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Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century European City: Some Findings and Implications

Recent international research on social mobility has found that rates of intergenerational upward mobility from manual to non-manual occupations are remarkably similar in nearly all industrialized countries—at least since World War II. This similarity of social mobility patterns has led Lipset and Bendix to conclude that a relatively high and uniform rate of social mobility is "determined by the occupational structure" of advanced industrial societies, and that any "differences in national value systems" have relatively little impact on mobility patterns in such societies. Although I am not convinced that differences in value systems are as unimportant as Lipset and Bendix claim, most of their data seem to support these generalizations. A parallel conclusion emerges from the more recent and more sophisticated analysis of American social mobility patterns by Blau and Duncan. They found that varying patterns of occupational mobility of different groups in the population can nearly always be explained by the groups' competitive advantages and disadvantages in the labor market, and that such factors as discrimination or differences in values rarely have much influence. (The great exception is American Blacks, who as a result of discrimination, have attainments far below what would be predicted on the basis of their qualifications.) Thus, both at the level of Lipset and Bendix's gross international comparisons, and at the level of Blau and Duncan's refined internal analysis, social mobility in contemporary industrial societies appears to be primarily a function of objective and impersonal economic and social forces, with differences in values having little, if any, impact.[1]

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1 Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society* (Berkeley, 1959), 55, 73. Peter M. Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, *The American Occupational Structure* (New York, 1967), esp. 207–241.

But this conclusion is based on evidence from a very short time-span. In advanced industrial societies it may be true that high rates of social mobility are "determined by the occupational structure," and that values have very little effect on mobility patterns. But was this true for earlier stages of industrialization? My research on nineteenth-century Marseille suggests that it was not. During the early stages of industrialization in Marseille, rates of upward mobility from non-manual to manual occupations were not nearly as high as in contemporary industrial societies, and disparate values held by different categories of the population appear to have had a profound effect on social mobility patterns. Marseille is only one city, and no conclusive generalizations can be based on a single case. But if Marseille was at all typical of nineteenth-century European cities, the apparently automatic generation of high mobility rates so characteristic of contemporary Western industrial societies may be a very recent development.

All of my figures on social mobility are based on an analysis of Marseille's marriage registers (*actes de marriage*) for the years 1846 and 1851. (Data for the two years are combined and treated as a single unit.) French marriage registers are an extraordinarily rich source of data. When a couple married, each spouse was required to give his or her name, age, place of birth, address, and occupation, and his or her father's name and occupation. All this information was duly recorded on a marriage certificate which was then signed by each spouse (if they could sign their names) and by four witnesses, each of whom also gave his age, occupation, and address. Measures of intergenerational occupational mobility can thus be obtained by simply comparing the occupation of the groom to that of his father. It should be noted, however, that the marriage registers can also be used to investigate a number of other important problems, including intermarriage, migration, labor recruitment, residence patterns, literacy, and friendship patterns.[2]

Marriage registers do not provide a perfectly representative sample of the population. It is essentially a sample of the young adult population, with no children and relatively few older adults included. (The median age at marriage was 30 for men and 25 for

2 The marriage registers for nineteenth-century Marseille can be found in series 201E in the Archives départementales de Bouches-du-Rhône.

women.) Furthermore, it leaves out men and women who remained unmarried, as well as residents of the city whose marriages were celebrated elsewhere. Nevertheless, the sample obtained from the marriage registers gives us a reasonably accurate picture of the young adult population, and can provide us with satisfactory information if used with sufficient care. There were, moreover, 2,559 marriages in Marseille in these two years, giving us enough cases to make fairly reliable estimates.

Marriage register data do present one serious methodological problem for a study of occupational mobility. As is true for many official French documents of the nineteenth century, most men working in small-scale handicraft industry failed to indicate whether they were employers or employees; they simply designated themselves as *cordonniers* or *boulangers* rather than as *fabricants cordonniers* or *ouvriers boulangers*. According to the best available estimate, the ratio of workers to employers in Marseille's handicraft trades was about 5.2 to 1 in the period from which our sample was drawn.[3] But in our sample, only thirty men designated themselves as employers in small handicraft trades, as against 978 whose titles indicate without further specification that they worked in such trades. Assuming that all of the latter were workers, we would get a clearly impossible worker to employer ratio of 33 to 1. This means that over one hundred of the men in our sample whose status as worker or employer is not designated were probably employers.

Being unable to determine which of these men were employers is especially unfortunate in a study of social mobility; it means that a substantial amount of mobility between the status of worker and that of employer will escape our scrutiny. Since the reporting of the husband's father's occupation suffers from this same problem, we are left with several different types of errors in calculating mobility rates. If we work on the assumption that all the indeterminate cases were workers, the following types of errors will result. (1) Some men whose fathers were workers but who themselves became small employers will be incorrectly counted as experiencing no upward mobility. (2) Some workers whose fathers were small employers will be incorrectly counted as experiencing no downward mobility. (3) Some men with white

3 Enquête sur le travail industriel et agricole, Archives nationale: C947.

collar occupations whose fathers were small employers will be incorrectly counted as upwardly mobile workers' sons. (4) Some small employers whose fathers were in white collar occupations will be incorrectly counted as downwardly mobile. There is no way of knowing a priori whether the combined effects of these measurement errors will be to inflate or to deflate the amount of mobility actually occurring.

There is, however, one alternative to assuming that all indeterminate cases were workers. Instead, one can assume that the husbands who actually identified themselves as small employers are typical of the remaining unidentified small employers, and, similarly, that the fathers who were identified as small employers are typical of the small employer fathers who remained unidentified. On the basis of this assumption one can generate a modified mobility matrix that corrects for the errors of classification by removing an appropriate number of cases from the skilled worker category and placing them in the small business category. It is quite possible that the men actually identified as small employers differed significantly from the small employers not specifically identified as such. But applying this correction to our mobility figures should give us some indication of the scale and the direction of the errors introduced by the initial misclassifications. In fact, the differences between the corrected and uncorrected figures are generally so small as to be negligible. For the sake of simplicity, therefore, I will always cite the *uncorrected* figures in the text of this article, but I will give both corrected and uncorrected figures in the tables.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Marseille was a city of just under 200,000, the second largest city in France, a major provincial administrative center, and the fifth largest port in the world in terms of the quantity of cargoes unloaded onto its docks. In a country where urbanization and economic growth were generally occurring at a rather leisurely pace, Marseille nearly doubled in population from 1821 to 1851 (from 109,000 to 196,000), and experienced rapid growth in both the commercial and industrial sectors of the economy in the same years.[4] It was, in short, a so-

4 For a more detailed description of the social and economic setting of Marseille, see Sewell, "The Structure of the Working Class of Marseille in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century," unpub. Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Berkeley, 1971).

cially and economically diverse city which was undergoing rapid economic and demographic expansion—all of which should have been conducive to relatively high rates of social mobility. Opportunities for upward social mobility were further enhanced by the demographic situation in Marseille. Because the native population barely managed to reproduce itself, relying for expansion on migrants who generally came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, there were never enough young men from non-manual family backgrounds to fill all the available non-manual positions. Furthermore, not all young men from non-manual occupational backgrounds managed to secure non-manual positions themselves. In our sample, fully 36 percent of the men whose fathers held non-manual positions had fallen into the manual category—the vast majority into the skilled trades. This substantial volume of downward mobility, which was at least as high as in most modern industrial societies, further increased the availability of

Table 1 Inter-Generational Mobility into Non-Manual Occupations

A. UNCORRECTED

	FATHER'S OCCUPATION				
	(1) Agriculture	(2) Maritime, Service	(3) Unskilled Worker	(4) Skilled Worker	(5) Total Workers (2 + 3 + 4)
Total no. of sons	513	172	242	849	1263
Sons with non-manual occupations	91	20	18	116	154
% upwardly mobile	18%	12%	7%	14%	13%

B. CORRECTED

	FATHER'S OCCUPATION				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Total no. of sons	513	172	242	771	1185
Sons with non-manual occupations	99	24	18	121	163
% upwardly mobile	19%	14%	7%	15%	14%

non-manual positions for ambitious men from farther down the social hierarchy.[5]

In these circumstances it is surprising how few men from working-class backgrounds had attained non-manual positions by the time they got married. Among sons of unskilled and semi-skilled workers only 18 out of 242, or 7 percent, had non-manual jobs, and among sons of skilled workers the rate was only 116 out of 849 or 14 percent. For the entire population of working-class origin, the rate of mobility into non-manual occupations was 13 percent, or about half to a third the rate that obtains in most contemporary industrial societies. In short, despite the relatively favorable demographic and economic circumstances, upward mobility from working-class to non-manual occupations was far lower in mid-nineteenth-century Marseille than in modern industrialized societies.

But if the rate of mobility into non-manual occupations was surprisingly low for sons of workers, it was surprisingly high for sons of peasants. Of the 513 peasants' sons who got married in Marseille in 1846 and 1851, ninety-one of them, or 18 percent, held non-manual occupational positions. Their rate of mobility into non-manual occupations was thus substantially higher than that of workers' sons. How can this rather surprising contrast between workers' sons and peasants' sons be explained? Were peasants' sons in mid-nineteenth-century Marseille more highly qualified for non-manual occupations than workers' sons? Judging from the limited evidence at hand, they were not.

The possession of literacy is obviously a crucial qualification for nearly all non-manual occupations, and in this respect sons of peasants were, on the average, clearly less qualified than sons of workers. Only 67 percent of the peasants' sons who married in Marseille in 1846 were able to sign their names on their marriage certificates, a literacy rate slightly above the 64 percent for unskilled workers' sons, but well below the 84 percent that obtained for skilled workers' sons, and substantially below the combined rate of 79 percent for all workers' sons.[6] If the average level of

5 The corrected figure for downward mobility is 28%. The most comprehensive set of figures on social mobility in contemporary societies is in S. M. Miller, "Comparative Social Mobility: A Trend Report and Bibliography," *Current Sociology*, IX (1960).

6 The corrected figures for literacy are very slightly lower, 83% for skilled workers and 78% for all workers.

qualification, as measured by literacy rates, had been the sole determinant of rates of mobility into non-manual occupations, peasants' sons should have found themselves in non-manual occupations only slightly more frequently than sons of unskilled workers, considerably less frequently than sons of skilled workers, and somewhat less frequently than all workers' sons. Instead, peasants' sons bested all categories of workers' sons by margins ranging from 30 percent for skilled workers' sons to over 250 percent for unskilled workers' sons.

One further possibility presents itself: perhaps those peasants' sons who found non-manual positions in Marseille were not simple rustics driven from the countryside by poverty, but second or third sons of prosperous landowning peasants who arrived in Marseille with at least a smattering of education and perhaps with a small amount of capital as well. If so, this might explain the overall difference between sons of peasants and sons of workers. This possibility can be tested by separating the peasants' sons who married in Marseille in 1846 and 1851 into those whose fathers were and were not proprietors of their land. As we should expect, the proprietors' sons were considerably more likely to find non-manual occupations than non-proprietors' sons: fully 32 percent of the former, as against 16 percent of the latter, held non-manual positions at the time of their marriage. But the 16 percent rate of the sons of non-proprietors was still above the 14 percent attained by skilled workers' sons, and was more than double the rate of unskilled workers' sons. Furthermore, the sons of both proprietors and non-proprietors had lower literacy rates than workers' sons: 75 percent and 65 percent, respectively.

The conclusion, thus, seems inescapable: the remarkable success of peasants' sons in obtaining non-manual occupations cannot be accounted for by competitive advantages in the labor market, nor can the equally remarkable failure of workers' sons to do so be explained by competitive disadvantages. It therefore follows that many workers' sons must have either abstained from the competition for non-manual positions or entered it only half-heartedly, voluntarily leaving most of the prizes to the more eager peasants' sons. We seem to be confronted, in short, with a difference of preferences, of values.

It is clear that many workers did not actively seek non-manual occupations, even though the likelihood of successfully

finding such positions was reasonably high. Instead, they chose to remain in the working-class occupational world. How can this choice be explained? I believe it can be explained, at least in large part, by the survival of a traditional corporative world-view among the working-class of the city. Although the corporative regime was formally abolished during the French Revolution, there is a good deal of evidence that French workers, both in Marseille and elsewhere, retained a corporate mentality and continued to use corporate forms in their labor organizations well into the nineteenth century.[7] A worker still tended to see his trade as a solidary community governed by its own traditional rituals and sanctions, and he felt his status in society and many of his social obligations to be defined by membership in such a community. To the extent that this view of society remained in force among Marseille's workers in the middle of the nineteenth century, it should have both intensified a young man's self-identification as a worker and made bourgeois occupations, which lacked the corporative forms, the powerful labor organizations, and the sense of solidarity of the working-class trades, seem unattractive. It should, consequently, have caused workers' sons to seek jobs in working-class trades and to ignore opportunities in non-manual occupations.

Peasants' sons, by contrast, had no reason to prefer working-class trades. Indeed, if there is any truth in the standard portrait of the French peasant mentality—with its pronounced individualism and its obsession for private property—the *petite bourgeoisie* should have been more congenial than the highly organized, solidary, and corporate world of the working class. But in addition to this affinity between peasant and *petit bourgeois* values, the peasant had also been affected by a process of uprooting. A peasant's son who took up residence in Marseille had already decided to abandon his ancestral occupation, while a worker's son, even if he had left his native town or village, could still seek a position in his father's trade or in a similar working-class trade. When the peas-

7 Jean Vial, *Le coutume chapelière, histoire du mouvement ovrière dans la chapellerie* (Paris, 1941); Paul Chauvet, *Les ouvriers du livre en France de 1798 à la constitution de la fédération du livre* (Paris, 1959); Joan W. Scott, *The Glassworkers of Carmaux* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), esp. 19–52. For Marseille, see Sewell, "Social Change and the Rise of Working-Class Politics in Nineteenth-Century Marseille," *Past & Present*, 65 (1974), esp. 81–82, 91–92, and 104–105.

ant's son entered the urban labor market, there was no "natural" place for him to look. He was therefore responsive to opportunities of all kinds, and especially to opportunities in non-manual occupations, where the rewards in pay, prestige, and possibilities for advancement were greatest. Thus, peasants' sons may have been responsive to opportunities in non-manual occupations at least in part because they had been so thoroughly uprooted in the process of migrating to the city.

If uprooting were one of the factors that led peasants to have high rates of mobility into non-manual occupations, we might reasonably expect that migration had similar effects on men from working-class backgrounds. To be sure, a worker's son who moved to Marseille from a small town or village might retain many of his family's values regarding occupations, but in moving to the city he loosened or broke his ties with the social institutions that reinforced his childhood values—his family, his peers, his church, and his native community. The migrant's escape from the familiar web of social relations, together with the cultural shock that was bound to result from migration, should have had the effect of eroding his commitment to and his identification with his ancestral occupation. Hence, migrants from working-class backgrounds should have been more responsive to opportunities for non-manual occupational positions than native-born workers' sons, who never escaped from their families' value assumptions or from the web of social relations that reinforced those assumptions.

Our data generally support this argument about the effects of migration. Immigrants from Italy, who made up about a quarter of all migrants from working-class backgrounds, had a much lower rate of mobility into non-manual occupations than native workers' sons (3 percent against 9 percent), but French-born workers' sons who migrated to Marseille had a rate twice as high as that of native workers' sons—20 percent as against 9 percent. These same differences held both for sons of skilled workers and for sons of unskilled workers. Among skilled workers' sons the rates of mobility into non-manual occupations were 5 percent for immigrants from Italy, 10 percent for natives of Marseille, and 20 percent for French-born migrants. Among unskilled workers' sons the rates were 2 percent for immigrants from Italy, 5 percent for natives, and 14 percent for French-born migrants.

Table 2 Inter-Generational Mobility into Non-Manual Occupations, Natives and Migrants

	FATHER'S OCCUPATION				
	(1) Agriculture	(2) Maritime, Service	(3) Unskilled Worker	(4) Skilled Worker	(5) Total Workers (2 + 3 + 4)
I. NATIVES OF MARSEILLE					
A. UNCORRECTED					
Total no. of sons	60	108	93	432	633
Sons with non-manual occupations	4	9	5	42	56
% upwardly mobile	7%	8%	5%	10%	9%
B. CORRECTED	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Total no. of sons	60	108	93	386	587
Sons with non-manual occupations	8	13	5	36	54
% upwardly mobile	13%	12%	5%	9%	9%
II. FRENCH-BORN MIGRANTS					
A. UNCORRECTED	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Total no. of sons	362	42	83	355	480
Sons with non-manual occupations	80	11	12	71	94
% upwardly mobile	22%	26%	14%	20%	20%
B. CORRECTED	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Total no. of sons	362	42	83	325	450
Sons with non-manual occupations	84	11	12	71	94
% upwardly mobile	23%	26%	14%	22%	21%

Table 2 (cont.)

III. ITALIAN-BORN MIGRANTS

A. UNCORRECTED

	FATHER'S OCCUPATION				
	(1) Agri-culture	(2) Maritime, Service	(3) Unskilled Worker	(4) Skilled Worker	(5) Total Workers (2 + 3 + 4)
Total no. of sons	91	22	66	60	148
Sons with non-manual occupations	7	0	1	3	4
% upwardly mobile	8%	0%	2%	5%	3%

B. CORRECTED

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Total no. of sons	91	22	66	60	148
Sons with non-manual occupations	7	0	1	6	7
% upwardly mobile	8%	0%	2%	10%	5%

These results seem to indicate that migration increased the likelihood of upward mobility, except in those cases where the migrants suffered from crushing disadvantages in the labor market. Thus, workers' sons who migrated to Marseille from elsewhere in France had higher rates of upward mobility than natives, while foreign-born workers' sons had very low rates. The foreign-born were mostly Italians, who were frequently illiterate, who were in any case ignorant of the French language, and whose values and work habits had been formed in an economically backward country. And in addition to these more-or-less objective handicaps, they were also subjected to widespread and open prejudice by the native population. It is possible that both Italian and French migrants were freed of their traditional ascriptive values regarding occupational choices by the experience of migration. But a combination of prejudice and lack of qualification kept the Italians from experiencing upward mobility, while the French

migrants, unencumbered by such problems, attained upward mobility in a relatively high proportion of the cases.

The argument that high migrant mobility rates resulted from the effects of uprooting on values is also corroborated by evidence from other areas of social life. This evidence seems to show that uprooting affected a whole range of values and behavior patterns in the working class of mid-nineteenth-century Marseille. Thus, a massive study of the decline of religious practice in Marseille shows that "dechristianization" of the working class, which began at about the middle of the nineteenth century, advanced particularly rapidly among migrants to the city.[8] Secondly, French-born migrants made up the bulk of the militants in the democratic and socialist movement that grew up in Marseille after the Revolution of 1848, while natives either remained politically apathetic or supported traditional royalism.[9] Finally, an analysis of court records of Marseille from 1845 to 1847 reveals that French-born migrants were about three times as likely to be convicted of crimes as natives.[10] These findings suggest that migration liberated men from traditional value-constraints of all kinds, and made them more receptive to all kinds of modern ideas and behavior—to anticlericalism and to socialism, to competitive behavior in the labor market and to criminal behavior in the streets.

These findings about natives and migrants cast further doubt on the now much beleaguered concept of a "folk-urban continuum."[11] My findings hardly fit the assumption that city-dwellers are necessarily modern in outlook and behavior and that

8 F. L. Charpin, *Pratique religieuse et formation d'une grande ville* (Paris, 1964), 261–301.

9 Sewell, "La Classe ouvrière de Marseille sous la Seconde République; structure sociale et comportement politique," *Le mouvement social*, LXXVI (1971), 56–59, translated in Peter N. Stearns and Daniel J. Walkowitz (eds.), *Workers in the Industrial Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1974), 103–106; *idem*, "Social Change and the Rise of Working-Class Politics," 99–104.

10 Jugements du tribunal correctional de Marseille, Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône: 403 U 52–57.

11 See Oscar Lewis, "Tepozlan Restudied: A Critique of the Folk-Urban Conceptualization of Social Change," and "Further Observations on the Folk-Urban Continuum and Urbanization with Special Reference to Mexico City," in *idem, Anthropological Essays* (New York, 1970); Philip M. Hauser, "Observations on the Urban-Folk and Urban-Rural Dichotomies as Forms of Western Ethnocentrism," in Philip M. Hauser and Leo F. Schnore (eds.), *The Study of Urbanization* (New York, 1965), 503–517; Francisco Benet, "Sociology Uncertain: The Ideology of the Rural-Urban Continuum," *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* VI (1963), 1–23.

the process of modernization can be described as an expansion of urban social patterns throughout the whole of society. In Marseille in the middle of the nineteenth century, native-born workers had "folk" traditions of their own that led them to behave in distinctly "non-modern" ways—traditions that kept them from acting like "rational" economic men in the labor market, that kept them from committing crimes, and that kept them from adopting new ideologies in politics and religion. This implies that at least in societies like those of Western Europe, where cities have long been part of the social landscape, modernization involved extensive transformations of a traditional *urban* social order, as well as of rural society.

The major conclusion of this paper is that social mobility patterns in mid-nineteenth-century Marseille differed in a number of respects from those of modern industrial societies. The most obvious difference is that the overall rate of upward mobility from working-class to non-manual occupations was much lower than in modern industrial societies. Indeed, the real difference between mid-nineteenth-century France and modern industrial societies may well be understated by our figures, since the modern figures are based on national samples while those for Marseille are based solely on one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing urban centers in the country. The case of Marseille therefore demonstrates that the early stages of industrialization did not necessarily produce the high rates of upward mobility that are characteristic of mature industrialism.

But this does not mean that all societies in the early stages of industrialization had similar social mobility patterns. Indeed, what evidence is available seems to indicate that American social mobility patterns were strikingly "modern" at a relatively early date. Thernstrom, who has done the best work on mobility in nineteenth-century America, has found that in 1890 41 percent of all Bostonians of working-class parentage had attained non-manual occupational positions—a figure that is far above Marseille's and that compares favorably with modern industrial societies.[12] The figures for Boston and Marseille are separated by

12 This figure is from Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), 86.

some forty years, and it is not clear that either Boston or Marseille was representative of the rest of America or of France. Nevertheless, the striking contrast between Marseille and Boston suggests a significant amendment to Lipset and Bendix. One of the most important conclusions of *Social Mobility in Industrial Society* was that American social mobility patterns were no more open than those of other industrialized countries—contrary to received notions about the unique fluidity of the American social structure. But the comparison of Marseille and Boston implies that American society may have been far more open than European societies in the nineteenth century, and that the convergence found in studies carried out since World War II may be of recent origin.[13]

Another conclusion that arises from our data is that patterns of social mobility in mid-nineteenth-century Marseille were by no means automatically "determined by the occupational structure." Differences in values had a significant impact on mobility patterns, reducing intergenerational upward mobility from working-class to non-manual occupations to a level appreciably below what would have obtained if workers' sons had chosen to compete energetically for non-manual positions. It was adherence to ascriptive values that caused workers' sons to enter non-manual occupations in lower proportions than peasants' sons. Furthermore, native-born workers' sons seem to have had especially low rates of upward mobility in part because their adherence to ascriptive values was especially strong.

However, the differences between Marseille and modern industrial societies may not be as great as they at first appear. It is true that our findings about peasants' sons are in sharp contrast to Blau and Duncan's findings about contemporary American farmers' sons. They find that farmers' sons in the urban labor market are less likely to find non-manual jobs than workers' sons; moreover, they find that the poorer performance of farmers' sons can be explained by their low qualifications.[14] These findings are the reverse of what we discovered in Marseille, where peasants'

13 Crew's study of social mobility in Bochum, Germany in 1900 shows rates of intergenerational mobility roughly similar to those of mid-nineteenth-century Marseille. In this one German town, at least, mobility rates around the turn of the century were far lower than in Thernstrom's Boston. David Crew, "Definitions of Modernity: Social Mobility in a German Town, 1880–1901," *Journal of Social History*, VII (1973), 60–62.

14 Blau and Duncan, *The American Occupational Structure,* 286–292.

sons did *better* than workers' sons, and did so in spite of their *lower* qualifications. It is also true that the patterns indicated by our data are very far from Lipset and Bendix's theoretical argument about social mobility, which stresses the imperatives inherent in a modern industrial economic order, and minimizes the impact of different systems of values. Nevertheless, one of the key findings on which we base our argument for the importance of values actually has a striking parallel in the studies reported by Lipset and Bendix. They point out in a long footnote that the United States is the only country for which data are available in which farmers' sons who leave agricultural employment are less likely to find non-manual positions than are workers' sons. They also present a number of speculations as to why this should be so—that rural-urban migration may be less selective in the United States, that in European countries rural people's education may be better than urban workers' education, and so on. In short, they argue that European farmers' sons who migrated to the cities must in some way have been better qualified than urban workers' sons, while the reverse was true in America.[15]

This is one possibility, and it could and should be tested empirically by methods similar to those used by Blau and Duncan in America. But until such research has been done, we cannot reject the possibility that the difference is accounted for by a difference in values—either that European farmers' sons have extraordinarily strong achievement values or that European workers' sons have relatively weak achievement values. This last possibility—that workers have values which make them prefer working-class occupations—is precisely what we have argued for mid-nineteenth-century Marseille. And given the strong class consciousness that prevails in most European countries, it is not entirely implausible that workers' sons may have some hesitations about entering non-manual occupations. But whatever the explanation may be, it is clear that Lipset and Bendix's arguments against the influence of values are by no means air-tight—at least so far as European countries are concerned.

Our limited data are obviously not sufficient to provide any decisive answers to the very complex question of the relationship between mobility and class consciousness, but they do suggest

15 Lipset and Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society,* 216–217.

some speculations. At first sight, our comparison between nineteenth-century Marseille and Boston would seem to restore the once axiomatic notion that high rates of social mobility have helped to preserve America from European-style class consciousness. After all, in Boston, where social mobility was high, no very significant class-conscious workingmen's movements ever developed; while Marseille, where social mobility was low, was and is a stronghold of socialism in France. But if our data seem to indicate a link between low social mobility and high class consciousness, the link they suggest is rather different from the one sociologists and historians usually assume. Most discussions of the problem have stressed the importance of blocked mobility aspirations in creating working-class consciousness. According to this formulation, the impossibility of individual betterment within the system led workers to band together in collective attacks against the system itself.

Although something of this mechanism may have operated in societies where socialism developed mass followings, our data for Marseille suggest an alternative mechanism. In Marseille the low levels of upward mobility from the working class seem to have been due in part to a voluntary abstention from the competition for non-manual jobs. After all, peasants' sons, whose qualifications were generally lower than workers' sons, managed to obtain non-manual occupations in 18 percent of the cases, a rate above that of workers' sons, and not much below the rates obtaining in some modern industrial societies. It appears that Marseille's workers were not driven to class consciousness by the impossibility of achieving upward mobility. Rather, they seem to have had low rates of mobility largely because they already had an embryonic form of class consciousness, because they were strongly committed to working-class occupations and regarded non-manual occupations as somehow alien and undesirable. Moreover, the continuing greater success of peasants' sons than workers' sons in modern European societies suggests that a similar mechanism may still be operating.

If this line of argument is accepted, it implies that one of the most important roots of European class consciousness may have been the corporate cultural tradition of the pre-industrial European working class. This tradition made working men feel that their destiny was linked to that of their fellow workers, and pre-

disposed them to collective, rather than individualistic, ideologies and modes of social and political action. At the same time, it led men to stay in the working class rather than strive to enter the bourgeoisie, thereby maintaining stability of personnel and strengthening the continuity of working-class traditions. The corporate tradition was far from politically conscious class solidarity of the Marxian type, and the road that led from the relatively particularistic corporate consciousness to a broader and more inclusive working-class consciousness was long and sometimes tortuous. Nevertheless, many of the sentiments, symbols, and ideas that informed the class-conscious workers' movements of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries probably had their origins in the peculiar corporate subculture of the pre-industrial European working class.

Similarly, the failure of class-conscious workers' movements to take hold in America probably owes as much to the absence of a pre-industrial tradition of artisan solidarity and distinctiveness as it does to the entraordinary fluidity of American society. It was particularly difficult to organize a working class whose membership was constantly changing as a result of both geographical and occupational mobility, just as the lack of mobility of the European working class made organizational tasks easier. But rates of mobility, as we have seen, are not themselves simple functions of the structure of opportunities: they are also affected by the values and social assumptions of the population, and in America these values and social assumptions accentuated the fluidity of society in general and the turnover of working-class personnel in particular. Thus, it was the American workers' individualistic cultural heritage, as much as the nature of the economic and social structure, that made them socially mobile and kept them from developing European-style class consciousness.