Social Mobility and Occupational Career Patterns II. Social Mobility
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SOCIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATIONAL CAREER PATTERNS*

II. SOCIAL MOBILITY

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ABSTRACT

The Oakland, California, labor-market study reinforces the findings of other studies that social mobility largely goes on within manual and nonmanual occupations rather than between them. A majority of 935 respondents, however, have held occupations in both categories at some time in their careers, though most shifts were temporary. The study also indicates that mobility into the nonmanual group on the part of manual workers is largely movement into self-employment.

UPWARD AND DOWNWARD MOBILITY

The interchange between manual and nonmanual occupations from the point of view of social mobility can most easily be shown by contrasting the proportion of time which those who work with their hands have spent in the nonmanual occupations with the proportion of time which nonmanual workers have spent as manual laborers.

TABLE 14

PERCENTAGE OF TIME SPENT IN OCCUPATIONAL DIVISIONS OTHER THAN PRESENT, BY PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION

PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE OF TIME SPENT	
		In Manual Occupations	In Nonmanual Occupations
Professional	23	5.7	.....
Semiprofessional	19	13.4	.....
Own business	105	26.0	.....
Upper-white-collar	72	10.4	.....
Lower-white-collar	67	29.5	.....
Sales	42	21.2	.....
All nonmanual	343*	20.2	.....
Skilled	169	.....	9.3
Semiskilled	98	.....	13.5
Unskilled	44	.....	12.8
All manual	314*	.....	11.1

* These figures include 15 business executives and 3 manual (odd jobs) workers not shown separately. (All of the tables in this article reporting proportions of lifetime career patterns are based on males, aged thirty-one years or older. The younger workers in our sample are not considered in such tables.)

Though little confidence can be placed in the over-all contrast between 11.1 and 20.2 per cent, it is of interest that the range of variation in the two groups differs markedly. Those who hold manual jobs at present have worked for from only 9 to 13 per cent of their careers in nonmanual occupations. But those now in nonmanual occupations have spent from 5 to 29 per cent of their life-careers as manual workers. In a society in which the majority of individuals do *not* pass from the one category to the other, the instances where the crossing is made may be called cases of upward or downward mobility. These terms shall be used in the conventional sense, designating as upward mobile any individual who moves from manual to nonmanual jobs during a significant period of his work career.[13]

Although the use of this terminology is justified on the whole, the data reveal an important aspect of social mobility, in American society, which is essentially obscured by the terms. There is perhaps less doubt about upward than about downward mobility. If a person from a worker's family obtains jobs in the nonmanual occupations, then he is likely to have risen in the hierarchy of prestige even though, economically, he may have advanced little, or not at all. Our

* Part I of this report, "Stability of Jobholding," appeared in this *Journal*, January, 1952, pp. 366–74.

[13] These terms shall also be used when there is a significant shift between occupations within the manual or the nonmanual category, such as from unskilled to skilled or from lower-white-collar to professional.

data indicate that relatively little of this upward mobility is of a permanent character. On the other hand, it does not follow that those who are now in nonmanual occupations have been downward mobile because they have spent a portion of their careers as manual laborers. The test of a rise or fall in the socioeconomic hierarchy is clearly the permanence of the change. As already indicated, there is relatively little permanent crossing between the manual and nonmanual occupations among the respondents.

Table 15 indicates, however, that a temporary change from one to the other category occurs with considerably frequency. Significantly, the temporary crossings occur more frequently downward than upward. Workers in American society may well feel that their chances of a rise in socioeconomic status are slight. Yet those in the middle and upper brackets of the occupational hierarchy may continue to insist that ready opportunities for social and economic advancement exist, because from 40 to 80 per cent of their numbers have at one time or another worked in the manual occupations. While this is not the place to explore the subjective aspects of social mobility, we want to emphasize the importance of considering the impact of casual job experiences on the subjective appraisals of opportunities and on the presence or absence of subjective class identifications.

TABLE 15

PERCENTAGE WHO EVER WORKED IN OCCUPATIONAL DIVISION OTHER THAN PRESENT, BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION*

PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION	NUMBER	RESPONDENTS EVER SPENDING TIME	
		In Manual Occupations	In Nonmanual Occupations
Professional	23	39.1	.....
Semiprofessional	19	52.6	.....
Own business	105	68.5	.....
Upper-white-collar	72	45.8	.....
Lower-white-collar	67	82.1	.....
Sales	42	64.3	.....
All nonmmanual	343†	62.4	.....
Skilled	169	.....	46.7
Semiskilled	98	.....	49.0
Unskilled	44	.....	40.9
All manual	314†	.....	46.8

* These figures include 15 business executives and 3 manual (odd jobs) workers not shown separately.

† The jobs included in these data *do not* include jobs held before completing school or university.

In using the conventional interpretations of the occupational hierarchy, two reservations must be made. Recent studies have shown that the occupation of an individual correlates highly with his "social placement" by members of the same community.[14] On the other hand, people's ideas about who belongs to the middle class or the working class are sufficiently vague and ideological to allow even some corporation vice-presidents to rank themselves as members of the working class.[15] Such findings demonstrate the difficulty of using an occupational classification as a basis for assessing upward or downward mobility. Differences in earnings can be objectively ascertained, but the social evaluation of a particular job or occupation is inevitably subjective. When an individual's work career is judged by his occupational rise or fall, it is so judged because occupational classification combines to some extent the economic with the prestige aspect of social class. But, in using data such as those in this study, whose subjective judgment of social mobility should be employed? Not the individual's, since he was not asked to evaluate his own mobility, or his associates', since that was not available. Hence we fall back on the general understanding of the differences between high- and low-status jobs, which is presumed to be accepted in the country as a whole. Such an understanding, in so far as it exists, is vague indeed, and in assessing the social mobility of the respond-

[14] See W. Lloyd Warner *et al.*, *Social Class in America* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1949).

[15] See Richard Centers, *The Psychology of Social Classes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949).

ents only crude distinctions can be made. A second reservation must be made. We speak of a lack of social mobility if an individual has remained within the same occupational group throughout his career. But this conflicts with the general understanding, however vague, which was referred to above. A man who owns his own business and who transforms it from a small store to a chain of stores in twenty years will be regarded as highly mobile, both economically and socially. Yet he would not be so described if the stability of an occupational career is the only criterion of mobility. At the same time it is impossible to consider each career in detail as long as the interest is in an analysis of general career patterns. This aspect of the problem subsequently will be taken into account by linking occupational career with income data and with the degree of mobility between jobs, areas, and industries.

TABLE 16

OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF PRESENT JOB BY OCCUPATIONAL DIVISION OF PREVIOUS JOB

Occupational Division of Previous Job	Present Job							
	Professional and Semiprofessional		Own Business		Upper-White-Collar		Lower-White-Collar	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Nonmanual	193	89.8	207	55.5	91	89.2	534	74.5
Farm	.....	.....	12	3.2	1	1.0	10	1.4
Manual	22	10.2	154	41.3	10	9.8	173	24.1
Total	215	100.0	373	100.0	102	100.0	717	100.0
	Sales		Skilled		Semiskilled		Unskilled	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Nonmanual	243	70.2	135	13.6	167	16.7	73	17.3
Farm	7	2.0	21	2.1	47	4.7	32	7.6
Manual	96	27.7	839	84.3	786	78.6	316	75.1
Total	346	99.9	995	100.0	1,000	100.0	421	100.0

SPECIFIC AVENUES OF MOBILITY

Though 935 job histories provide a mass of information, this number is quickly reduced to insignificance when more than two or three breakdowns are attempted. It is, nevertheless, possible to analyze the upward and downward mobility of respondents in greater detail. "Areas" of high and of low mobility may first be distinguished on the basis of the previous tabulations of 4,530 job changes. Here again (Table 16) the pattern is similar to that evidenced in the total job-history data above. The self-employed reveal the greatest mobility from manual to nonmanual positions. Shifts from farm jobs are largely to manual labor, especially the unskilled and semiskilled positions. The lower-white-collar and sales positions are the main positions in which manual workers have an opportunity to secure other than self-employment, and these positions do not usually reflect immediate upward mobility. The professional, semiprofessional, business executive, and upper-white-collar positions are filled largely by persons who previously were in nonmanual positions. As one would expect, skilled positions are the most difficult manual jobs for nonmanual workers to secure.

It is difficult to estimate from the data

how much genuine social mobility is reflected in these tables, since persons changing from manual work to lower-white-collar and sales jobs or to small business may not actually be changing their status and income level by a great deal. The fact remains, however, that a considerable amount of such shifting does occur.

A. "BUREAUCRATIC" VERSUS "FREE-ENTERPRISE" MOBILITY

Table 16 suggests that the greatest social mobility occurs in the form of shifts into "own business" and that shifts into the white-collar occupation and sales rank next. These are the occupations of most of those who manage to pass from manual to nonmanual work. There is, however, a significant difference in the mobility patterns if "own business" is compared with the white-collar occupations. That is to say, the majority of persons in white-collar jobs have always been employed in such jobs, though 20 per cent of those employed in lower-white-collar occupations have previously worked with their hands. On the other hand, more than a third of the persons who own their business are "recruited" from the manual occupations.

It cannot be concluded that a person's work career is mobile if he has stayed throughout in the same occupational classification. He may be a white-collar worker at the end as well as at the beginning of his career, though he began as a salesclerk and ended as an executive vice-president. However, the study does not deal with this type of mobility here but rather with the two types of social mobility which are represented by the people who own their business and by those in the white-collar occupations, which may be called an "old" and a "new" type of mobility. To run a business of one's own is still a much-cherished ideal. But with the growth of large-scale organizations in all parts of American society it has lost some of its meaning, though its ideological appeal has not necessarily been weakened thereby. Many still cherish it, though their own careers show little evidence that "private enterprise" has had much significance for them personally. Mobile persons in the white-collar occupations are mobile in the bureaucratic manner; the qualities which lead to the promotion of the salaried employee are radically different from those which would make him a successful, independent businessman. The data reveal some significant differences between the idolized "free-enterprise" career and the bureaucratic career of the white-collar worker.

Until now these occupations have been

TABLE 17

SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS* OF PRESENT JOB BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION OF PREVIOUS JOB

Major Occupational Group and Division of Previous Job	Present Job					
	Own Business		Upper-White-Collar		Lower-White-Collar	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Professional and semiprofessional	9	2.1	4	3.3	31	3.6
Own business	92	21.6	8	6.6	16	1.9
White-collar and sales	106	24.8	79	65.8	487	57.0
All manual	154	36.2	10	8.4	173	20.2

* For simplicity, a number of miscellaneous occupational groups have been excluded. This table is simply an excerpt from Table 10. The percentage figures are calculated for the whole group, but, since some occupational groups have been excluded, they do not add to 100 per cent.

considered in terms of "all previous" jobs, meaning the occupational background of any person who owned his business or did white-collar work, if only for three months. However, the degree of mobility which characterizes these career patterns can be more accurately assessed. Other data in this study reveal that the first job is an excellent predictor of the subsequent career.[16] Degree of social mobility may be described in terms of the "occupational distance" between the first and the present job.[17]

The "occupational distance" between first and present job is clearly greatest for business owners and executives, almost as great for the lower-white-collar workers, and least significant for persons in the upper-white-collar brackets. A number of other variables are associated with these differences. Business owners and executives are an older group than are the white-collar workers, 7 per cent of the first but 22 per cent of the second group being thirty years or under, while 53.9 per cent of the business owners and 43.3 per cent of the white-collar workers are forty-six years of age or older. The older age of the business owners, together with the fact that many of them have been in the manual occupations at various times, suggests that opportunities for the manual workers to turn businessmen open up in the middle and later years. In all other respects there is little difference between the mobility patterns of business owners or white-collar workers and those of the sample as a whole: mobility among jobs, occupations, and areas is greatest in the younger age groups and decreases with age.

TABLE 18

SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS OF PRESENT JOB BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION OF FIRST JOB

MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND DIVISION OF FIRST JOB	PRESENT JOB					
	Own Business		Business Executive and Upper-White-Collar		Lower-White-Collar and Sales	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Professional, semiprofessional, business owners, and executives	10	9.0	10	10.3	2	1.3
All white-collar and sales	38	34.2	61	62.9	75	48.7
All manual (including farm)	63	56.8	26	26.8	77	50.0
Total	111	100.0	97	100.0	154	100.0

The mobility of these three occupational groups, considered as a whole, is, however, quite striking. That is to say, between 40 and 50 per cent of business owners and white-collar workers have had four or more different occupations as well as six or more different jobs. Although this mobility is partly reflected in the answers to a number of questions posed in the study, it may be suggested that a further investigation of the contrast between proprietorship and bureaucratic careers would be worth while. Respondents were asked whether they had known of other available positions since they began their present jobs. Answers to this question presumably reveal something of a person's potential mobility in the recent past, since mobility depends in good part on

[16] This finding is compatible with the notable mobility across occupational lines which we discussed earlier.

[17] This does not take into account the upward and downward shifts which may have occurred in the course of an individual career.

his contacts. Presumably persons who knew of other available jobs are more mobile than those who knew of no job alternative since starting in their present positions.

More than half of the semiskilled and unskilled workers and of the business owners state that they have not known of other jobs since starting on the present one. All respondents in the nonmanual and skilled occupations have known of other jobs more often than business owners. It is true of course that "available job" means different things to the different occupations and that business owners in particular are not at all concerned with other jobs but rather with how to make profitable their present, presumably small-scale investment. Thus, while business ownership is a goal of the socially mobile, especially for persons from the manual occupations, it is not in the same sense a step to other jobs. The significant difference between business ownership versus bureaucratic position as a goal for the socially mobile lies in the fact that in modern society the first is the final step in a person's work career, while the second is at least potentially a means to a better-paying job in the same or another large-scale organization.

TABLE 19

SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS BY NUMBER OF OCCUPATIONS AND NUMBER OF JOBS

No. of Occupations and No. of Jobs	Present Job					
	Own Business		Business Executive and Upper-White-Collar		Lower-White-Collar and Sales	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
No. of occupations:						
1	15	12.6	15	14.0	30	18.5
2–3	53	44.5	42	39.3	59	36.4
4 or more	51	42.9	50	46.7	73	45.1
Total	119	100.0	107	100.0	162	100.0
No. of jobs:						
1–5	56	47.1	63	58.3	97	59.9
6–10	44	37.0	39	36.1	50	30.9
11–15	13	10.9	3	2.8	10	6.2
16 or more	6	5.0	3	2.8	5	3.0
Total	119	100.0	108	100.0	162	100.0

B. CHANGING IMPLICATIONS OF PROPRIETORSHIP

That there is a certain finality in proprietorship does not mean that persons in this group never move into other occupations. But, since a good proportion of them come from the manual occupations, it is probable that their only opportunity is to choose between manual labor or proprietorship. The self-employed businessman, in so far as the data of this study represent him adequately, is today a very different person, both socially and economically, from what he was two generations ago. Then he could hope and work for real economic success which would consist in the building-up of a large enterprise out of very small beginnings. That hope and work were meaningful, regardless of the individual's particular fate, because the social and economic distance between the small business at the beginning and the large enterprise at the end of a career was very great. Today, this dis-

tance has largely disappeared. Success in proprietorship today consists in most instances in the stabilization of an enterprise at a given social and economic level, because the opportunities for building large enterprises out of very small ones are dramatically diminished, though they have certainly not disappeared. It is in part a by-product of the predominance of large-scale organizations that those who head them have usually had a bureaucratic career. The

TABLE 20

KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER JOBS BY PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER JOBS*			
	Yes		No	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Professional and semi-professional	31	63.3	18	36.7
Own business	40	42.1	55	57.9
Upper-white-collar and business executive	60	65.2	32	34.8
Lower-white-collar	47	54.0	40	46.0
Sales	33	60.0	22	40.0
Skilled	104	56.2	81	43.8
Semiskilled	48	44.9	59	55.1
Unskilled	19	41.3	27	58.7
All groups	382	53.4	334	46.6

* Based on replies to question: "Since you began this job, have you known about any other jobs which you might have been able to get?"

"industrial bureaucrat" and not the small independent businessman is likely to advance most, both socially and economically. For these reasons the data on self-employed businessmen are of special interest.

The 105 individuals who were self-employed at the time of the interview have been so employed for less than half of their average working careers (Table 7). Sixty-eight per cent of the group had at some time been employed in manual work (Table 15), while 59 per cent had had jobs as lower-white-collar workers or salesmen. If one considers semiskilled, unskilled, manual (odd jobs), and farm workers, as well as lower-white-collar workers and salesmen, as the lower-status occupations in American society, then 88.6 per cent of the self-employed business owners have spent some part of their work careers in these lower-status occupations. If their work careers are considered collectively (rather than what proportion of the group has been in the lower-status occupations at some time), then the group is shown to have spent, on the average, 36.3 per cent of its work careers in these low-status jobs, which is only slightly less than the average time spent in self-employment (41.5 per cent) (Table 7).[18]

Census data corroborate our finding that self-employment continues to be important as a career goal at the same time that it proves to be unattainable on a permanent basis for the overwhelming majority of Americans. Only 8 per cent of the population are presently self-employed, but many more persons have been in business for themselves at some time in their history. Every socioeconomic category (see Table 9) contains a large group who have once been self-employed. It is especially noteworthy that over one-fifth of those persons now employed in manual work were at some time employed in their own businesses. The proportion of the previously self-employed rises to 24.3 per cent for the skilled workers and to 38.1 per cent for salesmen.

Department of Commerce statistics on turnover among business firms from 1944 to 1948 confirm the implications of our data. Table 21 presents the figures of the department.

Even during the postwar boom of 1945–48 almost 30 per cent of the businesses in the United States were discontinued, while in the same period every year with the exception of 1948 witnessed the opening of new businesses equal to about twice the number of businesses which closed. In California, where the data of the present study were collected, the entrance and discontinuance

[18] Percentages (without table references) cited in this paragraph are from tabulations not included here.

rate was much higher, as is to be expected in an area of expanding population.

The absolute figures present an even clearer picture. Over four-fifths of all the businesses which opened or closed were small firms employing three or fewer workers. A total of 1,917,000 firms opened and 1,094,400 discontinued. Assuming that these openings and closings involved different people, which is obviously not always the case, and if a temporary one, for a large part of the population.[19]

The majority of every occupational category in the sample admits to having had the goal of "going into business" at some time. This aspiration has been even greater among the manual (Table 22) than among the white-collar group, though salesmen as a class seem to desire and obtain self-employment more than any other group.

TABLE 21*

ENTRANCE AND DISCONTINUANCE RATES: NUMBER OF NEW AND DISCONTINUED FIRMS PER 1,000 FIRMS IN OPERATION, BY AREA AND SIZE OF FIRM, MARCH 31, 1944–48

AREA AND SIZE	ENTRANCE RATES					DISCONTINUANCE RATES				
	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948
Specified area:										
Total United States	117	134	176	123	99	66	63	64	76	94
Far West	207	210	243	194	131	100	81	83	94	128
California	217	205	244	205	131	102	84	81	91	124
Size of firm:										
All firms	.....	134	176	123	99	.....	63	64	76	94
0–3 employees	.....	155	206	143	115	.....	72	76	88	111
4–7 employees	.....	86	124	88	75	.....	34	35	48	53
8–19 employees	.....	55	74	51	41	.....	35	32	41	46
20 or more employees	.....	33	38	26	22	.....	26	24	29	29

* Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, *State Estimates of Business Population* (Washington, 1949), p. 5, and U.S. Department of Commerce, *Survey of Current Business*, May, 1950, p. 17.

ignoring the question of number of partners in these firms, between 1944 and 1948 about three million Americans were involved in either starting or getting out of business, a figure equal to 6 per cent of the urban work force of the entire population. Unfortunately, similar data do not exist for previous years, and it is difficult to extrapolate the postwar data backward to the war years and to the prewar depression period. Judging by the war year of 1944, however, the rate of business turnover was even greater during the war than in the following period. Thus it is safe to conclude that the Oakland labor market is not atypical. That is, somewhere between 20 and 30 per cent of the urban work force has been self-employed at some time, and self-employment in small business still constitutes an attainable goal,

Responses to the question, "Have you ever tried to own your own business?" are similar. The proportions of persons who report that they actually tried to become self-employed is lower than those who have thought of it as a goal, but here again the manual workers report more such effort than the white-collar group, the salesmen again leading.

This analysis of mobility between manual and nonmanual occupations reveals hidden and changing aspects of the belief in social mobility which is still widespread among the

[19] By "attainable," we do not mean that the businessman can make an economic success but rather that it is possible for millions of Americans to shift from working for others to owning their own business. It is clear from the Department of Commerce statistics that many of those who make these shifts are not able to maintain themselves in business.

American people. It is our guess that the creed of the "individual enterpriser" has become by and large a working-class preoccupation. Though it may have animated both working class and middle class in the past, it is no longer a middle-class ideal today. Instead, people in the middle class aspire to become professionals and, as a second choice, upper-white-collar workers.[20] But

TABLE 22

BUSINESS ASPIRATIONS OF MALES AGE THIRTY-ONE AND OVER BY PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	BUSINESS ASPIRATIONS*			
	Yes		No	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
White-collar....	77	55.8	61	44.2
Sales.....	31	73.8	11	26.2
Skilled.....	106	63.1	62	36.9
Semiskilled.....	69	71.1	28	28.9
Unskilled.....	30	68.2	14	31.8
All manual.....	208	66.7	104	33.3

* Based on replies to question: "Have you ever thought about going into business for yourself?"

persons in the nonmanual occupations frequently work with their hands—though only for short periods of time. The belief in the social mobility of American society apparently continues its hold on people's imagination, partly because individual enterprise is frequently a goal of manual workers and partly because members of the middle class can point to their experience with manual jobs as evidence of such mobility.

CONCLUSIONS

This research report is a preliminary introduction to the Oakland labor-market studies, limited to a survey of the data, especially classified by lifetime careers for males, thirty-one years of age and older. Certain conclusions may be drawn upon in future research in occupational stratification.

1. The use of present job as an index of the social experiences and pressures correlated with occupational status ignores the fact that the individuals in any given sample have a variety of work experiences. If, the sample were analyzed at some point five or ten years before the interviewing, many individuals would fall into a different socioeconomic category.

2. That the split between manual and nonmanual work is basic in American society is a conclusion reinforced by this sample, taken from one of the most mobile areas in the United States. On the other hand, the majority of males over thirty-one years of age have at some time been in occupations in either category. It is important to see that both conditions exist simultaneously.

3. Those who cross from one category to the other, nevertheless, are largely persons in the nonmanual occupations who work with their hands from time to time and persons in the manual occupations who for some period become self-employed small businessmen or lower-white-collar workers. Persons in the nonmanual occupations frequently work with their hands, whether their careers are considered in terms of the over-all time they spend in the manual occupations and in terms of the proportion of nonmanual persons who have ever done so. The reverse movement of manual workers into the nonmanual occupations occurs less frequently.

4. The opportunity and the desire to enter small business may still be a major goal of American wage-earners. Statistics on the comparatively small number of self-employed at any given time conceal the fact that many more than the number now self-employed have been self-employed in the past or will try to be self-employed in the future. That people do not mention self-employment as a desired future occupation does not mean that it is not a realistic goal to them. Self-employment is one of the few

[20] The majority of respondents say that parents, teachers, or others advised them, while in school, to become professionals, regardless of the occupational position of their families.

positions of higher status attainable to manual workers. That most of those who try it apparently fail does not change the fact that they do try.

5. Various sociologists hold that the socially mobile have significantly different attitudes from those of the immobile, especially in respect to racial prejudice. This study indicates that Americans are still a very mobile people, regardless of long-run trends, and that it is possible within rough limits to differentiate careers which reflect a great deal of mobility from those which do not.

6. There seems to be more homogeneity at the top of the social structure than at the bottom. However, the study tells little about the very top or bottom because of the limitations of the sample. The study does suggest that generalizations about trends in social mobility made on the basis of studies of small communities may greatly distort the national picture.

Certain limiting factors prompt us to regard this inquiry as a pilot study in social mobility.

a) The study was undertaken in connection with an investigation of labor-market behavior. From the standpoint it was convenient to omit census tracts containing some 17 per cent of the Oakland population, which had the effect of excluding from consideration the areas of the highest and of the lowest socioeconomic classes. This is clearly a limitation, in a study of social mobility. Likewise, since only working heads of fame ilies were interviewed, the older age groups are overrepresented.

TABLE 23

PERCENTAGE OF MALES AGE THIRTY-ONE AND OVER WHO ATTEMPTED TO OWN BUSINESS, BY PRESENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

Present Occupational Group	Attempts To Own Business*										Have Been in Business †	
	Tried		Did Not Try		Total Replies		No Reply		Total			
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
White-collar	40	35.1	74	64.9	114	82.0	25	18.0	139	100.0	20	14.4
Sales	27	67.5	13	32.5	40	95.2	2	4.8	42	100.0	16	38.1
Skilled	61	44.2	77	55.8	138	81.6	31	18.3	169	100.0	41	24.3
Semiskilled	30	37.0	51	63.0	81	83.5	16	16.5	97	100.0	23	23.7
Unskilled	16	42.1	22	57.9	38	86.3	6	13.6	44	100.0	6	13.6
All manual	108	41.5	152	58.5	260	83.0	53	16.9	313	100.0	71	22.7

* Based on replies to question: "Have you ever tried to own your own business?"

† Data on business ownership are from actual job histories and are shown here to provide ready comparison. Although 107 respondents have owned a business, 282 indicate that they have made attempts in this direction.

b) The sample was drawn from a prob ability random sample of segments of blocks. The sample requirements were not completed. In all, close to 18 per cent of the population drawn were not interviewed, for a variety of reasons. This was in part a result of the fact that the interviewing was done on a very small budget.

c) There were a number of biases in the data on job histories. The reliability of the interviewees is probably low. The older a worker and the more jobs he has had, the less likely is he to report his job changes accurately or to give information which permits reliable classification of the status of the job. Certain types of jobs, especially those which are considered of high status, are probably more likely to be reported than

the low. Highly educated persons are more likely to give accurate information than those of lesser education. The very meaning of the job may be different in peacetime from what it is in wartime and in a small community from what it is in a metropolis.

Certain variables specific to Oakland and California may make it impossible to generalize from these results to the rest of the country. The city of Oakland has grown greatly in the last twenty years, and most especially in the last ten years. Only 24.4 per cent of the sample are native to the San Francisco Bay Area, and only 30.6 per cent have always lived in California: 69.4 per cent have resided in more than one community, and a large proportion of this group has held jobs before coming to California. An analysis of the relation between the community of origin of the interviewees and their occupational status suggests a relationship between the expansion of a city and the social mobility of its residents. This analysis will be presented elsewhere, but the limitations should be mentioned as a caveat to those who may extrapolate these data to other more static areas. On the other hand, studies conducted in other metropolitan areas will probably reveal also a great deal of heterogeneity of the occupational backgrounds of the population, although there is little doubt that the degree will vary with the size, age, and economic stability of the given community.

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