Measurement| Documents and Archives

Doing Political Research, Week 7

Research Design: Key Points

- Outline a plan for a research project that would answer an original research question of your own choosing

- 2500 words (+/- 10%), including footnotes and bibliography

- Any referencing style, as long as it is consistent

- Deadline: noon on 8th January

- Week 10 class: discuss your ideas

Research Design: Questions to Think About

- What is your **research question**?

- Where does your proposed research fit into **existing literature** on the topic? How will you build on existing studies?

- What is your **theory**? Will you be testing an existing theory, developing a new theory or adapting an existing theory to a different context?

- What are the key **concepts** in your research project? How will you operationalise and measure them?

- Which **method**(s) will you use to answer your question? Why use this method, or set of methods?
    - How will you collect your data? How will you analyse the data you collect?
    - What practical difficulties might you face when collecting and analysing your data? How will you overcome them?

- What **ethical issues** might arise during your research project? How will you ensure that your research meets relevant ethical standards?

Skaaning

- What types of data on democracy does Skaaning discuss? Which types are more or less useful?

- How could we go about combining different types of data into a single measure? Would this be worthwhile? What would the challenges be?

- Are there any other types of data we could use to measure democracy?

Article

Different Types of Data and the Validity of Democracy Measures

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Abstract
Different measures of democracy rely on different types of data. Some exclusively rely on observational data, others rely on judgement-based data in the form of in-house coded indicators or expert surveys. A third set of democracy measures combines information from indicators based on different types of data, some of them also data from representative surveys of the mass public. This article discusses the advantages and disadvantages of these different types of data for the measurement of electoral and liberal democracy. The discussion is based on the premise that the main priorities must be to establish a high degree of concept-measure consistency, i.e. indicators capture relevant aspects of the core concept of interest in a precise and unbiased manner, and to provide high coverage. The basic argument of the article is that no type of data is superior to others in all respects. The article draws on examples from extant datasets to illustrate the tradeoffs and it offers suggestions about how to reduce some of the potential drawbacks.

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.
(Cameron, 1963, p. 13)

1. Introduction

The construction and use of measures of democracy in social scientific research has increased considerably in recent decades. This makes good sense; without them, the identification of trends in political rights and liberties must be based on rough impressions not allowing for systematic temporal and cross-country comparisons (Bollen, 1992, p. 189). However, such efforts are only valuable if the quality of the data is high in terms of reliability and validity.[1]

When we attempt to measure democracy, the identification of empirical indicators that tap into the different aspects of the overarching concept is one of the most important tasks. One can either use extant indicators, collect new data, or combine new indicators with old ones. The main priority must be to establish a high degree of concept-measure consistency, i.e. the extent to which the indicators capture all of the components of the core concept of interest (and only those), and the extent to which they do so in a precise and unbiased manner (Adcock & Collier, 2001; Goertz, 2006; Munck, 2009).[2] In the

[1] Reliability concerns whether a measurement procedure produces similar results under consistent conditions. Validity concerns the extent to which a measure plausibly captures the concept it is supposed to measure. Reliability is a necessary but insufficient condition for measurement validity. See Seawright and Collier (2014) for an overview and critical assessment of different validation strategies applied to measures of democracy. The strategies they discuss mainly apply to extant measures, while they neither discuss the data generating procedures nor address the question of different data types in the same level of detail as the present article.

[2] Note that concept-measure consistency, besides the use of adequate indicators, also concerns the aggregation procedures used to combine the information provided by different indicators. However, the question of whether the aggregation of information provided by the indicators is based on theoretically justified, empirically sound procedures is not part of this article's agenda as it constitutes a rather independent issue (see Bollen & Lennox, 1991; Goertz, 2006; Møller & Skaaning, 2011, Appendix; Munck, 2009).

Measurement

- Design a measure to operationalise the intensity of civil wars.
- What will your coding scheme be?
- What evidence will you use to code individual cases?

Designing an Archive/Document-based Research Project

- Choose a research question to investigate a political process or phenomenon and design an archive- or document-based study to research it.

- What materials do you need to get access to? Where are these materials? How can you get access to them?

- What materials exist, and how might the different kinds of bias affect what is available?

- How will you analyse the contents of the documents?

Srivastava

- What archives and documents did Srivastava use?

- How did she analyse these sources?

- What other sources could she have looked at?

- How could the study have been improved? What other methods could have been used?

Corporate Sovereign Awakening and the Making of Modern State Sovereignty: New Archival Evidence from the English East India Company

Swati Srivastava

Abstract The English East India Company's "company-state" lasted 274 years— longer than most states. This research note uses new archival evidence to study the Company as a catalyst in the development of modern state sovereignty. Drawing on the records of 16,740 managerial and shareholder meetings between 1678 and 1795, I find that as the Company grew through wars, its claim to sovereign authority shifted from a privilege delegated by Crown and Parliament to a self-possessed right. This "sovereign awakening" sparked a reckoning within the English state, which had thus far tolerated ambiguity in Company sovereignty based on the early modern shared international understanding of divisible, nonhierarchical layered sovereignty. But self-possessed nonstate sovereignty claimed from the core of the state became too much. State actors responded by anchoring sovereign authority along more hierarchical, indivisible foundations espoused by theorists centuries earlier. The new research makes two contributions. First, it introduces the conceptual dynamic of "war awakens sovereigns" (beyond making states) by entangling entities in peacemaking to defend sovereign claims. Second, it extends arguments about the European switch from layered sovereignty to hierarchical statist forms by situating the Company's sovereign evolution in this transformation. Ultimately, this study enables fuller historicization of both nonstate authority and the social construction of sovereignty in international politics.

Modern sovereignty was born in an age of empire.
—Nicholas Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire* (2008), 203

The current international system may be exclusively composed of sovereign states, but that does not mean it was built by them.
—Andrew Phillips and Jason Sharman, *Outsourcing Empire* (2020), 16

By 1800, the English East India Company ("the Company" or EIC) ruled one-fifth of the world using a larger military force than England's.[1] It established forts and trading

1. Chaudhuri 1978; Lawson 1993.