

**The American Electrical
Engineering
Occupation:
Profession, Professionalization,
Power and Status**

H. Michael Boyd, PhD

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ABSTRACT

The Sociology Of The American Electrical Engineering Occupation: A Socio-Historical Analysis of the Profession, Professionalization, Power and Status

This work deals with the sociological aspects of power, knowledge, status and technology as they are found in a socio-historical review of the American electrical engineering profession and occupation as it has evolved from the early 1880s through the 1990s. The review centers on the American electrical engineering profession with particular emphasis on electronics. The primary foci of this discourse are the professionalizing of the American Electrical Engineering occupation, its quest for status and power, its creation and stewardship of knowledge, its control of technology, and its marriage with capitalism and industry. This is a qualitative project addressing how the social issues of power and status have influenced the evolution of the American electrical engineering profession. It will deal with three questions of sociological importance: Is the American electrical engineering group an occupation or a profession; what has been the influence of technology on the group; and how has the elite leadership of the group influenced it ? I propose the concept of a profession nested within an occupational group as a way to explain the otherwise conflicting interpretations by sociologists of analyses of the social history. This work uses the Second World War as a primary point of differentiation and transition.

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