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EMPLOYING ORGANIZATIONS AND  
THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL MOBILITY  
IN SINGAPORE: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK  
AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

When we deal with the subject of social mobility in Singapore--or, for that matter, in any other modern industrial society--we would inevitably have to focus on the impact of employing organizations on mobility processes and experience. The reason for this is that Singapore has, since the early 1960s, increasingly become what can best be characterized as an "employee society": a vast majority of those in the labour force--about 84.4 percent of the gainfully employed--are organizational employees (Singapore, Department of Statistics, 1987). It will therefore make sense for an essay that aims at understanding the dynamics of social mobility in Singapore to focus on how the different types of employing organizations in Singapore structure mobility rules and opportunities and, in turn, that of mobility experiences.

This essay has two main objectives. First, it aims at deriving a broad analytical framework for studying employing organizations as opportunity structures. Second, the essay will discuss three empirical cases to illustrate both the utility of the analytical framework derived as well as the range of organizational opportunity structures present in Singapore.

The essay is divided into three parts. Part One will address two relevant, interrelated theoretical issues: (1) the merit of conceptualizing the organization of work in employing organizations, or even the labor market as a whole, in terms of the mental/manual

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<sup>1</sup>This essay is a revised version of Chapter Four of my dissertation (Tan, 1988). I appreciate the suggestions of members of my dissertation committee--Profs F H Buttel, W Lambert, and L K Williams--as well as my colleagues in the Department of Sociology, the National University of Singapore--Drs Kwok B Chan, Hing Ai Yun, and Ho Kong Chong--who read an earlier draft of this essay.

dichotomy (cf. Braverman, 1974), rather than the non-manual/manual dichotomy; and (2) the advantage of identifying the essence of employing organizations as one of procuring an adequate level of organizational commitment and job motivation, rather than one of obscuring and securing surplus value (Burawoy, 1985:33-35). Part Two will build upon the conclusion of Part One to derive a broad analytical framework specifying the key parameters and processes--in particular, career structure and job level and content, and performance appraisal and job reward formulae--that relate employing organizations to the dynamics of employee social mobility. Part Three will utilize the analytical framework derived in Part Two to examine and compare three employing organizations representing a somewhat broad spectrum of organizational opportunity structures in Singapore.

## PART ONE

### **Two theoretical issues on the organization of work as opportunity structures: The mental/manual dichotomy and the essence of management**

Part One will focus on two interrelated theoretical perspectives--those of Braverman and Burawoy--that deal with the generating mechanism structuring the organization of work and production in capitalist societies. The purpose of Part One is to draw out the implications of two theoretical issues stemming from Braverman and Burawoy for the analytical framework to be derived in Part Two.

In a thought-provoking analysis of the labor process in advanced capitalism, Braverman (1974:126) argued that the most fundamental dynamic shaping the organizational structure of capitalist enterprises is the separation of conception and execution. This process of separating conception and execution via managerial appropriation of production knowledge and skills not only strengthens organizational

control,<sup>2</sup> but also produces two broad classes of workers characterized by their key functions--either mental or manual--within the capitalist organization of production.<sup>3</sup>

On the surface of it, the mental/manual dichotomy<sup>4</sup> appears suspiciously similar to the still popular white-collar/blue-collar or nonmanual/manual classification (e.g., Logan, 1983; Hout, 1983:8-9; Yamaguchi, 1987:486). In essence, however, it is conceptually very different from the latter in at least three ways.

First, the mental/manual dichotomy is based on a relational, as opposed to a gradational, perspective of the capitalist division of labor (cf. Wright, 1979:5). For this reason, its defining characteristic is not derived from the fact that mental labor is in general better rewarded--both intrinsically and extrinsically--compared to manual labor (cf. Davis and Moore, 1972 [1945]), but rather from its specification of a structural relation amongst capital, mental labor, and manual labor.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>According to Braverman(1974), the process of job deskilling and eradication enhances organizational control by eroding the market position of labor power and by incorporating technical control into the design of production processes.

<sup>3</sup>This method of delineating the non-capitalist classes corresponds roughly to that of Giddens (1973): He suggested that we should consider the "relevant attributes" that "individuals bring to the bargaining counter" (Giddens, 1973:103)--possession of educational or technical qualifications" and "possession of manual labor-power" (Giddens, 1973:107). However, it is possible that with "qualification inflation" (Dore, 1976) and "job deskilling" (Braverman, 1974), many of those who possess educational and technical qualifications may find themselves in the manual end of the Braverman's mental/manual dichotomy, while many of those who possess only manual labor power may end up without employment.

<sup>4</sup>I will be using the term "mental/manual dichotomy" throughout the discussion on the implications of Braverman's thesis. However, it may at times be fruitful to treat the phenomenon represented by this term as a continuum--for example, when we are dealing with intermediate-level jobs.

<sup>5</sup>Since the late 1970's, a number of studies (e.g., Wolf and Fligstein, 1979; Wright, 1979) have derived some additional dimensions of "stratification" that are based on aspects of the structural relations amongst capital and various categories of labor: control over resources and labor power; authority to hire, fire, set pay, and supervise; autonomy; positional power.

Second, this particular dichotomy cuts across the white-collar/blue-collar classification. Hence, for instance, just as a blue-collar job can be included in the mental category, a white-collar job can also be classified under the manual category. Such an approach possesses at least two conceptual advantages: (1) It makes allowances for more than one mobility ladder, and (2) Unlike the approach adopted by, for example, Blau and Duncan (1978 1967 :63-67), it is not bound by a conceptual framework which dictates that moving from a blue-collar job to a white-collar job necessarily constitutes upward social mobility.

Finally, the mental/manual dichotomy draws attention to the underlying mechanism--the political struggle for control over production knowledge and skills--that shapes job reward formulae and even occupational status and job prestige. This facilitates our deriving a more theoretically grounded and realistic perspective of the dynamics of social mobility, one that takes into account the interplay of subjective factors and objective forces in its explanatory framework. Among the highlights of such a perspective are the following:

(1) It does not consider job prestige scores (Duncan, 1961; Blau and Duncan, 1978 [1967]:119) to be essentially invariant. More importantly, it regards them as mere surface phenomena that reflect the workings of a basic generative process, that of the political contention for control over production knowledge and skills. A good illustration of this perspective can be found in any specific process of professionalization, such as one involving members of an occupational category organizing themselves to, for instance, forestall any attempt aimed at devaluing the body of knowledge and skills they hold in common.

(2) The mental/manual dichotomy possesses a built-in dynamic in the sense that a job in, for example, the mental category can be reclassified under the manual category if it has been stripped of most of its mental content. Hence, instead of having to keep a

highly deskilled clerical job in the white-collar category, this approach allows us to take the more conceptually fruitful step of reclassifying it as a manual job.

(3) It does not portray mobility processes as primarily one-person acts performed by atomistic individuals gravitating towards jobs with higher prestige scores and material rewards. Instead, it draws attention to the structural bases inherent in the capitalist labor process that may engender collective-based political struggles centering on distributional issues.

(4) Clearly, it places a heavy emphasis on the political dimension of social mobility. It recognizes, in particular, the crucial influence of production politics and state politics (Burawoy, 1985) on mobility processes.

(5) While a Blau and Duncan-type approach will be hard-pressed to find an explanation for why blue-collar workers with high school education are unable or even unwilling to move "upwards" into lower level white-collar jobs, the perspective adopted here is able to provide a more plausible explanation as to how the boundary between mental jobs and manual jobs acts as a barrier hindering mobility between the latter two job levels.

To begin with, the barrier in question, as seen from this perspective, is one separating skilled blue-collar workers and technicians from engineers and not from white-collar office attendants and clerks. This barrier reflects not only the discontinuity (Mills, 1956; Packard, 1971; Shepard, 1971; Offe, 1976) between conception and execution characteristic of the organizational design of large capitalist enterprises, but also the prevalence of credentialism rooted in their recruitment and promotions practices (Moore, 1969:386). The combined effect of task discontinuity and credentialism is to widen the gap between managerial and staff positions on one side, and shop floor and general office jobs on the other (Packard, 1971:258). In other words, those in managerial positions, for example, are more likely to have been promoted from the level of college-educated

junior executives or management trainees rather than from the rank-and-file on the shop floor or in the general office.

(6) It draws our attention to what can result from the process of managerial appropriation of production knowledge and skills: the creation of more mental jobs, the destruction of manual jobs, or even the destruction of both mental jobs and manual jobs (Goldthorpe and Payne, 1986).

We have thus far derived some important implications from Braverman's thesis. However, while Braverman's thesis has yielded a number of useful insights, it also presents a somewhat lopsided and narrow view of capitalist employment practices and organization of work.<sup>6</sup> This particular shortcoming is in part the consequence of the thesis' "inadequate treatment of organized worker resistance" (Watson, 1980:216; see also Friedman, 1977) and of its mistaking "appearance" for "essence" (Burawoy, 1985:33-35): Braverman "assimilates the separation of conception and execution to the fundamental structure of capitalist control" and in so doing "treats what is but a single expression of capitalist control as its essence," which in Burawoy's view lies in "the obscuring and securing of surplus value."

What is significant about Burawoy's thesis for our analysis is that it recognizes the possibility of the essence of capitalist control being handled in more ways than just the separation of conception and execution. Historical and cross-cultural evidence (Edwards, 1979; Gordon, Edwards, and Reich, 1982; Littler, 1981; Burawoy, 1985) demonstrates that capitalist societies and enterprises have, by and large, displayed a great deal of flexibility and resilience in the face of political and technological barriers hindering their securing of surplus value. Indeed, they still generate, experiment with, and utilize a

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<sup>6</sup>Critics of Braverman's thesis argue that it has ignored both the political dimension and the ideological of the capitalist labor process (Littler and Salaman, 1982:265-266; Burawoy, 1985:39).

variety of employment practices and control structures, a reflection of the different types of political environment they operate in (Dore, 1973). For this reason, we are able to witness an ever-expanding range of employment practices and control structures which serves to counteract the managerial approach that hinges on the separation of conception and execution. Some of the currently more popular employment practices and control structures are life-time employment, profit-sharing schemes, career development and training programs, job enrichment and enlargement, quality circles, participatory management, and group-based reward systems.

In contrast with the managerial approach characterized by Braverman, the "modern" management practices listed above are oriented towards the cultivation and nurturing of organizational commitment and job motivation. However, despite the popularity of these practices, we should regard managerial orientation towards the generation of commitment and motivation as a variable and not a constant. According to Watson (1980:216), following Friedman (1977), employing organizations can, and often do, differ in the extent to which they are concerned about the commitment and motivation of employees or a particular category of employees.<sup>7</sup>

Having moved full circle and arriving once again at the managerial problem of organizational commitment and job motivation, I would argue that although the "obscuring and securing of surplus value" does constitute the essence of capitalist enterprises, it cannot be considered the organizational principle upon which all employing organizations in a capitalist society are based. As alluded to earlier, the organizing principle applicable to all employing organizations is that pertaining to the procuring of an adequate level of organizational commitment and of job motivation. An illustration of the

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<sup>7</sup>Kanter (1972) provides an illustration of a type of social organization--utopian communities--which depends rather heavily on members' commitment and motivation for its very survival.

point suggested here can be inferred from a comparison between the two main types of employing organizations--public sector organizations and private enterprises--operating within capitalist societies. While the former is unlikely to be set up chiefly for the purpose of generating profits, the latter is unabashedly profit-oriented (Kreckel, 1980:545). Despite the difference in orientation, the employment practices and control structures of both types of organizations are likely to reflect (1) the extent to which they have had to deal with the problem of employee commitment and motivation, and (2) the degree to which they are dependent on employee commitment and motivation.

Nevertheless, for our purposes here, the theoretical importance of the argument in Part One lies not so much in its locating the basis of organizational rules and structures, but in its providing a common reference--the problem of commitment and motivation--capable of linking the structural aspect with the dynamic aspect of social mobility in Singapore. With this common reference, one could then understand the basis of both the nature of career structures and of job deskilling and, in turn, that of the fluidity of mobility rules, opportunities, and experience in employing organizations.

The discussion in Part One also suggests that the opportunity structure of employing organizations can be best understood in terms of a mental/manual dichotomy. However, to emphasize this point is not to imply that all, or even most, employing organizations necessarily maintain an impermeable boundary between their mental- and manual-level jobs. Rather, the implication here is that one could evaluate how employing organizations fare as opportunity structures by examining the permeability of the boundary between their mental jobs and manual jobs and, in turn, the kind of mobility opportunity they offer their employees. A related implication of some importance to the analysis here is that the permeability of this boundary--which, in the extreme case, may not even exist--should be understood as a variable dependent on the relative power of capital vis-a-vis each of the different categories of labor.

## PART TWO

### **Employing organizations and the dynamics of social mobility: Towards an analytical framework for understanding the organizational-level mobility game**

Part Two will build upon the conclusion of Part One to derive a broad analytical framework specifying the key parameters and processes--in particular, career structure and job level and content, and performance appraisal and job reward formulae--that relate employing organizations to the dynamics of employee social mobility. The analytical framework to be derived will address two key questions: (1) How do employing organizations structure mobility rules and opportunities? and (2) How would the resulting opportunity structures influence the mobility aspirations and strategies of employees? One could also conceptualize the whole configuration of mobility rules, opportunities, aspirations, and strategies as constituting a mobility game.

We will begin our discussion in Part Two with an important, though seemingly trivial, assumption that organizational opportunity structures are essentially social systems based on the unequal distribution of power and rewards. Correspondingly, the basic parameters that define the nature of organizational opportunity structures can be best understood in terms of these two aspects, that of power and of rewards. The first aspect relates to the mental/manual dichotomy dealt with in Part One and, in turn, the concept of hierarchy and that of the division of labor. The second aspect can be resolved into the following distinct but interrelated reward dimensions: extrinsic and intrinsic (Organ and Hamner, 1982:173-177), and material and symbolic (Gouldner, 1975 [1973]:294). Perhaps not unexpectedly, the two key aspects are positively correlated with one another. For example, a job which contains a higher mental content is, by and large, also likely to be invested with greater power, assigned greater autonomy, as well as compensated more handsomely on all four reward dimensions. Nevertheless, jobs characterized by a high manual content do not necessarily score lowly in terms of power and rewards. This is so

in part because there is an upper limit to managerial control over production knowledge and skills.

## 2.1 The Great Divide

Notwithstanding the above qualifier, the boundary between mental labor and manual labor usually constitutes a "great divide"<sup>8</sup> hindering the upward mobility of workers who occupy jobs in the shopfloor and general office. Besides, it is often reinforced by educational policies and curricula premised on the separation of conception from execution<sup>9</sup> and by the institutionalized practice of credentialism (Dore, 1976), which together also provide some measure of legitimacy to the social inequality they foster.

In practice, however, this "great divide" is not always totally devoid of "bridges," since managerial policies often provide some opportunities for workers from the general office and the shopfloor to cross the boundary between mental jobs and manual jobs. Such a policy not only confers greater legitimacy to this particular aspect of organizational control, but also serves as a source of employee motivation and commitment. Perhaps for this reason, many a highly task-discontinuous and credential-oriented corporation invariably has its own "office boy to president" type of stories, even when the kind of mobility highlighted actually constitutes a rarity. Nevertheless, although the proportion of manual-level workers, both blue-collar and white-collar, crossing the "great divide" is likely to be somewhat small, it should not lead us to ignore the fact that

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<sup>8</sup>The actual location of this "great divide" on the mental/manual continuum is not always defined by technical criteria alone. Indeed, the jobs that lie immediate above and below many a "great divide" may often be quite similar to one another, except that one set of jobs differs from the other in regard to future promotional chances and task assignments. The implication here is that job design and promotional ladders are not only determined by technical considerations, but also imposed by those in control.

<sup>9</sup>The Singapore education system, for instance, is premised on the separation of conception and execution.

employing organization can, and often do, differ in the extent to which their individual "great divides" are permeable.

In general, public sector organizations tend to maintain highly impermeable boundaries between different segments of their job hierarchies.<sup>10</sup> The organizational structure of the Singapore Civil Service, for instance, is characterized by several promotional ranges arranged in a hierarchical order based primarily on the criterion of educational attainment and skills specialization: (1) clerical positions: secondary level qualifications; (2) technicians: vocational qualifications; (3) technical officers: polytechnic diplomas; (4) executive positions: high school diplomas or general degrees; (5) administrative positions: honours degree; and (6) professional positions: diplomas from professional institutes or professional degrees.

There are at least three reasons why public sector organizations have a tendency to enforce impermeable boundaries between job segments and to place a great deal of emphasis on educational qualifications. First, they usually have to shoulder the responsibility of absorbing citizens who are graduates of the nation's public educational system into their employment. This necessitates their performing a sorting function, especially since the yearly intakes of recruits are likely to be substantial.<sup>11</sup> Second, they also have an obligation to maintain the par value of locally conferred educational qualifications, which means that they often have to perform the function of determining and

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<sup>10</sup>The notion "job segments" as used in this discussion should not be confused with the concept of labor market segmentation (see Kalleberg and Sorensen, 1979, for a review of the literature on the latter concept) or even the concepts "independent primary jobs" and "subordinate primary jobs" (Reich, Gordon, and Edwards, 1973:359, quoted in Kreckel, 1980:534), though there are some parallels between them.

<sup>11</sup>In Malaysia, for instance, salaries take up as much as 35 percent of the federal government's annual operating expenditure (Far Eastern Economic Review, Aug 27, 1987). In the case of Singapore, the Civil Service, as well as government-owned corporations and statutory boards, absorbs about 50 to 60 percent of the total number of "fresh Singaporean [university] graduates" each year (Tsao, 1987:207).

supporting job-status and wage differentials. Third, they are generally expected to utilize objective, merit-based criteria in their recruitment and promotions decisions, and by using educational qualifications they are able to meet this expectation.

Unlike public sector organizations, however, private enterprises, are less likely to be burdened with the kind of political obligation mentioned above. Consequently, the latter organizations are usually in a better position to exercise greater flexibility in regards to recruitment and inter-job-segment promotions. Hence, instead of relying almost exclusively on educational qualifications, private enterprises can assign greater weights to those criteria that are more directly linked to performance potential--in particular, job experience and recent job performance. Undoubtedly, such a policy, especially if it is also coupled with a highly flexible system of work-related task assignment, will allow some manual workers to cross the "great divide."

Another key distinction between public sector organizations and private enterprises that has a bearing on organizational opportunity structures lies in the degree of emphasis each type of organizations places on generating employee commitment and motivation and on providing job security. In general, while public sector organizations tend to be more concerned about providing job security, private enterprises tend to place more emphasis on generating employee commitment and motivation. This means that, all other things being equal, the probability of crossing the "great divide" is higher in private enterprises than in public sector organizations.

The above inference also suggests that some types of employing organizations may not even operate a "great divide" within their domains. Indeed, the Japanese zaibatsu, as portrayed by Vogel (1980 [1979]:144), seem like a good illustration: It is one in which job "assignment is flexible" and "the position and tasks are two different systems"--both of these features indicating the absence of a technical barrier hindering career advancement. However, although these salient features, together with a number of other

distinctive aspects, of the zaibatsu's employment system do highlight the linkage between task continuity and opportunity structure, they often obscure the fact that a "great divide" exists between permanent employees and temporary workers (Rohlen, 1974:136; Clark, 1979:174). Perhaps a better example can be located in the small manufacturing or repair workshop where an apprentice could still move to the position of skilled worker and eventually to foreman primarily because its operations are organized on a craft basis. Another equally good example is the "top heavy,"<sup>12</sup> large sales and customer services subsidiary of a high-technology corporation where the possibility of moving from sales representative to vice-president of marketing exists.

Although the last two examples refer to two separate kinds of employing organizations lacking their own "great divide," we can still conceptualized them in terms of the mental/manual dichotomy operating within a much broader context: the labor market. From the latter perspective, jobs in the small repair workshop will be included within the manual category, while jobs in the large sales and customer services subsidiary will fall under the mental category. Here again, the boundary separating the two categories operates as a highly impermeable barrier hindering mobility across labor market segments.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>An organization can be described as "top heavy" if the majority of its staff occupy professional and managerial positions.

<sup>13</sup>There is clearly some overlapping between the dual labor market concept presented here and those reviewed in Kalleberg and Sorensen (1979). However, while the latter review article (Kalleberg and Sorensen, 1979:367) expresses some reservation about the dual labor market theory's "prediction of little intersectoral mobility," I would argue instead that the task discontinuity contributing to the sharp break between the mental segment and the manual segment precludes the possible existence of any intersegment vacancy chain, but not the possibility of individual, intersegment mobility. On the basis of data gathered on 133 firms in Singapore, Pang (1982:133) argued that "there is a fair degree of movement of workers from low- to high-level jobs, certainly higher than dual labor market theory predicts." While I support the first half of Pang's argument, I am somewhat skeptical about the second half of his argument. This is because he failed to control for changes in educational attainment: if between the first job and present job, workers have acquired additional qualifications to facilitate their crossing the (continued...)

## 2.2 Career Structure and Job Level and Content

While our focus has thus far been on the "great divide," we also hinted earlier that the manner in which employing organizations deal with mental-level employees often differs from that pertaining to manual-level employees. According to Watson (1980:207-209), employees performing "manual work, and, increasingly, clerical and service (work)<sup>14</sup>" are usually not subject to "career type inducement to compliance." However, because managerial solutions to the problem of organizational commitment and job motivation can take on diverse forms, it is possible that under certain conditions--for example, a tight labor market situation, strong labor unions, state regulation and facilitation--manual-level employees may in fact be dealt with more favorably than mental-level employees. We can approach the question of differential treatment by examining the degree of net dependence between employing organizations and each of the different levels of employees. For instance, an employing organization may, in an absolute sense, be more dependent on its mental-level employees than on its manual-level employees. Yet this does not rule out the possibility that the same organization may, in a net sense, be more dependent on its manual-level employees than on its mental-level employees. Consequently, we may find employing organizations applying career-type inducement on both mental- and manual-level employees.

In essence, the use of career-type incentives often involves the routine creation of intra-organizational career opportunities--that is, internal labor markets. However, even when an employing organization is not experiencing a decline, economic and technical considerations--in particular, the need to maintain an optimum number of supervisory

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<sup>13</sup>(...continued)

"great divide," then there is little doubt that market segmentation still constitute a formidable barrier even to individual, intersectoral mobility.

<sup>14</sup>All the three types of work mentioned here can be subsumed under the manual category.

levels--can place a constraint on its capacity to create additional opportunities for career advancement. To overcome this limitation, employing organizations often resort to using a rank system that possesses the following characteristics: (1) It has a built-in capacity for accommodating an almost unlimited number of job ranks, since it is largely independent of, though parallel to, any technically based system of job functions (cf. Vogel, 1980 [1979]:144); and (2) It can be organized in such a way as to incur very little additional costs, while conferring a proportionally greater measure of symbolic rewards<sup>15</sup> for each step up its rank-based career ladder. Interestingly, because such a rank system is able to endow user-organizations with an enormously flexible mode of manipulating career structures, it can--and often does--lead to a proliferation of job titles and ranks.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the latter effect is not necessarily a negative one from the perspective of user-organizations. This is because it can help reduce the potential for conflict generated by employees competing with one another for an otherwise shrinking pool of organizational rewards.

We will next deal with the issue of intra-organizational competition and cooperation in addition to examining the basis of performance appraisal, job reward formulae, and micropolitics at the workplace.

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<sup>15</sup>The capacity to confer symbolic rewards is much less constrained by scarcity than the capacity to dispense material rewards (cf. Gouldner, 1975 [1973]:294).

<sup>16</sup>There is an alternative to using a rank system that will not bring about an escalation of job titles and ranks: a grade system. However, a grade system may have a dampening effect on the morale and motivation of employees precisely because it uses a lesser number of rank titles. (Under a grade system, an employee will, for instance, be promoted to grade 10 step 2 instead of section head.) To mitigate this problem, the Japanese factory that Clark (1979:120) studied superimposed grade titles upon the system of standard rank titles.

### 2.3 Performance Appraisal, Job Reward Formulae, and Micropolitics: The Dynamics of the Organizational-level Mobility Game

This section will examine the potential effect of different aspects and types of mobility rules on employee mobility strategies. The discussion here will centre on the following questions: (1) What criteria do employing organizations utilize to evaluate job performance and dispense rewards? and (2) How do the criteria chosen influence employee mobility strategies within organizations?

In principle, employing organizations normally base their promotion-related decisions on one or more criteria of excellence--for example, productivity, competence, creativity, personality, work attitude, seniority, and whatever virtue deemed supportive of organizational goals. In practice, however, some unexpressed, unmeasured qualities other than excellence--personal loyalty, nonwork ties, and so on--often enter into the processes that determine the actual promotional chances of employees, resulting in nonmeritocratic criteria rivalling or even taking precedence over meritocratic ones. Such a nonmeritocratic tendency is paradoxically able to thrive within the context of a meritocratic system in part because many of the commonly used criteria of excellence, with the possible exception of productivity, are not easily amenable to objective measurement.

Nonetheless, most employing organizations are likely to use some kind of performance appraisal instrument, even if it happens to be one that does not generate a reasonably high proportion of valid and reliable performance evaluations. This is because the very fact of using a scientific instrument, frequently even a pseudo-scientific one, can in itself confer a high degree of legitimacy to the organizational reward system it supports, particularly if the instrument is also sanctioned by reputable management consultants and behavioral scientists.

All in all, most organizational reward systems are, in essence, likely to facilitate the prevalence of subjectivity in performance evaluation and, in turn, the subtle use of non-meritocratic criteria in promotion-related decisions.

Having analyzed the basis of performance appraisal and job reward systems, one may argue that the key to achieving upward social mobility within employing organizations certainly does not lie in job performance per se, but in the possession of political power. In general, where objective means of measuring job performance are weak or nonexistent, intra-organizational political power<sup>17</sup> would invariably play a larger role in influencing not only the mode of performance appraisal,<sup>18</sup> but also the actual outcomes of organizational-level mobility processes. For this reason, micropolitics at the workplace permeates almost every aspect of work life, in particular the intra-organizational mobility game.<sup>19</sup> It also brings the following types of mobility strategy into the realm of the mobility game: the cultivation of superordinates' sponsorship (Kanter, 1977) and subordinates' cooperation, the forging of informal ties (cf. Walder, 1986:180), the management of impression (Watson, 1980:211-212), and the sabotaging of fellow competitors.

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<sup>17</sup>Intra-organizational political power may often be derived from extra-organizational sources.

<sup>18</sup>The case of China can be used to illustrate the two points suggested here: (1) It indicates the extent to which political power can influence the choice of reward criterion. Since 1949, the criterion operating at any one time has flip-flopped between "redness" and "expertness" (Unger, 1982:104). (2) It illustrates the arbitrariness and subjectivity accompanying the application of a reward criterion, "redness," that is not easily amenable to objective measurement (cf. Walder, 1986:152).

<sup>19</sup>For analytical purposes, it is useful to conceive of the whole configuration of mobility rules, opportunities, and rewards, and the mobility aspirations and strategies of employees operating within organizations as a game.

The fact that micropolitics exists also implies that employing organizations in general do not distribute their rewards equally.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, not only does micropolitics reinforce such a differential-reward system, but it also increases the number of competition-prone arenas within employing organizations.

However, we are not suggesting here that competition is necessarily an inevitable by-product of all job reward systems, for employing organizations can render a job reward system less conducive to competitiveness by altering its basic premises. Indeed, various societies and organizations--China, the Israeli kibbutzim, the Mandragon cooperative complex in Spain (Whyte, 1984:181), and some of the utopian communes studied by Kanter (1972)--have originated from or are still experimenting with purportedly competition-free reward systems.

Despite the diversity of approaches, one could identify some common premises that form the basis of a less competitive reward system. We will highlight the key premises here in order to provide a set of parameters by which to understand the bases of intra-organizational competition:

(1) As alluded to earlier, a less competitive-based reward system uses a highly objective method of appraising performance, offering minimal leeway to subjectivity and politicking. Although this method alone cannot eradicate intra-organizational competition completely, it has the potential to at least reduce both the latter's intensity and the number of competition-prone arenas.

(2) It takes into account absolute performance, rather than relative performance. This means that an employee's performance is judged on the basis of some objective yardstick alone, and not on how he fares in comparison to his colleagues.

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<sup>20</sup>Employing organizations distribute their rewards in at least two major ways: directly, in the form of salary increments and job promotions; and indirectly, in the form of enhancement of promotional chances--opportunities for training and access to crucial, fast-growing departments-- via job or task re-assignments.

(3) It rewards team or group performance, rather than individual performance. One particular by-product of this approach is the phenomenon called free-riding, a managerial problem that can to a large extent be overcome by the inculcation and strengthening of organizational loyalty and commitment (Fireman and Gamson, 1979:21-22; Gergen and Gergen, 1986:301).

(4) It is based on job designs that facilitate intrinsic motivation, such that the very process of applying oneself to doing a good job can in itself generate sufficient reward for the employee involved.<sup>21</sup>

(5) It dispenses rewards on the basis of some nonachievement criterion. The Japanese zaibatsu, for example, reputedly bases its promotional system primarily on a nonachievement criterion--service seniority--instead of on the more formally rational, achievement-type criterion: ability or competence (Rohlen, 1974:149). Clark (1979:115) observes that competition appears "more muted" in such a system.

(6) It disengages job performance from material rewards, linking it instead with the more abundant symbolic rewards--for example, social recognition as a model, skilled, responsible, and self-sacrificing member of a community of workers, and the personal satisfaction derived from gaining such a recognition.

Undoubtedly, implementing any of the above approaches, with the possible exception of the approach based on the criterion of absolute performance and that based on group performance, will involve enormous, though not entirely insurmountable, practical difficulties. But, even granted that this is so, one may still argue that employing

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<sup>21</sup>Job enrichment represents one approach to enhancing intrinsic job rewards. However, as long as it does not help to disengage effort and performance from extrinsic job rewards, it will not reduce intra-organizational competition.

organizations in capitalist societies generally place a high premium on competition.<sup>22</sup> This is because they operate on the assumption that competition encourages good job performance and high productivity, facilitates control over labor power, and thereby contributes to organizational survival and growth--qualities that at worst made it a necessary evil. For this reason, competition is likely to retain its centrality in capitalist employing organizations, remaining a key item in the list of features, which include subjectivity and politicking, characterizing the organizational-level mobility game.

Interestingly, however, even while employing organizations reward competitive behavior, they are also just as likely to encourage cooperativeness amongst their employees. It would seem obvious that competitiveness and cooperativeness are mutually exclusive orientations, but this does not have to be so. A method by which employing organizations can reconcile the two orientations is to place a premium on cooperativeness and teamwork. This method involves rewarding work teams for their cooperativeness and team effort, not individual employees for displaying cooperativeness and the ability to work in a team. Employing organizations in Singapore, however, generally prefer the latter approach<sup>23</sup>--that of adding cooperativeness to the repertoire of qualities considered indicative of a good job performance<sup>24</sup>--perhaps for the following reasons: (1) both employers and employees are still strongly inclined towards using the competitive

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<sup>22</sup>Even in a context where competition is officially discouraged, as in China, the prevalence of subjectivity in performance appraisal and the politicized nature of reward dispensation can generate a high level of intra-organizational competition amongst workers (Unger, 1982).

<sup>23</sup>For example, some major employing organizations in Singapore use individual-based incentives to motivate employee participation in a management-directed instrument for teamwork building: quality circles.

<sup>24</sup>Shirk (1982:167) presented an interesting parallel to the point noted here: cooperative behavior can spring from competitive intentions. She reported that in the China of 1964-1965, "mutual help became more competitive than cooperative" when "the official incentives for helpfulness were increased."

approach; (2) employees have yet to perceive a direct linkage between cooperative effort and individual material interest; and (3) individual interest, rather than company interest, remains the overriding motivating force amongst employees.

#### 2.4 Summary: Employing Organizations -- Implications for the Mobility Game in Singapore

This section will highlight the main parameters that characterize the mobility game in large employing organizations.

First, large organizations usually impose a "great divide" between mental jobs and manual jobs. The actual location of such a boundary and the degree to which it is permeable may differ from one type of organization to another.

Second, employing organizations often utilize a rank system or a grade system as a means of creating additional promotional opportunities. This measure facilitates the use of career-type inducement in each of the different segments on their organizational career ladders, which also implies that we may often find more than one internal labor market in each employing organization.

Third, micropolitics and competition define the nature of the organizational-level mobility game, broadening the range of employee mobility strategies to include, for example, the cultivation of informal ties with superiors and subordinates, and the sabotaging of fellow competitors in the mobility game.

Having derived a broad analytical framework for analyzing employing organizations as opportunity structures, we will next utilize it to help us understand the dynamics of employee social mobility in Singapore.

## PART THREE

### The Structure and Dynamics of the Organizational-level Mobility Game in Singapore

Part Three will examine the organizational-level mobility game in Singapore from three vantage points--that is, by way of three main types of employing organizations--and in terms of the analytical framework derived in Part Two. It will, in addition to illustrating the key parameters constituting the above analytical framework, derive a number of inferences relating specifically to the mobility game in Singapore.

The three organizations chosen for this analysis were selected to illustrate the range of organizational opportunity structures present in Singapore. Company A is fairly typical of large employing organizations in Singapore insofar as it possesses a somewhat impermeable "great divide," a highly developed internal labor market, a largely subjective-based performance appraisal system, as well as an intensely competitive reward system. Company B exemplifies those organizations with poorly developed internal labor markets, while Company C typifies those in which the "great divide" does not exist and where a highly objective performance appraisal system operates.

#### 3.1 COMPANY A: A typical large corporation in Singapore

I have chosen to focus on Company A partly because of my familiarity with its operations as a structure of mobility opportunity. Nevertheless, I would still argue that an examination of its key characteristics can help us derive a macro-view of how various crucial, typical factors relate to the operations of the organizational-level mobility game in Singapore.

Company A is the largest of several subsidiaries of a huge, flourishing Singapore corporation established in the 1950s. The company provides a range of airport ground-handling services to most of the commercial airlines that operate flights into and out of

Singapore, handling inflight catering and the physical and documentation aspects of passenger, baggage, and cargo traffic at the airport.

Company A is also a government-owned enterprise employing about 4,000 employees. Indeed, the company's personnel policy reflects its status as both a state-owned corporation as well as a profit-oriented enterprise. For instance, while Company A has recruited mainly college graduates to its administrative ranks, the company also demonstrates some flexibility in its recruitment policy: it does not maintain a totally impermeable "great divide," neither does it hesitate to revise its entry requirements downwards whenever necessary.

#### The "Great Divide" and the rank and grade system in Company A

Being a large, capitalist enterprise, Company A exhibits most of the key features highlighted in Part Two. The company possesses a relatively tall hierarchical structure made up of five "junior staff" ranks separated by a "great divide" from three "senior staff" ranks<sup>25</sup> (see Figure 1).

As with most other large organizations, Company A's organizational structure has undergone some fundamental changes over the years (refer to Figure 1). Previously, there was an additional rung between the rank of "officer" and that of "supervisor" in the "junior staff" segment of the organizational hierarchy. However, the management felt that there were far too many supervisory levels in the company. For this reason, the

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<sup>25</sup>The labels "junior" and "senior" as applied to the job positions in a firm like Company A do not refer to length of service or number of years with the company, but to the generic rank an employee attained in the company.

The "senior/junior" dichotomy used in Company A overlaps to a large extent with the mental/manual dichotomy discussed earlier. However, some "junior" positions, such as those of supervisors, in Company A do involve performing tasks that can be considered as mental functions.

Another important aspect to note here is that the "junior" staff segment comprises both blue-collar and white-collar workers.

FIGURE 1  
COMPANY A'S RANK AND GRADE STRUCTURE

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Previous Title/Rank (if any)</u>
<b>Senior Staff</b>		
Managing Director		
General Manager		Divisional Manager
Deputy General Manager	Senior Manager	
Department Manager	Grade 4	
	Grade 3	
	Grade 2	
Administrative Officer	Grade 1	
-----The "Great Divide"-----		
<b>Junior Staff</b>		
Supervisor		
Officer	Senior Officer	
Operations Assistant/ Clerk/Mechanic		
Equipment Operator		
Helper/Hand		

management eliminated the rank of "senior officer," a measure it felt would help enhance both efficiency and accountability at every level of the organizational hierarchy.

The management has also restructured the "senior staff" segment of the organizational hierarchy at various points in time. It upgraded the status of divisional managers, the highest ranking managers, renaming them general managers; increased the number of levels within the managerial ranks to four; and inserted four grades of "administrative officer" into the "senior" ranks. The management instituted these changes, which lengthened the "senior staff" segment of the organizational hierarchy, not only in response to scheduled expansion in the company's scale of operations, but also to accommodate its policy of filling the majority of its administrative positions with college graduates, rather than through the promotions of noncollege-educated, "junior" employees already in the company's ranks.

The above structural changes evidently have an important bearing on the structure of mobility opportunity in Company A, affecting the promotional chances of "junior" employees in ways different from those facing "senior" employees.

First, by abolishing an intermediate level from the "junior staff" segment of the organizational hierarchy, the company has in fact reduced the proportion of higher-level positions and vacancy chains<sup>26</sup> (White, 1970) accessible to employees in the "junior" ranks. However, this particular measure did benefit those who were occupying that intermediate level just before it was eliminated: the employees involved were in a sense upgraded by default to the rank of "supervisor."

Second, the company, in setting up a clearly defined route of advancement in the "senior staff" segment of its hierarchy, not only demonstrates its commitment to the long-

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<sup>26</sup>The concept of "vacancy chain" (White, 1970) focuses on the linkages between different job levels, rather than on the pattern of mobility experienced by a population of individuals.

term career prospects of the college graduates it has recruited in relatively large numbers, but also its concern with securing the commitment of its senior-level employees. However, implementating this measure also resulted in some unintended or perhaps unexpressed consequences: Simply by lengthening the organizational-career ladder, the company not only upgraded the positional status and power of those in top management, but also created a buffer zone delaying the mobility of "administrative officers" into managerial ranks. I was told that because of this buffer zone it generally takes a longer time for college-graduate appointees to attain managerial rank in Company A than in most medium-sized companies in Singapore.

Third, the company's policy of recruiting college graduates for its middle-management positions seems to have widened its "great divide" in at least three ways:

- (1) It diverts the vacancy chains leading to "senior staff" jobs out of the internal labor market facing "junior" employees.
- (2) It widens the gap between mental jobs and manual jobs. For example, "senior staff" jobs often entail the preparation of management papers that involve data analysis and report writing, functions that are likely to be unfamiliar even to the high-school educated "junior" employee. Moreover, some "senior staff" jobs also involved performing the task of designing and standardizing work procedures, a process that has the effect of reducing the mental component of "junior staff" jobs. However, "junior" employees in Company A have continually resisted this routine deskilling process by refusing to share their "native" knowledge--relevant, first-hand knowledge acquired on the job--with "senior" employees, the ones whom they perceive to be not only acting as the company's agents of control but also blocking their route of advancement in the company.
- (3) Although the "junior" employees of Company A do not require a college degree to be eligible for promotion to a position across the "great divide," they have generally been reluctant to attempt the crossing. This is because they are afraid that, once on the other

side of the "great divide," they will prove themselves incapable of measuring up to not only the standards set by the college-graduate appointees, but also the requirements of mental-level jobs.

### The performance appraisal system in Division X of Company A<sup>27</sup>

The performance appraisal system in Division X is, by and large, not an objective one. To account for this lack of objectivity, we will have to examine both the basic contents and reward criteria related to the different categories and levels of jobs present in the division.

In the operations area<sup>28</sup> and to a lesser extent in the administrative offices of Division X, every individual job function is usually highly interrelated with a series of other job functions. This feature explains in part why the division has not found it practical or even meaningful to take precise measurement of individual output or performance. Moreover, the division uses relative performance as its main reward criterion, which therefore renders it superfluous to make a precise measurement of individual output in the first place.

We can also explain the lack of objectivity in Division X's performance appraisal system as follows: (1) Given the kind of operations handled by the division, it cannot be reasonably assumed that individual output will necessarily correlate with individual input (cf. Dornbusch and Scott, 1975:82)--the amount of effort utilized and the level of ability displayed in the process of performing a job. (2) For this reason, it will not be equitable to use individual output as the sole or even as just one of the main reward criteria, and

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<sup>27</sup>The discussion in this section will center on Division X, the cargo division of Company A. Recently, the various divisions of the company have been restructured and made subsidiary companies themselves.

<sup>28</sup>The term "operations area," as used in the context here, can be understood as the service industry's equivalence of "shopfloor."

(3) However, bearing in mind the difficulties involved in measuring the amount of individual input expended in the process of performing an operations job in Division X, we can expect the division's performance appraisal system, which places a significant amount of emphasis on individual input, to be highly subjective-based.

The division's performance-appraisal system has also been rendered even more subjective by its utilizing another pair of reward criteria, that of creativity/conformity, alongside input/output. To some extent, creativity/conformity, as a pair of dimensions, parallels the mental/manual dichotomy discussed earlier as well as the company's "senior staff/junior staff" classification. This suggests that we can expect reward criteria to vary with job level in the division. Generally, the most important quality the division requires its "junior," manual-level employees to demonstrate is conformity: abiding by rules that emphasize punctuality, obedience, and the desirability of displaying the kind of behaviors that reflect a "positive" work attitude. Nevertheless, Division X does occasionally encourage "junior" employees to demonstrate some creativity, which means using their "native" knowledge--first-hand knowledge gathered while on the job--to help improve various aspects of the division's operational procedures. However, the division expects its "senior," mental-level employees to exhibit a high degree of creativity tempered by an equally high degree of conformity.

All in all, my arguing that Division X's performance appraisal system is best understood as a highly subjective mechanism should not be construed as suggesting that it is incapable of discriminating the best performers from the worst performers. Rather, the point argued here is that, between these two extremes, there is sufficient leeway for subjectivity and politicking to influence the process of performance appraisal and reward dispensation in Division X and perhaps even throughout the whole of Company A.

### Competitiveness and employee mobility strategies in Company A

Like many other employing organizations in Singapore, Company A operates a reward system that dispenses promotions and merit increments on the basis of (1) relative performance, rather than absolute performance, and (2) individual performance, rather than group or team performance. Consequently, competition between individual employees figures rather prominently in the company.

The presence of competition in Company A is manifested in various forms depending in part on at least two nonmutually exclusive factors: (1) the extent to which fellow competitors in the organizational mobility game can influence the actual quality or even their superiors' evaluation of one another's job performance, and (2) the degree of subjectivity inherent in the company's performance appraisal system. Where fellow competitors can influence the outcome of one another's job performance, they are likely to resort to the use of sabotage as a mobility strategy: for example, highlighting mistakes made by fellow competitors, refusing to cooperate when one's help is urgently needed, and providing wrong or misleading information. And where the performance appraisal system is inherently subjective, competitors are likely to engage in politicking,<sup>29</sup> rather than focusing their attention solely on performing well in the tasks assigned to them.

Not surprisingly, both types of employee mobility strategy--sabotaging and politicking--seem to flourish in Company A. Most of the employees engaged in the company's mobility game generally use some combination of sabotaging and politicking. There is, however, a category of employees who use sabotaging almost exclusively. The category referred to here consists primarily of those employees who perceive themselves

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<sup>29</sup>While the section has made a distinction between sabotaging and politicking, it should be pointed out that politicking can encompass sabotaging. The rationale for making the distinction here is to differentiate between strategies that involve hurting the interest of competitors and strategies that center on promoting one's own image in the eyes of superiors.

as having arrived at a dead end in their careers. Although these employees are unlikely to receive any direct personal benefit, such as in the form of enhanced promotional chances, from the use of sabotaging, they may experience a sense of relative "upward" mobility, if their use of sabotaging manages to reduce the promotional chances of colleagues.

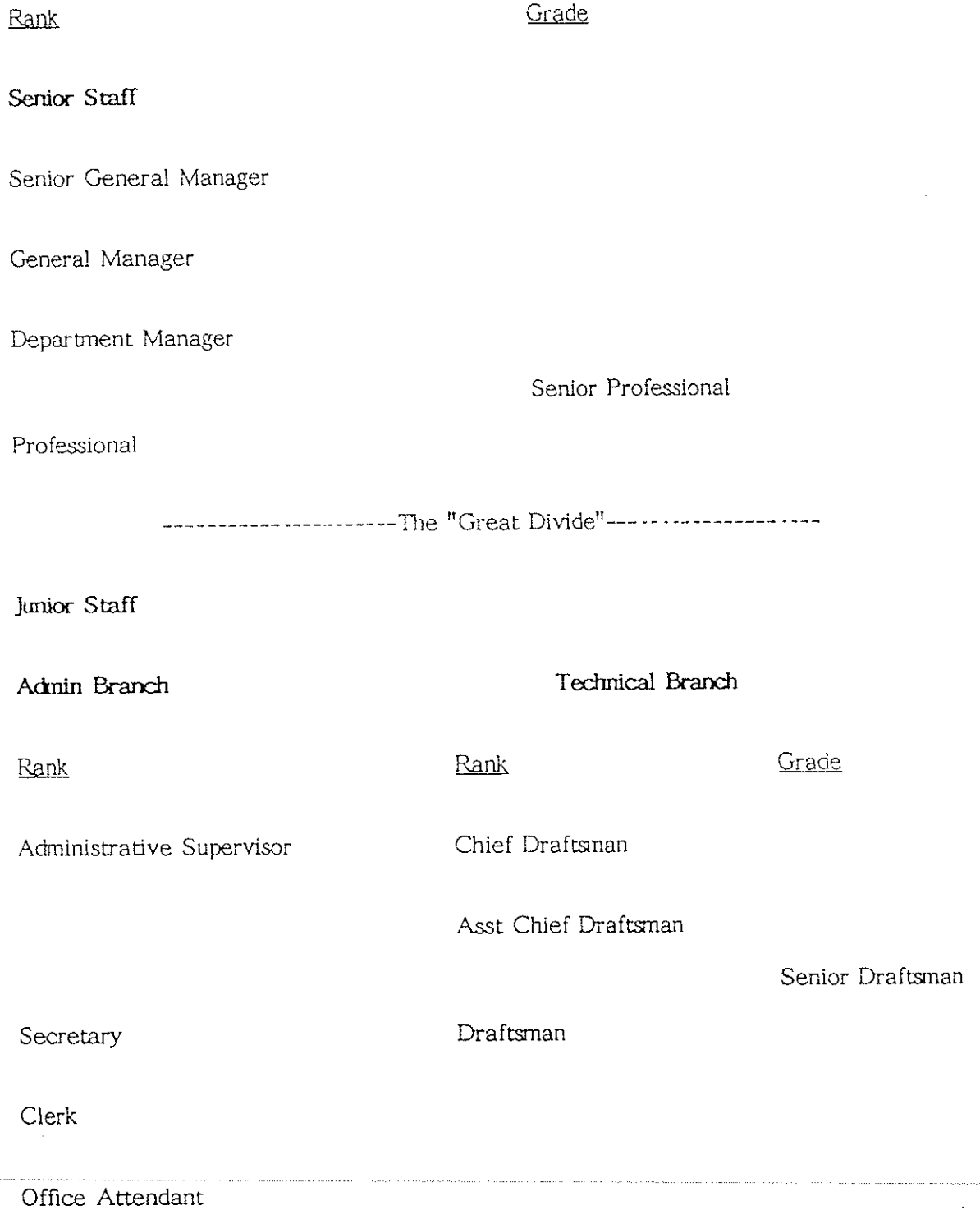
### 3.2 COMPANY B: A poorly developed internal labor market

Company B is one of the largest building consultancy corporations in Singapore. The company possesses both the expertise and the capacity to provide clients with the full-range of construction-related services, which means that it can handle building projects from the designing stage to completion. Correspondingly, most of the company's 150 employees are, as we would expect, either technicians or professionals.

Like Company A, Company B's organizational structure (see Figure 2) is made up of two segments--a "junior staff" segment and a "senior staff" segment--separated by a totally impermeable "great divide." The "junior staff" segment is itself divided into two branches: an "administrative" branch comprising a handful of clerical and secretarial personnel; and a "technical" branch consisting of draftsmen, quantity surveying assistants, engineering assistants, and clerks-of-work or site supervisors. Professionals (architects, engineers, and quantity surveyors) and managers, many of whom are themselves professionals, occupy the "senior staff" segment of the company's hierarchy.

Each of the branches or segments also possesses its own rank and grade structure. However, Company B, unlike Company A, does not have a well-developed, clearly defined career development policy and program. There are at least two factors that can account for the company's lack of emphasis on career development. For one thing, Company B has not encountered any serious problem relating to recruitment. Neither

FIGURE 2  
COMPANY B'S RANK AND GRADE STRUCTURE



does the company anticipate facing staff shortages in the future. Moreover, given the kind of job knowledge and skills Company B utilizes, new employees joining the company do not have to undergo a significantly long period of time acquiring some company-specific skills on the job. For all of these reasons, the company does not consider it essential to generate and nurture a high degree of organizational commitment amongst its employees.

Nevertheless, Company B does utilize some kind of job incentives, such as the annual wage increments and bonuses, and the occasional promotion that its rather simple grade structure allows. Specifically, both its "senior staff" segment and the "technical" branch of its "junior staff" segment operate a two-grade structure alongside a three-rank structure (see Figure 2). Hence, for instance, the company could at any time promote any number of its draftsmen to the rank of senior draftsman regardless of whether the chief draftsman and his assistant are due for retirement or not. By the same token, it could also promote any number of its architects to the rank of senior architect. However, a simple grade structure such as that of Company B is clearly unable to generate sufficient promotional opportunities, let alone facilitate promotions at regular intervals.

All in all, we observe in Company B the presence of two kinds of characteristics likely to reinforce or even produce a more outward-looking mobility orientation among employees: (1) low company-specific job contents, and (2) a low-ceiling career structure. Consequently, the company's professional-level employees are somewhat more likely than their "junior" colleagues to anchor their mobility aspirations to an immensely broader context: the larger labor market for their professional skills. But, like their counterparts in Company A, the professional-level employees in Company B are just as likely to engage in intra-organizational competition with one another, except that they compete primarily for the opportunity to participate in the more prestigious, credit-earning,

resume-enhancing building projects, rather than for gaining internal promotions. From the observation made here, one can infer that where intra-organizational conditions act to hinder mobility aspirations, employees with skills that have some value in the external labor market may be motivated to seek extra-organizational mobility opportunities. Clearly, such an orientation may well also apply to the operations assistant in Company A whose hope for advancement is hindered by the presence of a "great divide."

### 3.3 COMPANY C: The Absence of a "Great Divide"

Company C is the Singapore subsidiary of a major multinational insurance corporation. The firm employs about 100 insurance agents. However, in an important sense, these agents are not really employees, but self-employed people; they do not receive fixed salaries, but are paid according to individual sales performance.

For our purposes here--namely that of analyzing the organizational-level mobility game in Singapore--what is significant about Company C is that, unlike Company A and Company B, it does not impose a "great divide" on its career structure. Career advancement in the company depends almost totally on sales performance, and not on educational attainment or the displaying of behaviors that reflect a conforming attitude. Because Company C's reward system is based on a criterion that can be objectively measured, it does not exhibit those characteristics that figure so prominently in Company A: the prevalence of subjectivity in performance evaluation and the routine use of sabotage and politicking amongst employees. However, the agents registered with Company C, like the higher-level employees in Company A, do compete amongst themselves, except that, in their case, they channel their competitiveness almost exclusively towards trying to outperform one another in regard to enhancing individual sales output.

Company C therefore offers a mobility game that differs to a large extent from that operating in either Company A or Company B. Its opportunity structure is clearly less

restrictive, but, at the same time, it also provides a lower degree of job security. Moreover, the company basically does not offer an organizational-based career. This in part explains why its agents are likely to focus their attention primarily on acquiring greater monetary rewards and achieving a professional-type status, rather than on gaining job promotions.

## SUMMARY

This essay attempts to derive a comprehensive conceptual framework that will facilitate our analyzing the organizational-level mobility game in Singapore. In so doing, the essay highlights a number of key parameters that relate to employing organizations as structures of mobility opportunity: (1) the impact of the mental/manual dichotomy and "great divide" on organizational opportunity structures, (2) the rationale for internal labor markets, and (3) the relationship between subjectivity in performance evaluation and micropolitics at the workplace.

The essay also compares three main types of employing organizations representing a somewhat broad spectrum of opportunity structures in Singapore. The purpose of the comparative analysis is to illustrate the utility of the analytical framework derived in Part Two of the essay as well as to convey a sense of the range of variation in those organizational conditions that have a critical bearing on the mobility orientations of employees in Singapore.

Company A illustrates how an organization created a "great divide" between its senior-level and junior-level employees through its policy of recruiting college graduates directly from the external labor market for its middle-management positions. Company A also highlights how the nature of an organization's operations relates to the degree of subjectivity present in its performance appraisal system as well as the extent to which ~~sabotaging and politicking are used as mobility strategies by employees.~~

Company B exemplifies an employing organization that does not possess a well-developed internal labor market. There are at least two factors that can account for the absence of a well-developed career structure in Company B: (1) the kind of job knowledge and skills that the company utilizes can be found in relative abundance in the labor market, and (2) most of the jobs in the company contain a low company-specific skill-content, which therefore enhances the replaceability of the company's employees. The case of Company B suggests that the absence of a well-developed internal labor market coupled with jobs that contain a low company-specific job content is likely to engender a more outward-looking mobility orientation amongst employees involved. In other words, the employees involved are more likely to anchor their mobility aspirations to the external labor market rather than to the organizations which employ them.

Company C differs from Company A and Company B in that it does not impose a "great divide" between its senior-level and junior-level staff. Moreover, because Company C's performance appraisal system is based on a criterion that can be objectively measured, the company does not display those characteristics that figure so prominently in Company A: the prevalence of subjectivity in performance evaluation and the routine use of sabotaging and politicking amongst employees. But, somewhat like Company B, Company C does not offer its employees an intra-organizational career, which in part explains why its employees are more likely to focus their attention primarily on achieving personal income mobility and attaining a professional-type status, rather than on gaining job promotions.

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