



<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz>

ResearchSpace@Auckland

Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage.

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback>

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the Library Thesis Consent Form.

**CLASS
AND OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AMONG
FARM EMPLOYEES**

ALISON MARGARET LOVERIDGE

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
University of Auckland, 1991**

"In an age of explanation one can always choose varieties of truth."

Janet Frame Living in the Maniototo

ABSTRACT

Class mobility in farming works both ways, some farmer's children are unable to afford a farm, while others from non-farm families do succeed in farm ownership. The literature reviewed in this thesis suggests this situation is related to New Zealand's economic history. In the past small family farms have benefited from both secure markets and governments whose interests have been closely bound up with high productivity. This has led the state to offer cheap credit to prospective farmers with little capital of their own. Upward mobility has been possible, but at the same time state support has enabled relatively small farms to remain viable, and many of these are unable to secure farm ownership for all family members. In this thesis I explore class mobility and career patterns among farm employees and consider their wider implications.

There are many ambiguities in farm employment in New Zealand which stem from the predominance of petty bourgeois farm owners. Such farmers must deal with the capitalist markets of other sectors when they purchase inputs or sell their product but family workers may act as a bulwark against commercial pressures by accepting lower incomes. Similar conditions may be forced on working class farm employees with no chance of ownership. The high number of people leaving farm employment offers indirect confirmation of such problems and this thesis investigates the context in which departures occurred.

Farm employees consist of three groups, those without interest in farm ownership, those with an interest and little chance of success, and those whose family background ensures farm ownership. Many farms only have one employee and take on non-family labour for short periods when the family labour which would otherwise do the task is unavailable. Some of the people they employ are offspring of neighbouring farm owners. This variation in class interests has exacerbated the disinclination of farm employees to take collective action in the face of poor wages and conditions.

By tracing a sample of farm employees through the electoral rolls over a period of ten years, I have been able to contact three groups of farm employees: those who have left for non-farm work in the intervening period; those who have been farm workers for at least ten years; and those who have since become farm owners. This has given me an insight into the proportion of farm employees who take up farming hoping to own their own farm, and the problems involved in succeeding. People who have left farming also provide an important perspective on farm employment. I have correlated outcome of career by various background factors, principally father's occupation, aspiration, and education. Job history is also important to my analysis. All these factors influence class mobility, and may either increase or mask the action of each other in different circumstances. By looking at mobility I will demonstrate the way class relationships impinge on individual lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Behind every successful piece of research is a host of key people without whom the project could never have been carried out. This was never more true than for the farming people who spent their time providing the information on which this thesis is based. They shared their experiences with me in a way which the resulting work is unable to do justice to.

However the process of research started long before I knocked on the first door to ask why someone had left farming. Each of my supervisors has contributed something different to this thesis. Without the inspiration of Ian Carter this thesis might never have been written. He introduced me to the intricacies of rural sociology and demonstrated the ways in which the research from other countries could illuminate the rural sector in New Zealand. I am also indebted to Charles Crothers for his clear thinking and willingness to ask for higher standards. He also introduced me to the computing skills required by this type of analysis.

I owe a special thanks to Patrick Graham. He has not only been endlessly patient and supportive during the writing up of this thesis, but has made suggestions concerning the statistical analysis as well. The responsibility for the final analysis was mine alone, but his help has extended my understanding of statistical processes

I would like to acknowledge the scholarship from the University Grants Committee which supported me while the thesis was being written.

Many other people have helped to bring this project to fruition. I would like to thank the staff and students of the Sociology Department, University of Auckland, for feedback and advice given freely, both during seminars and informally. The Department has also provided financial support and services while the thesis was being researched and written. I would particularly like to thank Gaynor van Beurden for typing my questionnaires and the accompanying letters, and Mei Everitt for helping to reproduce them. They and Kim Sullivan have helped in any number of ways during the time spent in the Department. The final appearance of this thesis is my own responsibility but it has benefitted from their advice.

My family has encouraged me throughout my university career and I owe them a special debt. A thesis is a time consuming project and I would like to thank my family and friends for their tolerance and support during the seemingly endless period of its production.

Finally I am aware that my colleagues at DSIR Social Science have had to share my attention with this thesis during the final stages of writing up and I would like to express my appreciation of their interest. I

owe a particular debt to Lindley Turnbull, who has read the entire thesis, doing much to improve my written expression.

It is always possible to improve a project, but the time has come when I can best fulfil my debts to everyone by drawing this project to a close.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	ABSTRACT	III
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
	LIST OF TABLES	IX
CHAPTER ONE:	INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTION AND STRUCTURE	1
	1.1 Preamble	1
	1.2 New Zealand Literature on Farming	2
	1.3 Models of Farm Employment	2
	1.4 Methodology	5
	1.5 Structure of this Thesis	9
CHAPTER TWO:	THE NATURE OF THE FAMILY FARM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PAID EMPLOYEES: A LITERATURE REVIEW	12
	2.1 Introduction	12
	2.2 Class Structure in Farming	13
	2.3 Farm Employment in Relation to Debates over Class Structure	18
	2.4 The Class Position of Non-owning Farm Family Members	20
	2.5 Conclusion	25
CHAPTER THREE:	THE NEW ZEALAND LITERATURE ON FARM EMPLOYMENT	28
	3.1 Introduction	28
	3.2 Background to the Present Situation	30
	3.3 Farm employees and Trade Unions	33
	3.4 The Manpower Management Approach to Farm Employment	35
	3.5 Studies of Farm Employment and Intergenerational Farm Transfer	40
	3.6 The Family Labour Contribution	46
	3.7 Conclusion	48
CHAPTER FOUR:	STUDYING FARM EMPLOYEES - METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES	51
	4.1 Introduction	51
	4.2 Problems in Sample Construction	53
	4.3 Construction of the Sample	54
	4.4 Sample Biases	55
	4.5 Biases Resulting from Use of a Mail Survey	58
	4.6 Statistical Analysis	61
	4.7 Conclusion: Linking Method and Theory	62

CHAPTER FIVE:	THE INFLUENCE OF BACKGROUND ON FUTURE LIFE CHANCES	65
	5.1 Introduction	65
	5.2 Significance of Age within the Sample	67
	5.3 Family Background and its Effects	69
	5.4 Education and its Effects	75
	5.5 Aspiration and its Effects	78
	5.6 Women's Experiences in Farming	83
	5.7 Conclusion	86
CHAPTER SIX:	FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF BACKGROUND ON FUTURE LIFE CHANCES	89
	6.1 Introduction	89
	6.2 Results of the Log-linear Analysis	92
	6.3 Effect of Age of Respondent on Results	97
	6.4 Relationship between Father's Occupation and other Factors	99
	6.5 Relationship between Aspirations and other Factors	102
	6.6 Relationship between Education and other Factors	105
	6.7 Conclusion	110
CHAPTER SEVEN:	JOB HISTORY AND LIFE CHANCES	113
	7.1 Introduction	113
	7.2 Individual Job Histories	114
	7.3 Overall Job Histories	116
	7.4 Relationship of Job History and Outcome	120
	7.5 Effect of Background Characteristics	122
	7.6 Job Sequences	130
	7.7 Changes Between First Job and Last Job	132
	7.8 Outcome and Job Sequence	136
	7.9 Conclusion	138
CHAPTER EIGHT:	INTERACTION OF PERCEPTIONS OF FARMING WITH FARM CAREERS	142
	8.1 Introduction	142
	8.2 Attitudes to Jobs	144
	8.3 Career Outcome and Attitudes to Work	150
	8.4 Different attitudes to Jobs among Subgroups	153
	8.5 Attitudes to Wages and Conditions, and Rural Lifestyle	155
	8.6 Attitudes to Unions	163
	8.7 Conclusion	166
CHAPTER NINE:	SOURCES OF FINANCE	169
	9.1 Introduction	169
	9.2 Father's Occupation and Sources of Finance	173
	9.3 Aspiration and Sources of Finance	175
	9.4 Education and Sources of Finance	176
	9.5 Age and Sources of Finance	177
	9.6 Job History and Sources of Finance	178
	9.7 Conclusion	179

CHAPTER TEN:	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	181
	10.1 Recapitulation of Theoretical Issues	181
	10.2 Significance of Research Results	184
	10.3 Conclusion	191
BIBLIOGRAPHY		196
APPENDIX ONE: COMPARISON OF DATA WITH OTHER SURVEYS		202
APPENDIX TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE AND ACCOMPANYING LETTERS		208

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 4-1	Effectiveness of Tracing Full-time Workers through the Electoral Rolls	57
TABLE 4-2	Response Rates	58
TABLE 5-1	Outcome of Career by Age	68
TABLE 5-2	Age by Father's Occupation	69
TABLE 5-3	Outcome of Career by Father's Occupation Using Elley-Irving Index	71
TABLE 5-4	Outcome of Career by Farm Experience before Full-time Work	72
TABLE 5-5	Outcome of Career by Region in which Childhood was Spent	73
TABLE 5-6	Outcome of Career by Mother's Occupation Using Elley-Irving Index	73
TABLE 5-7	Outcome of Career by School Qualifications	76
TABLE 5-8	Education by Father's Occupation	77
TABLE 5-9	Outcome of Career by Farm and Trade Qualifications	78
TABLE 5-10	Aspiration by Father's Occupation	79
TABLE 5-11	Outcome of Career by Job Expectations when started Work	80
TABLE 5-12	Outcome of Career by Time of Decision to Work on Farm	82
TABLE 6-1	Comparison of Goodness of Fit of Log-linear Models	93
TABLE 6-2	Relative Risk of Outcome for Father's Occupation, Aspiration and Education	96
TABLE 6-3	Outcome by Mother's Occupation on Elley-Irving Index by Father's Occupation	100
TABLE 6-4	Outcome of Career by Farm Experience by Aspiration	102
TABLE 6-5	Outcome of Career by Aspiration by Father's Occupation	103
TABLE 6-6	Outcome of Career by Father's Occupation by Education	107
TABLE 6-7	Outcome of Career by Aspirations by School Qualifications	108
TABLE 6-8	Outcome of Career by Farm and Trade Qualifications by Education	109
TABLE 6-9	Outcome of Career by Qualifications by Father's Occupation	110
TABLE 7-1	Frequency of each Career Type	118
TABLE 7-2	Outcome by Job History	121
TABLE 7-3	Outcome by Job History by Father's Occupation	122
TABLE 7-4	Outcome by Job History by Aspiration	123
TABLE 7-5	Results of Log-linear Modelling	125
TABLE 7-6a	Relative Risk of Achieving Farm Ownership	128
TABLE 7-6b	Relative Risk of Leaving Farming	129
TABLE 7-7	Nature of First, Middle, and Last Jobs	133
TABLE 7-8	First and Last Jobs Held by Those with Post-Farm Careers	135
TABLE 7-9	Outcome by Job for First, Middle, and Last Jobs	137
TABLE 8-1	Importance of Aspects of Rural Life to Decision of Those who Left	159

TABLE 8-2	Outcome by Family Situation	160
TABLE 8-3	Outcome by Characteristics of Family	161
TABLE 8-4	Percentage Stating Aspects of Job Important by Outcome	162
TABLE 8-5	Percentage Stating Aspects of Job Important by Father's Occupation	162
TABLE 8-6	Percentage Agreeing Statement about Unions Important by Outcome	164
TABLE 8-7	Percentage Agreeing Statement about Unions Important by Father's Occupation	165
TABLE 9-1	Purchase Prices of Farms Worth \$100,000 in 1980 Terms	170
TABLE 9-2	Summary of Sources of Finance for Farms	171
TABLE 9-3	Proportion of Finance from each source	173
TABLE 9-4	Mean Amount of Finance by Father's Occupation	174
TABLE 9-5	Mean Amount of Finance by Aspirations	176
TABLE 9-6	Mean Amount of Finance by Education	177
TABLE 9-7	Mean Amount of Finance by Age	178
TABLE 9-9	Mean Amount of Finance by Job History	179