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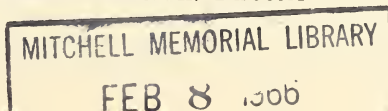
Changes In The
Occupational Structure
Of Mississippi And The South
1950 - 1960

Mississippi State University

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MISSISSIPPI



CHANGES IN THE OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF MISSISSIPPI AND THE SOUTH, 1950-1960

BY ELISABETH J. STOJANOVIC

In improving its economic status, Mississippi relies heavily on physical resources. The full realization of the benefits from these resources depends largely upon an adequate labor force, made up of many individuals representing various walks of life. The more skilled and better trained this labor pool becomes, the closer and the more readily attainable may be the goals for raising the level of living of its citizens.

The objective of this report is to elucidate the changes which have occurred chiefly among four major occupational groupings in Mississippi, namely the white collar, manual, service, and agricultural workers, between 1950 and 1960. Also, where appropriate, comparisons will be made with the changes in the South in general over the same period. It is anticipated that focusing on the outstanding changes in the human resources of the State may develop an awareness of the trends in the occupational structure of Mississippi employment and may assist in projecting future employment opportunities.

Trends in Total Employment

During the decade 1950 to 1960, the total number of employed males in Mississippi, 14 years of age and over, decreased by 15.9 percent, whereas the number of employed females in the same age category increased 28.7 percent. For the South, on the other hand, both male and female workers increased, namely 3.4 and 38.2 percent, respectively.

When the white and nonwhite segments of the Mississippi population of both sexes are considered separately, the changes in employment become even more striking. A relatively small decrease, 5.6 percent, was depicted for white male workers and a quite large decline, 30 percent, for the nonwhite segment of the employed

workers. The latter was also true for the South as a whole, although the decrease was slightly over 10 percent. Female workers increased both in Mississippi and regionally, with the most pronounced changes occurring among whites (Table 1).

The overall picture is quite similar for persons who reported their occupation. Male workers decreased by 16.8 percent, while the female workers had gained 27.4 percent.

A decline in the male labor force was also observed for the 1940-1950 period, and thus seems to be a continuation of an earlier trend, which actually started during the 1930's.² Indications are that those losses are due mainly to a continuous migration from the State, which is particularly sizeable in the nonwhite category.

The same trend is also holding for the South in general, but only for the nonwhite segment. The decrease, however, was substantially smaller. The outstanding changes in the major occupational groupings are shown in Table 2. It is evident that except for agricultural workers for both Mississippi and the South, all other occupations have grown between 1950 and 1960. Interestingly, for the first time white collar workers numerically overtook the manual workers. In Mississippi this is true only for the male workers. In the female group, the bulk of employment is still of the manual type. The agricultural workers decreased roughly by one half, a trend consistent with the State and the region, as well as with both sexes.

¹This report is based on 1950 and 1960 decennial census data.

²U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1950 Census of Population, Vol. II, Part 24, Table 26.

Table 1. Percent change in total employed persons by race, sex, and occupational groups, in Mississippi and the South, 1950-1960.

| | Mississippi | | The South | |
|--|-------------|--------|-----------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| | percent | | | |
| Changes by Race | | | | |
| White | - 5.6 | 52.1 | 6.8 | 45.6 |
| Nonwhite | -30.0 | 4.7 | -10.2 | 18.1 |
| Changes by Occupational Groupings | | | | |
| | percent | | | |
| White collar workers | 19.3 | 40.2 | 26.8 | 46.8 |
| Manual workers | 18.1 | 75.8 | 10.3 | 25.0 |
| Service workers | 15.7 | 45.6 | 15.5 | 37.0 |
| Agricultural workers | -54.0 | -51.2 | -50.1 | -44.7 |

Sources: U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1950 Census of Population, Vol. II, Part 24, Mississippi, Table 28 and U. S. Census of Population, 1960, PC(1), 26D, Mississippi, Table 121, and PC(1) 1D, United States, Table 257.

In general, the changes continue to accentuate the trends observed in earlier decennial censuses. These changes, however, do not reveal in which occupational groupings the greatest or most drastic shifts have occurred. In an attempt to throw some light in this direction each of the four above-mentioned major occupational groups will be considered separately.³

White Collar Workers

This occupational group consists of a wide spectrum of civilian professional and technical personnel. For the purpose of this report occupations belonging to the following categories will be considered: 1) Professional workers, such as engineers, natural scientists, medical and health workers, teachers, and other professional and technical workers, including accountants, lawyers, etc.; 2) Managers, officials, and proprietors (farm excluded); 3) Clerical workers, and 4) Sales workers.

For both sexes and both races, the professional workers were the fastest growing occupational group between 1950 and 1960. This seems to reflect the State's greater emphasis on the technological advances, the application of scientific discovery to industrial uses, better

³Only those reporting their occupation are included in this report.

medical and educational services, and in general a dynamic tendency in all sorts of enterprises.

The recent expansion in the existing space programs throughout the South and the initiation of new ones in Mississippi have undoubtedly contributed to the rise of this professional group, particularly in the fields of engineering, physics, and mathematics. The teaching profession has also contributed to this increase, particularly at the elementary and secondary school level. A quite fast increase in the number of school-age children created a need for more teachers.

The white managerial workers group increased more slowly than the professional. On the other hand, nonwhite workers were drastically reduced. Apparently, the changes in the ways in which nowadays' business matters are conducted, as well as their modification in scope, required more specialized training and thus might have forced the decline in certain categories of this group.

Notwithstanding the introduction of more modern and efficient office equipment for data processing, clerical workers generally increased sharply. Steady influx of industry in the State, and in the South in general, seems to have created a greater demand for manpower for collecting data, programming the results,

and for operating computing machines, as well as cashiers. As shown by the percentage increases in Table 2, women in this category appear to be in far greater demand than men. Secretaries, stenographers, and typists represent the majority of jobs filled.

Moderate increases are also noted for sales workers, except for nonwhite males in Mississippi, which category suffered a sharp decline. It is assumed that whatever growth was registered, it was largely due to the handling of retail trade by part-time workers.

Manual Workers

In this group are included: 1) Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers, such as construction craftsmen, mechanics and repairmen, metal craftsmen, except mechanics, and other craftsmen; 2) Operative and kindred workers, such as drivers and similar workers, and 3) Laborers, except farm and mine.

Table 2 shows that craftsmen, foremen,

and kindred workers increased with both races and both sexes, with the white females having an exceptionally sharp increase. Census figures indicate that the observed increases were essentially among foremen, mechanics, and repairmen. The latter two groups were in greater demand as the ever increasing use of complicated machinery and apparatus requires a larger force of trained individuals for their service and upkeep. The only slight rise in construction craftsmen may be explained by a limited demand for such services due to a greater tendency of using prefabricated materials for building purposes. Nevertheless, electrical workers and brickmasons remained in demand and their numbers show the greatest escalation among construction craftsmen.

The extremely large ascent in the white female craftsmen category was brought about by the more than doubling of the number of women employed as decorators, window dressers, and textile work-

Table 2. Percent change of employed workers by occupation, sex, and race, in Mississippi and the South, 1950-1960.

| Occupation | Mississippi | | | | The South | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | |
| | White | Non-White | White | Non-white | White | Non-white | white | Non-white |
| | percent | | | | | | | |
| White collar workers | | | | | | | | |
| Professional | 29.6 | 23.3 | 36.0 | 34.6 | 54.2 | 33.0 | 48.6 | 42.9 |
| Managerial | 19.5 | - 8.2 | 26.8 | -20.8 | 18.3 | -12.0 | 27.1 | - 8.5 |
| Clerical | 25.7 | 35.8 | 61.0 | 37.0 | 20.8 | 59.2 | 56.8 | 81.8 |
| Sales | 7.9 | -15.5 | 21.6 | 1.0 | 19.1 | 2.8 | 29.1 | 9.8 |
| Manual workers | | | | | | | | |
| Craftsmen, etc. | 33.4 | 19.6 | 94.4 | 2.2 | 19.5 | 22.2 | 26.0 | 40.2 |
| Operatives, etc. | 44.0 | 6.1 | 100.8 | 11.2 | 11.0 | 9.2 | 27.7 | 8.8 |
| Laborers | - 9.7 | -10.9 | - 6.1 | - 6.3 | - 2.7 | -11.0 | 1.8 | -12.5 |
| Service workers | | | | | | | | |
| Service wks. exc. | | | | | | | | |
| private household | 17.0 | 19.2 | 61.3 | 32.4 | 20.7 | 11.8 | 57.1 | 37.9 |
| Private household | 12.3 | 15.9 | 222.8 | 40.6 | 0.5 | -20.0 | 67.1 | 18.4 |
| Agricultural workers | | | | | | | | |
| Farmers and farm mgrs. | -59.4 | -71.2 | -28.2 | -63.4 | -50.4 | -66.8 | 13.9 | -52.6 |
| Farm laborers and foremen | -53.7 | - 1.7 | -60.5 | -44.2 | -48.2 | -29.4 | -52.4 | -50.2 |

Sources: U. S. Census of Population, 1950, Vol. II, Part 24, Miss., Table 28; U. S. Census of Population, 1960, PC(1), 26D, Miss., Table 121, and PC(1), 1D, U. S., Table 257.

ers during the decade from 1950 to 1960.⁴ This, in turn, was encouraged by an expanded building program of both private homes and business establishments, and by bringing into the State more industry which offered employment opportunities for women.

Among the manual workers, operatives, laborers, and kindred workers were by far the largest group, showing the greatest increases, specifically among the whites. For example, in Mississippi male employment increased by 44 percent and the proportion of females employed in this category more than doubled, and was a more than four-fold increase over that of the entire South. Drivers and deliverymen exhibited the largest growth, probably due to the greater number of trucks needed for transporting goods across the country.

The reason for the more than double increase in the State's female workers in this category may be sought in the increasing demand for checkers, examiners, inspectors, assemblers, packers, wrappers, and particularly in sewing and stitching jobs, which more than doubled during the last decade. Increases in employment of women are also evident in the food industry, specifically in the areas of perishable goods and in the handling of textile goods.

Figures on industrial manual workers, on the other hand, show a decline, resulting from a greater emphasis on mechanical devices, which are substituting for manpower. This is particularly true with such jobs where heavy objects are moved, and where excavations are made. For both races, the declines were greater in the male labor category than in that of the female.

For the South, the descending order is of far greater magnitude and in a some-

what reverse order. It is evident from Table 2 that the chief decline occurred in the white male laborers group and in the nonwhite female category. The white females maintained a slight upward trend.

Service Workers, Including Private Household Workers

This occupational group may be subdivided into two categories 1) Service workers, except private household, such as protective service workers, waiters, bartenders, cooks, and counter workers, and 2) Private household workers such as cooks, laundresses, baby sitters, housekeepers, etc.

The women workers of the first category increased sharply in Mississippi and in the South during the 1950 to 1960 decade. The rise in the number of male workers was somewhat smaller, although it continued to maintain an upward trend. Census data indicate that primarily waiters, bartenders, cook, and counter workers were involved in the augmentation of numbers. This, in turn, may be construed as reflecting the change in the people's living habits, such as a tendency for many to eat away from home, as well as to take pleasure trips.

Private household workers of both sexes and both races in Mississippi also increased with white females increasing more than 200 percent. The pick-up in this occupational group reversed the drastic drop of the 1940-1950 decade. The increase is largely attributed to the employment in babysitting, as well as to the upward trend of employed housekeepers.

Agricultural Workers

The agricultural workers group consists of: 1) Farmers and farm managers, and 2) Farm laborers and farm foremen.

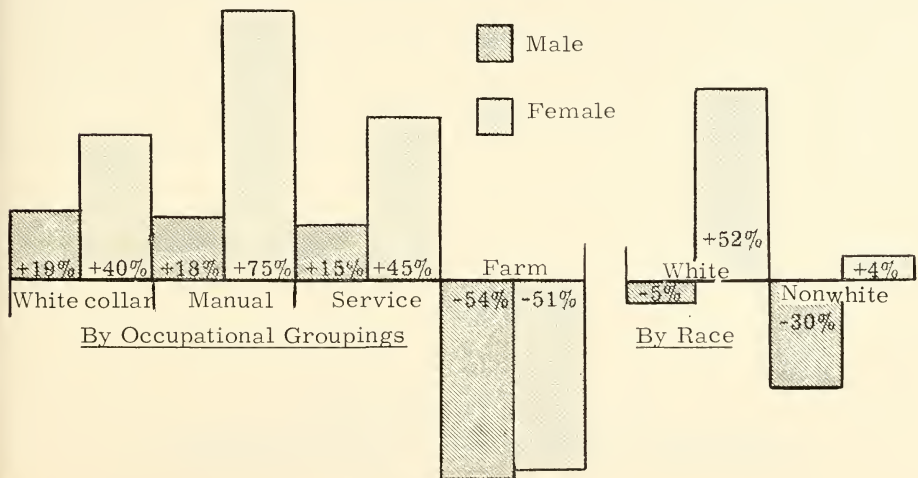
⁴U. S. Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Population, 1960*, PC(1), 26D. Table 120.

Ever since 1920 there has been a steady drain on farm labor which gradually became nonfarm labor. This trend has become more and more pronounced in recent years, featuring sharp declines in this category. Except for women workers of both races in the South, there were sharp declines across the board between 1950 and 1960, with both farmers and farm managers, and farm laborers and farm foremen declining both in number and in proportion of the total employed. (Table 2)

The reasons for the decline may be sought in the improved farm practices, such as better crop breeding techniques, improvement and maintenance of soil fertility, use of more and modern equipment, and larger farms which escalate the output per farm worker man-hour as much as 70 percent. As a result thereof, many marginal farmers were forced to shift to nonfarm occupations, adding to a larger decline in this category.

Concurrent with the writing of this report, the daily press reports that the decline in the agricultural work force in Mississippi continues the descending trend, despite record harvests. The annual report, prepared by the State Employment Service's Farm Placement Department, shows that the 1964 seasonal work force included 47,600 workers, compared with 55,700 the year before. Reasons given for the decline were the greater use of pest control measures, favorable weather, and optimum use of machines to harvest the crop. The report also pointed at the tendency toward stabilization of employment of nonseasonal hired workers despite the decline in the number of farms. This information is additional evidence on the continuous declining trend in the number of farm workers required, and of the fact that many men are being replaced by machines in an increasingly intense and mechanized type of agriculture.

Percent of Change in Employment in Mississippi 1950-60



Analysis of census figures shows some striking changes in employment in Mississippi from 1950 to 1960. There was a sharp increase in female employment, a rather heavy decline in workers on farms, and a relative gain in white over non-white employment.