

Bernhardt, Annette, Martina Morris, Mark S. Handcock, and Marc A. Scott. *Divergent paths: economic mobility in the new American labor market*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. 2001. 267 pp. ISBN: 978-0-87154-150-5

The authors describe how career development and upward mobility have changed in postindustrial society. Using data from the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS), they compare two groups of young white men at critical points in their careers: during the greatest growth in their wages and when long term attachment to employers occurs. The first group entered the labor market in the late 1960s. The second group was the first to experience the restructuring of the labor market throughout their careers. The authors found that the latter group experienced increased job instability in the early years of their working lives compared to the earlier cohort. The more recent cohort had a 43 percent greater chance of changing jobs than the earlier group, in part possibly due to lower early marriage rates, longer school enrollment, population density shift to the southern states, and the shift in the U.S. economy toward the service sector. The authors also found that there is greater uncertainty and inequality of early wage growth than in the past. Even more important is the finding that upward mobility, defined as long-term wage growth, "has deteriorated for young men who entered the labor market in the 1980s," and is a permanent, downward change for the majority of workers. In examining policy options for career development and upward mobility, the authors focus on the employment relationship directly, recommending the creation of career ladders outside of firms, the strengthening of career ladders within firms, the improvement of low-wage jobs, and the improvement of labor market coordination through a formal structure for matching jobs to workers.