Paths toward Democracy
*The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America*

The question of whether democratic institutions are introduced through an elite-led strategy from above or a popular triumph from below continues to be a matter of scholarly contention. Examining the experiences of countries that have provided the main empirical base for recent theorizing, namely, Western Europe and South America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and again in the 1970s and 1980s, this book delineates a more complex and varied set of patterns, which for both periods integrates class and political-strategic perspectives. Professor Collier explores the politics of democratization through a comparative analysis of twenty-one countries, examining the role of labor in relation to elite strategies and challenging conventional understandings of both contemporary and historical periods. The analysis recaptures a neglected role for unions and labor-based parties in most recent cases, and for both historical periods it suggests an institutional explanation of labor’s role, focused on the way actors’ resources and strategies were shaped by prior experiences with democratic regimes and the immediately antecedent, pre-reform regime.

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