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# SOCIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATIONAL CAREER PATTERNS

## I. STABILITY OF JOBHOLDING

SEYMOUR M. LIPSET AND REINHARD BENDIX

### ABSTRACT

The job histories of 935 respondents in Oakland, California, reveal that the majority of them have had unstable occupational careers. The findings cast doubt on the assumption that present occupational position is a relatively permanent measure of position in the social hierarchy.

A study<sup>1</sup> conducted primarily to analyze labor-market behavior calls into question the use of the common occupation of a group of individuals as a means of predicting their attitudes and actions. The study is based on the entire job histories of 935 working heads of families in Oakland, California, from their first job to the present. Data were gathered, also, on the present occupations of their male siblings and on the occupations of their fathers. The sample was designed to secure a representative sample of the working population of Oakland, except that the lowest and the highest occupational and income groups were excluded, a limitation which should be borne in mind in the following discussion of social mobility.

<sup>1</sup> This article is one of a series based on the Oakland labor-market study, conducted by the Institute of Industrial Relations in 1949-50. During this study, 935 principal wage-earners were interviewed, chosen as a random sample from Oakland households after eliminating the highest and the lowest socio-economic areas in the city. A standardized questionnaire covered the subject's family background, education, residential community shifts, job history, and other conditions considered important in an analysis of labor mobility in this community. Other articles planned in this series include: social origins, geographic mobility, the worker's perception of the labor market, and others. It is expected that the series will be completed with a detailed analysis of the methodology used and that the several projects will be combined later into a monograph. We are glad to acknowledge help from several sources, particularly from Maurice I. Gershenson, chief, Division of Labor Statistics and Research, California Department of Industrial Relations; Robert L. Raschen; and Grace Woodward.

### STABILITY AND INSTABILITY OF OCCUPATIONAL CAREERS

The major purpose was to obtain a longitudinal view of job histories.<sup>2</sup> The characteristic pattern of occupational mobility was arrived at for each person by determining the frequency with which he changed from one job to another, shifted from one occupation to another, or moved from one community to another. These three aspects of a job history are closely related but not identical. One might suppose that an older person, who has been in the labor force for many years, would be more mobile than a younger person simply because he has had more time in which to change jobs, occupations, or communities. But this study indicates that this is not necessarily the case; the older persons have settled down, and during a worker's early years in the labor force (Tables 1 and 2) the greatest amount of mobility occurs. We have no assurance, of course, that the persons who are, say, over

<sup>2</sup> Any sample of the California population in 1948-49 will show more than the national average of mobility, both social and geographic. The total population of Oakland increased from 284,063 in 1930 to 302,163 in 1940 (6.4 per cent) and to 382,463 in 1950 (26.6 per cent). The 1950 figure is preliminary. Preliminary figures indicate that during 1940-50 Oakland ranked third in population increase among the twelve cities having a population of 300,000-400,000. While population increased by 26.6 per cent in that decade in Oakland, California's population increased 51.6 per cent. Our purpose is to examine career patterns in terms of social mobility; a separate article will be devoted to a study of geographic mobility.

sixty years of age have given us a complete account of their job histories. But even if we discount the distortions of memory, job mobility clearly decreases as age increases.<sup>3</sup>

TABLE 1  
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF  
PRINCIPAL WAGE-  
EARNERS

AGE GROUP	SAMPLE	
	Number	Per Cent
21-30 . . . . .	175	18.7
31-40 . . . . .	238	25.4
41-50 . . . . .	224	24.0
51-60 . . . . .	156	16.6
61-70 . . . . .	95	10.3
70 and over . . . . .	47	5.0
Total . . . . .	935	100.0

and changes between communities. The mobility of the 935 respondents was computed by dividing the number of changes each person made by the number of years he had been in the labor force (Table 3). This over-all tabulation of mobility can be refined in two ways. Low, medium, and high mobility may be distinguished, but to do so requires the consideration of the three types of change separately. Job changes are most frequent, while changes between occupations and communities are less frequent, and this must be taken into account in distinguishing the three types of mobility, avoiding the assumption that mobility between jobs, occupations, and communities always means the same thing. A group has "low mobility" when persons changed jobs 0-1.9 times during ten years or when they changed occupations or communities 0-0.9 times during the same period. Similarly, the greater fre-

TABLE 2  
JOB MOBILITY BY AGE GROUPS

AGE GROUPS	JOB MOBILITY							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
21-30 . . . . .	10	5.7	49	28.0	116	66.3	175	100.0
31-40 . . . . .	57	23.9	108	45.4	73	30.7	238	100.0
41-50 . . . . .	89	39.7	109	48.7	26	11.6	224	100.0
51-60 . . . . .	88	56.4	62	39.8	6	3.8	156	100.0
61-70 . . . . .	59	62.1	31	32.7	5	5.2	95	100.0
70 and over . . . . .	36	76.6	11	23.4	0	0.0	47	100.0

Changes from one job to another constitute only one index of mobility. They are related to changes between occupations

<sup>3</sup> Most of the detailed analyses of mobility which are to follow are therefore computed for all males, thirty-one years of age or over, in order to limit the discussion to those whose careers are well under way and to eliminate, as far as possible, those who are still "shopping around." A similar method was used by Anderson and Davidson, *Occupational Mobility in an American Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1937).

quency with which people change jobs has been taken account of by designating as "high mobility" five or more job changes during a ten-year period, three or more occupational shifts, and two or more moves between communities.<sup>4</sup> Like other typolo-

<sup>4</sup> "Medium mobility" has been designated as 2-4.9 job changes on the average during every decade in the labor force, 1-2.9 changes between occupations, and 1-1.9 changes between geographic areas.

gies, the distinctions of mobility are based on a simple inspection of the frequency of shifts between jobs, occupations, and pla-

by considering the mobility patterns of the 935 respondents from the viewpoint of internal consistency. One may assume that a person who is mobile in one respect (e.g., shifts between jobs) would also be mobile in the other respects, despite the fact that it is of course possible, say, to change jobs

TABLE 3  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHANGES IN JOB, OCCUPATIONAL GROUP,\* AND COMMUNITY

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHANGES MADE IN EACH TEN YEARS IN LABOR FORCE	PERSONS CHANGING JOBS		PERSONS CHANGING OCCUPATIONAL GROUP		PERSONS CHANGING COMMUNITIES	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
0-1.9 . . . . .	339	36.3	562	60.1	724	77.5
2-3.9 . . . . .	297	31.8	224	24.0	147	15.7
4-5.9 . . . . .	160	17.1	91	9.7	43	4.6
6 and over . . . . .	139	14.9	58	6.2	21	2.2
Total . . . . .	935	100.0	935	100.0	935	100.0

\* In this and the following tabulations are distinguished occupational group, major occupational group, and occupational division. The first term refers to the occupational titles such as "professional," "own business," "skilled," etc. The second refers to combinations of kindred occupational groups like "white-collar and sales," "skilled and semiskilled," etc. The third term refers to the division of occupational groups into manual, non-manual, and farm.

TABLE 4  
OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY BY JOB MOBILITY

JOB MOBILITY	OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY					
	Low		Medium		High	
	Number	Per Cent*	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Low . . . . .	207	22.1	132	14.1	132	14.1
Medium . . . . .	61	6.5	246	26.3	63	6.7
High . . . . .	9	1.0	42	4.5	175	18.7
Total . . . . .	277	29.6	420	44.9	238	25.4

\* Percentages in this and Tables 5 and 6 have been calculated in terms of the total number of respondents. Thus, 22.1 per cent of the total sample show low mobility in both jobs and occupations, while 18.7 per cent show high mobility.

ces; though such distinctions are necessarily arbitrary, they are, at any rate, unequivocal as far as the extremes of low and high mobility are concerned.

This typology is tested to some extent

TABLE 5  
COMMUNITY MOBILITY BY JOB MOBILITY

JOB MOBILITY	COMMUNITY MOBILITY					
	Low		Medium		High	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Low . . . . .	206	31.7	39	4.2	4	0.4
Medium . . . . .	147	15.7	146	15.6	77	8.2
High . . . . .	64	6.8	32	3.4	130	13.9
Total . . . . .	507	54.2	217	23.2	211	22.5

TABLE 6  
COMMUNITY MOBILITY BY OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY	COMMUNITY MOBILITY					
	Low		Medium		High	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Low . . . . .	218	23.3	43	4.6	16	1.7
Medium . . . . .	214	22.9	130	13.9	76	8.1
High . . . . .	75	8.0	44	4.7	119	12.7
Total . . . . .	507	54.2	217	23.2	211	22.5

very frequently without ever leaving one's occupation or community. But, as Tables 4, 5, and 6 illustrate, mobility patterns occur in clusters. There is some indication, then, that from 13 to 18 per cent of our sample have had a highly mobile job history, while from 22 to 32 per cent have been relatively stable. The remaining members of the group studied show moderate mobility in varying degrees.

Both how a person thinks and how he acts are outgrowths of his life-experience, an important part of which is revealed by his occupational career. Therefore, the more uniform his career, the easier it is to predict his thoughts and actions. It was on this premise that Thorstein Veblen distinguished the conventional and pecuniary frame of mind of the typical businessman from the radical, matter-of-factness of the engineer. In that same way James Burnham recently characterized a "managerial class" by imputing similarity of thought and action to those who exercise the functions of management.

The pervasive influence of a common occupation on the mentality of all who are in it is unquestioned. But one may question the assumption that occupational experience is uniform throughout an individual's career. When the proportion of time which the respondents spent in their present or in some other than their present occupational group is computed, many turn out to have relatively unstable careers (Table 7).<sup>5</sup>

While members of all occupational groups have spent a considerable portion of careers in other than their present occupations, there are some differences between the various brackets of the occupational hierarchy. Occupational careers appear to be more unstable among unskilled than among skilled workers, and among upper-white-collar workers and those who own a business than among those in the other nonmanual occupations. Unskilled manual labor in American society is not the cul-de-sac that it is in the more rigidly stratified societies of Europe and Asia.

<sup>5</sup> The "professionals" are an exception to this statement almost by definition. Their careers depend on the completion of a prescribed educational program, and, once they have obtained professional status, they are not likely to take up other occupations except perhaps in later life. All other occupations differ: a person may hold jobs in a number of different occupations prior to obtaining a given white-collar position or owning a business of his own. To hold other than professional positions is likely to be an accidental part of a professional person's career.

The average frequency with which respondents held jobs in occupations other than their present ones yields a more refined measure of occupational instability, if oc-

TABLE 7  
PERCENTAGE OF TIME SPENT\* IN PRESENT AND IN OTHER THAN PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS,† BY PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

Present Occupational Group‡	Number	Percentage of Time Spent in Present Occupational Group	Percentage of Time Spent in Other than Present Occupational Group
Professional . . . . .	23	80.2	19.8
Semiprofessional . . . . .	19	69.2	30.8
Own business . . . . .	105	41.5	58.5
Upper-white-collar . . . . .	72	38.6	61.4
Lower-white-collar . . . . .	67	47.6	52.4
Sales . . . . .	42	48.0	52.0
Skilled . . . . .	169	55.9	44.1
Semiskilled . . . . .	98	52.5	47.5
Unskilled . . . . .	44	44.2	55.8
All groups . . . . .	639	50.1	49.9

\* Time is calculated as a percentage of total job history. Thus, if a person spent fifteen out of twenty years in the labor market as a professional, but five years as a salaried employee, then 75 per cent of his career was spent as a professional, 25 per cent in other than the present group. "Percentage of Time Spent" refers to the average of these percentages for all members of an occupational group.

† A man who has worked one out of three years and one who has worked ten out of thirty years in lower-white-collar jobs have both spent 33 per cent of their time there. By limiting the group to males thirty-one years and over, such discrepancies are minimized.

‡ The occupational strata first introduced by Alba Edwards and used here in a modified form are illogical. People are classified alternately by length and complexity of training and by type of remuneration (professional), by property-owner (own business), by employment status and type of work done (white-collar, salesman), and by degree of skill (manual labor). Yet this absence of logic is justified by convention: people distinguish the occupations of others in terms of these criteria. We added to them the categories of "semiprofessional" in order to take account of the many occupations (such as nursing, personnel work, etc.) whose members aspire to or have acquired semiprofessional status. Also, we distinguish upper- from lower-white-collar so as to enumerate business executives separately from their secretaries; and we list "salesmen" separately because neither the Fuller Brush man nor the insurance salesman can well be fitted among the salaried white-collar employees.

cupational populations are grouped into three distinct categories. Professionals may have spent on the average 80 per cent of their working careers as professionals, but this average hides a range of variation. Table 8 is designed to show what proportion of the members of each occupational group

has spent under 50, 50-79, or 80-100 per cent of their careers in their present occupational category.

A majority of the professionals (69.6 per cent) have spent most of their working careers in their present occupations. This is to be expected in view of the length of

proportion of persons who have spent half their careers in occupations other than the present one.

The data being the entire job histories of 935 individuals, it is possible to compute the variety of work they had *ever* done outside their present occupational group. The discussion until now has been of the *typical* career patterns for the various occupational groups; the present concern is with *every* job which the respondents held for at least three months, to shed light on the variety of jobs characteristic of the different occupational groups (Table 9). The data reveal a variety of job experiences that is staggering.<sup>6</sup>

A total of 935 working heads of families report 4,530 jobs held, or an average of 4.8 jobs for an average of 25.3 years in the labor force.<sup>7</sup> In order to obtain an over-all picture of the shifts between occupational groups which are here involved, every job is tabulated as antecedent to every subsequent job, that is, every job change is treated as a shift from the previously held to the "present" job, which in turn is considered as "previously held" as soon as the next job shift is tabulated (Table 10).

This operation shows that as a group

<sup>6</sup> In this tabulation we could not distinguish the short-term jobs from those held for many years. Therefore Table 9 refers both to the job held for three months and to the job held for fifteen years. But this does not seriously affect the findings, since it is obvious that the short-term jobs far outnumber those held for long periods of time.

<sup>7</sup> Treating the 935 respondents collectively we added their total years in the labor market and divided by 935. In calculating the number of jobs held by the 935, we left out of consideration unemployment, exit from the labor force, and war service. The total number of recorded "positions" is 6,957, which means that the 935 held a total of 4,530 jobs and in an additional 2,427 instances were either unemployed, out of the labor force, or in the armed services. If the total number of positions held is considered, then the 935 have occupied an average of 7.4 "positions" for an average of 25.3 years in the labor force. The term "positions" refers to all steps in the working career of an individual after his first entry into the labor force, regardless of whether they involved jobs, unemployment, war service, or exit from the labor force.

TABLE 8

PERCENTAGES OF MALES IN SPECIFIED PERCENTAGES OF WORK TIME SPENT, BY PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	PERCENTAGE OF WORK CAREER IN PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP				
	1-100%		80-100%	50-79%	Under 50%
	Number	Per Cent			
Professional . . . . .	23	100.0	69.6	9.0	21.7
Semiprofessional . . . . .	19	100.0	47.4	31.6	21.1
Own business . . . . .	105	100.0	11.4	31.4	57.1
Upper-white-collar . . . . .	72	100.0	13.9	20.8	65.3
Lower-white-collar . . . . .	67	100.0	17.9	32.8	49.3
Sales . . . . .	42	100.0	26.2	23.8	50.0
Skilled . . . . .	169	100.0	22.5	34.9	42.6
Semiskilled . . . . .	98	100.0	22.4	28.6	49.0
Unskilled . . . . .	44	100.0	18.2	20.5	61.3
All manual . . . . .	314	100.0	65.0*	21.0	14.0
All Nonmanual . . . . .	343	100.0	58.3*	23.0	18.7
All groups . . . . .	639	100.0	21.6	28.8	49.6

\* The proportion of all manual or all nonmanual workers who have spent 80-100 per cent of their time in these categories is significantly higher than the corresponding proportion for the separate occupational groups. Shifting between jobs may be frequent without entailing a cross-over from the manual to the nonmanual occupations, or vice versa. (Cf. below.)

their training. But, as one goes down the occupational ladder, this is less and less the case. Frequently, the low income and status of an occupational group is associated with the circumstance that only a small percentage of its members have spent from 80 to 100 per cent of their careers in it. Those who own a business or who belong to the upper-white-collar group are the most mobile among the nonmanual, while the unskilled are the most mobile among the manual workers—if we measure mobility by the

persons who own or manage a business have the most heterogeneous past experience.<sup>8</sup> Almost 40 per cent of the shifts into self-employment were from manual jobs of various kinds. Slightly under 30 per cent were from various nonmanual occupations, largely white-collar and sales, while only 21.6 per cent shifted from one form of business ownership to another.

Shifts from job to job at the "same" occupational level took place most fre-

quently in the occupations with high status, such as professionals, semiprofessionals, and upper-white-collar.<sup>9</sup> In each of these groups over 60 per cent of the changes occurred within the group. Among the manual occu-

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pations a similar pattern of job shifts within the occupational group is most characteristic of the skilled workers. Though there are many shifts between occupational groups, especially in the lower brackets, these are, on the whole, shifts between adjacent occupational groups. Between those who work with their hands and those who do not, there is, however, rela-

TABLE 9  
PERCENTAGE OF MALES WHO WORKED IN OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS OTHER THAN PRESENT, BY PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	NUMBER	OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS OTHER THAN PRESENT											
		Professional	Semi-professional	Own Business	Upper-White-Collar	Lower-White-Collar	Sales	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	Farm-owner	Farm Labor	Odd Jobs, Unemployed
Professional..	23	.....	8.7	8.7	13.0	26.1	8.7	8.7	21.7	17.4	..	.....	13.0
Semiprofessional.....	19	.....	.....	15.8	5.3	31.6	10.5	21.1	21.1	31.6	5.3	.....	10.5
Own business..	105	2.9	4.8	.....	8.6	41.0	33.3	47.6	45.7	20.0	1.0	10.5	14.3
Upper-white-collar.....	72	2.8	6.9	16.7	.....	77.8	29.2	15.3	26.4	18.1	2.8	9.7	16.7
Lower-white-collar.....	67	.....	3.0	11.9	9.0	.....	26.9	44.8	53.7	35.8	6.0	13.4	35.8
Sales.....	42	.....	7.1	38.1	16.7	64.3	.....	26.1	50.0	28.6	2.4	14.3	14.3
Skilled..	169	.....	1.2	24.3	.....	22.5	10.7	.....	73.4	40.2	3.6	17.8	30.2
Semiskilled...	98	..	3.1	23.5	2.0	27.6	22.5	41.8	.....	56.1	4.1	24.5	32.7
Unskilled..	44	...	2.3	13.6	2.3	31.8	9.1	38.6	63.6	.....	4.5	29.5	36.4
All groups..	639	0.9	3.6	17.4	4.5	34.0	19.1	26.0	44.6	31.8	3.1	15.7	25.2

quently in the occupations with high status, such as professionals, semiprofessionals, and upper-white-collar.<sup>9</sup> In each of these groups over 60 per cent of the changes occurred within the group. Among the manual occu-

<sup>8</sup> The same statement is true of "Farm," which is hardly surprising in an "urban" sample. Casual workers (manual, odd jobs) are, of course, mobile by definition.

<sup>9</sup> Our criteria of stability or instability at different occupational levels are exceedingly crude. We speak of a stable occupational career if a person has been a professional all his life. But, for example, a farmer's son may have worked his way through medical school, started his practice in a community of 2,000 people, and may be, at present, a prominent doctor in a metropolitan area.

tively little shifting (Table 11). This is perhaps the most fundamental cleavage in American society. All those who work with their hands have spent 80 per cent of their working lives in manual occupations; all who do not work with their hands have spent 75 per cent of their working lives in nonmanual occupations. This division between people in the manual and in the nonmanual occupations has important ideological implications. Manual labor in the United States is not regarded as degrading, and the dignity of manual work is frequently stressed. Nothing has contributed more, for instance, to the popular legend of Henry

TABLE 10  
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PRINCIPAL WAGE-EARNERS' PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP  
 BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF PREVIOUS JOBS

OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF PREVIOUS JOBS	OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF PRESENT JOB																						
	All Groups		Profes- sional and Semi- profes- sional		Farm		Own Business and Business Execu- tive		Upper- White- Collar		Lower- White- Collar		Sales		Skilled		Semi- skilled		Un- skilled		Manual (Odd Jobs)		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Professional and semiprofessional.....	285	5.5	103	67.9	9	6.6	9	2.1	4	3.3	31	3.6	8	2.0	17	1.5	24	2.0	17	3.4	3	1.4	
Farm .....	169	3.3	...	...	29	21.2	12	2.8	1	0.8	10	1.2	7	1.8	21	1.9	47	4.0	32	6.4	10	4.6	
Own business and business executive.	263	5.1	4	1.7	6	4.4	92	21.6	8	6.6	16	1.9	30	7.7	53	4.7	35	3.0	13	2.6	6	2.7	
White-collar .....	813	15.8	21	8.8	11	8.0	53	12.4	74	61.6	429	50.2	62	15.9	48	4.3	73	6.3	28	5.6	19	8.7	
Sales.....	355	6.9	5	2.1	7	5.1	12.4	5	4.2	58	6.8	143	36.7	17	1.5	35	3.0	15	3.0	15	3.0	17	7.8
Skilled.....	912	17.6	10	4.2	10	7.3	18.1	2	1.7	35	4.1	21	5.4	599	53.6	100	8.6	28	5.6	30	13.7	...	...
Semiskilled.....	1,030	19.9	5	2.1	28	20.4	51	12.0	4	3.3	84	9.8	49	12.6	159	14.2	497	42.6	100	20.1	53	24.2	
Unskilled .....	463	9.0	4	1.7	14	10.2	20	4.7	2	1.7	30	4.2	18	4.6	44	4.0	131	11.2	159	31.9	35	16.0	
Manual (odd jobs)*.....	189	3.7	3	1.2	10	7.3	6	1.4	2	1.7	18	2.1	8	2.0	37	3.2	58	5.0	29	5.8	17	8.2	
Unemployed†.....	520	10.1	21	8.7	11	8.0	40	9.4	9	7.5	110	12.9	33	8.5	81	7.2	124	10.6	68	13.7	23	10.5	
War service.....	167	3.2	4	1.7	2	1.5	13	3.1	9	7.5	28	3.3	11	2.8	42	3.8	44	3.8	9	1.8	5	2.3	
All groups.....	5,171	100.0	240	100.0	137	100.0	426	100.0	120	100.0	855	100.0	390	100.0	1,118	100.0	1,168	100.0	498	100.0	219	100.0	

\* Manual (odd jobs) refers to casual laborers.  
 † Unemployed includes also persons who have left the labor force



Ford than the fact that this boy from the farm built an industrial empire.<sup>10</sup> The belief in effort and success has remained an essential part of the American creed, notwithstanding the real inability of people to rise from the manual to the nonmanual occupations. But slogans cannot obliterate the wide cleavage between the outlook and way of life of people on either side of the barrier. These differences have been tellingly stated by Granville Hicks:

Hunting and machinery—those are the two great topics of conversation when men get together. Sam Josephs loves to talk about both, and he is usually the central figure in any discussion. Being currently employed in a garage, he is regarded as an authority, and the session is likely to open with a question directed to him, but once the topic is launched, everyone—everyone but me—joins in. The talk grows more and more technical, but human interest is never excluded, for Sam is always being reminded of what some stupid customer said or what some incompetent mechanic did, and his anecdotes evoke others. Some of the men in our group are closely confined to things they have actually worked with, but others are interested in general principles and capable of dealing with them. Stan Cutter, for instance, though he was unable or at any rate unwilling to finish the sixth grade, has a genuinely speculative mind, and has worked out certain theories of mechanics for himself, just from handling machinery, even as he acquired some knowledge of physiology from the butchering of domestic and game animals. For all these men machinery is, among other things, a field of competence, and it is obvious that they enjoy talking about the subject simply because it is one on which they have something significant to say.<sup>11</sup>

Many people in the manual occupations have in common a way of life in which they judge men in terms of what they do with their hands and how they do it. No such simple description, even for the small town, is possible for persons in the nonmanual occupations. Their way of life is too varied

<sup>10</sup> See Keith Sward, *The Legend of Henry Ford* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1948), pp. 275-88.

<sup>11</sup> *Small Town* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1946), p. 115.

to permit of much generalization. In the absence of a simple interest in manual skill and the intricacies of animals and machines, their concern, as Veblen has shown, is with social prestige and material comfort which often overshadows the matter-of-fact aspects of daily living.

So soon as the possession of property becomes the basis of popular esteem, therefore, it becomes also a requisite to that complacency which we call self-respect. In any community where goods are held in severalty it is necessary, in order to his own peace of mind, that an indi-

TABLE 11  
PERCENTAGE OF TIME SPENT BY MALES IN  
PRESENT AND OTHER THAN PRESENT  
OCCUPATIONAL DIVISIONS

Present Occupational Division	Number	Percentage of Time Spent in Present Occupational Division	Percentage of Time Spent in Other than Present Occupational Division
Manual.....	314	80.4	19.6
Nonmanual.....	343	75.3	24.7

vidual should possess as large a portion of goods as others with whom he is accustomed to class himself; and it is extremely gratifying to possess something more than others. . . . The tendency in any case is constantly to make the present pecuniary standard the point of departure for a fresh increase in wealth; and this in turn gives rise to a new standard of sufficiency and a new pecuniary classification of one's self as compared with one's neighbors.<sup>12</sup>

But, while the cleavage itself is deep, occupational shifts on either side of it are so frequent that most men are familiar to some extent with both mentalities. The manual workers in our sample have spent 80 per cent of their work careers in manual occupations, but they have also spent from 45 to 55 per cent of their time in manual occupations other than their present ones. Nonmanual workers have spent 75 per

<sup>12</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Modern Library, 1934), p. 31.

cent of their work careers in nonmanual occupations, but they have also spent from 20 to 61 per cent of their time in nonmanual occupations other than their present ones.

Moreover, shifts between manual and

ents are taken into account, one-sixth of the manual jobs are shown to have been filled by people from nonmanual occupations, while one-fourth of the nonmanual jobs have been filled by people who at the time worked with their hands.

TABLE 12  
PERCENTAGE OF MALES WHO WORKED IN MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS AND DIVISIONS OTHER THAN PRESENT, BY PRESENT MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION\*

PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION	OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION OTHER THAN PRESENT							
	Number	All Manual	Semi-skilled and Apprentice	Unskilled	All Non-manual	High Status†	Lower-White-Collar and Sales	Own Business
All manual.....	314	.....	.....	.....	46.8	26.1	33.1	22.6
Semiskilled, unskilled, manual	145	.....	.....	.....	46.9	26.2	36.6	20.7
All nonmanual.....	343	62.4	39.9	23.9	.....	.....	.....	.....
High status†.....	129	46.5	24.8	19.4	.....	.....	65.1	15.5
Lower-white-collar and sales..	109	75.2	52.3	33.0	.....	33.0	.....	22.0

\* This is a summary presentation of the data contained in Table 9. Discrepancies in group totals result from the omission of certain "present occupations" from Table 9, since their significance is negligible owing to their small size.

† "High status" includes professionals, semiprofessionals, business executives, and upper-white-collar workers, while "All non-manual" includes, in addition to the foregoing, lower-white-collar workers, salesmen, and business owners.

nonmanual occupations occur as well. It is to be expected that the occupational experience of the respondents in this study is most diversified when the jobs held for short periods are considered. Table 12 shows the proportion of male respondents, grouped by overlapping sociological categories, who have spent some time in occupations that are most distant from their present position socioeconomically.

The jobs so tabulated include many held for relatively short periods. Nevertheless, 46.8 per cent of the manual workers have held nonmanual jobs, while 62.4 per cent of the nonmanual workers have worked with their hands, clear evidence of the flexibility of the American occupational structure.

Another measure of the shift between manual and nonmanual occupations is obtained when each job is treated as intermediate between a previous and a future job, in the manner discussed previously (Table 13).

When all 4,523 jobs held by the respond-

TABLE 13  
OCCUPATIONAL DIVISION OF PRESENT JOBS OF PRINCIPAL WAGE-EARNERS, BY OCCUPATIONAL DIVISION OF PREVIOUS JOBS

OCCUPATIONAL DIVISION OF PREVIOUS JOB	OCCUPATIONAL DIVISION OF PRESENT JOB					
	Manual		Nonmanual		Farm	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Manual.....	2,077	79.7	466	26.0	62	50.0
Nonmanual..	420	16.1	1,296	72.3	33	26.6
Farm.....	110	4.2	30	1.7	29	23.4
Total.....	2,607	100.0	1,792	100.0	124	100.0

A more detailed consideration of social mobility in this restricted sense will be considered in the second part of this report.

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AND  
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