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## Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis

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Against the backdrop of an explosion of interest in new techniques for data collection and theory testing, this volume provides a fresh programmatic statement about comparative-historical analysis. It examines the advances and distinctive contributions that CHA has made to theory generation and the explanation of large-scale outcomes that newer approaches often regard as empirically intractable. An introductory essay locates the sources of CHA's enduring influence in core characteristics that distinguish this approach, such as its attention to process and its commitment to empirically grounded, deep case-based research. Subsequent chapters explore broad research programs inspired by CHA work; new analytic tools for studying temporal processes and institutional dynamics; and recent methodological tools for analyzing sequences and for combining CHA work with other approaches. This volume is essential reading for scholars seeking to learn about the sources of CHA's enduring influence and its contemporary analytical and methodological techniques.

**James Mahoney** is Gordon Fulcher Professor in Decision-Making and Professor of Political Science and Sociology at Northwestern University.

**Kathleen Thelen** is Ford Professor of Political Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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**James Mahoney**

Northwestern University

and

**Kathleen Thelen**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology



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Cambridge University Press, 2010) and *Beyond Continuity* (edited with Wolfgang Streeck; 2005). Thelen’s current work focuses on labor and social policy in the advanced industrial democracies, and on the American political economy in comparative perspective.

**Lucan A. Way** is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on democratic transitions, postcommunist politics, and the evolution of authoritarian rule in cross-regional perspective. In 2006, his article in *World Politics*, “Authoritarian State Building and the Sources of Regime Competitiveness in the Fourth Wave,” received the award for best article from the American Political Science Association’s Comparative Democratization Section. His book, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (with Steven Levitsky), was published in 2010 by Cambridge University Press. Professor Way is completing a new book, *Pluralism by Default: Weak Autocrats and the Rise of Competitive Politics*, in which he argues that democratic politics in the post–Cold War era has often been the product of weak states and underdeveloped ruling parties rather than strong democratic institutions or robust civil societies. Professor Way received a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to begin a new project with Steven Levitsky on the durability of revolutionary regimes.

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## Preface

This volume originated in a conversation in 2010 in which Lewis Bateman of Cambridge University Press expressed interest to James Mahoney in a second edition of *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (coedited by Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, 2003). The following year, Kathleen Thelen and Mahoney began discussions about a new project along these lines. Although a fresh programmatic statement about comparative-historical analysis (CHA) seemed appropriate and much needed, it was also apparent that any new undertaking could not replicate – or even simply update – the earlier book. For one thing, Dietrich Rueschemeyer had retired from sociology, making unavailable the senior leader of the earlier project. Moreover, developments in political science and sociology spoke against following the previous book’s approach of simultaneously engaging both disciplines. In particular, the rise of new methodologies and approaches in political science seemed to require a new programmatic statement about CHA focused on political science.

*Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis* features original contributions that situate CHA within present-day debates in political science. The book retains the earlier volume’s threefold structure – exploring the substantive contributions, theoretical accomplishments, and methodological strategies of CHA. It also follows the earlier book in being a collective effort, bringing together leading CHA scholars who otherwise work in diverse empirical areas. However, the essays in this book cover wholly new topics and tools, and they engage recent and ongoing debates and problems in the field.

To us, this project seemed especially important now because of the excitement surrounding the “revolution in causal influence” currently gripping political science. In recent years, the discipline has witnessed an explosion of interest in the experimental method and a smaller but significant movement advocating the use of “big data.” In light of the growing interest in new techniques for data collection and theory testing, we felt it important to call to mind the ongoing contributions that CHA has made to theory generation and

the explanation of large and complex outcomes at the macro level – outcomes that newer approaches often shy away from as empirically intractable. In our introductory essay we explain the enduring influence of CHA in contemporary political science by highlighting comparative advantages inherent to the approach, and we also consider what is lost in research programs that lack core features of CHA. The epilogue of the book returns to broader themes by examining how CHA rests on a particular ontology of the social world that links it to the classics in political science and that distinguishes it from many prominent contemporary alternative approaches.

After an introduction, the core essays of the volume are organized into three parts. In the first part, “Agenda-Setting Work,” authors explore how key works in CHA within specific substantive areas have inspired broad research programs spanning generations of scholars. The essays suggest that orientations inherent to CHA – above all, its concern with deep case-based research and its openness to complex, configurative explanation – enable the tradition to produce agenda-setting works that define the questions and lines of analysis that other scholars of diverse methodologies and orientations subsequently pursue.

The next part of the book, “Tools for Temporal Analysis,” consists of essays that explore the theoretical tools and conceptual innovations associated with CHA. These essays focus especially on tools for pursuing temporally oriented analysis within CHA. They include new work on the study of power and path dependence, new guidelines and concepts for the analysis of agency and critical junctures, and new orientations for the study of institutional change, including, especially, change that occurs beneath the veneer of continuity in formal-institutional arrangements.

In the last part of the volume, “Issues of Method,” authors focus on some of the methodologies employed in CHA research. These essays summarize the different procedures used in CHA to make inferences about historical causal processes. They also explore how the comparison of historical sequences is central to these procedures, including both cross-case and within-case methods of inference. And they consider how comparative-historical methods can and cannot be combined with other methodologies, such as statistical and experimental methods.

The three main parts are interrelated and connected. Most essays, although centered on one set of issues, in fact reflect on all of the three major themes – agenda-setting work, tools for temporal analysis, and issues of method. In the course of writing the essays, volume contributors were in dialogue with one another at multiple conferences, and they reacted to and commented



on each other's chapters, reinforcing connections across the volume. This dialogue and exchange also served to bring us together closely as a group. For us, working with such talented contributors, and witnessing the formation of this wonderfully collaborative group, has been one of the great joys of carrying out this project.

We would first like to thank and acknowledge Dietrich Rueschemeyer, who coedited the earlier book and contributed a career of work that advanced CHA. We also thank Lewis Bateman, whose suggestion to consider a second edition set into motion the events leading to the present volume, as well as Margaret Levi, who enthusiastically supported the earlier project. For this book, it was a great pleasure to work with John Haslam at Cambridge University Press. He was supportive of the volume from the start, arranged reviewer reports from which we benefited, and oversaw the book's production with efficiency and professionalism. Colin Elman and John Gerring, coeditors of the *Strategies for Social Inquiry* series in which this book appears, were also great supporters of this project.

The first conference at which initial drafts of papers were presented was held at MIT in March 2013. We thank Dick Samuels and the Center for International Studies for sponsoring that event and Kate Searle for managing the logistics with her characteristic care and efficiency. We benefited immensely from the participation and commentary of our colleagues Andrea Campbell, Peter Hall, Ben Schneider, and Lucas Stanczyk.

A follow-up conference was held at Northwestern University in November 2013. We are grateful to Northwestern's Department of Political Science and the Roberta Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies for supporting this second conference. At the Buffett Center, acting director Brian Hanson encouraged the project from the onset, and Jeff Cernucan and Diana Snyder made sure conference events ran smoothly. Dan Galvin, Edward Gibson, and Rachel Riedl served as excellent discussants and participants at the event. We owe an extra special thanks to Andre Nickow, who not only helped organize conference activities but also assisted in formatting and compiling the volume's chapters for submission to Cambridge University Press.

Many of the chapters were also presented at two panels during the 2013 American Political Science Association meetings, and authors received excellent comments from the discussants of these panels, Nancy Bermeo and Daniel Ziblatt. At these meetings, Theda Skocpol also expressed her encouragement for the project and suggested ideas for framing the introduction. Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to the larger CHA community

in political science. This community not only continues to produce some of the best empirical work in the discipline but also sets important theoretical agendas for scholars working from other analytical and methodological orientations.

**James Mahoney**  
**Kathleen Thelen**