



**DEMOCRACY 'WITH ADJECTIVES':  
Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The recent trend toward democratization in countries throughout the globe has challenged scholars to pursue two potentially contradictory goals: to develop a differentiated conceptualization of democracy that captures the diverse experiences of these countries; and to extend the analysis to this broad range of cases without ‘stretching’ the concept. This paper argues that this dual challenge has led to a proliferation of conceptual innovations, including hundreds of subtypes of democracy—i.e., democracy ‘with adjectives.’ The paper explores the strengths and weaknesses of three important strategies of innovation that have emerged: ‘precising’ the definition of democracy; shifting the overarching concept with which democracy is associated; and generating various forms of subtypes. Given the complex structure of meaning produced by these strategies for refining the concept of democracy, we conclude by offering an old piece of advice with renewed urgency: It is imperative that scholars situate themselves in relation to this structure of meaning by clearly defining and explicating the conception of democracy they are employing.

## **RESUMEN**

La reciente corriente de democratización en países de todo el mundo ha movido a los especialistas a perseguir dos metas potencialmente contradictorias: desarrollar una conceptualización diferenciada de la democracia que capture las diversas experiencias de estos países; y extender el análisis a este amplio rango de casos sin ‘estirar’ el concepto. Este texto sostiene que este doble desafío ha llevado a la proliferación de innovaciones conceptuales, incluyendo cientos de subtipos de democracia—esto es, democracia ‘con adjetivos.’ El texto explora las fortalezas y debilidades de tres importantes estrategias de innovación que han emergido: ‘precisar’ la definición de democracia; cambiar la noción abarcadora con la cual se asocia a la democracia; y generar varias formas de subtipos. Dada la compleja estructura de significado producida por estas estrategias de refinamiento del concepto de democracia, concluimos ofreciendo, con renovada urgencia, un viejo consejo: Es imperativo que los especialistas se sitúen en relación a esta estructura de significado a través de una definición y explicación claras de la concepción de democracia que están empleando.

The recent global wave of democratization has presented scholars with a major conceptual challenge. As numerous countries have moved away from authoritarianism, the concept of democracy has been applied in many new settings. Although the new national political regimes in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the former communist world share important attributes of democracy, many of them differ profoundly from the democracies in advanced industrial countries. Some, it is widely agreed, cannot be considered fully democratic. Others are often viewed as meeting minimal criteria for democracy, yet still exhibit features that scholars find problematic.

This paper argues that as scholars have attempted to deal analytically with these new cases of democracy, they have pursued two potentially contradictory goals. On the one hand, they seek to increase conceptual differentiation in order to capture the diverse forms of democracy that have emerged. On the other hand, they seek to avoid conceptual 'stretching,' in the sense of applying the concept of democracy to cases that exhibit a constellation of attributes that do not correspond to their definition of democracy. An important consequence of the pursuit of these goals has been a proliferation of alternative forms of the concept, including a surprising number of subtypes, such as 'authoritarian democracy,' 'neopatrimonial democracy,' 'military-dominated democracy,' and 'protodemocracy.' An examination of the literature reveals over 550 such examples of democracy 'with adjectives,'<sup>i</sup> i.e., many times more subtypes than countries being analyzed.

This proliferation of subtypes is particularly interesting in light of the effort by leading analysts of this recent episode of democratization to standardize terminology, most notably through 'procedural' definitions in the tradition of Joseph Schumpeter and Robert A. Dahl.<sup>ii</sup> This standardization has, in important respects, been successful. Yet as the process of democratization has continued, and as attention has shifted from the initial transitions from authoritarian rule to issues of democratic consolidation, the proliferation of subtypes and other conceptual innovations has persisted. Consequently, the earlier effort to standardize usage must now be supplemented by an assessment of the structure of meaning that underlies these diverse forms of the concept.

Focusing on studies concerned with recent cases of democratization at the level of

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<sup>i</sup> 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, Enrique Krauze, *Por una democracia sin adjetivos* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz/Planeta, 1986).

<sup>ii</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (NY: Harper, 1947); and Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

national political regimes, with particular attention to work on Latin America,<sup>iii</sup> this paper seeks to initiate such a process of assessment. To provide a base line for the discussion, we first introduce the different definitions and conceptions of democracy found in this literature. We then explore alternative strategies that scholars have employed in refining the concept of democracy as they have pursued the two-fold goal of capturing the diverse experience of these new cases of democracy while seeking to avoid conceptual stretching.

A central concern of the analysis is with the fact that these two goals are at times contradictory. In Sartori's well-known formulation, conceptual stretching is to be avoided by moving up a 'ladder of generality,'<sup>iv</sup> in the sense of shifting to concepts that have *fewer* defining attributes and that, correspondingly, refer to a *larger* number of cases. Moving up a ladder based on this pattern of 'inverse variation' between the number of defining attributes and number of cases yields concepts that may be less vulnerable to conceptual stretching. Yet precisely because they are more general, such concepts have the drawback of providing less, rather than more, differentiation. On the other hand, Collier and Mahon recently pointed to the alternative procedure of creating what we will call 'diminished' subtypes, which can serve both to provide greater differentiation and to avoid conceptual stretching.<sup>v</sup>

Against the backdrop of these alternatives, we examine three strategies of conceptual innovation that seek to address these competing goals of differentiation and avoiding conceptual stretching: 'precising' the definition of democracy by adding defining attributes; shifting the overarching concept (e.g., political 'regime') with which democracy is associated; and generating various forms of subtypes. In analyzing this last strategy, we first explore how subtypes may be used in both descending and climbing Sartori's ladder of generality. We then consider the approach of generating diminished subtypes. Because diminished subtypes increase differentiation at the same time that they help to avoid conceptual stretching, they are particularly useful. Possibly for this reason, they are by far the most common strategy of conceptual innovation found in this literature.

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<sup>iii</sup> We are thus not primarily concerned with the literature on advanced industrial democracies, although this literature is an important locus of intellectual reference in the studies we are examining. In a few places we have included conceptions of historical forms of democracy that are used as points of comparison in studies of contemporary cases. We also have included studies of countries that are not actually part of the recent episode of democratization but whose relatively new democracies are frequent points of comparison in the literature under review—for example, Venezuela and Colombia.

<sup>iv</sup> Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," *American Political Science Review* 64 (1970). Sartori actually refers to a ladder of "abstraction" (p. 1040). However, because the term 'abstract' is often understood in contrast to 'concrete,' this label can be confusing. We therefore find that it expresses the intended meaning more clearly to refer to a ladder of generality.

<sup>v</sup> David Collier and James E. Mahon, Jr., "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 87 (1993), 850–52.

The larger goal of the analysis is to clarify and place in perspective the diverse usages of the concept of democracy that have emerged in these studies. Scholars often employ different forms of conceptual innovation intuitively rather than self-consciously, and one of our basic purposes is to encourage the more self-conscious use of these strategies. In addition, it becomes clear that these authors have gone far beyond offering only broad categorical contrasts between democracies and nondemocracies, in that they have provided numerous distinctions regarding different aspects and gradations of democracy. These distinctions represent an important innovation in the *description* of democracy, which in turn has fundamental implications for how scholars analyze the *causes* and *consequences* of democracy.

Two initial caveats are in order. First, scholars introduce conceptual and terminological innovations for various reasons, and not only in pursuit of the two-fold goal just discussed. For example, they sometimes produce new terms to provide synonyms that they can use to overcome the rhetorical problem of numerous repetitions of the same term in the course of an analysis. However, the analytic goals of conceptual differentiation and avoiding conceptual stretching appear to be central to understanding the proliferation of conceptual forms observed here. Second, along with the 'qualitative' literature that is the focus of the present discussion, valuable quantitative indicators have been developed that also provide a basis for comparing recent cases of democratization.<sup>vi</sup> Ultimately, it will be productive to integrate the insights contained in these two literatures. However, an essential prior step, which is our present concern, is to learn more about the complex structure of meaning that underlies the treatment of democracy in the qualitative literature.

### **Definitions and Conceptions of Democracy in Research on Recent Democratization**

The conceptual innovations analyzed in this paper are introduced with reference to the concept of democracy as it has been applied to the structure of national politics. To discuss these innovations an appropriate first step is to summarize the definitions and conceptions of democracy found in research on recent democratization.

In his famous analysis of "essentially contested concepts," the philosopher W.B. Gallie

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<sup>vi</sup> Alex Inkeles, ed., *On Measuring Democracy: Its Consequences and Concomitants* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991) brings together an important part of this work. Kenneth A. Bollen, "Liberal Democracy: Validity and Method Factors in Cross-National Measures," *American Journal of Political Science* 37, no. 4 (1993), is a particularly important effort to evaluate alternative quantitative measures. For a somewhat skeptical view of these quantitative measures, offered by scholars whose focus is more centrally on Western Europe, see David Beetham, ed., *Defining and Measuring Democracy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).

argues that democracy is “*the* appraisive political concept *par excellence*.”<sup>vii</sup> Correspondingly, one finds endless disputes over appropriate meaning and definition. However, the purpose of Gallie’s analysis is not to legitimate such disputes but to show that a recognition of the contested status of concepts opens the possibility of understanding each meaning within its own framework. With reference to democracy, he argues that “politics being the art of the possible, democratic targets will be raised or lowered as circumstances alter...,”<sup>viii</sup> and he insists that these alternative standards should be taken seriously on their own terms.<sup>ix</sup> In this spirit, our analysis focuses on the particular set of standards for evaluating democracy that have emerged for the purpose of studying the specific domain of cases that are of concern here.

As a point of entry, we examine a spectrum of definitions that have appeared in these studies. We cannot do justice to all the nuances of meaning, yet we are convinced that this summary identifies certain definitional and conceptual benchmarks that have played a crucial role in orienting these studies. The definitions examined here are primarily ‘procedural,’ in the sense that they focus on democratic *procedures* rather than on substantive policies or other outcomes that might be viewed as democratic. Many are also ‘minimal’ definitions, in that they deliberately focus on the smallest possible number of attributes that are still seen as producing a viable definition (although, not surprisingly, one finds disagreement about how many attributes are needed for the definition to be viable). For example, most of these scholars differentiate what they view as the more specifically political features of the regime from characteristics of the society and economy, arguing that the latter are more appropriately analyzed as potential causes or consequences of democracy rather than as features of democracy itself.<sup>x</sup> Much of the usage by these authors is linked to explicit definitions that are easy to situate within this spectrum. Other

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vii W. B. Gallie, “Essentially Contested Concepts,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 51 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1956), 184. Emphasis in original.

viii Gallie, “Essentially Contested Concepts,” 186.

ix Gallie, “Essentially Contested Concepts,” 178, 189, 190, 193.

x For discussions of procedural definitions, see Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), chap. 2; Samuel P. Huntington, “The Modest Meaning of Democracy” in Robert Pastor, ed., *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum* (NY: Holmes and Meier, 1989); and Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, “What Democracy Is...and Is Not,” *Journal of Democracy* 2 (1991). The origin of this approach is found in Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. Regarding minimal definitions, see Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 28; and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 9. An excellent example of a minimal definition is found in Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10. On the argument about treating characteristics of the society and economy as a cause or consequence of democracy, see Juan J. Linz, “Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes” in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science* 3 (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 182; and Terry Lynn Karl, “Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America” in Dankwart A. Rustow and Kenneth Paul Erickson, eds., *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives* (NY: Harper Collins, 1991), 165.

authors are less explicit, but on the basis of the larger framework within which they discuss democracy and the way they apply the concept to particular cases, it is possible to infer the meaning they are employing.

These definitions, along with the attributes entailed in each and examples of authors who employ them, are arrayed in Figure 1. We have also placed within this spectrum what we will call a 'prototypical conception' of established industrial democracy which, although almost never explicitly defined, serves as an analytic benchmark in these studies. We include it here not because we consider the distinction between formal definitions and informal conceptions unimportant, but because it is useful to locate this conception within the spectrum to provide a basis, later in the analysis, to make clear its role in the formation of subtypes.

Looking first at the left side of Figure 1, we find scholars who follow Schumpeter in employing a narrow definition that equates democracy with elections. This approach, which may be called 'electoralism,'<sup>xi</sup> defines democracy as holding elections with broad suffrage and the absence of massive fraud. Second, many scholars argue that without effective guarantees of civil liberties, elections do not constitute democracy, and that a 'procedural minimum' for defining democracy must include not only elections, but reasonably broad guarantees of basic civil rights—e.g., freedom of speech, assembly, and association.

Third, beyond this procedural minimum, various scholars have identified further characteristics that must be present for these basic procedures to meaningfully constitute a democracy, thereby creating an 'expanded procedural minimum' definition. Most importantly, some scholars have added the requirement that elected governments must (to a reasonable extent) have effective power to govern. This issue may arise, for example, when civilian rulers lack a meaningful degree of control over the military. This expanded definition has gained substantial acceptance, especially in the literature on Latin America.<sup>xii</sup> The next column in Figure 1 corresponds to a prototypical conception of established industrial democracy, which entails a constellation of political, economic, and social features commonly associated with these regimes. This prototypical conception, which plays an important role in the formation of subtypes, goes well beyond the procedural definitions just discussed. Finally, the 'maximalist' approach is based on attributes widely understood to exist in few if any cases in the real world. These include equality of social and economic relations and/or broad popular participation in decision-making at all levels of politics. Some of the authors who follow this usage distance themselves from the rest of the

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<sup>xi</sup> This term is found in Terry Lynn Karl, "Imposing Consent: Electoralism vs. Democratization in El Salvador" in Paul W. Drake and Eduardo Silva, eds., *Elections and Democratization in Latin America, 1980–1985* (La Jolla, CA: Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1986), 34.

<sup>xii</sup> As noted below in the discussion of 'precising,' other analysts have proposed additional definitional requirements that could lead to a further expansion of the procedural minimum definition. However, these innovations have not been adopted by enough scholars to be included in the figure.



**Figure 1**

**Definitional and Conceptual Benchmarks in Research on Recent Democratization\***

(Bibliographic references are in Appendix.)

Terms Used to Designate Alternative Definitions and Conceptions  
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

	<b>Electoralist Definition</b>	<b>Procedural Minimum Definition</b>	<b>Expanded Procedural Minimum Definition</b>	<b>Prototypical Conception of Established Industrial Democracy</b>	<b>Maximalist Definition/Conception</b>
Associated Meanings	These are the principal definitions employed in this literature; often presented and applied with considerable care			Not defined; plays important role in forming subtypes	Often not explicitly defined
Reasonably competitive elections, devoid of massive fraud, with broad suffrage.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Often not included
Basic civil liberties: Freedom of speech, assembly, and association.		Yes	Yes	Yes	Often not included
Elected governments have effective power to govern.			Yes	Yes	Often not included
Additional political, economic, and social features associated with industrial democracy.				Yes	Often not included
Socioeconomic equality; and/ or high levels of popular participation in economic, social, and political institutions.					Yes
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	Kirkpatrick 1981; Vanhanen 1990; Fukuyama 1992; Chee 1993; also Schumpeter 1947.	O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1989; Di Palma 1990; Mainwaring 1992; also Linz 1978.	Karl 1991; Schmitter and Karl 1991; Huntington 1991; Valenzuela 1992; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Loveman 1994.	Not explicitly discussed. See analysis below of the subtypes presented in Figure 6.	Fagen 1986; Harding and Petras 1988; Jonas 1989; Miliband 1992; Gills, Rocamora, and Wilson 1993; Hamecker 1994.

\*Heavy line in figure brackets those definitions and conceptions that form an ordered scale.

literature by explicitly rejecting the idea of a procedural definition,<sup>xiii</sup> and often they do not include the procedural guarantees that are central to the other definitions just discussed. Because many of these authors do not present a formal definition, we refer to this in the figure as a ‘definition/conception.’

These alternative definitions are not equally prevalent. In the literature we examined, the electoralist definition has been used by a number of scholars. However, this usage raises concern about overextending the concept of democracy by applying it to countries—such as El Salvador, Mexico, and Singapore in the 1980s—that satisfy the criterion of elections yet where the violation of civil liberties is common. In light of this concern, a substantial consensus has emerged around a procedural minimum or expanded procedural minimum definition. Furthermore, scholars who employ a procedural minimum definition would generally have no objection to including some reasonable criterion of effective power to govern (as specified in the expanded procedural minimum approach) as a defining attribute.<sup>xiv</sup> Maximalist definitions, which correspond to a conception of democracy that was common in the field of Latin American studies in the 1960s and 1970s, have continued to be employed. However, a great many scholars who work on the recent wave of democratization have deliberately avoided this approach.

It merits emphasis that a clear ordering is present within this set of definitions and conceptions. Although this spectrum of meanings does not form a perfect ‘cumulative scale,’<sup>xv</sup> with the exception of the last column on the right each subsequent definition or conception includes all of the attributes entailed in the previous ones (see heavy line in the figure). This ordering plays a critical role in giving structure to the conceptual innovations analyzed in the remainder of this paper.

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<sup>xiii</sup> Susanne Jonas, “Elections and Transitions: The Guatemalan and Nicaraguan Cases” in John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, eds., *Elections and Democracy in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 129–30; and Ralph Miliband, “The Socialist Alternative,” *Journal of Democracy* 3 (July, 1993), 120–21. Critiques of this rejection are found in Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1987); and Huntington, “The Modest Meaning of Democracy.”

<sup>xiv</sup> Some other authors have discussed the importance of these aspects of democracy, but without taking the step of entering them into the formal definition. See J. Samuel Valenzuela, “Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions” in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O’Donnell, and Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); William C. Smith and Carlos H. Acuña, “Future Politico-Economic Scenarios for Latin America” in Smith, Acuña, and Eduardo A. Gamarra, eds., *Democracy, Markets, and Structural Reform in Latin America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1994); and Terry Lynn Karl, “The Hybrid Regimes of Central America.” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (July 1995).

<sup>xv</sup> See Delbert C. Miller, *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*, 5th edition (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991), 177–78; and R. J. Mokken, *A Theory and Procedure of Scale Analysis with Applications in Political Research* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

Though identifying this spectrum of definitions is a useful step toward understanding the meanings of democracy in this literature, such definitions do not fully govern usage. Democracy is a complex concept, and the various formal definitions presented by different authors do not resolve, once and for all, what democracy really 'is.' Rather, these definitions and conceptions commonly serve to provide a meaning that is useful in relation to the specific research goals of a given author and the specific cases under analysis. As we show in the following sections, when these goals change, or when different cases become the focus of analysis, authors introduce a variety of conceptual innovations and shifts in meaning.

### **Strategies of Conceptual Innovation**

The conceptualizations of democracy found in this literature are complex, in part due to the great heterogeneity of cases on which analysts have focused. While the presence of relatively competitive elections in many postauthoritarian settings suggests that the concept of democracy is relevant, the obvious difference between these regimes and well-established democracies both creates the need for concepts that provide more fine-grained distinctions regarding different kinds of democracy and also raises a concern about avoiding conceptual stretching. Our central argument is that the complex usage of this concept reflects the alternative approaches adopted by different authors in addressing these two problems. We now turn to an examination of three basic strategies they have employed.

#### **Precising the Definition**

One strategy of conceptual innovation is that of 'precising,' or 'contextualizing,' the definition of democracy.<sup>xvi</sup> As the concept of democracy is extended to new settings, researchers may confront a particular case that is classified as a democracy on the basis of a commonly accepted definition yet that in light of a larger shared understanding of the concept does not appear from the perspective of some analysts to be fully democratic. This situation may lead them to make explicit one or more criteria that are implicitly understood to be part of the overall meaning but that are not included in the formal definition. The result is a new definition intended to change the way a particular case is classified. Although this procedure could be seen as raising the standard for democracy, it can also be understood as adapting the definition to a

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<sup>xvi</sup> A 'precising definition' is one that is designed to include or exclude specific cases. See Giovanni Sartori, "Guidelines for Concept Analysis" in Sartori, ed., *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1984), 81; and Irving M. Copi and Carl Cohen, *Introduction to Logic*, 9th ed. (NY: Macmillan, 1994), 173–75. In *Social Science Concepts* (42), Sartori also uses this as a verb, as in 'to precise' a definition.

new context. This strategy of precisising addresses the issue of conceptual differentiation, in the sense of adding a further differentiating criterion for establishing the cut-point between democracy and nondemocracy. The strategy may thereby also address the issue of conceptual stretching, because it avoids applying the label 'democracy' to cases that, in light of this new criterion, the analyst sees as incompletely democratic.

In contrast to some of the other strategies, precisising is undertaken by scholars who have a strong interest in formal definitions and who, as the concept of democracy is applied to a wider range of cases, become concerned about the appropriateness of available definitions. For example, the emergence of the expanded procedural minimum definition presented above in Figure 1 involved precisising. In several Central American countries, as well as in South American cases such as Chile and Paraguay, one legacy of authoritarian rule is the persistence of 'reserved domains' of military power over which elected governments have little or no authority.<sup>xvii</sup> Hence, despite free or relatively free elections, civilian governments in these countries are seen by some analysts as lacking effective power to govern. In light of these authoritarian legacies, and often in response to claims that because these countries have held free elections they are 'democratic,' some scholars have modified the prior definition of democracy by specifying as an explicit criterion that the freely elected government must to a reasonable degree have effective power to rule. With this revised definition, even though they held relatively free elections, countries such as Chile, El Salvador, and Paraguay have thereby been excluded from the set of cases classified as 'full' democracies.<sup>xviii</sup> It could be argued that these scholars did not create a more demanding definition of democracy but rather adapted the definition to explicitly include an attribute that we may take for granted in advanced industrial democracies. In this manner, they avoided treating as full democracies those countries that lacked this attribute.

A second example of precisising is found in discussions of what might be called a 'Tocquevillean' definition of democracy, which includes a focus on selected aspects of social relations. In analyzing postauthoritarian Brazil, scholars such as Weffort and Guillermo O'Donnell have been struck by the degree to which rights of citizenship are undermined by the pervasive semifeudal and authoritarian social relations that persist in some regions of the country. In light of this concern, Weffort added the definitional requirement of "some level of social equality" for a country to be considered a democracy, and O'Donnell introduced a closely related stipulation.<sup>xix</sup>

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<sup>xvii</sup> Valenzuela, "Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings," 70.

<sup>xviii</sup> See Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization," 165; Humberto Rubin, "One Step Away from Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1990); Valenzuela, "Democratic Consolidation"; and Brian Loveman, "'Protected' Democracies and Military Guardianship: Political Transitions in Latin America, 1979–1993," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 36 (1994).

<sup>xix</sup> Francisco Weffort, "New Democracies, Which Democracies?" Working Paper No. 198, Latin American Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Washington, DC, 1992), 18; Weffort, *Qual democracia?* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992), 100–1; Guillermo

In adopting this usage, these authors view themselves as remaining within the procedural framework. Yet introducing issues of social relations nonetheless represents an important departure from earlier procedural definitions. This approach has not been widely adopted, and as we will suggest in the next section, O'Donnell subsequently arrived at an alternative means of incorporating this set of concerns into his conceptualization of democracy.

A third example of precisising arose from a concern that in many new democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America elected presidents at times make extensive use of decree power, circumvent democratic institutions such as the legislature and political parties, and govern in a plebiscitarian manner that is seen as having strong authoritarian undercurrents. In the Latin American context prominent examples include Carlos Menem in Argentina, Fernando Collor de Mello in Brazil and, in the most extreme case, Alberto Fujimori in Peru. The concern with these authoritarian tendencies has led a few authors to include checks on executive power in their procedural criteria for democracy.<sup>xx</sup> However, this practice has not been widely adopted, and as we will see below, scholars such as Jonathan Hartlyn and O'Donnell, who have been concerned with these 'neopatrimonial' and 'delegative' patterns of executive rule, have approached this issue through the alternative strategy of creating new subtypes.<sup>xxi</sup>

Precising the definition of democracy thus has the merit of addressing both goals discussed above: i.e., not only achieving finer differentiation but also avoiding conceptual stretching vis-à-vis a larger shared understanding of the concept, given that the meaning and functioning of specific democratic procedures can vary considerably in different political contexts. At the same time, three points of caution are in order. First, not surprisingly, any particular innovation based on 'precising' may make sense to one scholar but not necessarily to another. For example, a recent analysis of Chile takes exception to the usage adopted by scholars who introduced the expanded procedural minimum definition, arguing that the problem of civilian control of the military does not represent a sufficient challenge to the democratically elected

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O'Donnell, "Challenges to Democratization in Brazil," *World Policy Journal* 5, no. 2 (1988), 298; and O'Donnell, "Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes" in Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation*, 48–49.

<sup>xx</sup> Authors who have included horizontal accountability in their definitions include Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization," 165; and Alan R. Ball, *Modern Politics and Government* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1993), 45–46.

<sup>xxi</sup> Jonathan Hartlyn, "Crisis-Ridden Elections (Again) in the Dominican Republic: Neopatrimonialism, Presidentialism and Weak Electoral Oversight," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 36, no. 4 (Winter 1994); and Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy?" *Journal of Democracy* 5 (1994). Other authors who have addressed the issue of checks on executive power include Luis Abugattas, "Populism and After: The Peruvian Experience" in James Malloy and Mitchell Seligson, eds., *Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transition in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987); and G.M. Tamás, "Socialism, Capitalism, and Modernity," *Journal of Democracy* 3, no. 3 (July 1992).

government to qualify post-1990 Chile as a 'borderline' democracy.<sup>xxii</sup>

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<sup>xxii</sup> Rhoda Rabkin, "The Aylwin Government and 'Tutelary' Democracy: A Concept in Search of a Case?" *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 34, no. 4 (Winter 1992-93), 165.

Second, more broadly, one must recognize the potential problem of ‘definitional gerrymandering,’<sup>xxiii</sup> in which definitions become excessively flexible to the point where a basic consistency of meaning is lost. Thus, it would hardly be productive if scholars created a new definition every time they encountered a somewhat anomalous case. However, the contrast between the first and third examples of precisising discussed above shows that scholars may in fact impose constructive limits on precisising. In the first example, the inability of elected governments to exercise effective power was seen as invalidating their democratic character. By contrast, in the third example involving heavy-handed assertions of power by the president, a crucial point is that these presidents *are* elected leaders. Hence, it appears more plausible to treat these cases as democratic and to avoid precisising—as long as a general respect for civil liberties and ongoing presidential elections is maintained and the legislature and opposition parties are not banned or dissolved (as did occur in Peru in 1992).

Finally, excessive contextualization also poses the risk of bringing back into the definition of democracy attributes that authors had initially decided to exclude. An example is the concern with social relationships in the Tocquevillian approach. These authors could be seen as remaining within a procedural framework, in the sense that they argue that political participation becomes less meaningful in the context of extreme social inequality. Nonetheless, this conceptual innovation reintroduces features of social relations in a way that does represent a major shift in relation to earlier recommendations about which attributes should be included in definitions of democracy.

### **Shifting the Overarching Concept**

A second strategy of conceptual innovation is to shift the overarching concept in relation to which democracy is seen as a specific instance. In using the concept of democracy to characterize particular countries, scholars most commonly view it as a specific type in relation to the overarching concept of ‘regime.’ Yet the recent literature has also understood democracy as a specific type in relation to several other overarching concepts, including ‘government,’ ‘governance,’ ‘governability,’ ‘moment,’ ‘order,’ ‘polity,’ ‘rule,’ ‘situation,’ ‘society,’ ‘state,’ and ‘system.’ Hence, when a given country is labeled ‘democratic,’ the meaning can vary greatly according to the overarching concept to which the term is attached.

Correspondingly, a shift in the overarching concept can yield an alternative standard for declaring a particular case to be a democracy but without either modifying, or stretching, the concept of ‘democratic regime.’ As can be seen in Figure 2, scholars can use this strategy to

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<sup>xxiii</sup> Jennifer Whiting, in a personal communication, suggested this term.

create either a less or a more demanding standard. For example, if democracy is so poorly institutionalized in a given country that it seems inappropriate to use the overarching label 'regime,' scholars may refer to a democratic 'situation'<sup>xxiv</sup> or a democratic 'moment' (see Figure 2). Similarly, several analysts have referred to democratic 'governments,' which implies that although a particular government has been elected democratically, the ongoing functioning of democratic procedures is not necessarily assured. By shifting the overarching concept from regime to government in this way, scholars lower the standard for applying the label 'democratic' and thus may avoid conceptual stretching.

**Figure 2**

**Shifting the Overarching Concept: Examples with Reference to Post-1985 Brazil**

(Bibliographic references are in Appendix.)

Author	Democrati c Situation	Democratic Moment	Democratic Government	Democratic Regime	Democratic State
Duncan Baretta/ Markoff (1987)	Yes			No	
Malloy (1987)		Yes		No	
Hagopian/ Mainwaring (1987)			Yes	No	
O'Donnell (1988)			Yes	No	
O'Donnell (1993)				Yes	No

Alternatively, by shifting the overarching concept from 'regime' to 'state,' O'Donnell establishes a more demanding standard for labeling particular countries 'democracies.' Writing after Brazil's presidential election in 1989, which led many scholars to reinterpret Brazil as having a democratic 'regime,' O'Donnell suggests that the legal apparatus of the Brazilian 'state' does not adequately guarantee the rights of citizens to fair and equal protection in their social and economic relationships. While he believes that this inadequacy may not *directly* affect the functioning of the regime, he is convinced that it has important implications for the larger understanding of democracy. Thus, although he recognizes that Brazil has a democratic 'regime,' he *excludes* Brazil from the set of countries he considers to have democratic 'states.' This shift in

<sup>xxiv</sup> This follows the example of Linz's analysis of what he viewed as a poorly institutionalized case of authoritarianism in post-1964 Brazil, which led him to speak of an authoritarian 'situation.' See Juan J. Linz, "The Future of an Authoritarian Situation or the Institutionalization of an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Brazil" in Alfred Stepan, ed., *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).



the overarching concept constitutes another way of limiting and refining the claims about what is deemed to be an incomplete case of democracy. In this manner, O'Donnell seeks to avoid conceptual stretching by establishing a higher and a lower standard for democracy and declaring that Brazil meets only the lower standard.<sup>xxv</sup>

From the standpoint of a concern with maintaining a procedural definition of democracy, this innovation can be seen as a better solution to the problem that O'Donnell and others had initially tried to address by creating the Tocquevillian definition through precisifying. Thus, in conjunction with shifting the overarching concept, democratic 'regime' continues to have a procedural definition, and this concern with the broader functioning of citizenship in the context of authoritarian patterns of social relations is addressed via the concept of the state.

The strategy of shifting among alternative overarching concepts thus usefully serves to avoid conceptual stretching at the same time that it introduces finer differentiation—in this instance by creating an additional analytic category. The disadvantage of this approach may well be that because so many different overarching concepts have been employed, the potential for scholarly confusion is enormous—especially if one considers the possibility of combining eleven or more overarching concepts with the hundreds of adjectives employed in forming subtypes of democracy.

### **Forming Subtypes**

The third and most important strategy of conceptual innovation is the creation of subtypes. A 'subtype' is understood here as a derivative concept formed with reference to and as a modification of some other concept. The most common means of forming subtypes is by adding an adjective to the noun 'democracy,' as in 'competitive democracy,' and the subtypes we have examined are generally formed in this manner. In other cases, the subtype appears to be created with reference to the concept of democracy, but the term democracy is not used in the name of the subtype—e.g., 'electoral regime.' In analyzing these subtypes, it is essential to underscore the fact that their meaning cannot necessarily be inferred exclusively on the basis of the specific terms employed in naming the subtype. Terms that appear similar may be used to mean quite different things, and the definitions and actual usage of each author must also be considered.<sup>xxvi</sup> We first consider two approaches to forming subtypes that correspond to Sartori's original recommendations and then turn to diminished subtypes.

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<sup>xxv</sup> O'Donnell, "On the State, Democratization, and Some Conceptual Problems," *World Development* 21, no. 8 (1993).

<sup>xxvi</sup> This is why we insist in the classification of subtypes presented below that the subtypes cannot be evaluated on the basis of terms taken in isolation. Rather, the classification is based on the usage of the specific authors whom we cite.

## Sartori's Strategy for Differentiation

In Sartori's pioneering article on the use of concepts in comparative analysis, one of his basic goals is to show how greater conceptual differentiation can be achieved by moving *down* the ladder of generality to concepts that 1) have more defining attributes and 2) correspondingly fit a narrower range of cases. These concepts provide the more fine-grained distinctions that for some purposes are invaluable to the researcher.<sup>xxvii</sup> With reference to the concept of democracy, this move down the ladder is often accomplished by the creation of what we will call 'classical' subtypes,<sup>xxviii</sup> which in the context of the present discussion are understood as *specific yet full* instances of democracy. Thus, 'federal democracy,' 'multiparty democracy,' and 'parliamentary democracy' are seen as particular *kinds* of democracies at the same time that they are viewed as *definitely* being democratic (by whatever standard the author is employing). In research on recent cases of democratization, the use of classical subtypes to achieve differentiation is found, for example, in the important debate on the consequences of 'parliamentary' versus 'presidential' democracy (see Figure 3).<sup>xxix</sup> Other classical subtypes refer to additional aspects of political structure, as in 'two-party' democracy, and to the antecedents of the current regime, as in 'postauthoritarian' democracy.

Descending the ladder of generality provides useful differentiation, and indeed these subtypes have offered analytic distinctions of fundamental importance. Yet the classical subtypes formed in this manner may leave the analyst more vulnerable to conceptual stretching, given that they presume the cases under discussion to be fully democratic. If the particular case being studied is *marginally* democratic, then the use of these classical subtypes as a tool of conceptual differentiation may not be appropriate. Particularly in the first phase of this literature, when scholars believed they were dealing with incomplete or 'uncertain' democracies,<sup>xxx</sup> there was a strong inclination to use labels that signaled a recognition of these limits. To do this, analysts needed concepts that distinguished among different *degrees* of democracy, in addition to

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<sup>xxvii</sup> Sartori, "Concept Misformation," 1041.

<sup>xxviii</sup> We refer to these as classical subtypes because they fit within the 'classical' understanding of categorization discussed by such authors as George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), *passim*; and John R. Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization: Prototypes in Linguistic Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), chap. 2.

<sup>xxix</sup> Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism," *World Politics* 46, no. 1 (October 1993); and Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives, and Outcomes* (NY: New York University Press, 1994).

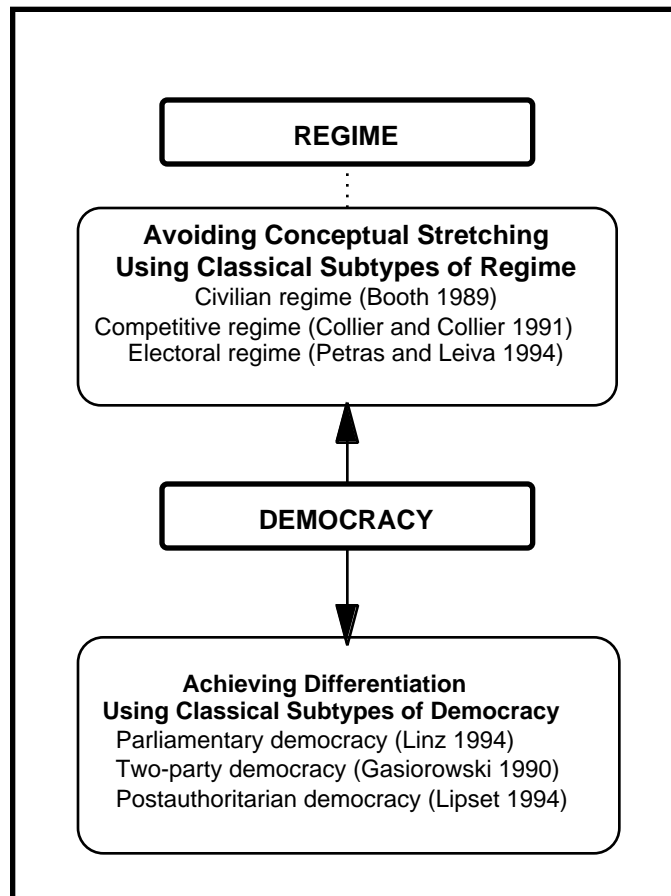
<sup>xxx</sup> This expression was used in the subtitle of O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*.

different *kinds* of democracy. Because classical subtypes only contribute to the second of these two goals, they have not been the most common strategy of conceptual differentiation.

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**Figure 3**  
**Achieving Differentiation versus Avoiding Conceptual Stretching**

(Meaning of subtypes must be understood in relation to usage by the specific author. Bibliographic references are in Appendix.)



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### **Sartori's Strategy for Avoiding Conceptual Stretching**

Sartori's proposal for avoiding conceptual stretching is to move *up* the ladder of generality to concepts that 1) have fewer defining attributes and 2) correspondingly fit a broader range of cases.<sup>xxx</sup> In the present context, this involves using concepts located *above* democracy on the

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xxx Sartori, "Concept Misformation," 140–44.

ladder of generality. As noted in the previous section, scholars commonly view democracy as a specific type in relation to the overarching concept of 'regime.' Consequently, if analysts have misgivings as to whether a particular case is really a *democratic* regime, they can move up the ladder and simply call it a 'regime.'

However, because shifting to a term as general as 'regime' entails an enormous loss of conceptual differentiation, scholars have typically moved to an intermediate level (Figure 3). Thus, in conjunction with dropping the term democracy, they have added adjectives to the term 'regime,' thereby generating classical subtypes of regime that differentiate specific *kinds* of regime. The resulting subtypes remain more general than the concept of 'democracy,' in that the subtypes encompass not only democracies but *also* some nondemocracies. Examples include 'civilian regime,' 'competitive regime,' and 'electoral regime.' In each case, scholars achieve some conceptual differentiation in relation to 'regime' yet are not specifically committing themselves to the idea that the case under discussion is a democracy. As noted in the previous section, analysts have not restricted themselves to the overarching concept of 'regime,' and some scholars make reference to 'government,' 'rule,' 'polity,' 'system,' or simply 'ism.' Corresponding subtypes, which may serve in a parallel manner to avoid conceptual stretching, include 'elected government,' 'civilian rule,' 'competitive polity,' 'postcommunist system,' and 'post-totalitarianism.'<sup>xxxii</sup>

Although climbing the ladder of generality usefully addresses the problem of conceptual stretching, it has an important drawback. Because these subtypes remain *more general* than the concept of democracy itself (in Figure 3, they are located *above* democracy on the ladder), this approach leads to a loss of conceptual differentiation.

To summarize, Sartori's two strategies of descending and climbing the ladder of generality can serve well either for avoiding conceptual stretching or achieving differentiation but not for both purposes at once. As a consequence, many scholars have turned to an alternative strategy that can be used to pursue these two goals simultaneously.

### **Diminished Subtypes**

Diminished subtypes have played a central role in this literature because they can contribute both to avoiding conceptual stretching *and* to achieving greater differentiation. They

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<sup>xxxii</sup> See, respectively, Laurence Whitehead, "The Consolidation of Fragile Democracies: A Discussion With Illustrations" in Pastor, *Democracy in the Americas*, 82–83; Richard Wilson, "Continued Counterinsurgency: Civilian Rule in Guatemala" in Barry K. Gills, Joel Rocamora, and Richard Wilson, eds., *Low Intensity Democracy: Political Power in the New World Order* (London: Pluto Press, 1993); Terry Lynn Karl, "Democracy by Design: The Christian Democratic Party in El Salvador" in Giuseppe Di Palma and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *The Central American Impasse* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1986); Ball, *Modern Politics and Government*, 45; and Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, and South America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming), chap. 3.

have also been widely employed because they can be expressed in terms of compelling labels that vividly draw attention to novel forms or features of democracy of concern to the analyst.

Two points are crucial for understanding how diminished subtypes can contribute both to differentiation and to avoiding conceptual stretching. First, in contrast to the classical subtypes discussed above, they are *not* 'full' instances of the overall type with reference to which they are formed. For example, 'limited-suffrage democracy' and 'semicompetitive democracy' are understood as less than complete instances of democracy because they lack some of the defining attributes entailed in a full case of democracy.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Consequently, in using these subtypes the analyst makes a more modest claim about the cases to which they are applied and is therefore less vulnerable to conceptual stretching.

The second point concerns differentiation. Because diminished subtypes represent an incomplete form of democracy, they might be seen as having *fewer* defining attributes, with the consequence that they would be *higher* on the ladder of generality and would therefore provide less, rather than more, differentiation. However, the distinctive feature of diminished subtypes is that they generally identify specific attributes of democracy that are *missing*, thereby establishing the diminished character of the subtype, at the same time that they identify other attributes of democracy that are *present*. Because of this distinctive feature of specifying missing attributes, they also provide greater differentiation, and the diminished subtype will in fact refer to a *different* set of cases than does the overall concept of democracy.

To understand the use of diminished subtypes in this literature, it is essential to recognize that the meaning of a subtype is generated in relation to the initial conception of democracy—i.e., the 'root concept'—with reference to which the subtype is a diminished instance.<sup>xxxiv</sup> We will first discuss diminished subtypes that have been generated in relation to the procedural minimum and expanded procedural minimum definitions presented above in Figure 1, which we refer to as 'partial' democracies. We will then examine cases where the differentiating criteria have been derived from the prototypical conception of established industrial democracy, which we refer to as 'problematic' democracies.

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<sup>xxxiii</sup> Because they are less than complete instances, it might be objected that they are not really 'subtypes' of democracy at all. Drawing on a term from cognitive linguistics, one can refer to them as conceptual 'blends' which are derived in part from the concept of democracy. However, to avoid referring repeatedly to 'subtypes and blends,' it seems simpler in the discussion below to call them subtypes. See Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, "Conceptual Projection and Middle Spaces," Report No. 9401, Department of Cognitive Science, University of California, San Diego, 1994.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> It merits emphasis that these authors may not think of themselves as forming subtypes of democracy but rather as informally using an adjective in conjunction with the noun 'democracy.' However, from a linguistic or cognitive point of view they are thereby creating analytic categories, and the fact that the resulting subtypes are often used in the title of their articles, or at key points in the introduction or conclusion, suggests that these conceptual innovations do play an important role in framing their research.

a. Partial Democracies: Subtypes Derived from Procedural Minimum and Expanded Procedural Minimum Definitions

These subtypes tend to be employed by scholars studying cases that are either 'in transition' or have remained only partially democratized, including a number of countries in Central America, Southeast Asia, Africa, and much of the former Soviet Union. This form of subtype is generally derived in relation to the procedural minimum definition presented in Figure 1, in that these scholars treat free elections, universal suffrage, and the protection of basic civil liberties as essential features of democracy. Most of these subtypes serve to differentiate cases on the basis of a specific attribute that is missing or weakened—for example, free elections, full suffrage, full electoral contestation, and civil liberties. Because each of these attributes is considered by the author to be a defining element of democracy, the subtypes generated are necessarily seen as less than fully democratic. Hence, these subtypes serve to distinguish different forms of 'partial' democracy.

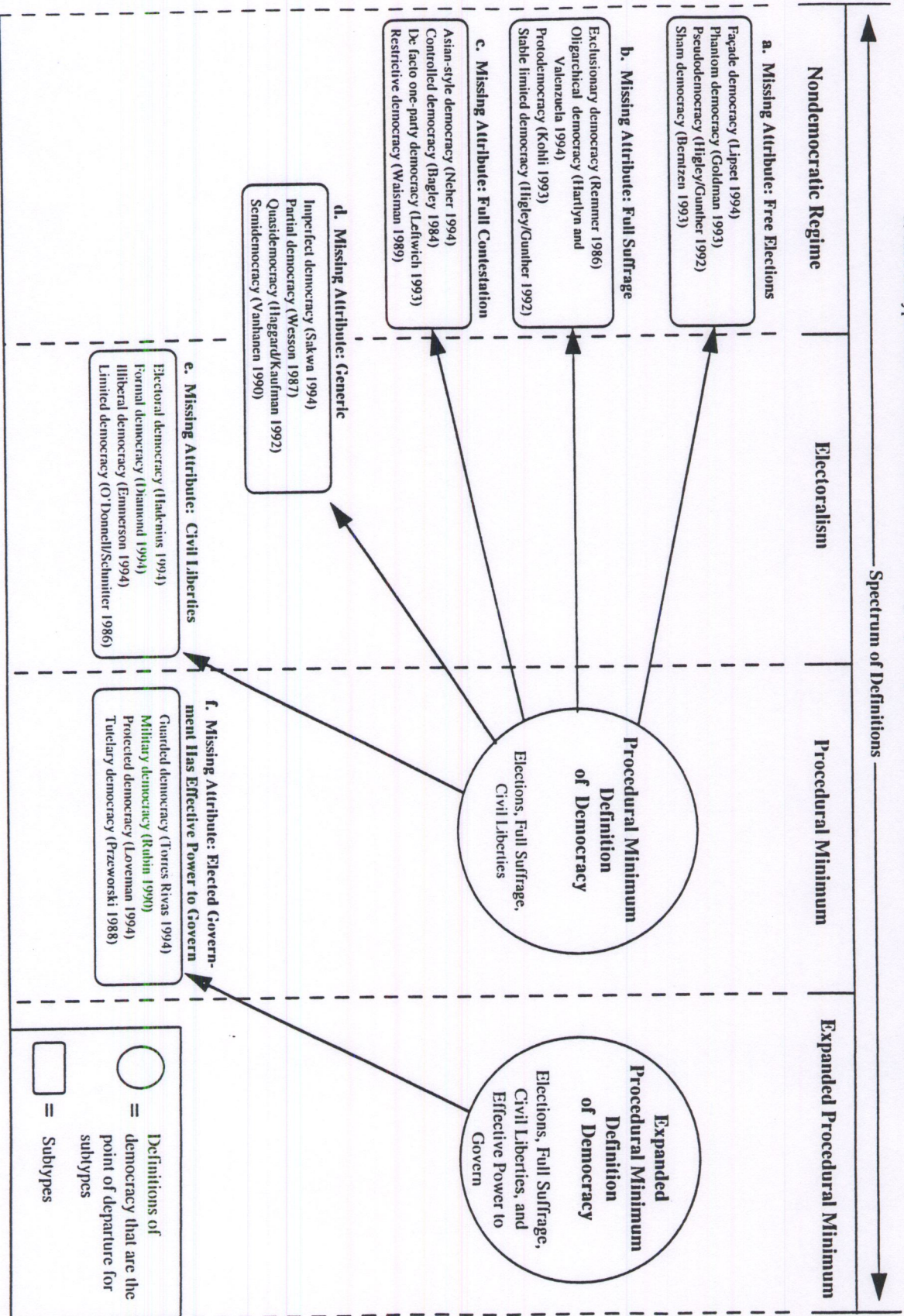
Figure 4 presents selected examples of these subtypes. The organization of the figure is intended to call attention to systematic correspondences between the meanings of the subtypes and the spectrum of definitions of democracy discussed above. Beginning with the left column in the figure, we find those subtypes that do not meet even an electoralist standard for being democratic. The subtypes in the first group (a) in the left column refer to cases where elections are basically fraudulent. Here, analysts see the missing attribute as fundamentally invalidating democracy, and consequently they use dismissive terms such as 'façade' or 'sham' democracy. Where elections are held and the missing attribute is full suffrage (b), we find terms such as 'oligarchical' or 'proto-' democracy. Where elections are basically competitive, but the attribute of *full* contestation is missing (c), as when important parties are banned from electoral competition, we find terms such as 'controlled' and 'restrictive' democracy.

Turning to the next group of subtypes (d), we find that one or more of these essential features of democracy is missing but that the missing trait is not specified. It is clear from the author's usage that these subtypes at most correspond to an electoralist definition, but because the exact placement on the spectrum of definitions is not clear, they have been placed between the first and the second column. Examples of these subtypes include 'partial,' 'quasi,' and 'semi'-democracy.

Moving to the right in the figure, the subtypes grouped in the second column (e) correspond in their meaning to the electoralist definition of democracy. Here, in dealing with cases where elections are reasonably free and competitive but civil liberties are incomplete, scholars have used terms such as 'electoral' and 'illiberal' democracy.

Finally, the subtypes in the group (f) located in the third column of Figure 4 correspond in their meaning to the procedural minimum definition of democracy. The emergence of these

**Figure 4. Diminished Subtypes vis-à-vis Procedural Minimum and Expanded Procedural Minimum Definitions**  
 (Location of subtypes in the columns reflects their meaning in relation to the spectrum of definitions in Figure 1. The meaning of each subtype must be understood in relation to usage by the specific author. Bibliographic references are in Appendix.)



subtypes shows how the creation of diminished subtypes may occur in conjunction with precisizing. Thus, scholars who created the expanded procedural minimum definition through precisizing introduced new diminished subtypes in which the missing attribute was the effective power of the elected government to govern. Examples include 'protected' and 'tutelary' democracy.

Having introduced the basic idea of how diminished subtypes work, we can now return to the relationship between these subtypes and the ladder of generality. We have already argued that if these subtypes simply had fewer defining attributes than does the concept of a full democracy, then within the framework of the ladder of generality diminished subtypes should be *more* general than the concept of democracy itself, i.e., they would refer to more cases. In this sense, they would follow the pattern noted above of inverse variation between the number of defining attributes and the number of cases referred to. However, the diminished subtype does not merely have fewer defining attributes. Rather, it specifies certain attributes that are *missing*. As a consequence of specifying these missing attributes, it refers to a particular type of *partial* democracy and not to *full* democracy. The question of whether these diminished subtypes refer to a larger or smaller number of cases than does the root concept of democracy is an empirical one.

Figure 5 illustrates one possible pattern of inclusion and exclusion of cases that may occur in conjunction with creating a diminished subtype, as opposed to climbing the ladder of generality, using the illustrative cases of contemporary Spain and Guatemala. Whereas Spain, but probably *not* Guatemala, would be seen as fully democratic in terms of the procedural minimum definition, climbing the ladder of generality we find that the broader concept of 'electoral regime'<sup>xxxv</sup> encompasses *both* cases. On the other hand, the diminished subtype of 'limited democracy' would include only Guatemala, and specifically *not* Spain. Thus, the diminished subtype of limited democracy refers to a case that does not fit the root concept of democracy.

b. 'Problematic' Democracies: Differentiating Criteria Derived from a Prototypical Conception of Established Industrial Democracy

Another set of subtypes refers to countries that the observer views as basically 'democratic' but that are differentiated in terms of the contrasting ways in which they are seen as 'problematic,' i.e., they do not meet a larger set of expectations about what democracies should be like. These subtypes are commonly employed by scholars who study countries that have completed a transition to some form of democracy, including cases found in Southern Europe, much of South America, and parts of Eastern Europe. These scholars are centrally concerned with providing a form of conceptual differentiation that highlights the particular political, economic,

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<sup>xxxv</sup> This subtype is understood to have the meaning explained on pages 14–16 above in the discussion of Figure 3.

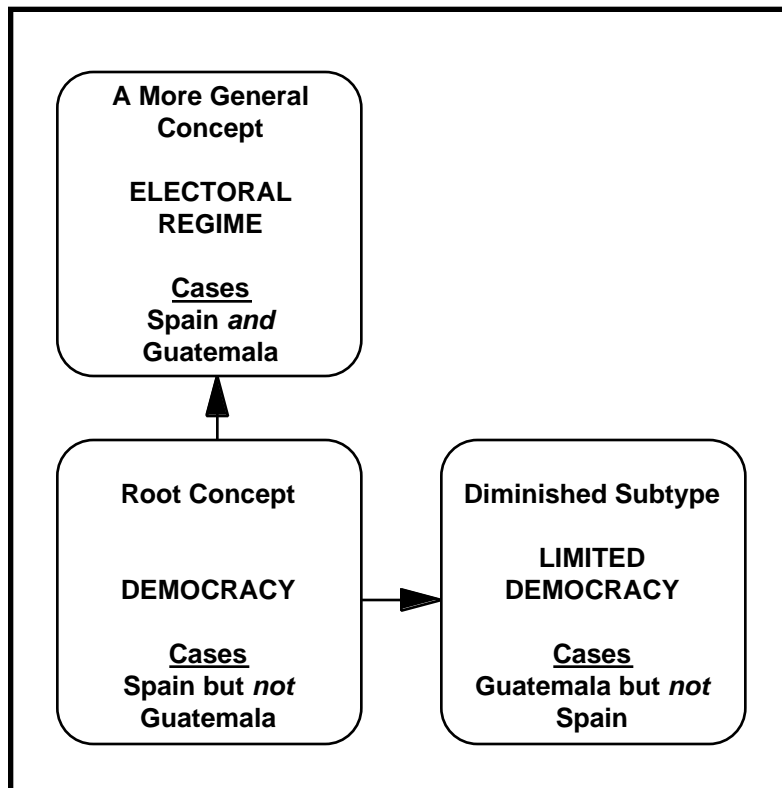


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Figure 5

**Inclusion and Exclusion of Cases in Climbing the Ladder of Generality versus Creating Diminished Subtypes: The Example of Spain and Guatemala\***

(Meaning of subtypes must be understood in relation to usage identified in Figures 3 and 4 above.)



\* The diminished subtype is placed to the right side of 'democracy' in the figure, rather than above or below it, to underscore the fact that it is *not* located on the ladder of generality.

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and social problems faced by many democracies. The differentiating criteria employed in forming these subtypes are derived not from elements of the procedural minimum or expanded procedural minimum definitions, as is the case for the subtypes presented in Figure 4, but rather from the prototypical conception of established industrial democracy introduced in Figure 1. This conception is based on a constellation of attributes, listed in Figure 6, that are commonly perceived to be found in the political and social systems of advanced industrial countries. As

Figure 6

**'Problematic' Democracies: Differentiating Criteria Derived from Prototypical Conception of Established Industrial Democracy**

(Meaning of each subtype must be understood in relation to usage by the specific author. Bibliographic references are in Appendix.)

<p><b>(a) Weakened Element: Regime Consolidation</b> Fragile democracy (Whitehead 1989) Immature democracy (Kelley et al. 1993) Uncertain democracy (O'Donnell/Schmitter 1986) Unconsolidated democracy (Higley/Gunther 1992)</p> <p><b>(b) Weakened Element: Horizontal Accountability</b> Caudillistic democracy (Hillman 1992) Delegative democracy (O'Donnell 1994) Plebiscitarian democracy (Tamás 1992) Populist democracy (Schmitter/Karl 1992)</p> <p><b>(c) Weakened Element: Effective Citizen Participation</b> Depoliticized democracy (Whitehead 1992) Dual democracy (Smith/Acuña 1994) Elitist democracy (Hagopian/Mainwaring 1987) Low-intensity democracy (Stahler-Sholk 1994)</p> <p><b>(d) Weakened Element: Effectiveness and Responsiveness of Government and Regime</b> Blocked democracy (Lanzaro 1993) Impotent democracy (Whitehead 1992) Overinstitutionalized democracy (Schedler 1995) Weak democracy (Weffort 1992)</p> <p><b>(e) Weakened Element: Commitment to Sustaining Social Welfare Policies</b> Conservative democracy (Karl 1991) Input democracy (Black 1993) 'Moderated' democracy (Hillman 1992) Neoliberal democracy (Whitehead 1992)</p>	<p><b>(f) Weakened Element: National Sovereignty</b> Controlled democracy (Hinkelammert 1994) Internationally dependent democracy (Whitehead 1992) Neocolonial democracy (Whitehead 1992) US-imposed democracy (Berntzen 1993)</p> <p><b>(g) Weakened Element: Favorable Socioeconomic Conditions</b> Bankrupt democracy (Whitehead 1992) Democracy without prosperity (Torres Rivas 1994) Low-income democracy (Diamond 1992) Poor democracy (Weffort 1992)</p> <p><b>(h) Weakened Element: Social and Political Stability</b> Besieged democracy (Archer 1995) Conflictive democracy (Weffort 1992) Socially explosive democracy (Whitehead 1992) Unruly democracy (Leftwich 1993)</p> <p><b>(i) Weakened Element: Generic</b> Incomplete democracy (Hillman 1992) Problematic democracy (Hartlyn 1994) Sick democracy (Stempel Paris 1980) Tarnished democracy (Hellinger 1991)</p>
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noted above, by including these attributes, which are seen as characteristic of democracies that are understood to 'function properly,'<sup>xxxvi</sup> this conception goes well beyond basic procedural

<sup>xxxvi</sup> It might be added that this prototypical conception typically does not take account of the serious political and economic crises recently experienced by some of these advanced industrial countries.

definitions. The subtypes formed in this manner are often presented with little attention to definitions.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

We have identified more than one hundred of these subtypes, examples of which are included in Figure 6. Most of the examples in the figure refer to cases in which one or more specific elements in this prototypical conception are understood to be weakened or absent. Some of these subtypes are concerned with basic features of the regime. Thus, where regime consolidation is weak (a), scholars refer to ‘fragile’ and ‘insecure’ democracy. Where horizontal accountability<sup>xxxviii</sup>—i.e., ‘checks and balances’ vis-à-vis the executive—is incomplete (b), one finds such subtypes as ‘caudillistic’ and ‘delegative’ democracy.

Many subtypes in the figure refer not to the regime itself but to other features of the political systems that are commonly found in industrial democracies. Thus, where the level of effective citizen participation is low (c), scholars have used subtypes such as ‘depoliticized’ and ‘low-intensity’ democracy. If the government or the regime is seen as ineffective or unresponsive (d), subtypes such as ‘blocked,’ ‘impotent,’ ‘overinstitutionalized,’ and ‘weak’ democracy are employed. Where commitment to social welfare policies is weak or absent (e), one finds, for example, ‘conservative’ and ‘neoliberal’ democracy. In cases where national sovereignty is weak (f), scholars have used subtypes such as ‘internationally dependent,’ ‘neocolonial,’ and ‘US-imposed’ democracy.

Subtypes associated with this prototypical conception at times include features of the society and economy that advocates of minimal and procedural definitions have specifically argued should be excluded from the definition of democracy (see again Figure 6). Thus, where socioeconomic conditions are seen as unfavorable to democracy (g), one finds reference to ‘low-income’ and ‘poor’ democracy, and for cases characterized by low levels of sociopolitical stability (h), scholars refer to ‘socially explosive’ and ‘conflictive’ democracy. Finally, some of these subtypes refer more generically to a weakened version of this prototypical conception (i) in which the particular missing features are not clear: for example, ‘incomplete’ and ‘problematic’ democracy.

An ambiguity regarding this group of subtypes merits comment. In contrast to the subtypes that represent a diminished form of a procedural minimum definition, this second group consists of subtypes introduced by authors who explicitly or implicitly view them as referring to regimes that meet basic procedural definitions of democracy. Because the differentiating features are not explicitly treated by the authors as defining features of democracy, their absence

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<sup>xxxvii</sup> As with other authors whose definitions are not explicit, we have often inferred the meaning from the larger framework of the authors’ analysis and from the way the subtype is applied to specific cases.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> This term was suggested by Guillermo O’Donnell, “Delegative Democracy?” 61.

does not make the regime less democratic from a formal definitional standpoint. In this sense, these might in fact be seen as classical subtypes vis-à-vis the procedural minimum definition. On the other hand, these authors can be seen as creating diminished subtypes because they are in effect treating these regimes as incomplete and problematic in relation to this often implicit conception of advanced industrial democracy. Thus, in this case, the distinction between classical and diminished subtypes depends on the perspective from which the subtypes are viewed.

### c. Evaluating the Use of Diminished Subtypes

In light of these examples, how should we assess the role of diminished subtypes? They usefully provide further analytic categories for differentiating among the remarkable diversity of new cases of democracy that have emerged in the past two decades and for avoiding conceptual stretching. Within this framework, the two groups of diminished subtypes exhibit distinctive strengths and weaknesses. In the first group, i.e., the subtypes in Figure 4 that identify partial democracies in relation to procedural minimum and expanded procedural definitions, the conception of democracy that is the point of departure for the subtypes, as well as the relation of the subtypes to this conception, is generally presented in a clear and consistent manner. By using these subtypes, the authors establish a useful and appropriate means of referring to marginal cases. On the other hand, as with the other strategies discussed above, a good strategy can be counterproductive if misused. It is not desirable to have numerous labels for what, with regard to meaning, is the same diminished subtype. Figure 4 offers only a few examples of the large number of subtypes that correspond to each weakened element, and as the number of labels moves well into the hundreds there is certainly a loss in clarity of communication.

Furthermore, for some of the cases that are marginally democratic the issue arises as to whether it would be better to avoid identifying them as types of democracy. In the Latin American field, an example of such a step is Bruce Bagley's decision to reject the numerous diminished subtypes of democracy that have been used to label the case of Colombia during the National Front period (e.g., 'restricted,' 'controlled,' 'limited,' 'oligarchical,' 'elitist,' 'elitist-pluralist,' and 'consociational' democracy) and to declare instead that Colombia was an "inclusionary authoritarian regime."<sup>xxxix</sup> Following a similar pattern, some scholars have created subtypes that do not employ the noun 'democracy' but that in terms of their defining attributes correspond in meaning to what we are calling diminished subtypes of democracy. Examples include 'electrocratic rule,' 'semicompetitive polity,' 'competitive, partially illiberal regime,' 'hybrid regime,'

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<sup>xxxix</sup> Bruce Michael Bagley, "Colombia: National Front and Economic Development" in Robert Wesson, ed., *Politics, Policies, and Economic Development in Latin America* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), 125–27.

and 'hybrid democratic-authoritarian regime.'<sup>xi</sup>

The second group of diminished subtypes (Figure 6), which we have characterized as identifying 'problematic' democracies, refers to cases that are understood as democracies in terms of the procedural minimum definition yet are seen as problematic in relation to a prototypical conception of advanced industrial democracy. On the positive side, one may argue that readers of the literature on democracy readily understand these subtypes as conveying salient information about the cases under discussion, and in this sense they are useful. Yet several concerns may be raised about these subtypes. First, the root conception from which the differentiating attributes are derived is generally not clearly stated by the authors. Although the authors often provide enough information for us to be able to identify the conception of democracy in relation to which the subtype is treated as a diminished form, there is often a lack of explicit reflection on the part of the authors about the standard they are employing. Though many of these authors purport to use a procedural minimum definition of democracy, it is clear that their implicit understanding of 'full' democracy is actually far more elaborate. Indeed, many of the diminished subtypes listed in Figure 6 introduce as criteria for differentiation some of the very social and economic attributes that proponents of procedural and minimal definitions have argued should be excluded from the definition of democracy. Hence, these social and economic features are creeping back into many authors' conceptions of democracy, although these conceptions are rarely, if ever, made explicit. This implicit conception of 'full' democracy needs to be more carefully examined.

Moreover, in some cases one observes an unfortunate interaction between the imprecise character of these subtypes and their tendency to convey a negative evaluation of the case or cases under discussion. They at times place scholars in the position of appearing to write critically about given cases but without situating their negative evaluation in the context of a careful conceptualization of democracy and its subtypes. This does not strike us as a productive route to follow. O'Donnell's analysis of delegative democracy is a good model for avoiding this problem, in that he offers an intricate conceptualization of how the delegative character of these regimes undermines democratic consolidation.<sup>xli</sup> For each of these subtypes, it is worth asking whether

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<sup>xi</sup> These subtypes might appear to resemble those presented in the upper part of Figure 3. Yet in terms of their meaning they correspond more closely to the examples in Figure 4—with the crucial difference that they do not identify the cases to which they refer with the term democracy. These examples are drawn from Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization," 180; Karl "Imposing Consent," 195; Larry Diamond, "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered" in Diamond and Gary Marks, eds., *Reexamining Democracy* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992), 99; Karl, "The Hybrid Regimes of Central America," 72; and Catherine M. Conaghan and Rosario Espinal, "Unlikely Transitions to Uncertain Regimes? Democracy without Compromise in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22 (October 1990), 555.

<sup>xli</sup> O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy?" 66–68.

there is an equivalent analytic payoff. In some cases, what is at least implicitly being treated as a

problem of democracy might be better understood as involving underlying problems of societies that happen to have democratic regimes.

### **Concluding Observations**

Scholars who study recent democratization have faced the two-fold challenge of developing conceptualizations of democracy that not only achieve finer differentiation among cases but also avoid stretching the concept. We have examined various strategies of conceptual innovation employed to meet this challenge with the aim both of making more comprehensible the complex structure of meaning that has emerged and of offering observations on the strengths and weaknesses of the different strategies. The first two strategies—precising the definition of democracy and shifting the overarching concept with which democracy is associated—can be used both to avoid stretching the concept of democracy and to provide finer differentiation. However, if either strategy is carried too far, it can lead to confusion about meaning and usage. With regard to strategies based on the formation of subtypes, Sartori's alternative approaches of descending and climbing the ladder of generality can, respectively, help either in providing finer differentiation or avoiding conceptual stretching, but cannot do both at once.

Finally, diminished subtypes can achieve both goals simultaneously, and they often serve to provide vivid, compelling labels for the specific forms of democracy of concern to the analyst. Consequently, the creation of diminished subtypes is the most common form of conceptual innovation in this literature. At the same time, the value of diminished subtypes is greatly reduced if scholars do not offer clear definitions and if they unreflectively separate the root conception used in deriving subtypes from their own definition of democracy. It is similarly counterproductive to generate numerous terms for subtypes that mean basically the same thing.

To conclude, four points should be emphasized. The first concerns the understanding of democracy in graded, as opposed to dichotomous, terms. Various scholars have pointed to the need to move beyond a dichotomous conceptualization of authoritarianism and democracy and recognize the 'hybrid' or 'mixed' character of many postauthoritarian regimes.<sup>xlii</sup> As this paper shows, this recognition has indeed occurred—and on a rather large scale. Not only have scholars studying regimes in Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the former communist countries emphasized the 'partial' or 'hybrid' nature of many new democracies, they have also identified, often through the use of numerous subtypes, the diverse configurations of features found in

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xlii James M. Malloy, "The Politics of Transition in Latin America" in Malloy and Seligson, eds., *Authoritarians and Democrats*, 236–57; Conaghan and Espinal, "Unlikely Transitions to Uncertain Regimes?" 555; Hartlyn, "Crisis-Ridden Elections," 94–96; Karl, "The Hybrid Regimes of Central America"; and Weffort, *Qual democracia?* 89–90.

these regimes. What has been lacking is an effort to understand how the treatment of these hybrid regimes has been organized conceptually.

This paper has sought to initiate that effort. It is evident that within the general framework provided by the spectrum of definitions in Figure 1, analysts have introduced a series of gradations into their conceptualizations—to such an extent that it may be appropriate to reconsider the old distinction between quantitative researchers who think in terms of ‘degree’ and qualitative researchers whose categories capture differences in ‘kind.’ Although the studies under discussion here would conventionally be viewed as involving qualitative research, at a number of points these analysts appear to be working with an implicit ordinal scale of degrees of democracy rather than with a large number of nominal distinctions. To the extent that this ordinal scale is made more explicit and is employed more systematically, the goal of conceptual differentiation will be better served.

Second, this more differentiated understanding of democracy is important not only for the purpose of description, but also because democracy is often used as a variable in causal analysis. A large literature has treated democracy as an outcome to be explained, including both major works of comparative-historical analysis and the old and new literature on ‘social requisites.’ Other studies have looked at the impact of democracy, and also of specific types of democracy, on economic growth, income distribution, economic liberalization and adjustment, and international conflict. Given the diverse definitions of democracy found in these writings, as well as the numerous subtypes that have been proposed, it is not surprising that these causal analyses have often reached contradictory conclusions. We hope that the present discussion can serve as a step toward a greater consistency of meaning and usage that will provide a more adequate basis for causal assessment.

Third, our analysis suggests that although scholarship on the recent wave of democratization initially embraced procedural and minimal definitions, recent work reflects a shift toward more elaborate definitions and conceptualizations. This trend can be seen in many of the innovations discussed in this paper, including the various efforts at precisising, O’Donnell’s distinction between democratic ‘states’ and democratic ‘regimes,’ and the widespread use of subtypes to refer to new democracies that meet procedural minimum criteria for democracy but lack other—often ‘substantive’—features that are viewed as characteristic of established industrial democracies. Although many of these conceptual innovations may be criticized both for lack of clarity and for adding attributes to the concept of democracy that are better kept distinct, they do seem to reflect a growing concern that the mere existence (and persistence) of basic democratic ‘procedures’ does not guarantee the existence of the broader range of political, economic, and social outcomes that we have come to associate with democracy as it is practiced in the industrialized West. As many of the new democracies in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and



other parts of the world continue to survive but not thrive, these conceptual innovations are likely to continue. At the same time, it is reasonable to raise again the issue posed above: Do the 'problematic' features that are the focus of these shifting conceptions of democracy really entail attributes of democracy itself, or are they better understood as underlying problems of societies that happen to be democratic?

We conclude by offering an old piece of advice with renewed urgency. The complex structure of meaning generated by the strategies of conceptual innovation discussed above offers scholars an impressive array of terms and conceptions that may be applied to the study of democratization. Given this complexity, it is imperative that scholars situate themselves in relation to this structure by clearly defining and explicating the conception of democracy they are employing.

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## Figure 1

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## Figure 2

### Shifting the Overarching Concept

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### Figure 3

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## Figure 4

### Diminished Subtypes vis-à-vis Procedural Minimum and Expanded Procedural Minimum Definitions of Democracy

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## Figure 6

### **'Problematic' Democracies: Differentiating Criteria Derived from Prototypical Conception of Established Industrial Democracy**

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### Figure 4. Diminished Subtypes vis-à-vis Procedural Minimum and Expanded Procedural Minimum Definitions

(Location of subtypes in the columns reflects their meaning in relation to the spectrum of definitions in Figure 1. The meaning of each subtype must be understood in relation to usage by the specific author. Bibliographic references are in Appendix.)

