The essays in this volume are intended to help social scientists do better comparative research and thereby to improve our possibilities for creating more satisfactory explanations or theories. These broad aims are advanced throughout the book in several ways: (1) by an identification and assessment of the methodological strategies of exceptionally important comparativists, past and present; (2) by an explication and refinement of logics of procedure that are central to many types of comparative research; (3) by a presentation of new research models that link or bridge heretofore separate lines of comparative inquiry; and (4) by the definition of methodological criteria by which theories and conceptual frameworks can be more fruitfully related to and qualified by comparative studies. Specific problems such as comparability, causal inference, conceptualization, measurement, and sampling are addressed in various sections of particular essays.

Unlike many volumes of a collaborative nature, this one did not spring full-blown from a special conference or research seminar, but has grown incrementally from the interests of individual authors working within their own fields of study. Each author was asked to focus on methodological issues or problems that he considered important for comparative research. Some authors have chosen to concentrate attention on particular men and their works. Others follow a general format by examining problems that cut across many lines of thought and investigation. There are also essays that give primary attention to issues that have emerged on the interfaces between established approaches. For these reasons the aggregate intellectual configuration is more like a group of independent outcroppings in a geological series than a single, ten-story building. We have emphasized methodologies rather than a method, strategies rather than a strategy, and procedural alternatives rather than single solutions.

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Ivan Vallier

Santa Cruz, California