



"The Changing Standard of Accountability and the Positive Relationship between Human Rights Treaty Ratification and Compliance"



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ABSTRACT: A science of human rights requires valid comparisons of repression levels across different spatial and temporal contexts. New, theoretically informed latent variable models of difficult to measure concepts such as human rights, dissent, and treaty compliance are helping to provide new insights into the global patterns of repression and reform. Latent variable models go by many different names and may seem complex at first glance but they can all be conceptualized as variants on the linear model and are therefore easily accessible to anyone who has completed an introductory statistics class. In this presentation, I first provide what I hope is an accessible presentation of how to create a latent variable model based on the linear model. Second, I describe multiple ways in which both old and new latent variable models can be extended in theoretically meaningful ways using construct validity as a guide. Third, I emphasize the importance of continuous validation as part of the development process for these models. To conclude, I motivate the development of these models with a discussion of the Bayesian perspective on the relationship between data and model parameters. This perspective provides a foundation for using the often flawed and incomplete data with which scholars of repression, human rights, and contentious politics must work with in order to generate new insights about these important concepts. This perspective is useful because it shifts the burden of validity from the primary source documentation and raw data to the model parameters that bind these diverse pieces of information together.



Chair: Benjamin Graham
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