

# Pathways to Social Class: A Qualitative Approach to Social Mobility

By Daniel Bertaux, Paul Thompson



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Calling for a broader new approach to social mobility research which goes beyond statistics and utilizes life stories and family case histories, this richly suggestive volume explores sociological issues such as transmission between family generations, how immigrants make good, how social elites survive revolutions, and the meanings of houses, places and dreams for mobility.



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#### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

"Especially for those American social scientists used to thinking of mobility studies as sophisticated statistical analyses of large numbers of variables in massive national data sets, the eights studies included here are themselves refreshing and unusual in their approach and specific subject matter...The richness of the details in the family chronicles suggests new information for the content of mobility theories and a new agenda for mobility studies."--Social Forces

#### From the Back Cover

Calling for a broader, new approach to social mobility research, Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson here move beyond pure statistics to use qualitative techniques - such as life stories and family case studies - to examine more closely the dynamics of mobility and address more fundamental sociological questions. Up to now, the extensive sociological literature on mobility has been based around the survey method. As a result, we have access to abundant statistical data, but there is little information available to explain how and why people follow particular life paths. To overcome these limitations, the authors have developed an alternative, complementary approach using life stories, case histories of whole families over several generations, or case studies of local communities. Employing the case-study approach does not prevent the identification of structural trends; on the contrary, it allows us to analyse those collective processes through their local effects, restoring the links with the classics of sociological thought.

#### About the Author

Daniel Bertaux is Director of Research at Le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in France. Paul Thompson is Founder of the National Life Story Collection and Research Professor at The University of Essex.

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