elected government has effective power to govern		
Guarded democracy[j]		
Protected democracy[k]		
Tutelary democracy[l]		

[a] Archer (1995: 166); [b]Sorensen (1993: 20); [c]Hartlyn and Valenzuela (1994: 99); [d]Bagley (1984: 125); [e]Leftwich (1993: 613); [f]Waisman (1989: 69); [g]Hadenius (1994: 69); [h]O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 9); [i]Emmerson (1995); [j]Torres Rivas (1994: 27); [k]Loveman (1994: 108–11); [l]Przeworski (1988: 60–61).

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historical cases prior to the advent of universal suffrage. Where the attribute of full contestation was missing (1b), as when important parties were banned from electoral competition, we find terms such as *controlled* and *restrictive democracy*. Where civil liberties were incomplete (1c), scholars used terms such as *electoral* and *illiberal democracy*.

The subtypes in the final group (2) were those introduced by the scholars who created the expanded procedural minimum definition of democracy – which as noted earlier added the defining attribute that, to a reasonable degree, the elected government had effective power to govern. From that point of departure, these scholars introduced diminished subtypes in which this attribute was missing. Examples that referred to cases where the military was seen as having an inordinate degree of ongoing political power included *protected democracy* and *tutelary democracy*.

Diminished subtypes, to reiterate, were a useful means to avoid conceptual stretching in cases that were less than fully democratic. They also provided new analytic differentiation. Various scholars pointed to the need to move beyond a dichotomous conceptualization of authoritarianism and democracy, and they recognized the *hybrid* or *mixed* character of many post-authoritarian regimes.[13] Diminished subtypes could help bring into focus the diverse features of these hybrid regimes. For scholars, including Sartori, who thought that democracy should be treated as a well-bounded concept, this approach could be seen as giving up too much. Yet it does indeed appear to be a realistic way of grappling with the diverse panorama of cases in the third wave.

Shifting the Overarching Concept: Indirectly Changing the Definition

A further strategy involved a different approach to modifying kind hierarchies. Here, scholars shifted the overarching concept, in relation to which democracy was seen as a specific type. This shift in turn modified the meaning of the root concept, that is, of democracy. In this sense, it produced an innovation parallel to that of changing the definition of democracy, discussed in the next section. Yet it did so indirectly, via modifying the overarching concept.

Scholars in this literature most commonly understood democracy in relation to the overarching concept *regime*, and the procedural criteria for democracy discussed earlier were features of the regime. Yet some analysts came to view democracy as a root concept in relation to other overarching concepts, such as democratic *government* or democratic *state*. Hence, when a given country was labeled *democratic*, the meaning was modified to align with the alternative overarching concept. In this sense, two of the strategies overlap – that is, shifting the overarching concept and changing the definition.

[13] Malloy (1987: 256–57), Conaghan and Espinal (1990: 555), Weffort (1992b: 89–90), Hartlyn (1994: 93–96), Karl (1995), and Levitsky and Way (2010).

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TABLE 2.2 *Was it a democratic regime? Lowering and raising the standard for Brazil in 1987/88 versus 1993*

	Lowering the standard for applying the term "democratic"			Raising the standard
	Democratic situation	Democratic government	Was it a democratic regime?	Democratic state
Duncan Baretta and Markoff[a]	Yes		No	
Hagopian and Mainwaring[b]		Yes	No	
O'Donnell[c]		Yes	No	
O'Donnell[d]			Yes	No

[a] Duncan Baretta and Markoff (1987: 62); [b]Hagopian and Mainwaring (1987: 485); [c]O'Donnell (1988: 281); [d]O'Donnell (1993: 1360).

Scholars used the strategy of shifting the overarching concept to create a standard that could be either less or more demanding for classifying cases as democratic. These alternatives are illustrated by research on Brazil (Table 2.2). Some scholars found that in the immediate post-1985 period, Brazilian politics was so poorly institutionalized that it appeared inappropriate to use the overarching label "regime," yet they felt it was unreasonable to insist that Brazil was not democratic. They thereby lowered the standard for labeling it a democracy by referring to a "democratic situation."[14] Other scholars, out of a similar concern with the implications of regime, used the terms "democratic government" or "democratic moment."[15] The idea of a democratic *government*, for example, suggested that, although a particular government had been elected democratically,[16] the sustainability of democratic procedures remained in doubt.

Subsequently, Brazil's presidential election of 1989 led some scholars – previously skeptical about Brazilian democracy – to accept the idea that Brazil had a democratic regime. In this context, O'Donnell considered the regime to be democratic, and he went on to pose questions about the democratic character of the state in Brazil. He observed that, given widespread neofeudalized and sometimes sultanistic political relationships in some regions

[14] This distinction followed the example of Juan Linz's (1973) analysis of Brazil during the earlier post-1964 authoritarian period: Linz introduced the concept of an authoritarian situation to take into account the weak institutionalization of national political structures.

[15] Malloy (1987: 236) used the expression democratic moment to convey basically the same idea as democratic government.

[16] Government is understood here as the head of state and the immediate political leadership that surrounds the head of state.

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of the country, the national state did not protect basic rights of citizenship within the framework of law (1993: 1359 and *passim*). This failure might not directly influence the functioning of the regime, in the sense of affecting the elections and associated civil liberties that were core features of the procedural understanding of a democratic regime. However, O'Donnell argued that this failure of the legal and bureaucratic institutions of the state was a crucial feature of politics in Brazil, as well as in several other Latin American countries. Although he recognized that Brazil had a democratic *regime*, he raised the standard by excluding it from the set of countries he considered to have democratic *states*.

To summarize, shifting the overarching concept within the kind hierarchy served to introduce finer differentiation. When this strategy lowered the standard for declaring a given case a democracy, it also helped avoid stretching the concept. When the strategy raised the standard, it was typically acknowledged that the cases of concern were in fact democratic regimes. Additional analytic differentiation was achieved by pointing to respects in which the countries might, nonetheless, be considered nondemocratic.

From democracy to authoritarianism. Modifying the overarching concept could also involve a shift from democracy to authoritarianism, and it could likewise involve diminished subtypes. For example, Bruce Bagley rejected the numerous diminished subtypes of democracy that had been applied to the National Front period in Colombia (1958–74). These included *restricted*, *controlled*, *limited*, *oligarchical*, *elitist*, and *elitist-pluralist* democracy. Bagley instead characterized Colombia as a diminished subtype of authoritarianism: *inclusionary authoritarian regime* (Bagley 1984: 125–27). A parallel use of a diminished subtype was Levitsky and Way's (2002: 52–58) characterization of Russia under Yeltsin and Peru under Fujimori. These were treated not as partial democracies, but instead as competitive authoritarianism regimes.

Changing the Definition

A final strategy consisted of changing the definition of democracy. Here analysts adjusted the formal definition by adding one or more defining attributes that they argued were contained in the wider, intuitive understanding of democracy. This distinction between the operational definition and the larger understanding of the concept was parallel to the contrast between the systematized concept and the background concept discussed by Adcock and Collier (2001).[17] This approach thereby modified the root concept in relation to which both the kind hierarchies and the part–whole hierarchies were structured. As noted earlier, this approach overlapped with the strategy of shifting the overarching concept. The difference was that here it was done not indirectly, but rather through directly revising the definition of democracy.

[17] See Chapter 16, this volume.

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Thus, as the concept of democracy was extended to new settings, researchers sometimes encountered cases that (1) were classified as democracies on the basis of a commonly accepted scholarly definition; yet (2) were not seen as fully democratic in light of the larger shared understanding of the concept. This mismatch between the case and the broader understanding sometimes led analysts to make explicit one or more criteria that were implicitly understood as part of the overall meaning of democracy, but were not included in the prior definition. The result was a new definition intended to change how these cases were classified. This new definition enhanced analytic differentiation by fine-tuning the cut-point between democracy and nondemocracy. Simultaneously, it avoided conceptual stretching by not including cases that did not fit the new conception of democracy.

An important example of changing the definition was the emergence of the idea of an expanded procedural minimum (see Table 2.1). In several Central American countries, as well as some South American cases, owing to the ongoing power of the military and/or other elites, elected governments faced strong constraints on their power to govern. For example, in Chile one legacy of authoritarian rule was the persistence of reserved domains of military power over which elected governments had little or no authority (Valenzuela 1992: 70).

Given these constraints, and often in reaction to claims that these countries were democratic because they had held free elections, some scholars modified the procedural minimum definition by explicitly specifying an additional criterion: The elected government must to a reasonable degree have effective power to rule. With this revised definition, countries such as Chile were excluded by some scholars from the set of cases classified as democracies, even though they had held relatively free elections.[18] These scholars thereby included an attribute that was taken for granted in studies of advanced industrial democracies, yet was absent in these cases. This revised definition was widely accepted, though some disagreement continued about the classification of specific cases.[19]

As noted, changing the definition had the merit of both introducing finer differentiation and avoiding conceptual stretching, yet it modified the definitional point of departure for all the other strategies, thereby unsettling the *semantic field*.[20] By contrast, the introduction of a new subtype did not pose this problem. For literatures in which conceptual confusion was a recurring challenge, the analytic gains had to be weighed against this cost.

[18] Karl (1990: 2), Rubin (1990), Valenzuela (1992), and Loveman (1994).

[19] For example, in analyzing Chile in the post-1990 period, Rhoda Rabkin took exception to the usage adopted by scholars who introduced the expanded procedural minimum definition. She argued that the problem of civilian control of the military did not represent a sufficient challenge to the democratically elected government to justify calling Chile a borderline democracy (Rabkin 1992–93: 165).

[20] On the problem of unsettling the semantic field, see Sartori (1984: 51–54).

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A related concern is the problem of definitional gerrymandering,[21] in the sense that scholars might introduce a new definition as an ad hoc means of dealing with an anomalous case. Analysts therefore needed to proceed with caution – at the same time recognizing that this was a valuable strategy.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

We have discussed strategies of conceptual innovation employed by scholars as they addressed a twofold challenge in characterizing the diverse regimes that emerged in the third wave of democracy: increasing analytic differentiation, while simultaneously avoiding conceptual stretching. Our goal has been to examine the structure of these alternative strategies and to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. We have seen that the strategies included working with both kind hierarchies and part–whole hierarchies. Even when analysts proceeded intuitively, rather than self-consciously, they tended to operate within these hierarchical structures. However, in the interest of conceptual and analytic clarity, it was far more desirable for scholars to proceed self-consciously, with full awareness of trade-offs among the strategies.

The strategies are summarized in Figure 2.3. Conceptual innovation occurred at three levels: the root concept of democracy itself, the subtypes, and the overarching concept. We observed that the strategies of (1) moving down the ladder of generality to classical subtypes of democracy and (2) moving up the ladder to classical subtypes of regime could serve either to increase differentiation or to avoid conceptual stretching, but could not do both simultaneously. By contrast, these two goals could be achieved simultaneously by (3) creating diminished subtypes within the framework of a part–whole hierarchy. Shifting the overarching concept, as a means of both lowering and raising the standard (4a and 4b), was successfully used both to increase differentiation and avoid stretching.

The final strategy – that is, (5) changing the definition of democracy by adding defining attributes – had the merit of contributing both to avoiding stretching (vis-à-vis a larger understanding of democracy) and to achieving finer differentiation. However, it was a more drastic approach in that it shifted the meaning of other concepts in the hierarchy.

We have also underscored further issues that arose with particular strategies. Diminished subtypes were useful for characterizing hybrid regimes, but raised the issue of whether these regimes should be treated as subtypes of democracy, rather than subtypes of authoritarianism or some other overarching concept. Shifting the overarching concept with the goal of raising the standard was not relevant to the problem of conceptual stretching. However, it allowed scholars to introduce new analytic issues without abandoning a procedural definition of democracy. Finally, the strategy of changing the

[21] Jennifer Widner suggested this term.

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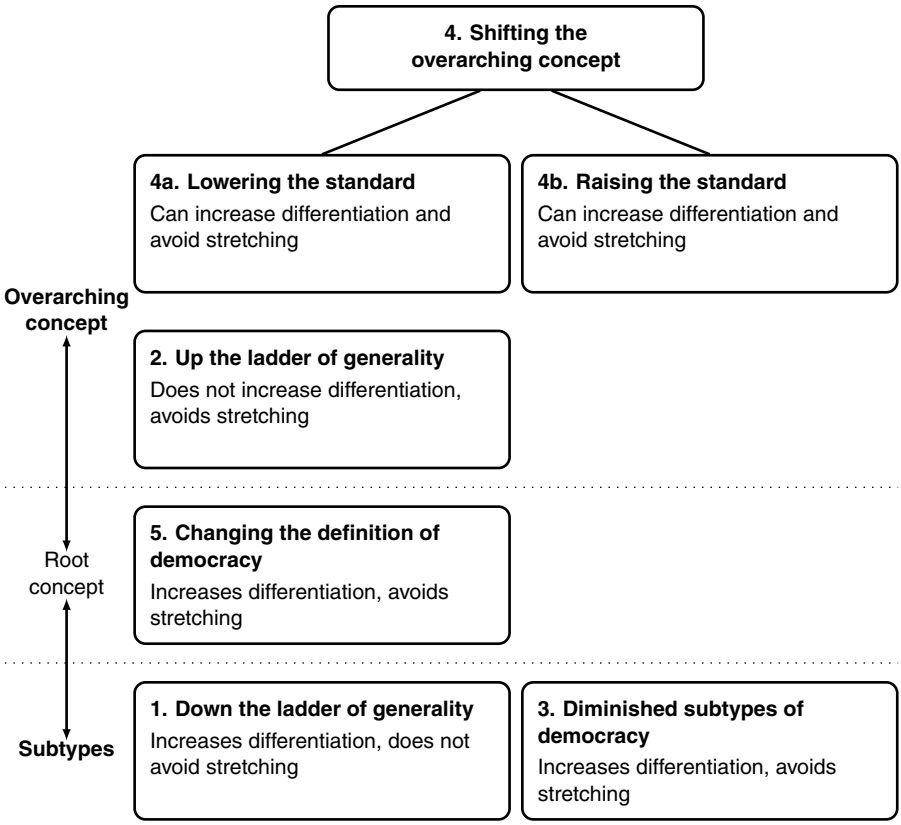


FIGURE 2.3 Evaluating the strategies: differentiation and avoiding stretching.

definition was subject to the perennial problem of scholarly disputes over the meaning of democracy, as well as to the need to impose limits on definitional gerrymandering.

The diverse strategies summarized in Figure 2.3 also point to a broader problem. This literature on the third wave of democracy faced a major dilemma in the proliferation of literally hundreds of subtypes, many meaning approximately the same thing. The consequence could too readily be scholarly confusion, indeed, the kind of conceptual confusion against which Sartori (1984) warned long ago.

Hence, we propose another major objective of concept usage – one that introduces a further trade-off vis-à-vis the two goals of achieving analytic differentiation and avoiding conceptual stretching. Scholars should aim for parsimony and avoid excessive proliferation of new terms and concepts. Coordinating scholarly inquiry around carefully developed concepts will facilitate constructive dialogue and theory-building. The publication of

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review essays that clarify key concepts can play a crucial role. In the absence of such efforts, the advantages that derive from the kind of conceptual innovations that characterized this literature may be overridden by the resulting conceptual confusion.

A BRIEF GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Conceptual stretching In the literature discussed here, extending the concept of democracy to cases which are seen (at least by some analysts) as not being democratic.

Conceptual travelling In the literature discussed here, extending the concept of democracy to new cases.

Diminished subtype A subtype in a part–whole hierarchy, in which the subtype lacks an attribute that is part of the root concept. For example, illiberal democracy is a diminished subtype of democracy, in that it lacks adequate protection of civil liberties.

Extension The set of cases encompassed by a concept.

Intension The defining attributes associated with a concept.

Kind hierarchy A conceptual hierarchy in which each subtype has all the attributes of the overarching concept, plus an additional attribute. It is a "kind of" in relation to the overarching concept. Thus, parliamentary democracy is a kind of democracy – that is, a democracy that has, in addition, a parliamentary system.

Ladder of generality The sequence of steps in a kind hierarchy. Sartori's original term was ladder of abstraction, but it can be hard to pin down what it means for a concept to be abstract. Ladder of generality is more self-explanatory.

Overarching concept A broader concept in a conceptual hierarchy, in relation to which a subordinate concept is understood. For example, in many studies the overarching concept vis-à-vis democracy is regime.

Part–whole hierarchy A conceptual hierarchy in which each subtype lacks one of the attributes of the overarching concept. It is a "part of" in relation to that concept. Thus, an illiberal democracy is only partly democratic, in that it has limited civil liberties. It is a diminished subtype.

Root concept The point of entry in a given analysis. In a study of democracy, the root concept is democracy. Goertz (2020: 27) suggests a parallel term: the "basic level."

Subtype A type that is subordinate to or included in another type.

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