Democratization

Assessing the Quality of Democracy: Freedom, Competitiveness and Participation in Eighteen Latin American Countries

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Version of record first published: 06 Sep 2010.

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Assessing the Quality of Democracy: Freedom, Competitiveness and Participation in Eighteen Latin American Countries

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This article explores the problem of conceptualizing and measuring the quality of democracy in Latin America. The first part discusses the use of the concept and the need for an operational measure. It explores three dimensions of the quality of democracy: civil rights, participation and effective competition. The second part develops an indicator of effective competition, one of the key dimensions of the concept. The third part analyses the empirical relationship between all three dimensions in 18 Latin American countries between 1978 and 1996. The study constructs summary measures of the quality of democracy in several ways, and show that the ranking of the cases is highly consistent no matter the procedure applied. The final section tests the validity of the measure and discusses its limitations.

Introduction

After the third wave of democratization, students of comparative politics have noticed a decreasing range of variance in their favourite dependent variable: the political regime. Explaining the conditions for the emergence, breakdown or survival of different regimes has been a classic goal of comparative studies. Over the last decade, however, political democracy has survived in many countries – meaning that the dependent variable has shown no significant change. This situation has directed scholars towards new and more subtle questions about preconditions for democratic consolidation and the institutional features of new democracies. Moreover, it is breeding a growing interest in the quality of democratic life, a factor that clearly varies from country to country.

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This article explores the problem of conceptualizing and measuring the quality of democracy in Latin America. The first part discusses the use of the concept and the need for an operational measure. It begins by noting an important distinction among polyarchies: even though all of them allow (quasi) universal participation and legal opposition to the ruling party, *effective* participation and competition vary from country to country. This suggests that countries with similar levels of democratization might take advantage of their democratic institutions to different degrees. Following this observation, three dimensions of the quality of democracy are explored: civil rights, participation and effective competition. Following Hill, these three dimensions are conceived as the extension of Robert Dahl's concept of polyarchy.[1] The second part then develops an indicator of effective competition, one of the key dimensions in the study. The third part analyses the empirical relationship between all three dimensions in 18 Latin American countries between 1978 and 1996. Summary measures of the quality of democracy are constructed in several ways, to show that the ranking of the cases is highly consistent no matter the procedure applied. The last section tests the validity of the measure and discusses its limitations.

Approaching the Quality of Democracy

By quality of democracy is meant the extent to which any given polyarchy actualizes its potential as a political regime.[2] The assumption underlying this view is that polyarchy is a necessary, yet not a sufficient, condition for a high quality of democracy. Most students of democracy would probably agree with this basic definition, if only because it is broad enough to accommodate several perspectives on this issue.

Recent studies of democratization have increasingly dealt with this question. Some authors have approached the topic as an extension of the classic focus on regime change. A good deal of research has been done in order to measure levels of democracy allowing scholars to trace fine distinctions among the cases placed at the top of the scale.[3] For instance, Diamond and Coppedge conceived the quality of democracy as the relative degree of democratization among countries that we already label as polyarchies.[4]

The value of this perspective cannot be denied but there are two potential problems. The first one is that instruments designed to grade regimes in a wide range between full authoritarianism and full democracy might lack sensitivity to discriminate within the pool of polyarchies clustered at one extreme of the range. Second, the relevant criteria to distinguish between authoritarianism and democracy are not necessarily the

same as the relevant ones to discriminate *among* polyarchies. For instance, marginal improvements in political rights and civil liberties might be relevant but do not constitute the only key to the quality of democratic life.

There is a substantial difference between addressing the *quality of democracy* and the *level of democratization* of a political regime. Every analysis of the quality of democracy should assume a minimum degree of democratization, namely Dahl's procedural minimum. When we compare the quality of democracy among countries we are not comparing which countries are more democratic (in the sense that Freedom House scores or the Polity Index measures the level of democracy as opposed to authoritarianism). Rather, we are analysing in which countries democracy performs better given some normative standards. Much of the debate about the quality of democracy is about the identification of these normative standards.

For instance a second approach to the quality of democracy has emphasized, often from a qualitative perspective, substantive flaws that negatively affect democratic life in a given country or set of countries.[5] To deal with these cases of 'reserved domains', lack of 'horizontal accountability', or 'electoralism', among other problems, scholars have developed a whole array of diminished sub-types of democracy.[6] This perspective has been extremely lucid in identifying challenges for (and flaws of) new polyarchies, but it has usually avoided a comprehensive definition of the quality of democracy and has tended to ignore problems of cross-national measurement.

In our view, some of the most interesting studies of the quality of democracy have been done at the local level.[7] Putnam identified the quality of democracy with institutional performance – understood as some objective measure of governmental responsiveness and output levels.[8] Some of Putnam's indicators, however, are related to the performance of local government *per se*, not necessarily local *democratic* government (even though his universe of study was democratic). In addition, we suspect that his indicators are too tailored to the Italian case (at the local level), and would not travel well to Latin America (at the national level).

An operational definition of the quality of democracy anchored in Dahl's definition of polyarchy is employed here. It allows us to assess to what extent different polyarchies transform legal opportunities for participation and contestation into tangible patterns of citizen behaviour. Democracy creates the potential for citizen participation and opposition to elected officials, but in many countries citizen apathy or weak party competition, among other possible reasons, hinder the development of this potential.

The approach adopted is similar to Hill's study of the United States. Hill proposed

an empirical assessment of the extent of representative democracy in the [American] states. That assessment is guided by empirical democratic theory and its explication of the essential components of such a governmental system: equal rights to vote in free and fair elections, competitiveness among political parties contending to control government through those elections, and the degree of mass participation in elections.[9]

Because these three dimensions were derived from Dahl's concept of polyarchy, this approach is particularly useful for the purpose of cross-national comparison.[10]

Following Dahl and Hill, therefore, the three dimensions of the quality of democracy in Latin America can be summarized as:[11]

Effective civil rights: Dahl's definition of polyarchy hinges on a set of institutional conditions allowing mass participation and free opposition to the ruling elite. The lack of such conditions (what we call effective rights) determines the absence of polyarchy. But even if all conditions are present to a good extent (making the country a member of the polyarchic set of regimes) limited violations of civil rights may hinder the quality of democracy. Countries in which some specific regions or social groups are affected by political violence or electoral manipulation are clearly worse than democracies in which the whole population effectively exercises its rights – of course, no country has a *perfect* record. Freedom House scores are used as an indicator of this dimension: the 2–14 scale was normalized to range between 0 and 1 in order to facilitate comparison with the other dimensions.[12] Since all cases in our sample are polyarchies, the average score is high: 0.73, with a standard deviation of 0.15.

Effective Participation: Dahl's measure of participation reflected the *right* to participate, not the actual rate of participation. Most scholars contend (correctly) that voter turnout should not be part of a definition of democracy. But many others have argued (also correctly, in our view), that turnout is an important dimension of the *quality* of democratic life.[13] Greater participation – whether it is voluntary or encouraged by compulsory vote – makes democratic governments responsive to a larger share of the population.[14] The health of a democratic regime is particularly weak when some citizens are effectively disenfranchised as a consequence of poverty, lack of basic education or sheer apathy.[15] Because low turnout in Latin America is typically related to low levels of voter registration this study measures turnout as the number of voters over the voting-age population (VAT).[16] Data were gathered from a single source.[17] In Latin America, turnout varies

from extremely low (15 per cent in 1994 Guatemala) to very high rates (95 per cent in 1989 Uruguay). The average for our sample was a VAT of 0.62, with a standard deviation of 0.18.[18]

Effective Competition: Dahl's definition of polyarchy allowed for the free exercise of political contestation in – and between – elections, but it never implied that effective competition *had* to occur. For instance, Japan between 1955 and 1993 is a classic example of democracy with low inter-party competition. Nevertheless Hill is correct to argue that a more competitive democracy is a *better* democracy.[19] An indicator of competition useful for our purposes must fulfil three requirements. First it should reflect the opposition's access to the legislative process, rather than mere electoral outcomes (which can be distorted through disproportionality or fraud). Second it should punish the excessive dominance of the ruling party in policy making, but, third, without rewarding excessive dominance of the opposition (which may create serious problems of governability). For different reasons that are explained in the following section, traditional measures of party competition do not serve our purpose. We therefore develop an original index for cross-national comparison.

Assessing Effective Competition

Students of democracy and elections have developed different measures of competition. For example, Powell measured competition as the frequency of alternation in power over a 19-year period, and Ranney built a multidimensional index of competition in the American states over several decades.[20] This long-term perspective is not very useful for new democracies in which only a very few elections may have taken place. Other students have measured competition as the winner's percentage of the votes, the per cent margin of victory, and the raw vote margin of victory in elections.[21] Such measures are closer to our purposes, but they are heavily biased against two-party systems because margins of victory tend to be smaller in multiparty democracies.

We measure the opposition's access to power as a weighted difference between the share of the seats of the government and the opposition parties in the lower chamber.[22] Being aware that it is important to penalize fragmentation, we designed a measure to find the 'typical party' in the opposition by weighting the shares of seats in favour of the largest parties:

$$O = \frac{\sum o_i^2}{\sum o_i}$$

O is an indicator of the leverage of the opposition, where o_i is the share of seats for the i-th opposition party. The same procedure is followed to estimate the size of the 'typical party in government' in the case of electoral coalitions winning office:

$$G = \frac{\sum g_i^2}{\sum g_i}$$

Based on our previous assessment of the size of the 'typical parties' in government and in opposition, we developed an index of competitiveness:

$$C = 1 - \left| \frac{G - O}{100} \right|$$

The value of C tends to zero whenever the government (or the opposition) controls the whole legislature, and to one if there is balance between government and opposition.[23] For example, C equals 0.332 for 1984 Nicaragua, and 0.998 for 1990 Bolivia. The performance of this indicator is well illustrated by the cases of Ecuador (1988) and Venezuela (1979). In both cases, the ruling party (Izquierda Democrática and Copei, respectively) controlled 42.2 per cent of the seats. In Ecuador, however, the opposition was highly fragmented, therefore C=0.656. In contrast, Copei had to face the powerful Acción Democrática in Congress: C=0.745.[24] The average value of C in the sample is 0.80 with a standard deviation of 0.14.[25]

Measuring the Quality of Democracy

The previous sections have argued that effective civil rights, participation and competition are three dimensions of the quality of democracy inferred from Dahl's concept of polyarchy. Are these three dimensions independent, or do they all reflect a latent variable? If these variables are independent from each other, we can only conceive the quality of democracy as a multidimensional phenomenon. If, on the contrary, all dimensions reflect an underlying construct, it might be possible to develop a summary measure of the quality of democracy in Latin America.

This section addresses the problem using factor analysis. The sample includes all Latin American countries that were polyarchies at some point between 1978 and 1996. The decision to include some cases in the sample is debatable because the boundaries between democratic and non-democratic regimes are sometimes contested – and, of course, it would not make sense to measure the quality of democracy in non-democracies. One way of dealing with this problem is to consider polyarchy a concept with

uncertain boundaries, not because the concept is ill-defined but because there is uncertainty about some cases belonging to the polyarchic set.[26] If we adopt a 'fuzzy set' approach, we can think of countries as being part of this set with different degrees of probability.[27] For instance, the probability of Cuba belonging to the set of democracies is virtually zero, the probability of Costa Rica, virtually one. The probability of Mexico being a member of the set in the early 1990s is likely to be less than one. Acknowledging the problem of uncertainty, we wanted to include in our sample all cases with a high likelihood of being members of the polyarchic set.

The decisions were based on two categorical measures of democracy, the ACLP classification, and Mainwaring's classification.[28] The sample includes all cases coded as democracies or semi-democracies in Mainwaring's classification (that is, cases coded as democratic by Alvarez *et al*. but *not* coded as authoritarian by Mainwaring).[29] Eighteen countries entered the sample at different time points (see Table 1 below). Cuba and Haiti were not classified as democracies at any point during the 1978–96 period.

The chosen units of analysis are democracies-after-each-election, a total of 77 observations were included in the analysis (see Appendix). For the few cases in which presidential and legislative elections were held in different years, turnout at the presidential or legislative election was measured and the competitiveness of the system calculated on the basis of the configuration of the new government or legislature.

To the extent that the three dimensions (civil rights, competitiveness and turnout) reflect an underlying construct like the 'quality of democracy', we would expect them to be partially correlated across cases – they all map the same latent variable. Indeed, the Pearson correlation between Freedom House scores and turnout is 0.58, between turnout and the C index is 0.29, and between Freedom House and C is 0.49 (all significant at 0.01 level). These are not strong correlations and therefore it cannot be said with certainty that they reflect a single latent variable without factor analysis.

Following a factor analysis is used to create a summary measure of the quality of democracy.[30] Factor analysis is useful to validate an index by demonstrating that its constituent items load on the same factor. According to Marradi, 'factor analysis allows one to use statistical relationships between several lower-level variables as empirical evidence for or against the establishment of a semantic relationship of indication between these variables and an abstract concept, which may thus be measured and transformed into a variable with a high semantic extension and theoretical importance'.[31] Factor scores for each country are presented in Table 1 below.

The three dimensions were aggregated by estimating the unweighted average of their standardized scores. The values, presented in the column

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TABLE 1

QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA (1978–1996)

Country	Dimensions			Factor	Alternative procedures		
	FH	Turnout	C	Scores	Average	Product	Z-Scores
Uruguay (1984–96)	0.861	0.935	0.898	1.385	0.898	0.722	1.108
Costa Rica (1978–96)	0.983	0.807	0.848	1.338	0.879	0.672	1.027
Chile (1990–96)	0.833	0.840	0.980	1.301	0.884	0.686	1.064
Brazil (1985–96)	0.771	0.758	0.908	0.726	0.812	0.527	0.599
Argentina (1983–96)	0.821	0.807	0.790	0.681	0.806	0.526	0.525
Venezuela (1978–96)	0.833	0.684	0.806	0.479	0.774	0.460	0.361
Ecuador (1979–96)	0.781	0.627	0.870	0.358	0.759	0.425	0.289
Honduras (1982–96)	0.708	0.672	0.879	0.259	0.753	0.425	0.231
Dominican Rep. (1978–96)	0.764	0.548	0.893	0.185	0.735	0.382	0.158
Bolivia (1982–96)	0.750	0.563	0.862	0.092	0.725	0.363	0.081
Panama (1990–96)	0.708	0.629	0.761	-0.156	0.699	0.334	-0.130
Nicaragua (1984–96)	0.556	0.752	0.677	-0.575	0.662	0.313	-0.445
Peru (1980–92, 1995–96)	0.625	0.631	0.681	-0.625	0.646	0.271	-0.504
El Salvador (1984–96)	0.597	0.468	0.796	-0.776	0.620	0.219	-0.597
Paraguay (1989–96)	0.625	0.470	0.732	-0.853	0.609	0.209	-0.679
Colombia (1978–96)	0.681	0.348	0.693	-1.066	0.574	0.175	-0.875
Mexico (1988–96)	0.528	0.525	0.557	-1.499	0.537	0.154	-1.212
Guatemala (1986–96)	0.479	0.328	0.724	-1.654	0.510	0.120	-1.292

labelled 'Z-scores' are highly correlated with the values for the common factor. The problem with those two measures is that they are dependent on the cases included in the sample. If, for instance, we add or delete some observations from the sample, the standardized scores may change and the relative order of cases may be affected. Therefore two forms of aggregation that are free of this problem were tested: the average value ([FH+C+VAT]/3) and the product (FH*C*VAT) of all three dimensions. The results are extremely consistent regardless of the aggregation procedure, the only exception being the ranking of Chile and Costa Rica (Chile's ranking is discussed in more detail in the conclusions below). Those two countries change positions if countries are sorted by Average, Product or Z-Scores. The rest of the countries remain in the same position when sorted by Factor or by any other measure.

For graphic parsimony a map of Latin America is also included (see Figure 1) in which each country is shaded according to its factor coefficient. On average, countries in the southern cone have shown a better quality of democracy than countries in Central America or northern South America. But Costa Rica is of course the most noticeable exception to this pattern.

Not only has Costa Rica been democratic for more than half a century, it is also a *good* democracy. It is probable that the 'white' countries – Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Paraguay – are, or have been for most of the period under study, borderline cases. In other terms, they might be located under the 'cross-over point' where membership in the set of democracies is more than uncertain.[32]

Concept Validity

Besides the issue of aggregation, another important problem in concept building is validation. Simply put, validity implies that our measure reflects (our definition of) the quality of democracy, not just a small part of the concept or some other theoretical construct.[33] This section therefore focuses on criterion-related validity (the extent to which our measure correlates to

FIGURE 1

QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

Factor scores:

1.3   to 1.39 (3)
0.48 to 1.3   (2)
0.09 to 0.48 (5)
-0.78 to 0.09 (4)
-1.66 to -0.78 (4)

No data
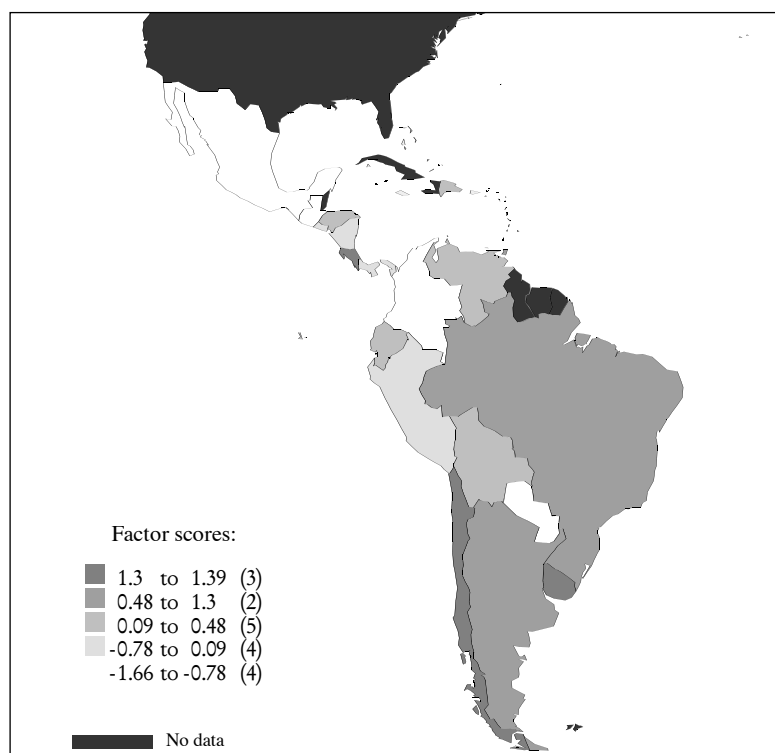
other indicators) and construct validity (the ways in which our measure relates to broader theoretical assumptions about the quality of democracy). Of course this is only a modest, first step in the validation process. As Hubley and Zumbo noted, 'the validation process is a form of disciplined inquiry in which plausible, alternative inferences from the test scores or observations are disproved'.[34]

Criterion-related validation is difficult in this case because, to our knowledge, no other measures of the quality of democratic life are available for Latin America. There are, however, available indicators of *democracy* like the Polity III, 20-point scale.[35] We expect a positive correlation between our indicator of democratic quality and the (upper range) of the Polity score. In fact, the average Polity III scores for countries in the sample correlate at 0.70 with our measure (n=18). This correlation is not very surprising, since Polity is itself correlated to Freedom House scores, our indicator of civil rights. Because our sample includes some cases (that is, countries in given years) that Mainwaring classified as 'semi-democratic' the mean factor score for this group was investigated as well. Cases labelled as semi-democracies (n=28) have an average factor score of –0.92, while the ones coded as democratic (n=49) have a mean of +0.53.

For construct validation, what Adcock and Collier called the AHEM (Assume the Hypothesis, Evaluate the Measure) validity test was employed.[36] This is also a difficult task because the literature on the quality of democracy is at an early stage, and there are no well-established hypotheses about the causes (and consequences) of a 'good' democracy. Three ideas that we considered (almost) uncontroversial were selected: 1) a stronger democratic tradition is correlated with a better democracy; 2) political violence has a negative impact on democratic life, and 3) public satisfaction with democracy is related to the quality of the regime (probably in a bi-directional way).

As an indicator of 'democratic tradition' the number of years of democracy enjoyed by each country in the second half of the century was counted, that is for the period 1950–96, the last year in the sample.[37] The correlation between this indicator and factor score is 0.79 (n=18). We also measured democratic tradition in the long run using the Polity III country average between 1900 and 1977 (the last year prior to our period). The correlation between this indicator and our index was 0.62. Countries with strong guerrilla movements in the 1978–96 period (Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Perú) have a mean score value of –0.94, while the average for the rest of the countries is +0.33. The inclusion of Mexico in the first group would only help confirm the test.

Satisfaction with democracy at the mass level was measured by the Latinbarometer (1997 wave) in all countries except for the Dominican

Republic. Satisfaction was measured as the difference between the percentage of respondents saying that they are 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with the regime, and the ones declaring some degree of dissatisfaction. The correlation between this indicator and our score is 0.65 (n=17). Table 2 below presents the relation between the three factors (tradition, violence and satisfaction) and the quality of democracy index. The regression model predicts 80 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable, and all coefficients are significant and of the expected sign.

TABLE 2
PREDICTORS OF THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY

	b	Beta	t
Democratic tradition (1950–96)	0.034**	0.539	4.25
Political violence	–0.641*	–0.311	–2.53
Satisfaction with democracy	0.013*	0.336	2.71
Constant	0.095		0.342
Adjusted R^2=0.802			

** Significant at 0.001 level, * 0.05 level. n=17

Conclusions

The major question underlying any assessment of the quality of democracy is how to discriminate between better and worse democratic units. The number of normative criteria that could be used to evaluate democracies is, however, virtually unlimited. This study selected three dimensions that are well-grounded in democratic theory: effective liberties, competitiveness and participation.

These criteria have proved to be instrumental for comparing democracies at different levels of analysis. For instance, Hill compared the US states at two historical moments, Centellas assessed the evolution of democracy over time in one country (Bolivia), and Altman and Pérez-Liñán dealt with a cross-section of countries world-wide.[38] This article has compared 18 Latin American countries during the 'third wave', between the late 1970s and the mid 1990s.

Those three aspects are not enough to fully describe the complexities of democratic life. For instance, our indicator is not sensitive to the presence of 'reserved domains' – as the ones Valenzuela had in mind when describing Chilean politics.[39] This explains why Chile ranks so high in our study. Neither is the measure very sensitive to the presence of 'brown areas' like the degree of independence of the judiciary, accountability or institutional performance.[40]

Those limitations show that we are far from settling the question of how to measure the quality of democracy. Although our index performs

satisfactorily well, fitting our theoretical expectations, we consider this measure a very modest contribution to the incipient debate on this issue. Future research will be directed at addressing three topics: the validity of this measure, its reliability in different contexts, and the addition of new dimensions to this idea of democratic quality.

NOTES

1. Kim Quaile Hill, *Democracy in the Fifty States* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).
2. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971).
3. For example: Phillip Cutright, 'National Political Development: Measurement and Analysis', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.28, No.2 (1963), pp.253–64. Kenneth A. Bollen, 'Issues in the Comparative Measurement of Political Democracy', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.45, No.2 (1980), pp.370–90. Kenneth A. Bollen, 'Liberal Democracy: Validity and Sources Biases in Cross-National Measures', *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol.37, No.4 (1993), pp.1207–30. Tatu Vanhanen, *The Emergence of Democracy: A Comparative Study of 119 States, 1850–1979* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984). Ted R. Gurr, Keith Jaggers and Will Moore, 'The Transformation of the Western State: The Growth of Democracy, Autocracy, and State Power since 1800', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol.25, No.1 (1990), pp.73–108. Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang Reinicke, 'Measuring Polyarchy', in A. Inkeles (ed.), *On Measuring Democracy: Its Consequences and Concomitants* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990), pp.47–68. Raymond D. Gastil, 'The Comparative Survey of Freedom: Experiences and Suggestions', in A. Inkeles (ed.), *On Measuring Democracy: its Consequences and Concomitants* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), pp.21–46. Axel Hadenius (ed.), *Democracy and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Dean E. McHenry Jr., 'Quantitative Measures on Democracy in Africa: An Assessment', *Democratization*, Vol.7, No.2 (2000), pp.168–85. Joe Foweraker and Roman Krznaric, 'Measuring Liberal Democratic Performance: an Empirical and Conceptual Critique', *Political Studies*, Vol.48, No.4 (2000), pp.759–87. Gerardo Munck and Jay Verkuilen, 'Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indexes', Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago, 2000).
4. Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). Michael Coppedge, 'Modernization and Thresholds of Democracy: Evidence for a Common Path and Process', in M. Midlarsky (ed.), *Inequality, Democracy, and Economic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.177–201.
5. Samuel Valenzuela, 'Democratic consolidation in Post-transitional settings: Notion, Process and Facilitating Conditions', in Guillermo O'Donnell, Scott Mainwaring and Samuel Valenzuela (eds), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp.57–104. Guillermo O'Donnell, 'On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems: a Latin American View with Glances at Some Postcommunist Countries', *World Development*, Vol.21, No.8 (1993), pp.1355–69. Guillermo O'Donnell, 'Delegative Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.5, No.1 (1994), pp.55–69. Guillermo O'Donnell, 'Illusions about Consolidation', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.7, No.2 (1996), pp.34–51. Terry Lynn Karl, 'The Hybrid Regimes in Central America', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.6, No.3 (1995), pp.72–86.
6. David Collier and Steve Levitsky, 'Democracy with Adjectives: Finding Conceptual Order in Recent Comparative Research', *World Politics*, Vol.49, No.3 (1997), pp.430–51. Diamond, op. cit., Chapter 2.

7. William L. Miller, *Irrelevant Elections? The Quality of Local Democracy in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

8. Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

9. Kim Quaile Hill, *Democracy in the Fifty States* (Lincoln, NA: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), p.xii.

10. Ibid., pp.13–15.

11. Robert Dahl, op. cit.; Hill, op. cit.

12. See Miguel Centellas, 'The Consolidation of Polyarchy in Bolivia, 1985–1997', 57th Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago, 1999).

13. For instance E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960); Olavo Brasil De Lima, 'Electoral Participation in Brazil (1945–1978): The Legislation, the Party Systems and Electoral Turnouts', *Luso-Brazilian Review,* Vol.20, No.1 (1983), pp.65–87; Ruy Texeira, *Why Americans don't Vote: Turnout Decline in the United States, 1960–1984* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Miller, op. cit.; Hill, op. cit.; Arend Lijphart, 'Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.91, No.1(1997), pp.1–14.

14. Admittedly, this is a controversial issue. David Altman and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán explore this problem in greater length in 'Más allá de la poliarquía: midiendo la calidad de las democracias', *Revista Uruguaya de Ciencia Política*, Vol.11 (1999), pp.83–105.

15. Some analysts contend that low participation may reflect high satisfaction with the political regime. We dispute this idea based on the fact that most studies have shown that the less educated people (the ones with fewest opportunities in the system) are the less inclined to vote. For instance see R. Wolfinger and S. Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980).

16. Centellas, op. cit., developed a subtler Index of Effective Participation (IEP) which accounts for blank-null votes and votes for parties not represented in congress. We rely on the classic VAT indicator due to lack of reliable information on 'ineffective' parties.

17. International IDEA, *Voter Turnout from 1945 to 1997: A Global Report on Political Participation* (Stockholm: IDEA: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 1997).

18. For the advantages (and some problems) of the VAT measure, see Hill, op. cit., pp.135–9. We are aware that political participation is not limited to voting in elections. But casting ballots is the *basic* form of participation, and the one that is equally relevant in all democracies. Other forms of participation may be too idiosyncratic to facilitate comparison across countries.

19. Ibid., Chapter 3.

20. G.B. Powell, 'American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective', *American Political Science Review,* Vol.80, No.1 (1986), pp.17–43; Austin Ranney, 'Parties in State Politics', in Herbert Jacob and K. Vines (eds), *Politics in the American States* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), pp.51–92. See also: Kim Q. Hill and Jan Leighler, 'Party Ideology, Organization, and Competitiveness as Mobilizing Forces in Gubernatorial Elections', *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol.37, No.4 (1993), pp.1158–78; Hill, *Democracy in the Fifty States*.

21. Samuel Patterson and Gregory Caldeira, 'Getting Out the Vote: Participation in Gubernatorial Elections', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.77, No.3 (1983), pp.675–89. Gary Cox and M. Munger, 'Closeness, Expenditures and Turnout in the 1982 House Elections', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.83, No.1 (1989), pp.217–31. Gary Cox, 'Closeness and Turnout: a Methodological Note', *Journal of Politics*, Vol.50, No.3 (1988), pp.768–75.

22. We operationalize opposition as all parties with seats in the lower chamber that are not the ruling party or that are not part of the electoral coalition that elected the president. By government, on the other hand, we understand the party (or the coalition of parties) controlling the executive as a result of a given election. By 'government coalition' we refer to any set of parties that had formed an explicit electoral front with the ruling party, that is parties that presented a single presidential candidate under a common label. We are aware that the majority of government coalitions in Latin America are post-electoral, but post-

electoral coalitions are not relevant for our measurement. The fact that the executive has to negotiate the formation of a government coalition with the opposition parties shows the presence of a competitive party system rather a non-competitive one. See David Altman, 'Coalition Formation and Survival under Multiparty Presidential Democracies in Latin America: Between the Tyranny of the Electoral Calendar, the Irony of Ideological Polarization and Inertial Effects', Latin American Studies Association (Miami, Florida, 2000).

23. The ratio between O and G yields another measure called Index of Effective Opposition, or IEO, see Altman and Pérez-Liñán, op. cit. The IEO rewards a larger opposition bloc, rather than the balance between government and opposition. For a use of this measure, see Altman, op. cit.

24. The index assumes party cohesion, which was presumably higher in Venezuela than in Ecuador. Although lack of discipline may create some noise in our indicator, we presume that, even in cases of low cohesion, party labels are yet 'somewhat meaningful predictors of how legislators would vote'. See Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, 'Party Discipline in the Brazilian Constitutional Congress', *Legislative Studies Quarterly,* Vol.22, No.4 (1997), pp.452–83.

25. For a more detailed discussion on the performance of C, see Centellas, op. cit. and Altman and Pérez-Liñán, op. cit. The C index is a measure of potential contestation, rather than an indicator of closeness in the races. C would reflect any consociational agreement dividing the legislative seats as effective power sharing, even if the distribution of votes is not that even.

26. Uncertainty about the classification of borderline cases may originate in insufficient information, measurement error, or the fact that democracy is a continuous, rather than a dichotomous concept. Our fuzzy-set approach does not require us to take a position in the debate between dichotomous and continuous measures of democracy, see David Collier and Robert Adcock, 'Democracy and Dichotomies: A Pragmatic Approach to Choices about Concepts', *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol.2 (1999), pp.537–65.

27. Michael Smithson, *Fuzzy Set Analysis for Behavioral and Social Sciences* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987). Charles Ragin, *Fuzzy-Set, Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Charles Ragin, 'Conceptualizing Complexity: A Fuzzy-Set Approach', in Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Atlanta, 1999).

28. Mike Alvarez, José A. Cheibub, Fernando Limongi and Adam Przeworski, 'Classifying Political Regimes', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol.31, No.2 (1996), pp.3–36. Scott Mainwaring, *Democratic Survivability in Latin America,* The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, Working Paper No.267 (1999). Scott Mainwaring, Daniel Brinks and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, *Classifying Political Regimes in Latin America 1945–1999*, The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, Working Paper No.280 (2000).

29. We suspect that the ACLP dichotomous measure of democracy is too inclusive (that is, the risk of type-II error in the selection process is high). For instance, Alvarez *et al.* coded the late years of military dictatorship in Brazil (1979–85) as democratic (see Mainwaring *et al.*, 'Classifying', op. cit. On the other hand, Mainwaring's definition of democracy may be too demanding for our purposes (therefore increasing the risk of type-I error).

30. Hill, op. cit., pp.100–102. Principal component analysis yielded a single factor (with an eigenvalue of 1.92) accounting for 64 per cent of the variance in the component dimensions. Communalities (h2) were 0.52 for C, 0.62 for VAT, and 0.78 for Freedom House Scores.

31. Alberto Marradi, 'Factor Analysis as an Aid in the Formation and Refinement of Empirically Useful Concepts', in David J. Jackson and Edgar F. Borgatta (eds), *Factor Analysis and Measurement in Sociological Research. A Multi-Dimensional Perspective* (Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1981), p.13.

32. Ragin, op. cit., p.4.

33. Gerardo Munck, 'Canons of Research Design in Qualitative Analysis', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol.33, No.3 (1998), pp.18–45.

34. Anita Hubley and Bruno Zumbo, 'A Dialectic on Validity: Where we Have Been and Where we are Going?', *The Journal of General Psychology*, Vol.123, No.3 (1996), p.214.

35. Gurr, Jaggers and Moore, op. cit., pp.73–108.
36. Robert Adcock and David Collier, 'Connecting Ideas with Facts: The Validity of Measurement', Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Washington, DC, 2000).
37. Of course, this test created the problem of choosing an operational definition of democracy again. In this case, we just followed Mainwaring's 'Democratic Survivability in Latin America' and its restrictive definition.
38. Hill, op. cit.; Centellas, op. cit.; Altman and Pérez-Liñán, op. cit.
39. Valenzuela, op. cit.
40. O'Donnell, 'On the State', op. cit., Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, op. cit.

APPENDIX

Country	Year Legislative	FH	Effective Number of Parties	C Index	Year Elections	Turnout
Argentina	1984	0.83	2.220	0.882	1983	0.775
Argentina	1986	0.92	2.327	0.831	1985	0.778
Argentina	1988	0.92	2.491	0.889	1987	0.801
Argentina	1990	0.83	2.536	0.789	1989	0.825
Argentina	1992	0.75	2.684	0.740	1991	0.894
Argentina	1994	0.75	2.705	0.734	1993	0.781
Argentina	1996	0.75	2.776	0.667	1995	0.798
Bolivia	1983	0.75	3.997	0.815	1980	0.591
Bolivia	1986	0.75	4.313	0.852	1985	0.652
Bolivia	1990	0.75	3.917	0.998	1989	0.508
Bolivia	1993	0.75	3.715	0.782	1993	0.500
Brazil	1986	0.83	3.294	0.923	1986	0.704
Brazil	1989	0.83	6.914	0.827	1989	0.794
Brazil	1990	0.75	7.079	0.905	1990	0.766
Brazil	1994	0.67	7.870	0.977	1994	0.769
Chile	1990	0.83	4.382	0.996	1989	0.863
Chile	1994	0.83	4.948	0.964	1993	0.817
Colombia	1978	0.75	2.064	0.837	1978	0.34
Colombia	1982	0.75	1.985	0.824	1982	0.431
Colombia	1986	0.75	2.450	0.836	1986	0.421
Colombia	1990	0.58	2.183	0.652	1990	0.356
Colombia	1991	0.67	3.007	0.552	1991	0.256
Colombia	1994	0.58	3.348	0.456	1994	0.284
Costa Rica	1978	1.00	2.366	0.911	1978	0.753
Costa Rica	1982	1.00	2.269	0.671	1982	0.79
Costa Rica	1986	1.00	2.209	0.884	1986	0.801
Costa Rica	1990	1.00	2.209	0.884	1990	0.851
Costa Rica	1994	0.92	2.300	0.890	1994	0.842
Dominican R.	1978	0.83	1.994	0.946	1978	0.628
Dominican R.	1982	0.92	2.249	0.850	1982	0.656
Dominican R.	1986	0.83	2.531	0.867	1986	0.607
Dominican R.	1990	0.75	3.053	0.938	1990	0.473
Dominican R.	1994	0.58	2.434	0.878	1994	0.306
Dominican R.	1996	0.67	2.434	0.878	1996	0.616
Ecuador	1979	0.83	3.944	0.712	1979	0.416
Ecuador	1984	0.83	6.659	0.973	1984	0.58
Ecuador	1986	0.75	7.490	0.921	1986	0.649

APPENDIX (Cont'd)

Country	Year Legislative	FH	Effective Number of Parties	C Index	Year Elections	Turnout
Ecuador	1988	0.83	4.465	0.656	1988	0.671
Ecuador	1990	0.83	6.732	0.943	1990	0.647
Ecuador	1992	0.75	6.208	0.994	1992	0.7
Ecuador	1994	0.75	5.830	0.862	1994	0.663
Ecuador	1996	0.67	6.579	0.896	1996	0.691
El Salvador	1984	0.42	3.163	0.860	1984	0.581
El Salvador	1985	0.67	2.097	0.837	1985	0.483
El Salvador	1988	0.67	2.406	0.790	1988	0.435
El Salvador	1989	0.58	2.410	0.790	1989	0.394
El Salvador	1991	0.58	3.011	0.754	1991	0.44
El Salvador	1994	0.67	3.064	0.743	1994	0.472
Guatemala	1986	0.50	2.980	0.644	1985	0.477
Guatemala	1990	0.58	4.435	0.916	1990	0.38
Guatemala	1994	0.42	3.480	0.701	1994	0.145
Guatemala	1995	0.42	2.716	0.634	1995	0.31
Honduras	1982	0.67	2.164	0.837	1981	0.519
Honduras	1985	0.75	2.122	0.943	1985	0.778
Honduras	1989	0.75	2.000	0.875	1989	0.757
Honduras	1993	0.67	2.031	0.860	1993	0.635
Mexico	1988	0.58	3.039	0.602	1988	0.417
Mexico	1991	0.50	2.214	0.477	1991	0.5
Mexico	1994	0.50	2.287	0.593	1994	0.659
Nicaragua	1984	0.33	1.787	0.332	1984	0.74
Nicaragua	1990	0.67	2.054	0.850	1990	0.757
Nicaragua	1996	0.67	2.737	0.849	1996	0.759
Panama	1990	0.67	3.315	0.855	1989	0.556
Panama	1994	0.75	4.149	0.667	1994	0.702
Paraguay	1989	0.58	1.888	0.592	1989	0.547
Paraguay	1993	0.67	2.451	0.873	1993	0.394
Peru	1980	0.75	2.472	0.693	1980	0.585
Peru	1985	0.75	2.314	0.600	1985	0.691
Peru	1990	0.58	4.042	0.915	1990	0.628
Peru	1995	0.42	2.912	0.514	1995	0.621
Uruguay	1985	0.83	2.923	0.877	1984	0.939
Uruguay	1990	0.92	3.350	0.846	1989	0.949
Uruguay	1995	0.83	3.299	0.970	1994	0.919
Venezuela	1979	0.92	2.646	0.924	1978	0.745
Venezuela	1984	0.92	2.422	0.650	1983	0.769
Venezuela	1989	0.83	2.828	0.751	1988	0.728
Venezuela	1994	0.67	4.650	0.902	1993	0.492