

THE TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY TO PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT:
JOBS AND WORKERS IN ETHNIC NEIGHBORHOOD LABOR MARKETS

by

HOWARD J WIAL

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Signature of Author _____
Department of Economics
September 30, 1987

Certified by _____
Michael J. Piore
Professor, Economics
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____
Peter Temin
Chair, Departmental Graduate Committee
Department of Economics

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study of the job mobility of young men (ages 17 to 35) in three ethnic working class neighborhoods of Boston: East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. The data are drawn from open-ended interviews with workers, employers, and labor market intermediaries. The study uses the perspective of labor market segmentation theory, which divides the labor market into a "primary" sector, which contains secure, high-wage jobs with good working conditions and well-developed internal labor markets; and a "secondary" sector, which contains jobs that lack these attributes. The study's focus is on the workers' mobility from secondary to primary jobs.

The main finding is that there exist neighborhood-specific, customary social linkages between particular ethnic working class neighborhoods and particular groups of primary jobs. These linkages consist of complexes of labor market information, attitudes and beliefs, general job-related abilities, and personal ties to primary-sector workers. These reflect the job structures and hiring practices of particular primary employers. The linkages are reproduced through worker socialization into neighborhood-based social groups in which adult men work in the primary sector. Youths who belong to such groups make the secondary-to-primary transition easily, while those who do not belong have difficulty in making the transition.

The study develops policy implications for assisting the upward economic mobility of disadvantaged minority workers and displaced primary-sector workers.

Thesis Supervisor: Michael J. Piore

Title: Professor of Economics

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with job mobility in ethnic neighborhoods. Individual economic mobility, both inter- and intragenerational, is one of the central themes in American social folklore. The United States is often portrayed as a nation that offers the opportunity for economic advancement to all who are willing and able to take advantage of it; by means of individual initiative, hard work, intelligence, education, and training, even persons of humble origin are supposed to be able to improve their economic status during the course of their lives and to achieve greater economic success than their parents. Intertwined with the theme of mobility is the theme of ethnic assimilation into American economic life. Immigrants are often portrayed as beginning their lives in the U.S. as workers in poorly paid, low-prestige jobs, but working their way up the economic ladder as they learn American habits and values. If this mobility does not occur within a single generation, it is said, then it occurs over the course of several generations.

Phenomena that challenge or appear to challenge American folk beliefs about mobility and ethnic assimilation are often on the agenda of American social policy. During the 1980's, two such phenomena are especially noteworthy. First, the members of some racial and ethnic minority groups, especially disadvantaged

inner-city blacks, appear to be trapped in low-paying jobs that offer little prospect of economic advancement. What could be done to improve these workers' prospects for upward mobility has been a concern of U.S. public policy for more than twenty years. Second, the 1980's have witnessed rapid losses of fairly high-paying, fairly secure blue-collar jobs in basic manufacturing industries. The workers who formerly held these jobs, many of whom are second- and third-generation Americans of Eastern or Southern European descent, face the possibility of downward economic mobility. What, if anything, should be done to assist these displaced workers has become an important policy issue in recent years.

The twin themes of economic mobility and ethnic participation in economic life figure prominently both in Americans' conception of their own society and in key issues of public policy. Yet there are serious gaps in our knowledge of the processes by which economic mobility occurs and of the relationships between ethnicity and economic structure.

Economic mobility, especially intragenerational mobility, is a terrain that social scientists have explored in a very uneven manner. There has been a great deal of work on mobility within internal labor markets and on the role of education, especially higher education, in promoting upward mobility outside of internal labor markets. However, we know relatively little about the labor market institutions and social processes that guide the external labor market mobility of workers who have not attended

college. Paul Osterman has shown that many of these workers begin their working lives, during late adolescence, by moving rapidly between low-wage, low-skill jobs that offer little or no job security or advancement opportunity. As they grow older, they eventually "settle down" into longer-lasting, higher-paying, more secure jobs that offer advancement within internal labor markets.¹ Although Osterman offers considerable insight into the individual psychology of the "settling down" process, he has little to say about what it is that enables workers to obtain the higher-paying jobs into which they "settle down." Not all workers are able to "settle down" into relatively secure, relatively high-paying jobs. For example, many disadvantaged minority workers are unable to do so, and workers who have been displaced from such jobs may have difficulty in "re-settling" into comparable jobs. What prevents the latter workers from following the pattern that Osterman describes? An examination of the labor market institutions and social processes that influence a worker's ability to "settle down" into a relatively secure, relatively high-paying job would both contribute to our knowledge about intragenerational economic mobility and aid the formulation of policies to promote upward mobility for disadvantaged and displaced workers. My main purpose in undertaking this study is to conduct such an examination.

Ethnic participation in the U.S. economy is another unevenly explored terrain. There have been many case studies of immigrant-owned small businesses, but the participation of ethnic groups in the labor market has received relatively little scholarly

attention. Much of what we know about ethnic participation in the labor market comes from ethnographic studies of "ethnic working class" neighborhoods. Each of these neighborhoods is inhabited primarily by the members of a single European ethnic group (including the immigrant generation and/or its second- and third-generation descendants). The men who live in these neighborhoods work mainly, but not exclusively, at blue-collar jobs, and share a distinctive set of attitudes toward work. Unfortunately, ethnographic studies of ethnic working class neighborhoods rarely go beyond descriptions of work-related attitudes to probe the actual labor market practices of neighborhood residents. Consequently, we know little about how the members of particular ethnic groups obtain the jobs that they obtain, or about how they move from job to job. My second reason for conducting this study is to improve our understanding of these phenomena.

In this study, I aim not only to fill the aforementioned gaps in our knowledge of job mobility and ethnic participation in the labor market, but also, in the course of filling these gaps, to develop a new theoretical perspective on the job mobility of men in ethnic working class neighborhoods. This perspective will have implications for the public policy issues mentioned above.

In order to obtain data that could inform such a perspective, I conducted a qualitative case study of the job mobility of young men (between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five) in

three ethnic working class neighborhoods of Boston: East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown.² The study's data are derived from open-ended interviews that I conducted with workers, employers, and labor market intermediaries. The workers who are the principal subjects of my study have patterns of job mobility that roughly resemble those described by Osterman; none of them may be classified either as a member of a disadvantaged minority group or as a worker who has been displaced from a relatively secure, high-paying job. (Consequently, the study's policy implications for the economic mobility of the latter two groups are based on indirect inferences rather than on direct comparisons.) I restricted the study to men, not because I believe that women's labor market experiences are less important than men's, but because the social processes and labor market institutions that are relevant to women's labor market experiences may be quite different from those that are relevant to men's. My focus on young men is a consequence of my concern with the process by which workers "settle down" into relatively secure, relatively high-paying jobs; this process normally occurs during late adolescence or young adulthood. Although my study is, in part, a study of youth employment, it is a study of job mobility rather than of the more widely publicized (and more widely studied) phenomenon of youth unemployment. It is concerned with the labor market institutions and social processes that shape workers' job mobility decisions, with the ways in which those institutions and processes influence job mobility patterns, and

with the implications of those institutions and processes for the distribution of job opportunities among various groups of workers (including disadvantaged minorities and displaced workers). Because the study is concerned with labor market institutions and social processes, it deals with workers not as isolated decision-makers but as agents who act within a social context. Neighborhood-based social groups, job structures, and employers' methods of recruiting and hiring workers are important parts of the social context within which the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown make their labor market decisions. Accordingly, this study pays attention to them as well as to the decisions that workers make.

In describing and theorizing about the job mobility of young men in East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown, I have found it useful to make use of labor market segmentation theory's distinction between "primary" and "secondary" jobs. In chapter 4 of this study, I will discuss the primary/secondary distinction in depth, distinguishing it from alternative descriptions of the job structure and explaining in detail why I have found it useful for this study. In chapter 2, I will examine the ways in which labor market segmentation theory has dealt with the issue of mobility between secondary and primary jobs. In this introductory chapter, I will simply set the stage for these subsequent discussions by providing a brief definition of the distinction between primary and secondary jobs. Among labor market segmentation theorists, perhaps the most widely used definition is that of Piore:

The primary market offers jobs which possess several of the following traits: high wages, good working conditions, employment stability and job security, equity and due process in the administration of work rules, and chances for advancement. The secondary market has jobs which, relative to those in the primary sector, are decidedly less attractive. They tend to involve low wages, poor working conditions, considerable variability in employment, harsh and often arbitrary discipline, little opportunity to advance.³

More refined versions of labor market segmentation theory divide the primary sector into two "tiers," an "upper" (or "independent") tier consisting of jobs (such as professional and managerial jobs) that require workers to exercise a substantial amount of independent judgment about and control over their work tasks, and a "lower" (or "subordinate") tier that consists of relatively routinized jobs. The primary jobs that are relevant to the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown are primary lower-tier jobs, as subsequent chapters will clearly show. Since I will have little to say about primary upper-tier jobs in this study, I will rarely make use of the upper tier/lower tier distinction, but will usually refer to primary lower-tier jobs simply as "primary" jobs.

The title of this study is derived from the fact that the crucial element in the job mobility patterns of the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown is the transition from secondary to primary jobs. Workers typically move through a succession of secondary jobs during late adolescence and then "settle down" into primary jobs as they grow older. Moreover, the workers seem to view their own job mobility patterns in terms of something like the distinction between primary and secondary jobs; this is

the major reason why I have found the distinction useful for this study. I have also found it useful to view the policy problems posed by disadvantaged and displaced workers in terms of the primary/secondary distinction. Disadvantaged workers can be seen as having great difficulty in escaping secondary employment; the policy problem is to enable them to make the transition from secondary to primary jobs. The policy problem for workers displaced from primary jobs can be seen as a problem of how to (or, for some analysts, whether to) enable them to obtain new primary jobs.

Other economists have also found it useful to think about job mobility within the analytical framework of labor market segmentation theory. Osterman, for example, conceives of the "settling down" process, as I do, in terms of the transition from secondary to primary employment.⁴ The originators of the segmented labor market perspective saw disadvantaged minority workers as being trapped in secondary jobs and advocated policies to promote their mobility into the primary sector.⁵ However, as I shall argue in chapter 2, labor market segmentation theory has not yet produced an adequate explanation of mobility between the secondary and primary sectors of the labor market. In particular, it has not been able to explain why some workers (e.g., the workers who are the subjects of this study, or the workers described by Osterman) are able to move from secondary to primary jobs with relative ease while others (e.g., members of disadvantaged minority groups) make the secondary-to-primary transition with

great difficulty or not at all. The failure of labor market segmentation theory to explain this fact is an additional motivation for the present study.

The main idea of this study is that there are neighborhood-specific, customary social linkages between particular ethnic working class neighborhoods and particular groups of primary jobs. These linkages consist of complexes of labor market information, attitudes and beliefs, general job-related abilities, and personal ties to primary-sector workers. The information, attitudes and beliefs, and abilities reflect, in broad outline, the actual job structures and employer hiring practices of the primary jobs to which the workers are linked. The linkages between neighborhoods and jobs are reproduced through the socialization of workers into neighborhood-based social groups in which adult men tend to work at primary jobs. It is through socialization into these groups that young men learn how to perceive and act in the labor market in ways that facilitate their movement from secondary to primary jobs. Workers who belong to social groups in which primary jobs are commonplace among adult men will make the transition from secondary to primary employment with relative ease, while workers who do not belong to such groups will find it difficult or impossible to make the transition. In short, mobility from secondary to primary jobs is socially structured.

The study is organized as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 set the stage for the inquiry. Chapter 2 surveys the literature on job

mobility and on the labor market experiences of men in ethnic working class neighborhoods. It raises a number of theoretical and empirical questions that serve as a basis for further investigation in the substantive chapters that follow. Chapter 3 discusses the study's methodology and research techniques. It explains how and why I conducted the qualitative case study and how I used the case-study findings to develop a theoretical perspective on job mobility. It also provides background information about the research setting.

Chapters 4 and 5 are the core substantive chapters of the study. These chapters present the findings of the case study, informed by the theoretical perspective that I developed from them. Chapter 4 describes the jobs, both secondary and primary, with which the study is concerned. It provides detailed information about job structures and about the ways in which employers recruit and hire workers. Chapter 5 examines the ways in which workers perceive and act in the labor market and shows how workers' labor market perceptions and behavior are formed through socialization into neighborhood-based social groups. Together, chapters 4 and 5 show how workers' perceptions and behavior are linked to the job structure and to the labor recruitment and hiring practices of employers.

The final two chapters abstract and generalize from the case-study material presented in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 6 draws out the implications of that material, and of the theoretical perspective that underlies it, for theories of worker behavior

and of the labor market and for the literature surveyed in chapter 2. Chapter 7 considers the implications of the case-study findings and the underlying analytical perspective for the policy problems of disadvantaged and displaced workers. Together, chapters 6 and 7 suggest that the perspective developed in this study is relevant not only to the particular case from which it was developed, but also to some important issues of U.S. public policy and of economic and social theory.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Paul Osterman, Getting Started (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), chapter 3.
2. The exact sense in which these neighborhoods ought to be described as "working class" will become clear only after I have elaborated the theoretical perspective that the case study suggests. I will, therefore, leave the term "working class" undefined until the appendix to chapter 6. Until then, what is important is that the three Boston neighborhoods may be categorized as "ethnic working class" neighborhoods, in the sense in which I previously described such neighborhoods. For more information about neighborhoods of this type, see chapter 2.
3. Michael Piore, "The Dual Labor Market," in David Gordon (ed.), Problems in Political Economy (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1971), pp. 90-94.
4. Osterman, loc. cit. Note, however, that the main concern of my study is quite different from that of Osterman. Osterman is interested in the reasons why youths tend to begin their working lives in the secondary sector and in young people's psychological readiness to "settle down" into primary jobs. I am interested in what enables the secondary-to-primary transition to occur among some groups of workers (such as those who are the subjects of my study) and in what prevents other workers (such as members of disadvantaged minority groups) from making that transition.

5. See, e.g., Piore, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER 2: A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

There are several bodies of literature that bear in some way on either the process of worker mobility from secondary to primary jobs or the labor market experiences of young men in ethnic working class neighborhoods. These bodies of literature may be classified into three broad groups. The first of these is the literature of labor market segmentation theory, whose relevance to this study should be obvious.

The second broad group includes formal theories of job mobility and/or the matching of workers to jobs. (In these theories, job mobility and worker-job matching are not usually regarded as analytically distinct phenomena. In fact, most of what the theories have to say about mobility can be derived directly from their analyses of worker-job matching.) Theories of this sort include human capital theory and job-search theory (both of which are derived from neoclassical economics), status-attainment theory in sociology, and the neo-Marxian theory of class reproduction.

The final category of relevant literature includes case studies of blue-collar labor markets, ethnic working class neighborhoods, and "ethnic enclave economies." Several local labor market studies, conducted mainly during the 1940's and 1950's, provide some useful qualitative data on the labor market activities of

workers and employers who, in important respects, resemble the workers and employers with which the present study is concerned. Ethnographic studies of ethnic working class neighborhoods, conducted between the 1930's and 1970's, provide similar data on the social institutions of those neighborhoods. A small body of quantitative literature on "ethnic enclave economies" describes a particular kind of relationship between certain immigrant groups and the structure of the economy. Since the present study is concerned with the relationship between ethnic working class neighborhoods and the labor market, there is a parallel between this concern and the concern of the "ethnic enclave" literature.

This chapter surveys the contributions that these bodies of literature have made, or could make, to our understanding of the secondary-to-primary job mobility of non-college young men from ethnic working class neighborhoods. (The survey will, therefore, be selective rather than comprehensive. It will not deal with all of the theoretically or empirically important aspects of each literature, but only with those aspects that bear directly on the subject of this study.) The survey will raise a number of questions, both theoretical and empirical, which will serve as a basis for further inquiry in the present study. Although this chapter will identify theoretical and empirical gaps in the bodies of literature that it surveys, it will not present full-fledged critiques of those bodies of literature; specific critiques that emerge from the present study will be presented in chapter

6.

The chapter is divided into eight sections. The first four sections discuss the formal theories mentioned above: human capital theory, job-search theory, status-attainment theory, and neo-Marxian class reproduction theory. The fifth section examines labor market segmentation theory, which, as a general theory that was derived from case studies, forms something of a bridge between the formal theories and the case-study approaches. The last three sections deal with the case-study approaches: local labor market studies, ethnographic studies of ethnic working class neighborhoods, and studies of "ethnic enclaves."

1. HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY

Viewed as a theory of job mobility, human capital theory is a theory about how workers decide to acquire or not to acquire the skills that they ostensibly need in order to obtain high-paying jobs. ("Skills" can be defined broadly to include any characteristic that a worker can acquire that makes him or her more valuable to any employer. Thus, the acquisition of behavioral traits, attitudes, and information, as well as cognitive skills required for particular jobs, can in principle be analyzed within the human capital framework. However, applications of human capital theory usually emphasize work-related cognitive skills that are obtained through schooling, on-the-job training, or external training programs.)

According to human capital theory, the skills that a worker

needs in order to increase his or her earnings are costly to acquire. Some of the costs may be direct costs, e.g., tuition costs of colleges or vocational schools. However, even if there are no direct costs of skill acquisition, the theory assumes that there are always indirect costs, which take the form of foregone income-earning opportunities. The underlying assumption here is that it is not possible for a worker simultaneously to learn skills and earn the same wage that he/she could have earned if he/she were not learning the skills. (For example, a worker who is enrolled in a vocational training program might be unable to hold a full-time job while enrolled.)

The simplest, and most common, formulations of human capital theory assume that the worker's skill-acquisition decision is guided by his or her desire to maximize the present discounted value of his or her lifetime earnings stream. (More complicated formulations allow for the maximization of the present discounted value of utility, where utility can depend on leisure and non-wage job characteristics in addition to earnings. These complications do not change the basic logic of the theory.) Given this objective, and given the costliness of skill acquisition, the worker's decision is an investment decision, i.e., a decision about whether or not it is worthwhile to incur a cost today in return for a gain in the future. The cost includes the present discounted value of the direct and indirect costs of obtaining the skill. The gain consists of the increase in the present discounted value of future earnings that possession of the skill

makes possible. The worker's decision turns on whether the gain exceeds the cost.¹

Before turning to particular human capital models that are intended to apply directly to the job mobility of young people, it is useful to explore the implications of the basic human capital approach for the job mobility of non-college youths. Although the theory does not make use of the distinction between primary and secondary jobs, it could be relevant to mobility from the latter to the former, since primary jobs tend to pay higher wages than secondary jobs. The theory suggests that workers must acquire costly skills in order to move from secondary to primary jobs, and that their decisions about whether or not to acquire those skills (and, hence, about whether or not to move into the primary sector) are based on a consideration of skill-acquisition costs in relation to future earnings gains. For workers who do not attend college, one would expect the decision not to attend college to be made in this way. One would also expect non-college-educated workers to be able to enter primary jobs, if they do so at all, because they have obtained the necessary skills through training programs or vocational schools or through on-the-job training in secondary jobs.

The costliness of skills is crucial to the theory's ability to explain the process of worker mobility from secondary to primary jobs. If the skills required for entry into primary jobs were not costly to acquire (e.g., if the skills were acquired

through socialization), then human capital theory would be irrelevant to workers' acquisition of these skills. Workers would not have to go through an investment calculus in order to decide whether or not it was worthwhile to acquire the skills. If the maximization of lifetime income were their only concern, they would acquire all skills that could be obtained at zero cost. Any worker who could acquire the skills necessary for primary-sector entry at zero cost would be able to enter the primary sector if enough primary jobs were available. The interesting questions for secondary-to-primary job mobility would then be whether the necessary skills could be acquired costlessly by all workers (and if not, why not) and whether there were enough primary jobs for all workers who wanted them (and if not, why not). Human capital theory has nothing to say about these questions.

The characterization of workers' decisions about skill acquisition as being based on a comparison of costs and benefits is also crucial to human capital theory. Even if some skills can be acquired costlessly (and are, therefore, beyond the purview of human capital theory), there are surely other skills (e.g., those that can only be learned in college or in fee-charging training programs) that are costly. In order for human capital theory to be relevant to the explanation of why workers do or do not acquire these skills, workers must have some idea (even if an imperfect idea) of the relevant costs and benefits and must make a comparison of these costs and benefits. If they

do not do so, then any correspondence between their behavior and the predictions of human capital theory either would be accidental or would be a consequence of some indirect process (not specified by human capital theory) that related the costs and benefits of various skills to the behavior of the workers.

These considerations lead to some empirical questions about the operation of labor market institutions. What personal characteristics do employers require of workers who wish to enter primary jobs? How do workers acquire these characteristics? Do they make conscious decisions about whether or not to do so? Is it costly for them to do so? Do all workers have the characteristics needed for entry into primary jobs? If so, then what prevents them all from obtaining primary jobs? If not, then what prevents some of them from acquiring the necessary characteristics? Since this study focuses on workers who did not or will not attend college, there is an opportunity to explore why they did not or will not attend college. Is the decision not to attend college made in the way that human capital theory suggests? Are non-college education and training prerequisites for entry into the primary sector?

There are two particular human capital models that are intended to be directly relevant to the job mobility of young people. In Sherwin Rosen's model of on-the-job training,² there are jobs that provide various amounts of training and jobs that provide no training. All training is assumed to be costly. Workers who work at jobs that provide training are paid less

than their value marginal products. (This is the case because workers who are receiving purely general training must pay the entire cost of the training, while those who are receiving training that is wholly or partly firm-specific must pay part of the training cost.) Thus, workers invest in training. After receiving training, they recoup their investments by moving to jobs that do not offer training, but that require them to make use of the training that they have received elsewhere. This model might be relevant to the transition from secondary to primary employment. If secondary jobs provide workers with skills that are necessary for entry into primary jobs, then the model would lead one to expect youths to begin their working lives in secondary jobs and then move on to primary jobs after acquiring the necessary skills. Rosen's model, therefore, suggests that it is important to examine the content of secondary jobs. Do secondary jobs provide workers with skills that they will need for primary jobs? If so, how do workers learn these skills while working at secondary jobs? Is it costly for them to do so? If secondary jobs do not provide skills that are useful in the primary sector, what do they provide?

William Johnson's model of "job shopping"³ suggests some additional questions about youth job mobility. In this model, workers are uncertain about their abilities to perform particular jobs. Because they are uncertain, they are prepared to move from job to job in search of a job that matches their talents. They begin with jobs about which they are most uncertain and, if

they are unable to perform those jobs, move gradually to jobs in which they are more sure of their abilities. Initially they change jobs very frequently, but as they learn more about the fit between their own abilities and the requirements of particular jobs, their labor market behavior becomes more stable. Although it is not entirely clear how, if at all, this "shopping" process relates to the transition from secondary to primary employment, Johnson's model does suggest that it is worth exploring how and why young workers change jobs. Do they do so in order to find the jobs that best match their abilities or interests? Do they begin their working lives by moving rapidly between jobs and then gradually "settle down"?

Johnson's model treats information about job characteristics as a form of human capital. The model, therefore, provides a bridge to the following section's discussion of neoclassical job-search theory.

2. SEARCH THEORY

The logic of the neoclassical theory of job search is similar to that of human capital theory. The focus of search theory, however, is on the process by which workers acquire information about particular jobs rather than on the process by which they acquire relatively durable job-related skills.

Search theory begins with the premise that workers lack perfect information about the wage and non-wage characteristics of jobs. In the absence of perfect information on the part of workers, an

otherwise competitive labor market need not adjust job characteristics to make workers with any given stock of human capital indifferent among all of the jobs that require that stock of human capital. A worker with a particular stock of human capital, therefore, has a non-trivial problem of selecting a job from among all of the jobs that are open to him or her. Search theory assumes that the worker knows the joint distribution of wages and non-wage characteristics of these jobs, even though he/she does not know the characteristics of any particular job before engaging in search. (In order to simplify the analysis, most search models ignore non-wage job characteristics, so only the distribution of wages is relevant.) The worker's process of job search is a process of sampling jobs from this distribution. Search is assumed to be costly to the worker. Some of the costs of search may be direct. For example, a worker may have to spend money to visit a potential employer in order to learn about the characteristics of the employer's jobs. Other search costs may be indirect. Search models usually assume that a worker cannot earn the same income while searching for a job that he/she could earn if not searching. This assumption often takes the form of an assumption that a worker must be unemployed in order to search for a job, or that the worker can search more effectively from a position of unemployment. Alternatively, it could be assumed that a worker can search for a new job while employed, but must take time off from work (and, therefore, sacrifice potential earnings) in order to search. In any case,

the worker foregoes some income during search. This foregone income is an indirect cost of search. Throughout the search process, the worker must weigh the direct and indirect costs of additional search against the benefits. The longer the worker searches, the more he/she knows about the distribution of job characteristics, so the more likely it is that he/she will be able to locate the job that provides the maximum lifetime earnings (or, in more general formulations of the theory, the maximum lifetime utility). To balance the benefits and costs of search, the worker searches until the expected marginal benefit of future search equals the expected marginal cost.⁴

Although there are more complicated variants of search theory than the one described in the previous paragraph,⁵ the simple version of search theory highlights two essential features that are common to all of the variants. First, search is costly to workers, directly and/or indirectly. Second, workers determine the number of jobs among which to search by comparing the benefits and costs of search. These two characteristics are analogous to the characteristics of human capital theory that were highlighted in section 1. They are essential to search theory for the same reasons that the analogous characteristics are essential to human capital theory.

Neoclassical job-search theory raises some questions about the process by which workers acquire information about jobs. What kinds of job information do workers obtain? How do they go about obtaining it? Is the process of search one in which the

worker actively seeks information, as neoclassical search theory suggests it is? Is it costly to workers, either directly or indirectly? Do workers consider the benefits and costs of seeking information about jobs with which they are not already familiar? Do workers use the same methods to find out about both primary and secondary jobs? Is their information about secondary jobs as extensive as their information about primary jobs?⁶

The search theory discussed thus far has been a theory about the process of extensive job search, i.e., about how workers acquire information about jobs of which they are not already aware. Some neoclassical economists, however, have been interested in the process of intensive job search, i.e., in how workers acquire additional information about the jobs with which they are already familiar.⁷ Research on intensive job search emphasizes the contribution that various job-seeking methods make to the amount of information that a worker can gain about a particular job. This research usually concludes that workers can most efficiently find out about a large number of characteristics of particular jobs by learning about the jobs from friends, relatives, and/or acquaintances. Theories of intensive search then use this conclusion to explain why workers often rely on their personal contacts to tell them about job vacancies. (That workers do this is a common finding of local labor market studies. See section 6 below.) A parallel argument can be developed to explain why employers often rely on their current employees to recruit new workers for them. (That employers do this is another

common finding of local labor market studies.) Employers, it is argued, are interested in finding out about a large number of characteristics of particular job applicants. By relying on their current employees to refer job applicants, employers who are satisfied with their current workers can assure themselves of a flow of new workers who resemble the current workers along many different "quality" dimensions. This observation, along with the observation that recruitment through the personal contact networks of current employees is costless to employers, is used to explain why employers often rely on workers' personal contacts when recruiting. If the intensive-search argument about workers' job-seeking methods is combined with the intensive-search argument about employers' labor recruitment methods, one obtains an implicit-contract explanation of why personal contacts are often used to transmit labor market information. If it is important for both job applicants and employers to acquire "intensive information" about particular jobs or workers, then the use of personal contacts is the most efficient method for all labor market participants to use in order to obtain that information.⁸

The implicit-contract interpretation of intensive search raises some further questions about the ways in which workers and employers learn about each other. Do workers seek "intensive information" about particular jobs? If so, what kinds of information do they seek? For which jobs do they seek it? Do they rely on personal contacts for this information? If so, who are the

personal contacts and how do they transmit the information? What is the structure of the personal contact networks? To what extent are workers aware of the costs and benefits of alternative sources of "intensive" job information? Do they consider those costs and benefits when deciding on the information sources upon which they will rely? Analogous questions can be asked about employers. In addition, one can ask whether the answers are different for primary jobs than for secondary jobs.⁹

3. STATUS-ATTAINMENT THEORY

Status-attainment "theory" is the name of an empirical research strategy that some sociologists have used to study intragenerational job mobility. The "theory" is embodied in particular regression models and is rarely discussed apart from those models.

The dependent variable in a status-attainment model is a unidimensional, continuous index of occupational prestige. Several such indices are in use. All are based on the results of large-scale, random-sample surveys that measure individuals' evaluations of occupational prestige. The most commonly used index of prestige is the Duncan index. This index is derived from an interview survey in which respondents were asked to rate the "general standing" of a variety of occupations into several categories ranging from "excellent" to "poor." For each occupation mentioned in the survey, a prestige score is derived from the distribution of survey responses across categories. The prestige

scores are then regressed on measures of education and income for each occupation mentioned in the survey. The predicted prestige scores from this regression are the values of the Duncan index. (The use of predicted values from the regression makes it possible to determine a Duncan index value for any occupation on which income and education data are available, not just for the occupations mentioned in the survey.)¹⁰

Status-attainment researchers rarely justify their use of the Duncan index (or similar prestige indices) in an explicit manner. To the extent that they do so implicitly, their justification appears to be based on the fact that the prestige rankings derived from surveys differ very little across surveys and across groups of respondents. For example, respondents of various occupations, incomes, educational levels, ages, and regions produce similar prestige ratings. Respondents who give different interpretations to the concept of "prestige" or "general standing" also produce similar ratings. Surveys with different rating scales and rating instructions also yield similar ratings, as do surveys conducted in different years.¹¹

The invariance of prestige scores across groups of respondents and across surveys does not, however, imply that a continuous, unidimensional occupational prestige variable is relevant to the job mobility of all workers or, indeed, of any workers. It does not imply that any workers make their own labor market decisions in terms of such a variable. As I will argue in chapter 3, the kind of survey from which the prestige variable is derived is poorly

suiting to the discovery of the variables that workers use when making labor market decisions. If workers do not recognize the prestige variable as having any relevance to their own decisions, then the variable can only be relevant to their job mobility if some indirect mechanism, either within or outside of the labor market, operates so as to make it relevant. Status-attainment researchers have not suggested any such mechanism.

Although status-attainment researchers have not demonstrated the relevance of their dependent variable to the study of job mobility, their use of that variable raises some interesting, unexplored questions about how workers evaluate jobs. What kinds of distinctions do workers make among jobs when they are making their own labor market decisions? (I have already given away part of the answer by suggesting that the distinction between primary and secondary jobs is relevant to the workers who are the principal subjects of this study.) Do workers evaluate jobs in terms of a unidimensional index? Do they rank jobs along a continuum? What role, if any, does the concept of prestige play in their evaluations?

A status-attainment model explains the occupational prestige of an individual's current job with a set of variables that is supposed to reflect the individual's family background, education, and previous labor market experience. The causal ordering of these variables is recursive and is supposed to correspond to the (assumed) order of events in an individual's life-cycle. Thus, family background is assumed to precede education (both

temporally in an individual's life-history and causally in a status-attainment model), and education is assumed to precede employment. In the simplest model, an individual's family background (represented by father's education and occupational prestige) explains his/her educational level. Family background and education explain the occupational prestige of the individual's first job. Family background, education, and the occupational prestige of the first job explain the occupational prestige of the current job. More complicated models include additional family background variables (such as number of siblings and mother's education) and additional intervening variables (such as the prestige scores of jobs held after the first job, methods of finding jobs, intelligence quotient, and measures of labor market aspirations and motivation).¹²

Status-attainment theory's characterization of the job mobility process raises two kinds of empirical questions. First, there is the question of whether the explanatory variables used in status-attainment models are relevant to the job mobility of young men in ethnic working class neighborhoods. Do education, previous employment, and parents' occupation and education influence the ability of these workers to obtain certain kinds of jobs? In particular, do they play any role in the process of transition from secondary to primary jobs? Second, one can ask how these variables and/or other variables that are relevant to the mobility process actually influence that process. Status-attainment theory posits a structure of correlations among

variables, but does not explain how the mobility process gives rise to those correlations. How, for example, do such variables as education, previous job experience, or family background (assuming that these are indeed the relevant variables) give a person access to certain kinds of jobs?

4. NEO-MARXIAN CLASS-REPRODUCTION THEORY

The neo-Marxian theory of class reproduction, which has been stated most clearly by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis,¹³ is a theory of how young people become members of the same social class to which their parents belong. "Social class," in the work of Bowles and Gintis, is used in a fairly loose sense to denote a variety of social relationships in the production process, including relationships of property ownership, of authority in the workplace, and of the technical division of labor. Bowles and Gintis are concerned with the social institutions that ostensibly channel young people into jobs whose relationships to the production process are similar to those of the youths' parents' jobs.

The school, according to Bowles and Gintis, is the social institution that is primarily responsible for directing youths into jobs that resemble their parents' jobs. (The family plays a parallel, though less important, role in this process.) The most important way in which the school (and, to a lesser extent, the family) accomplishes this task is by socializing youths into the kinds of attitudes and behavioral traits (e.g., orientations

toward authority, modes of self-presentation) that are required by the youths' parents jobs. Different kinds of schools (and families) and different levels of the educational system socialize students differently. For example, schools that serve students from professional and managerial family backgrounds require their students to work without a large number of explicit rules and to internalize the norms of the school, thereby preparing the students for professional and managerial jobs, which make similar demands on their occupants. Schools that serve students whose parents work at primary-sector manufacturing jobs impose many explicit rules on their students, thereby preparing the students for primary-sector manufacturing jobs, which also emphasize rule-following. Bowles' and Gintis' main thesis is that there is a correspondence between the patterns of social relations in a school and the patterns of social relations in the jobs of the students' parents. (There is also an analogous correspondence between the patterns of social relations in a family and the patterns of social relations in the parents' jobs.) On the basis of this correspondence, they argue that schools (and families) successfully socialize young people into their parents' occupational roles. Schools (and families), in a more or less mechanical fashion, stamp out the appropriate attitudes and behavioral characteristics onto the youths.

A second function of the school, according to Bowles and Gintis, is to reconcile students to the jobs for which they are being prepared by teaching them that their society is a meritocratic

one. Schools supposedly teach students that an academic and occupational success are determined by individual ability and effort. Students, Bowles and Gintis assume, learn this lesson and believe that it is relevant to their own lives, both in school and, later, at work, where it is reinforced by employers' ostensibly meritocratic criteria for hiring and promotion.

The Bowles-Gintis theory infers young people's beliefs and behavioral characteristics from the structures of social relations that prevail in their schools and, to a lesser extent, in their families. Regardless of whether or not the theory's substantive claims about youths' beliefs and behavioral traits are correct, though, it is not legitimate to make inferences from institutional structures to personal characteristics without showing how the institutions actually shape personal characteristics. Bowles and Gintis do not undertake the latter task. They do not provide evidence that youths actually learn the lessons that schools and families ostensibly teach, nor do they show that youths learn these lessons from schools and families rather than from other social institutions. It is, therefore, important to ask what young people's work-related attitudes and behavioral traits actually are, which social institutions shape them, and how the shaping is done. Do youths share their parents' orientations toward work? Do they believe that the social order is meritocratic? To what extent, if any, do they acquire their orientations toward work from their schooling?¹⁴ From their families?

There is an important respect in which the neo-Marxian

theory, at least in its present form, seems to be inconsistent with the basic fact about intragenerational job mobility that this study is designed to explore. Intragenerational mobility from secondary to primary jobs is an important phenomenon in the ethnic working class neighborhoods with which this study is concerned. The Bowles-Gintis theory, however, does not seem to allow for the possibility of this kind of mobility. If behavioral and attitudinal requirements for workers differ between primary and secondary jobs, then the theory would lead one to expect that young people leave school already prepared for work in either the secondary or the primary sector (but not both) and, once employed in one of the two sectors, are unable to move into the other sector. Since intragenerational mobility from secondary to primary jobs does occur, though, there must be some flaw either in the Bowles-Gintis theory or in the assumption that secondary and primary jobs make different kinds of demands on workers. Exactly where the flaw lies is a question that merits empirical scrutiny.

5. LABOR MARKET SEGMENTATION THEORY

The difficulty that disadvantaged minority workers have in moving from secondary to primary jobs was one of the major concerns of the originators of labor market segmentation theory. Moreover, many of the debates about labor market segmentation that occurred in the economics profession during the 1970's centered around the issue of intragenerational economic mobility;

neoclassical labor economists often interpreted labor market segmentation theory as a theory about mobility.¹⁵ Despite all of this attention to the issue of mobility, though, labor market segmentation theorists have not yet produced a satisfactory theory of mobility from the secondary sector to the primary sector.

Early formulations of labor market segmentation theory, which were intended to explain the problems of disadvantaged workers, assumed the existence of little or no mobility between sectors and attempted to explain the assumed absence or near absence of mobility. In the early work of Piore, the principal explanation for intersectoral immobility is a supposedly self-regulating feedback loop from the behavioral requirements of jobs to the behavioral characteristics of workers. Primary jobs, according to this explanation, require workers to have stable work habits. Secondary jobs, on the other hand, tolerate or even encourage worker instability. Workers who work in the primary sector become stable as a consequence of working in that sector, while workers who are employed in secondary jobs become unstable as a consequence of working in those jobs. Once employed in one sector, a worker develops, over time, the kind of behavioral traits that are appropriate to that sector and is, therefore, disqualified from moving into the other sector.¹⁶ In a subsequent analysis of the labor market problems of poor and disadvantaged workers, Piore supplements this feedback model with additional reasons why workers who have been employed in secondary jobs

would find it difficult or impossible to move into the primary sector. Workers whose superficial characteristics (e.g., race) resemble those of the secondary-sector labor force may be subject to discrimination (either statistical discrimination or prejudice-based discrimination) if they apply for primary jobs, regardless of whether they are unstable. For this reason, they may be unable to escape the secondary sector. Secondary-sector workers tend to live among other secondary-sector workers, and may, as a consequence of this, become socialized to a way of life that is compatible only with secondary-sector employment. Finally, many secondary-sector workers receive income from public assistance or illegal activities, and both the public assistance system and illegal activities foster behavioral characteristics that are incompatible with primary-sector employment.¹⁷

As the labor market segmentation perspective developed, theorists shifted their attention away from the specific problems of disadvantaged workers and toward more general issues of economic and social theory that the concept of labor market segmentation seemed to raise. Included in this shift was a recognition that intragenerational secondary-to-primary job mobility occurred and, indeed, was commonplace among non-disadvantaged workers. It was recognized that many of these workers are employed in the secondary sector during adolescence, but move to the primary sector as adults. The theoretical problem of mobility in a segmented labor market then came to be seen as the problem of why disadvantaged workers are apparently

"trapped" in the secondary sector while other workers are able to move relatively easily from secondary to primary jobs. In his 1975 analysis of this problem, Piore de-emphasizes the shaping of worker characteristics by job characteristics as a major determinant of mobility. Instead, he attributes differences in workers' intersectoral mobility patterns mainly to relatively autonomous differences in subculture between different groups of workers. According to Piore, the "working class subculture" (which is an abstraction from the way of life that characterizes many ethnic working class neighborhoods--see section 7 below) facilitates young men's movement from secondary to primary jobs. It does so by encouraging men, during early adulthood, to marry and have children, to stabilize their employment patterns, and to change the nature of their peer-group activities from those that are compatible with secondary jobs to those that are compatible with primary jobs. The "lower class subculture" (which is an abstraction from the way of life that characterizes many poor and disadvantaged groups) does not encourage young men to do any of these things, but instead supports the continuation of adolescent behavioral patterns into adulthood. For this reason, workers who belong to the "lower class subculture" do not make the transition from secondary to primary jobs.¹⁸

What Piore offers here is a theory of why some workers seek or are willing to take primary jobs during early adulthood while other workers of the same age continue to seek or continue to accept employment in the secondary sector. He does not explain

how or why men from the "working class subculture" are able to obtain primary jobs when they become ready for those jobs. As a theory of secondary-to-primary transition, Piore's theory is, therefore, incomplete. Even as an explanation of differential readiness for or willingness to seek primary employment, though, the theory is inadequate. It does not explain exactly how family formation, stabilization of employment, and changes in peer group activities affect the process of secondary-to-primary transition. Therefore, it is unable to determine whether the labor market problems of the "lower class subculture" are due to a lack of the right kind of peer group, to employment instability, to failure to form a family, to some combination of these factors, or to some other factor(s) that are associated with them. Furthermore, the theory's hypothesized association between the "working class subculture" and the transition from secondary to primary employment is not clearly supported by empirical evidence. As section 7 of this chapter will show, some groups of workers whose way of life is ostensibly described by the term "working class subculture" seem never to make the transition from secondary to primary jobs.

Paul Osterman has provided a psychological theory of the secondary-to-primary job transition. Like Piore's "subcultural" theory, Osterman's theory associates the transition from secondary to primary employment with the transition from adolescence to adulthood. According to Osterman, young people who are no longer in school pass through two psychological stages that have different

implications for their employment. The first stage, called the "moratorium" stage, occurs during late adolescence after the end of formal schooling. Youths who are in this stage are by nature immature and unwilling to make long-term commitments, especially long-term commitments to jobs. They are mainly interested in peer-group social activities. In order to finance these activities, they work sporadically in secondary jobs, moving frequently from job to job or between work and non-employment. This kind of work pattern enables them to earn small amounts of money without committing themselves to any particular job or, indeed, to work itself. As they grow older, they "outgrow" this orientation toward work and the pattern of labor market behavior that accompanies it. They enter a second psychological stage, the "settling-down" stage, in which they adopt adult work orientations and behavioral patterns. In this stage, they seek steady jobs and are willing to make long-term commitments to particular employers and/or occupations. Therefore, they try to "settle down" into primary jobs, which provide them with steady work and require them to make long-term labor market commitments.¹⁹

Osterman gives a clear account of the psychological forces that affect a young person's readiness to move from a secondary to a primary job. In this sense, his theory of intersectoral mobility is superior to Piore's. Because Osterman bases his theory on a presumably universal psychology, though, he is unable to explain why some workers do not make the transition while other workers do. In this sense, his theory explains less

than Piore's. Moreover, like Piore, Osterman deals only with workers' readiness to move from the secondary sector to the primary sector. He does not attempt to explain what enables workers in the "settling down" stage to obtain primary jobs. (In an earlier, unpublished work, Osterman introduced the concept of a "bridge job," a job that teaches workers skills that are useful in primary jobs, but that resembles a secondary job in other respects.²⁰ Access to "bridge jobs" could enable workers to move out of the secondary sector, and differences between groups of workers in access to these jobs could explain why some workers are able to make the secondary-to-primary transition while others are unable to do so. However, Osterman did not use the concept of a "bridge job" in his published work.)

In addition to the theories surveyed above, there have been two attempts to identify correlates of secondary-to-primary job mobility econometrically. Neither of these is closely linked to any of the aforementioned theories of mobility. Using 1970 U.S. Census data on the job mobility of men between the years 1965 and 1970, Rumberger and Carnoy find that education, age, marriage, and vocational training positively affect the probability of transition from secondary to primary lower-tier jobs for whites. For blacks, the effects of education and age are also present, but they are weaker than for whites. The effect of vocational training for blacks is comparable to that for whites, but the effect of marriage is much weaker and is not statistically significant.²¹ In a similar study, Rosenberg examines the

correlates of secondary-to-primary mobility between first job and current job for a sample of men aged twenty-one to sixty-four in selected U.S. poverty areas in 1970. (Since the neighborhoods in which I conducted my study were designated as poverty areas in 1970, Rosenberg's results are of special interest.) The findings are mostly negative; neither education nor vocational training nor years of labor market experience is consistently and significantly associated with secondary-to-primary mobility for either blacks or whites. However, education and training do have significant positive effects, for both races, on the probability that a man's first job will be a primary job. Furthermore, blacks are more likely than whites to begin their working lives in the secondary sector and are less likely to move into the primary sector.²²

The labor market segmentation approach has not yet produced an adequate account of how and why some workers are able to make the transition from secondary to primary jobs with relative ease while others are able to make the transition only with great difficulty or not at all. Previous theories of the transition process have focused on workers' readiness or willingness to make the transition, but have not explained what gives workers who are ready and willing to make the transition the ability or inability to make the transition. Econometric studies of the transition process have discovered some correlations whose institutional basis might be worth exploring, but their findings have not been linked to any theory of mobility in a segmented

labor market. A more adequate theory of the transition process could remedy both of these ills. The absence of such a theory is one of the major reasons for the present study. In order to develop such a theory, it is necessary to understand the operation of the institutions, both within and outside the labor market, that facilitate secondary-to-primary mobility for some workers and/or block that mobility for other workers.

6. LOCAL LABOR MARKET STUDIES

Between the 1930's and the 1960's, but mainly during the 1940's and 1950's, labor economists in the United States and Britain conducted a number of case studies of local labor markets, focusing on blue-collar workers and/or blue-collar jobs. Some studies, such as those of DeSchweinitz in Philadelphia; Myers and Shultz in Nashua, New Hampshire; Adams and Aronson in Auburn, New York; and Sheppard and Belitsky in Erie, Pennsylvania, emphasized workers' patterns of job mobility and workers' job-finding methods.²³ Others, such as those of Edelman in Illinois; Lester in the Trenton, New Jersey, area; and Mackay et al. in Britain, dealt with employers' labor recruitment and hiring procedures.²⁴ A few studies, conducted by Myers and Maclaurin in Fitchburg, Massachusetts; Reynolds in New Haven; and Rees and Shultz in Chicago, were concerned with the labor market activities of both workers and employers.²⁵ None of these studies was explicitly concerned with men from ethnic neighborhoods, but the background information that the studies provide about workers

suggests that many of the workers studied, at least in urban areas of the Northeastern and Midwestern U.S., were members of ethnic groups that often formed such neighborhoods.

In the chapters that follow, I will compare some of the specific findings of the present study with those of previous local labor market studies. In this section, I will provide a very brief overview of the local labor market study findings and raise a few questions about them.

The studies portray blue-collar workers, whether currently employed or currently unemployed, as being either poorly informed about the existence and characteristics of alternative job opportunities or well-informed about only a small number of jobs. (Most of the studies provide little information about the structure of the information that workers do have, though; they give the reader the general impression that the information has no particular structure.) Except in the very tightest local labor markets, workers rarely view themselves as being in a position to choose from among a large number of jobs. If they receive job offers while unemployed, they usually accept the first offer that they receive. Most of their job information comes from friends and relatives. "Personal contacts" and direct application to a small number of firms are their most prevalent methods of locating jobs; they rarely make use of formal job-placement services. (The studies provide little information, however, about the structure of the workers' personal contact networks or about the precise role that contacts play in

the job-finding process.²⁶⁾ The mere existence of relative wage differentials among similar jobs does not, according to the studies, induce workers to change jobs. An employed adult man changes jobs only if a friend or relative tells him about a job that he regards as more satisfactory than his current job. ("More satisfactory" is defined in terms of some rule-of-thumb that the worker uses to evaluate jobs). Youths change jobs more often than adults, but their job mobility is usually portrayed as purely random; as they age, they eventually move into jobs of long duration. (The studies do not describe the "settling-down" process in any detail, though.)

Employers of blue-collar workers, according to the local labor market studies, are not very concerned about the job-related skills of their job applicants. Instead, they seek to hire reliable, stable workers who adapt well to routine tasks. They recruit these workers using methods that explicitly or implicitly favor applicants who are friends or relatives of their current employees.

With the exception of the Rees and Shultz study, the local labor market studies suggest (although they do not prove) that blue-collar labor markets are dominated by non-market social institutions (such as families and social networks) and customary or habitual decision-making procedures. In comparison with these institutions and procedures, the market forces emphasized by neoclassical labor market theories appear weak. (Rees and Shultz, like many contemporary neoclassical labor economists,

try to explain the non-market institutions and rules-of-thumb in terms of an underlying market rationale. In so doing, they rely heavily on the human capital and search theories. For example, they use the implicit-contract version of search theory to explain why personal contacts are so important in blue-collar labor markets.²⁷ Their explanations are not entirely convincing, though, because they do not attempt to answer the questions about the human capital and search theories that I raised in the first two sections of this chapter.) Unfortunately, most of the studies that emphasize non-market forces do not provide any theoretical framework that could explain why those forces operate as they do. In the absence of such a framework, the studies' findings appear as interesting but isolated sets of facts. The major question that the local labor market studies raise, then, is the question of how to account for the institutional details that the studies describe.

Reynolds goes part of the way toward answering this question, although he never states his answer explicitly. His implicit theoretical structure can only be discovered by reading the passages of his study that deal with worker behavior, worker beliefs, and employer behavior in conjunction with one another. He (implicitly) explains certain features of worker behavior (e.g., reliance on friends and relatives for job information, absence of systematic job search) by referring to workers' beliefs about the labor market (e.g., the belief that desirable jobs are scarce and that personal contacts are needed in order

to obtain them). He (also implicitly) explains workers' beliefs in terms of employers' recruitment and hiring practices (e.g., recruitment methods that favor friends and relatives of current employees).²⁸ However, Reynolds does not make use of this implicit theoretical structure when he discusses the theoretical and policy implications of his study. Instead, he views neoclassical labor market theory as the basic theory of worker and employer behavior and presents his own findings as modifications of that theory,²⁹ even though his findings suggest that non-market institutions are at least as central as market forces to the understanding of blue-collar labor markets. This defect in his theoretical approach seems to be related to a deficiency in his data. Because he does not probe the nature of workers' social groups in any detail, he lacks the kind of data that would enable him to theorize about non-market influences on worker behavior except as adjuncts to market forces. In order either to develop the kind of labor theory toward which the local labor market studies of Reynolds and others point or to show that that kind of theory is misguided, then it is necessary to understand the social context in which workers make and carry out their labor market decisions.

7. ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF ETHNIC WORKING CLASS NEIGHBORHOODS

Ethnographic studies of ethnic working class neighborhoods provide some of the information about social context that local labor market studies lack. The ethnographic studies, which were

conducted between the 1930's and the 1970's, describe the social structures, beliefs, and values of the people who live in ethnic working class neighborhoods. Studies conducted in the United States (e.g., those of Whyte in Boston's North End, Gans in Boston's West End, Suttles in Chicago, Binzen in Philadelphia, and Kornblum in Chicago³⁰) focus on urban neighborhoods in the Northeast and Midwest. Most of the neighborhoods described in these studies are inhabited primarily by Irish, Italian, or Eastern European Catholic immigrants and/or their second- and third-generation descendants. There is, however, a study of a non-immigrant, non-Catholic, blue-collar neighborhood in London, England, whose findings are so similar to those of the American studies that it deserves to be classified as part of the same genre as the American studies.³¹

Taken together, the ethnographic studies suggest that ethnic working class neighborhoods are characterized by a distinctive pattern of beliefs, values, and neighborhood social structures. In this section, I will sketch the main features of that pattern and raise a few questions about its relationship to the labor market. In subsequent chapters, I will discuss specific elements of the pattern in more detail in connection with specific findings of the present study.

According to the ethnographic studies, residents of ethnic working class neighborhoods have strong social ties within the neighborhood but relatively few outside of the neighborhood. The neighborhood is made up of an interlocking collection of

extended families and age-graded, single-sex peer groups. A neighborhood resident's strongest social ties are to the members of his or her extended family and peer group. Both the extended family and the peer group remain relatively stable (except for births, deaths, and marriages) throughout the lifetime of any particular individual. The social activities of the extended family and peer group, like the structure of the groups themselves, are stable and routinized, especially for adults.

The residents of ethnic working class neighborhoods take a purely instrumental view of both formal schooling and work. They are not especially interested in formal education per se and are sometimes disdainful of extremely high levels of schooling. They view education mainly as an instrument that enables them to qualify for jobs. (This view extends to higher education, for those few who attend college.) Similarly, they view work primarily as an instrument that enables them to pursue their lives within their neighborhood social groups. They are interested in earning enough income to support their families at the standard of living that is customary within the neighborhood and to participate in the social activities of their peer groups in the ways that are customary within the neighborhood. They rarely expect their work to be intrinsically rewarding or satisfying. Most of them work at blue-collar jobs, although some are employed in low-level white-collar jobs; professional and managerial employment is rare. In some neighborhoods (e.g., the one studied by Gans), the jobs held by adult men appear to be mainly secondary jobs,³²

while in others (e.g., the one studied by Kornblum) they seem to be mainly primary jobs.³³

The findings of the ethnographic studies raise several questions about the labor market activities of ethnic working class men. Although the studies describe these men's attitudes toward work in general terms, they do not provide much information about how workers make decisions about, become qualified for, obtain information about, and move between particular jobs. What kinds of job mobility exist in ethnic working class neighborhoods? By what process does mobility occur? In particular, for neighborhoods in which adult men work at primary jobs, how does the transition to primary employment come about? Does neighborhood social structure play a role in the mobility process, as the local labor market studies suggest that it does? If so, what role does it play? To what extent, if any, is it endogenous to the job-mobility process? What role do workers' attitudes about work play in the process? To what extent, if any, are those attitudes endogenous to the job-mobility process?

From the point of view of a student of the labor market, the strengths and weaknesses of the local labor market studies and the ethnographic studies are complementary. The former provide a great deal of information about workers' labor market activities, but do not place those activities in their social context. The latter have much to say about the social context, but little to say about the way in which that context influences the details of workers' labor market behavior. Despite this complementarity,

however, the two sets of studies do not dovetail. One comes away from the two sets of studies with two disconnected sets of facts, one about the labor market and the other about the social life of the neighborhood. Although both sets of studies suggest that there might be links between these two sets of facts, the nature of those links has not been explored. One of the tasks of the present study, then, should be to explore those links. Such an exploration would improve our understanding of both labor markets and ethnic working class neighborhoods.

8. ETHNIC ENCLAVE ECONOMIES

Three recent quantitative case studies of the structure of Cuban-owned businesses in Miami and the earnings of Cuban immigrant workers in Miami have developed the concept of an "ethnic enclave economy."³⁴ An ethnic enclave economy consists of a set of firms whose owners and workers all belong to a particular immigrant ethnic group. Although most of these firms are small firms, they do not have strong economic links to firms outside the enclave. Instead, they are linked mainly to one another; the degree of economic integration among firms in an enclave is high enough that the enclave merits designation as a sub-economy in its own right. Like the industrial structure of the enclave, the jobs available within it are distinctive. Although many enclave jobs pay low wages in comparison with non-enclave primary jobs, the enclave jobs are organized in a way that enables workers to advance economically within the enclave. For this reason,

enclave jobs should be distinguished from non-enclave secondary jobs, which do not facilitate upward economic mobility.

The enclave literature is relevant to the present study because it suggests that the members of certain ethnic groups, by virtue of their ethnic identity, have access to a set of jobs that are not available to people who are not members of those groups and that are, in terms of potential for economic advancement, superior to many of the jobs available to non-group members. Ethnic groups that have developed enclave economies are not assimilated into the "mainstream" American labor market. Neither are they disadvantaged by being excluded from it. Rather, they are insulated from the "mainstream" labor market by their participation in an enclave labor market that enables them to achieve upward economic mobility. This finding leads naturally to the question of whether something like an enclave economy might facilitate economic mobility in ethnic working class neighborhoods that are not inhabited mainly by first-generation immigrants. One task of the present study should be to explore this question. If the question can be answered in the affirmative, then the present study could help to fill a major theoretical gap in the ethnic enclave literature. The enclave literature describes ethnic enclave economies, but it provides no theory that could explain the persistence of their ethnic character. What enables enclave firms to continue to draw their workers (and owners) from a particular immigrant group? An examination of the operation of enclave-like social institutions in ethnic

working class neighborhoods could shed some light on the operation of full-fledged ethnic economic enclaves.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. The classic sources for this simple version of human capital theory are Jacob Mincer, "Investment in Human Capital and Personal Income Distribution," Journal of Political Economy 66 (August 1958): 281-302; and Gary Becker, Human Capital (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

2. Sherwin Rosen, "Learning and Experience in the Labor Market," Journal of Human Resources 7 (Summer 1972): 326-342.

3. William Johnson, "A Theory of Job Shopping," Quarterly Journal of Economics 92 (May 1978): 261-277.

4. This simple version of search theory is based on George Stigler, "Information in the Labor Market," Journal of Political Economy 70 (October 1962 supplement): 94-105.

5. For a survey, see Steven Lippman and John McCall, "The Economics of Job Search: A Survey," Economic Inquiry 14 (June 1976): 155-189, and Economic Inquiry 14 (September 1976): 347-368.

6. The simple theory outlined above suggests that workers may sample primary jobs more extensively than secondary jobs if they expect to stay in any given primary job for a longer period of time than they expect to stay in any given secondary job. The longer the time period for which a worker expects to remain in a particular job, the greater is the present discounted value of earnings or utility derived from that job. The discounted costs of search, however, are unaffected by the length of time that the worker expects to remain on the job. Therefore, a worker who is looking for a long-term job will, according to neoclassical search theory, search more extensively than one who is looking for a short-term job.

7. The intensive-extensive distinction is due to Albert Rees, "Information Networks in Labor Markets," American Economic Review 56 (May 1966): 559-566. A conceptual framework for integrating intensive and extensive search is provided by David Stevens, "A Reexamination of What Is Known About Jobseeking Behavior in the United States," in National Commission for Manpower Policy (ed.), Labor Market Intermediaries (Washington:

National Commission for Manpower Policy, 1978), pp. 57-104.

8. The implicit-contract argument is made informally in Rees, *op. cit.* I am not aware of any attempts to formalize the argument.

9. For a reason analogous to that given in note 6 above, one might expect workers to acquire more "intensive" information about long-term jobs than about short-term jobs. Similarly, one might expect employers to acquire more intensive information about applicants for long-term jobs than for short-term jobs. If workers expect to remain in any given primary job longer than they expect to remain in any given secondary job, and if employers expect to make longer commitments to workers in primary jobs than to workers in secondary jobs, one might, therefore, expect "intensive" information to be more important (to both workers and employers) for primary jobs than for secondary jobs. Hence, personal contacts might be more important sources of information about primary jobs and job applicants than about secondary jobs and job applicants.

10. On the construction of the Duncan index, see Albert Reiss, Jr. et al., Occupations and Social Status (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), chapter 6; and Peter Blau and Otis D. Duncan, The American Occupational Structure (New York: Wiley, 1967), pp. 117-128.

11. Blau and Duncan, *op. cit.*, p. 119. For more detailed discussions of the evidence in favor of these statements, see Reiss et al., chapter 8; and Robert Hodge, Paul Siegel, and Peter Rossi, "Occupational Prestige in the United States, 1925-1963," American Journal of Sociology 70 (November 1964): 286-302.

12. The simplest status-attainment model is found in Blau and Duncan, *op. cit.*, chapter 5. For some more complicated models, see Otis D. Duncan, David Featherman, and Beverly Duncan, Socioeconomic Background and Achievement (New York: Seminar Press, 1972); and Michael Ornstein, Entry into the American Labor Force (New York: Academic, 1976).

13. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America (New York: Basic, 1976), especially chapters 4 and 5.

14. An ethnographic study of a group of English youths from blue-collar families shows that these youths rebel against the work orientation that is quite explicitly taught in their school; their orientation toward work is the exact opposite of the one that the school is trying to inculcate in its students. See Paul Willis, Learning to Labor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

15. See, e.g., Michael Wachter, "The Primary and Secondary

Labor Market Mechanisms: A Critique of the Dual Approach," Brookings Papers on Economic Activity 3 (1974):637-680; Glen Cain, "The Challenge of Segmented Labor Market Theory to Orthodox Theory: A Survey," Journal of Economic Literature (December 1976): 1215-1257. Some economists have attempted to test labor market segmentation theory by means of econometric studies of mobility, e.g. Bradley Schiller, "Relative Earnings Mobility in the United States," American Economic Review 67 (December 1977): 926-941; Duane Leigh, "Occupational Advancement in the Late 1960's: An Indirect Test of the Dual Labor Market Hypothesis," Journal of Human Resources 11 (Spring 1976): 155-171.

16. Michael Piore, "Public and Private Responsibilities in the On-the-Job Training of Disadvantaged Workers," MIT Department of Economics Working Paper #23, June 1968.

17. Michael Piore, "Jobs and Training," in Samuel Beer and Richard Barringer (eds.), The State and the Poor (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop, 1970), pp. 53-83.

18. Michael Piore, "Notes for a Theory of Labor Market Stratification," in Richard Edwards, Michael Reich, and David Gordon (eds.), Labor Market Segmentation (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1975), pp. 125-150. Piore's account of "class subcultures" is drawn from Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers (New York: Free Press, 1962), chapter 11. The association between "class subcultures" and the presence or absence of secondary-to-primary job mobility, however, is not based on the work of Gans. In fact, Gans' ethnographic study describes a group of workers who are apparently members of a "working class subculture" but who apparently work, for the most part, at secondary jobs throughout their lives. See Gans, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-129, for information about the jobs held by these workers.

19. Paul Osterman, Getting Started (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), chapter 3.

20. Paul Osterman, "The Labor Market for Young Men" (Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, 1976), pp. 154-173.

21. Russell Rumberger and Martin Carnoy, "Segmentation in the U.S. Labour Market: Its Effects on the Mobility and Earnings of Whites and Blacks," Cambridge Journal of Economics 4 (June 1980): 117-132.

22. Sam Rosenberg, "Male Occupational Standing and the Dual Labor Market," Industrial Relations 19 (Winter 1980): 34-49.

23. Dorothea DeSchweinitz, How Workers Find Jobs (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932); Charles Myers and George Shultz, Dynamics of a Labor Market (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951); Leonard Adams and Robert Aronson, Workers and

Industrial Change (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957); Harold Sheppard and A. Harvey Belitsky, The Job Hunt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966).

24. Murray Edelman, Channels of Employment (Urbana: University of Illinois Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, 1952); Richard Lester, Hiring Practices and Labor Competition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954); Richard Lester, Adjustments to Labor Shortages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); D.I. Mackay et al., Labour Markets Under Different Employment Conditions (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971).

25. Charles Myers and W. Rupert Maclaurin, The Movement of Factory Workers (New York: Wiley, 1943); Lloyd Reynolds, The Structure of Labor Markets (New York: Harper and Bros., 1951); Albert Rees and George Shultz, Workers and Wages in an Urban Labor Market (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

26. There is only one empirical study that provides detailed information about the structure and operation of personal contact networks. Mark Granovetter, Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), is concerned with the job-finding activities of professionals and managers. Personal contacts play a major role in conveying information about job availability and job characteristics to these workers. Furthermore, the personal contacts that convey job information are mainly "weak ties" (i.e., acquaintances) rather than "strong ties" (i.e., close friends or relatives). It would be interesting to know whether Granovetter's findings also apply to workers in blue-collar and low-level white-collar jobs.

27. Rees and Shultz, op. cit., pp. 200-203.

28. Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 48-51, 85-87, 106-109.

29. Ibid., chapters 8 and 9.

30. William F. Whyte, Street Corner Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943); Gans, op. cit.; Gerald Suttles, The Social Order of the Slum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Peter Binzen, Whitetown U.S.A. (New York: Random House, 1970); William Kornblum, Blue Collar Community (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

31. Michael Young and Peter Willmott, Family and Kinship in East London (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957).

32. Gans, op. cit., pp. 122-129.

33. Kornblum, op. cit., chapter 2.

34. Alejandro Portes and Robert Bach, "Immigrant Earnings:

Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States," International Migration Review 14 (Fall 1980): 315-341; Kenneth Wilson and Alejandro Portes, "Immigrant Enclaves: An Analysis of the Labor Market Experiences of Cubans in Miami," American Journal of Sociology 86 (September 1980): 295-319; Kenneth Wilson and W. Allen Martin, "Ethnic Enclaves: A Comparison of the Cuban and Black Economies in Miami," American Journal of Sociology 88 (July 1982): 135-160.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES

Chapter 2's survey of the literature raised a number of questions about existing approaches to the study of job mobility and ethnic working class neighborhoods. Consideration of formal theories of job mobility and of the matching of workers with jobs (i.e., human capital theory, neoclassical job-search theory, status-attainment theory, and neo-Marxian class-reproduction theory) raised questions about details of the operation of labor market and non-market institutions. For example, the discussion of human capital theory raised the questions of whether the skills necessary to qualify for a high-paying job are always costly to acquire and of whether workers make labor market decisions on the basis of a comparison of the costs and benefits of alternative career paths. Consideration of the labor market segmentation approach to job mobility also raised a question about the operation of institutions, namely, the question of how some workers are able to make the transition from secondary to primary jobs. Chapter 2's discussion of case-study approaches (e.g., local labor market studies, ethnographic studies of ethnic working class neighborhoods, and studies of ethnic enclave economies), on the other hand, raised questions about theory. Although the latter approaches provide a description of many institutional details, they lack theories that could explain those details. The details, therefore, appear simply as isolated,

though interesting, sets of facts.

It is possible to bring theory and institutional detail closer together (and, therefore, to answer the kinds of questions posed in chapter 2) by developing a "grounded theory" of the job mobility of a particular group of workers. A "grounded theory" is a theory that is developed inductively from empirical data rather than deductively from a set of axioms.¹ This study is intended to develop a grounded theory of the job mobility of a group of non-college young men from ethnic working class neighborhoods. It is not intended to test that theory or to test any of the theories surveyed in chapter 2, although its findings will have definite implications about the applicability of the latter theories to ethnic working class young men and their jobs.

The empirical data are drawn from a qualitative case study that I have conducted in three ethnic working class neighborhoods of Boston. Although qualitative case studies were once common in labor economics,² contemporary labor economists rarely undertake them. Therefore, some readers of this chapter may be unfamiliar with or even suspicious of the kind of knowledge that can be gained from qualitative case studies. They may not know how such studies are conducted. They may be unfamiliar with the idea of a grounded theory and with the role that case-study evidence can play in developing such a theory. For these readers, simple descriptions of this study's research setting, types of data, and methods of data collection are not sufficient; it is also necessary to provide

a detailed explanation and justification of the research methods used in conducting the study.

This chapter provides such an explanation and justification. The chapter consists of four sections. The first section explains and defends the role of the qualitative case study in the present research project. It explains the kinds of questions that a qualitative case study can answer, why qualitative methods are needed in order to answer those questions, why a case study is sufficient for obtaining the answers, and why it is important to obtain the answers. The next two sections of the chapter explain where, when, and how the present case study was conducted. Section two provides a picture of the research setting. It describes the three Boston neighborhoods in which the bulk of the research was done. It also describes the condition of the Boston metropolitan area labor market during the period when the research was being conducted. Section three describes the case study data, which consist of open-ended interviews with workers, employers, and labor market intermediaries. The final section of the chapter explains how the case study data were used to construct a theory of mobility from secondary to primary employment. In so doing, it discusses the theory's method of explanation, its validity, and its generalizability.

1. THE ROLE OF THE QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

The questions about institutional details that were posed in chapter 2 are essentially questions about how workers and employers

make labor market decisions. For example, do workers compare the costs and benefits of alternative careers when they decide which job to take? Do employers consider job applicants' prior training when they decide which applicants to hire? In order to make decisions like these, workers and employers must have some understanding of how the economic environment (or some part thereof) operates. They must also have some understanding of their own places in that environment. Answers to detailed questions about the operation of institutions, then, depend on answers to questions about how economic agents understand their environment and their places therein.

The purpose of a qualitative case study in economics is to answer questions of the latter sort.³ More specifically, such a study aims to find out which economic variables the agents consider when making decisions, what relationships they believe exist among those variables, how they determine the values of those variables, how they go about acting on the basis of the information that they have obtained, and what they see themselves as doing when they act on that information. I shall refer to the set of answers to these questions, for any given economic agent, as that agent's "model" of the economic environment. The agent's model enables the agent to describe and analyze the economic environment, just as an economist's model enables the economist to describe and analyze that environment. It is important to note, though, that an agent's model, as defined here, includes a description not only of the environment but also of the

role that the agent sees him/herself as playing in that environment. This is the case because the agent uses his or her model as a basis for his or her own action, which is something that the economist generally does not do. In this way, the agent's model is unlike an economist's model. The agent's model may also differ from an economist's model in that it may define its basic concepts in a vague manner, may not be internally consistent, and may not be amenable to description in graphical or mathematical terms.

This study is about the job mobility of a group of workers. Accordingly, the model with which it is primarily concerned, and which it describes in the greatest detail, is the model of the labor market that those workers hold. However, since the decisions of employers are obviously relevant to the workers' job mobility, the study also includes information about employers' models of the labor market.

The qualitative research technique that I used in order to discover workers' and employers' models of the labor market was that of open-ended, or unstructured, interviewing. Open-ended interviewing is especially well suited to the task of identifying those models because it allows respondents to use their own analytical concepts and categories when answering questions. In an open-ended interview, the interviewer does not use a fully prespecified set of questions, does not force the respondents to fit their answers into a prespecified set of categories, and does not necessarily ask all respondents to answer exactly the

same questions in exactly the same order. Instead, the interviewer asks questions that elicit the respondents' stories about their own experiences. Some of these questions are determined in advance of the interview, but others are made up during the course of the interview in response to the stories that the respondents tell. From the respondents' stories, it is possible to obtain clues about their models. The details of the interviews and of the process of determining the respondents' models are the subject of section 3 of this chapter. At this point, what is important is that the open-ended interview, because it lacks a structure that the interviewer can specify in advance of the interview, forces the interviewer to let the respondent do much of the structuring of the interview. Because the structure that the respondent imposes on the interview will reflect his or her own analytical perspective, the open-ended interview forces the interviewer to accept the respondent's analytical framework. In this way, open-ended interviewing resembles another qualitative research technique, participant-observation. In fact, open-ended interviewing might be seen as a substitute for participant-observation in cases in which the latter technique is infeasible or inappropriate to the research problem at hand.

In order to illustrate more clearly exactly why qualitative techniques, such as open-ended interviewing, are the appropriate techniques to use in order to discover workers' and employers' models of the labor market, it is instructive to consider why some other commonly used social science research techniques are

not appropriate for this purpose. Consider the conventional structured interview, for example. In a structured interview, the respondent is given a questionnaire, which contains a prespecified set of questions and a prespecified set of categories to use in answering the questions. Each respondent must answer all questions in the same order as all other respondents. In this type of interview, it is the interviewer alone who structures the interview. Through his or her choice of questions, ordering of questions, and choice of response categories, the interviewer imposes his or her own concepts and categories on the respondent. There is no room for the respondent to question these concepts and categories during the interview, to tell the interviewer that the concepts and categories of the questionnaire are not the ones that he/she actually uses to guide his/her decisions. Thus, although the respondent may be able to answer the questionnaire (because he/she may understand the questionnaire's concepts and categories), the fact that he/she is able to do so does not imply that the questionnaire's concepts and categories are meaningful to him/her in the context of his/her own decision-making. Structured interviews, then, are not useful for discovering economic agents' models of the environment, since such interviews effectively force the agents to respond in terms of a prespecified model. (It is for this reason that the measures of occupational prestige used by status-attainment researchers, which are derived from structured interviews, cannot be used as evidence that workers make decisions about job mobility in terms of a model

that ranks jobs along a unidimensional prestige continuum.)

Neither are the techniques of descriptive statistics or econometrics, applied to behavioral data, useful for identifying agents' models. Descriptive statistical techniques are designed to obtain information about the distribution of a variable or variables in a population. In order to use these techniques, one must know in advance the variable(s) that are to be measured. The process of discovering agents' models is a process of determining the variables that agents use when making decisions. The information that descriptive statistical techniques use as an input is the information that the process of uncovering agents' models produces as an output. Hence, the former techniques cannot be used as part of the latter process. Similar remarks apply to econometric techniques. Econometrics has even more stringent informational requirements than descriptive statistics. In order to use econometrics, one must know not only which variables are to be measured but also what sorts of relationships exist among those variables. Econometric techniques then enable one to estimate the parameters of those relationships and to test specific hypotheses about the parameters. Since the kinds of relationships that agents believe exist among economic variables are part of the agents' models of the economic environment, it is clearly inappropriate to use econometric techniques to determine what those models are in the first place. (Econometric techniques may, however, be very useful for testing hypotheses that are derived from those models.)

The argument thus far has shown why qualitative research is appropriate for discovering economic agents' models. Since I have conducted a qualitative case study, I must show why a case study, as opposed to a qualitative study of broader dimensions (e.g., one with a large number of subjects who are selected randomly from a large population), is appropriate for this purpose. Since it is not possible to generalize in a rigorous way from a case study, how can one know the limits of applicability of the models that the case study has revealed? My response to this question is implicit in the argument of the previous paragraph. The purpose of a case study is to discover agents' models, not to measure their relative frequencies in a larger population or to test hypotheses derived from them. In order to undertake the latter tasks, one must first know what the agents' models are. It is interesting and perhaps important to measure the distribution of agents' models in a larger population (once that population has been defined), but this measurement can only occur at a later stage of the research process, after the models have first been defined. To insist on measurement prior to definition of the models is to put the cart before the horse! Since definition of the models is the first step in the research process, a case study is sufficient in order to begin that step. A single case study will reveal the model(s) of some economic agents. If a larger population of interest to the researcher is defined, then additional case studies can be conducted to determine the models of other members of that population. Only after all

of the models that exist in the target population have been identified is it possible to measure the distribution of those models in that population.

It remains for me to explain why it is important to discover the models held by economic agents. One reason is simply that these models are of interest in their own right. They are empirical phenomena that can be described and explained. Since many contemporary economists are not accustomed to this point of view, however, a further defense of the relevance of agents' models to economic theorizing is needed. One such defense is that it is essential for the economist to know these models in order to construct his or her own model of the agents' behavior. In principle, many neoclassical economists should be receptive to this argument. After all, neoclassical economics is, in part, a theory about how individual economic agents make decisions on the basis of the information that is available to them about the economic environment. In order to model those decisions correctly, the economist needs to know what information is available to the agents. This involves knowing the economic variables to which the agents pay attention, how the agents learn the values of those variables, and what relationships the agents believe exist among the variables. In practice, neoclassical economists simply make assumptions about the answers to these questions. (Note that even neoclassical theories of decision-making under uncertainty and Bayesian theories of learning make such assumptions; these theories allow agents to be uncertain or

even ignorant of the precise values of certain variables, but they nevertheless assume that the agents know which variables to look at, how to learn the values of the variables, and how to determine the relationships that exist among the variables.) It is not necessary to make assumptions of this sort. By incorporating economic agents' models into their own models, economists can dispense with these ungrounded assumptions.⁴

Some readers, however, might object that this concern with the description of agents' decision-making processes is misplaced. They might argue that an economic model can legitimately dispense with or make ungrounded assumptions about economic agents' models; as long as the economic model makes accurate predictions about the aspects of the agents' behavior that it is designed to explain, then it is acceptable. This argument, which is derived from a more comprehensive argument of Milton Friedman's, rests on a series of epistemological claims about the logical structure of economic theories, about the role of prediction in economic explanation, and about whether economic theories should be given a realist or an instrumentalist interpretation.⁵ An evaluation of these claims is well beyond the scope of this chapter. I will not, therefore, provide a complete response to the objection raised at the beginning of this paragraph. However, I will suggest two reasons why even an economist who is not concerned with describing agents' decision-making processes per se might be interested in a theory that takes the agents' models into account.

The first reason is that a theory that bypasses or makes

ungrounded assumptions about the agents' models is likely to be unable to account for many of the interesting details of their economic behavior.⁶ This is, of course, an empirical claim about economic theories, but its plausibility may be illustrated by using one of the theories discussed in chapter 2 as an example. Consider the implicit-contract interpretation of job-search theory, which predicts that jobs for which intensive information is important for both employer and worker will be filled through personal contacts. The theory does not say what kinds of personal contacts will be used, e.g., whether the contacts will be casual acquaintances or family members. Nor does it say anything about how the contacts will be incorporated into the hiring process, e.g., whether the contacts will provide job applicants with "pull" or only with information about job availability, or whether employers will refuse to hire applicants who do not have personal contacts in the firm. The answers to questions like these are not only interesting, but are also important for the design of labor market policy (e.g., affirmative-action policy). In order to discover the answers, it is necessary to examine the decision-making processes of workers and employers; this means that it is necessary to know workers' and employers' models of the labor market.

The second reason (other than descriptive accuracy) that economic agents' models are important for economic theory is that a successful prediction of an economic phenomenon raises the question of why the prediction is successful. The fact that

an economic theory makes a correct prediction is itself an empirical fact that can be explained. If the economic theory that generated the prediction correctly represents the models of the economic agents, then the theory can explain its own predictive success on the basis of its correct depiction of the agents' models. If, however, the theory omits or misrepresents the models of the economic agents, then not only is the theory incapable of accounting for its own predictive success, but it is difficult to see how the theory's predictive power could be explained.⁷ Consider human capital theory, which correctly predicts a positive correlation between education and earnings. Why is the theory able to make this correct prediction? If human capital theory accurately represented the models of the labor market held by at least some workers, then this could explain why the theory predicted this correlation correctly. However, if human capital theory did not accurately represent the models held by any workers, then the theory would be incapable of explaining its own predictive success. How, then, would it be possible to explain why it made a correct prediction about the correlation between education and earnings? It might be the case that the correlation is due to the operation of some economic process that human capital theory does not depict, e.g., screening. But if this were so, then one could ask the same question about screening theory that was asked about human capital theory: why does the theory predict correctly? This question makes sense in economics because economics deals with agents who perceive, decide, and act in the

economic environment. The sort of answer that is required is one that makes sense of the behavior of the economic agents as agents. A theory that made correct predictions about economic variables would be useful for forecasting even if it bypassed or misrepresented the agents' models, but it would not be a theory that made sense of the agents as agents.

My argument that it is important for economists to make use of economic agents' models in constructing their own theories should not be misconstrued as an argument that all economic phenomena can ultimately be explained in terms of the models of the individual economic agents. Nor should it be misconstrued as an argument that the agents' models can replace economic theories. Economic agents need not have a complete and correct understanding of their economic environment or of their own behavior. They may be misinformed or confused about how the economic environment works. They may not know the correct values of economic variables. They may not be fully aware of all of the reasons for their actions. They may misunderstand the roles that they play in the economic system. Their models may be very partial and incomplete. To accept the agents' models as necessarily correct would be as much of a mistake as to ignore them altogether. When an agent's model is not completely correct, it is necessary to explain how and why it is wrong. The method that I use in this study enables me to do exactly this. While I use the workers' model of the labor market as a central analytical construct in my account of their job mobility,

the workers' model is only the starting point of that account, not the ending point. I also use information about employers' labor recruitment and hiring practices, job structures, labor market conditions, and the social structure of the workers' neighborhoods to place the workers' model in its proper context. In so doing, I show both how the workers' model is a partial and limited understanding of the labor market and why the model, nevertheless, makes sense from the workers' point of view. The final section of this chapter explains how I made use of the workers' model in constructing a theory of their job mobility. Before that explanation can make sense, I must describe the research setting and the way in which I used open-ended interviews to discover the workers' model.

2. THE RESEARCH SETTING: EAST BOSTON, SOUTH BOSTON, AND CHARLESTOWN, AND THE BOSTON AREA LABOR MARKET

I conducted open-ended interviews from October 1983 through April 1985. The workers whom I interviewed were residents of three ethnic working class neighborhoods of Boston: East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. (For the sake of convenience, I will sometimes refer to these three neighborhoods, collectively, as "Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods," even though these neighborhoods are not the only Boston neighborhoods that could be described by that term.) There are important similarities among these neighborhoods. According to the 1980 U.S. Census,⁸ the population of each neighborhood is more than 98% white (in

contrast to the city of Boston as a whole, whose population is only 70% white). The residents of each neighborhood work mainly in blue-collar, clerical, or non-professional service occupations, and do so to a greater extent than residents of the city as a whole. (In 1980, the percentage of each neighborhood's employed residents, aged 16 or older, who worked in occupations other than professional, managerial, technical, or sales occupations was: East Boston, 78.2%, South Boston, 79.6%, Charlestown, 71.1%. All of these percentages are well above the corresponding percentage for the city as a whole, which was 62.5%.)⁹ A majority of the residents of each neighborhood belong to a single ethnic group. (See below.) In these respects, the three neighborhoods resemble the white ethnic working class neighborhoods that have been described in ethnographic studies.

There are other similarities that are not revealed by census data, but that I discovered during the course of my fieldwork in the neighborhoods. Each neighborhood is geographically isolated from the rest of the city, East Boston by Boston Harbor, Charlestown by the Charles River, and South Boston by railroad yards, an expressway, and an industrial area. Nevertheless, despite their geographical isolation, all three neighborhoods are easily accessible to downtown Boston. Each can be reached by subway from downtown Boston in fifteen minutes or less. (It is even possible to reach some residential areas of Charlestown on foot from the downtown area in about ten minutes.) The neighborhoods also share a distinctive type of social structure. The social

groups in which neighborhood men participate outside of the workplace are anchored in the neighborhood. They include extended families and age-graded, male peer groups. These groups play an important role in the process by which neighborhood men learn about and make decisions about jobs, a role that I will describe in detail in chapter 5.

There are also some important differences among the three neighborhoods. East Boston and South Boston were extremely stable neighborhoods at the time when I was conducting my research. According to the representatives of neighborhood organizations with whom I spoke, most of the adult residents of each of these neighborhoods grew up in the neighborhood, and most of their children continue to live in the neighborhood by choice. (Those who do not remain in the neighborhood usually move to nearby suburbs that resemble the city neighborhoods in ethnic composition, social structure, and occupational distribution.) Charlestown was traditionally similar to the other two neighborhoods in this respect, but in the early 1980's it began to experience an influx of high-income, college-educated professionals who had no family ties to the neighborhood.

East Boston is a predominantly (60% single- or partial ancestry) Italian neighborhood of about 32,000 residents. The East Boston residents of Italian descent whom I interviewed were mostly third-generation Americans. Other important ethnic groups in East Boston are the Irish and small (but growing) communities of recently arrived Southeast Asian and Latin American

refugees. East Boston residents' levels of schooling are among the lowest in the city; 51.6% of those aged 25 or older have not completed high school, while only 4.8% are college graduates. (The corresponding figures for the city as a whole are 31.5% and 20.3%, respectively.) The neighborhood's 1979 median household income of \$11,216 was also among the city's lowest; it was only 89.5% of the citywide median household income. However, there is some residential segregation of residents by income within the neighborhood. East Boston is the location of Boston's international airport and of most of its shipyards; both of these are important sources of employment for neighborhood residents. There are also many small businesses that are owned by people who reside or who once resided in the neighborhood.

South Boston's largest ethnic group is the Irish, who make up 60% (single- and multiple-ancestry) of the neighborhood's approximately 30,000 residents. Most of South Boston's Irish families, like most of those in the U.S. as a whole, are descendants of mid-nineteenth century Irish immigrants, although some are the product of more recent immigration. Other important ethnic groups in the neighborhood are the Italians and the Poles. While 38.4% of South Boston's adults have not finished high school; 6.9% have college degrees. The neighborhood's 1979 median household income of \$10,601 was only 84.6% of the citywide median and was the second lowest of any Boston neighborhood. As in East Boston, there is income-based residential segregation within the neighborhood. A large number of small manufacturing

firms are located in or adjacent to South Boston, but relatively few South Boston residents work for these firms.

Charlestown, like South Boston, is a predominantly (58% single- or multiple-ancestry) Irish neighborhood. The Italians are the only other sizeable ethnic group among the neighborhood's approximately 13,000 residents. While 36.1% of Charlestown's adults have not completed high school, 14.8% are college graduates. The latter figure reflects the recent influx of highly-educated professionals into the neighborhood. Also reflecting this influx is the neighborhood's 1979 median household income, which, at \$12,833, was 102.4% of the citywide median. Charlestown has a small number of manufacturing firms, which provide employment for a small and declining fraction of the neighborhood's residents. Aside from these firms, which are located on the perimeter of the neighborhood, Charlestown is almost entirely residential. The small businesses that are so common in East Boston and (to a lesser extent) in South Boston are almost entirely absent from Charlestown.

Most of the adult men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown work outside of their own neighborhoods, mainly in other parts of the city of Boston (sometimes downtown) and in the close-in suburbs. Therefore, a brief discussion of the condition of the Boston metropolitan area labor market during the period in which I conducted my interviews is in order. During this period, the Boston area experienced an upswing in the general level of economic activity. The area recovered from the

nationwide recession of the early 1980's and was just beginning to experience the economic boom that was to characterize it during the middle-to-later years of the decade. In 1983, the metropolitan area's unemployment rate was 5.8%. In 1984, it was 4.1%; in 1985, 3.4%. The corresponding unemployment rates for the city of Boston during these years were: 1983, 7.9%; 1984, 5.5%; and 1985, 4.6%.¹⁰ (Unemployment rates by neighborhood are not available for the years during which the study was conducted.) The relatively rapid change in the condition of the local labor market that occurred during the research period was an unexpected advantage for the research, since it enabled me to determine how, if at all, the process of mobility from secondary to primary jobs changed as the local labor market tightened.

3. THE INTERVIEWS

This section describes the open-ended interviews that are the primary data of this study, explains how I selected the interviewees, and outlines the way in which I used the interviews to discover workers' and employers' models of the labor market.

The interviews were of four types: (a) interviews with men from East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown; (b) interviews with firms and government agencies that employ men from these neighborhoods; (c) interviews with what I will call "labor market intermediaries" in the three Boston neighborhoods (to be described below); and (d) interviews with other workers, employers, and intermediaries, undertaken for comparative purposes.

I conducted a total of thirty interviews with men from East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. Seven of the workers were from East Boston, fourteen from South Boston, and nine from Charlestown. Eleven, all from South Boston, were between the ages of thirty and thirty-five. The rest were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-six. Although my major interest was in men who had not attended college, six of my interviewees had some college education and two had college degrees.

I interviewed twenty-four employers who employ men from East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. Of these, seventeen mainly offered primary jobs, while seven mainly offered secondary jobs. (I will refer to the former as "primary employers" and to the latter as "secondary employers.") When possible, I interviewed the person or persons responsible for making decisions about the recruitment and hiring of workers. In large firms or government agencies with centralized recruitment and hiring, I generally interviewed a personnel manager(s). In local branches of large retailers, I interviewed the branch manager. In small sole proprietorships or partnerships, I usually interviewed an owner, but when this was not possible I spoke with an experienced worker. Finally, in the unionized construction trades, I interviewed union business agents or coordinators of apprenticeship programs.

I conducted eighteen interviews (eight in East Boston, six in South Boston, and four in Charlestown) with people whom I will call "labor market intermediaries," although the term "labor market intermediary" is not a strictly accurate description of

these people. The "intermediaries" were people who had general knowledge about the employment patterns and problems of young men in the three neighborhoods. Each of them worked in one of the neighborhoods. Many had grown up in the neighborhoods in which they worked. Some, but not all, were full- or part-time job counselors. The "intermediaries" included social workers in neighborhood-based social-service agencies, job counselors in neighborhood-based non-profit employment centers, coordinators of high school equivalency diploma programs, high school guidance counselors, supervisors of neighborhood recreational facilities, and Roman Catholic priests. Interviews with these people, which I conducted mainly during the early stages of the research process, gave me both a general overview of the employment situation of young men in the three neighborhoods and personal contacts with neighborhood youths who were willing to be interviewed.

The case study findings are based primarily on the aforementioned interviews. However, for comparative purposes, I also conducted a total of twenty-four interviews with other workers, employers, and intermediaries. These included young men and job counselors in black neighborhoods of Boston, job counselors who worked in downtown Boston, primary employers who do not employ many men from the neighborhoods in which I was interested, and a U.S. Army recruiter. The results of these interviews do not figure prominently in the case study. Some of them are not mentioned at all in the following chapters. However, I occasionally draw on them in order to show how the labor market patterns that I am

describing resemble or differ from those that characterize other kinds of workers and other kinds of jobs. In addition, all of the comparative interviews, whether or not I refer to them in the text, helped to shape my perspective on the Boston area labor market in general and on the particular institutions that I shall be describing.

The interviews ranged from twenty minutes to three hours in length. Interviews with workers and with labor market intermediaries were usually about one hour long. Interviews with employers usually lasted between thirty minutes and one hour, depending on the amount of time that the employer had available.

Because my open-ended interviews were not standardized as to content, it would be impossible to provide a complete account of the contents of all of the interviews without reproducing all of the interview transcripts. However, it is possible to provide a general outline of the contents of each of the three major types of interviews—worker interviews, employer interviews, and labor market intermediary interviews. Since these outlines may appear rather mechanical, it is important to stress that they are outlines rather than exhaustive descriptions of any particular interviews. They indicate the kinds of information that I sought from my interviewees rather than the particular questions that I asked any one person.

In my interviews with labor market intermediaries, I sought both information about the intermediaries' roles in the labor market and the neighborhood and a general overview of the employment

situation of young men in the neighborhood. I asked each intermediary about the nature of his or her contact with its neighborhood in general and with youths and young adults in particular. What kinds of people does the intermediary serve and how does he/she serve them? If the intermediary engaged in job counseling or placement, I asked about the counseling or placement activities. With what kinds of employers does the intermediary deal? With what kinds of jobs? Why those particular employers and jobs rather than others? How does the intermediary learn about job openings and place workers in jobs? What kinds of clients seek job counseling or placement from the intermediary? Why those kinds of clients and not others? In what kinds of jobs are the clients interested, and why? What kinds of jobs, if any, have the clients previously held? How long do clients remain at the jobs that they obtained with the intermediary's help, and why? Regardless of whether or not the intermediary did job counseling or placement, I asked about the school and work experiences of non-college young men in the neighborhood during and after high school. How do the youths feel about school? What kinds of jobs do they obtain? How do they find out about and obtain these jobs? What kinds of qualifications are needed for the jobs? How do young men obtain these qualifications? How do they feel about the jobs? Why do they change jobs? Do they "settle down" into a single job? How do they feel about the neighborhood? Do they remain in the neighborhood after leaving school? Do they work in the neighborhood? Are

there differences between high school graduates and high school dropouts, or between teenagers and young adults, in any of these respects? Are there any other important differences among sub-groups of young men?

I began each of my worker interviews with some background questions about the worker's age, current job and employer, education, ethnicity, marital status, and parents' jobs. I then asked the worker about his attitudes toward and experiences in school. Did he take any vocational courses in school and, if so, why? If he dropped out of high school, what were the circumstances? Did he consider going to college or vocational school? Why did he attend or not attend college? Vocational school? I then sought information about the worker's post-school employment history (including unemployment, if any). Insofar as possible, I let each worker tell his own story in his own way, but the following questions indicate the kinds of things that I sought to probe during the course of each story. How did the worker learn about and go about obtaining each job? Is this how people usually learn about and obtain that job? Before taking the job, did he know anyone who worked at it? What other jobs, if any, did he consider at the time? What other jobs, if any, did he think were available to him at the time? How, if at all, did he go about looking for a job? Why did he decide to take the particular job that he took? What qualifications did he believe there were for this job? How did he obtain those qualifications? What were his attitudes toward the job before taking it and

after having worked at it? What would he have done if he had not obtained that job? What possibilities for promotion did the job offer? Was the worker interested in them? What promotions, if any, did he receive? How long did he remain on that job/with that employer? Why did he leave? What are his attitudes toward his current job? How long does he expect to stay? What kind of work does he want to do in the future? What kind does he expect to do? What kinds of jobs do his friends and relatives have? How did they obtain them? What are his attitudes toward those jobs? What are/were his friends' and relatives' attitudes toward the jobs he has held? Toward the end of the interview, if time was available, I asked each worker about his neighborhood and his attitudes toward it. Did he grow up in the neighborhood? Does he plan to stay there? Do his friends and relatives live in the neighborhood?

I began each of the employer interviews by requesting basic information about the size, age, and union status of the firm or government agency (and, if relevant, of the establishment). I then sought a description of the employer's job structure, exclusive of managerial and professional jobs, which were not of concern to me in this study. What kinds of jobs exist? What wages do they pay? How are they organized in relation to one another? Which are open to external hires and which are filled through internal promotion? If an internal labor market exists, what are the channels of internal promotion? What rules govern promotions and pay increases? After having the employer map out

the job structure, I asked about the kinds of people who work for the employer. Are there any concentrations of workers from particular ethnic groups or particular neighborhoods, either in the firm as a whole or in particular jobs? What previous jobs have new workers held? How old are applicants for entry-level jobs? Labor recruitment was one of my major concerns during the employer interviews. How does the employer find workers? How do workers learn about job vacancies? Why does the employer use the recruitment methods that he/she uses? Did he/she ever consider other methods? Another major concern of mine was selection of workers for jobs that are open to applicants from outside of the firm. What characteristics does the employer look for in new workers? What formal qualifications (e.g., education, experience, skill) are required for each job? What other qualifications are required? Why are these qualifications required? Do they ever change? How does the employer ascertain that applicants have the necessary qualifications? How would a person go about obtaining these qualifications? What is the relative importance of different qualifications for each job? What procedures does the employer use to decide which applicants to hire? Do the friends or relatives of current employees have any special advantages over other applicants in the recruitment or selection process? I was also interested in training processes. How do workers learn their jobs after they have been hired? How long does it take them to reach an average level of proficiency in each job? If there is an internal labor market, how do

workers learn jobs above the entry level? A final concern of mine was labor turnover. How long do workers stay with the employer (or, if relevant, in the occupation)? Why do they leave? What kinds of jobs do they do after they leave?

To supplement the outlines of the three major types of interviews, I can make two general statements that apply to the contents of all of the interviews. First, I always made a special effort to discover and probe the assumptions that my respondents seemed to take for granted.¹ Sometimes I was able to do this more or less directly by asking questions about aspects of the respondents' stories that seemed puzzling or unclear to me. For example, one of the ways I found out what workers meant when they said that a friend or relative "got them a job" was to ask them exactly what the friend or relative did to help them get the job. By comparing their answers with the responses that employers gave to questions about the role of personal contacts in the recruitment and hiring process, I was able to determine how the personal contact process worked. In other cases, though, it was more difficult to uncover taken-for-granted assumptions. Sometimes I asked hypothetical questions about what the respondent would do if confronted with a situation to which he/she was not accustomed. For example, I sometimes asked primary employers what they would do if they did not have enough qualified applicants to fill all of their job vacancies. Sometimes I asked questions about alternative actions that seemed plausible to me but that the respondent did not consider. For example, I sometimes asked

workers why they did not look at newspaper advertisements in order to learn about job vacancies.

The second general point that I must make regarding interview content is that the contents of each interview were largely shaped by the learning that I did during the interview process and by the judgments that I made on the basis of what I learned. From each interview, from each part of each interview, and from the consideration of each interview together with all previous interviews, I learned something about the institutions that govern the job mobility of Boston's ethnic working class young men. As I learned, I continually formulated, revised, or replaced tentative hypotheses about the structure and operation of those institutions. Although I went into each interview with a tentative set of questions, those questions were always subject to revision or replacement during the interview on the basis of what I learned in the course of the interview. Moreover, the tentative set of questions was subject to change from one interview to the next because each interview, by itself and/or in conjunction with previous interviews, contributed something new to my understanding of the relevant institutions, either by strengthening my tentative hypotheses or by leading me to revise or replace those hypotheses.

A more formal way to describe the way in which learning and personal judgment influenced the contents of the interviews is in terms of the conventional concepts of data collection, data coding, and preliminary data analysis. In conventional, structured

interview studies, data collection, coding, and analysis are three distinct stages of the research endeavor. In this study, however, they were largely simultaneous processes. Each datum, i.e., each interview or part thereof, contributed to the formulation of tentative analytical categories and hypotheses about how those categories were related. The emerging categories and hypotheses, in turn, helped to shape (but never fully determined) the next data that were to be collected.¹²

An example will clarify the role that learning and personal judgment played in the interview process. I discovered during the course of the interviews that many workers from East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown draw a sharp distinction between "good" and "bad" jobs. I was first sensitized to this distinction through the comments of some labor market intermediaries. These comments led me to try to find out whether the workers whom I was later to interview would make such a distinction when they described their own labor market experiences. Since I did not want to impose a preconceived set of categories on the workers, though, I did not ask workers about this distinction directly. Instead, I listened to their stories and waited to see if the distinction would emerge spontaneously from those stories. Some workers spontaneously made the distinction in a very direct way, explicitly stating that there were two kinds of jobs. I was then able to ask them directly what differentiated the two kinds of jobs. More often, the distinction would emerge indirectly when a worker referred to a particular job as a "good" or "bad"

job. When this occurred, I would ask the worker why he described the job in this way. When workers spontaneously made a sharp distinction between the two kinds of jobs, I had an opportunity to ask them what the basis of this distinction was. After hearing the distinction formulated and explained in the same way by several different workers of different ages and from different neighborhoods, I began to use the distinction as a tentative theoretical category. Upon reflection, I noticed enough similarity between the workers' concepts of "good" and "bad" jobs and the labor market segmentation theory's concepts of primary and secondary jobs that I began to identify the former concepts with the latter ones. When I reread the transcripts of previous interviews, I discovered that the workers saw the transition from "bad" jobs to a "good" job as the key event that had occurred or would occur in their working lives. This discovery led me to focus on the transition from secondary to primary employment as the most important aspect of these workers' job mobility. Thereafter, I made sure to probe the details of this transition during my interviews with workers and intermediaries and to probe the details of labor recruitment and hiring during my interviews with primary employers. Occasionally I found workers who did not think about jobs in the way that my emerging interpretation suggested. I did not try to impose my interpretation on these workers. Instead, I tried to find out the terms in which they thought about jobs. Then, after the worker had told his own story, I would mention that some other men whom I had

interviewed thought about jobs as being divided into "good" and "bad" and thought about their own work histories in terms of movement from "bad" to "good" jobs. Workers would invariably recognize this way of thinking about jobs even if they themselves did not use it. Those who did not use it would always tell me emphatically that they did not use it and would explain how they were different from the workers who did use it. This made me aware that my tentative interpretation did not fit all workers from East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown, but it also strengthened my confidence in the applicability of that interpretation to some workers from those neighborhoods.

Like the contents of the interviews, the method by which I selected interviewees relied heavily on the learning that I did during the interview process and on the judgments that I made on the basis of that learning. I began by interviewing two kinds of respondents, small employers who I thought might hire young people, and labor market intermediaries who I thought might have some contact with neighborhood youths. I then asked both the employers and the intermediaries whether they could refer me to young men from my target neighborhoods (preferably but not necessarily non-college young men) who might be willing to be interviewed. Employers were rarely willing to do this, but several of the intermediaries did refer me to young workers who were willing to talk. This is how I obtained my first worker interviews. I also asked each intermediary to give me the names of other intermediaries in his or her neighborhood. This is how

I obtained additional intermediary interviews. Because workers were rarely willing to put me in contact with their friends and relatives, I relied on the intermediaries for all of my contacts with young (i.e., age twenty-six and under) workers. As I learned about the primary jobs that workers and intermediaries perceived as being important in each neighborhood, I interviewed the relevant employers. I also interviewed a few of the secondary employers who had employed some of my interviewees. Since the focus of the study came to be entry into primary jobs, however, I interviewed only a few of the latter employers. As I proceeded with the worker, employer, and intermediary interviews, I began to develop and explore tentative analytical categories and hypotheses. I used these emerging categories and hypotheses to guide the selection of additional interviewees. For example, my worker and intermediary interviews led me to develop the idea that there is, in each neighborhood, a "customary group" of primary jobs, which has a special significance to men in that neighborhood. As I learned what the "customary groups" were, I interviewed the employers who offered those jobs. I stopped interviewing in each category (i.e., workers, employers, intermediaries) when the interview results from that category, when taken together with those from the other two categories, began to converge to a single understanding of the job mobility process. I will explain later how I arrived at this understanding. Before doing this, however, I must explain how I selected the older workers (ages 30-35) whom I interviewed.

As I was beginning to gain a tentative understanding of the job mobility process from the interviews described in the previous paragraph, I realized that I had interviewed only three workers who had actually "completed" that process, i.e., who had actually settled down into primary jobs. Because my interviews with these three workers did not enable me to explore all of the aspects of the process that I believed to be important, I decided to interview older workers who, I thought, would be likely to have completed the process. There were few labor market intermediaries or formal neighborhood organizations of any kind that could put me in contact with the latter workers. Moreover, primary employers were generally unwilling to allow me to contact their employees. Therefore, I needed to use a new procedure to locate and select older workers. The procedure that I used was a door-to-door, random sample survey of South Boston men who were between the ages of thirty and thirty-five (inclusive) in 1984. (Since I had already determined that there were no job-mobility differences between the three neighborhoods that required further exploration, I could safely limit my sample of older workers to a single neighborhood.) The sample was selected from the Boston city census list.¹³ I selected thirty-five men, of whom I was able to interview eleven. These eleven interviews enabled me to explore all of the issues that I had intended to use them to explore. In addition, they did not challenge the understanding of job mobility that I had previously built up. Rather, they helped me to fill in some of the details of that

understanding and made me more confident of its correctness. At this stage of the research, it appeared that further interviews would only enrich the understanding at which I had arrived, but would not challenge it or lead me to modify it in any important way. Therefore, I ended the entire interview process after completing the last eleven worker interviews.

The sampling process that I have just described occurred simultaneously with the processes of data collection, data coding, and preliminary data analysis. Although it was quite systematic, it was not the kind of method that would be appropriate for a statistical study. In order to explain why it is appropriate for a qualitative case study, I must describe in more formal terms how I went about coding and analyzing the interview results during the interview process.

In coding and analyzing the interview results, I was looking not for particular responses to particular questions, but rather for recurring themes or patterns in those responses, themes or patterns that would reveal the workers' and employers' models.¹⁵ Three partially-overlapping waves of data collection, coding, and analysis were required in order to identify these themes or patterns. The first wave involved the identification of workers' and employers' analytical categories. The second involved the identification of the theoretical properties of the categories. The final wave involved the identification of the relationships among the categories. Because the three waves overlapped in part, the results of these waves fed back upon each other.

I began the first wave by coding the results of my initial interviews into a large number of tentative analytical categories that I thought might enter into workers' or employers' decision-making processes. I arrived at these categories by making educated guesses on the basis of a comparison of the interview results. (For example, my initial interviews with workers and intermediaries led to initial classifications of jobs and of workers' job-finding methods.) Some of the categories (e.g., the workers' category of a "good" job) were ones for which the economic agents themselves had names, while others (e.g., the "customary group" of "good" jobs) were ones that I had to infer from the interview results and for which I had to supply names. The initial categories guided my decisions about the people whom I would interview next and about the information that I would seek from them. After each new interview or set of interviews, I conducted a new comparison of interview results. During the early stages of interviewing, each new comparison led to a new set of categories, as old categories were dropped or revised and new ones added. As I conducted more interviews, though, my conceptions of workers' and employers' analytical categories gradually became more stable. (For example, workers' and intermediaries' repeated mentions of "luck" and "personal contacts" as job-finding methods led me to classify job-finding methods into these two categories).

The next wave, which I began after this stabilization of categories had begun but before I was certain of all the relevant

categories, involved developing the theoretical properties of the categories. Since I was interested in discovering workers' and employers' models of the labor market, this next step involved finding out what the categories meant to workers and employers (e.g., finding out what workers meant when they said that "luck" or "personal contacts" are needed in order to obtain a "good" job). In order to do this, I compared the results of all of the interviews to which a particular category seemed to apply. I then compared these results with the results of other interviews to which the category seemed not to apply. These comparisons yielded some tentative hypotheses about the meanings of the categories to the economic agents. I selected additional interviewees and interview topics with the aim of exploring these hypotheses. As I continued to conduct interviews and compare results, my ideas about the meanings of the categories to the agents began to stabilize.

The final wave, which partially overlapped with the previous two, involved determining the relationships that the workers and employers believed existed among the categories of their respective models. (For example, what relationships did the workers perceive among the concepts "luck," "personal contacts," "good jobs," and the "customary group"?) The procedures that I used to accomplish this task were of the same kinds as those described for the previous two waves: comparison of interview results, development of tentative hypotheses on the basis of the comparison, selection of new interviewees and interview topics in order to explore these

hypotheses, and repetition of this process until my ideas stabilized.¹⁶

When these three waves of data collection, coding, and preliminary analysis ended, I had discovered at least the broad outlines, if not all of the details, of a workers' model of the labor market. My confidence in my understanding of this model was based on the fact that I had contextually validated that understanding. That is, I had evaluated my understanding of the model by checking it against the evidence from a variety of sources.¹⁷ The use of a variety of different sources served as a partial check on the accuracy of each source, thereby reducing the likelihood that I was led astray by individual respondents who lied or who were misinformed. My interviews with workers (including those who did not themselves hold the model that I had identified, but who recognized the model) were, of course, my major source. My interviews with labor market intermediaries supported what I had learned from the workers. Finally, my employer interviews supported my understanding of the workers' model because I was able to see how the employers' job structures and recruitment and hiring practices supported what I had learned about the way in which workers perceive the labor market. Although contextual validation could not prove that my understanding of the workers' model was correct, it did make that understanding highly plausible to me. Because my conception of the workers' model eventually came to change less and less with each successive interview, I reached a point at which, I believed, further

interviewing might deepen but would not change my understanding. At this point, I stopped interviewing workers and intermediaries because I had achieved the purpose for which I had conducted these interviews, which was to gain an understanding of the workers' model that would be sufficient to serve as a basis for further theorizing.¹⁸

Similar remarks apply to the employer interviews. At the end of the three waves of data collection, coding, and preliminary analysis, I had achieved a broad understanding of several different employer models of the labor market. This understanding had been contextually validated through a comparison of the employer interview results with each other and with the results of the worker and intermediary interviews. Although my understanding of the various employer models was not as deep as my understanding of the workers' model, this was acceptable because the goal of my study was to explain the workers' job mobility pattern, not the employers' labor market practices. Once my understanding of the employers' practices was sufficient to enable me to see how those practices could relate to the workers' job mobility patterns, it was unnecessary for me to probe the employers' models more deeply.

My sampling procedure, then, was justified by the purpose of my study. That purpose--to develop a theory of the job mobility of a group of workers--required that I discover the ways in which those workers and, to a lesser extent, their employers, understood the operation of the labor market and their own place

in the labor market. If my purpose had been different, my sampling method would also have had to differ. Because my aim was not to describe a population statistically or to test quantifiable hypotheses about a population, I did not need to obtain a large, random sample. Because my goal was not to write an ethnography, I did not need to continue interviewing until I understood every detail of the way in which my subjects perceived their world. Finally, because my objective was not to develop a complete theory of the job mobility of all ethnic working class youths or even of all youths in the three neighborhoods that I studied, I did not need to sample until I had identified all of the labor market models that exist in those populations; identification of a single workers' model was sufficient.

4. CONSTRUCTING AN EXPLANATION

Once I had achieved understandings of the workers' and employers' models that I considered sufficient for use in further theorizing, I began the task of constructing a theory that would explain the workers' job mobility patterns. I had no preconceived ideas about what that theory would look like, although I did have a tentative idea, from my preliminary analysis of the interview results, that the practices of employers would somehow figure in the explanation. The process of constructing an explanation, like the process of interviewing, was characterized by simultaneous collection, coding, and analysis of data, by the formulation of tentative hypotheses, and by contextual validation

of those hypotheses.

The first step in explaining the workers' job mobility was to convert my general understanding of the workers' model into an explicit statement of that model. In order to do this, I once again compared my worker interview results with each other and with my employer and labor market intermediary interview results, but I also broadened the scope of my comparative analysis to include the findings of ethnographic, ethnic enclave, and local labor market studies, and theoretical ideas from the social sciences. When I had identified a pattern in my interview results, I examined the local labor market, ethnographic, and ethnic enclave literature for similar patterns and considered various social scientific theories that might account for those patterns. I also looked for patterns in the local labor market, ethnographic, and ethnic enclave studies and for patterns suggested by social scientific theories, and searched my interview data for similar patterns. Regardless of whether or not the hypothesized similarities appeared to exist, these comparisons helped me to understand the workers' model in a more systematic way by sharpening my understanding of what the model did and did not include. A similar but less comprehensive comparative analysis improved my understanding of the various employer models.

At this point, I was able to write an account of the workers' model that made sense of the workers' patterns of secondary-to-primary job mobility. That account appears in chapter 5 of this study. I was also able to write descriptions of the various employer

models, although these were far less detailed than that of the workers' model. Those descriptions appear in chapter 4. Since it was not clear to me why the workers believed what they did about the labor market, my next task was to explain the workers' model. In order to do this, I compared my description of the workers' model with my descriptions of the employers' models; with the findings of local labor market, ethnographic, and ethnic enclave studies; with theoretical ideas from the social sciences; and with my interview data. This comparison led me to probe the connections between particular features of the workers' model and particular features of the employers' job structures and labor market practices. These connections turned out to be central to my explanation of the workers' model, although the social structure of the workers' neighborhoods and the condition of the local labor market also entered into that explanation. The explanation of the workers' model appears in chapters 4 and 5 and again, in less detail, in chapter 6.

The final step was to draw out the theoretical properties of the explanation that I had developed. What kind of relationship between workers and employers was I describing? What are the scope and limits of that relationship? How does that relationship inform our understanding of labor markets? What are its implications for the literature that was reviewed in chapter 2? In order to arrive at some tentative answers to these questions, I drew on all of the data mentioned in the previous two paragraphs, including my own explanation of the workers' model. The results of this

exercise are presented in chapter 6.

The procedures that I have just described produced a multi-layered theory of job mobility. The first layer of the theory explains the workers' patterns of secondary-to-primary job mobility by showing how those patterns fit into the workers' model of the labor market. The second layer explains the workers' model by showing how it makes sense in terms of employers' practices, workers' social groups, and labor market conditions. The third layer explains the relationship between workers and employers as a particular kind of relationship with particular theoretical properties.

A theory of this kind is often referred to as a "pattern model." A pattern model explains a particular phenomenon by specifying the place of that phenomenon in a pattern or system. It does not attempt to predict the phenomenon, but to make sense of it. It does not consist of a set of propositions and logical deductions from those propositions, but of a set of relatively independent, contextually validated descriptions of particular phenomena, which are linked together by one or more common themes.¹⁹

Because the theory that I develop in this study is a pattern model, some readers might not recognize it as a theory at all, but only as a description. Detailed descriptions of jobs and workers are, indeed, the core of the next two chapters. However, the descriptions are not simply a compilation of the results of my interviews. Instead, they are written in a way that emphasizes

the pattern of connections among the phenomena that they describe. The workers' transitions between jobs, for example, are described in terms of the categories and relations that make up the workers' model of the labor market. The workers' model, in turn, is described in terms of its connections to the job structure and the labor market practices of employers, which are themselves described in ways that make the workers' model an intelligible interpretation of them. The underlying pattern constitutes the theoretical structure of chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 6, which reflects on the kind of pattern that underlies chapters 4 and 5, may seem more theoretical than the chapters that precede it because it abstracts and generalizes from those chapters. However, all three chapters are theoretical in the sense that all three, when taken together, explain an empirical phenomenon.

How can the validity of the explanation be assessed? There is an obvious problem here, since a "self-confirming" tendency is built into the structure of the explanation. In order to understand the underlying pattern, it is necessary to understand the component parts of the pattern. For example, in order to understand the workers' model, one must understand the concepts that belong to that model. In order to understand the link between the workers' model and the employers' practices, one must understand the workers' model and the employers' practices separately. However, it is also necessary to understand the underlying pattern in order to know how the component parts fit together, and knowledge of how the component parts fit together is required in order to

understand what the component parts mean. For example, in order to understand what workers mean by "luck" in finding a job, one must know that "luck" applies only to "good" jobs, and in order to understand why "luck" applies only to "good" jobs, one must know that workers perceive only "good" jobs as being scarce; ultimately, one must understand the entire workers' model in order to understand the significance that any one of its concepts has for the workers. In the pattern model, the underlying pattern is constituted out of the component parts, which are then explained in terms of the pattern. The descriptions of the parts support the claim that a pattern exists, while the existence of the pattern supports the claim that each of the parts should be understood in a particular way. Although the explanation has been contextually validated, contextual validation is not proof; someone who "read" my evidence in a different way than I did might be able to use that evidence to validate a different explanation contextually. Is there any way that I could convince such a person that my explanation is correct?

As long as the explanation includes the models of the economic agents, there is no way that it can avoid the circle of "self-confirmation" described above. Charles Taylor has provided a subtle and complex argument for this proposition.²⁰ To reproduce that argument here would take this discussion too far afield. However, it is not necessary to do so in order to discuss criteria for determining the validity of my explanation. Although I cannot specify criteria that would logically compel someone to accept

my explanation, I can offer several ways to evaluate my explanation on the basis of empirical evidence. One could look first at the evidence as I have stated it. Does all of that evidence fit into the pattern that I have identified? If not, then my explanation must be revised or replaced. An alternative explanation that could make sense of both the evidence that does and the evidence that does not fit into my pattern would be superior to my explanation. One could also go beyond my data to find new data about the subjects of my study. The new data may fit easily into the pattern that I have described, or they may require the elaboration of a new pattern. (For example, data on the employment histories of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown men after they have entered the primary sector would require a new pattern, since my study deals only with entry into the primary sector and with the events that precede it.) If a new pattern is required, can the new pattern and the pattern that I have identified be incorporated within a larger pattern? If so, then this is tentative support for my explanation. If not, then my explanation must be replaced by one that is compatible with the new evidence. A third way to test my explanation would be to conduct case studies of a variety of other groups of workers. Undoubtedly, new patterns would emerge from these studies, since there is no reason why my explanatory framework should apply to all workers. If these new patterns can be incorporated along with mine into a larger pattern, then this makes my pattern more plausible. However, if no such larger pattern can be constructed,

then my explanation must be discarded in favor of one that can be fitted into such a larger pattern. All three of these methods of evaluating a pattern-model explanation rely on expanding the pattern to make sense of as much relevant data as possible. A successful pattern model is one that can incorporate more evidence and more varied evidence as the pattern is made more complex and detailed. Although the model's ability to do this does not prove that the model is correct, it does make the model more plausible by making it more difficult to imagine an alternative model that can make sense of the same body of evidence.²¹

Statistical evidence can certainly be part of this body of evidence. Although the pattern model does not aim to explain by predicting, it may, nevertheless, suggest specific hypotheses about correlations among variables. For example, this study suggests that, among the workers studied, an individual's probability of transition from secondary to primary employment depends on his age, the kind of peer group to which he belongs, and the demand for labor in entry-level primary jobs in the local labor market. Hypotheses of this type can be tested econometrically. The results of the tests bear on the correctness of the overall explanation in the same way as do the other kinds of empirical evidence mentioned above.

A final methodological question that should be raised about the kind of explanation that this study provides is the question of how generalizable the explanation is. Generalizability is a problem for any theory that is derived from a case study. In

this study, I compare my findings with those of previous local labor market and ethnographic studies in order to suggest the ways in which my theory is and is not generalizable. Since the purposes of those studies differ from my purpose, though, their analytical frameworks also differ from mine. One consequence of this is that the results of comparisons between this study and previous studies are sometimes ambiguous. Another consequence is that there are many points on which no direct comparisons can be made. Nevertheless, comparisons with previous case studies are often a fruitful source of hypotheses about the scope of my explanation, even if they rarely provide clear evidence for or against such hypotheses.

In order to develop a grounded theory that is more general than the one presented here, it is necessary to conduct further case studies that are guided by the same theoretical purpose as the present study. Thus, in order to develop a general theory of workers' mobility between secondary and primary jobs, it is necessary to study workers and jobs that differ from those described in this study. Once several such studies have been completed, researchers can make decisions about the contents of future studies in much the same way as I made decisions about which workers, employers, and labor market intermediaries to interview for this study. As more of these case studies are conducted, the outlines of a general theory of secondary-to-primary job mobility should emerge in much the same way as workers' and employers' models of the labor market emerged

during the course of my fieldwork. By making comparisons among the studies in the same way that I made comparisons among interviews, and by supplementing the studies with other kinds of empirical evidence (e.g., econometric evidence), it should be possible to generate such a theory.²² In other words, what is needed in order to develop a more general theory is a coordinated research program that includes a variety of related case studies. This study could be the first step in such a program.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. The term "grounded theory" is due to Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, The Discovery of Grounded Theory (Chicago: Aldine, 1967), chapter 1.

2. For examples, see the local labor market studies cited in chapter 2.

3. Michael Piore, "Qualitative Research Techniques in Economics," Administrative Science Quarterly 24 (December 1979): 560-569. For similar accounts of the purpose of qualitative research in other social sciences, see Robert Bogdan and Steven Taylor, Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods (New York: Wiley, 1975), p. 2; John Van Maanen, "Reclaiming Qualitative Methods for Organizational Research: A Preface," Administrative Science Quarterly 24 (December 1979): 520-526; Peggy Reeves Sanday, "The Ethnographic Paradigm(s)," Administrative Science Quarterly 24 (December 1979): 527-538.

4. The argument of this paragraph is based on that of Piore, op. cit. Note, however, that the incorporation of agents' models into economic models may be less compatible with the analytic structure of neoclassical economics than this paragraph suggests it is. The reason for this is that agents' models are models not only of the economic environment but also of the places that the agents see themselves as occupying within that environment. Neoclassical theory assumes that agents are optimizers of autonomous objective functions, but it may be impossible to describe the agents' own models in terms of such

functions. It may, therefore, be difficult or impossible to incorporate their models into neoclassical economic models. Because qualitative research does not prejudge this issue, it may produce findings that are fundamentally incompatible with the neoclassical research strategy. In fact, such an incompatibility turns out to exist in the present case study. It forms the basis for a critique of the neoclassical theory of worker behavior and suggests an alternative to that theory. The critique and the alternative are presented in chapter 6.

5. Milton Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics," in Friedman, Essays in Positive Economics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 3-46. Friedman does not carefully distinguish among the various epistemological claims that he makes; this is one reason why it is difficult to refute his argument in a convincing manner.

6. This argument is due to Charles Taylor, "Understanding and Ethnocentricity," in Taylor, Philosophy and the Human Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 116-133.

7. This argument is based on Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 1-30; Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Idea of a Social Science," in MacIntyre, Against the Self-Images of the Age (New York: Schocken, 1971), pp. 211-229; and Taylor, *op. cit.*

8. The neighborhood statistics cited in this section were calculated from Boston Redevelopment Authority, "Boston Population and Housing by Neighborhood Areas, 1980: Demographic Information from the U.S. Bureau of the Census," Research Report #143 ([Boston]: Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1983), tables P-1, P-2, and P-3. This report is based on unpublished 1980 U.S. Census block-level data for the city of Boston. It aggregates the blocks into "neighborhood areas," which are subdivisions of areas that the Boston Redevelopment Authority designates as "planning districts." These "planning districts" correspond to areas that Boston residents generally refer to as "neighborhoods"; among the latter are East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. To derive data for East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown, I aggregated the report's data across the relevant "neighborhood areas." East Boston consists of "neighborhood areas" 23, 24, 25, and 26. South Boston consists of "neighborhood areas" 56, 57, 58, and 60. Charlestown consists of "neighborhood areas" 5 and 6.

9. More detailed occupational distributions for each neighborhood and for the city as a whole are as follows.

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Percent of Employed Persons 16+ Years Old</u>			
	<u>Charlestown</u>	<u>E. Boston</u>	<u>S. Boston</u>	<u>Entire City</u>
Professional/ Technical	18.0%	8.3%	9.8%	20.3%
Managerial	4.7	6.9	6.1	9.9
Sales	6.2	6.6	4.5	7.3
Clerical	27.2	24.9	28.5	22.8
Service	16.4	19.8	19.6	18.4
All Others*	27.5	33.5	31.5	21.3

*includes farming, forestry, and fishing; precision production, craft, and repair; machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors; transportation and material moving; handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers.

Source: See note 3 above.

10. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Unemployment in States and Local Areas, 1983 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984); Unemployment in States and Local Areas, 1984, Supplement #1 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985); Unemployment in States and Local Areas, 1985 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986). The metropolitan area data are for the Boston Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. The monthly unemployment rates for the metropolitan area and the city of Boston during the research period were as follows.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Metropolitan Area</u>	<u>Boston city</u>
1983	Oct.	5.7%	7.7%
	Nov.	4.7	6.4
	Dec.	4.7	6.4
1984	Jan.	6.1	8.2
	Feb.	5.3	7.1
	Mar.	4.9	6.6
	Apr.	4.3	5.9
	May	3.5	4.7
	Jun.	4.0	5.4
	Jul.	3.8	5.1
	Aug.	4.3	5.7
	Sep.	4.1	5.5
	Oct.	3.0	4.1
	Nov.	2.7	3.7
	Dec.	3.2	4.4
1985	Jan.	3.7	5.0
	Feb.	3.6	4.8
	Mar.	3.9	5.2
	Apr.	3.2	4.3

11. John Van Maanen, "The Fact of Fiction in Organizational Ethnography," Administrative Science Quarterly 24 (December

1979): 539-550, emphasizes the need to do this in qualitative research. As chapter 6 will show, the fact that workers take certain assumptions about the labor market for granted is essential to the explanation of their labor market behavior.

12. For a formal exposition of this process, see Glaser and Strauss, op. cit., chapter 3.

13. The city census is conducted annually by Boston police, who visit every housing unit in the city. The listings include the name, sex, year of birth, address, and (often erroneous) current occupation and height of every Boston resident who is seventeen years of age or older. Census listings for each ward and precinct of the city can be purchased at Boston City Hall. The listings from which I drew my sample are entitled, City of Boston, Annual Listing of Residents Including Registered Voters and All Residents 17 Years of Age and Over as of January 1, 1983. South Boston consists of Wards 6 and 7.

14. Note that even though the last eleven respondents were selected by means of a random sample survey, I used the results of their interviews exclusively for their qualitative properties and did not attempt to analyze them statistically.

15. Cf. Piore, op. cit.; Glaser and Strauss, op. cit., chapter 2.

16. The method by which I determined the agents' models on the basis of the interview results resembles the "constant comparative method of qualitative analysis" described in Glaser and Strauss, op. cit., chapter 5. For a more general account of the role of comparative methods in the development of theory from case studies, see Paul Diesing, Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971), chapter 13.

17. Contextual validation is described in Charles Wilber and Robert Harrison, "The Methodological Basis of Institutional Economics: Pattern Model, Storytelling, and Holism," Journal of Economic Issues 12 (March 1978): 61-89; and Diesing, op. cit., pp. 146-151.

18. Glaser and Strauss, op. cit., pp. 61-65, refer to this as the point of "theoretical saturation."

19. Wilber and Harrison, op. cit.; Diesing, op. cit., pp. 155-167; Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry (San Francisco: Chandler, 1964), pp. 332-336.

20. Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," in Taylor, Philosophy and the Human Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 15-57.

21. Wilber and Harrison, *op. cit.*

22. For a more detailed discussion of techniques that can be used to develop such a theory, see Glaser and Strauss, *op. cit.* chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: THE JOBS

The first step in understanding the job mobility patterns of the young men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown is to understand the structure of the jobs that these men hold. This is the case because the way in which these workers view the labor market and the means by which they move between jobs are linked very closely to the characteristics of the jobs themselves (including the pay, job security, internal labor market structure, training, labor turnover, labor recruitment, and hiring characteristics). This chapter describes the job that Boston's ethnic working class young men hold from about age seventeen or eighteen (when they generally leave high school and begin working full-time) to about age thirty (by which time most have settled down into the kind of work that they will do for the rest of their working lives) and categorizes these jobs in terms of the primary sector/secondary sector distinction made by labor market segmentation theory. Because the focus of this entire study is on entry into primary jobs, the chapter pays particular attention to the ways in which employers recruit and select workers for primary jobs. The first section of the chapter discusses the primary/secondary distinction as it is used in this study, shows how workers perceive the distinction, and compares the way in which this study makes use of the distinction with the ways in which other labor market

segmentation studies have utilized it. It also introduces the concept of a "customary group" of primary jobs, a set of jobs that provides the men of each neighborhood with a concrete model of what a primary job is. The second section describes the labor market characteristics of selected secondary jobs. Section 3 does the same, but in more detail, for several of the customary primary jobs of the three Boston neighborhoods. The descriptions presented in sections two and three are based on open-ended interviews with the persons (including firms' owners, personnel managers, and trade union officials) who are responsible for administering the hiring processes of the various jobs. These sections, then, describe the jobs from what might be termed "the hiring manager's point of view." The final section accomplishes two goals. First, it summarizes the major similarities and differences between the labor market characteristics of primary jobs and those of secondary jobs and discusses some reasons for these similarities and differences. Second, it shows how some of the principal characteristics of primary and secondary jobs are linked to the way in which the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown view the labor market. These workers' view of the labor market will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. The final section of this chapter, therefore, provides a bridge between this chapter's description and analysis of job characteristics and the following chapter's account of worker beliefs and behavior.

1. THE PRIMARY/SECONDARY DISTINCTION

The workers whom I interviewed held a variety of jobs during the course of their working lives. These jobs included fast-food service worker, shipping and receiving clerk, auto rental representative, school janitor, short-order cook, roofer, rug deliverer, taxicab driver, firefighter, Post Office mail-handler, public works department laborer, bus driver, auto body repairman, ironworker, carpenter, and ship painter. There are a variety of possible ways in which these jobs might be categorized or ordered for purposes of analysis. Both neoclassical economists and status-attainment researchers in sociology, for example, order jobs along a single dimension that can be represented by a continuous variable. For the former, that variable is the wage. For the latter, it is a measure of occupational prestige. Other researchers classify jobs into discrete categories based on occupation (e.g., white collar/blue collar), industry (e.g., core/periphery), or (as in Marxian class analysis) control over the process of production. This study makes use of a different kind of discrete classification system, namely, the distinction between primary and secondary jobs that comes out of labor market segmentation theory. This distinction is used because it captures, in a way that other classification schemes do not, the main difference that the men of Boston's "ethnic working class" neighborhoods see between jobs. This difference is between jobs that are considered appropriate for neighborhood men to hold as "lifetime jobs" during their adult years and jobs that are not considered

desirable as "lifetime jobs" for adult men. Movement from the latter kind of job to the former is the key element in these men's job mobility histories.

The best way to explicate the primary/secondary distinction, in the sense in which that distinction is used in this study, is to examine what the workers themselves have to say about different kinds of jobs. All of the East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown workers whom I interviewed made a sharp distinction between two kinds of jobs. One kind of job, the sort considered appropriate as a "lifetime job" for an adult man, was referred to, variously, as a "good" job or a "decent" job or a "real" job. A South Boston employment counselor described jobs of this type as "fairly effective, fairly well-compensated blue-collar or clerical jobs." I will refer to them as "primary jobs." The second type of job, which I will call "secondary," is the type of job that workers regard as undesirable for adult men to hold on a long-term basis. Workers of all ages, even those who worked in jobs of this kind, generally referred to these jobs in a derogatory manner, calling them "bad" or "lousy" or "half-ass" jobs. This is not to say that all workers who were employed in jobs of the latter type wished to leave them immediately and enter the primary sector. As chapter 5 will show, young men in their late teens and early twenties commonly work in secondary jobs and do not mind doing so. What is important is that men of all ages do not want to remain in secondary jobs for their entire working lives.

What is the basis for the primary/secondary distinction that the workers make? That is, what makes a "good" job "good" and a "bad" job "bad"? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to describe a set of jobs that I will call the "customary group" of primary jobs. The customary group is a set of jobs, specific to a particular neighborhood but not necessarily unique to that neighborhood, of which all neighborhood men over the age of about fifteen are aware and that all recognize as "good" jobs. For the men of the neighborhood, this set of jobs is a set of exemplars of what "good" jobs are. It is impossible to discuss the workers' distinction between "good" and "bad" jobs without reference to this particular group of jobs.

In East Boston, the customary group of primary jobs includes police and firefighting jobs, blue-collar and clerical jobs with the U.S. Postal Service and with the Port Authority, blue-collar jobs with major airlines, ship-repair jobs in East Boston's shipyards, transit operative and maintenance jobs in the metropolitan public transportation system, automobile repair jobs (e.g., mechanic or auto-body repairman) in small firms, and jobs in the unionized skilled building trades. The customary groups of South Boston and Charlestown are identical to one another but differ somewhat from East Boston's customary group; they include a variety of blue-collar and clerical jobs with the city and state governments and with the Boston area's major public utility companies as well as the police, firefighting, construction, public transportation, and Post Office jobs that are customary

in East Boston. With the exception of the auto-repair jobs, jobs in one of the East Boston shipyards, clerical jobs in one of the public utilities, and some of the airline jobs, all of the customary primary jobs are unionized.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to digress in order to clarify the sense in which the term "job" is used in this study. In keeping with the study's emphasis on the importance of the ways in which workers perceive the labor market, jobs are defined in the ways in which the workers themselves define them. Sometimes a job is defined as an occupation. For example, workers refer to each of the unionized construction trades as a "job"; from the time that a man enters an apprenticeship for such a trade until the time he leaves the trade, he is said to have the same job regardless of the particular employer for whom he works. In other cases, a job is identified with a particular employer or sub-unit of an employer. For instance, a man who works for a department of the city government, doing any of a wide range of unskilled or semiskilled manual or clerical tasks, is considered to have the same job as long as he is employed in that department, regardless of the particular task that he performs at any given time. It is common in some city departments for a worker to enter the department as an unskilled laborer and then progress within the department to equipment operative or maintenance positions. Such a worker would ordinarily be identified as a "city worker in the X Department" even though he may perform several dissimilar sets of tasks during his tenure with the

department. Thus, neither occupation nor industry nor firm nor any particular combination of occupation, industry, and firm suffices to capture the way in which the workers of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown define job. Nevertheless, the definition of a job for these workers is neither individual- nor neighborhood-specific. Rather, it reflects the structure of the labor market. It is typically the case that once a worker has begun working for a particular primary employer or in a particular primary occupation, his future pattern of inter-occupation, inter-firm, and inter-industry mobility is determined largely by the way in which his particular labor market is organized. The customary primary jobs of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown exhibit three basic patterns of labor market organization: occupation-specific, employer-specific, and occupation- and employer-specific. The unionized building trades exemplify occupation-specific labor markets. Workers in those trades work for many different employers throughout their working lives but remain within a particular trade. Many city and state government jobs belong to employer-specific labor markets. In such markets, workers may change occupations during the course of their lives but do not change employers. Police officers and firefighters operate in labor markets that are both occupation- and employer-specific. Once one enters a particular police or fire department, one remains with that department, changing neither occupation nor employer. A primary "job," therefore, typically means a distinct pattern of progression between tasks and/or between

employers. Such a pattern corresponds to what Doeringer and Piore have called an "internal labor market."¹ Secondary jobs often, but not always, lack such distinct lines of progression. When such lines are absent, a "job" simply refers to a specific set of tasks performed for a particular employer at a particular time, and a worker who changes either tasks or employers is said to change jobs. Sections 2 and 3 of this chapter will provide detailed descriptions of the job structures of particular primary and secondary jobs. For now, all that is important is that, where internal labor market structures exist (as they do in all of the customary primary jobs), they serve to define jobs.

How important, quantitatively, are the customary primary jobs in East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown? Are they held by most of each neighborhood's adult men or only by a small elite? Using 1980 U.S. Census data on the employment of each neighborhood's men by industry, and taking into account the internal labor market structure of each of the customary primary jobs, it is possible to make some rough estimates of the proportion of employed men from each neighborhood (aged sixteen and over) who work in their neighborhood's customary primary jobs.² My most conservative estimates, based only on employment in those three-digit industries in which nearly all jobs are known to be customary primary jobs, are that 19.8% of East Boston men, 28.6% of South Boston men, and 25.0% of Charlestown men hold customary primary jobs. These proportions should be regarded as lower bounds on customary primary employment in the three neighborhoods.

Perhaps the best point estimates of customary primary employment among men in the three neighborhoods, derived from industry data, are: East Boston, 33.4%; South Boston, 36.2%; and Charlestown, 31.5%.³ Even the latter percentages, though, are probably underestimates of adult male employment in customary primary jobs, since the data from which they are derived include teenagers, who are less likely than older men to be employed in primary jobs, including customary primary jobs.

The customary primary jobs have a qualitative significance for the men of Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods that exceeds their quantitative significance. When asked to name "good" jobs, workers always name their neighborhood's customary primary jobs first, regardless of whether or not they work in those jobs or have close friends or relatives who work in them. For the men of each neighborhood, the characteristics of these jobs define what a "good" job is. In particular, workers from the Boston neighborhoods identify two characteristics of a "good" job, high pay and job security. A "bad" job is a job that lacks one or both of these attributes. "High pay" and "job security," though, are not abstract concepts that can be defined without reference to the pay levels and job-security characteristics of particular jobs. Rather, these concepts are generalizations that the workers make from the actual pay levels and job-security characteristics of the customary primary jobs. If the customary groups differed from what they currently are, or if there were no customary groups at all, then the workers' definitions of

"high pay" and "job security" and, hence, their entire conception of what differentiates "good" from "bad" jobs, might be different from what it is now. It is even possible that, in the absence of a customary group of jobs, workers might not have a basis for drawing a sharp distinction between "good" and "bad" jobs. The workers' patterns of job mobility, the nature of their transitions between jobs and the methods by which they make those transitions, might then differ from the patterns described in chapter 5 of this study.

A detailed discussion of what is meant by "high pay" and "job security," then, requires attention to the pay and security provided by the customary primary jobs. The pay levels of these jobs lie within a rather broad range. At the entry level, the lowest starting pay (among those jobs for which I was able to determine pay⁴) was found in clerical jobs with one of the public utility companies (which, in 1984, started at \$ 188 per week, or \$ 9400 per year). The highest starting pay (\$ 22,000 per year in 1984) was found in the transit operative jobs of the public transportation system. Workers with five years of experience (following the normal patterns of internal labor market advancement) in the customary primary jobs earn between approximately \$ 13,000 and approximately \$ 30,000 per year, with the clerical jobs in the public sector and public utilities generally being the lowest-paying of the customary primary jobs and the transit operative jobs generally being the highest-paying. Annual earnings after five years in the blue-collar customary jobs are in

approximately the \$ 15,000-to-\$ 20,000 range. Pay levels that lie within the general pay range of the customary primary jobs are the pay levels that workers associate with the "high pay" of the primary sector. Occasionally, workers express their ideas about the meaning of "high pay" by citing dollar amounts, as when one man described high-paying jobs as "jobs that start at five to eight dollars an hour and go up from there," or when another remarked, "No one expects to work for four dollars an hour for their whole life." Statements such as these indicate that the workers' concept of "high pay" corresponds roughly to the pay levels of the customary primary jobs. Workers often describe "high pay" in vague terms like "enough to support a family" or "enough to live decently." One South Boston man commented, "You're not trying to get rich. You just want to make a good, steady living." Comments of this sort suggest that the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown have a general idea of an appropriate standard of living for men from their neighborhoods. This general idea is derived from an awareness of the standards of living that are enjoyed by neighborhood men who hold the customary primary jobs and from a belief that those standards of living are desirable for men like themselves. As chapter 5 will show, both the awareness and the belief are acquired fairly early in life through a socialization process that takes place primarily within the extended family and peer group. At this point, what is essential to the analysis is that the workers' concept of "high pay" is derived, at least indirectly,

from the pay levels of the customary primary jobs. Non-customary jobs pay "well" if they pay about as much as the customary jobs.

Job security, the second attribute of a primary job, is a bit more amorphous a concept than high pay. However, as long as a job's pay falls within the pay range described in the previous paragraph, security is the major consideration for a worker in deciding whether or not a job is a "good" one.⁵ "You'll never get rich working for the state," remarked a South Boston man who earned \$ 298 per week as a laborer in a state sewage-treatment plant, "But you'll always have a job and a steady check. That's what matters most." The kind of job-security arrangement that Boston's "ethnic working class" men appear to regard as ideal is what might be described as "lifetime economic security." A job that provides lifetime economic security provides a steady income for the worker and his family during both working life and retirement. There are three separate job characteristics that contribute to lifetime economic security. The first is a steady income, free from short-term fluctuations, that enables the worker to maintain a constant or rising standard of living throughout his working life. The second is fringe benefits, especially pensions and employer-paid health insurance, that provide income insurance during periods of unusual economic need. The third is a set of institutional rules, principally seniority layoff rules and prohibitions on arbitrary dismissals, that protect the worker's tenure on the job against the whims of managers and (to a lesser extent) against economic fluctuations.⁶

Three different workers described jobs with each of these characteristics as, respectively, "a job with a steady paycheck," "a job with pensions and benefits," and "a job where you'll never get fired." Most of the customary primary jobs possess all three of these characteristics. However, there are customary jobs that lack one or more of these attributes. The unionized building trades, for example, provide workers with pensions and fringe benefits and protection against arbitrary firings, but do not guarantee a steady income. Apparently, the extremely high hourly wages paid to workers in these trades compensate them sufficiently for the variability of employment that they regard construction work as relatively secure despite the fact that income fluctuates substantially over the course of a year. The carpenters and ironworkers whom I interviewed were able to adapt to employment variability without too much difficulty by "smoothing" their consumption patterns over the course of a year. While these workers recognized that their jobs were less secure than public sector or public utility jobs, and while some of them said that they would have taken the latter jobs if they had been offered them, they nevertheless considered their jobs sufficiently secure to qualify as "good" jobs. A second example of a customary job that is considered secure even though it does not possess all three of the aforementioned characteristics is auto-repair work done in small shops in East Boston. Because the demand for auto-repair services in East Boston is stable, workers in these shops enjoy fairly steady incomes. However, they do not receive

pensions or fringe benefits and their employment is, at least in the formal, legal sense, strictly at-will. (A more extended discussion of job security in this industry is provided in section 3 of this chapter.)

The examples of the skilled construction and auto-repair trades, then show that workers are willing to consider, as acceptably "secure," jobs that depart somewhat from the ideal of lifetime economic security. To what extent may a job depart from this ideal and still be considered secure? It is impossible to specify a rule that precisely demarcates the boundary between secure and insecure jobs. Jobs that possess all three of the aforementioned characteristics are obviously "secure" and jobs that lack all three are obviously "insecure." In deciding whether or not other jobs are secure, workers appear to be guided, in a very general way, by the security characteristics of their neighborhoods' customary primary jobs. Non-customary jobs that are about as secure as what the worker thinks of as a "typical" customary primary job are considered "secure," while non-customary jobs that are markedly less secure than the "typical" customary job are considered "insecure." An example of this sort of reasoning about job security was provided by an East Boston high school student whose teacher told him about computer programming jobs. In deciding whether or not those jobs were "good" jobs, the student made a rough comparison of the job security of programming jobs with the job security of the customary primary jobs that were most prominent in his thoughts at the

time, namely, jobs in the Post Office and in the airport. On the basis of this comparison, he decided that computer programming jobs were not secure enough to be "good" jobs.

The distinction between primary and secondary jobs that is relevant for the analysis of the employment patterns of the men of Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods is, therefore, tied to the pay and job security characteristics of the jobs in the neighborhoods' customary groups. Since the pay and security characteristics of the three neighborhoods' customary jobs are broadly similar across neighborhoods, it appears reasonable to assume that the primary/secondary distinction is the same for all three neighborhoods. Jobs that pay about as much and that are about as secure as the customary jobs will be considered "primary" jobs for the purposes of my analysis. Jobs that are substantially lower-paying and/or substantially less secure than the customary jobs will be deemed "secondary." The pay and job security characteristics of secondary jobs actually fall into two distinct groups. The first consists of jobs that are both low-paying and insecure (relative to the customary jobs). Most of the secondary jobs described in section 2 of this chapter fall into this category, as did most of the secondary jobs that were held by the workers whom I interviewed. Jobs of this type lack all of the job security characteristics described above, have starting pay levels at or near the minimum wage, and do not enable experienced workers who follow "normal" channels of advancement to achieve standards of living comparable to those

enjoyed by similarly experienced workers in primary jobs. A second group of secondary jobs consists of jobs that are high-paying but insecure. Frequently these jobs are designed to be "temporary" jobs. Examples of this sort of job are cable television line installation (where work lasts only as long as it takes to complete an installation job in a particular city) and temporary clerical or manual jobs in the public sector.

In order further to clarify the nature of the primary/secondary distinction, it is instructive to consider several job typologies that differ from the primary/secondary typology but that have figured prominently in a variety of economic and sociological accounts of job mobility and have sometimes been confused with the primary/secondary typology. First, the primary/secondary distinction is not based on the skill level of a job. Some primary jobs, such as those in the building trades, are highly skilled. At the other extreme, the laborer jobs in one of the public utility companies require no special skills, and advancement in such jobs does not necessarily lead to the acquisition of any special skills. While primary jobs, on average, probably require somewhat more skill to learn and to perform than do secondary jobs, the skill differential does not appear to be large (see section 3) and, in any event, is not a defining characteristic of primary as opposed to secondary jobs.

Second, the primary/secondary distinction is not based on job content or on worker satisfaction with job content. While some primary jobs (notably those in the skilled building trades) are

highly satisfying to the workers who hold them, workers commonly remark, "A job's a job," when asked about job content. This does not necessarily imply that the workers are indifferent to job content or that they would not prefer, in an ideal world, to be doing work that is more intrinsically satisfying than the work that they currently do. Rather, it indicates the overriding importance that they attach to pay and job security considerations in a world in which they perceive high-paying, secure jobs to be scarce. (See chapter 5 for a discussion of the belief that "good" jobs are scarce.) A particularly striking example of this was provided by a South Boston taxicab driver. Cab-driving, which lacks job security altogether, is a secondary job to the men of South Boston. The cab driver whom I interviewed said that he enjoyed cab-driving and especially enjoyed the freedom from direct supervision that cab-driving provided, but that, because he recently became a father, he now needed to obtain a "good" job, which he described as a high-paying job that would provide him with a steady income, health insurance, and a pension. He expected that such a job would offer him less intrinsic satisfaction than cab-driving. Nevertheless, he seemed quite anxious, almost desperate, to obtain such a job. A primary job, then, is not necessarily an enjoyable job, nor is a secondary job necessarily an unrewarding job.

Third, primary jobs are not necessarily more prestigious than secondary jobs, at least not in the sense in which conventional indices of occupational prestige (such as the Duncan scale)

measure prestige. For example, the occupation "shipping and receiving clerk," a secondary job, receives a higher Duncan score than the occupation "carpenter," which is clearly a primary job.⁷ The men of Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods simply do not make job mobility decisions in terms of an abstract, universalistic index of occupational status. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which primary jobs are more "prestigious" than secondary jobs. The relevant concept of prestige, though, is a very localized, neighborhood-specific one. The jobs that are recognized as primary in a particular neighborhood are those that are considered desirable for an adult man from the neighborhood to hold throughout his working life. Secondary jobs are not considered desirable in this sense.

The primary/secondary distinction utilized in this study should be compared with the primary/secondary distinction that is used in other labor market segmentation studies. Some writers posit a correspondence between labor market sectors and the economic sectors of a dual economy. They identify primary jobs with jobs in large ("core" or "center") firms and secondary jobs with jobs in small ("periphery") firms.⁸ This view of labor market segmentation differs from the view taken in the present study. While most of the jobs that I identify as primary are located in large firms and government agencies and many of the jobs that I identify as secondary are located in small firms, there is no precise correspondence between firm size and labor market sector in the sense in which the latter term is used

here. Some primary jobs, such as the auto-repair jobs that are customary in East Boston, are found in small firms. Some secondary jobs, such as the temporary clerical and manual jobs in the public sector, are performed for large employers, most of whose other jobs are primary. The tendency for primary jobs to be associated with large employers and for secondary jobs to be associated with small employers is an important subject for research, but for the purposes of this chapter the job and not the firm per se is the relevant unit of analysis. The characteristics of firms are, however, important insofar as they affect the characteristics of jobs, and the core/periphery distinction is sometimes useful for categorizing differences between jobs.

The distinction between primary and secondary jobs that is perhaps most widely used by segmented labor market theorists is that of Piore. Piore's description of the primary/secondary distinction was introduced in chapter 1; it is reproduced here for the reader's convenience. According to Piore,

The primary market offers jobs which possess several of the following traits: high wages, good working conditions, employment stability and job security, equity and due process in the administration of work rules, and chances for advancement. The secondary market has jobs which, relative to those in the primary sector, are decidedly less attractive. They tend to involve low wages, poor working conditions, considerable variability in employment, harsh and often arbitrary discipline, little opportunity to advance.⁹

This distinction between labor market sectors appears, at first glance, to be considerably more complex than the pay- and security-based distinction that is articulated by Boston's

ethnic working class men. However, the divergence between Piore's distinction and that used in this study is more apparent than real. The reason for this is that the jobs that possess the pay and job security characteristics that I attribute to jobs in the primary (secondary) sector also tend to possess the additional characteristics that Piore attributes to jobs in that sector, and vice versa. In other words, the primary and secondary sectors are broad, composite concepts that can be described in terms of any of a number of job characteristics that tend to (but do not always) appear together in "clusters." To see this, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of primary and secondary jobs in some detail.

2. LABOR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS OF SECONDARY JOBS

There are four different types of secondary jobs that appeared in the job histories of the men whom I interviewed.¹⁰ First, there are jobs in small businesses. Some of these businesses are located in East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown, and some are owned by neighborhood residents. Examples of such businesses are a tire shop in South Boston, a sausage factory in East Boston, and a pizza shop in East Boston. Second, there are jobs in large firms that are primarily secondary employers. Secondary jobs of this type are often found in neighborhood establishments (branches or franchises) of large national retail or fast-food chains. Examples include a South Boston branch of a Boston-area ice cream and sandwich chain, an East Boston

franchise of a national fast-food chain, an East Boston store of a national shoe store chain, and the airport branch (located in East Boston) of a national automobile rental firm. Third, there are secondary jobs, often part-time or temporary, located in large firms or government agencies in which most of the jobs are primary. Thirty- or ninety-day clerical and manual jobs in the city and state governments are of this type, as are part-time jobs loading parcels onto vans for a large parcel delivery service. The final type of secondary job is casual, under-the-table home- and auto-repair work (e.g., roofing or house-painting) that is often performed by groups of family members or friends. This section describes the job structures, training procedures, labor turnover patterns, recruitment methods, and hiring criteria that characterize each type of secondary job. These job characteristics tend to form "clusters" that correspond to the different types of secondary jobs, in the sense that most of the characteristics exhibit substantial joint variation across job types but vary much less within job types than between them. The particular secondary jobs cited above, on which the descriptions in this section are based, were chosen not because they are statistically representative either of secondary jobs as a whole or of the secondary jobs held by the workers whom I interviewed, but because they exemplify each of the aforementioned types of secondary jobs.

Small Secondary Firms. The job structures of small secondary

firms are characterized by flexible job definitions and a complete or almost complete absence of internal labor markets. The division of labor within the firm is not highly specialized. Each worker typically performs a variety of tasks. In the pizza shop, for example, there are two counter cooks and one delivery man (in addition to the owner, who does not work in the shop). Each of the three employees knows how to do both of the jobs, and employees frequently alternate between jobs. The sausage factory employs approximately ten Vietnamese production workers and five Italian-American youths who make deliveries and run errands for the owner. The tire shop employs a bookkeeper, a salesman, and a worker who repairs tires, autos, and bicycles. Each of the three employees knows all of the jobs, and jobs rotate among the employees and the firm's owner, who works alongside the employees.

Training in all of these firms is done directly by the owner. Workers watch the owner perform the work tasks and then imitate him. Most of the work tasks are routine and require very little training. New employees can perform them perfectly within, at most, a few days after beginning work. The tire shop is an exception to this generalization, though. While training in that firm is done directly by the owner, the work tasks are more varied and less routine than the tasks of the other secondary jobs of this type, and it takes a new worker two or three years to learn how to do all of the tasks well.

While the owners of the pizza shop, the sausage factory, and the tire shop were not willing to provide information about

wages, interviews with workers who have held jobs in small secondary firms similar to these firms indicate that jobs of this type pay wages that are usually within one dollar per hour of the minimum wage and that increase little, if at all, with on-the-job experience. Despite the fact that employer-employee relations are highly personalized and sometimes paternalistic in nature, these jobs offer no explicit or implicit job security guarantees. In some cases (e.g., the sausage factory and the tire shop), the absence of job security appears to be a consequence of the fact that the small firms face what their owners regard as ultimately unbeatable competition (in terms of price or product characteristics) from larger or more specialized firms. The small secondary firms' owners are uncertain as to how long their firms will survive. In other cases (e.g., the pizza shop), the individual firm faces considerable uncertainty about the demand for its product but product demand in the industry as a whole is fairly stable. If pizza shop workers had the same kinds of interfirm personal contact networks as workers in East Boston's auto-repair shops (see section 3), workers would possess a degree of job security because they could use those networks to facilitate movement to another shop when one shop failed. Lacking such networks, the employees of a failed shop do not have systematic channels by which to find other jobs in the industry.

Small secondary firms typically offer no systematic paths by which workers can significantly improve their earnings or job

security. Children of a firm's owner may be groomed to inherit the business, but other workers rarely have this option. Workers do not learn any particular skills or acquire any personal contacts on these jobs that would help them to obtain primary jobs. Jobs in the tire shop, though, are an exception to this statement. Because the tire shop does several different kinds of auto-repair work (e.g., simple mechanical repairs, front-end alignment, and simple body repairs), and because each of the shop's workers learns how to do all of the repair operations that are performed in the shop, the workers learn, over the course of several years, some of the skills needed to become a mechanic, a front-end specialist, or an auto-body repairman. The tire shop jobs, then, are what Osterman has termed "bridge jobs."¹¹ Most men who work in the tire shop do, according to the owner, move on to primary auto-repair jobs in specialized shops like those described in section 3 below. However, "bridge jobs" do not play a very important role in job mobility either in the auto-repair industry (see section 3) or in the work histories of Boston's ethnic working class men (see chapter 5).

Workers and employers in small secondary firms do not make and do not expect to make long-term commitments to each other. Workers generally do not expect remain with the firms for very long, although they do not have any particular ideas about when they might leave for other jobs. Employers do not expect workers to remain with them for more than perhaps two or three years and are not troubled if workers do not stay even that long. (The

three current employees of the tire shop have been with the firm for ten, twelve, and eighteen years, respectively, but the shop's owner never expected them to stay that long and he never in the past had employees who remained with him for such long periods of time.) These jobs are often "starter jobs" for youths, who begin working in them on a part-time basis while in high school and who then continue in them as full-time workers after leaving school. The jobs are also filled by young men in their late teens and early twenties who have previously held other secondary jobs of various types. (The production jobs in the sausage factory are done by Vietnamese immigrants who have not previously worked in the U.S. The factory's owner formerly employed Italian-American youths in these positions but found the youths too undisciplined for production work. When Vietnamese began to settle in East Boston, the owner recruited them for the production jobs and has been pleased with their production speed, accuracy, and willingness to follow directions on the job.) The owners of small secondary firms typically do not know and do not care what kinds of jobs their former employees now hold. The tire shop owner is an exception; as noted above, his employees tend to move into more specialized, primary-sector automotive repair jobs.

Recruitment and hiring are extremely informal and are done personally by the firms' owners. The owners make on-the-spot hiring decisions after briefly and informally interviewing job applicants. The only employee characteristics that the owners

specified as hiring criteria were trustworthiness and dependability. The owners simply wanted to hire people who would not steal cash or supplies and who could be relied on to follow instructions and perform work tasks regularly and accurately. In order to avoid having to screen strangers for trustworthiness and dependability, they would try first to fill job openings with their own friends or relatives or with referrals from their friends or relatives, from current employees, or from long-time customers. If this recruitment method proved unsuccessful, they were not averse to putting "help wanted" signs in their windows and interviewing walk-in applicants. However, they rarely needed to do so. Most of the time, in their experience, personal contacts produced reliable workers at times when job vacancies arose.

Large Secondary Firms. Branches and franchises of large secondary retail and service firms have job structures that consist of two parts: (a) a large number of entry-level sales or service workers, and (b) a relatively small managerial hierarchy that extends from "assistant branch manager" upward to the top management of the national corporation or franchise holder. The entry-level jobs include sales clerks in a shoe store; counter help and waiters/waitresses in a Boston-area ice cream and sandwich chain; "crew workers" who alternate between cooking, cashiering, and sandwich preparation in a national fast-food chain; and rental representatives, garagemen, and bus drivers in an auto rental firm. With the exception of the auto rental jobs, all of

these entry-level jobs are part-time. All lack job security guarantees of either a formal or an informal nature. With the exception of the auto rental jobs (for which the firm would not disclose information about pay), all have starting wages at or near the minimum wage. Branch-level management positions, which pay between \$ 200 and \$ 500 per week, are usually filled through internal promotion from the entry-level jobs. Some firms also have company-run management training programs to which only college graduates are admitted. These programs supplement internal promotion as a managerial recruitment source. Although most managers obtain their positions through internal promotion, very few entry-level workers could become managers even if they desired to do so, since there are many more entry-level than management jobs. Branch managers select their assistant managers from among the entry-level workers on the basis of the latter's mastery of entry-level skills. Sometimes they give secondary attention to seniority as well. Often a worker who is being considered for a managerial position is first placed in a "trial" position (e.g., lead cashier in the shoe store or production leader in the national fast food chain) in which he is given more responsibility than the entry-level workers. Promotions to branch manager and higher-level managerial positions are made by higher-level managers on the basis of performance in the lower-level managerial positions. High school-educated workers are preferred for managerial jobs, but there are no formal educational requirements for such jobs.

Training procedures for entry-level jobs are standardized across establishments within each large firm. Training is conducted by the branch manager and is accomplished through a combination of formal and informal techniques. New workers in the shoe store are given a company training manual that describes each of their tasks in detail. The store manager tests them on their mastery of the material found in the manual. They must pass these tests in order to receive pay raises. Most learning of store-specific tasks, though, is accomplished by watching the manager or other workers perform the tasks. The store manager reports that it takes new workers approximately one week to become proficient at their jobs. In the national fast-food chain, the manager first demonstrates the job tasks to new workers, one task at a time, making use of standardized visual aids provided by the firm. Trainees then spend a full four-hour shift doing the task in which they have just been instructed, after which they take a written test on the task, which they must pass before receiving instruction in the next task. It takes each worker twenty to twenty-four shifts (approximately four to five weeks of part-time work) to become competent at all six of the entry-level tasks. All entry-level workers in the local ice cream and sandwich chain and all new rental representatives in the auto rental firm go through an initial period (one week in the ice cream chain, two weeks in the auto rental firm) of formal training conducted by the branch manager, after which they continue to learn their jobs through informal on-the-job training.

The ice cream firm's workers become fully competent at their jobs after three days of part-time work, the rental representatives, after about a month of full-time work. Finally, garagemen and bus drivers in the auto rental firm learn their jobs entirely through informal on-the-job-training that is provide partly by supervisors but mainly by experienced workers. They become proficient at their jobs within a week or two after beginning work. Their training, therefore, resembles the training of many primary workers more than it resembles the training of other workers in large secondary firms.

Jobs of this type provide extremely limited opportunities for workers to improve their pay and job security. The sole channel of internal labor market mobility is movement into management positions. The job structures of large secondary firms, as noted above, effectively foreclose this option for more than a handful of entry-level workers. Nor do the entry-level jobs provide skills or personal contacts that would be helpful in obtaining primary employment. Indeed, the narrow, standardized, highly firm-specific methods used to train workers in these firms make those workers' job skills nearly useless outside of the firms in which they are currently employed. A fast-food service worker, for example does not acquire any skills that would help him to become a chef. In fact, he does not even learn much that would reduce his training time if he were to take a job in another fast-food firm. Even the garageman and bus-driving jobs in the auto rental firm, which are similar to primary jobs in the Port

Authority and public transit system, do not give workers any special advantages in obtaining the latter jobs, since the specific content of job applicants' previous work experience is irrelevant in the hiring processes of the latter jobs. (See section 3.)

Most of the new workers in the part-time jobs are high school students who remain in the jobs for periods ranging from four months to one year. Some of these workers have previously worked in other secondary jobs. Others have had no previous work experience. According to managers, youths leave these jobs during high school if they become dissatisfied with the pay or the work hours. A substantial minority are fired because of lateness or poor work habits. (This is the only category of job, primary or secondary, in which the hiring managers viewed worker discipline as a problem and in which they cited discharges as a major source of worker separations.) Many youths who do not leave during high school leave soon after graduating from or dropping out of school; at that time they usually desire full-time jobs. The national fast-food chain also employs a large number of housewives who desire part-time work and a small number of middle-aged men who have been laid off from primary jobs in factories or auto-repair shops. Both of the latter two types of workers tend to remain with the firm longer than do the youths. Workers in the auto rental firm, where all jobs are full-time, tend to be slightly older and tend to remain on the job slightly longer than workers in the other three firms. Workers usually

enter the auto rental firm between the ages of nineteen and twenty-three. They have usually had (although they are not required to have had) previous secondary work experience. They remain with the rental firm for a year or two, often while waiting to be hired by a primary employer. Rental representatives, for example, are often women who are waiting to be hired for airline ticket-sales jobs. Bus drivers and garagemen are almost always men from East Boston or nearby areas who have applied for jobs in the Port Authority or the public transit system.

Most applicants for jobs in the large secondary firms are friends or acquaintances of current employees. Only the manager of the shoe store, though, expressed a preference for hiring employee referrals. He believed, on the basis of his own experience in hiring workers, that current employees would refer only good workers to him because "they put their own reputations on the line when they send their friends in here to apply." Branch managers in the other large secondary firms were neutral toward hiring employee referrals. In addition to employee referrals, all of these establishments hire large numbers of "walk-ins" who do not know any current employees. Each establishment usually gets several walk-in applicants per week regardless of whether or not there are job openings available. In order to increase the flow of applicants during times when job openings are available, all of the branch managers whom I interviewed put "help wanted" signs in their windows. However, the managers do not like to have "too many" applicants even when they are seeking to hire new

workers. The shoe store manager once advertised job openings with the state Employment Service. The manager of the fast-food restaurant once advertised job vacancies in a newspaper. Both managers reported that these "formal" recruitment methods required them to spend an inordinate amount of time screening a large number of "low quality" applicants. (The Employment Service apparently did not help at all in the screening process. "They're a joke," said the shoe store manager. "They don't screen at all. They just sent a lot of people over here and I had to screen them all myself.") On the basis of their experiences with formal recruitment methods, these managers stated that they would never again use such methods.

Branch managers are responsible for the hiring of entry-level workers. They often make on-the-spot decisions about whether or not to hire an applicant immediately after completing an interview. They have three basic hiring criteria: (a) trustworthiness and dependability, (b) "attitude," and (c) the likelihood that a worker will remain on the job long enough that it will have been worthwhile for the manager to have trained him. Trustworthiness and dependability have the same importance in large secondary firms as in small ones. Managers attempt to evaluate these characteristics of job applicants by conducting brief, informal employment interviews and by checking the school, church, and/or previous employment references supplied by applicants. "Attitude," which the managers cited as the most important hiring criterion for all jobs of this type except garageman, means the ability to

deal with customers cheerfully. Managers use a variety of direct and indirect indicators of "attitude" to evaluate job applicants, including the interview, references, "reasonable" (i.e., "not failing") school grades, the applicant's manner of dress, and the neatness of the written job application. Finally, managers use references, along with the stability of an applicant's previous employment record (if any) and school attendance record, as indicators of an applicant's likely future job stability. While managers do not explicitly quantify the costs of and returns to employee training, they do have a rough sense of how long a worker must remain on the job in order for training to be worthwhile. The managers whom I interviewed desire workers who will remain with the firm for at least three or four months. They do not expect workers to remain with them for more than a year, although they are pleased if an employee does stay for longer than a year. All of the managers seemed satisfied with the stability of their current employees. It is noteworthy that the branch managers of large secondary firms were the only hiring managers whom I interviewed who thought in terms of investment in employee training when making hiring decisions. This is probably a consequence of the type of training that is used in these firms. Unlike any other type of secondary or primary employer, these firms have relatively formal training programs that are conducted by the manager who is responsible for making hiring decisions. Because branch managers must interrupt their normal work activities in order to train new workers in a rather

formal manner, they are especially conscious of investing in employee training and take training investments into account when making hiring decisions.

Secondary Jobs in Primary Firms. Secondary jobs sometimes exist in firms or government agencies in which most of the jobs are primary. Sometimes these secondary jobs are located in parts of the enterprise that are especially sensitive to fluctuations in product demand. Employment in such jobs fluctuates with the level of product demand, and the jobs are not attached to any firm- or occupation-specific internal labor markets.¹² Part-time parcel-loading jobs in a parcel delivery firm are of this type. The employment of parcel loaders can be, and is, varied with the number of parcels that the firm delivers to a much greater extent than the employment of, say, van drivers. Although parcel loaders may apply for primary jobs (e.g., as van drivers) within the firm, the firm does not expect them to do so, and most of them do not do so. Another kind of secondary job located within a primary firm is the temporary job. The city and state governments, for example, sometimes offer thirty- or ninety-day clerical or blue-collar jobs in order to replace permanent employees who are on vacation. Workers in these temporary jobs perform the same tasks and receive the same wages as the workers they replace, but they do not enjoy the fringe benefits, protections against arbitrary discharge, and seniority promotion and layoff rights that permanent public-sector employees receive. They may

apply for primary job vacancies in the public sector, but, as is the case with the parcel loaders, they are not hired with the expectation that they will move into primary government jobs. Nevertheless, a worker in a secondary job that is located in a primary firm will have an advantage over "outside" applicants in obtaining a primary job in that firm. There are two reasons for this. First, he is likely to know of the existence of primary job vacancies in the firm before "outsiders" learn of them. Second, the employer is already familiar with his performance on his current job. Thus, a secondary job with a primary employer can lead to a primary job with that employer. What is important, though, from the viewpoints of both the firm and the secondary worker, is that there is no systematic link between secondary and primary jobs within the firm in the sense in which there is a systematic link between jobs in an internal labor market. The employer does not arrange the job structure so that a primary job exists for every secondary worker in the firm who wants one. The secondary worker cannot count on the existence of a primary job vacancy during his tenure with the employer. Therefore, it is not surprising that labor turnover patterns in this type of secondary job are similar to those in other kinds of secondary jobs. Workers enter the jobs after having worked in other secondary jobs (or, sometimes, without ever having worked before), remain on the job for at most a year or two (less in the case of the temporary government jobs), and then move on to other secondary jobs or to primary jobs with other employers.

Training procedures for these jobs are quite informal. Temporary clerks and laborers in the public sector learn their jobs through the same process of costless, informal on-the-job training by which their permanent counterparts learn the same jobs. (See section 3.) Parcel loading, according to a manager at the parcel delivery firm, requires virtually no training; new workers simply follow the instructions of their supervisors.

Primary employers are not very particular about whom they hire for their secondary jobs. Temporary government workers are selected by lottery. Announcements of upcoming lotteries are posted in city hall, at the state civil service commission office, and at public and non-profit employment services, but most people learn about the lotteries from relatives, friends, or casual acquaintances. Clerical workers whose duties include typing must pass a typing test after being selected in the lottery, but other workers are hired solely on the basis of the lottery. Government personnel officials do not find it worthwhile to screen workers who will be on the job for at most a few months. Employee recruitment and selection for the parcel-loading jobs are very similar to recruitment and selection for jobs in small secondary firms. Supervisors make on-the-spot hiring decisions. They hire workers who seem to them, on the basis of a brief, informal interview, to be trustworthy and reliable. Applicants are either employee referrals or walk-ins. Supervisors find that they do not need to advertise their jobs in newspapers or with employment services.

Under-the-Table Home- and Auto-Repair Jobs. These jobs, ubiquitous among Boston's "ethnic working class" men, are performed on a casual basis, often by teams of friends or family members. Since these jobs are embedded in the primary social groups to which the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown belong, I defer a (brief) discussion of the way in which workers find out about and learn the jobs until section 3 of chapter 5 (in which social networks and socialization processes are discussed). For the purposes of this chapter, what is important about under-the-table jobs is that, while they are not directly linked to primary jobs through internal labor markets, personal contact networks, or specific skill complementarities, they do provide workers with the general mechanical skills necessary to enable them to pass, with ease, the mechanical skill tests that are required of applicants for primary jobs in several of the public utilities and in some of the unionized building trades apprenticeship programs. Thus, these casual jobs, which workers often forget to mention when recounting their job histories and which they scarcely regard as "jobs" at all, are perhaps the most useful of any secondary jobs in facilitating mobility into at least some kinds of primary jobs.

3. LABOR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIMARY JOBS

This section describes the job structures, training methods, labor turnover patterns, hiring criteria, and recruitment methods of a variety of primary jobs that belong to the customary primary job groups of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. The primary jobs, unlike the secondary jobs described in the previous section, do not exhibit the kind of joint variation in job characteristics that would make for an easy classification of jobs into "clusters." In order to facilitate convenient description of job characteristics, I will, therefore, group the primary jobs by employer (for jobs in which internal labor markets are employer-specific or both occupation- and employer-specific) or by occupation (for jobs with occupation-specific but not employer-specific internal labor markets).

Civil Service Jobs. Most city and state government jobs (except for jobs in the independent city and state authorities and commissions and jobs that are filled by appointees of elected officials) fall under state civil service rules. In this section, I will describe the labor market characteristics of civil service jobs in the city government. State government jobs are quite similar to city jobs.

The city of Boston has 12,000 employees. Nine thousand of these are civil service employees. The remaining 3000, including all department heads, are appointed by the mayor. All civil service employees are unionized. Within each city government

department (except for police and fire) there are two separate internal labor markets, one for clerical workers and one for blue-collar workers. The police and fire departments have their own separate, employer- and occupation-specific internal labor markets. (Several city departments also employ professionals, such as lawyers and engineers, whose jobs are covered by civil service rules. This study is not concerned with these workers.) Department heads are responsible for making all hiring and promotion decisions within their departments.

The police and fire departments are open to new workers only at the lowest rank (i.e., patrolman or firefighter). All other ranks in these departments (lieutenant, captain, district chief, and deputy chief) are filled exclusively by internal promotion based on civil service examinations, which are offered when job vacancies arise. The job structures of both departments narrow as rank increases. The internal labor markets for clerical and blue-collar workers are theoretically open to outsiders at every level. Jobs above the lowest level require previous "related" employment experience. (Sometimes education beyond high school can substitute for experience. (However, with the exception of professional jobs, there are no education requirements of any kind for any city jobs.) In practice, higher-level jobs are almost always filled by internal promotion from within the same department because no one other than current department employees bothers to apply for these jobs. Entry-level clerks routinely advance to more responsible mid-level clerical positions. They

can ultimately advance to positions as supervisors of clerical workers, but few do so because the job structure narrows considerably at the supervisory level. Blue-collar workers begin in unskilled jobs (e.g., park laborer) and routinely advance to semiskilled jobs (e.g., motor equipment operator). Advancement to positions involving supervision of laborers or equipment is possible, but few laborers advance to such positions, again because of a narrowing of the job structure at the supervisory level. Clerical workers are promoted according to the same criteria by which they are hired, namely, civil service exam scores or "provisional appointment" by the department head. (See below.) For blue-collar jobs, promotion goes to the most senior worker whom the department head considers qualified for promotion; in practice, this usually means that promotions are based on seniority.

New entry-level clerks earn \$ 199 per week (as of 1984). New entry-level blue-collar workers earn \$ 224 per week. After five years of on-the-job experience, the typical clerk who has followed the normal path of internal labor market advancement earns \$ 230 per week. The typical blue-collar worker with five years of experience earns \$ 270 per week. The starting salaries for police patrolmen and firefighters are \$ 20,304 per year and \$ 391 per week respectively. The typical police officer or firefighter with five years of experience earns between about \$ 22,000 and \$ 25,000 per year.

The police and fire departments have extensive formal training programs that combine classroom instruction with simulated

on-the-job situations. After completing these programs, workers need several years of experience to learn how to do their jobs well. In contrast, clerical and blue-collar jobs are learned much more quickly and through very informal means. Workers learn these jobs by watching experienced workers perform the jobs and imitating the experienced workers. The entry-level jobs are relatively simple and routine. According to a city personnel manager, new workers take "about an hour and a half" to become proficient at these jobs. Although higher-level jobs, especially blue-collar jobs, often involve the operation of idiosyncratic, job-specific machines, they are learned in the same manner as the entry-level jobs. Informal on-the-job training for these jobs is facilitated by the fact that many city jobs are performed by small groups of workers who work together. The integration of the individual worker into the work group is the key to successful learning of jobs of this type. For most workers, this integration is more or less automatic, so that learning a new job is an incidental, costless byproduct of joining a new work group.¹³

Clerical and blue-collar workers usually begin working for the city immediately after graduating from high school, without having previously held any full-time jobs. Many police officers and firefighters also begin their jobs immediately after leaving school, but more often they enter their jobs while in their early or mid-twenties. (This is apparently a consequence of the fact that civil service waiting lists are longer for entry-level jobs

in the police and fire departments than for other entry-level jobs.) City employees tend to remain in city jobs for their entire working lives unless they are laid off. According to a personnel manager, workers view city jobs as "lifetime jobs" that it would be foolish to leave voluntarily and from which it is impossible to be fired and unusual to be laid off. Although the passage of a statewide property tax limitation referendum has led to layoffs in several city departments and has altered workers' previous belief that city jobs were "layoff-proof," new workers continue to enter city government with the expectation of having a long-term job. Personnel officials are pleased with the low level of voluntary labor turnover. Yet they also seem to take this state of affairs for granted. To them, the "reasonable" pay and high job security offered by government jobs necessarily implies that workers will not quit these jobs. They cannot conceive of plausible circumstances in which labor turnover would ever be a problem in the public sector.

The "official" method of filling entry-level clerical jobs is by state civil service examination. For every N vacancies, $2N+1$ applicants are initially selected in order of civil service exam scores. These $2N+1$ applicants are then interviewed by the appropriate department head, who selects N workers from among them on the basis of what a personnel manager described as "very subjective" criteria. I was unable to find a department head who was willing to discuss these criteria. However, the personnel manager whom I interviewed believed that department heads are

most concerned with picking people who will "fit into" their departments. Department heads also use their selection procedures to implement affirmative-action hiring guidelines. (These guidelines vary widely in their content and in their enforcement between departments and between mayoral administrations. Only the police and fire departments, whose affirmative-action programs are subject to U.S. government approval, have mandatory affirmative-action hiring targets.)

Most clerical workers are not hired through the "official" method, ostensibly because the state government, as an economy measure, does not offer exams for clerical positions on a regular basis. Instead, clerical positions, after being "posted" in city hall and the state civil service office, are filled by "provisional" appointees who are selected directly by the department heads. Provisional appointees do not enjoy seniority layoff rights or the right to a hearing before dismissal, and their appointments must be renewed every three months. In all other respects, though, they are identical to "permanent" employees. When "sufficiently many" provisional appointments have been made (usually once a year or once every two years), the state offers a civil service exam, the results of which usually make the provisional appointees permanent. If, however, a provisional appointee does not obtain a high enough exam score to qualify for a permanent position, the department head may override the exam results and rehire the employee as "provisional." In this way, it is possible (although uncommon) for a clerical worker to

remain provisional indefinitely.

There are no examinations or provisional appointments for blue-collar jobs. Instead, applicants simply put their names on a list that is maintained by the state civil service commission. For every N vacancies, $2N+1$ applicants are selected in order of date of application. These applicants are then interviewed by the appropriate department manager, who chooses from among them on the basis of subjective criteria. The names of workers who are not selected remain on the list indefinitely.

New police officers and firefighters are selected using civil service exams. However, there are no provisional appointments for these jobs as there are for clerical jobs. Strictly enforced affirmative-action hiring rules in the police and fire departments require that one minority applicant be selected for each white applicant who is selected, with both whites and minorities being chosen (separately) in order of exam scores. Applicants who are selected must meet physical standards and, for the police department, must undergo extensive background investigations. Applicants who meet these standards are then hired in order of their exam scores, except that veterans are given absolute preference over non-veterans.

Most applicants find out about city jobs through informal channels, despite the fact that several formal job advertisements are required by law. Notices of all job vacancies must be posted in city hall and in the state civil service office. The state Employment Service is notified of upcoming civil service exams.

The city personnel office sends notices of all job vacancies to a large number of minority community organizations, but does not make any further effort to recruit minority job applicants.

(Employment counselors in minority community organizations whom I interviewed did not believe that the city government was seriously interested in hiring minority group members, except in the police and fire departments. Therefore, they did not refer their clients for city jobs, except for jobs as police officers or firefighters.) People usually find out about city jobs from friends or relatives who are city employees, although a sizeable minority learn about job openings by direct inquiry at city hall. Friends and relatives of city employees (except for friends and relatives of politicians and department heads) do not receive any hiring preference. However, department heads' concern with hiring people who will "fit into" their departments suggests that friends and relatives of people already working in a particular department may have an advantage over other applicants for jobs in that department.

In the experience of the personnel manager with whom I spoke, all entry-level city government jobs have always had more qualified applicants than available positions. This was true even during the Boston-area economic expansion of late 1984, when the city's unemployment rate was very low. At that time, the city was no longer laying off workers, but neither was it expanding its hiring. New workers were being hired only to replace older workers who had retired.¹⁴

The Port Authority. The Massachusetts Port Authority, an independent state agency, employs more than four hundred workers, most of whom work at the Boston metropolitan airport. Among the principal non-professional entry-level jobs are flight dispatcher, parking lot attendant, messenger, janitor, cashier, and electrician. All of these jobs are unionized. However, there are several different unions, whose jurisdictions do not correspond well to occupational boundaries, each of which negotiates a separate contract with the Authority. While all of the jobs have the kinds of formal job-security guarantees that are found throughout the unionized primary lower tier, the multiplicity of unions results in a substantial amount of wage variation across jobs, even across jobs in the same occupation. Some jobs have starting wages at or near the minimum wage, while others have considerably higher entry-level wages. A Port Authority personnel manager estimated that clerical and blue-collar workers who have worked for the authority for five years earn between \$ 12,000 and \$ 25,000 per year.

The internal labor market is of a relatively "open" variety. There are no rigid pathways of advancement within the Authority. All job openings are "posted" and workers can "bid" on any positions for which they possess the necessary formal qualifications. Promotion to a particular position goes to the most senior employee, among those who "bid" on the position, who has the required qualifications. (In practice, this system is similar to a

purely seniority-based promotion system.) It is possible for jobs above the entry level to be filled from outside of the Authority, but this is not normally done unless there are no qualified "bidders" from within the Authority. Despite the absence of rigid promotion pathways, workers tend to advance to jobs that are related to their entry-level jobs but that require somewhat more skill and/or responsibility. The reason for this is that the principal qualification for a higher-level job is usually experience in a related lower-level job. It is possible for workers who begin in entry-level clerical or blue-collar jobs to advance eventually to supervisory positions, but few are able to do so because the job structure narrows considerably at the supervisory level. A college degree is required for higher-level management positions, although the personnel manager with whom I spoke neither knew nor seemed to care about the reason for the existence of this requirement; she viewed the requirement simply as a rule made by top management officials, which she had to administer.

Training is accomplished through a combination of direct instruction and informal on-the-job training. Supervisors initially show and/or tell new workers the basic elements of the entry-level jobs. The workers then learn the details of the jobs through the same kind of informal process by which city government employees learn their jobs. Most of the entry-level jobs are fairly routine and are easily learned in less than one month.

New workers usually begin working for the Port Authority

between the ages eighteen and twenty-five. Some come directly from high school. Others have previously worked in a variety of secondary jobs. Non-professional workers tend to remain with the Authority for their entire working lives unless they leave the Boston area or unless they are offered jobs that are higher-paying but equally secure. (The latter events are uncommon, according to the personnel manager with whom I spoke.) The Authority has never laid anyone off, a fact of which job applicants are well aware and one that contributes to the Authority's reputation as a provider of secure jobs. Personnel managers are pleased with the stability of the workforce, although they do not purposely seek workers who are looking for "lifetime" jobs.

Workers learn about job openings either from friends or (less often) relatives or by direct inquiry ("walk-ins"). Relatives play less of a role in recruitment for the Authority than for most other primary employers because the Authority, in an attempt to avoid even the appearance of nepotism, places severe restrictions on the employment of relatives. (A new employee can have no more than two relatives [including parents, spouses, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and in-laws] employed by the Authority in any capacity and cannot have any relatives employed in his department.) Only professional jobs are advertised in newspapers because personnel officials find it unnecessary to advertise other jobs. For non-professional entry-level jobs, informal recruitment sources always produce a surplus of qualified applicants over available job vacancies. Personnel managers

are, therefore, quite content to draw new employees from those sources, although they have no preference for or against applicants drawn from any particular recruitment source. As long as costless recruitment sources produce sufficient numbers of qualified applicants, there is no motivation for the Authority to use costly sources.

The Authority's hiring strategy is similar in its broad outlines to the hiring strategies used by several other large primary employers, notably the public utilities and shipyards. This strategy, which can be conveniently summarized as, "Hire the first qualified applicants who appear when job openings arise,"¹⁵ works in the following manner. The Authority sets "objective" qualifications for each entry-level job. Two such qualifications, which apply to all entry-level jobs, are that applicants must be at least eighteen years old and must have a high school diploma or the equivalent. These particular qualifications appear to be arbitrary rules made by top management; the personnel official whom I interviewed could not provide a rationale for them. Each job also has one or more additional "objective" qualifications that personnel managers believe are technically necessary for satisfactory job performance. Applicants for flight dispatcher, parking attendant, and messenger jobs must have driver's licenses. Applicants for janitorial jobs must have some previous experience in cleaning. Applicants for cashier jobs must have some previous employment experience that involved handling of and responsibility for money. Personnel

managers interview applicants who possess the relevant "objective" qualifications and check their previous employment references (if any) and school references. The interview and reference check are intended mainly to determine whether the applicant, if hired, is likely to come to work regularly, work steadily, and remain with the Port Authority for several years (not necessarily for a lifetime). The stability of an applicant's previous employment record (or school attendance record, if there is no previous employment record) is an important element in the evaluation of references. Personnel managers use it as a predictor of an applicant's likely future employment stability. However, previous employment stability is not judged by overly strict standards. An applicant who has had a string of jobs that lasted one year each would be considered to have a "stable enough" work history, while one who has had many previous jobs that lasted less than six months each would be considered too unstable. Layoffs and periods of involuntary unemployment do not count against an applicant. On the basis of the interview, reference check, and formal job qualifications, personnel managers decide whether an applicant is "qualified" or "unqualified" for the job. They do not attempt to rank applicants in order from "most qualified" to "least qualified" because they do not believe that it is necessary to do so. Anyone who possesses the "objective" qualifications for a job and who is thought likely to be a stable worker is "qualified" for the job and is believed likely to be a satisfactory worker. Anyone who lacks either the "objective"

qualifications or the expected stability is considered "unqualified." Personnel managers select four or five "qualified" applicants for each job opening and refer them to the appropriate department manager, who chooses among them on the basis of "subjective" criteria that personnel officials were unable or unwilling to describe. The applicants selected by the personnel office are usually the first applicants whom personnel managers have interviewed and found to be qualified. Since all qualified applicants are more or less interchangeable from the personnel manager's viewpoint, it is not worthwhile for the personnel office to conduct additional interviews once sufficiently many qualified applicants have been found. (The only exception to this generalization results from the Authority's attempt to implement affirmative-action hiring goals, which apply both to minorities and to residents of areas, such as East Boston, where Authority facilities are located. Personnel managers attempt to interview applicants until they have located enough qualified affirmative-action candidates to meet the hiring goals. Several representatives of East Boston and minority community organizations, though, believe that the Authority has not seriously attempted to meet its affirmative-action goals. (I have been unable to obtain data from the Authority on its employment of East Boston residents and minorities.)

There is only one non-professional job in the Authority for which hiring is conducted in a manner that differs from that described above. Journeyman electricians are referred to the Authority by the electricians' union local with which the Authority

has a contract. Union electricians have usually learned their trade through a union apprenticeship program that resembles the apprenticeship programs of the other unionized building trades. (See below.) If the union is unable to refer a suitable candidate to the Authority, then the Authority will advertise for a licensed journeyman electrician from outside of the union. If the latter course of action is followed, the electrician who is hired must become a union member after being hired.

The Public Transportation System. The Boston area's public transportation system, known as the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), is an independent state agency that employs approximately 6200 workers. The system's non-professional employees include transit operatives, repairmen, and their supervisors ("line workers"), clerical workers, and skilled trades journeymen. Clerical jobs in the MBTA do not appear to belong to the customary primary job groups of the men of East Boston, South Boston, or Charlestown. Skilled trades journeymen stand outside of the MBTA's blue-collar internal labor market structure. They are recruited directly from the unions that provide their training, in the same way in which the Port Authority recruits electricians. Therefore, I will not discuss skilled trades jobs any further at this point. The line workers, who are represented by several different labor unions, are the subject of the following discussion.

There are three entry-level jobs for line workers. These are bus driver (the largest job category), subway token clerk, and

security guard. All entry-level workers begin work on a part-time basis (twenty to thirty hours per week) during rush hours. During this time, their work hours and work locations change daily or weekly. After a period that normally lasts eight to ten months, they become full-time workers and receive more regular work hours and locations. (The purpose of this system is to enable the MBTA to meet its rush-hour staffing needs without having to hire full-time workers who would work only during rush hours and be idle the rest of the day.) Higher-level line jobs are filled exclusively by internal promotion from the three entry-level jobs. The internal labor market for line workers is a relatively "open" one that lacks rigid pathways of advancement. All job vacancies are "posted" and interested workers "bid" on them. "Bidders" must pass an examination that is related to the content of the job on which they are "bidding." The MBTA supplies study material for these exams. Most "bidders" pass the promotion exams. Promotion goes to the most senior worker who has passed the exam. The promotion system, then, operates much like a seniority promotion system with "bidding." The purpose of the promotion exam is not so much to select among "bidders" as to serve as the first component of training for the higher-level job. Workers who have passed the exam already know something about the content of the job on which they have "bid." It is fairly common for entry-level workers to advance one level, to such jobs as subway car driver or track repairman. (Many bus drivers, though, remain bus drivers throughout their tenure with

the MBTA. Instead of changing positions, they use their seniority to "bid" on more desirable bus routes.) Because of a rapidly narrowing job structure, it is very difficult to advance further, to the positions of starter, inspector, and stationmaster. It is almost impossible for line workers to move into management positions. In order to become a manager, according to one personnel official, "you have to be in the right place at the right time and know the right people." The relative difficulty of upward internal mobility for line workers does not have adverse consequences for the workers' pay or job security. New part-time workers usually earn about \$ 22,000 per year. Full-time workers in entry-level jobs who work six hours of overtime per week (an amount of overtime that is considered "normal") earn approximately \$ 30,000 per year. As noted in section 1 of this chapter, the pay levels are the highest to be found among the customary primary jobs of Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods. After a ninety-day probation period, during which very few workers are dismissed, new part-time workers enjoy the seniority rights and protection against arbitrary dismissal that are hallmarks of unionized primary lower-tier jobs.

Entry-level workers learn their jobs through a combination of formal and informal means. New workers receive classroom training and closely supervised work experience (usually lasting six weeks altogether) for the specific jobs for which they have been hired. They then begin regular work and learn their jobs gradually through repetition. After completing classroom training, workers

require less than a month to become fully competent at their jobs. Since the entry-level jobs are not performed by groups of workers who work together, the group-oriented process of informal on-the-job training that characterizes many other primary jobs is not applicable to these jobs. Jobs above the entry level are learned in much the same way as entry-level jobs, except that, as noted above, a promotion exam is really the first step of the training process.

New workers enter the MBTA at all ages from seventeen upward. Most, however, are under the age of thirty. Most are Boston residents, although the MBTA has no geographical restrictions or preferences regarding a worker's place of residence. Most have previously done a variety of secondary jobs, but some enter the MBTA directly from school and some have previously worked in other primary jobs that paid less than the MBTA jobs. A few are college students or college graduates who view the MBTA jobs as temporary. Turnover in line jobs is about six per cent per year. Half of this is due to retirements or deaths of older workers. The other half is due to quits by college-educated workers who intended the jobs to be temporary. Non-college-educated workers rarely leave the MBTA voluntarily. Personnel managers are pleased with the low level of labor turnover. Like the city personnel officials, they take this situation for granted. They believe that workers would be foolish to leave an employer that offers as much pay and job security as the MBTA.

Since 1977, the MBTA has had a unique system of hiring and

recruitment that was designed by a judge in order to eradicate race and sex bias in the Authority's employment patterns. Prior to the adoption of this system, recruitment and hiring were done, as a personnel manager put it, "entirely by nepotism." The main component of the current system is a lottery, which is held about once a year. There is a three- to four-week signup period for each lottery, during which time anyone may file an application. One does not apply for a particular job at this stage; the MBTA determines which workers are assigned to which jobs after selections have been made from the lottery. The signup period is advertised extensively in local newspapers and in mailings that are sent to schools and community organizations throughout Boston and its suburbs. Many people also hear about the signup period from current employees or from friends, relatives, or acquaintances who happened to stop in at the MBTA's employment office during the signup period. Because the MBTA is such a well-known employer and because the location of its central offices in downtown Boston is fairly well-known, people come to the employment office all year to ask about job availability. Signups are permitted only during the designated period, however. An applicant who is not selected in one lottery must re-apply during the next signup period in order to be reconsidered for employment. There are three separate lottery pools, one for white men, one for minority men, and one for women. Two or three times each year, job openings are filled by selecting from the lottery pools a number of applicants equal to the number of job vacancies.

Forty per cent of the chosen applicants must be minority men, forty per cent women, and twenty per cent white men. Applicants who are selected by lot are given a test of the basic arithmetic and basic mechanical knowledge that management considers to be the minimum knowledge necessary to begin training for the entry-level jobs. Those who achieve the minimum passing test score are hired without any further screening. According to MBTA personnel officials, most of the applicants who are selected in the lottery pass the entrance exam. If some of the chosen applicants do not pass, then more applicants are selected from the lottery pool (again in the proportions of forty per cent minority men, forty per cent women, and twenty per cent white men) and tested. The process is repeated until all entry-level vacancies are filled. If at any time one of the three lottery pools is exhausted, a new signup period is held and a new lottery conducted for all three race/sex groups. This ensures that the 40:40:20 proportions will be maintained for all new hires. The lottery system has increased the female percentage of the MBTA's total workforce from 4.2 per cent in 1977 to 8.7 per cent in 1982 and has increased the total minority percentage (male and female combined) from 11.6 per cent in 1977 to 22.0 per cent in 1982 and 25.9 per cent in 1983.¹⁶

The Public Utilities. There are four major public utilities that provide electricity, natural gas, water and sewer, and local telephone service in the city of Boston. Three of these

are privately-owned, government-regulated monopolies. The fourth is an independent agency of the Boston city government. The combined employment of the four utilities exceeds 6300 workers. With the exception of clerks and service representatives in one of the utilities, all of the public utility jobs are unionized. To preserve the confidentiality that was requested by two of the personnel managers whom I interviewed, I will refer to the utilities as "A," "B," "C," and "D."

Below the management level, the job structures of all four utilities are open to hiring from outside only at the bottom. Entry-level jobs include file clerk, messenger, electric power station cleaner, bill deliverer, gas line repairman, telephone service representative, telephone installer and repairman, telephone coin collector, truck driver, sewer cleaner, water meter reader, and pick-and-shovel water or sewer laborer. There are two distinct internal labor markets in each utility, one for clerical workers and one for blue-collar workers. Pay for entry-level clerical workers ranges from \$ 188 per week to \$ 250 per week, depending on the firm and the position. Pay for new blue-collar workers ranges from \$ 200 to \$ 250 per week. Clerical workers with five years of within-firm experience earn between approximately \$ 300 and \$ 400 per week, while blue-collar workers with five years of experience earn between about \$ 300 and \$ 500 per week, according to rough estimates made by personnel officials. All of the companies have job-posting and "bidding" systems for internal advancement. The internal labor markets of utilities

A, B, and C are of the relatively "open" variety, while that of utility D is characterized by relatively rigid promotion pathways. Jobs above the entry level are similar to entry-level jobs but involve more skill and/or more responsibility. In utility A, promotions into some positions are made entirely on the basis of seniority, while promotions into others are based on a combination of seniority and performance in the lower-level job. Promotions in utility D are based on performance and job attendance record in the lower-level job, with seniority being used to break ties. In practice, job performance and attendance records vary little between employees, so seniority is the main determinant of promotion. Seniority is the sole determinant of promotion for all jobs in utility B and for unionized jobs in utility C. For non-union jobs in utility C, promotion is based on managers' assessments of workers' qualifications for promotion. Clerical and blue-collar workers in all of the utilities ordinarily advance two or three levels above the entry level during their working lives. Theoretically, they can become foremen or first-level supervisors, but few are able to do so because job structures narrow considerably at the supervisory level. Higher-level managers are either former foremen who were promoted on the basis of their length of service and supervisory ability, or college graduates who entered the firm as managers.

Training for most of the public utility jobs, both at the entry level and at higher levels, is very informal. Several of the jobs are done by groups of workers who work together. These

jobs are learned through the group-oriented process of costless, informal on-the-job training described above. For jobs that are not performed by groups, supervisors describe and/or demonstrate tasks to new workers and the workers master the tasks through repetition. Workers generally achieve average levels of job competence within less than a month on the job. Only for one entry-level job and for certain higher-level technical jobs in utility C is training more formal and learning time longer. New workers in the entry-level job undergo six to twelve weeks of self-paced classroom training before beginning work. Workers in the higher-level technical jobs often receive extensive and systematic technical instruction from their supervisors before beginning work.

New workers in utility A most often enter the firm during their mid-twenties, although some enter earlier, and about fifteen per cent enter directly from high school. Typically, entering workers have previously done a variety of secondary jobs, mostly in small neighborhood firms. Clerical workers have often had previous clerical experience, although this is not a requirement. New workers enter utility B at all ages from the late teens upward, but none enter directly from high school because previous full-time work experience is hiring requirement in this firm. The utility B personnel manager with whom I spoke was not able to identify any particular previous jobs held by new employees of the firm. In utility C, new workers are usually in their late teens an early twenties. Many enter the firm directly from

high school. Those who have previously held full-time jobs have usually done so for about two years and have come to utility C in search of "something better-paying and more secure." Clerical workers tend to have had previous clerical experience (although this is not required), while blue-collar workers have previously worked in "any kind of job." Utility D, like utility B, requires its workers to have had some kind of previous full-time work experience. Most new entrants to utility D are in their late teens or early twenties and have previously held several secondary jobs, among which are gas station attendant, non-union construction worker, supermarket clerk, non-union truck driver, hardware store stockboy, shipping and receiving clerk, and security guard. As in utilities A and C, clerical workers have often held previous clerical jobs, although, once again, this is not a requirement. Non-professional employees of all four utilities tend to remain with their firms until retirement, a fact that personnel managers attributed to the high pay and security of the jobs (none of the firms has ever had a layoff) and the difficulty of obtaining comparably high-paying and secure jobs elsewhere. It is not clear whether the firms' high levels of pay and job security are part of a conscious strategy by the firms to reduce labor turnover. Personnel managers simply take low turnover for granted. When asked, they attribute low turnover to high pay and job security, but they do not state that the firm offers jobs with these characteristics in order to keep turnover rates low.

Each of the four utilities follows one of two distinct

recruitment strategies. Utilities B and D recruit rather passively, relying for job applicants on walk-ins and friends and relatives of current employees. Job interviews for persons referred by current employees are often arranged by the current employees rather than by the applicant. Informal recruitment sources are used because they provide the firms with steady streams of qualified applicants (many more qualified applicants, in fact, than the number of available entry-level positions). Personnel managers, therefore, do not find it necessary to advertise job openings (except for certain professional job openings). Utility B has an "anti-nepotism rule" that prohibits the hiring of parents, children, or siblings of current employees. Moreover, a personnel manager of utility B stated that he disliked dealing with applicants referred by current employees because he must sometimes reject those applicants as "unqualified" for jobs and, in so doing, antagonize the employees who made the referrals. "Friends and relatives are the toughest problem we have to deal with in personnel," he remarked. "But," he continued, "there's not much we can do about it." His personal dislike for employee referrals has not influenced his hiring decisions. He is willing to interview employee referrals and to hire them if they are qualified, and, in fact, most of utility B's new employees are friends or relatives (although not immediate family) of experienced employees. The firm is apparently trying to minimize the recruitment cost of filling its job openings with qualified people. Utility D appears to follow the same strategy, and most of its new employees

are also friends or relatives of current employees. Passive recruitment, dominated by employee referrals, has produced identifiable concentrations of workers from particular geographical areas or ethnic backgrounds in both firms. The utility D personnel manager noted that her firm has large concentrations of workers from East Boston, South Boston, Charlestown, and Dorchester. The utility B personnel manager stated that Irish-Americans have traditionally made up a large proportion of his firm's work force, although this proportion is slowly declining over time.

Utilities B and D both have government-mandated affirmative-action goals. Their attempts to achieve these goals give rise to the only departures that they make from their usual passive recruitment methods. Both utilities send lists of job openings to minority community organizations. Utility B also recruits in some Boston high schools and participates in "job fairs." Yet these recruitment activities generate relatively few minority job applicants. For this reason, both personnel managers said that meeting affirmative-action goals is one of the most difficult aspects of a personnel manager's job. (Neither of them, however, was able to describe the affirmative-action goals in detail or to assess the firm's progress in meeting them.) Both managers seemed to experience a tension between the goal of hiring minorities (who rarely come from informal recruitment sources) and the goal (see below) of hiring the first qualified workers (who usually come from informal sources). The representatives of minority community organizations whom I contacted said that they

hesitate to refer minority job-seekers to utilities A, B, and D because they have found that job openings are usually filled by the time their applicants arrive. This suggests that the firms do not wait very long for minority applicants to arrive. Apparently, if minorities are among the first qualified job applicants who appear when job openings arise, they will be hired. However, minority applicants tend not to among the first qualified applicants. In the concluding chapter, I will discuss the implications of this for the design of affirmative-action programs and for alternative means of improving the economic position of disadvantaged groups.

Utilities A and C pursue much more active recruitment strategies than utilities B and D. Both A and C send notices of job vacancies to community organizations throughout Boston, recruit at high schools in the city and suburbs, and participate in "career days." In addition, utility A advertises all of its job vacancies in newspapers, while utility C sends vacancy notices to the state Employment Service and operates a telephone "job line" on which a recorded message informs callers about the week's job openings and tells them where and when to apply. Yet most of the people who are actually hired by these firms found out about job openings from friends or relatives who already worked for the firms or from casual, direct application. Why, then, do the firms do so much active recruiting? A personnel manager in utility A was unable to give a clear answer to this question. She stated that her firm wanted to have a large applicant pool on which to draw in case it should ever need to do so. The firm accepts job

applications at all times, regardless of whether or not it is hiring new workers. It keeps these applications on file for several months. However it has never found it necessary to consider applications other than those received when job openings actually arose. Utility A ignores applications that are more than two weeks old unless the applicant happens to re-contact the firm at a time when a vacancy occurs. The number of qualified people who apply for jobs when vacancies occur have always, in the firm's experience, exceeded the number of vacancies. It is not clear, then, that utility A needs to build up a large file of old job applications as "insurance" against the (apparently very unlikely) possibility that it might experience a shortage of qualified applicants. Nor does the firm appear to have a highly selective hiring policy which might justify the existence of a large applicant pool as necessary in order that the "best" applicants are hired for the available jobs. Affirmative-action goals are another possible justification for active labor recruitment, but utility A's personnel managers face the same problems in meeting these goals as do the personnel managers of utilities B and D. The rationale for utility A's recruitment policy, then, remains unclear.

The personnel manager of utility C stressed the need to meet affirmative-action goals as a major reason for engaging in active recruitment. This rationale seems plausible if the manager's comments about the administration of the firm's affirmative-action program are true. Unlike the personnel managers of the other

utilities, this manager stated that she had not experienced any major difficulties in meeting affirmative-action goals. The reason for this is not clear, since utility C's recruitment practices seem at least superficially similar to those of utility A and since its hiring practices are similar to those of the other utilities as well. Perhaps there is a subtle difference between the hiring and recruitment methods of utility C and those of the other utilities that is not apparent from a comparison of personnel managers' comments. Perhaps the affirmative-action goals of utility C differ markedly from those of the other utilities. Or perhaps the historic composition of utility C's workforce differs substantially from those of other utilities. Without a more detailed examination of affirmative-action programs (which would be beyond the scope of this study), it is not possible to account for the apparent difference between utility C and the other utilities with respect to the difficulty of recruiting minority job applicants.

Each of the four utilities follows some variant of the "hire the first qualified applicants" policy described previously. Utility A gives job-related skill tests (clerical tests for clerical jobs, tests of basic mechanical skills for blue-collar jobs) and checks applicants' school and employment references in order to judge their reliability and likely future job stability. (An applicant's work history must be extremely unstable in order for the firm to reject him on the basis of a poor work history. "Six jobs in a year is too much," explained the personnel manager.

In any event, the firm rarely rejects applicants because of unstable previous work records.) Applicants who pass the tests and who have acceptable references are considered "qualified." Personnel managers tend to hire the first qualified applicants while also trying to meet affirmative-action goals. A job applicant's age, education, and the content of his previous work experience are all irrelevant to utility A.

Utility B has a similar hiring policy, but is somewhat concerned with the content of applicants' prior work experience. All applicants take job-related skill tests similar to those given by utility A. Each applicant is interviewed by a personnel manager in order to determine whether the applicant has had previous full-time work experience that is somehow related to the job for which he is applying. The connection between the previous experience and the position being applied for can be extremely loose, however. A bill deliverer, for example, needs only to have previously held a job that required independent (i.e., not closely supervised) work. Applicants who have passed the relevant tests and who have had previous work experience that a personnel manager finds acceptable are considered "qualified." For each job vacancy, personnel managers send a group of five or six qualified applicants (again, generally the first qualified applicants, with some attention given to affirmative-action goals) to the appropriate department manager, who makes the final hiring decision on the basis of subjective criteria about which I was unable to obtain any information. Once again, age and

education play no role in the hiring process. Because of uncertainty about its hiring needs, utility B has, in recent years, hired all new clerical workers as temporary employees for a period of six months to one year. The temporary workers are not guaranteed permanent jobs, but the firm's experience thus far has been that a permanent job opening has usually appeared for each temporary worker.

Utility C has more screening criteria than utilities A and B, but its hiring process is essentially similar. Applicants must pass job-related skill tests. All applicants must be at least sixteen years old. Personnel managers check applicants' work and school references and interview them in order to determine their reliability and job stability. In evaluating work and school references the most important considerations are regular attendance and punctuality. "We don't have to hire "A" students," explained a personnel manager, "Just people who are in school and on the job every day." A stable work history is also important (if the applicant has worked previously): "We like the person to have stayed on the job for at least a year unless there's a good reason." Finally, applicants for certain jobs must pass a security background check or a medical examination. Each of these screening criteria, like the screening criteria used by the other public utilities, is basically of a "pass/fail" nature. Personnel managers do not attempt to make fine distinctions among applicants on each criterion because they do not believe that such distinctions are necessary in order to select competent

workers. Applicants who "pass" all of the criteria are "qualified." The first qualified applicants are hired, with some attention given to affirmative-action hiring goals. All new employees of utility C, like the clerical workers of utility B, are initially hired on a temporary basis. Both the rationale for this and the availability of permanent job openings for temporary workers are the same as in utility B.

Utility D has the least stringent hiring criteria of all. All workers must be at least eighteen years old (a rule, enacted by top management officials, whose rationale the personnel manager was unable to explain). Since most blue-collar positions require hard, physical labor and/or truck-driving, applicants for manual jobs must pass a physical examination and have a driver's license. (Some truck-driving jobs, in addition, require special driver's licenses which, according to the personnel manager, are not difficult to obtain.) Clerical job applicants must have a high school diploma; for secretarial jobs (done mainly by women), they must also have previous secretarial experience or secretarial training). Applicants for all jobs must have previous full-time work experience, although the nature of that experience is irrelevant to the hiring decision. The personnel manager believes that work experience, in and of itself, promotes worker maturity and stability. Finally, applicants for blue-collar jobs are interviewed in order to determine their willingness to do "hard, dirty, physical work." Applicants who have the required "objective" qualifications, who have had full-time work experience, and who

are willing to do the work are "qualified." The first qualified applicants are hired (again, with some attention paid to affirmative-action targets).

Shipyards. There are two large privately owned shipyards in East Boston (one of which also has a branch in South Boston), each of which employs more than one hundred workers. These yards are engaged exclusively in the repair of Navy ships. There are also two small ship-repair subcontractors in East Boston that employ fewer than one hundred workers each. Total employment in East Boston's shipyards fluctuates between about three hundred and about seven hundred workers depending on the volume of ship-repair activity. A very large shipyard in Quincy (a suburb south of Boston), which in the past employed over six thousand workers, closed permanently in 1986 because of an expected lack of future Navy shipbuilding business. With the exception of one of the large East Boston yards, which recently changed ownership, all of the Boston-area shipyards are unionized. The information presented below is based on interviews with the hiring managers of the large, unionized East Boston firm and one of the small East Boston subcontractors.

In each firm, ship-repair work is organized into several functional departments, most but not all of which correspond to particular skilled trades. The small firm has four departments (deck repair, boiler repair, insulation, and sheet-metal fabrication), while the large firm has thirteen (including

machinist, electrician, carpenter, crane operator, rigger, shipfitter, and truck driver). Each department ordinarily functions as a separate internal labor market, although interdepartmental transfers sometimes occur. Within each department, workers move through standardized job classifications from "helper" to "handyman" (which has two classes) to "mechanic" (which has three classes). The starting wage for helpers is \$ 7 per hour, the top wage for mechanics, \$ 13 per hour. Most shipyard workers are able to advance to the lowest class of mechanic within five years after beginning work as a helper, and most eventually reach the top class of mechanic. Foremen are drawn exclusively from the ranks of mechanics and higher-level managers mainly from the ranks of foremen, but there are few positions available at these levels. Promotion is based mainly on skill. In order to advance beyond the entry level, workers must meet the skill standards specified by the Navy for each job classification. Seniority is used to break ties among workers who meet the skill standards for promotion, but there is enough skill variation among workers that the promotion system is not a de facto pure-seniority system. If none of a firm's current employees meet the skill standards for a particular job vacancy, then the firm will attempt to fill the opening by drawing employed or unemployed workers from other shipyards in the Boston area or (if necessary) other parts of the U.S.

Most shipyard jobs are highly idiosyncratic to the ship-repair industry, even though some of the job titles are identical to

those of skilled trades outside of the industry. A carpenter in the construction industry, for example, would have no special advantage over anyone else in learning to become a shipyard carpenter; the jobs are simply too dissimilar. Training for all shipyard jobs occurs through the highly informal, work group-oriented process that characterizes many primary sector lower-tier jobs. Unlike most of the other primary jobs described in this section, most shipyard jobs are highly skilled and workers require as many as fifteen years of experience to learn how to do some of them expertly.

New workers usually begin working in the shipyards at about age eighteen or nineteen. Shipyard work is sometimes the first full-time job that a worker has held since leaving school. More often, though, new shipyard workers have worked for a year or two in secondary jobs (mostly manual jobs) in small neighborhood firms. Few workers who enter the ship-repair industry ever leave it. Workers' attachment to individual firms, though, depends on the availability of work. When a worker changes firms, he retains his job classification and receives the wage that corresponds to that classification, but loses all seniority rights. Because of this, and because employment levels fluctuate greatly depending on the availability of Navy contracts, workers will not normally change firms as long as there is work to be had in their current firms. However, they will move between firms in the Boston area and sometimes will move to shipyards outside of the Boston area if it is necessary to do so in order to obtain work after

unemployment insurance benefits have run out.

The shipyards follow a "hire the first qualified applicants" policy. For the small firm, the only qualification for an entry-level job is "to be mechanically inclined." The firm evaluates mechanical aptitude by means of an informal interview. The first mechanically inclined applicants who appear when job openings arise are hired. The personnel manager of the large shipyard also uses interviews to determine whether applicants have sufficient mechanical aptitude to be able to learn the shipyard jobs. He also tries to determine, through the interview, whether applicants really want to work in a shipyard. (Nearly all do, and few have any plans ever to do any other kind of work.) Finally, he tries to judge applicants' future job stability by looking at the stability of their past work records (if they have worked before), but he noted that most applicants have stayed in previous jobs for six-month or one-year periods and that such a work history is acceptable. Therefore, he rarely rejects applicants on the basis of unstable work histories. He hires the first applicants who meet his minimum standards.

Education, age, and the content of previous work experience are all irrelevant to both firms. The personnel manager of the large firm, though, remarked:

"I'd rip up all the other applications if I got one from someone who went to vocational school or someone who was trying to better himself by taking courses part-time."

He believed that shipyard work was becoming increasingly complex and vocational school, therefore, increasingly important to

facilitate skill-learning. He decried the attitudes of young workers who "think education isn't important any more." Yet he almost never receives applications from people with vocational training and does not make any special attempt to recruit them. The applicants whom he currently gets are, by and large, qualified for the jobs that currently exist. Therefore, despite his personal preferences and beliefs regarding education, he does not think it worthwhile to go out of his way to recruit vocationally trained applicants.

New workers in both firms tend to be either friends or relatives of experienced workers or other men who grew up in communities in which shipyard work was common among adult men. The hiring manager of the small firm, attempting to explain this phenomenon, said:

"The average person wouldn't think about working in a shipyard. They just wouldn't know about it....[E]veryone whose father or uncle works in a shipyard tries to get a job in a shipyard....When the shipyards are hiring, they don't even think about any other jobs."

Sometimes fathers bring their sons to the shipyards to apply for jobs when the yards are hiring. Often, applicants find out that a shipyard is hiring when the yard hires one of their friends or relatives. The firms' hiring managers are able to regulate the flow of applicants by relying on workers' social networks to convey information about hiring. As the large firm's personnel manager put it, "All I have to do is hire someone and word gets around through the barroom grapevine."¹⁷ The shipyards, though, do not necessarily prefer to hire the friends and relatives of

their current employees. Indeed, the personnel manager of the large yard said that he preferred not to hire employee referrals out of fear of "getting stuck with bad workers," but that he has often been unable to avoid hiring employee referrals because of the nature of the firm's applicant pool. Apparently, though, the friends and relatives of the firm's current workers do not turn out to be bad workers often enough for the personnel manager to find it worthwhile to try to change the composition of the applicant pool.

The Unionized Building Trades. Apprenticeship programs in the unionized building trades are jointly administered by the trade unions and the unionized building contractors. Apprenticeships include both classroom training and work experience, the latter being supervised by journeyman workers. They last for either a specified number of years (usually three or four) or a specified numb# of working hours (usually the average number of hours that workers in the trade are employed during a typical three- or four-year period). Apprentices' classroom training consists of instruction in the basic mathematics necessary to the trade (generally a repetition of the final two years of high school mathematics) and in the use of trade-specific tools and techniques. In some trades, there are special classes, held prior to the beginning of the apprenticeship, in which new apprentices are taught some of the basics of tool handling and are exposed to simulated work situations. In all trades, apprentices participate

in both classroom training and regular work experience from the very beginning of their apprenticeships. All of the trades have probationary periods (lasting from three months to a year, depending on the trade) during which an apprentice can be dismissed from the union, without a formal hearing, on the basis of poor work or school performance. Dismissal rates during the probationary period vary by trade.

In order to complete the apprenticeship program successfully, a worker must have (a) the mechanical abilities needed to perform satisfactorily on the job and (b) a good attendance record in apprentice classes and on the job. An apprentice whose classroom performance is poor is given extra help, which is usually sufficient to enable him to pass the classroom component of the apprenticeship. "If they're not doing well in school but they have good attendance and are OK on the job, they'll get by," said one union's business agent. The apprenticeship coordinator of another union remarked, "It's difficult to fail. It's always an attitude problem if you're failing."

Apprentices with whom I have spoken consider the apprenticeship program to be a "good job" rather than a "training program." There are three likely reasons for this. First, apprentices' pay is roughly comparable to that of other entry-level primary jobs. The starting wage for an apprentice varies between \$ 6 and \$ 11 per hour depending on the trade. Despite the seasonal and weather-based variability of work hours in the construction trades, this wage translates into an annual income of between \$

9600 and \$ 19,800.¹⁸ Moreover, apprentices receive regular pay raises (on the basis of either number of hours worked or length of time spent in the apprenticeship program) until, at the end of the program, they earn the journeyman's rate (usually \$ 17 to \$ 18 per hour) The second reason why an apprenticeship is regarded as a job rather than as a training program is that apprentices begin regular work experience as soon as they begin their apprenticeships. Finally, successful completion of the apprenticeship leads immediately to journeyman status in the trade; there is no need to search for a job after completing an apprenticeship. The fact that the young men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown regard construction trades apprenticeships as "good" jobs is crucial for understanding why these men are willing to enter the apprenticeships. As I will show in chapter 5, these men do not believe that formal post-high school education or training is important in getting a "good" job. As I have already shown in this chapter, most of the customary primary jobs of the three neighborhoods do not require such education or training as a condition of entry. The unionized skilled building trades, alone among the customary primary jobs, require several years of formal classroom instruction as part of their training programs. The case of the building trades shows that Boston's ethnic working class men do not object to lengthy formal training programs per se. When the training program is so closely linked to a primary job that participation in training is almost indistinguishable from entry into the job, these

workers are quite willing to go through several years of highly specialized formal training.

The majority of new apprentices enter the apprenticeship programs immediately after completing high school. They have worked previously only in part-time, usually non-mechanically oriented, secondary jobs. Many of these new apprentices have, however, done under-the-table home- or auto-repair work with friends or relatives. Those with fathers or uncles in the trade have almost always had some previous exposure to the tools and techniques of the trade. Thus, despite the fact that most new apprentices have not had any formal work experience related to their trade, they have had informal experience of a related nature. In addition to workers who enter apprenticeships directly from high school, there is a large minority of workers, mainly in their early twenties, who have previously done non-union construction work or who have been members of the laborers' union. Some workers enter union apprenticeships after graduating from vocational high schools. Finally, a small but growing number of apprentices in several of the building trades are college graduates who have had no previous mechanical experience and who lack family ties to the trades. Regardless of their pre-apprenticeship experiences, most apprentices expect to remain, and most do remain, in their trades for their entire working lives. Some, however, leave the trades during or soon after their apprenticeships if they are offered jobs in the city or state government, the public utilities, or the Post Office, because the latter jobs provide steadier incomes than do

the construction trades.

Each trade union accepts applications for apprenticeships during a two-week to one-month period at a specific time each year. Apprentices are selected by committee that is made up of representatives of both union and management. The committee also determines the number of apprentices who will be admitted in any given year. All apprentice selection committees interview applicants in order to assess their interest in and awareness of the trade, their general mechanic aptitude, and any formal or informal mechanically-related work experience that they may have had. The committees rank applicants on the basis of their interview performance. Some trades select apprentices solely on the basis of the interview. Others also make use of formal tests of basic mechanical skills, manual dexterity, and/or elementary arithmetic and English. Some require apprentices to have completed tenth grade or to be high school graduates. Some set minimum age requirements (usually age eighteen) and/or age limits (usually between the ages of twenty-four and twenty-seven) for apprentices. (Age limits are ostensibly intended to prevent apprentices from having to take orders from journeymen who are younger than they.) The various selection criteria are always weighted in order to produce an overall rating for each applicant. Applicants are selected in order of rating. Generally, no single factor is decisive for selection. Trade-related work experience or vocational schooling, for example, can help an applicant, but it is possible to receive a high rating without having had

either previous related work experience or vocational schooling. The particular selection criteria vary substantially by trade, but this variation often seems arbitrary and unrelated to the specific work requirements of each trade. (Why, for example, do some trades use mechanical skill tests while others, in which the same kinds of mechanical skills are required on the job, do not?) While it is usually possible to ascertain some relationship between selection criteria and job requirements, and while union officials usually justify the criteria in these terms, the relationship is often rather loose. The impetus behind the selection criteria sometimes appears to be as much the simple need to establish some method (any method) of selection as the desire to select applicants who will be likely to succeed in the trade. One apprenticeship coordinator remarked:

"Since more people apply than we have slots available, we need to have some way to choose who gets in. Sometimes I wonder if we wouldn't do just as well if we had a lottery."

The trades vary greatly in the nature and success of their affirmative-action programs. All local unions whose jurisdiction includes the city of Boston have programs that are intended to ensure that the unions meet the city's affirmative-action requirements for workers on publicly funded construction projects. (Twenty-five per cent of the workers on such projects must be minorities and fifty per cent must be Boston residents.) Some unions that already have many minority members simply rely on current members to recruit their relatives and do not have any special recruitment or selection programs for minorities. Other

unions notify minority community organizations of their apprenticeship application periods but do not give minorities any special selection preference. At the other extreme, one union that has had very few minority or female apprenticeship applicants and that has been a target of race- and sex-bias complaints recently instituted a policy of automatically admitting any woman or minority group member who completes the application process. Another union follows a middle course; it draws up separate rating lists for minorities, Boston residents, and all other applicants, and draws from each list, in order of rating, so as to maintain a membership that meets the city's requirements.

The trade unions vary in the extent of their recruitment activities, although all advertise their apprenticeships with the state Employment Service. Some also advertise in newspapers and send information about apprenticeship openings to public schools and community organizations. Most applicants, though, find out how and when to apply for apprenticeships from relatives (usually fathers or uncles) who are union members or contractors. According to the trade union representatives whom I interviewed, relatives have no formal influence over the process of apprentice selection and have not had such influence for at least fifteen or twenty years. Indeed, they took great pains to point out that some relatives of union members or contractors are denied admission to the apprenticeship programs. Yet young men from East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown commonly believe that it is impossible to enter a union apprenticeship without having

a relative as a "sponsor," and union representatives say that they often hear apprentices speak of having been "sponsored" into the union by a father or uncle. Even though the "sponsors" have no official status in the eyes of the apprentice selection committee, it is not difficult to see how people with family connections to the trades could have advantages over others in finding out about the apprenticeship application process and in obtaining high ratings from the selection committee. First, apprenticeship application periods are not always widely publicized, so people who have relatives in the trades have an advantage in finding out when to apply. Second, applications for apprenticeships must be made at the union halls, many of which are located on side streets in industrial areas of Boston or its suburbs, far from applicants' homes. People who have relatives in the unions, therefore, have an advantage in knowing where to apply. Third, people whose fathers or uncles are in the trades have an awareness of the trades' tools and techniques and have often done mechanical work with their fathers or uncles. They are, therefore, likely to receive high ratings for their previous work experience and awareness of the trades. Finally, members of apprentice selection committees usually know the current members of the trade union and may, therefore, give high interview scores to the sons and nephews of current members even if those sons and nephews score poorly on selection criteria other than the interview. None of these factors guarantees either that all applicants who are relatives of current members will be admitted to apprenticeships

or that all non-relatives will be disadvantaged in applying for apprenticeships. Taken together, though, these considerations do seem to give some advantages to relatives of current union members.

Small Auto-Repair Shops. Jobs as automobile mechanics or auto-body repairmen in small shops are commonly mentioned as "good" jobs by the young men of East Boston. The following account pertains to auto-body shops; mechanic shops are similar to body shops in their employment patterns.

East Boston has more than twenty auto-body shops, each of which employs fewer than ten workers. All of these shops are non-union. There are no formal rules (such as the seniority layoff rules and rules prohibiting arbitrary discharges that are found in large, unionized primary firms) to protect worker job security, nor are there employer-provided pensions or medical insurance. Moreover, individual shops frequently go in and out of business. Yet auto-body workers consider their jobs reasonably secure in the sense of providing a steady income. One worker stated, "There's always good, steady work in this trade." There appear to be three reasons why auto-body workers in small East Boston shops enjoy reasonably steady work despite the absence of formal job-security protection and despite the instability of individual firms. First, employers and employees in the industry are frequently close friends or relatives. Because owners and workers are engaged in ongoing social relationships that extend

beyond the workplace, they will tend not to behave in the workplace in ways that would threaten those relationships. Owners, for example, will tend not to fire workers without cause. Thus, personal relationships within the small firms may substitute for the formal rules that protect workers in large primary firms against arbitrary dismissal.¹⁹ Second, although individual firms are unstable, the demand for auto body repair services in East Boston is fairly stable over time and is not very sensitive to business cycles. "There are always plenty of car accidents around here," remarked the owner of one body shop. Because product demand in the industry as a whole is relatively stable, it is not difficult for a laid-off worker to find a job in another shop. Finally, the workers and owners of East Boston's auto-body shops tend to know one another. "Auto-body men stick together," said one. For this reason, information about which experienced workers are looking for work and which employers are hiring travels quickly and costlessly, facilitating the job transitions of experienced workers who wish to or who have been forced to change employers.

Auto-body workers operate in an occupation-specific internal labor market that has two types of positions. The entry-level position, accessible to workers without previous experience in the trade, is called "helper." Helpers sand the bodies of cars that are to be repaired and gradually learn how to do repair work by watching and imitating experienced workers. After about four years as a helper, a worker has ordinarily learned enough

to become a "body man," an experienced worker who removes dents and paints cars. Workers of both types often move between firms, retaining their designations as "helper" or "body man" when they move. (In the past, according to one worker, it was common for experienced body men to move from small shops to auto dealerships, which used to offer higher pay than small shops. However, the pay differential no longer exists and it is no longer common for experienced workers to move to dealerships.)

After about ten years of experience as a body man, a worker can accumulate enough money, tools, and knowledge of the trade to be able to open his own body shop. It is common for workers to try to open their own shops. According to one worker, "It's everybody's ambition to start their own shop." Workers do not necessarily have this ambition when they begin working in a body shop, but they develop it during the course of several years of employment in the industry. According to one owner, most East Boston body shop owners have previously worked as body men. Because body shops do not require large amounts of fixed capital, it is relatively easy to open a new shop and relatively easy to close an unprofitable one. The industry is constantly in flux; new firms are entering while old firms are simultaneously closing. If a shop fails, the owner simply resumes work as a body man in someone else's shop; at a later time, he may try once again to start his own shop.

New helpers are usually in their late teens or early twenties. Some enter the trade directly from school. Others have previously

worked in secondary jobs that were not necessarily mechanical or auto-related. Helpers are usually friends or relatives of shop owners or of experienced workers. When an owner wants to hire a helper, he begins by asking friends, relatives, and experienced workers to refer suitable candidates. The owners with whom I spoke said that they were usually able to obtain new helpers in this way. They stated that they preferred to hire friends and relatives because by doing so they could be fairly certain to obtain honest, reliable workers. In addition to honesty and reliability, the only other qualifications for a helper job are general mechanical ability and a general knowledge of cars, both of which are ubiquitous among East Boston youth. "Cars are a fascination of just about every guy around here. Everyone seems to know a little something about them," a body man explained.

Most body-men began working in the trade as helpers. Some, though, learned the basics of the trade in vocational high schools and were hired as body men without having had any previous work experience. An owner who wants to hire a body man prefers to hire either an experienced body man or a helper who has had about four years of experience. If unable to hire a body man from one of these sources, he will then recruit from a vocational high school.

Men tend to remain in the auto body repair industry (as workers or owners or both) for their entire working lives, although a few leave to take more secure jobs in the public sector. Youths who enter the industry from vocational school have usually

planned on auto-body work as a career from the time they began vocational school. The majority of new workers, who did not attend vocational school, did not plan careers as auto-body repairmen. Rather, they "fell into" auto-body work when a friend or relative told them about a job in the industry and remained because of the pay and the intrinsic satisfaction provided by the work.

4. CONCLUSION

What are the major similarities and differences in the labor market characteristics of the primary and secondary jobs described in this chapter?

Entry-level primary jobs generally offer higher pay and always offer more job security than entry-level secondary jobs. Jobs in large primary firms or government agencies (most but not all of which are unionized) offer the most extensive job-security arrangements. Other primary jobs are somewhat less secure than jobs with large employers, but are still considerably more secure than secondary jobs. The security of large employers' primary jobs appears to be based on (a) the stability of the demand for the employers' products or services, which enables the employers to offer steady employment, and (b) institutional rules that restrict the employers' power to lay off or discharge workers. The security of other primary jobs is rooted in either (a) trade union attempts to stabilize and control the labor supply in markets where labor demand is unstable (as in the construction trades), or (b) a combination of stable market-wide product demand and close personal relationships among workers and employers within and between firms, in an environment where individual firms may be quit unstable (as in the East Boston auto-body shops).

Primary jobs have better-developed and, usually, more extensive internal labor markets than secondary jobs. A worker who enters a primary job typically spends the rest of his working life

moving within the firm-specific, occupation-specific, or firm- and occupation-specific internal labor market of that particular job. A worker who enters a secondary job normally either continues to perform the same set of tasks for the same employer for a long period of time or moves fairly quickly to another job (either secondary or primary) that has no internal labor market connection to the initial secondary job. An examination of the reasons for intersectoral differences in internal labor market structure would require consideration of the origins of labor market segmentation. Because the evidence presented in this chapter is compatible with all of the leading theories of the origins of segmentation,²⁰ a discussion of those theories would be beyond the scope of this chapter. (However, the first section of chapter 7 provides such a discussion in the context of labor market policy toward disadvantaged minority workers.)

Primary jobs tend to take somewhat longer to learn than secondary jobs. With the exception of under-the-table secondary jobs and secondary jobs in primary firms, secondary jobs have training processes that are quite different from those of primary jobs. Training for secondary jobs is either relatively minimal (in which case it is accomplished by command, i.e., the employer tells the employee exactly what to do) or quite formal but of short duration. Training for primary jobs is either formal, lengthy, and costly or (more often) informal, on-the-job, gradual, and costless. Informal on-the-job training for many primary jobs is inseparable from the process of worker socialization

into work groups. The latter fact may explain why the final hiring decisions for some primary jobs are made by line managers, who are concerned to choose workers who will "fit into" their departments. It may also help to explain why primary-sector personnel managers are willing to hire the friends and relatives of current workers, although this explanation should not be pushed too far because a person referred to an employer by a current employee does not necessarily work in the same work group or even the same department as the employee who made the referral.

For the most part, both primary and secondary employers appear to be passive rather than active recruiters of labor. Both primary and secondary jobs are filled mainly by walk-ins and employee referrals. Most employers do not find it necessary to use costly, formal recruitment sources because costless, informal sources produce a sufficient number of acceptable job applicants. Because walk-ins and employee referrals tend to be the first people to learn about job vacancies, even those primary employers that do use costly recruitment sources find that most of their jobs are filled by persons who learned about the jobs through informal means.

Hiring procedures and criteria differ between sectors, although some of the differences are more along core/periphery than primary/secondary lines. Primary employers are largely, though not exclusively, core firms, while secondary employers are largely, though not exclusively, periphery firms. Core firms tend to have

formal, bureaucratic hiring procedures and fairly rigid, formal hiring standards. They employ personnel managers to administer the procedures and enforce the standards. These managers view themselves as selecting technically qualified workers according to a predetermined set of hiring rules, some of which bear some relation (although not always a close relation) to workers' job performance and others of which are simply arbitrary rules imposed by top management or by the government. Periphery firms, in contrast, have informal hiring procedures and criteria. Hiring standards are not made as explicit and precise as they are in core firms, and there is no separate personnel function.

Overall, primary jobs, whether located in the core or in the periphery, have somewhat higher hiring standards than secondary jobs, although neither type of job ordinarily requires extensive formal education, specific prior work experience, or extensive prior skills. Primary jobs sometimes require general work experience or general clerical or mechanical ability as a condition of hiring, though. Hiring criteria for primary jobs are of two general types (although not all primary jobs have both types of criteria): (a) criteria (e.g., passing scores on general mechanical or clerical skill tests) used to select persons who the employer believes will easily be able to learn both entry- and higher-level jobs, and (b) criteria (e.g., stable work histories) used to select persons who the employer believes are likely to come to work regularly, work steadily, and remain with the firm for a long period of time. Secondary jobs also have hiring criteria of

one or both of these types, but these criteria are less stringent than those of primary jobs.

Why do these criteria exist and why do they differ between labor market sectors? Criteria of the first type are related to the abilities that workers must have in order to be able to learn the entry- and higher-level jobs. However, the hiring standards should not necessarily be regarded as direct reflections of the minimal abilities that are necessary in order for effective learning to occur. Despite the fact that the hiring standards for most of the primary job discussed in this chapter do not appear to be very stringent, there is no guarantee that the existing hiring standards for these jobs are the least stringent criteria that would enable the primary employers to hire competent entry-level workers. Since the primary employers described above have (and, in the experience of their current hiring managers, have always had) more job applicants who meet the existing standards than they have entry-level vacancies, they do not face labor market pressure to change their hiring standards.²¹ Primary-sector hiring standards can, therefore, have a tendency toward rigidity. Differences between primary- and secondary-sector hiring criteria, then, do not automatically reflect real differences in the abilities that workers must possess in order to be able to learn jobs.

What of the hiring criteria that are aimed at identifying stable workers, especially those designed to identify workers who will remain with the employer for a long period of time?

Human capital theorists would interpret such criteria in terms of firms' investments in worker training. To the extent that a firm makes investments in firm-specific training for its workers, the firm loses part of the return on its investment when a worker quits. It must then invest in the training of a new worker. Labor turnover, therefore, is costly to a firm that invests in training. Hence, such a firm will want to hire workers who will remain in its employ long enough for the training investment to pay off.²² Primary employers are more concerned about ensuring low turnover than are secondary employers, according to this analysis, because primary employers make greater investments in worker training than do secondary employers. The descriptions of training procedures presented in this chapter suggest that the human capital analysis of the relationship between worker training and employers' desire for employee stability is limited in applicability. Large secondary firms are the only employers whose hiring managers actually think in human capital terms when making hiring decisions. Moreover, the only other employers to which the human capital analysis could apply are primary employers whose training methods are costly in either the direct sense (i.e., the employer must make direct expenditures on training) or the indirect sense (i.e., workers and/or supervisors must take time away from their regular jobs in order to train new workers). It is noteworthy, though, that some primary employers (e.g., the police and fire departments, the skilled construction trades, the MBTA) use costly, formal training procedures but do

not screen workers for stability. Since these employers nevertheless succeed in attracting workers who remain with them for long periods of time, one could conceivably argue that human capital considerations are not absent from the employers' decision-making processes, but merely latent; if turnover ever proved to be a problem, these employers would begin screening job applicants for stability and/or taking other steps to reduce labor turnover. If one accepts this interpretation, one needs to explain why workers develop long-term attachments to these employers despite the fact that they have not been screened for stability. In chapter five, I argue that a major reason why workers do not quit primary jobs is that they perceive high-paying, secure jobs as being scarce.

Many primary employers that use costless, informal on-the-job training (and that, therefore, cannot be said to make investments in worker training) nevertheless screen job applicants for stability. The human capital analysis outlined in the previous paragraph is not applicable to these employers. Considerations of cost may, however, play a role in accounting for these employers' aversion to labor turnover. Costless processes of on-the-job training, insofar as they depend on the existence of stable work groups, require that workers remain with the employer for long periods of time. In the absence of long-term worker stability, these costless processes either could not operate at all or could not operate as well as they currently do. If the costless training processes were unable to operate, it might be necessary,

at the very least, for the employer to utilize costly training methods. Furthermore, to the extent that the costless training methods are inherent in the current production process (so that the current methods of production simply could not operate without costless on-the-job training), the employer might have to reorganize the entire production process in order to cope with the breakdown of costless training. Such a reorganization could be very costly. According to this interpretation, then, primary employers that utilize costless training processes screen workers for stability in order to avoid incurring the costs of both training and the reorganization of production that might be necessitated by high labor turnover.

It should be noted that primary employers that screen applicants for stability rarely reject applicants on the basis of presumed instability. The work histories of most job applicants, according to personnel managers, are not sufficiently unstable to be of concern to these employers. The reasons for this, which have to do with workers' social networks and socialization processes, will be discussed in chapter 5. It may also be the case that primary firms simply do not have to set very high standards for stability screening because they know that most job applicants perceive high-paying, secure jobs as being scarce and will, therefore, not quit if hired. To the extent that this is true, screening for stability is relatively unimportant and may even be superfluous. If such screening is indeed superfluous, of course, an economic explanation of its existence becomes problematic;

why do not all primary employers, noticing that very few job applicants fail to meet their stability criteria, follow the examples of the police and fire departments, the skilled trades, and the MBTA, and abolish stability screening altogether? The inability of personnel managers to explain why they screen job applicants for stability but reject very few for instability suggests that stability screening, like the arbitrary age and education requirements of some primary employers, may simply be an arbitrary rule that top management, lacking detailed knowledge of the applicant pool, has imposed on personnel officials.

This section has, thus far, summarized the principal labor market characteristics of primary and secondary jobs, as seen by hiring managers, and has discussed some reasons for intersectoral similarities and differences in those characteristics. What do Boston's ethnic working class men make of all of this? What do they see as the salient features of the labor market, and why? Chapter 5 answers this question in detail. As a prelude to chapter 5, it is useful to provide a brief description of the workers' view of the labor market and to show briefly how specific components of that view are linked to particular labor market characteristics of primary and secondary jobs.

The Boston workers see the labor market as offering "good" and "bad" jobs, which can be distinguished from each other by pay and job security. "Bad" jobs are plentiful and can be obtained by anyone who desires them. "Good" jobs are scarce and workers

need luck or personal contacts in order to obtain them. Neither education nor special training nor employment in "bad" jobs nor any type of individual "merit" is important in obtaining a "good" job.

Workers perceive a pay- and security-based distinction between "good" and "bad" jobs because the jobs of which they are aware differ in pay and security and because their customary job groups provide them with a means of making a fairly sharp distinction between high and low pay and between security and insecurity.

(Why these customary groups exist, what determines their composition and why their characteristics define and limit the workers' idea of what a "good" job is, are important questions whose answers lie beyond the scope of this chapter. The concluding section of chapter 5 and the first section of chapter 6 will provide some tentative answers to these questions.) Workers see "bad" jobs as being plentiful and easily obtainable because such jobs have both high turnover rates (which make them seem plentiful) and very minimal hiring standards (which make them easy to obtain).

Education and specialized training are seen as irrelevant to the process of obtaining a "good" job because the primary jobs of which the workers are aware generally do not have any particular educational or specialized skill requirements for entry. When education is required for a primary job, all that is necessary is a high school diploma or the equivalent. The content of high school education is irrelevant to primary employers.

Work experience in "bad" jobs is perceived as irrelevant for

obtaining a "good" job because there are no direct connections between "bad" and "good" jobs of which workers are aware. "Bridge" jobs are apparently rare enough not to be a route upon which workers can rely to move into "good" jobs. While some primary employers require previous work experience (the content of which is usually irrelevant) as a condition of employment, not all have such a requirement. In any event, work experience in "bad" jobs is so easy to obtain, so ubiquitous, and so taken-for-granted among ethnic working class young men (see chapter five) that workers do not see it as having any connection to primary employment. This is especially true of the under-the-table repair jobs that provide young men with the general mechanical skills that are needed for several blue-collar primary jobs. Workers acquire these skills through casual work experience without even noticing that they have done so.

The proximate source of workers' perception of primary job scarcity is the fact that, at least for the "good" jobs of which the workers of east Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown are aware, there are always many more entry-level primary-job applicants than entry-level primary-job vacancies. There are two possible reasons why these particular jobs have chronic surpluses of willing workers. First, it is possible that there is no real shortage of "good" jobs (similar to the jobs described above) in the Boston area. Rather, workers simply perceive a shortage of "good" jobs because they are aware of only a limited number of such jobs. In order for imperfect information on the part of

workers to be an explanation of the perception of primary job scarcity, there would have to exist some primary employers in the Boston metropolitan area that faced chronic labor shortages. Although I have not conducted an exhaustive survey of primary employers in the Boston area, my interviews with a limited number of non-customary primary employers (including several banks and insurance companies in downtown Boston, large factories in Charlestown and South Boston, a parcel delivery firm in South Boston, and a computer manufacturer in Boston) showed no evidence of labor shortages in these firms even during late 1984, a time of very low unemployment in Boston. Like the customary primary firms, all of these firms reported surpluses of qualified entry-level job applicants. Moreover, a local labor market study conducted in the Trenton, New Jersey, area during the early 1950's found that firms that one might classify as "primary" had surpluses of qualified job applicants (without changing their hiring standards) even during a period of general labor shortage.²³ This evidence, while not conclusive, suggests that even though workers may have very limited information about primary job openings (as chapter 5 shows they do) this limited information is not the ultimate source of the perception of primary job scarcity. Therefore, it is necessary to turn to a second explanation of this perception, namely, that there are simply not enough primary jobs for all of the workers who desire them at any given time. (Chapter 5 will suggest that at least some workers who want primary jobs are able to obtain them after waiting for a period of several months

to several years. Even if this were true of all workers, however, it would still be the case that not everyone who wanted a primary job would be able to obtain one immediately, so there would still be an objective basis for workers' perception of primary job scarcity.) The reason why there are not enough primary jobs for every worker who wants one depends on one's theory of the origin of labor market segmentation. Since the relationships between theories of segmentation and the scarcity of primary jobs is tangential to the present discussion, I will not consider them here. However, these relationships are crucial to the evaluation of policies that are designed to increase the number of primary jobs. I will discuss such policies in the concluding chapter of this study, and it is in the context of that discussion that I will consider the implications of various theories of segmentation for the scarcity of primary jobs.

The scarcity of primary jobs underlies workers' belief that luck or personal contacts are necessary in order to obtain such jobs. Despite the fact that the recruitment/hiring processes of secondary jobs rely, if anything, more heavily on personal contacts than do those of primary jobs, luck and contacts are not needed to obtain a secondary job because workers do not perceive secondary jobs as scarce. Given that primary jobs are scarce, though, why do workers see luck and contacts as the factors that determine who gets these jobs? To see the sources of the perception that luck or personal contacts are necessary in order to obtain a primary job, it is useful to classify the

recruitment and hiring procedures of primary jobs into five broad groups.

First, there are jobs (such as police officer, firefighter, and, sometimes, clerical jobs in the public sector) that are filled by competitive examination. One might expect workers to believe that the allocation of these jobs is based on individual "merit," but this is not the case. Examination scores do not appear, to the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown, to vary) much among the people they know. Since the people they know all have similar exam scores, the main factor that determines who gets the jobs seems to them to be luck. The fact that department heads' subjective decisions are part of the hiring process for some civil service jobs reinforces the belief that one must be lucky in order to get those jobs, since workers do not know what the department heads' subjective criteria are. The subjective decisions of department heads may also lead workers to believe that personal contacts play a role in hiring, both because personal contacts may actually influence department heads' decisions and because workers who see no particular pattern to the decisions may attribute them to personal contacts.²⁴

A second type of primary sector recruitment/hiring system is purely or largely random (e.g., the MBTA lottery or the first-come-first-hired system used to fill blue-collar public-sector jobs) . Workers accurately perceive that who is hired for jobs that use such a system is entirely or primarily a matter of luck.

A third recruitment/hiring procedure, found in small auto-repair shops, is to recruit and hire mainly from among the friends and relatives of a firm's owners or senior employees. Getting a job in a firm that uses this type of procedure is, therefore, mostly a matter of having the right contacts.

The skilled construction trades have apprentice recruitment/selection procedures that tend to favor applicants who have knowledge (both about application procedures and about the trades themselves) that is typically acquired from people who already work in the trades. While it is possible to acquire this knowledge by other means (e.g., by inquiry at the state Employment Service), only the relatives of construction workers or contractors obtain the necessary knowledge costlessly as part of the routine of everyday life. Hence, it is not difficult to see how the belief that one must have a relative "sponsor" one into a construction trade union persists even though relatives have no formal influence over the selection of apprentices.

Finally, the Port Authority, public utilities, and shipyards have a recruitment/hiring strategy that combines (a) reliance mainly on costless, informal recruitment channels, (b) fairly rigid distinctions between "qualified" and "unqualified" job applicants, and (c) a policy (sometimes modified by affirmative-action requirements) of hiring the first qualified applicants who appear when job vacancies arise. This type of recruitment/hiring policy may have significance well beyond the jobs discussed in this chapter. Indeed, there is evidence that

such a policy may be characteristic of many blue-collar jobs in the U.S.²⁵ Therefore, it is especially important to understand how this kind of recruitment/hiring system works. To begin with, the first qualified applicants are likely to be people who learned about job vacancies from the firm's current employees. Hence, it is not surprising that personal contacts would seem, to workers, to play a role in hiring even if such contacts do not actually influence hiring decisions. (Of course, it is also possible that the personnel managers whom I interviewed were lying about the role of contacts in the hiring process, in which case the workers' view directly reflects the actual hiring process.) Since it is possible to be among the first qualified job applicants simply by appearing in the firm's personnel office at the right time without having any prior information about job availability, there is a role for luck as well as for contacts in obtaining jobs with employers that use this type of recruitment/hiring method. Why do formal job qualifications not play an important role in the workers' view of the hiring process? There are two reasons. First, qualifications are only necessary and not sufficient for obtaining a job with an employer who hires the first from among many qualified job applicants. Second, qualifications for jobs of this type are not difficult for Boston's ethnic working class men to obtain and are, in fact, both possessed and taken for granted by most such men. (See chapter 5.)

The workers' view of the labor market is certainly not the

only possible set of abstract generalizations that one could make about the jobs described in this chapter. It certainly differs from the hiring managers' view of the labor market. Nevertheless, the workers' view, which is based on their own labor market experiences and those of their friends and relatives, is a reasonable abstraction from the actual labor market characteristics of the jobs of which they are aware. Its major features reflect those characteristics, although they do not do so in a direct or complete manner.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Peter Doeringer and Michael Piore, Internal Labor Markets and Manpower Analysis (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1971). The typology of internal labor market structures presented here resembles the typologies used in other labor market segmentation studies, all of which attempt in some way to distinguish between internal labor markets in which mobility is mainly within occupations and internal labor markets in which mobility is mainly within firms. Cf. Doeringer and Piore, op. cit., pp. 2-4; Clark Kerr, "The Balkanization of Labor Markets," in E. Wight Bakke, Philip Hauser, Gladys Palmer, Charles Myers, Dale Yoder, and Clark Kerr (eds.), Labor Mobility and Economic Opportunity (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1954), pp. 105-106; Robert Althausser and Arne Kalleberg, "Firms, Occupations, and the Structure of Labor Markets," in Ivar Berg (ed.), Sociological Perspectives on Labor Markets (New York: Academic, 1981), pp. 119-149.

None of these typologies (including the one used in this chapter) presupposes any particular theory of why internal labor markets exist or why they assume the particular forms that they assume; rather, each is compatible with a variety of explanations of these phenomena. Oliver Williamson, Michael Wachter and Jeffrey Harris, "Understanding the Employment Relation: The Analysis of Idiosyncratic Exchange," Bell Journal of Economics 6 (Spring 1975): 250-278, explain internal labor markets as an efficient means of obtaining and training workers when firm-specific skills and skill complementarities between firm-specific jobs

are important. Michael Piore, "The Technological Foundations of Dualism," in Michael Piore and Suzanne Berger, Dualism and Discontinuity in Industrial Societies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), chapter 3, describes internal labor markets as institutions that evolve to regulate employment relationships when firms are able to stabilize part or all of their product demand. Lawrence Kahn, "Unions and Labor Market Segmentation," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1975), stresses the role of labor unions in creating or putting pressure on employers to create internal markets. Neo-Marxian analyses, e.g., Richard Edwards, Contested Terrain (New York: Basic, 1979), esp. chapters 7 and 8 and pp. 177-183, explain the internal labor market as a mechanism that employers use to maintain control over the labor-power of workers. These theories of the internal labor market are not mutually exclusive.

2. It is impossible to determine this proportion in a precise manner because the Census occupation and industry categories, even at the finest level of detail, do not correspond precisely to the internal labor market boundaries that define the customary primary jobs. Some customary primary jobs are defined by occupation, others by a combination of occupation(s) and employer. (None are defined solely by employer without any reference to occupational boundaries. Even jobs that are identified with employer-specific labor markets exclude certain positions [e.g., professional and managerial positions] with the identified employer.) The problem of identifying the customary primary jobs from Census data would, of course, be less severe if the joint distribution of detailed (three digit) occupation and detailed (three digit) industry were available for employed men from each neighborhood; unfortunately, this distribution is not released by the Census Bureau for the requisite level of geographical detail. For the purpose of making the rough estimates that follow, I relied exclusively on the Census three-digit industry data, since it is easier to identify the customary primary jobs in a rough manner from industry data than from occupational data. (Joint occupation-industry data would still be preferable, of course, if it were available.)

3. Estimates based on data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census of Population and Housing, 1980, Summary Tape File 4-A; Boston city census tracts 401-408 (Charlestown), 501-512 (East Boston), and 601-612 (South Boston); table PB-58. The most conservative estimates presented in the text are the proportions of employed men in East Boston whose jobs are in the construction, U.S. Postal Service, and public administration industries. For South Boston and Charlestown, the corresponding estimates are the proportions of employed men who work in the aforementioned industries plus the utilities and sanitary services industry. The best point estimates are the proportions of employed men who work in the following industries:

East Boston
 construction
 other transportation equipment
 (includes shipyards)
 U.S. Postal Service
 other transportation
 (includes public transit &
 airlines)
 repair services
 (includes auto repair)
 public administration

South Boston and Charlestown
 construction
 U.S. Postal Service
 other transportation
 (includes public transit)
 communications
 utilities and sanitary services
 public administration

4. Pay information in this chapter was obtained from interviews with hiring managers. Some wages and salaries reported in this chapter are based on estimates made by hiring managers. All wages and salaries are those that prevailed during 1984. All are expressed in 1984 dollars, rounded to the nearest dollar. Pay could not be determined for some jobs (e.g., the auto-body repair jobs in small shops, whose owners and employees would not discuss the matter).

5. Lloyd Reynolds, The Structure of Labor Markets (New York: Harper and Bros., 1951), pp. 86-87, emphasizes the importance of job security to blue-collar workers in New Haven during the late 1940's. Lillian Rubin, Worlds of Pain (New York: Basic, 1976), chapter 3, suggests that concern with job security among a group of blue-collar workers in suburban San Francisco is due to the fact that these workers had all experienced extreme economic insecurity during childhood. Among the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown, though, concern with job security was not limited to men whose parents held insecure jobs.

6. Unless otherwise indicated in the text, all of the primary jobs located in large firms or government agencies have these rules, which apply to workers who have completed a probationary period. During the probationary period, which usually lasts thirty to ninety days, a worker can be dismissed without a hearing.

7. Peter Blau and Otis D. Duncan, The American Occupational Structure (New York: Wiley, 1967), p. 123.

8. See, for example, E.M. Beck, Patrick Horan, and Charles Tolbert, "Stratification in a Dual Economy: A Sectoral Model of Earnings Determination," American Sociological Review 43 (October 1978): 704-720.

9. Michael Piore, "The Dual Labor Market," in David Gordon (ed.), Problems in Political Economy (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1971), pp. 90-94.

10. Similar typologies of secondary jobs are found in Doeringer

and Piore, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-168; and Paul Osterman, Getting Started (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), pp. 24-25. Each of these typologies, like the one used in this study, is intended to organize, more for descriptive than for analytical purposes, the observations that each author has made of particular secondary jobs.

11. Paul Osterman, "The Labor Market for Young Men," (Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, 1976), pp. 154-173.

12. Piore's theory of labor market segmentation as a response to the stability or instability of product demand appears to apply to jobs of this type. This does not, however, imply that Piore's theory is necessarily the only or even the principal correct explanation for labor market segmentation as a general phenomenon.) See Piore, "Technological Foundations."

13. This type of informal on-the-job training, which is characteristic of a variety of primary lower-tier jobs (including many of the jobs described in this chapter), is described in more detail in Michael Piore, "On-the-Job Training and Adjustment to Technological Change," Journal of Human Resources 3 (Fall 1968): 235-249.

14. None of the other large customary primary employers increased its hiring during 1984, either, and all reported that the number of qualified applicants continued to exceed the number of available entry-level jobs during this period with hiring standards remaining unchanged. Cf. Richard Lester, Adjustments to Labor Shortages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), which found that during an economic expansion in the Trenton, New Jersey, area in the early 1950's: (a) the highest-paying firms and those with the best reputations as employers had more applicants than vacancies and did not lower their hiring standards, and (b) many firms increased their hiring little or not at all above their usual levels and were able to obtain all of the qualified workers they needed without lowering their hiring standards.

15. For a similar account of hiring practices used for blue-collar (primarily manufacturing) jobs, see Reynolds, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-51.

16. Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, "Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan, January 1, 1983, to January 1, 1988," ([Boston]: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, 1982), p. 19. Data for 1983 supplied by MBTA personnel office.

17. Richard Lester, Hiring Practices and Labor Competition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp. 38-40, found that manufacturing firms with good reputations as employers were able to regulate their applicant flows in a similar manner.

18. According to a representative of the Greater Poston Building Trades Council, most unions try to provide apprentices with 1600 to 1800 hours of work per year, which exceeds the 1400 to 1600 hours per year that is considered "reasonable continuing employment" for journeymen. Using 1600 to 1800 hours as the range of annual hours worked by apprentices and using \$ 6 to \$ 11 per hour as the wage range for apprentices produces the estimated range of apprentices' annual incomes shown in the text.

19. Cf. Mark Granovetter, "Labor Mobility, Internal Markets, and Job-Matching: A Comparison of the Sociological and Economic Approaches," State University of New York, Stony Brook, mimeo, April 1983, p. 37.

20. Theories of the origins of labor market segmentation are closely related theories of the origins of internal labor markets. See the references in the second paragraph of note 1 above.

21. Because these firms face little or no variation over the business cycle in either the size of the applicant pool relative to the number of job vacancies or the "qualifications" of job applicants, they do not appear to vary their hiring standards over the cycle in the manner suggested in M.W. Reder, "The Theory of Occupational Wage Differentials," American Economic Review 45 (December 1955): 833-852. According to Reder, hiring standards, instead of or in addition to wages, adjust over the cycle to clear the labor market; standards are high when the labor market is slack and low when it is tight. Perhaps the primary firms described in this chapter would behave in the manner suggested by Reder if their applicant pools varied substantially in size or "quality" over the business cycle. Alternatively, perhaps these firms would respond to such cyclical variation by keeping hiring standards unchanged and actively recruiting applicants who met those standards.

22. The classic analyses of long-term attachments between workers and firms as a consequence of firm-specific training investments are Gary Becker, Human Capital (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 16-37; and Walter Oi, "Labor as a Quasi-Fixed Factor," Journal of Political Economy 70 (December 1962): 538-555.

23. See the reference in note 14 above.

24. Cf. Eli Chinoy, Automobile Workers and the American Dream (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), pp. 53-56, which reports that automobile assembly line workers believed that management's decisions about promotions to the position of foreman were based on personal contacts. The reason for this belief, according to Chinoy, was that the workers could see no systematic element or pattern to the promotion decisions, so the only way in which they could make sense of the decisions was to

attribute them to contacts.

25. For example, large factories in South Boston and Charlestown, whose jobs no longer appear among the customary jobs of their respective neighborhoods because they have hired few new permanent workers in recent years, have similar recruitment and hiring practices. See also Reynolds, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-51.

CHAPTER 5: THE WORKERS

"Getting a good job is about fifty percent luck, forty percent who you know, and maybe ten percent college education."

-A 40-year-old South Boston longshoreman

The men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown do not move randomly from job to job. Rather, these workers have a particular model, which I will refer to as the "customary labor market model," in terms of which they understand the operation of the labor market. For the workers, this model is both positive (explaining to the workers the labor market patterns that they observe) and normative (providing the workers with guidance as to how they should make transitions between jobs). The tasks of this chapter are to describe this model and the means by which workers make transitions between jobs, to show how the model both interprets and regulates the actual job histories of the workers, and to illustrate the links between the model and the recruitment and hiring practices of the primary firms described in chapter 4. The account provided in this chapter is based on open-ended interviews with workers and community organizations in East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. Throughout the chapter, emphasis is placed on the workers' transitions from secondary to primary jobs. This emphasis is justified both by the relevance of the secondary-to-primary transition for public policy and by the central role that the workers themselves accord to this transition.

Before beginning the description of the model, it is necessary to define the group of workers within the three Boston neighborhoods to whom the model applies. In terms of educational level, the model applies to most of the high school graduates and some of the high school dropouts and college graduates (both those who attended college immediately after high school and those who worked for several years before attending college). In terms of family socioeconomic background, it applies mainly to men whose fathers work or worked in primary sector lower-tier jobs, but also to a considerable number whose fathers are or were employed in secondary jobs. In terms of the men's own occupational status, the model applies to men who have obtained primary jobs by approximately age thirty and to younger men who hope to obtain such jobs by age thirty and whose labor market experiences have been similar to the youth labor market experiences of the former group. In terms of their patterns of youth socialization, the structure of their social networks, and the types of social activities that occur within those networks, the group to which the model applies corresponds roughly to the "peer group society" described by Gans or the "corner boys" described by Whyte.¹ In characterizing the subjects of this chapter in these ways, I aim simply to describe, in a rough way, which workers hold the model of the labor market that I will discuss below. I do not claim to have specified the domain of that model in a way that would be useful for purposes of theoretical analysis. In particular, I have not taken a position on which, if any, of the attributes

above (e.g., level of education), defines the group of workers who hold the model. Nor have I discussed whether or not the model is limited to workers who live in ethnic working class neighborhoods such as East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. These questions are left open for future research, although I will provide some speculative answers in the concluding section of this chapter and in the following chapter.

In order to motivate the material that follows, it is useful to consider, as examples, the job histories of two South Boston men.

CASE 1. Joe Callahan (not his real name) is thirty-four years old. He grew up in South Boston a few blocks from his current residence. His father is a chemical mixer at a chemical company in a nearby town. After graduating from South Boston High School, Joe was drafted into the Army and was sent to Germany. (He did not want to attend college after finishing high school because he saw himself as "more or less a physical person, not a student," although he "did O.K. in school.")

After his two-year stint in the Army, he returned to South Boston and lived with his parents. At that time, he had no particular occupational plans. "I just needed a job," he explained. "Any job was O.K. When I was twenty years old I didn't give a damn." Joe briefly considered entering an apprenticeship program for sheet-metal work, a trade in which he had had some training in high school. But he quickly dismissed this idea because there were very few jobs available in that trade at the time and because the few apprenticeship slots that were available seemed to go to men whose fathers or uncles were in the union. During this time, seven of Joe's friends, with whom he had "hung" on street corners as a teenager and with whom he had served in the Army, were his major source of job information. These friends told him that there were very few jobs available at the time except for government jobs. Joe and his friends had long known of the existence of certain government jobs--police officer, firefighter, MBTA driver, public works laborer, city hall clerk--since many of the men they had known while they were growing up had held those jobs. Moreover, Joe's uncle and brother-in-law were in the fire department, and his older brothers were in the police department. From these relatives and from his friends, Joe learned how and where to apply for government jobs. Joe and his friends took the civil service exams for the police and fire

departments, entered the MBTA lottery, and put their names on waiting lists for many blue-collar government jobs. "I applied for any city and state jobs I found out about, even grave-digger." He and his friends also filled out applications for jobs at the public utilities ("because we knew they were good jobs"), although they did not expect to get those jobs because there were very few openings available.

Within a month after putting his name on the list, Joe was hired into a ninety-day job as a laborer for the Metropolitan District Commission, a state agency. (His status as an Army veteran helped him to obtain the job, as veterans were placed at the top of the waiting lists for blue-collar jobs with the city and state governments.) When that job ended, he obtained another ninety-day job with the city's public works department. This job, although temporary, was renewable, and Joe remained in it for two years, until he was hired by the MBTA. Of his first two post-Army jobs, Joe remarked, "They were menial, half-ass jobs." While working at these early jobs, he decided to take a few courses at Boston State College. "I didn't really have a goal in college," he explained. "I just wanted to try it out. I didn't expect it to lead to a good job." After two terms as a part-time college student, he realized once again that he was "not a student" and left school.

At the time when he was hired by the MBTA, Joe was not looking for job security, although he knew that it would be foolish for him to turn down an offer of a secure job—"a job that will be there fifty-two weeks a year"—if he received such an offer. "That's drummed into you early in life around here," he said. However, it was not until he got married, eight years ago, that he really began to appreciate job security.

In order to obtain his MBTA job, Joe had to take a test after his lottery number was drawn. "It was an idiot test," he explained. "They gave you easy arithmetic problems and asked you dumb questions like 'Do you like your mother?' Basically, I got my job because I was lucky. I got a good number in the lottery." If he had not been successful in the MBTA lottery, Joe said that he would have continued to work in temporary laboring jobs for awhile, waiting to be called by the police or fire department. In addition, he might have asked his brothers to "put in a word for him" with the police department. Or he might have called his brother-in-law, who knew an MBTA police officer who could have helped him by "talking to the right people." Or he might have "shopped around" for a relative who could have "sponsored" him into a construction trade union. Or he might have stayed with the public works department, hoping eventually to accumulate enough seniority to bid on a permanent job there. "I was pretty sure I'd get a good job eventually. It didn't matter what kind of job it was."

Joe has worked for the MBTA for the past dozen years. After a six-week training period, his first MBTA assignment was bus driver in the northern suburbs of Boston. After a year of bus-driving, during which he "got into a couple of minor accidents,"

Joe transferred (through internal bidding) to a position as a subway doorman. After a year in that position, he transferred (also through bidding) to his current position in subway track-maintenance. "Even though it was a slight cut in pay, I did it to get away from the passengers," he said of his last move within the MBTA. Currently [in 1984], he earns \$ 12 per hour, working full time plus overtime. If he wanted to advance within the MBTA, he could bid on a welding job and then advance to foreman if the latter job opened up. But he does not want a promotion. "I'm satisfied with where I am. There's no fighting for promotions, no responsibilities. In ten years, I can retire with a pension." As for the idea of leaving the MBTA before retirement: "I never thought about it in all the years I worked there. There aren't many good jobs around."

CASE 2. Frank O'Connor (not his real name) is thirty years old. He lives with his father in the house in which he grew up. Frank's father is a machinist who retired when the company for which he had worked for thirty-two years closed its Boston plant. When Frank was in his early teens, he thought about becoming a machinist, but by the time he graduated from South Boston High School he had learned from his father that there were very few jobs in the trade in the Boston area. After graduating from high school, Frank looked immediately for a job, "any kind of job; I just needed money." He was not interested in job security or in "tying himself down" to any particular employer. He briefly considered going to college, but rejected the idea because he "didn't know if he had the brains." "Southie High was easy to get by," he explained, "Especially if you were a good athlete like me."

Frank walked around the neighborhood in search of help-wanted signs, glanced at help-wanted advertisements in newspapers, and asked his street-corner friends for job leads. He noticed a newspaper ad for a job as a rug deliverer at a rug company in South Boston. He had heard of this company previously, since some acquaintances of his had worked there in the past. He knew that the company "went through a lot of help," so he thought that he could easily get a job there. He was hired for the rug-delivery job on the day he applied for it. According to him, the only qualification for the job was the ability to lift heavy rugs.

Frank remained a rug deliverer for five years. In his first few years on the job, he was glad to have the job because it provided him with enough money to meet his needs. Gradually, though, his attitude toward the job changed. His friends began to get jobs with the MBTA, the police department, the fire department, and the building trades. As his friends moved into these jobs, he grew dissatisfied with his pay and became concerned that he "wasn't getting anywhere" with the rug company.

He then began to apply for some of the jobs that his friends held and for other jobs that his friends and relatives told him

were "good" jobs. He entered the MBTA lottery, applied for jobs with all of the public utilities, took the police exam, and put his name on waiting lists for blue-collar jobs with the city and state governments. He also entered lotteries for temporary jobs with the city and state governments. He never seriously considered the building trades because he had no relatives in the trade unions. He did not take the civil service exams for the Post Office, the fire department, or government clerical jobs, even though he would have been interested in the latter jobs. "I just forgot about them," he explained. "I'm just lazy, I guess." After five years with the rug company, Frank was looking for a high-paying, secure job, "a real job." But he was willing to take any job, even a temporary one, as long as it paid more than his job at the rug company.

After obtaining (through a lottery) a ninety-day summer job as a garbage collector for the state Department of Parks and Recreation, he quit the rug-delivery job. The ninety-day job was converted into an indefinitely renewable, year-round job when the Parks and Recreation Department determined that it needed an extra year-round worker. Frank was offered the year-round position without having to undergo any screening. Gradually, he became tired of the job and began to want higher pay. He once again applied to the MBTA and the public utilities and re-took the police exam two more times. However, he never heard from the MBTA, the utilities, or the police department. (He was surprised that the police department did not call him, since his exam score was as high as the scores of his friends who were already police officers.)

Finally, after three years as a garbage collector, Frank was able to transfer (through internal bidding within the state government) to a higher-paying, permanent position as a laborer in a state sewage treatment plant in South Boston. He has worked at that job for the past four years. Currently [in 1984], he earns \$ 298 per week, working full-time. "You'll never get rich working for the state," he remarked. "But you'll always have a job and a steady check. That's what matters most." In addition, he noted, his job provides a pension, vacation, and sick days. Nevertheless, although he is satisfied with his job's pay and security, he does not like the work itself. He dislikes having to work with dirty, dangerous sewage wastes, and is unhappy that his unusual working hours (which begin before sunrise) prevent him from seeing his friends as often as he would like.

Last year he re-entered the MBTA lottery, but his number was not selected. He also re-applied for a job at utility A, but the company was not hiring at the time he applied. "I'd love to work for the 'T' or utility A," he said. "But I haven't been lucky." His bad luck with these jobs has discouraged him from applying for other jobs outside of state government; he now feels that it would be a waste of time for him to apply for any such jobs. In addition, since he rarely sees his friends, he feels that he cannot rely on them to help him get another job.

He does believe that he will eventually accumulate enough seniority to enable him to transfer to another position with the state government, but he does not think that this will happen for several more years. At present, he is resigned to his current job, although he admits that most South Boston men would consider it to be a "good" job.

The above case histories serve as a preface to this chapter. Although they are not statistically representative of the population with which the chapter is concerned, they do illustrate several of the chapter's major themes. The workers' limited awareness of "good" job opportunities, their belief in the scarcity of those opportunities, their emphasis on personal contacts or "luck" as necessary in order to obtain "good" jobs, the dependence of their beliefs about the labor market on the labor market experiences and beliefs of family and friends--all of these themes are present in the above case histories and will be taken up in detail later in the chapter.

The chapter consists of seven sections. The first two sections are devoted to a discussion of the two key components of the customary labor market model, namely, the "customary" group of primary jobs and the idea that primary jobs are scarce. The third section describes the social networks that transmit the model to young men and discusses youth employment in the secondary labor market in relation to the social groups to which youths belong. The fourth section describes the means by which young men move from secondary jobs into their first primary jobs. Section five considers the roles of formal education and job-placement services in the job mobility of the men studied

here. Section six discusses the labor market models and job mobility patterns of men from Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods who do not hold the customary labor market model. While these men are (according to the accounts given by priests, social workers, employment counselors, and other representatives of neighborhood organizations) a minority within their neighborhoods, there are two reasons why it is useful to describe their labor market experiences and beliefs. First, such a description creates a contrast with the customary labor market model, clarifying the nature of that model by throwing its key features into sharp relief. Second, a description of the labor market activities and attitudes of those who reject the customary model leads to a consideration of why some individuals in ethnic working class neighborhoods are "upwardly mobile" in the labor market. The final section of this chapter summarizes the case-study findings and briefly discusses their implications for labor market segmentation theory and for the study of ethnic working class neighborhoods.

1. THE CUSTOMARY GROUP OF PRIMARY JOBS

In each of the ethnic working class Boston neighborhoods, there is a set of primary-sector lower-tier jobs of which all men over the age of approximately fifteen are aware and that all recognize as "good" jobs because of the jobs' relatively high levels of pay and job security. Chapter 4 described these jobs and their patterns of labor recruitment, hiring, training, internal labor market

structure, and labor turnover, and discussed the meanings of "high pay" and "security" as applied to these jobs. This section examines the role that the "customary" group of primary jobs plays in the labor market model of the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown.

In each neighborhood, the "customary" primary jobs are the jobs that all men, from high school students to 35-year-olds, tend to mention first when they speak of "good" jobs. Many workers have friends or relatives who work in these jobs and nearly everyone seems to know of people from the neighborhood who hold the jobs. Even those men who do not have any close friends in these jobs include the jobs as prominent members of their set of "good" jobs. Workers find it difficult to say exactly how they first became aware of the existence of the customary good jobs; to them, awareness of these jobs is just a natural part of growing up in the neighborhood. This awareness does not necessarily include extremely detailed knowledge of each job's content and rate of pay, but rather is a more general awareness that the jobs' levels of pay and security are appropriate for adult men from their neighborhoods.

Customary primary jobs are not the only jobs that workers cite as "good" jobs. Most of the interviewed workers have friends and relatives who work in non-customary blue-collar or clerical jobs whose levels of pay and security are roughly comparable to those of the customary group. These jobs are also considered to be "good" jobs. However, they seem to occupy a less prominent place

than the customary jobs in the workers' picture of the labor market; workers typically mention them as "good" jobs only after first mentioning the customary jobs. I will, therefore, refer to these jobs as "fringe" primary jobs. The most important characteristic of the fringe primary jobs is that the only workers who are aware of them are those who have friends and relatives working in them. In contrast to the customary primary jobs, of which everyone in a given neighborhood is aware and for which all men in the neighborhood are, at some point in their lives, at least potential applicants,² the fringe primary jobs are effectively accessible only to workers who have personal contacts in those jobs. Analytically, then, the customary group of primary jobs may be considered a property of the neighborhood as a social aggregate, while the fringe group may not be so regarded. Taken together, the customary and fringe groups of primary jobs make up the set of primary jobs that is relevant to the analysis of mobility into the primary sector within a particular neighborhood.

A customary group of primary jobs is only definable with reference to a particular neighborhood. Workers in one neighborhood are unaware of the customary primary jobs in other neighborhoods unless those jobs are also customary in their own neighborhood or unless they happen to have friends or relatives in those jobs. They are even unaware of the jobs that are available at the large banks and insurance companies in downtown Boston. For example, South Boston and Charlestown workers say that they "never heard about" the shipyard or airport jobs that are customary in East

Boston or about the clerical jobs that exist in the banks and insurance companies. However, customary groups overlap, to varying degrees, across neighborhoods. South Boston and Charlestown have identical customary groups. Jobs in the unionized building trades, the Post Office, and the Boston area public transportation system appear in the customary groups of all three neighborhoods.

The customary group of primary jobs serves four functions in the workers' labor market model. First, it provides the men in a particular neighborhood with a common set of examples of the kinds of jobs that adult men from their neighborhoods have a reasonable chance of obtaining (under normal labor market conditions) and should try to obtain. Indeed, the customary group helps workers define what a good job is. When workers say that "high pay" and "job security" are the things that make a job "good," they do not define these characteristics by reference to abstract ideas about pay and security but rather by direct or indirect comparison with the levels of pay and security provided by the good jobs with which they are already familiar. It is on the basis of such a comparison that a worker will determine whether or not an unfamiliar job is a good job.³ Sometimes the comparison is direct. For example, an East Boston high school student who was told about computer programming jobs by a teacher decided that those jobs are not good jobs because they do not offer as much security as jobs in the Post Office or airport. Sometimes the comparison is indirect, as when a worker says that a good job "pays enough to support a family." Here the concept of an appropriate

standard of living for a family is based on an awareness of the standards of living enjoyed by neighborhood men who hold primary jobs. Those standards of living depend directly on the pay levels of primary jobs held by neighborhood men. Good jobs, then, are jobs that enable workers to maintain an appropriate standard of living; the appropriate standard of living is a social concept that is rooted in the actual labor market experience of the social group and which is, therefore, linked to the pay levels of the customary primary jobs.

The second function of the customary group is to limit the set of jobs from which "choices" of primary jobs are made. An individual worker's awareness of primary jobs is limited to his neighborhood's customary primary jobs plus any fringe primary jobs in which he has friends or relatives. He simply does not know about and does not try to find out about other jobs that offer comparable levels of pay and security. If he has preferences among the good jobs within his narrowly circumscribed choice set, he may attempt to act on those preferences, either by deliberately choosing not to apply for some primary jobs or by turning down primary job offers that do not appeal to him. These courses of action, though, are regarded as highly unusual by neighborhood residents and rarely appeared in the job histories of the workers I interviewed. It is considered somewhat unusual for a worker to have strong preferences among primary jobs; "a job's a job" is a common remark among the men of Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods. Even if a worker does have strong

preferences among good jobs, it is unusual for him to act on these preferences. Commonly, a worker who is trying to get a good job and who is unable or unwilling to use personal contacts to help him get such a job will apply for all or most of the good jobs of which he is aware. He may neglect to apply for some of these jobs out of forgetfulness or out of a belief that his chances of being hired are slim, but not out of dislike for particular jobs. He will ordinarily accept the first primary job offer that he receives,⁴ regardless of whether he is unemployed or employed in a secondary job at the time he receives the offer. Moreover, he will behave in this way regardless of what his preferences within his "choice" set are. This pattern of behavior is a consequence of the workers' perception that good jobs are scarce, a perception that is discussed in section two of this chapter.

A third function of the customary group is to structure the competition among workers for primary jobs, both within a given neighborhood and between neighborhoods in the Boston area. Within a particular neighborhood, all or nearly all of the workers who are actively trying to make the secondary-to-primary transition at a given point in time are competing with each other for the available entry-level jobs in the customary group. The extent to which the workers of one neighborhood compete with workers from other neighborhoods for these jobs depends on the extent to which the customary groups of the neighborhoods overlap. In short, the existence of customary primary job groups within

ethnic working class neighborhoods implies that groups of workers defined by neighborhoods are partially non-competing groups.

The final function that the customary group serves is to provide workers with information about which primary employers are likely to be hiring new workers. The primary jobs that appear in the customary group are jobs for which workers know that other neighborhood men are currently being hired or have been hired within recent years. This is not to say that the customary group immediately and accurately reflects some subset of primary employers in the Boston area that are actually hiring during a particular day, month, or even year; the customary group does not appear to change rapidly enough to serve this purpose. The accounts given by workers and by neighborhood organizations suggest that all of the primary jobs that appear in the customary groups of today's young men were also present in the customary groups of the youths' parents' generation. However, the customary groups have not remained entirely static over time. Some jobs that were customary good jobs during the 1950's and 1960's, but for which little new hiring has been done for several years, no longer appear in the customary groups of young workers. In South Boston, for example, longshoring jobs and assembly jobs in one large South Boston factory were once important sources of primary employment for neighborhood men. New permanent hires in both kinds of jobs have declined steadily over the past fifteen or so years. Young South Bostonians today rarely think about these jobs even though they may have parents or older relatives who work

in them. When asked about these particular jobs, young men say that they are "good" jobs but that they have never heard of anyone their age being hired for such jobs. The declining availability of the jobs, however, was at least partially offset by the expansion of public-sector hiring that occurred in Boston during the late 1960's and early 1970's. This example shows that the composition of a neighborhood's customary group can change gradually over time without any change occurring in workers' basic model of the labor market, provided that declines in hiring for some customary jobs are offset by increases in hiring for others.

2. THE SCARCITY OF PRIMARY JOBS AND THE ROLES OF CONTACTS AND "LUCK"

The belief in the scarcity of primary jobs is the second important feature of the customary labor market model. As noted in chapter 4, each of the customary primary jobs in large firms, government agencies, or the unionized building trades apprenticeships always has many more applicants than vacancies at the entry level. (Entry-level primary jobs in small firms are often filled as they arise, by friends and relatives of the firms' owners or senior employees.) Workers know, from their own personal experiences and from the experiences of friends and relatives, that not everyone who applies for even a large number of good jobs is able to get a good job. This knowledge is the basis for their belief that good jobs are scarce. In order to get a good job, they believe, one must either be lucky or one must have a close

friend or relative who can help one get a job by "putting in a good word with the boss."⁵ Some workers consider luck more important than personal contacts, while others rank contacts above luck in importance. Post-secondary education is ranked a distant third as a pathway to a good job; while workers acknowledge that a college education can provide access to some good jobs, they do not regard it as being very important in the labor market. (For more on the role of education, see section 5 of this chapter.) The quotation at the beginning of this chapter best summarizes the workers' beliefs about the relative importance of contacts, luck, and education. The following quotations express similar beliefs.

"You don't get a good job if you don't know people."

"If you don't know someone you just apply a lot of places and hope someone calls you."

"You have to know somebody. Either that or college."

"It's basically who you know, a friend or family. But sometimes you can luck out if you happen to be in the right place at the right time."

"If you're not lucky, you ask someone who'll try to get you in. The boss will do it as a favor for your friend if he likes him."

The view of the labor market expressed in these quotations may seem unremarkable, but it is notable for what it leaves out. Not only do the workers of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown downplay the role of education in the labor market, they also de-emphasize the importance of previously acquired skills and of individual "qualifications" or "abilities" of any sort. When workers mention that a person must be "qualified" in order to get

a primary job, they are not referring to any skill or personal characteristic according to which an employer might rank job applicants along some kind of continuum, but rather to "objective" characteristics that an employer requires of all applicants for a particular job and that are in fact possessed by most neighborhood men (e.g., a driver's license). As noted in chapter 4, the skills that are required of applicants for most customary and fringe primary jobs are so general and so ubiquitous among workers from the neighborhoods that they are easily overlooked. The downplaying of individual qualifications extends even to jobs such as civil service jobs, for which applicants are ranked in order of examination scores. The neighborhood men who apply for these jobs do not view the test as a barrier to employment. Rather, most of the people they know who take the test seem to have similar scores, so the test does not appear, to them, to discriminate among job applicants with whom they are personally familiar. Thus they see luck, not ability, as determining who gets hired into jobs that require competitive examinations; to get such a job, one must take the test and then simply wait until one's name is chosen from the applicant list. In addition to individual ability, another factor that workers regard as unimportant is previous experience in secondary jobs. Secondary jobs rarely provide any specific skills or experience that is relevant to primary employers. With few exceptions (primarily the under-the-table home- and auto-repair work that many neighborhood men do from time to time), the most that these jobs provide is general work experience

that does not, by itself, lead to good jobs.

Workers perceive the relative importance of personal contacts and luck as depending on the demand for entry-level workers in the primary jobs of which they are aware. When demand is low, they believe, personal contacts are extremely important and luck is hard to come by. When demand is high, it is easier to "luck into" a primary job and personal contacts recede in importance. This is not to say that all men who are employed in secondary jobs try to make the transition to primary employment at times when they know that primary employers are doing a large amount of hiring; for reasons related to the socialization of youth (to be discussed in section 3 of this chapter), this is not the case. However, workers are aware, through their knowledge of friends' and relatives' labor market experiences, of the hiring needs of customary and fringe primary employers and of the variation in those needs over time. A twenty-one year old East Boston shipping and receiving clerk expressed this awareness as follows:

"I knew the shipyards and the airport were doing a lot of hiring then [i.e., four years ago]. But I was seventeen, immature, and stupid. I didn't know what I missed. Now you can't get in there unless you know someone."

Workers' perceptions of job scarcity and of the importance of personal contacts and luck apply only to primary jobs and not to secondary jobs. It is commonly believed that anyone can obtain a secondary job at virtually any time. As a nineteen-year-old South Boston man put it,

"There's always something. Anyone can do shipping and receiving or be a porter in a nursing home, and they're always hiring."

While workers often find out about secondary jobs from friends and relatives, they do not believe that personal contacts are necessary to help a person get a secondary job.⁶ Nor is "luck" important for obtaining jobs that "anyone can get." The precise nature of the roles of personal contacts and luck in the primary sector will be discussed in section 4 of this chapter. For now, all that is important is to recognize that the workers perceive a difference in the roles of contacts and luck between the two sectors.

An implication of the perceived scarcity of primary jobs is that a worker will take the first primary job offer he receives; good job opportunities, after all, do not come along very often, so workers cannot be too choosy about them. As noted in section two, this implication is borne out by the interview evidence. Another important implication of perceived primary job scarcity is that a worker will remain with the same primary employer (or, in the case of primary jobs in which the typical pattern of internal labor market progression is occupation-specific but not firm-specific, in the same occupation) for the rest of his working life unless some unforeseen event (e.g., a permanent layoff, a firing, or an occupational injury) occurs. This implication, too, is confirmed by the interview evidence; of the fifteen interviewed workers who ever held primary jobs, none ever left or planned to leave such a job voluntarily. Workers' comments reflect the belief that primary jobs are "lifetime jobs":

"You'd be crazy not to stay unless you had a golden opportunity elsewhere."

"My father always told me, 'Get a good, secure job and stay with it.'"

The concept of primary job scarcity as a prominent feature of workers' view of the labor market is not new. Selig Perlman's theory of the labor movement⁷ has as its central element the idea that manual workers see the labor market as a place where economic opportunities are scarce. According to Perlman, this "scarcity consciousness" has its origins in the psychology of blue-collar workers. It results partly from workers' inherent psychological aversion to risk and partly from their belief that scarcity of economic opportunity is either a fact of nature or a consequence of other social groups having appropriated most of the existing economic opportunities for themselves. Whatever its source, "scarcity consciousness" gives rise to attempts by workers in a given job-type to control the availability of jobs of that type and to restrict entry into those jobs. In effect, the workers collectively try to "own" the jobs. While Perlman's theory has most often been used to explain the origins of "job-control" labor unionism, the theory is also relevant, although in a slightly different form, to the secondary-to-primary job mobility of Boston's ethnic working class men.

Three points of comparison can be made between Perlman's original formulation and the labor market beliefs and experiences of the Boston men. First, Perlman's theory is intended to apply only to manual workers. The Boston workers, who exhibit a "scarcity consciousness" similar to that described by Perlman, are largely

but not exclusively blue-collar workers and come largely but not exclusively from blue-collar families. "Scarcity consciousness" in the ethnic working class neighborhoods extends to men who are (or who will become) police officers and city hall clerks, as well as to those who work (or who will work) in manufacturing or construction. This suggests that whatever factor is responsible for the perception of blue-collar primary job scarcity may also be responsible for the perception of scarcity of the particular non-manual jobs that are customary in the three Boston neighborhoods.

Second, Perlman asserts that "scarcity consciousness" among a group of workers leads to attempts by the group collectively to control access to the scarce jobs. The pervasive use of personal contacts within extended families and peer groups to try to get primary jobs allocated to group members may be regarded as an attempt by those groups to reserve the scarce primary jobs for their members. The personal contact mechanism, though, is only a partial and incomplete means of controlling access to primary jobs. It does not operate for all of the customary and fringe primary jobs, is not always necessary even for those jobs for which it does operate, does not guarantee the group member a job, and is not coordinated across groups. There are no formal or informal institutions other than extended families and peer groups that attempt to ration primary jobs on a neighborhood-wide or sub-neighborhood level . (Even neighborhood politicians, who have patronage control over some government jobs, do not control enough jobs to play a major role in the rationing of primary

jobs.⁸⁾ Nor is there any sense among workers that some jobs "belong" exclusively to certain ethnic groups, neighborhoods, or sub-neighborhood areas. When workers speak of their neighborhood's customary primary jobs as "our" jobs, they mean that it ought to be possible, in an ideal world, for nearly all men from the neighborhood to get those jobs. They do not actively seek to exclude workers from other neighborhoods (at least not other white workers) from those jobs and do not try to exert any control over the allocation of jobs other than the control that can be exerted through the personal-contact mechanism.

Finally, Perlman attributes "scarcity consciousness" to workers' risk-aversion and to their belief that scarcity is either natural or has been artificially created by other social groups. The beliefs that Perlman highlights are certainly very much in evidence among the Boston workers. The workers' emphasis on job security as perhaps the most important attribute of a good job suggests a high degree of risk-aversion, as do the comments of employment counselors and social workers who work with neighborhood youths, e.g.,

"They don't want to take risks. They're ready to admit failure before they get it."

Some workers believe that primary job scarcity is a fact of nature that an unlucky individual is powerless to change:

"If you're not lucky and you don't know someone, there isn't much you can do. You just have to work at whatever job you can find and try to move up."

Others attribute scarcity to politicians who reserve the best government jobs for their supporters or to affirmative-action

programs that reserve some of the customary good jobs for blacks. The "scarcity consciousness" of the Boston workers, though, need not be attributed solely to the workers' psychological propensities. Rather, the good jobs of which these workers are aware appear to be objectively scarce in the sense that there are, even during periods of low unemployment (such as the second half of 1984) always more qualified applicants for these jobs than there are entry-level vacancies, and most of these applicants are trying to move into the primary sector from the secondary sector rather than to change employers within the primary sector. Thus, there are generally some workers who are unable to get primary jobs when they want them. (It may, of course, be the case that any worker who waits long enough and applies for enough primary jobs can eventually obtain a primary job, but this does not alter the fact that there is some objective basis for the workers' perception of primary job scarcity.)

"Scarcity consciousness," then, is a useful description of the Boston workers' belief about the availability of primary jobs. It accounts for three observed features of their secondary-to-primary job mobility: their tendency to take the first primary job offer that they receive, their tendency not to quit primary jobs, and their attempt (albeit in a partial and limited way) to control access to the jobs on a collective basis. In addition, it is possible that "scarcity consciousness," based as it is on an actual chronic imbalance between the number of primary-job seekers and the number of entry-level vacancies, may have even further

analytical significance. The existence of a "normal" level of primary job scarcity⁹ may be a pivot on which the workers' entire labor market model and corresponding labor market behavior rests. As long as the level of primary job scarcity remains approximately "normal," the workers' labor market model and associated mobility patterns might be expected to remain unchanged. If scarcity were to drop below normal for a long period of time (not just during the peak of a business cycle), then workers' perception of primary job scarcity might be undermined. Young workers might be more likely to quit primary jobs with which they are dissatisfied, might be more choosy about the primary jobs that they are willing to accept, might rely less heavily on personal contacts in obtaining primary jobs, and might value pay more highly relative to job security. (The latter three of these effects seem to have occurred among the blue-collar workers of East London during the post-World War II economic boom.¹⁰) If the primary jobs of which the workers are aware were to become unusually scarce for a long period of time (e.g., because of plant closings by major primary employers), then the customary group of primary jobs might break down. While there are, to my knowledge, no studies of the impact of such a situation on young workers just entering the labor force, one possible response to a persistent shortage of primary jobs might be long-distance migration. Another might be acceptance by workers of secondary jobs as lifetime jobs. Still another might be increased reliance on college education as a pathway to a primary job. Thus, the idea of

"normal scarcity" of primary jobs as a regulator of worker beliefs and behavior would, if borne out by empirical evidence, imply that workers change their labor market behavior in response to quantity signals rather than price signals.

3. SOCIAL NETWORKS, SOCIALIZATION, AND EARLY POST-SCHOOL LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCE

This section describes the social structure of the communities in which ethnic working class young men acquire both the customary labor market model and a combination of information, personal contacts, and general skills that enables them to make effective use of the model. While it is not possible to describe the details of the process by which youths learn these things, it is possible to describe the social groups within which the learning takes place and to describe the general nature of the learning process. The description given here draws on accounts of neighborhood life supplied by the worker and community organization interviews. These accounts bear a strong resemblance to descriptions found in ethnographic studies of ethnic working class neighborhoods.¹¹

Two kinds of close-knit social networks¹² are prominent in the lives of the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. The first is the extended family, a group that includes parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The members of this group do not all generally live in the same household, but they do tend to live near one another (in the same family-owned building,

on the same block, in the same neighborhood, or occasionally in nearby parts of the Boston metropolitan area) and to visit one another often. For the purpose of conveying job information, attitudes, and skills, a young man's extended family does not necessarily have to include both of his parents; men who grew up without fathers, for example, learned about the labor market from uncles or cousins. The extended family is the dominant social institution in the lives of youths prior to adolescence.

The second important social institution is the age-graded, single-sex peer group. A peer group is made up of young men who grow up together in the same sub-neighborhood area (usually within a few blocks of one another), go through school together (although not necessarily the same schools), "hang" together on a street corner during adolescence and young adulthood, and enter the labor force together. The peer group dominates the lives of its members during adolescence and during young adulthood prior to marriage. After marriage, the peer group recedes somewhat in importance and the extended family regains prominence in the lives of young men, but the peer group remains a man's principal social group outside of the extended family. All of the out-of-school men whom I interviewed, even those in their early thirties who were married and had children, reported that their current friends were the same people with whom they used to "hang on the corner."

Within these two social groups, the customary labor market model is transmitted costlessly to group members. The model appears, to group members, to be simply an accurate description

of the members' labor market experiences. It is taken for granted and is not in any meaningful sense "chosen" from among alternative models of the labor market. Indeed, there do not appear to the group member to be any possible alternative views of the labor market. A young man learns, certainly by the age of fifteen or so, what kinds of jobs are good and, in general terms, why those jobs are good. This is evidenced by the fact that high school students in the Boston neighborhoods named the same "good" jobs and gave the same reasons why those jobs were "good" as did older workers. Moreover, the students were, when specifically asked, able to name people (almost always family members or friends of family members) who they thought could help them get good jobs later in life. (The students did not get their ideas about jobs from school. With the exception of one man who attended a vocational high school, the interviewees stated their school teachers and counselors either never discussed jobs other than part-time or summer jobs or discussed professional and technical jobs that the youths considered irrelevant to their lives.) To say that high school students have the same general labor market model as adults is not, however, to say that they are immediately ready to act on the basis of that model or to plan their work lives in any way. High school students, as well as most out-of-school youths in their late teens and early twenties, typically do not make long-range plans and are not immediately interested in the pay or security offered by primary jobs. Yet they do seem to hold the customary labor market model

"in the back of their mind"; even though a youth may have no idea of what the details of his own personal future will be, he does know, at least in a vague way, that he has a future and that that future will probably be similar to the lives of older men in his neighborhood.

Within the extended family and peer group, there is often rather casual talk about the details of how to get jobs. In the course of everyday life, a youth can learn which employers are hiring, where and when to apply for a job, and exactly what to do in order to apply for a job. This information could pertain to either primary or secondary jobs. Within the close-knit group, too, a worker who is interested in a primary job can ask a friend or relative to try to help him get such a job. It would be misleading, though, to make too much of the search-theoretic argument that workers gain intensive, detailed information about job content, working conditions, or job satisfaction from friends and relatives.¹³ Workers rarely discuss job characteristics aside from pay and security; they do not see these characteristics as even worthy of discussion. (The only exception to this statement seems to occur in the case of the unionized building trades. Men who work in those trades express a craftsman's pride when pointing out the products of their work to their friends. Moreover, these workers do convey intensive information about their crafts to their sons and nephews by taking the latter along with them on construction jobs.)

In addition to conveying job attitudes and job information,

the extended family and peer group also convey to their members a set of general manual skills. Men from East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown often do home- and auto-repair work, both on their own homes and cars and (on an under-the-table basis) on those of other neighborhood residents. These casual jobs are a means of supplementing unemployment insurance checks while unemployed and a means of earning some extra money while employed at a full-time job. Men who do these jobs frequently take their sons, nephews, cousins, or friends along with them on the jobs. The latter gradually learn how to do the jobs simply by watching and imitating, a process of skill-learning that also characterizes many blue-collar primary jobs.¹⁴ While the specific skills learned on these casual jobs are not necessarily useful for primary jobs (except for primary jobs in the auto-repair field), the general mechanical skills that are learned are useful for a variety of blue-collar primary jobs, particularly in the building trades and the public utilities, which often require job and apprenticeship applicants to take mechanical skills tests.

The attitudes, information, and skills with which the Boston youths enter the labor market and which give the youths (when they are ready) a chance at obtaining a primary job, are, therefore, acquired through a process of socialization rather than a process of investment. The transmission of these attitudes, information, and skills occurs without anyone involved in the process incurring a cost. The youths are not even aware of alternative methods (if indeed there are any) of acquiring the same set of attitudes,

information, and skills, so they cannot be said to be consciously choosing the least-cost alternative. Therefore, it is not meaningful to regard the youths' job attitudes, information, and skills as "human capital" in which the youths have invested.¹⁵ The human capital model is simply inapplicable to this particular aspect of their labor market experience.

The previous paragraphs discussed the general manner in which the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown are socialized into "normal" adult labor market roles through their participation in the extended family and the peer group. What of the particular paths by which they move through the labor market before reaching the primary sector? Most ethnic working class youths do not move directly from high school to primary jobs. Rather, they work in secondary jobs before entering the primary sector. Their secondary-sector job mobility patterns are the subject of the remainder of this section.

The key to understanding the youths' early labor market experience is to be found in the most important kind of social group to which youths belong, the peer group. Employment counselors and social workers consistently stress the importance of the peer group in determining early post-school labor market experience: "Whatever their friends do, they do." There are three different kinds of peer groups, which can be distinguished according to their orientations toward work. One kind of group (type I) has no attachment to the labor market whatsoever. Men who are or who have been members of such groups describe them as being "on

vacation." Group members spend most of their time "hanging on the corner," sleeping, playing sports, drinking, smoking marijuana, and, in some groups, committing petty crimes. They work sporadically in a variety of secondary jobs (e.g., under-the table repair work, materials handling in factories, fast-food service, supermarket stocking) when they need small amounts of money and are unable to obtain money from their parents. Their early work experience is extremely unstable; they rarely remain at a single job for a period as long as six months. They quit jobs impulsively for a variety of reasons, including dissatisfaction with pay, arguments with the boss, being "tired of the job," and interference of the job with peer-group activities. They do not worry about what kind of job, if any, they will do after quitting, and do not especially mind being fired. Although they are quite aware of the existence of primary jobs and some, when asked, admit that they might eventually "settle down," neither a primary job nor the idea of settling down has any immediate relevance to their lives. In the words of a South Boston community school director, they "just kick it around for a few years until they realize they have to do something."

The second kind of group (type II) is committed to working fairly steadily but does not care about job security or a long-term relationship with a single employer. In these groups, the very fact that a youth is working, regardless of the type of job, is considered important. Youths who belong to these groups are proud of the fact that they have worked steadily since leaving school

and have never been unemployed unless laid off. Pay conveys prestige in these groups despite the fact that, as with the type I's, group members live with their parents and have relatively low income needs. Members of type II groups may work at either primary or secondary jobs. While they do not yet value job security, they do value the relatively high pay of even the entry-level primary jobs. Some of them will, therefore, seek primary jobs, although they will not be terribly disappointed if they do not obtain them. Some who do not actively seek primary jobs will apply for those jobs if a friend or relative tells them that a primary employer is hiring. Those who do work in primary jobs do not quit them because the pay exceeds that of virtually all secondary jobs and because primary jobs, most of which have formal rules that regulate the employment relationship, are less likely than secondary jobs to generate the kind of "dissatisfaction with the boss" that may lead a worker to quit. It is only later, after they have made the transition to type III, that these workers appreciate the security that their jobs provide. Most members of type II groups (indeed, most of the youths whom I interviewed) work at the same kinds of secondary jobs as the members of type I groups. They work at each job for a period lasting from about six months to about two years, quitting because of dissatisfaction with the pay, dissatisfaction with the boss, or simply because they are "tired of the job." They do not, however, quit a job without having another job already lined up.

The orientations toward work exhibited by type I and type II

groups are considered by youth workers to be typical youth orientations. They contrast with the primary-sector orientation of the more mature type III groups, which value both high pay and job security. Members of these groups are interested in getting primary jobs as soon as they leave high school. If they are unable to do so, they work in secondary jobs and behave, while in those jobs, much like members of type II groups.

A youth's labor market behavior changes as the peer group type to which he belongs changes. (Because an individual's peer group remains relatively fixed throughout his life, it is the group as a whole that changes rather than the individual moving to a different kind of group as his desires or needs change.) "Normal" movement of peer groups, or "settling down," is movement from type I to type II to type III. (Type I groups may or may not pass through a type II stage before becoming type III. Also, some type I groups, especially those that are heavily involved in criminal activity, never "settle down.") The pressure on a type I or type II group to move into primary employment may come from a variety of sources. Families, which usually consider type II or even type I behavior acceptable for an eighteen- or nineteen-year-old, may eventually pressure youths to get primary jobs. Marriage, which tends to occur around age 22 or 23 among East Boston men and in the mid- to late twenties among Charlestown and South Boston men, creates pressure to "settle down" and get a job that provides security. Sometimes the desire for a primary job is generated from within the labor market. Some youth need to spend several

years in secondary jobs just to gain confidence in their ability to do any job; it is only after several years in the secondary sector that they realize that they can do "better" jobs. Others are initially very glad to have secondary jobs and become dissatisfied with the low pay and insecurity of those jobs only after experiencing the jobs for a few years. Regardless of the nature of the impetus to "adult" work orientation, membership in the peer group facilitates the individual's transition to primary-sector employment. Once some group members begin to settle into primary jobs, the other members follow in order to be like their peers in consumption level and/or in prestige. By age thirty, if not before, most men will, according to job counselors, have become "adult" in their work orientation.

The transition from secondary to primary employment is, of course, regulated not only by changes in the work orientations of peer groups, but also by changes in the demand for entry-level workers in the customary and fringe primary jobs of a particular neighborhood. The behavior of type I groups is unaffected by the state of the primary labor market (although it is at least conceivable that the relative frequency of type I groups in the youth population of a given neighborhood is influenced by the demand for entry-level primary workers). The behavior of type II and type III groups is obviously affected by the condition of the primary labor market. The higher the level of demand for entry-level primary workers at a point in time, the higher the proportion of type II and type III workers who will be able to

move from secondary to primary employment at that time.

The foregoing account of early post-school youth job mobility may be contrasted with that of Osterman.¹⁶ According to Osterman, young people who have recently left school are by nature immature and unready to settle down into steady jobs. Lacking any long-term commitment to work, they go through a "moratorium" stage during which they work intermittently at secondary jobs, thereby satisfying both their minimal income needs and their desire to avoid long-term job commitments. As they grow older, they mature and enter a "settling down" stage during which they desire steady work and seek primary jobs in order to satisfy that desire. Both Osterman's theory and mine embody the idea that aging tends to be accompanied by a desire to "settle down" and to move from secondary to primary employment. Osterman's theory, though, is universalistic and is based on the psychology of the individual, while mine is grounded in the particularities of the social structure and social psychology of youth in ethnic working class neighborhoods.

My theory accounts for two features of youth labor market experience that would seem puzzling for Osterman. First, Osterman's "moratorium" stage appears to correspond to the kind of work orientation and labor market activity that is characteristic of type I peer groups. Yet most of the young (ages 17-25) out-of-school workers whom I interviewed did not have job histories that were as unstable as those of type I's, nor did most of the older workers (ages 30-35) report having such unstable early work records. The type I/type II distinction captures the difference between these

workers and those whose early job histories were extremely unstable. Moreover, the fact that many ethnic working class youths appear to exhibit type II rather than type I behavior explains why the personnel managers of several primary firms, who use the stability of a job applicant's previous employment as a hiring criterion, do not find themselves rejecting a large number of applicants on the basis of extreme instability of previous employment. Apparently, a typical type II youth work history is not sufficiently unstable to make these employers wary of hiring people who have such work histories.

Second, some workers enter primary jobs immediately after leaving school. Osterman cannot account for this. Indeed, his entire analysis depends heavily on the twin findings that youths do not want primary jobs for some time after leaving school and that primary employers consider youths to be too unstable to work in the primary sector.¹⁷ Neither of these findings is entirely correct. There are type III youths who want primary jobs as soon as possible and type II youths who are sometimes willing to work at those jobs. Primary employers who are concerned about job applicants' previous work records do not find instability to be a problem for most applicants (even 18- to 21-year-old applicants). Moreover, there are some primary employers, chiefly in the public sector, that hire on the basis of civil service exams, lotteries, or lists, and care little or not at all about the stability of applicants' previous work records.

4. THE TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY TO PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT

From the viewpoint of a labor market analyst, the most striking aspect of the secondary-to-primary job transition among the men of Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods is that there appear to be few or no direct links between the secondary jobs that a man holds and the primary job that he later obtains. "Bridge" jobs (such as the tire shop described in chapter 4), which are essentially secondary jobs in which workers learn specific skills that are useful in the primary sector, do exist.¹⁸ However, none of my interviewees ever held such a job and no employment counselor or social worker ever mentioned such a job as an element in the transition to primary-sector employment. Secondary jobs do provide employment experience, which some primary employers require of job applicants; the nature of an applicant's previous experience, though, is irrelevant to these employers. Secondary jobs in manual occupations provide general experience in manual labor, which some though not all blue-collar primary employers require. Many of the customary primary employers, particularly in the public sector, do not require applicants for entry-level jobs to have had any previous employment experience. The type of secondary work experience that is perhaps most relevant to a variety of blue-collar primary jobs is the ubiquitous under-the-table home- or auto-repair work, which provides workers with the basic mechanical skills that they need in order to pass the mechanical ability tests that are given by some primary employers.

Given the almost complete absence of direct labor market pathways

between secondary and primary jobs, it seems reasonable to focus on the methods by which workers go about getting primary jobs. There are three such methods. The first is the use of personal contacts within the extended family or peer group. This process may be used for both customary and fringe primary jobs. Like the customary labor market model, it is an automatic and incidental aspect of social relations within the workers' primary social networks.¹⁹ Workers describe the process as follows.

"It doesn't have to be someone high up, just someone who's been working there [in the primary job] for about fifteen years, who can put in a good word for you. Usually it's someone your parents grew up with."

"Your mother and father know people who can get you in. The bosses know them as good workers and expect that you'll be a good worker because they brought you in."

"You go to someone you know who has a good job and have a beer with them. You mention that you're looking for a job and they'll pass the word on.... When a person gets you a job they've usually spoken to a supervisor beforehand. Then they tell you to just go down and talk to the supervisor."

A worker, even one who is certain that a personal contact helped him obtain a good job, does not usually know exactly what kind of influence, if any, the contact had with the employer. He knows only that he spoke with the contact, that the contact arranged an interview for him with the employer, and that the employer hired him. Sometimes personal contacts have "pull" with an employer, as in the case of a worker whose entire job interview with a large manufacturing firm consisted of, "Hello. How are you? How's your uncle?" after which the man was hired. Some small primary employers, as noted in chapter 4, hire mainly friends and relatives of the firms' owners or senior employees. However, the role of the

contact is rarely this obvious. Workers tell stories about the use of personal contacts (by themselves or by others) to get jobs with employers (such as the public utilities) that claim that such contacts do not influence the hiring process in any way. It is, of course, possible that these employers are lying in order to avoid being charged with nepotism. It is also possible to explain the efficacy of the personal contact mechanism even if employers do not in fact give any hiring preference to applicants who are referred by current employees. The explanation, which was provided by a personnel manager who disliked hiring employee referrals but felt unable to avoid doing so, is as follows.

Workers in a firm ("insiders") are the first people to learn of upcoming job vacancies. As soon as they learn of these vacancies, they tell their friends and relatives ("outsiders") about them and simultaneously arrange job interviews for the "outsiders." The friends and relatives of "insiders," therefore, tend to be among the first applicants who are interviewed for the newly vacant jobs. Because primary employers (except for small firms, unionized building trades, and government agencies that use lotteries, lists, or civil service exams for hiring) tend to hire the first qualified applicants, the friends and relatives of "insiders" have an advantage with these employers. According to this explanation, then, the major function of personal contacts is to provide information about job openings. It is important, though, to distinguish the nature of this information from the nature of the information provided when a worker tells another

worker about the existence of a secondary job opening. Information about a primary job opening is much harder for a worker to obtain on his own than is information about a secondary job opening, both because secondary job openings are more common, relative to the number of applicants, than primary job openings, and because the employment offices of primary employers tend to be located in places (like downtown Boston) where men from ethnic working class neighborhoods do not ordinarily go. Therefore, personal contacts seem more essential for primary jobs than for secondary jobs. This difference is reflected in the terminology that workers use to describe the roles of personal contacts for primary and secondary jobs: someone "tells you about" a secondary job, but someone "gets you" a primary job.

Workers who use personal contacts to get primary jobs often seem to do so a rather passive way. A type II youth is not necessarily planning or actively trying to get a primary job at the time when a friend or relative tells him about a primary job opening and arranges an interview for him. A type III worker who makes use of a personal contact to get a primary job did not necessarily take the initiative in approaching the contact about that particular job, even though he may have applied for other primary jobs. Workers who have been in such circumstances typically say that before their contacts "came through" for them they were "just waiting for something to come along" or were "waiting for someone to tell me about something good." The tendency of some workers to behave in this way may stem from the

fact that use of the personal contact mechanism has drawbacks as well as advantages. Personal contacts, other than contacts with politicians, may not be useful for obtaining government jobs for which lotteries, lists, or civil service exams are used in hiring. Even for jobs where personal contacts can make a difference, they do not always guarantee an applicant success. Perhaps most importantly, to attempt to help a person get a good job is to do an important favor for that person, a favor that must be repaid even if the attempt is unsuccessful. Some workers are reluctant to ask friends or relatives for assistance in obtaining primary jobs because of the personal obligation that such a request creates.

In addition to the use of personal contacts, another common way to get a primary job is to apply directly to a primary employer without necessarily knowing whether or not job openings exist. This method is especially important for jobs for which lotteries, lists, or civil service exams are used in the hiring process. A worker will apply directly for his neighborhood's customary primary jobs even if he has no friends or relatives in those jobs. He may also apply directly for fringe primary jobs in which he has friends or relatives if he is unwilling or unable to use the personal contact mechanism. However, he will not apply for a non-customary primary job in which he has no friends or relatives.

Direct application for customary primary jobs is widespread among the type II and type III youths of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. During periods of strong demand for entry-level

primary workers (e.g., the period 1967-1972, when the 30- to 35-year-old cohort graduated from high school and when labor demand in the public sector was strong), the practice is so ubiquitous and taken-for-granted that the interviewed workers did not even mention it until specifically asked. When asked, they replied, "Of course I put my name in at the police department, the fire department,.... Everyone did." During periods when primary-sector demand conditions are less favorable (e.g., the years 1983 and 1984, when, despite a general tightening of the Boston area labor market, the demand for new workers in the public sector, the public utilities, and the East Boston shipyards was relatively weak), direct application is less common than during "good" years. Several of the 17- to 25-year-old men with whom I spoke viewed direct application as a waste of time because the customary primary employers were not doing much new hiring. Others thought that direct application was useless because politicians were reserving the good jobs for their supporters or because affirmative-action programs guaranteed those jobs to blacks. The 30- to 35-year-old workers did not express such beliefs about the state of the primary labor market at the time that they entered that market, although they, too, believed that there were not enough primary jobs for everyone who wanted them. The use of direct application, then, varies cyclically with the condition of the local primary labor market.

The obtaining of a primary job through direct application falls under the category of "luck" in the customary labor market

model. It is perhaps for this reason that workers who make direct application for primary jobs do not persist in doing so for very long if their initial applications are unsuccessful. A man will typically apply for all or most of his neighborhood's customary primary jobs, plus any fringe primary jobs of which he is aware, and then wait to be called for one of them. If he receives no primary job offers within about a year, he may reapply or may give up on direct application, but he will not reapply more than one or two times within a three- or four-year period. If he has not obtained a primary job within that period, he will give up on direct application and continue to work in the secondary sector until "someone tells him about something good." Workers behave in this way despite the fact that frequent reapplications could improve their chances of obtaining a primary job. For example, one who retakes a civil service exam each time it is given can possibly improve one's score. One who checks with the personnel office of a public utility company or shipyard on a weekly basis can improve one's chances of being hired since, according to company personnel officials, those firms consider only very recent applicants for new job vacancies as those vacancies arise. Instead of behaving in these ways, the ethnic working class men get discouraged and consider themselves unlucky if their first few direct applications are unsuccessful. This is one of the very few instances that I have observed in which worker behavior in accordance with the customary labor market model is counterproductive for workers' attempts to enter

customary or fringe primary jobs.

There is, in addition to personal contacts and direct application, one final method of making the secondary-to-primary transition. This method is to get a secondary job within a primary firm or government agency and transfer internally to a primary job within the same firm or agency when a primary job becomes available. Some primary employers have jobs whose characteristics (in terms of pay or job security or both) are essentially secondary. These jobs are filled either on a casual basis through direct application or, in the case of certain government jobs, through a lottery. The jobs are often part-time or temporary. For example, a parcel delivery service hires part-time workers to load parcels into delivery vans. In the public sector, the city and state governments from time to time offer thirty- or ninety-day clerical or public works jobs in order to replace permanent employees who are on vacation. A worker who takes a job of this sort may, once on the job, find out about a permanent primary job opening with the same employer. Even though the employer may not explicitly give part-time or temporary employees any hiring preference for the permanent jobs, such a worker will have an advantage over "outsiders" in obtaining the permanent job because he will know about the job opening before "outsiders" do and because the employer is already familiar with his performance on his current job. The important thing to note about this method of obtaining a primary job is that it is not a method that workers can count on or systematically

expect to use in order to get a good job. A worker who takes a secondary job in a primary firm is not guaranteed that a primary job opening will become available while he is working for that firm, nor is he certain to be hired to fill a primary job opening if one becomes available. Workers, therefore, classify this method of getting a good job under the heading of "luck." They do not take secondary jobs with primary employers with the intention of using such jobs as stepping-stones to primary jobs, although they may, once in the secondary jobs, make the jump to primary employment if a primary job opening appears within the firm.

5. THE ROLES OF SCHOOLING AND JOB-PLACEMENT SERVICES

The foregoing account of the Boston workers' movement from secondary to primary jobs made no mention of either schools or formal job-placement services. The omission of any discussion of these institutions may seem curious. After all, schooling plays a major role in most accounts of inter- and intragenerational socioeconomic mobility, whether those accounts are of the human capital, status-attainment, or Marxian class-reproduction variety. Workers' utilization or non-utilization of formal job-placement services, especially the U.S. Employment Service, was a major concern of the local labor market studies of the 1940's and 1950's. Neither schools nor employment services play a central role in the work lives of the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. This section explains why.

The principal job-placement services of which the interviewed workers were aware are the state Employment Service and non-profit community agencies that offer job counseling and referral assistance. (Private, profit-making employment agencies do not deal with the kinds of primary jobs in which these workers are interested.) Workers regard the Employment Service mainly as a dispenser of unemployment insurance checks and do not expect to obtain a primary job through the Service. While the Service does provide information about civil service exams and skilled trades apprenticeships, city personnel officials and union apprenticeship coordinators report that very few people learn about job openings through the Service. The Service cannot provide anything more than information to workers who are seeking these jobs, and the information that the Service provides is information that the ethnic working class men either already have or can easily obtain through informal channels. The other customary primary employers receive so many applications from employee referrals and walk-ins that they find it unnecessary to advertise their blue-collar and clerical jobs in any way whatsoever and, therefore, do not use the Service as a source of referrals. Given the kinds of primary jobs in which they are interested, then, the workers appear to be correct in believing that the Service is of little help to them.

Non-profit community agencies in each neighborhood are concerned primarily with referring workers to secondary employers, both small and large, both within and outside of the neighborhood. Their offices are small and each employs no more than one full-time

job counselor in a particular neighborhood. Many high school and out-of-school youths come to the agencies to find out about secondary jobs if their friends' tips and their own casual observations of neighborhood employers do not lead them to such jobs, but the agencies report that most of the youths who seek job information from them are able to find secondary jobs without the agencies' assistance. The only people who rely heavily on the agencies for job-placement assistance are ex-convicts, alcoholics, ex-drug addicts, and some of the high school dropouts who live in neighborhood public housing projects. No one in the neighborhoods expects the community agencies to assist people in obtaining primary jobs. For their part, the agencies make no attempts to place workers in primary jobs, although they do provide information about civil service exams and lotteries for certain government jobs. "Employers have other ways of parceling those jobs [i.e., primary jobs] out," stated a counselor in one agency. Even if the agencies were to attempt to place job-seekers with customary primary employers, they would not be likely to be very successful unless they were able to find out about job openings before the friends and relatives of "insiders" in those firms found out about the openings. It appears, then, that the community agencies' job-placement services serve mainly marginal populations within each neighborhood. The "mainstream" population of each neighborhood seems to be satisfied with (or resigned to) the informal job-finding methods described in the previous section of this chapter.²⁰

Given the current recruitment and hiring practices of primary

employers, those informal methods seem well-suited to obtaining primary jobs. These observations regarding the relative unimportance of formal job-placement services are in accordance with the findings of previous local labor market studies, which reported that many workers neither used nor desired to use such services (especially for locating the most desirable jobs) and that some employers did not like to use or found it unnecessary to use them.²¹

If employment services do not figure prominently in the work lives of the young Boston men, what about the schools? Each of the three neighborhoods has a public high school. (East Boston has, in addition, a "magnet" public high school oriented toward the study of science and technology, but most of this school's students come from other neighborhoods of Boston.) Prior to the mid-1970's, when a Federal court ordered racial desegregation of the Boston public schools, each school drew its students almost exclusively from its surrounding neighborhood and most high school students from each neighborhood attended the local public high school. Since the court order, South Boston and Charlestown High Schools have each drawn less than half of their students from their own neighborhoods. Many high school students from South Boston and Charlestown now attend Catholic schools, according to guidance counselors at the public high schools in those neighborhoods. Some attend public schools in other neighborhoods. East Boston High School, geographically remote from the rest of the city, participates only to a limited extent in the desegregation program; more than

two-thirds of its students live in East Boston, and most high school students from East Boston attend East Boston High School. Thus, the East Boston youths whom I interviewed were all students or former students of East Boston High School, while many of the South Boston and Charlestown youths were attending or had attended Catholic schools. A few of the latter were attending or had attended public high schools in black neighborhoods of the city. Most of the 30- to 35-year-old South Boston interviewees were graduates of South Boston High School. Job attitudes and patterns of job mobility, though, did not appear to vary with the type of school attended, despite the fact that the Catholic high schools draw students from the entire Boston metropolitan area and typically have a higher percentage of their graduates go directly to college than do the public high schools.²²

During the 1983-84 academic year, the high schools were only minimally involved in job-placement activities. The placement activities in which the schools did engage were almost all directed toward finding part-time, after-school secondary jobs for their students. Secondary employers interested in hiring high school students would sometimes inform guidance counselors, who would, in turn, pass the information on to students. Until recently, the schools have not engaged in any large-scale, systematic efforts to place students in full-time jobs after graduation. A recently instituted program, sponsored by the Boston Private Industry Council, to prepare students for and place them in a variety of primary jobs with banks, insurance companies, hospitals, and

computer-related companies did not yet, as of 1983-84, reach a large number of students.

The youths whom I interviewed did not regard high school as being important for obtaining a good job. Their major motivations for remaining in school were to see their friends and to have the prestige of a high school diploma. The youths' perceptions of the unimportance of high school have a factual basis. The specific skills taught in high school are not particularly relevant to the three neighborhoods' customary and fringe primary jobs. As noted in chapter 4, most of the primary employers do not require applicants for entry-level blue-collar or clerical jobs to be high school graduates, nor do they care about the subjects that applicants studied in school. Basic literacy and arithmetic seem to be the only "academic" skills that are required, even for jobs for which civil service exams are required.

Of course, it is quite possible, as Bowles and Gintis argue, that the major job-related function of schooling is to inculcate the attitudes (particularly attitudes toward authority) and patterns of behavior that are required in jobs that resemble those of the students' parents.²³ The present case study does not provide any direct evidence for or against this proposition, but it does suggest that families and peer groups, rather than schools, are principally responsible for instilling job-related attitudes and behavioral traits in the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. The fact that similar labor market attitudes and behavioral patterns characterize workers from a variety of

school backgrounds indicates that Bowles' and Gintis' facile identification of correspondences between the authority relations of particular kinds of schools and the authority relations of particular kinds of jobs is an oversimplification. Moreover, high school students do not always passively accept the authority relations of the school. A group of East Boston youths, all students or recent graduates of East Boston High School, characterized themselves as "madmen" in school. Mostly "C" students in school, they considered classes a waste of time, did not take schoolwork seriously, and spent much of their time playing practical jokes on teachers and on other students.²⁴ Other young interviewees complained that public school discipline was not strict enough. Attitudes such as these, while not expressed by all interviewees, at least hint that youths' orientations toward workplace relations are not necessarily formed in school.

Given the relatively unimportant role that formal schooling plays in the part of the primary sector toward which the subjects of this study are oriented, it is not surprising that few of the men attend college.²⁵ It is instructive to consider the reasons that workers who never attended and never plan to attend college gave for their decision. There were four kinds of reasons given for not going to college. Some men said that they were tired of school: "Thirteen years of school is enough." Others believed that they were not smart enough or industrious enough to go to college: "I'm not a student. I'm basically lazy, more or less a physical person." Men who gave this kind of response had not

generally been poor students in high school, but they somehow believed that they were not "college material." Some men did not go to college because none of their peers did so: "When I grew up, I didn't know a lot of people who went to college. It just wasn't something people did." Social workers reported that many men who go to college immediately after high school drop out within a year if the other members of their peer groups do not also attend college.

The final reason for not going to college is perhaps the most interesting for labor market analysis, since it provides insight into the relationship that at least some workers clearly perceive to exist between college and the labor market. It is expressed in this comment by an East Boston community school recreation director:

"They see people with college degrees washing dishes and their whole opinion of college is formed,"

and in the following comments by workers:

"My nephew went to college and became a teacher. He made half of what I make [as a subway track repairman] when he was working and then they laid him off because of budget cuts."

"Sometimes I thought about [college], but I never really followed it up. I guess it just didn't matter enough to me."

"I thought about [college], but jobs looked better at the time."

"Sure you could get a real high-paying job if you go to college, but there's no security in it.... You're not trying to get rich. You just want to make a good steady living."

These remarks indicate, in one way or another, the workers' belief that it is not necessary to have a college education in order to obtain a good job.²⁶ This belief is based on their own labor

market experiences and those of their friends and relatives. They see that it is possible to obtain a customary or fringe primary job without a college education. The few college-educated people whom they know work either in jobs that pay less than or the same as their own jobs and that are often less secure than their own jobs, or in the very same primary jobs as theirs (e.g., a South Boston man with a bachelor's degree in economics who works as a van driver for a parcel delivery service). They know very few college-educated people who work in extremely high-paying jobs; moreover, they have only a vague awareness of those jobs and, to the extent that they are aware of them, perceive them as insecure. Because they have access to secure jobs that provide them with what they regard as a reasonable standard of living without requiring college, college does not seem to them to "pay off."

This interpretation might seem to suggest a human capital account of worker decision-making with regard to risky "investments" in higher education. If jobs that require college have higher mean incomes but also greater income dispersion than the customary and fringe primary jobs (which do not require college), then Boston's ethnic working class men will, if sufficiently risk-averse, have relatively low rates of return to college education and will, therefore, choose the non-college jobs and forego higher education.²⁷ This sort of human capital account is partially accurate as a description of the decision-making processes of some workers with regard to the question of whether or not to attend

college (or, once in college, whether or not to drop out), but there are four reasons why it is misleading. First, it focuses analytical attention on wage differentials and on workers' risk-aversion but fails to explain why workers have the particular labor market alternatives to college that they in fact have. The existence of an "acceptable" non-college alternative is crucial to the decision processes of the workers whom I interviewed. These workers have a reasonable chance, although not a certainty, of getting good jobs without going to college because they costlessly and incidentally acquire a set of attitudes, information, contacts, and skills that enables them to obtain such jobs. If they did not have this kind of access to good jobs without attending college, and if they still aspired to standards of living comparable to those provided by their current customary good jobs, then it is possible that more of them might attend college. (Of course, it is also possible that they might not aspire to the standards of living to which they currently aspire and might then be satisfied with secondary jobs for their entire lives.) The second reason why the human capital story is misleading is that it overstates workers' awareness of the high-paying jobs that college-educated workers can obtain. Third, the human capital story outlined above assumes that college-educated workers get jobs for which college education is necessary and that it is those jobs that are characterized by a high degree of income dispersion. Yet most of the income dispersion that Boston's "ethnic working class" men see among the college-educated people with whom they are acquainted

results from college-educated people working in jobs that do not require college. If college education is a productive investment, as human capital theory assumes, then it is difficult to see why labor markets would have a systematic tendency to misallocate the skills of college-educated people by placing any appreciable number of them in jobs that can be done equally well by non-college educated workers. Finally, the human capital account has no place for the idea of a customary standard of living, an idea that seems to figure prominently in the decisions of workers who believe that college does not "pay off." Workers who decide to take primary jobs rather than attend college may indeed make rough calculations of the costs of and returns to these two courses of action, but their calculations are based on an objective of achieving a customary standard of living rather than (as in human capital theory) on an objective of maximizing discounted lifetime income.

If human capital theory is misleading as a characterization of the educational decision-making processes of workers who do not attend college, then it is even more misleading when applied to workers who hold the customary labor market model and do attend college. Human capital theory would lead one to expect that workers who go to college go because they believe it to be worthwhile to sacrifice current income in return for the higher (average) future income that they could receive with a college degree. If the jobs for which college education is required are more varied in their pay levels than the primary jobs for which no college is necessary, then these workers would be willing to make such an

"investment" if they were less risk-averse than the non-college goers. Yet the workers with customary labor market models who attended college did not seem to be any less risk-averse than those who never attended and never plan to attend college, nor did they go to college for job-related reasons.²⁸

Why, then, did the college-goers go to college? Some went because they received athletic scholarships. Others went because all of their friends went to college. Still others, particularly those who took college courses at night while working in primary jobs during the day, went simply because they were curious about college or were interested in learning. Finally, some went either immediately after high school or after several years of working in secondary jobs, because they were unable to get primary jobs and did not know what else to do other than go to college. This final reason appears, at first glance, to be job-related, but men who went to college for this reason did not have any particular vocational goals upon entering college, nor were they confident that college would enable them to get good jobs. Rather, they seemed to be using college as a way of "stopping out" of the labor market for a few years before trying once again to get a good job. Perhaps this good job would be one that required college or perhaps it would not; the men simply did not know.

Regardless of their reasons for entering college, many of the college-goers did not complete either a two-year or a four-year degree program. Their reasons for leaving college paralleled the reasons that non-college goers gave for not attending college at

all. Some left because of poor grades in college or because they felt that, with mediocre passing grades, they were not "college material." Others left in order to go back to "hanging on the corner" with their non-college peers. Still others left because they obtained primary jobs or because, at some point, they began to think about college in relation to jobs and concluded that college was not necessary in order to get a good job. The experiences of the college dropouts, then, like those of the other men who hold the customary labor market model, illustrate the unimportance of formal education in their work lives, an unimportance that stems from the unimportance of formal education for the primary jobs to which their families and peer groups are linked.

6. A CONTRAST GROUP: THE "UPWARDLY MOBILE"

While virtually all workers who grow up in East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown are aware of their neighborhood's customary labor market model, not all accept this model. There are workers from these neighborhoods who explicitly reject the model. Some of these workers work in the customary and fringe primary jobs. Others work in professional and technical jobs. None of them, however, restrict their job choices to the customary and fringe primary jobs. None believe that good jobs are scarce. All search or have searched actively for jobs outside of the customary and fringe groups. Some have made use of college or post-high school training programs (other than apprenticeships) for job-related purposes. Above all, all formulate and actively pursue goals in the labor market. In short, their labor market behavior is instrumental rather than customary.²⁹ They exhibit the "opportunity consciousness" that Perlman ascribed to businessmen rather than the "scarcity consciousness" that he ascribed to blue-collar workers and that is characteristic of the workers who follow the customary labor market model.³⁰ While this chapter's central concern is with the workers whose labor market experiences are governed by the customary model, a brief look at a different group of workers will serve to clarify the customary model by throwing its features into sharp relief and will show what circumstances can lead an individual to reject the customary model.

I refer to workers who reject the customary model as "upwardly

mobile," not necessarily because the jobs that they currently hold or that they aspire to hold are necessarily better-paying than the customary or fringe primary jobs (although this is sometimes true), but because these workers are interested in jobs that they believe are, in some sense, "better" (either higher-paying or more prestigious or more interesting or more satisfying) than the primary jobs that most adult men in their neighborhoods hold. The comments of some of the upwardly mobile 30- to 35-year-old South Boston workers are illustrative.

"Most people here would consider my job terrific and would want to stay in it forever, but I only took this job so that I could afford to buy a house, and I'm leaving once I have enough money for that.... It's a good check but it's a boring job."

-a Post Office
mail-handler who had quit a more interesting but lower paying
job as a claims representative with the Social Security
Administration.

"I don't have much in common with the police or firemen. They don't think too far. They put themselves in a slot and think that's as far as they can go."

-an ironworker who
planned to quit the trade begin speculating in real estate.

Why do these workers reject the customary labor market model and the jobs that go with it? Some obvious possible reasons seem inapplicable. The fathers and uncles of the upwardly mobile held the same kinds of primary and secondary jobs as the fathers and uncles of the men who accept the customary model. The upwardly mobile grew up in extended families and peer groups just as the other men in their neighborhoods did. What the upwardly mobile all seem to have had was some kind of experience or set of

experiences that gave them a different outlook on the labor market than their peers. These experiences were extremely diverse. One man, now a computer programmer, was an outstanding student in high school and was placed in a special summer school program for the academically talented. His teachers and guidance counselors expected him to go to college and to enter an occupation that would make use of higher education. Another man, an ironworker, had an Irish immigrant father who expected his sons always to pursue "the American dream" and to try to "better themselves" regardless of what others did. A third worker, a respiratory therapist, rebelled, as a teenager, against "the whole South Boston way of life" and began to spend time in downtown Boston, where he met people whose backgrounds were very different from his own. Two workers who are currently employed in customary jobs (an ironworker and a Post Office mail-handler) grew up accepting the customary labor market model but changed their views when they met non-South Bostonians in the army.³¹ Both of these men attended college after leaving the army, in order, as one expressed it, "to broaden myself and get an interesting, non-traditional job."

It is noteworthy that some of the upwardly mobile workers are employed in customary primary jobs. Unlike most workers in those jobs, though, they do not expect the jobs to be lifetime jobs. Instead, they intend the jobs to meet their temporary income needs for a few years.³² (Since they have families to support, they do not view secondary jobs as adequate to meet these needs.) The mail-handler, for example, took that job only because he

needed money to buy a house, which he would not have been able to save if he had stayed at his previous, interesting but low-paying job. One of the upwardly mobile ironworkers had an associate degree in engineering and had previously worked as a draftsman for an engineering firm, but quit that job when he found himself unable to advance within the firm. He entered the ironworker's apprenticeship after several months of unsuccessful search for another technical job, and still hopes eventually to find engineering-related work. Another ironworker, who planned to quit the trade to take up real estate speculation full-time, entered the trade in order to support himself and his family while he earned an undergraduate degree in business.

The upwardly mobile workers who worked in customary primary jobs obtained those jobs in the same ways in which other men from their neighborhoods obtain such jobs. Moreover, despite their overall "opportunity consciousness," they described the ways in which they got those jobs in the same terms as did the other men, namely, "personal contacts" and "luck." The ironworkers found out how to apply for their apprenticeships from fathers or uncles who were ironworkers. The Post Office worker took a civil service exam, on which his score was very close to the scores of other neighborhood men who took the same exam, and had to wait three years until he was called from the civil service list. All of these men knew about these jobs long before they ever considered applying for them. This illustrates two points. The first is that there is a job-specific component to the way

in which the customary jobs are obtained and that this component is reflected in workers' beliefs about how these jobs are obtained. The second point, related to the first, is that the difference between the upwardly mobile workers and the others is not that the former have a different "consciousness" than the latter with respect to all jobs, but that the latter's basic outlook on the labor market is shaped solely by their own experiences (and those of friends and relatives) with customary and fringe primary jobs and with secondary jobs, while the former's basic outlook is shaped by an awareness of and experience with other kinds of primary jobs as well.

The upwardly mobile workers who worked (or who had previously worked) in non-traditional primary jobs used formal labor market intermediaries in order to locate the jobs and reported that employers required them to have special skills or personal characteristics in order to obtain the jobs. The workers whom I interviewed found a job with the Social Security Administration through a college placement office, computer programming jobs through newspaper advertisements and private employment agencies, and jobs as a draftsman and as a respiratory therapist through newspaper advertisements. Respiratory therapy jobs required previous experience or training; my interviewee obtained the latter through a respiratory therapy training program offered during the late 1960's by a community antipoverty agency. The Social Security job required a college degree and the ability to work well under pressure, an ability that was tested through an interview in which

a job applicant was presented with simulated on-the-job situations. The drafting job required an ability to do technical drawing, which my interviewee had obtained through his engineering education. The computer programming jobs required applicants to have the ability to learn programming languages and the ability to "sell themselves" to firms. One man had taken computer programming courses in college, but the other, without any previous technical experience of any kind, was nevertheless able to convince a bank to hire him for a programming job.

A worker who held the customary labor market model, which is so well-suited to obtaining the traditional customary and fringe primary jobs, would be unlikely to know how to get non-traditional jobs like those described in the previous paragraph, nor would he be likely to be "qualified" for such jobs (at least given the current entry requirements of those jobs) if he knew how to get them. He would lack the aggressiveness and self-confidence that at least some of the non-traditional jobs seem to require, and would lack the skills required for entry into others (insofar as those skills are specialized ones that must be acquired through higher education or post-high school training programs other than apprenticeships). Moreover, workers who were familiar with the non-traditional jobs described above would be unlikely to develop the customary labor market model as long as they were able to obtain those jobs and as long as the entrance requirements for those jobs remain as they are today. Their own experiences (and the experiences of people they knew) in obtaining such jobs

would convince them that the customary model is not an accurate guide to the labor market in which they operate.

7. CONCLUSION

The findings of this chapter contribute to the debate within labor market segmentation theory over the nature of secondary-to-primary job mobility and of the entry barriers that surround the primary sector. Early formulations of intersectoral mobility theory (or, more accurately, immobility theory) posited the existence of a self-regulating feedback mechanism by which the nature of workplace relations in the secondary sector encourages unstable work behavior, which then disqualifies people who have worked in the secondary sector from entering the primary sector, where worker stability is important and is encouraged by the nature of workplace relations.³³ The existence of substantial intersectoral mobility as a routine part of the work histories of ethnic working class young men invalidates this simple theory. Subsequent attempts by segmented labor market theorists to address the issue of mobility grounded the mobility process principally in the characteristics of workers, either in worker psychology³⁴ or in workers' social structures and subcultural values.³⁵ The account given in this chapter, while similar in some respects to the latter type of account, stresses the linkages between specific groups of workers and specific groups of primary jobs. Once established, such linkages are perpetuated by the transmission, through workers' social networks, of a set of

beliefs, attitudes, information, and skills that reflect (in broad outline) the actual hiring practices of the specific primary jobs to which the group of workers is linked.

The secondary-to-primary job mobility of the men described in this chapter is regulated by a model of the labor market that is essentially an abstraction from the employment experiences of members of the men's families and peer groups. There are two key components of that model. First, there is a "customary" group of primary jobs, held by many adult men in the neighborhood, whose elements exemplify what a "good" job is and that, along with other, similar jobs held by members of a man's family and peer group, make up the set of jobs in which it is appropriate for an adult man to work. Second the appropriate good jobs are scarce (with the degree of scarcity depending on local labor market conditions) and personal contacts and luck are needed in order to obtain these jobs. Formal education, formal job training programs (other than apprenticeships), and formal labor market intermediaries are unimportant for obtaining these jobs. The model, along with the job information, personal contacts, and relatively general skills that are needed in order to make use of it, is transmitted informally and costlessly within close-knit extended families and peer groups. Youths acquire the model fairly early in life, but their implementation of it is delayed by movement through an optional set of youth roles in which the pay and/or job security of primary jobs is not valued. Given this structure of the labor force, the major determinant of

young workers' rate of secondary-to-primary mobility is the demand for entry-level workers in the primary jobs held by older workers in the neighborhood. The customary labor market model is, therefore, a mechanism (or part of a mechanism) by which the link between a specific group of workers and a specific group of primary jobs is perpetuated. Its operation depends crucially on the continuing availability of that group of jobs to new generations of workers.

The customary model appears very well suited to the primary jobs to which the workers aspire. The major features of the model reflect characteristics of this market, especially recruitment and hiring characteristics, although they do not reflect these characteristics in a complete and detailed way. (To see this point, note the differences between the workers' understanding of the hiring process and the understandings expressed by some of the hiring managers [which were described in chapter 4], particularly with regard to the role that personal contacts play in the hiring process.) The primary jobs of which the workers are aware offer higher pay (even at the entry level) and more job security than secondary jobs. The primary jobs are objectively scarce in the sense that, under normal labor market conditions, there are, at any given time, more entry-level applicants for these jobs than there are entry-level vacancies. Because few of the primary employers require job applicants to have any special educational background or specific job-related skills upon entering the jobs, workers correctly view education and formal training as

unimportant for obtaining such jobs. The reliance of some public-sector primary employers on civil service tests or random selection mechanisms for hiring purposes is the basis for the belief that luck is important for obtaining a good job. The tendency of private-sector primary employers to hire mostly friends and relatives of the firms' owners or senior employees (as do some small firms), to hire the first qualified applicants (as do the public utilities and shipyards), or to favor workers who possess knowledge that is typically acquired from friends and relatives already working at the job (as do some unionized building trades apprenticeship programs) are the foundations of the belief that personal contacts are important for getting a good job. These features of the customary and fringe primary jobs are incorporated into the workers' labor market model and, via the model, are reflected in their labor market behavior.

There are several unresolved analytical questions that arise with respect to this account of ethnic working class job mobility. Most of these will be discussed in detail in chapter 6. However, two are worth mentioning here. First, what is the origin of the customary group of primary jobs? How did the linkage between a specific group of workers and a specific group of jobs first develop? Why do workers not range more widely across the local labor market in search of primary jobs? Since the restriction of the workers' "choice" set to a narrow range of primary jobs appears to be a customary phenomenon rather than a deliberate choice on the part of the workers, the origin of this phenomenon

might perhaps best be sought in the historical circumstances under which the workers' ancestors first entered the customary primary jobs. There is, for example, some evidence that Irish immigrants were able to obtain blue-collar jobs in Boston's public sector and public utilities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through patronage dispensed by local Irish politicians.³⁶ With the growth of internal labor markets in those jobs during the twentieth century, the pay and job security of the jobs improved to the point where the jobs satisfied the aspirations of the immigrants' children and of subsequent generations. Therefore, as long as those jobs remained available, the immigrants' descendants simply remained in them.

The second unresolved question concerns the relative importance of job characteristics and worker characteristics in accounting for the workers' mobility model and mobility patterns. I have suggested a link between the characteristics of the particular primary labor markets within which the workers operate and the workers' beliefs about and experiences in the labor market. Do the characteristics of the jobs, particularly the employers' recruitment and hiring patterns, actually "cause" the workers' beliefs and mobility patterns? Or are those beliefs and patterns better explained, as some authors have argued, by the workers' ethnic backgrounds, community social structures, or subcultures?³⁷ There is some evidence against the latter view, at least in its pure form. Ethnographic studies of some non-ethnic blue-collar workers seem to suggest that those workers also made a rough kind

of primary-secondary job distinction, had customary groups of primary jobs, and relied on "luck" and/or personal contacts within close-knit social networks as means of obtaining good jobs.³⁸ This indicates that ethnicity per se is not necessary to produce the beliefs and behavior patterns found in the Boston ethnics whom I have studied. Moreover, the most comprehensive study to date of a Boston ethnic working class neighborhood, Gans found that most adult neighborhood men worked in what appear to be secondary jobs and did not make a primary-secondary job distinction, did not have a customary job group (and, therefore, could not have had a customary labor market model like the one described in this chapter), despite the fact that Gans' workers were quite similar, in terms of community social structure (close-knit extended families and peer groups) and some work attitudes (e.g., indifference to education and to job content), to the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown.³⁹ This finding suggests that neither ethnicity nor social structure nor subcultural values is sufficient to assure adult men of a reasonable degree of access to primary jobs. What seems to be missing from the group described in Gans' study, but is apparently present in the non-ethnic blue-collar groups referred to above is a sufficient concentration of older workers in a particular set of primary jobs. When such a concentration is missing, young men do not acquire a view of the labor market that resembles the customary model and do not settle into primary jobs, but instead spend their entire working lives in secondary jobs.

This is not to say that worker characteristics are irrelevant to the process of secondary-to-primary job mobility. Indeed, this chapter has stressed the role that close-knit social networks play in transmitting both the customary model of the labor market and the information, attitudes, contacts, and skills that enable workers to make use of that model. If workers were not embedded in these networks, their views of the labor market and the actual job opportunities to which they have access could differ considerably from what they currently are, even if their fathers worked in the same jobs as at present. This line of reasoning suggests the hypothesis that the relationship between job characteristics and workers' attitudes and mobility patterns is mediated by the characteristics (especially the structural characteristics) of the social groups to which the workers belong. Labor market models do not stem mainly from relatively autonomous subcultures that are essentially independent of the workers' employment experiences, but reflect the labor market characteristics of the jobs held by the members of the social groups to which workers belong. The social group to which a worker belongs (and also, perhaps, the reference group with which he identifies, if that group is different from the one to which he belongs) determines which jobs a worker can "see." The labor market characteristics of those jobs will be reflected in the worker's overall view of the labor market, which, along with labor demand conditions in the relevant set of jobs, governs the worker's labor market mobility pattern. The worker, therefore,

projects onto the entire labor market the characteristics of a particular group of jobs that is held by a particular social group, and it is those characteristics that help to shape his beliefs and behavior in the labor market. The following chapter elaborates this view of worker perception and behavior and draws out its implications for labor market analysis.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers (New York: Free Press, 1962); William F. Whyte, Street Corner Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943).

2. The unionized building trades are an exception to this statement. Everyone in the three neighborhoods seems to be aware of them, but it is commonly believed that a man must be "sponsored" by a family member in order to enter a union apprenticeship. Although this belief is false, it does influence workers' labor market behavior.

3. Lloyd Reynolds, The Structure of Labor Markets (New York: Harper and Bros., 1951), pp.87-101, found that blue-collar workers in New Haven during the late 1940's evaluated jobs in a similar way. Reynolds' workers determined whether or not a job was "good" by comparing the job with a standard of job desirability that was derived from their own past job experiences and from the experiences of people they knew.

4. The local labor market studies of the 1940's and 1950's found that most blue-collar workers did not engage in systematic job search but rather took the first "good" job offered them. See, for example, Reynolds, op. cit., p. 108; Charles Myers and George Shultz, Dynamics of a Labor Market (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951), p. 56; Leonard Adams and Robert Aronson, Workers and Industrial Change (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), pp. 76-77.

5. The blue-collar workers described in Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 85-86, also believed that good jobs were scarce and that personal contacts or luck were needed in order to obtain them.

6. Virtually all previous local labor market studies have stressed the importance of personal contacts as a means of obtaining

jobs and/or job information. See, e.g., Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 106-107; Myers and Shultz, op. cit., pp. 47-49; Adams and Aronson, op. cit., pp. 70-75; Dorothea DeSchweinitz, How Workers Find Jobs (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932), pp. 85-89; Charles Myers and W. Rupert Maclaurin, The Movement of Factory Workers (New York: Wiley, 1943), pp. 46-47. However, no previous study has noted that "getting a job through a friend or relative" has different meanings for different types of jobs. The failure of earlier studies to make such a distinction is probably due to the fact that those studies asked workers questions such as, "How did you find out about this job?" or "How did you get this job?" and did not probe deeply into workers' responses in order to determine the exact role that personal contacts played.

Some studies, e.g., Harold Sheppard and A. Harvey Belitsky, The Job Hunt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), pp. 46-49; and D.I. Mackay et al., Labour Markets Under Different Employment Conditions (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 357; reported differences by skill level (i.e., unskilled, semiskilled, skilled) in the incidence of blue-collar workers' use of personal contacts to obtain jobs. Their general finding was that the lower a worker's skill level, the more likely he was to have found out about his current job from a friend or relative. This finding is not inconsistent with the workers' model described in this study, for two reasons. First, the earlier studies did not use the primary-secondary distinction, which cuts across the tripartite skill-level classification. Second, the earlier studies identify a "job" with a particular employer, regardless of the structure of the labor market within which the job is embedded. The present study utilizes the workers' own definitions of "jobs," which reflect the structure of the relevant labor markets. Skilled workers are more likely than other workers to operate within occupationally-defined labor markets that cut across firms. In these markets (at least in the unionized building trades that I studied), the influence of personal contacts on job-finding is confined mainly to entry into apprenticeships. By the criteria used in this study, an experienced skilled construction worker who received assistance from friends or relatives in obtaining his apprenticeship would be said to have gotten his job through personal contacts. By the criteria of earlier studies, the same worker would only be said to have gotten his job through personal contacts if personal contacts helped him obtain work with his current employer.

7. Selig Perlman, A Theory of the Labor Movement (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1966), chapter 6.

8. This situation contrasts sharply with the extensive political patronage system that existed in Boston during the early twentieth century. At that time, virtually all jobs with the city and state governments and the public utilities, including civil service jobs, were in fact allocated by local politicians to their constituents.

See Robert Woods, "Livelihood," p. 121, and "Traffic in Citizenship," pp. 170-171, in Robert Woods (ed.), Americans in Process (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903).

9. This concept of a "normal" level of primary job scarcity is similar, analytically, to Kornai's concept of "normal shortage" in the product markets of centrally planned economies. See Janos Kornai, Economics of Shortage (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1980), pp. 46-47.

10. Michael Young and Peter Willmott, Family and Kinship in East London (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), pp. 96-97.

11. Descriptions of the social structure of ethnic working class neighborhoods, or of parts of that structure, may be found in Gans, op. cit., chapters 3 and 4; Whyte, op. cit., chapter 1; Gerald Suttles, The Social Order of the Slum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), chapters 9 and 10; William Kornblum, Blue Collar Community (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), chapter 3.

12. The term "close-knit social network" was introduced in Elizabeth Bott, Family and Social Network (London: Tavistock, 1957), p. 59, to denote a social network, each of whose members knows all or most of the other members well.

13. Albert Rees, "Information Networks in Labor Markets," American Economic Review 56 (May 1966): 559-566; David Stevens, "A Reexamination of What Is Known About Jobseeking Behavior in the United States," in National Commission for Manpower Policy (ed.), Labor Market Intermediaries (Washington: National Commission for Manpower Policy, 1978), pp. 57-104.

14. Michael Piore, "On-the-Job Training and Adjustment to Technological Change," Journal of Human Resources 3 (Fall 1968): 235-249.

15. Michael Piore, "The Importance of Human Capital Theory to Labor Economics - A Dissenting View," Industrial Relations Research Association, Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Winter Meeting (1973): 251-258, makes this argument with respect to on-the-job training in blue-collar primary jobs.

16. Paul Osterman, Getting Started (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), chapter 3.

17. Ibid.

18. Paul Osterman, "The Labor Market for Young Men," (Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, 1976), pp. 154-173.

19. The reliance of Boston's ethnic working class men on

strong ties (i.e., people whom they know well and see frequently) for assistance in the labor market contrasts sharply with Granovetter's finding that professional workers in a Boston suburb relied mainly on "weak ties" (i.e., acquaintances) for job information. See Mark Granovetter, Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 53-55. The fact that labor market assistance is, for the men described in the present study, an "automatic" and "incidental" aspect of social relations within a pre-existing social network rather than a goal in pursuit of which they "cultivate" social contacts, implies that Boorman's model of personal contacts in the labor market is inapplicable to these men. The central assumption of Boorman's model is that individuals invest time in maintaining strong or weak ties with other individuals based at least in part on the expected efficacy of those ties in obtaining jobs. See Scott Boorman, "A Combinatorial Optimization Model for Transmission of Job Information Through Contact Networks," Bell Journal of Economics 6 (Spring 1975): 216-249.

20. The marginal role of non-profit, community-based employment services in East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown, contrasts with the central role that similar services play in the predominantly black Boston neighborhoods of Roxbury and North Dorchester. In the latter neighborhoods, the agencies' offices are relatively large, some agencies employ more than one full-time job counselor, the job counselors attempt (with varying degrees of success) to build long-term referral relationships with primary employers (although not the primary employers that are "customary" in the ethnic working class neighborhoods), and many neighborhood youths rely on the agencies for assistance in obtaining both secondary and (if possible) primary jobs. For more details, see the first section of chapter 7.

21. Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 56-60; Myers and Shultz, op. cit., pp. 74-81; Myers and Maclaurin, op. cit., pp. 47-49; Adams and Aronson, op. cit., pp. 70-75; DeSchweinitz, op. cit., pp. 89, 115. For employer attitudes toward the Employment Service, see Murray Edelman, Channels of Employment (Urbana: University of Illinois Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, 1952), pp. 46-48, 101, 130-131, 145-146, 173, 186-187.

22. According to school records provided by guidance counselors, about 20 percent of the 1983 graduates of East Boston High School planned to attend two- or four-year colleges during the year after graduation. The corresponding percentages for South Boston High School and Charlestown High School were 35 percent and 15 percent, respectively. Counselors reported that these percentages were higher than during the pre-desegregation period. Area Catholic high schools reported that half to three-quarters of their graduates went directly to two- or four-year colleges.

23. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist

America (New York: Basic, 1976).

24. The blue-collar British high school youths described in Paul Willis, Learning to Labor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), exhibited similarly rebellious attitudes and behavior.

25. Relatively few adult residents of East Boston or South Boston have ever attended college, and even fewer are college graduates. (Charlestown residents tend to have had somewhat more schooling, but this is misleading with reference to the workers whom I am describing, since Charlestown has recently experienced an influx of well-educated, high-income professional and technical workers.) The distributions of years of schooling among all persons age 25 or older in the three neighborhoods, as reported in the 1980 U.S. Census, were as follows.

	Charlestown	E. Boston	S. Boston
Percent with no high school	14.9	27.9	20.4
1-3 years high school	21.2	23.7	18.0
High school graduates	39.0	36.8	45.6
1-3 years college	10.2	6.8	9.0
4 or more years college	14.8	4.8	6.9

The above data were calculated from data in Boston Redevelopment Authority, "Boston Population and Housing By Neighborhood Areas: Demographic Information from the U.S. Bureau of the Census," Research Report # 143 ([Boston]: Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1983), table P-2. The census data do not provide a more detailed distribution of educational level by age. Priests, social workers, and employment counselors who are familiar with the neighborhoods, though, assert that the distribution of educational attainment, at least in South Boston and East Boston, has not changed much in a generation.

26. Several studies of ethnic and blue-collar neighborhoods have noted an ambivalence toward or disdain for formal education, especially college education, among residents of those neighborhoods. See Gans, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-136; Peter Binzen, Whitetown U.S.A. (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 104-105; and Richard Hoggart's interpretive essay on the British working class, The Uses of Literacy (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967), pp. 71-72. The Boston workers' attitude toward higher education, though, seems to be not so much that it is undesirable (although a few interviewees did express such a sentiment) but that it is unnecessary.

27. For a formalization of this argument, see Yoram Weiss, "The Risk Element in Occupational and Educational Choices," Journal of Political Economy 80 (November/December 1972): 1203-1213.

28. This finding contrasts with the finding of Gans, op. cit., pp. 129-136, that ethnic working class men who go to college go exclusively for instrumental reasons. Of course, there are men from East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown who go to college for instrumental reasons. Perhaps such men are even in the majority among the college-goers in each neighborhood. These men, however, do not hold the customary labor market model. They are to be found among the "upwardly mobile" workers described in section 6 of this chapter.

It is noteworthy that many of the college-goers attend community colleges and do not plan to get more than two years of higher education. Some who attend four-year colleges attend school part-time during the day and work part-time in secondary jobs, or attend school at night and work full-time in either primary or secondary jobs. Some men do not attend college immediately after high school, but do so (usually part-time) after several years in the labor force, sometimes while working in primary jobs. Virtually all attend relatively low-cost state colleges in the Boston area. These facts, taken together, imply that the indirect (foregone income) costs of college are low or nonexistent for these men and that the major costs of college are the direct costs (which are relatively low, at least for someone who holds a primary job or whose parents hold such jobs. This makes the low rate of college attendance for instrumental reasons somewhat puzzling from a naive human capital perspective.

29. See Peter Temin, "Modes of Economic Behavior: Variations on Themes of J.R. Hicks and Herbert Simon," MIT Department of Economics Working Paper # 235 (March 1979). For a detailed discussion of the sense in which the customary labor market model is customary, see the first section of chapter 6 of the present study.

30. Perlman, loc. cit.

31. Several of the older (age 30-35) South Boston workers had served in the armed forces during the Vietnam era. Either they were drafted, or they enlisted because they expected to be drafted. Most neither changed their views of the labor market while in the military nor learned any specific job-related skills that could have been useful to them in civilian life. The exposure to men from outside of the neighborhood that is provided by military service, then, does not guarantee a change of work orientation, but only creates the possibility of one.

32. The motivations of these primary workers resemble those of type I youths or immigrants who work in secondary jobs. On the

motivations of immigrants, see Michael Piore, Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), chapter 3.

33. Michael Piore, "Public and Private Responsibilities in the On-the-Job Training of Disadvantaged Workers," MIT Department of Economics Working Paper # 23 (June 1968).

34. Osterman, Getting Started, chapter 3.

35. Michael Piore, "Notes for a Theory of Labor Market Stratification," in Richard Edwards, Michael Reich, and David Gordon (eds.), Labor Market Segmentation (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1975), pp. 125-150.

36. Woods, loc. cit.; James Green, Boston's Workers (Boston: Boston Public Library, 1979), chapter 5.

37. See, for example, Edward Banfield, The Unheavenly City Revisited (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974); Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963).

38. Cf. Young and Willmott, op. cit., pp. 94-103; August Hollingshead, Elmtown's Youth and Elmtown Revisited (New York: Wiley, 1975), chapter 14.

39. Gans, op. cit., chapters 3 and 4 (on neighborhood social structure) and pp. 122-129 (on attitudes toward work).

CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

The preceding two chapters provided detailed accounts of the job mobility of Boston's ethnic working class young men and of the characteristics of the jobs at which these men work. Three major conclusions can be drawn from these accounts. First, the process by which these workers obtain jobs is a social process, not a market process. It is produced and reproduced through the day-to-day, face-to-face social relations of the neighborhoods, not through market relations. Workers gain their awareness of various kinds of jobs, their "qualifications" for particular jobs, and their access to particular jobs (via information and/or "pull") as a by-product of their participation in the social life of the neighborhood. They do not "invest in human capital" or "search for jobs," at least not in the ways in which neoclassical labor market theory commonly portrays "investment" and "search."

Second, the workers' labor market activities are social in a larger sense as well. They depend critically on the existence of an ongoing social relation between a particular group of workers (e.g., a neighborhood or a part of a neighborhood) and a particular group of primary jobs. Chapters four and five showed that the men of each of Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods are linked, through socially transmitted information, attitudes, general job-related abilities, and personal ties, to a particular

piece of the Boston area's primary-sector job structure. Those chapters also showed that the structure of the jobs to which the workers are linked and the personnel policies of the employers that offer these jobs account for the key features of the model in terms of which the workers perceive and act in the labor market. This suggests that the workers' model of the labor market is a product of their ongoing, common experience with a particular group of primary jobs and with the hiring and recruitment practices that govern entry into those jobs. The existence of social linkages between particular groups of workers and particular groups of primary jobs, therefore, has both benefits and drawbacks for the workers involved. The linkages benefit the workers by giving them relatively easy access to a set of primary jobs (provided that employers are hiring for those jobs). The linkages limit the workers' opportunities, though, by making their entire awareness of how the labor market operates (and of how to operate in the labor market) depend heavily on the continued availability of that set of jobs, thereby leaving them potentially quite vulnerable to industrial and/or occupational restructuring in the local labor market.

The final major lesson to be drawn from the case study is that the existence of social linkages between particular neighborhoods and particular primary jobs makes it very difficult (although not necessarily impossible) for workers without those linkages to obtain those jobs. There are two reasons for this. First, workers with social linkages to particular primary jobs

readily and costlessly acquire the information, attitudes, and general job-related skills that are needed to apply for, qualify for, and remain in those jobs, while it is either difficult or impossible for other workers to acquire these things. Second, customary linkages between particular neighborhoods and particular primary jobs are reinforced by certain employer personnel practices. Employers who "hire the first qualified applicants" or who use other hiring strategies that favor the friends or relatives of their current employees tend to reproduce, over time, the social characteristics of their current employees, regardless of whether or not they intend to do so. Workers who lack social linkages to primary jobs for which employers use hiring practices of this kind will have difficulty in obtaining those particular primary jobs. If many primary employers engage in such practices and if some groups of workers lack social linkages to any primary jobs, then the workers without the linkages will have difficulty in obtaining any primary jobs.

This chapter begins by stepping back from these case study findings to consider the theoretical underpinnings of the worker behavior in which they are rooted. Implicit in the account of worker behavior provided in chapter 5 is a theory of worker behavior. The first section of the present chapter makes that theory explicit, contrasts it with the neoclassical economists' approach to the study of worker behavior, and uses it to discuss the sources and limits of the pattern of worker behavior described in chapter 5. The appendix to this chapter draws on the theory

developed in section one to provide a brief discussion of the sense in which I have been using the term "working class" in relation to the workers who are the subjects of this study. The remaining sections of the chapter examine the implications of the case-study findings, drawing on the underlying theory as a unifying analytical framework. Section two discusses the implications of these findings for the issues of labor allocation and wage determination that are central to conventional labor market theories. Section three uses the findings to reflect on the literature surveyed in chapter 2. Because the chapter generalizes about workers and labor markets on the basis of a case study, much of the material in the chapter is necessarily speculative in nature. Perhaps the chapter raises at least as many questions as it answers. Accordingly, scattered throughout the chapter are suggestions for future research that would help to answer those questions.

1. THE WORKER IN THE LABOR MARKET: MODELS AND BEHAVIOR

Chapter 5 described the model that the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown use to make sense of and to guide their activity in the labor market. How does an individual worker learn this model? In what kinds of social groups does the model exist? What could cause the model to change for an individual? For the group? This section addresses these questions. In order to do so, it develops a theory of workers' labor market activity that differs considerably from the neoclassical theory

of worker behavior. Because the neoclassical theory is the framework that most Anglo-American economists use to study worker behavior, it seems reasonable to begin by indicating why the neoclassical approach does not adequately account for the data presented in chapter 5. This section addresses the inadequacy of the general neoclassical approach to worker behavior for the explanation of the phenomena discussed in chapter 5; critiques of particular neoclassical models (such as the human-capital and job-search models) are reserved for section 3.

Neoclassical economic theory makes use, usually implicitly, of a particular characterization of the relationship between economic agents' perception of, evaluation of, and action in the economic environment. The theory draws a sharp distinction between an agent's goals or preferences, on the one hand, and the economic environment (including the possible means by which the goals may be achieved), on the other hand. The theory views the economic environment as a purely objective thing. That is, the theory assumes that the economic environment can be described without reference to the ways in which the agents who participate in the environment view it. An individual can acquire bits and pieces of information about the environment through simple observation and can process those bits and pieces into a more-or-less accurate picture of the objective reality. (I shall refer to this characteristic of neoclassical theory as "the theory of perception as reflection of the environment.") The individual's goals, on the other hand, are entirely autonomous to the decision-making

process. They are not influenced by the individual's perception of the environment or by the capabilities for action (e.g., skills) that the individual currently possesses. (I will call this second attribute of the neoclassical approach "the strict autonomy of goals.") The decision-making process involves the confrontation of the subjective goals with the objective environment. Given his or her goals and knowledge of the economic environment, the individual acts in the way that he or she expects will best achieve the goals. (I will refer to this final property of the theory as "the theory of action as optimization.")

Neoclassical accounts of the process by which workers are matched to jobs (including human-capital, job-search, and more general occupational-choice analyses) follow the schema outlined above. A worker is assumed to observe the various kinds of jobs that are available in the economy as well as the wage and non-wage characteristics of each job (including the qualifications that employers require for each job). He or she is also assumed to make a subjective determination of the relative importance of the various job characteristics to him/her. Finally, the worker is assumed to act in the way that he/she expects will most efficiently enable him/her to obtain the job that best satisfies his/her preferences.¹

The account of worker behavior presented in chapter five challenges this conventional story about worker behavior by calling into question each of the three key features of neoclassical choice theory that were described above. First, chapter 5

questions the theory of perception as reflection of the environment. It shows that the process by which workers understand the operation of the labor market is not a process of piecemeal observation and information processing in which the individual worker stands in an unmediated relationship to the objective environment. Instead, this process is a social process in which a particular structure of labor market perception (namely, the workers' model of the labor market) is formed in workers and used by them through their participation in the ongoing social relations of their communities.² Workers perceive the objective features of the labor market through "lenses" that are provided by this structure, and those "lenses" enable workers to make sense out of, to see the meaning of those features. For example, when workers look at wage rates and job-security provisions, what they see is not a wage distribution and a variety of job-security arrangements, but two discrete sets of jobs, "good" jobs and "bad" jobs. (These two sets of jobs are distinguished from one another by neighborhood-specific, customary standards that define an adequate wage and adequate job security for adult men in the neighborhood. The customary standards, in turn, depend on the wage and job security characteristics of the neighborhood's customary group of primary jobs.) When workers look at employers' labor recruitment and hiring practices (by looking at the effects of those practices on their friends and relatives), they see not a bewildering variety of rules and procedures but, instead, the operation of "luck" and personal contacts in the labor market.

Chapter 5 also challenges the strict autonomy of goals that is present in neoclassical theory. It does so by suggesting that workers' job-related goals are, in part, shaped by their perception of the kinds of jobs that are available to them and by the kinds of job-finding capabilities that they have. The structure, or model, in terms of which workers perceive the labor market places limits on the kinds of jobs to which workers aspire. The workers described in chapter 5 see two kinds of jobs as being available to them: jobs that are both secure and high-paying (where "security" and "high pay" are social constructs that reflect neighborhood-specific conceptions of an appropriate standard of living for an adult man), and jobs that are insecure and/or low-paying. Workers who view jobs in this way define their aspirations in terms of the customary notions of high pay and job security. Youths who are satisfied with secondary jobs do not yet care about high pay or job security and, therefore, do not yet aspire to primary jobs (even though they distinguish between primary and secondary jobs on the basis of pay and security). Adult men desire primary jobs because they want high pay and security. Neither group aspires to jobs in order to achieve such things as the opportunity to develop artistic or intellectual potential, substantial freedom from supervision, or participation in (or control over) managerial decision-making. Nor does either group aspire to jobs that pay much higher wages than the customary primary jobs. The latter job attributes, unlike customarily defined high pay and job security, do not enter into

the model of the labor market that both groups hold, so workers from both groups do not see the jobs that are available to them as being distinguished by those attributes. The job characteristics that workers value are constrained by the characteristics of the jobs that workers see as being available to them; their aspirations are closely matched to their perceived opportunities.³ Moreover, workers' aspirations are also closely matched to their job-finding capabilities. According to the workers' model of the labor market, "good" jobs are found through "luck" and "personal contacts," both of which have customary meanings. (Recall that a worker finds a primary job through "luck" if he is hired after having made direct application for a primary job with which he was already familiar or if he is able to move from a secondary job to a primary job with the same employer. He finds a primary job through "personal contacts" if he is hired after a friend or relative of his has "put in a good word for him" with the primary employer, regardless of whether the "good word" actually influenced the employer's decision.) The workers described in chapter 5 aspire to jobs that can be obtained through "luck" and/or personal contacts and do not aspire to jobs that cannot be obtained in these ways.

Finally, chapter 5 challenges the neoclassical conception of action as optimization. The workers described there do not choose their actions one at a time, carrying out each action at the place and time that best contributes to the achievement of their labor market objectives. Instead, they select from among

alternative groups of actions that are already constituted as meaningful, "prefabricated" wholes by their model of the labor market.⁴ There is no reason to expect any of these groups of actions to be the optimal set of actions (from among all possible actions) for the achievement of the workers' goals. Nor do workers choose from among these sets of actions with the intention of finding the set that best achieves their goals. Consider, for example, how an ethnic working class man who wants a primary job goes about obtaining one. His model of the labor market tells him that he must rely on "luck" and/or personal contacts in order to get such a job, and he knows the things he can do to make use of "luck" and personal contacts (e.g., apply directly for certain jobs, "put out the word" among friends and relatives, etc.). He may do any or all of these things. He does not, however, take actions that do not fall under the headings of "luck" or personal contacts, even if those actions would improve his prospects of obtaining a primary job. Indeed, he does not even consider (and, therefore, does not calculate the benefits and costs of) the latter sorts of actions. (For example, he does not think about re-applying for a public utility job more than once or twice within a three- or four-year period, nor does he consider the possibility of seeking out people, other than friends and relatives, who might be able to help him get a "good" job.) His job-seeking activities, then, may be well-suited to his goal of obtaining a primary job, but they may not be optimal. He certainly does not choose them because he thinks

that they are optimal. He may be described, using Herbert Simon's terminology, as a person who exhibits "bounded rationality," a "satisficer" whose actions are, and are intended to be, in some sense "satisfactory," but not necessarily the best possible, for the achievement of his goals.⁵

The three challenges that chapter 5 poses to the neoclassical theory of worker behavior do not suggest that the conventional theory of economic decision-making (or some variant thereof, such as the theory of subjective expected utility maximization under uncertainty) is inapplicable to any economic activity or even to some aspects of workers' labor market activity. Nor do they suggest that some of the variables that neoclassical theory identifies as being important to workers' decisions (e.g., the wages paid in alternative jobs) are unimportant to those decisions. However, when taken together, the challenges posed by chapter 5 suggest that the process by which Boston's ethnic working class young men obtain and change jobs is not well described by the conventional theory. Instead, they suggest, that process would be better described by a theory in which workers' perception, evaluation, and action in the labor market are integrated into a single, durable but flexible structure that is social in both its origin and its use. Such a structure consists of a set of mutually reinforcing, customary habits of thought and action that embody the world-view (and, therefore, the interpretation of labor market reality) of a group of workers and that guide group members' behavior and goals in a flexible way. The structure

constrains behavior by providing workers with a repertoire of behavioral patterns (e.g., reliance on "luck" and personal contacts to obtain primary jobs) that are consistent with the underlying world-view and by ignoring the possibility of behaviors that are inconsistent with that world-view.⁶ It constrains workers' goals by providing workers with a sense of limited job opportunities within which their job aspirations are confined (e.g., secondary jobs, customary primary jobs, and fringe primary jobs in which their friends or relatives are employed) and with a set of evaluative categories (e.g., "good" and "bad" jobs) in terms of which those aspirations must be formulated. It rules out aspirations that exceed the socially structured limits (e.g., aspirations for jobs that pay much higher wages than the customary primary jobs), that cannot be formulated in terms of the socially structured categories (e.g., aspirations for control over managerial decision-making in the workplace), or that are inconsistent with the socially structured behavioral capabilities of the workers (e.g., aspirations for jobs that cannot be obtained through the methods that workers characterize as "luck" and "personal contacts," or for primary jobs whose entry standards do not correspond to the skills that workers acquire through socialization in their extended families and peer groups). Workers try to achieve their labor market aspirations (which may vary over the life-cycle) by making use of the behavioral patterns that are in their repertoire. Finally, the actions and aspirations of the workers reinforce the underlying world-view, making it

seem correct and natural to the workers who hold it. The structure as a whole remains intact as long as the workers' world-view, aspirations, and actions continue to support and reinforce each other. When the components of the structure no longer fit together in this way (e.g., when workers cannot achieve their aspirations by using the patterns of behavior that are in their repertoire), then the structure breaks down and eventually gives way to a new structure.

A structure of this type⁷ gives rise to a form of customary behavior. Yet, in contrast to the ways in which economists have typically conceived of custom, it is neither a set of mechanical rules of behavior nor a surrogate for optimizing behavior.⁸ Instead, it regulates the everyday labor market activities of Boston's ethnic working class men in much the same way that a scientific paradigm, according to Kuhn, regulates scientific research during a period of "normal science."⁹ Like a scientific paradigm, it gives its bearers both an understanding of their world and a set of skills for dealing with that world.

It is as a structure of this sort (and, therefore, not as a part of or a consequence of neoclassical-type decision-making) that I believe the workers' model presented in chapter 5 ought to be interpreted. That model—which includes the distinction between "good" and "bad" jobs, the appropriateness of a "good" job for an adult man, the customary group of "good" jobs, the scarcity of "good" jobs (and the consequent need of a worker who desires a "good" job to take the first such job that becomes

available to him), and the need to use "luck" and/or personal contacts to obtain a "good" job--regulates the transition from secondary to primary (lower-tier) employment of Boston's ethnic working class young men. The model is not just a set of ideas that anyone can learn and use at will or abandon and replace at will. It is, rather, a product of the ongoing, common experience of a group of workers with a particular piece of the job structure of a local labor market, practicable only by members of that group and applicable only to sets of jobs that resemble the piece of the job structure that initially gave rise to it. The model's main features can be shown (and were shown in chapter 4) to correspond to characteristics of that piece of the job structure. Note, however, that the job characteristics described in chapter 4 do not deterministically explain the workers' model. Because the model is the workers' interpretation of labor market reality, not a direct and complete reflection of that reality, the features of the model cannot simply be "read off" of a description of the objective features of the labor market. One can use the findings of chapter 4 to make sense of the model described in chapter 5, but one cannot use the former to predict the latter.

The theory of customary labor market behavior sketched above may, moreover, be relevant to workers other than those described in chapter 5. It may even be relevant to all workers. Although workers may differ greatly in their labor market perceptions, aspirations, and patterns of behavior, as well as in the kinds of social groups that give rise to those perceptions, aspirations,

and behavioral patterns, all workers' labor market activity may be, to some extent, customary in the sense described above. That is, all workers' labor market activity may be embedded in a set of non-market social relations that give rise to an integrated structure of perception, evaluation, and action.

Having outlined the basic theory that underlies chapter 5's presentation of the workers' labor market model, I shall now return to the questions posed at the beginning of this section. Of those questions, the question of how the model is learned and maintained by individual workers is perhaps the easiest to answer. As noted in chapter 5, workers learn the model during childhood and/or adolescence through socialization into extended families and peer groups. They are never explicitly taught the model, nor are they taught that there might be alternative models of the labor market. Instead, they learn the model in an "automatic," incidental manner, by observing the labor market experiences of their friends and relatives and by listening to their friends and relatives talk about (and try to make sense of) those experiences. Because the model does make sense of those experiences, it appears, to youths, to be true. Moreover, because the model is never explicitly formulated by ethnic working class men during the course of everyday life (and, therefore, can never be explicitly challenged by them), it appears also to be unchallengeably true, to be part of a body of common-sense, taken-for-granted knowledge. As youths leave school and move from job to job, they do so in accordance with

their common-sense, taken-for-granted understanding of how the labor market operates and how to operate in the labor market. Youths who act in this way "fit themselves into" certain kinds of jobs by participating in the labor recruitment and hiring processes of the employers that offer those jobs. They also "fit themselves into" their extended families and peer groups, since behaving in accordance with their common-sense practical model requires reliance on "luck" or personal contacts, which requires membership in the extended family and/or peer group. In the absence of externally induced changes in the job structure, in employers' recruitment and hiring practices, or in the structure of extended families or peer groups, worker behavior in accordance with the model helps to reproduce the relevant part of the job structure, the employers' practices, and the workers' social groups. Such behavior, therefore, helps to reproduce the conditions under which workers can apprehend the model as common-sense knowledge. Workers who follow the model will continue to experience those conditions (i.e., they will continue to work at the kinds of jobs to which the model is relevant, participate in the recruitment and hiring procedures that the model describes as "luck" and "personal contacts," and remain in the extended families and peer groups in which the model is accepted as common sense), so they will find that their own labor market experiences "confirm" to them the model's common-sense truth.¹⁰ The model, then, is not something that workers learn all at once, before entering the labor market, and then carry around in

their minds, for use when they have to make decisions about jobs. Rather, the process by which workers maintain the model is a process of continuous socialization; the model is continuously confirmed and reconfirmed to workers through their participation in the ongoing life of certain kinds of social groups in which men work at certain kinds of jobs that are regulated by certain kinds of institutional rules.¹¹

Some hypotheses about what could cause an individual worker to change his model of the labor market follow from this discussion of how workers are socialized into the model. The importance of continuous socialization to the maintenance of the model suggests that an individual worker who is removed from regular social contact with his extended family or peer group (e.g., one who spends a long period of time in the army or in prison, or who moves to a distant locale) may eventually lose the customary labor market model described in chapter 5. Such a worker would be unlikely to continue to see the model as a common-sense description and guide to action in the labor market. Even if he does not change his beliefs about which jobs are "good" jobs, his belief that "good" jobs are found by luck or personal contacts may be undermined if he does not interact with a group of people who attribute their ability or inability to find "good" jobs to the presence or absence of luck or contacts. Without such interaction, he may not even know how to interpret his own labor market experiences, so even personal experience may not be sufficient to maintain the model for him as a common-sense

description of the labor market. In addition, an adult ethnic working class man who is cut off from his extended family and peer group is cut off from his only source of personal contacts who could actually help him (either through direct personal influence or through the provision of "inside information") to get a "good" job. He is also cut off from his only source of day-to-day information about which primary employers are hiring and when and where they are hiring. (The latter information, of course, can improve his "luck" in obtaining a "good" job.) He will, therefore, be unable to use personal contacts to get primary jobs, nor will he have much "luck" in obtaining such jobs. If he does not already have a primary job, or if he has one but then loses it, he will have difficulty in meeting his job aspirations by acting in the customary ways. The theory outlined above suggests that he will change either his aspirations (perhaps resigning himself to a secondary job) or his behavior. In order to change either, he must change his model of the labor market. Precisely how his model will change depends on the kinds of social groups to which he moves after leaving the extended family and peer group; this is a subject for future empirical research.

A worker's model of the labor market may also change if he has an unusual experience (i.e., an experience that is unusual for a member of his extended family or peer group) that leads him to redefine his identity, to see himself as a different kind of person than the members of his extended family and peer

group. (This is what happened to the workers whom I described in chapter 5 as "upwardly mobile." It might be viewed as a kind of removal from the extended family and peer group.) The new labor market model that such a worker adopts is, once again, a matter for future investigation. It is important to note that a model change of this sort will be experienced by the worker who undergoes it, not as an acquisition of information or a change of tastes (as it might be interpreted by the neoclassical theorist) but as a change of world-view, akin to a scientist's adoption of a new research paradigm.¹² Evidence for this is provided by the fact that all of the "upwardly mobile" workers whom I interviewed recognized the customary labor market model as a distinct world-view that they did not share (but, in most cases, once did share) and were able to point to a specific incident or set of events in their lives that led them to reject the customary model.

Just as individual workers may be expected to change their labor market model when they have experiences that lead them to question what they previously accepted as common sense, entire social groups of workers (e.g., the extended families and peer groups described in chapter 5) may change their labor market model when the group as a whole has experiences of this sort. Some such experiences are analogous to those described above for the case of the individual worker. The dissolution of ongoing social relations within the social group may change the labor market models held by the former group members for the same reason that removal

of an individual worker from the group may do so.¹³ Likewise, the group's model of the labor market may be expected to change if the entire group changes its conception of itself, just as an individual who redefines his identity may change his model. An additional circumstance that could change a group's labor market model is a rapid, substantial, and long-lasting change in the labor market conditions faced by the group. Such a change could occur in the job structure of the local labor market. If many of the primary jobs in which an ethnic working class neighborhood's adult men are currently employed were suddenly and permanently to disappear or decline drastically in availability, then the men of the neighborhood (both youths and adults, both those who lose their jobs and those who do not) would change their view of how the labor market works. Since the personal contacts and practical knowledge of the labor market that exist within the group would no longer enable group members to obtain "good" jobs, workers would no longer believe that luck or personal contacts led to "good" jobs. If the customary group of primary jobs were threatened, then workers' very idea of what a "good" job is might change as well, since the customary group gives concrete meaning to the concepts of "high pay" and "job security" that define a "good" job. (In chapter 7, I will discuss the policy implications of this analysis for communities that are experiencing a rapid loss of primary jobs.) Conversely, if the availability of a neighborhood's customary and fringe primary jobs were to increase sufficiently and permanently within a

short period of time, luck and contacts might no longer be seen as necessary for obtaining a "good" job, so the workers' model of the labor market might change.¹⁴ Moreover, both sharp increases and sharp declines in the availability of a particular neighborhood's customary and fringe primary jobs could induce a breakdown of that neighborhood's labor market model, regardless of the condition of the larger metropolitan area labor market. (Thus, changes in the job structure that appear minuscule on a metropolitan scale, e.g., the closing of a single plant or the decline of a single industry that affects only a small percentage of the metropolitan area's labor force, could have large effects that are highly localized, e.g., confined to a single neighborhood.) In addition to large changes in job availability, major changes in employers' recruitment and hiring practices could also lead to a change in workers' view of the labor market. For example, if many of a neighborhood's customary and fringe primary employers (or perhaps even only a few customary primary employers) were to require post-high school education in a vocational school or junior college as a prerequisite to entry-level primary employment, workers might view education as important for obtaining a "good" job.

Major changes in labor market conditions would be expected to induce change in a social group's model of the labor market because that model is a way of making sense of and responding to those conditions. When workers like those described in this study find that the customary modes of action in their repertoire

no longer work in the ways to which they have become accustomed, they no longer understand how the labor market operates or how they ought to behave in the labor market. Their common-sense view of the labor market no longer makes sense. Therefore, they abandon that view and the modes of action that go with it. For example, if workers find that they can no longer "use" luck or personal contacts (in the ways in which they are accustomed to "using" them) to obtain the kinds of jobs that they are used to seeing as "good" jobs, then they no longer know how "good" jobs are gotten or what they should do to get such jobs. They may become confused about what it means to "use" luck or contacts or even about what a "good" job is. They then abandon the view that luck and personal contacts lead to "good" jobs.

This is not to say that the workers' labor market model will change immediately whenever labor market reality changes, nor is it to say that the model will change in any particular way that can be predicted in advance of the change. Like a scientific paradigm as described by Kuhn, a model of the labor market is an interpretation of external reality, not a mirror of external reality. And, like a scientific paradigm, it exhibits a certain degree of flexibility and durability that obviates the need for the entire structure to change whenever external reality changes.¹⁵ Some of this flexibility and durability results from ambiguities in the model. For example, it is precisely because the customary model described in chapter 5 does not precisely define such key concepts as "luck," "personal contacts," "high pay," and "job

security," that it is able to withstand small or gradual changes in the job structure (such as the gradual decline of primary-sector manufacturing jobs in the Boston area) and in employers' hiring and recruitment practices (such as the MBTA's transition from a nepotistic to a lottery-based hiring system). The cumulation of these changes over a long period of time could result in substantial changes in the meanings of the key concepts of the model without altering the basic structure of the model itself. Moreover, even when faced with large and rapid changes in labor market conditions, workers may at first try to incorporate the changes into their customary labor market model, just as scientists, according to Kuhn, try to incorporate apparently anomalous experimental findings into their reigning paradigm.¹⁶ (Workers may, for example, initially view a drastic decline in the availability of customary primary jobs as a change in the "normal" level of primary job scarcity. This would amount to a change in a parameter of the workers' current model rather than a breakdown of that model.) There are several reasons for this. First, workers may not be able to tell whether a change in the labor market is temporary or permanent. (For example, workers do not change their model of the labor market over the course of an ordinary business cycle, but I would expect them to do so in the event of a sustained boom or depression. At the outset, though, they may not be able to distinguish the latter type of event from the former.) Second, if the change is permanent, workers may not know immediately whether the change represents a change in a

parameter of their model (e.g., a change in the "normal" level of primary job scarcity, as in the above example) or a change in the nature of the variables and/or relationships among the variables that characterize the labor market. Finally, if there is no alternative model of the labor market available to them (and this means an alternative set of practices and perhaps an alternative set of goals as well as an alternative depiction of the labor market), then workers may try to revise their existing model simply because the alternative would be confusion; even a bad model is better than no model.

The foregoing considerations suggest that there is likely to be a substantial lag between the time when a major labor market change occurs and the time when a social group's model of the labor market begins to break down. When a model does break down, it may not be replaced immediately by a new model. Especially if the breakdown is prompted by an adverse change in labor market conditions, workers may adopt a new model only after a period of confused, undirected labor market behavior, during which they grope to make sense out of the labor market. The new model that they adopt either must be consistent with the changed labor market conditions or must itself create further changes in those conditions, but there is no deterministic connection between the change in labor market conditions and the new model that workers ultimately adopt. There is more than one way to interpret and to respond to a change in labor market conditions. (For example, workers could respond to a drastic decline in

customary primary job availability by moving to a new city or region, by seeking higher education, by accepting secondary jobs as lifetime jobs, or by buying out their former employers and continuing production, among many possible responses. Each of these responses could make sense given a certain world-view on the part of the workers.)

The relationship between changes in labor market conditions and changes in workers' habits of labor market perception and behavior is poorly understood at the empirical level. The preceding theoretical comments on this relationship do little more than suggest some questions that might be answered by future empirical research. What kinds of changes in labor market conditions are "major" enough to cause a social group's model of the labor market to break down? What kinds of changes, on the other hand, can be accommodated within such a model, and how does the cumulation of those changes over time affect the parameters of the model? How do workers whose labor market model has broken down arrive eventually at a new model? How long does it take for them to do so? What influences the kind of new model that they ultimately adopt? In comparison with the old model, does the new model work to their economic advantage or disadvantage? The answers to these questions are likely to depend on such things as the nature of the workers' social group and initial labor market model, the kind of labor market change that they experience, and the ways in which employers, labor unions, governments, workers' community organizations, and

larger political movements respond to the change. Therefore, case studies of worker responses to changing labor market conditions are an especially appropriate means by which to seek answers to these questions.

One final question remains to be answered in this section. What kinds of social groups would one expect to have models of the labor market that resemble the customary model described in chapter 5? Because there is no deductive theory of workers' labor market models and because the comparative case-study evidence is extremely limited and rarely addresses this issue directly, it is impossible to answer this question conclusively for any particular category of workers, let alone for all workers. I shall confine my remarks to male workers in metropolitan areas (primarily but not exclusively in the U.S.), a group for which there is at least a small amount of comparative evidence. Among these workers, I hypothesize that the customary model described in chapter 5 would be found among men (a) who are members of close-knit social groups, such as extended families and peer groups, that are based outside the workplace, (b) whose close-knit social groups (regardless of whether or not they are ethnic in origin) have had an ongoing, common experience with both secondary and primary lower-tier jobs (but not with primary upper-tier jobs), with many adult group members working at primary lower-tier jobs, and (c) whose common experience with secondary and primary lower-tier jobs has included hiring and recruitment practices that rely heavily on personal contacts and

other forms of passive recruitment and de-emphasize job-related education or training, availability of secondary jobs more-or-less "on demand," and unavailability of primary lower-tier jobs "on demand." Chapters 4 and 5, by showing that a correspondence exists between the features of the workers' model and the features of the job structure, by showing how the workers' close-knit social groups transmit and enable workers to use the model, and by showing how labor demand plays a role in the model, suggested that characteristics (a), (b), and (c) are important in producing this particular model in the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. In order to generalize the argument, one would have to show that workers who possess all three of these characteristics tend to have this kind of labor market model, while workers who lack one or more of these characteristics tend not to view the labor market in this way.

The existing evidence that is relevant to this hypothesis is scanty and inconclusive. Previous local labor market and urban ethnographic studies, with few exceptions, do not provide detailed descriptions of the ways in which workers view the labor market, but only provide evidence on their general work-related attitudes, their neighborhood social structures, and/or the ways in which they find jobs.

Only two previous studies, Reynolds' study of blue-collar workers in New Haven,¹⁷ and Young and Willmott's study of blue-collar workers in London, England,¹⁸ provide clear documentation of a workers' model that resembles the model of chapter 5 in its main

features—including a clear distinction between "good" and "bad" jobs based at least in part on pay and/or job security, a perception of "good" job scarcity, and a belief that luck and/or personal contacts is necessary and sufficient to obtain a "good" job. In both of these cases, the workers studied are unable to obtain "good" jobs whenever they want them. In Reynolds' study, employers rely on both the personal contacts of current employees and a "hire the first qualified applicants" strategy for filling jobs, while in Young and Willmott's, the secure jobs (which workers perceive as the "good" jobs) are always filled through personal contacts of current employees. In the Young-Willmott case, the workers clearly have the close-knit networks of extended families and peer groups that were described in chapter 5 and these groups have had ongoing experience with both "good" and "bad" jobs. In the Reynolds case, workers probably belong to groups of this kind (since most are first- and second-generation Americans of southern European, Eastern European, and Irish descent) and have probably had ongoing experience with a variety of primary lower-tier and secondary manufacturing jobs, but the text is not specific about these points.

Only one study of white workers in the U.S., Gans' ethnography of Italian-Americans in Boston's West End¹⁹ provides clear evidence of a workers' model that is unambiguously different from the one described in the present case study. Gans' workers do not see jobs as falling into identifiable categories, do not seem to regard finding a job either as problematic or as worth

expending much energy on, and do not remain or expect to remain with a single employer for a long period of time. Although the social structure of their neighborhood resembles that of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown, their extended families and peer groups have apparently never had any experience with jobs that could be classified as primary jobs. Studies of blacks in the ghettos of large American cities have also revealed models of the labor market that differ greatly from those of the workers described in chapter 5.²⁰ The results of these studies are also consistent with my hypothesis, since the workers described in them have neither the kind of social structure described in chapter 5 nor any common experience with primary jobs.

The findings of other studies are more ambiguous. Hollingshead's study of youths in a small Illinois city that lacks strong ethnic neighborhoods²¹ suggests a very rudimentary primary/secondary job classification, a customary group of primary jobs, and reliance on luck and personal contacts to obtain jobs, for part of the city's population. Youths appear to belong to strong, close-knit peer groups, and the adults' social groups also appear close-knit, but there is no evidence of strong extended families. In hiring workers, employers rely heavily on personal contacts of current employees. Some segmentation of the labor market, mainly on the basis of pay, appears to exist and to have been a part of the workers' experience for some time. Hareven's historical study of textile millworkers in Manchester, New Hampshire, from the late nineteenth century through the mid-1930's,²²

shows that those workers made a sharp distinction between millwork (which was extremely high-paying by workers' standards and was viewed as always available [except during the Great Depression], although not always sought or treated as a lifetime job) and all other jobs. They relied exclusively on personal contacts to secure mill jobs. The workers, first- and second-generation European and French Canadian immigrants, belonged to close-knit networks of extended families, and had had ongoing experience with both millwork and other blue-collar jobs. The mill relied exclusively on personal contacts of current employees when hiring, and did so regardless of local labor market conditions. In the studies of factory workers conducted by Myers and Shultz²³ and Myers and Maclaurin,²⁴ workers rely mainly on personal contacts and luck to obtain jobs. Although the authors do not say much about the workers' social groups, workers in both studies live in cities where many factory workers are the descendants of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European immigrants and where strong ethnic neighborhoods exist, so the workers' social networks may resemble those described in chapter 5. There is little discussion of workers' perceptions of the labor market or of labor market structure. However, both studies were conducted at times (late 1930's and early 1940's for Myers and Maclaurin, late 1940's for Myers and Shultz) when some manufacturing jobs in the U.S. had clearly taken on the characteristics of what would now be called primary lower-tier jobs, while others were in the process of being transformed into such jobs.²⁵ Thus, it is at

least conceivable that the workers described in one or both of these studies might have viewed the labor market in a way that would be familiar to the men of Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods today.

The existing evidence, then, seems to be consistent in a very broad way with my hypothesis about the kinds of workers who will view the labor market in the manner described in chapter 5, but the evidence is clearly inadequate for a conclusive test of the hypothesis. Further case studies, specifically designed to uncover the models of the labor market held by various kinds of workers, are required. These studies should focus on workers who differ from the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown along one or more of the dimensions specified in my hypothesis. Thus, it would be important to study workers who hold jobs similar to those of the workers studied here but whose non-work social groups do not include close-knit networks of extended families and peer groups like the ones described in chapter 5. (Many primary lower-tier workers in metropolitan areas of the western U.S. may fall into this category. There has never been a careful study of the labor market institutions and social processes that guide the job mobility of these workers during youth and early adulthood.²⁶) It would also be important to study workers who have experienced labor market conditions (e.g., a sustained economic boom or depression in the local labor market area) that are very different from those experienced by the workers studied here, as well as workers in primary lower-tier

jobs that use hiring and/or recruitment methods that differ greatly from those described in chapter 4. Finally, studies of the processes by which workers settle into secondary or primary upper-tier jobs as adults are needed. The results of these studies should provide us with a clearer picture of the kinds of models that guide workers' paths through the labor market and of the relationships of those models to social institutions that operate both within and outside of the labor market.

2. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF LABOR MARKETS

The major concerns of this study have been the social processes and labor market institutions that guide the labor market decisions made by Boston's ethnic working class young men, the ways in which those processes and institutions shape the patterns of movement of these men from secondary to primary (lower-tier) jobs, and the implications of the operation of those processes and institutions for the distribution of primary job opportunities among various groups of workers. The major concerns of labor market theory per se, as conventionally defined by both neoclassical and institutional labor economists, are the determination of wage and employment levels for various types of jobs and/or various types of workers. Although the present study does have some relevance to the latter concerns, it is important to stress that it was not designed to address those concerns. For this reason, it does not attempt to answer questions about wage determination, about the labor-supply patterns of workers who

may behave quite differently from the workers described here, or about the ways in which employers determine how many workers to hire or what types of jobs to offer. Answers to these questions, though essential to a comprehensive theory of the labor market, are not required in order to explain how the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown view the labor market, what the social and institutional sources of this view are, how this view regulates their labor market behavior, or how their behavior can combine with certain employer practices to reduce the access of other groups of workers to certain primary jobs. Therefore, one should not expect a comprehensive labor market theory to emerge from this study. Nevertheless, the study contributes in two ways to our understanding of some of the phenomena that are of concern to conventional labor market theorists. First, it describes the structure and determinants of the labor supply of a particular group of workers, namely, the young men of the three Boston neighborhoods. Second, it raises a series of questions about the kinds of labor-allocation and wage-determination processes that could exist in an economy in which some (but not necessarily all) workers behave like those particular workers.

The findings of chapter 5 have some definite implications for the ways in which the labor supply of Boston's ethnic working class young men should be characterized for analytical purposes. One of these implications is that the structure and determinants of these workers' labor supply differ according to whether the workers are working in the primary (lower-tier) or secondary

sector of the labor market. These men tend to work in the secondary sector during their late teens and early twenties, but move into the primary sector as they get older. Their supply of labor to the secondary sector is structured by the type I, type II, and type III peer groups to which they belong as youths, and the determinants of that supply are to be found in the motivations that each kind of peer group has for working.

For type I youths, who are concerned only with earning small amounts of money on an occasional basis, the relevant labor market decisions are (a) whether to work at a secondary job or not to work at all, and (b) if secondary work is chosen, which secondary job to take. These decisions are essentially economic decisions as portrayed in the neoclassical theory of labor supply, and they are made very frequently (sometimes daily) because the youths lack any long-term attachment to the labor force. Since type I youths are target earners, they have backward-bending labor supply curves to the secondary sector (or perhaps to some subset of secondary-sector jobs; as I shall point out below, the correct definition of a labor market is problematic). Within the secondary sector, these youths will move from lower-paying to higher-paying jobs because by doing so they can meet their earnings targets by working fewer hours than they did previously. (They can vary their hours of work mainly by varying the length of time that they spend working for any particular employer before quitting and returning to non-employment.) This sort of behavior could make the secondary sector (or some part

thereof) very unstable if a sufficient proportion of that sector's employees and potential employees are type I youths, if those youths' labor supply curves are sufficiently backward-bending, and if employers in that sector respond to labor shortages (surpluses) by raising (lowering) wages. If these conditions obtain, then a secondary-sector labor shortage could set off an indefinite upward wage spiral and a secondary-sector labor surplus could set off an indefinite downward wage spiral.²⁷

The labor supply behavior of type II and type III youths is quite different from that of the target-earning type I's. For type II's, the wage rate is a source of prestige within the peer group. These youths are committed to steady work (although not to a single employer or occupation), so they do not see voluntary non-employment as an option. (Because voluntary non-employment is the major means by which youths can vary their work hours over a long period of time, this implies that type II youths have less control over their work hours than type I's.) These youths' principal labor market decision is the choice of a secondary job. (Although type II's sometimes work at primary jobs, this occurs almost "by accident," since type II's do not seek out primary jobs.) A key determinant of the choice of a secondary job is the wage rate; because of the social role that the wage rate plays in their peer groups, type II's move from job to job on the basis of (among other things) wage differentials. Because they do not vary their work hours in response to wage changes, though, their presence in the secondary sector does not pose the

problem of instability that the presence of type I's poses. As for type III youths (who are oriented toward primary-sector employment), those who are unable to obtain primary jobs work in the secondary sector and, while there, behave like type II's.

The men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown supply labor to the primary sector in a way that is in one sense very rigidly structured. As a consequence of the interaction of workers' social customs with labor recruitment and hiring practices of primary employers, there is rigidity in the set of primary-sector jobs (i.e., primary-sector internal labor markets) that are effectively open to a man from a particular neighborhood, extended family, and peer group. This set consists of his neighborhood's customary primary jobs plus those fringe primary jobs that are held by members of his extended family and peer group. The relative numbers of Boston's ethnic working class men who are available to work in various primary jobs, therefore, depend on the pattern of customary ties of particular groups of workers (i.e., neighborhoods, extended families, and peer groups) to those jobs. They do not depend on the relative wages paid by those jobs, since workers who are entering the primary sector for the first time do not choose jobs on the basis of relative wages and since workers who are already in the primary sector do not move between jobs on the basis of relative wages. Relative wages are irrelevant to the allocation of Boston's ethnic working class men among primary jobs because those men perceive primary jobs as scarce. Therefore, they take the first primary job that

they are offered and remain in that job (i.e., internal labor market) for life unless laid off. Because they behave in this way and because they rarely receive more than one job offer simultaneously, they rarely have to confront the problem of choosing among alternative primary jobs.

In contrast to the rigidity of the set of primary jobs at which these men are available to work is the flexibility of the kinds of tasks that they are willing and able to do on the job. When young men enter the primary sector, they lack specialized skills, but they have general mechanical ability; basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills; and a willingness to work regularly and steadily in internal labor markets in which they expect to remain for a lifetime. Given the appropriate formal and/or informal training within the internal labor market, they are willing and able to do a wide variety of manual and clerical tasks, including some that require a high degree of skill. The particular kinds of tasks that they perform depend largely on the structure of the internal labor markets of their jobs, which is to say that they depend largely on the structure of labor demand. They depend on the workers' own choices only to the extent that workers are able to choose among a number of skill-development paths once they have entered those internal labor markets.

The flexibility of the character of the workers' labor supply has an additional dimension. Not only do the workers exhibit flexibility in the kinds of tasks that they are willing

and able to perform on the job, but they also exhibit flexibility in the kinds of non-task-specific behavior that they display on the job, e.g., punctuality and willingness to follow orders. With the exception of type I youths, who are not really committed to work at all, workers exhibit different behavioral traits depending on the sector of the labor market in which they are employed. The worker who is often late to work while employed in a secondary job knows that this kind of behavior is not tolerated by primary employers and begins showing up for work on time when he obtains a primary job. Workers' behavioral traits, then, do not necessarily inhere in the workers themselves, but in the adaptation of the workers to the demands of the jobs in which they are employed. Once again, the characteristics of workers' labor supply depend at least partly on the characteristics of employers' labor demand.

In addition to its implications about the sector-specific nature of the labor supply of Boston's ethnic working class young men, this study also has definite implications about the determinants of the labor market sector in which these men are employed. These determinants are the demand for entry-level primary-sector labor in the primary jobs to which a worker has access, the worker's age, and the kind of peer group to which he belongs. The more entry-level workers primary employers want to hire, the higher the probability that a worker who wants a primary job will be able to obtain one. If there are not enough primary jobs for all of the ethnic working class men who want

them, then those who are unable to obtain primary jobs continue to work in the secondary sector. Since workers are more likely to want primary jobs as they grow older, one would expect a worker's age to influence the sector in which he is employed. Finally, the kind of peer group (type I, type II, or type III) to which a young man belongs influences the sector in which he is employed. Members of type I peer groups work only at secondary jobs, when they work at all. Members of type III groups, on the other hand, want primary jobs, so one would expect them to be working at primary jobs to the extent that those jobs are available to them. Type II's occupy a position intermediate between type I's and type III's; although they do not aim to get primary jobs, some type II's nevertheless hold such jobs.

Conspicuously absent from the list of determinants of primary versus secondary employment is the wage differential between primary and secondary jobs. A neoclassical theorist might assume that the larger this differential, the more likely any worker would be to move from the secondary sector to the primary sector. But while the primary/secondary wage differential does matter to the labor market behavior of the men of the three Boston neighborhoods, it does not matter in the way that the neoclassical theorist would think that it does. One of the defining characteristics of the labor market structure described in chapter 4 is that each entry-level primary wage ordinarily is at least equal to, and usually greater than, any secondary wage. This fact is one of the bases for the workers' perception that

there is a difference between primary and secondary jobs. While the wage of some secondary job might temporarily exceed the wage of any entry-level primary job (perhaps, for example, during a period of extreme labor shortage in the secondary job), this state of affairs could not persist indefinitely without undermining the status of the secondary job as a secondary job; workers would not consider a secondary job whose wage regularly exceeds that of any entry-level primary job to be a secondary job. If the structure of the labor market were to change in such a way that the jobs that these workers perceived as being available to them no longer tended to cluster into secure/high-paying and insecure/low-paying groups, then the workers would no longer classify jobs into two groups that corresponded to those clusters. Instead, they would adopt a different model of the labor market and would not behave in the ways described in chapter 5. The labor market in which they then operated would be a different labor market from the one described in this study. One of the major differences between the workers' model of the labor market and the neoclassical economist's is that the latter can accommodate any wage change within its basic structure, whereas the basic structure of the former depends on the existence of certain wage differentials.

Given the structure of the labor market described in chapter 4, there is a primary/secondary wage differential. Given the existence of that differential, the size of the differential does not matter to these workers' labor market decisions.

Members of type I peer groups, who do not want to make long-term

job commitments, do not care what the entry-level wages of primary jobs are, since they will never consider taking such jobs. Members of type III groups, on the other hand, will take any primary jobs that they are able to get, regardless of the size of the primary/secondary wage gap. Type II's do not consider the size of the primary/secondary wage gap, either. Although they seek high wages within the secondary sector and will take primary jobs if they are offered them, they seem to fall into primary jobs almost "by accident" without previously having thought about obtaining them.

These findings about the labor supply behavior of a particular group of workers in the Boston area raise some potentially troublesome questions about the kinds of wage- and employment-determination processes that could exist in a labor market that includes workers like those described above. In order for wages and employment levels to be determined by supply and demand, it is necessary to define labor markets for different "types of labor." This, however, is not an easy thing to do for the jobs and/or the workers described in this study.

A common approach to defining labor markets is to equate a labor market with an occupation. Of the jobs described in chapter 4, only the police, firefighting, and skilled construction trades jobs are characterized by well-defined occupations. The occupational approach to labor market definition can be applied in a straightforward way to those jobs. Other jobs, though, pose problems for this approach. In the secondary sector, there are

certainly differences in the tasks performed by workers in different jobs, but each job can be learned quickly by almost any worker, and workers can and do move very easily between different secondary jobs. Moreover, neither employers nor workers in that sector speak of jobs in terms of distinct occupations. It is, therefore, not clear that the concept of an occupation is useful for defining labor markets in the secondary sector. Is it the case, then, that the entire secondary sector (perhaps within some geographically bounded area) is a single labor market, or are there many secondary markets, defined by some criterion other than occupation? In much of the primary sector, the occupation concept is even harder to apply. Many of the primary jobs described in chapter 4 have employer-specific, employer-idiosyncratic internal labor markets, in which the set of tasks that a group of workers performs for their particular employer is not identical to, or even very close to, the set of tasks that other workers perform for the same employer or for other employers. Should we regard each such set of tasks as a separate occupation? Should we then regard the workers who perform each such set of tasks as belonging to distinct labor markets (so that when a worker moves within an internal labor market he moves between labor markets)? This way of looking at the primary sector is quite alien to both employers and workers in that sector, neither of whom thinks of jobs (with the few exceptions noted above) as being organized into occupations. It seems more natural, to both workers and employers, to define a primary-sector job as a

primary-sector internal labor market. But this latter view does not mesh well with the occupational approach to labor market definition, since the tasks performed by different workers within the same internal labor market may be as different from one another as driving a bus, selling subway tokens, and repairing subway tracks.

Another approach is to define labor markets according to the characteristics that employers require successful job applicants to have before beginning the job. (In order to apply this definition to the primary sector without treating the different sets of tasks performed within an internal labor market as different jobs, the characteristics relevant to the primary sector would have to be the characteristics that employers require successful applicants to have before entering a primary-sector internal labor market.) This definition can be applied in a number of different ways. To the extent that employers' requirements differ systematically between sectors, one would want to treat the primary and secondary sectors as two separate labor markets. However, there may be intra-sectoral differences in employer requirements that warrant the division of each sector into several different markets. Chapter 4 showed that in the secondary sector there are several different "clusters" of jobs, each of which has a set of entrance requirements that differs slightly from those of the other "clusters." In a broader sense, though, all secondary jobs require the same, relatively minimal "qualifications" of the workers whom they hire. Should

all secondary jobs (within some geographical area) be considered part of a single "secondary labor market," or should each of the "clusters" described in chapter 4 be considered a separate market? Is the fact that some workers are not aware of the "qualifications" that employers require relevant to the definition of the labor market? Similar problems arise with regard to primary jobs. In one sense, each primary job (i.e., internal labor market) has its own idiosyncratic "qualifications." In a broader sense, the "qualifications" required for all blue-collar primary jobs are roughly identical, and the "qualifications" required for all clerical primary jobs are roughly identical but slightly different from those required for blue-collar primary jobs. In a still broader sense, one might argue that the difference between blue-collar and clerical "qualifications" in the primary sector is irrelevant because there are many workers who have the "qualifications" for both kinds of jobs and who apply for both kinds of jobs. Should each primary job be regarded as a separate labor market (with each primary employer, therefore, a monopsonist)? Should all primary jobs be considered part of a single "primary labor market"? Or should primary jobs be seen as belonging to two distinct labor markets (primary blue-collar and primary clerical)? Is it relevant to the definition of labor markets that, in the primary sector as well as in the secondary, some workers are unaware of the "qualifications" required by primary employers? Is it relevant that some workers believe that the "qualifications" for many primary jobs include personal contacts, even in jobs

for which personal contacts are not formally required by employers and even in jobs for which personal contacts are not actually necessary to obtain the job?

A third approach is to define labor markets on the basis of the ostensibly productivity-related characteristics of workers, regardless of whether those characteristics are required by employers as a condition of employment. One might, for example, define labor markets on the basis of workers' job skills or skill levels, or on the basis of behavioral traits such as punctuality or willingness to follow orders. The problem with this approach is that these worker characteristics depend, for at least some workers, on the kinds of jobs in which the workers are employed; as noted above, a single worker may display different characteristics depending on whether he is employed in the primary sector or the secondary sector. Another possibility would be to define labor markets in terms of workers' levels of formal education. This approach would place a plurality of the East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown workers in the same labor market, regardless of whether they work in the primary sector or the secondary sector. However, it would have the counter-intuitive effect of placing workers who have different levels of education, but who are employed in the same job, in different labor markets.

Geographical considerations may also play a role in the definition of labor markets. Since the workers described in chapter 5 ordinarily consider only jobs located within the

Boston metropolitan area, and since the jobs described in chapter 4 draw most of their workers from within the Boston area, the labor market(s) to which those workers and jobs belong would seem to be restricted to the Boston area. Are labor markets further differentiated on a sub-metropolitan area geographical basis? Does the existence of neighborhood-specific customary groups of primary jobs in certain Boston neighborhoods suggest that labor markets in at least some primary-sector jobs should be differentiated by neighborhood? If so, should this be done for all workers in those jobs or only for some? Does the fact that the primary employers who offer those jobs may not select employees on the basis of neighborhood suggest that neighborhoods are irrelevant to the definition of labor markets in the primary sector? Is there any sub-metropolitan area differentiation of labor markets in the secondary sector?

In defining labor markets, it is not necessary to treat the various approaches mentioned above as mutually exclusive alternatives. A very complicated combination of those approaches and/or other approaches might be required in order to define labor markets satisfactorily. Future research on the labor supply characteristics of many different kinds of workers and on the labor demand characteristics of many different kinds of employers might produce answers to the questions raised above.

A contemporary neoclassical labor economist, however, might argue that it is not necessary to answer these questions in order to have a supply-and-demand analysis of wage determination

and labor allocation. The contemporary hedonic approach to labor markets does not require precise definition of labor markets, but only of workers' productivity-related characteristics and of job characteristics that affect the desirability of jobs to workers.²⁸ In the hedonic approach, there is only one "labor market," which encompasses all workers and all employers in a capitalist economy at a given time. Workers have abstract preferences defined over productivity-related personal characteristics (such as education) that are under their control, wages, and all other job characteristics that enter into their evaluation of the desirability of a job. Employers' profits are affected by the wages they pay, by the non-wage characteristics of the jobs that they offer, and by the productivity-related characteristics of the workers they hire. Workers choose bundles of productivity-related personal characteristics, wages, and desirability-related (non-wage) job characteristics to maximize utility. (Not all workers need behave in this way, but some must do so in order for the market mechanism to work at the margin.) Employers choose to structure jobs (which are nothing but bundles of these same items) to maximize profits. With wages perfectly flexible, the actual set of wages, non-wage job characteristics, and worker characteristics that we observe is the set in which the number of workers who possess each productivity-related personal characteristic equals the number of jobs that require that characteristic, given the wage paid to workers who possess that characteristic, and in which the number of jobs

that offer each non-wage job characteristic equals the number of workers who want a job with that characteristic, given the wage paid in a job with that characteristic. In effect, each job characteristic that affects the desirability of a job to any worker and each worker characteristic that affects the productivity of a worker in any job is a separate sub-market.

Although the hedonic approach appears to avoid the troublesome questions of labor market definition that were raised above, it does not avoid the related questions of how the relevant worker and job characteristics are to be determined. The labor market decisions made by the workers described in this study are structured by a model of the labor market that apprehends different labor market variables than the ones that employers use in making their hiring decisions. (For example, consider a primary job that requires an applicant to have general mechanical skills as a qualification for employment, but does not require the applicant to be a friend or relative of a current employee. A man from East Boston, South Boston, or Charlestown may not know that mechanical skills are a requirement for this job or for any job, but he might nevertheless have acquired those skills through automatic, incidental learning. On the other hand, he may believe that personal contacts are required to obtain the job and may act accordingly, even though the job can be obtained without personal contacts.) Other groups of workers may make their decisions in terms of different models of the labor market. There need not be any congruence between the job characteristics

and job qualifications perceived by employers and those perceived by workers, or between those perceived by different groups of workers. Therefore, it is difficult to see how the relevant worker and job characteristics can be defined unambiguously, let alone generated in the way the hedonic approach suggests.

Must we, therefore, conclude that the supply-and-demand mechanism of simultaneous wage and employment determination cannot operate? We are not forced to this conclusion, since there may exist workers who work in the same jobs as the workers described in this study but who both behave and perceive the labor market in the way that the hedonic approach requires. Even if most workers are like the ones described here, it is possible for wages and employment levels to be determined by supply and demand if there are some workers who behave in accordance with the neoclassical model of worker decision-making (e.g., who acquire labor market information through neoclassical-type search, who make human capital investments in productivity-related personal characteristics, who respond to wage differentials by moving between jobs) and who make decisions in terms of the same labor market variables that employers do. The behavior of the latter workers and of employers would then determine the boundaries of labor sub-markets.

What would the labor market look like if there were both "neoclassical" workers and workers who resemble the ones described in chapter 5? Such a market would consist of a mass of chapter 5-type workers, whom I will call "stayers," who either do not

change their jobs and productivity-related characteristics in response to wage differentials or, if they do, do so only within a limited group of jobs (e.g., as ethnic working class youths move between secondary jobs in response to wage differentials). The mass of stayers would be surrounded by a "buffer" of "neoclassical" workers, whom I will call "movers." Although wages and employment levels in this sort of economy could be determined by the interaction of the movers' behavior with employers' behavior according to the supply-and-demand mechanism, this would only be possible within certain limits. These limits would be set by the relative numbers of movers and stayers. Employers' demands for workers with particular characteristics and for workers in particular jobs could fluctuate, and as long as there were enough movers to accommodate these fluctuations, the market mechanism would reallocate labor and change wages as necessary. If the number of movers were large relative to the number of stayers, or if the fluctuations in labor demand were small, then the forces of supply and demand would suffice to determine wages and employment levels throughout the economy. The behavior of the stayers would be irrelevant for wage determination and labor allocation. However, if the number of movers were small relative to the number of stayers, or if the demand fluctuations were large, then the market mechanism would break down because there would not be enough movers to satisfy the changing demands of employers. Large changes in wages could occur without inducing the necessary supply responses. Furthermore,

these wage changes could cause the stayers' labor market models to break down, since certain wage differentials may be embedded in the basic structure of those models. (Recall, for example, that the workers' model described in chapter 5 depends on the existence of a differential between secondary-sector and entry-level primary-sector wages.) Breakdowns in the stayers' labor market models could result in large and unpredictable changes in the characteristics of the stayers' labor supply. Employers then could not count on the continuation of the stayers' previously stable behavior and might, therefore, have to change their labor market behavior as well. At this point, the behavior of both employers and workers could become quite unstable and unpredictable, as participants on both sides of the labor market tried to figure out the nature of the new labor market reality and adapt to that new reality. Even under the assumptions most favorable to the neoclassical theorist, then, the market mechanism does not suffice to determine wage and employment levels under all possible conditions in a labor market that contains stayers as well as movers. During periods of large-scale, demand-driven change in the job structure (such as the 1980's in the U.S.), the behavior of workers like those described in this study becomes important not only for the problems of worker decision-making, job mobility, and access to primary job opportunities, but for the central problems of labor market analysis.

In showing the extent to which the findings of this study could be incorporated into a simple supply-and-demand analysis

of the labor market, I have assumed that the labor market clears, at least as long as labor demand remains within certain limits. However, two of the important findings of this study are (a) that Boston's ethnic working class men perceive primary jobs to be scarce, in the sense that not everyone who wants one, is qualified for one, and applies for one can get one, and (b) that the primary employers described in chapter 4 always have more job applicants than entry-level vacancies. The most straightforward and, I believe, the most plausible interpretation of these findings is that there is a persistent excess supply of workers to the primary sector. The neoclassical theorist would link that excess supply to the high wages paid in primary jobs and would ask why primary wages do not fall to clear the market. One leading explanation of high primary-sector wages that has been advanced by neoclassical labor economists is that the primary sector has strong labor unions that push wages above competitive levels and may also have non-union employers who pay union-level wages in order to stave off the threat of unionization.²⁹ A second leading neoclassical explanation of high primary wages is that primary employers pay efficiency wages, i.e., higher-than-market-clearing wages that are necessary because workers' supplies of work effort or attachments to their employers are positively related to their wages.³⁰ Either of these explanations is compatible with the evidence presented in chapters 4 and 5. It is also possible, though, that there is no persistent excess supply of workers to the primary sector. (As noted in chapter

4, there seems to be no evidence of excess demand for workers in that sector, either, so an absence of excess supply would imply market clearing.) Every qualified worker who wants a primary job may be able to get one if he waits long enough and applies for enough primary jobs. (The fact that linkages between ethnic working class neighborhoods and particular primary jobs make it difficult for other workers, e.g., blacks, to obtain primary jobs does not necessarily contradict this interpretation. Workers without social linkages to primary jobs may not really participate in the primary labor market(s), since they may not have the appropriate qualifications, may not apply for enough primary jobs, or may not wait long enough for a primary job offer.) Workers' perception of primary job scarcity could then be the result of the fact that primary jobs are scarce at any particular time, but are not scarce when a long enough time period is considered. Primary employers' experience of having a permanent excess supply of qualified entry-level job applicants could be a consequence of the fact that each applicant is applying simultaneously to a number of different employers. Yet another possibility is that primary jobs are not really scarce for the workers described in this study (since every such worker may be able to get a primary job by waiting long enough and by applying for enough primary jobs) but that some other workers (e.g., blacks) cannot obtain primary jobs no matter what their qualifications, no matter how long they wait, and no matter how many applications they make. In this latter scenario, primary

jobs would be scarce overall and scarce for some groups of workers, but not scarce for all groups of workers. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether primary jobs are really scarce in a dynamic sense and, if they are scarce, whether they are scarce for all groups of workers or only for some. This issue, though, leads back to the question of how to define a labor market, the answer to which is crucial for any theory in which the determination of wages and the determination of employment levels are viewed as analytically related processes.

There are, of course, non-neoclassical labor market theories in which wage determination and labor allocation are seen as analytically separate processes.³¹ In these theories, neither labor supply nor labor demand depends on the wage. Labor demand is determined by the structure of technology and by the level of aggregate economic activity, while labor supply is determined by the kinds of social processes discussed in chapter 5. The wage structure, at least within the lower tier of the primary sector, is essentially a customary phenomenon.³² The findings of this study have an affinity with this sort of labor market theory. If all workers resembled those studied here, then wages would affect the supply of labor only within the secondary sector. They would not influence the number of workers employed in the primary sector or the allocation of those workers among primary jobs. The level of aggregate economic activity, at least within a metropolitan area, would play an important role in determining the number of workers employed in the primary sector. There

would be room for custom to influence not only the distribution of wages within the primary sector but also the differential between primary-sector and secondary-sector wages, since the latter differential is built into the structure of the model by which the workers understand the operation of the labor market. These cursory remarks are intended only to illustrate how the findings of this study might lead one to think about the labor market in terms of a theory according to which wages and employment levels are not analytically linked. They are not intended to develop such a theory or to argue that such a theory is superior to the modified supply-and-demand theory sketched above. In order to accomplish these latter tasks, it would be necessary to study both the process(es) of wage determination in various jobs and the nature of the labor supply of workers whose models of the labor market differ from those of the workers studied here. If, as I suggested in the previous section of this chapter, the labor market behavior of all workers is embedded in non-market social relations that give rise to customary models of the labor market, then studies of this type would support the development of the kinds of non-neoclassical theories described here.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LITERATURE

This section returns to the literature that was surveyed in chapter 2 and shows how the findings of this study support, refute, extend, or suggest reformulation of previous theories of the process by which workers are matched with jobs.³³

Human Capital Theory. Human capital theory does not adequately describe the process by which the young men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown move from secondary to primary jobs. While specific criticisms can be leveled at specific models (as in chapter 5's discussion of decisions about higher education), there are two basic ways in which the human capital approach fails to account for the findings of this study. First, it makes false claims about what is required in order to obtain a primary job. Second, it misrepresents the nature of the workers' decision-making processes.

Human capital theory suggests that advanced education, training, or other costly-to-acquire skills are necessary in order to obtain a high-paying job. The primary jobs described in chapter 4, however, do not have these costly prerequisites. (Perhaps the reason for this is that many of the job skills that they require are idiosyncratic to a particular employer or occupation and, therefore, are taught on the job.) What these jobs do require of new employees--basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills; general mechanical ability; ability to come to work regularly and punctually; ability to follow supervisors' instructions; and

willingness to remain in the internal labor market for a long period of time—are, with the exception of basic reading and writing skills, acquired costlessly through socialization into peer groups and extended families. Workers do not forego any income-earning opportunities in order to acquire these characteristics.

Some human capital models (e.g., those of Rosen and Johnson) posit that secondary-sector work experience provides workers with skills or personal attributes that are required in the primary sector. This, too, contradicts the case-study findings. Workers in secondary jobs do not learn skills that they will be able to use in primary jobs. Nor, when they move from one secondary job to another or from a secondary job to a primary job, are they "shopping" for a job that matches their interests or talents. Although some primary employers do use the stability of a worker's secondary job history as a screening device, some do not, and the latter employers may be no less concerned than the former about the worker's future job stability.

Proponents of human capital theory may respond that even if these particular workers do not choose to invest in human capital prior to entering the primary sector, the process by which they decide not to do so is the process depicted in human capital theory. This assertion, however, is also contrary to the case-study evidence. Consider post-high school vocational training that occurs outside of internal labor markets.³⁴ The workers described in the case study do not even regard such training as

an option; they seem never to have thought about it. Although such training is costly, the cost is not the reason why the workers do not choose it; the reason is that this kind of training has no place in the workers' model of the labor market.

Alternatively, consider higher education. Decisions about whether or not to attend college are, as chapter 5 showed, sometimes unrelated to employment considerations. But even when employment concerns enter into workers' decision-making processes (e.g., when workers say that they do not need college because they can get "good" jobs without it), these concerns do not enter in the way that human capital theory claims. A "good" job is not just a job that pays a certain wage and has non-wage attributes that have dollar values to workers. More fundamentally, it is a job that enables a worker to maintain what is regarded as an appropriate standard of living for an adult man in his neighborhood. A worker who takes a primary job rather than attend college does so in order to achieve that customary standard of living, not in order to maximize his discounted lifetime income. The point here is not that economic considerations are always absent from workers' decisions about college, but that when they are present, they are embedded in non-economic considerations.

Although I have severely criticized the human capital approach, it is important to note the limited nature of my criticism. The criticism is simply that human capital theory does not apply to the secondary-to-primary job transitions of the workers described

in this study. It is, therefore, a criticism of the ostensible universality of that theory as a theory about job mobility. It says nothing about the possible relevance of human capital theory to job mobility within primary-sector internal labor markets. Nor does it claim that there are no secondary-to-primary transitions to which the human capital approach is applicable. There may well be primary jobs (even primary lower-tier jobs) for which costly-to-acquire skills are a prerequisite. There may well be workers, even in jobs like those described in chapter 4, who make labor market decisions in the manner portrayed in human capital theory. In order to demonstrate the relevance of the human capital approach, the proponents of that approach must provide examples of such jobs and such workers.

Search Theory. The above criticisms of human capital theory can also be applied to the neoclassical theory of job search. The latter theory, like the former, is not relevant to the job mobility of the men described in this study, and the reasons are similar to those noted above. First, the information about primary-sector wages, non-wage job characteristics, and job availability that Boston's ethnic working class men acquire is not costly for them to acquire.³⁵ They passively receive their job information through social groups (i.e., extended families and peer groups) that were not deliberately constructed for the purpose of conveying that information. The information is a byproduct of their participation in the everyday social relations of these social

groups. Second, the information is only about the primary jobs held by group members and about certain other primary jobs that have customary status in the neighborhood. Workers do not even consider trying to find out about other jobs, so they are not concerned with what the costs or benefits of doing so might be. Therefore, their decision-making process is not the one that is depicted in neoclassical search theory.

With regard to the implicit-contract version of search theory, the case-study findings are mixed. According to the implicit-contract theory, both workers and employers acquire information through personal contacts because that method is the most efficient one for obtaining intensive information about particular jobs and particular job applicants. The case study shows that workers certainly do learn about some characteristics of particular primary jobs through personal contacts. Furthermore, much of what they learn (e.g., that a particular job is appropriate for a man from their neighborhood) would be difficult to learn in any other way. Yet the extent to which workers obtain intensive information about particular primary jobs from personal contacts should not be exaggerated. As chapter 5 pointed out, workers rarely talk among themselves about job content, working conditions, or job satisfaction. In addition, it is misleading to assert that workers use personal contacts to learn about particular primary jobs because that is the most efficient way to do so. Workers use personal contacts because it is customary to do so; their customary model of the labor market tells them that that

is how to get a "good" job. While this custom may be efficient for the purpose of acquiring some kinds of information about particular primary jobs, that is not why workers follow the custom. In order to explain the existence of the custom on efficiency grounds, one would have to show either that the custom was originally adopted for reasons of efficiency or that there is some evolutionary process that ensures that only efficient customs survive. The implicit-contract theory makes no attempt to show either of these things.

For primary employers, the story is a bit different. Some primary employers, like the small auto-repair shops of East Boston, do recruit workers by means of personal contacts in order to find workers who are trustworthy. This accords well with the implicit-contract theory. Other primary employers, though, do not seem to care about the personal characteristics of job applicants as long as applicants meet the formal job qualifications. This is true of many of the large primary employers described in chapter 4. These employers also rely on costless recruitment channels, especially the personal contacts of their current employees. They do so because they do not need to spend money on worker recruitment; by relying only on costless recruitment channels, they obtain more "qualified" applicants than there are entry-level job vacancies. This reasoning can be interpreted in two ways. First, it might actually be the case that these employers do not care about any applicant characteristics other than the formal qualifications that they have established

(or, if they do care about other applicant characteristics, they have determined that it is too costly to screen for them). On this interpretation, the "intensive information" that could be gained through reliance on personal contacts is irrelevant to the employers. Alternatively, it might be the case that the workers' social networks are an automatic "screen" that works to the employers' benefit, even if the employers are unaware of its existence. According to this interpretation, if applicants did not learn about jobs mainly through personal contacts, it would be necessary for the employers to screen them more carefully than they now do. Even if this second interpretation is correct, though, the implicit-contract theory is not thereby proven correct. The reason is that the large primary employers do not seem to be aware of the screening function that the workers' social networks might be performing for them. Because they are unaware of this screening function, it is difficult to argue that they have designed their recruitment practices to take advantage of it. Overall, the implicit-contract perspective points out some important facts about what those procedures do for workers and employers, but it does not adequately explain why workers and employers use those procedures.

Status-Attainment Theory. Status-attainment theory is also inadequate as a characterization of the transition of Boston's ethnic working class men from secondary to primary jobs. The major problems with the theory are that it identifies the wrong

variables as being important in the mobility process and, even when it identifies the correct variables, it specifies their influence in the wrong way. These problems manifest themselves in three ways.

First, some of the explanatory variables that have been used in status-attainment studies are not relevant to the job-mobility process described in the case study. Education and early post-school job experience have little to do with the process of secondary-to-primary job mobility, for the reasons that I pointed out in my evaluation of the human capital approach. These variables may help to explain why Boston's ethnic working class men do not obtain professional jobs. However, they do not explain why these men are able to make the transition from secondary to primary lower-tier jobs, since there are other workers with the same education and early job experience who are unable to make that transition.

A second problem with the status-attainment approach is its use of a continuous measure of occupational prestige as the dependent variable. As chapters 4 and 5 showed, the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown do not conceive of jobs as being arrayed in a continuous, unidimensional prestige hierarchy. Instead, they classify jobs into two discrete groups on the basis of customary ideas about pay and job security. While it may be possible for a survey researcher to force these workers to rank jobs according to prestige by using an appropriate questionnaire, this does not prove that the workers actually

view jobs in this way when they make their own labor market decisions. As chapter 3 pointed out, a structured questionnaire is not an appropriate vehicle with which to discover the concepts and categories that are meaningful to people. Although researchers are not obligated to use the same concepts and categories that the subjects of their research use, they must still explain why they use the concepts and categories that they do use. Status-attainment researchers have attempted to do this by pointing out that people from many different occupations, educational backgrounds, etc., all produce the same prestige rankings when forced to do so on a structured questionnaire, and that the rankings do not differ over time or with differences in the form of the questionnaire. From this, they seem to have inferred that the same set of occupational rankings is meaningful to everyone and, therefore, relevant to everyone's labor market behavior. Since inferences about the meaningfulness of a job-classification scheme cannot be drawn from the kind of research that generated the rankings, the status-attainment researcher has not provided a valid argument in favor of the continuous prestige ranking as a dependent variable.

The third difficulty with the status-attainment approach is that it misrepresents the nature of non-market social influences on the mobility process. In status-attainment models, these social influences (represented by such family-background variables as mother's and father's educational level and occupational prestige) are causally prior to a worker's educational level and

to any of the jobs at which he works. Family background variables may influence the amount of education that a worker obtains and may influence the kinds of jobs that he obtains, but they do not influence the relationship between education and jobs or between one job and another. Implicit in this representation of family background's influence on job mobility is the idea that there is an educational/employment system whose influence on an individual's job mobility is independent of the influence of family background on mobility. Family background may partially determine a worker's present position in this system, but it does not affect the way in which the system itself operates to move him from one position to another. The case study findings suggest that this is true only within the internal labor markets of the primary sector, where mobility between positions depends on the employer's or occupation's institutional rules. The way in which Boston's ethnic working class young men move from secondary to primary jobs, though, depends heavily on their membership in extended families and peer groups in which adults work at primary jobs. Workers who do not belong to such extended families and peer groups may make the transition in an entirely different way, or not at all.

These three problems are symptoms of a deeper, underlying flaw in status-attainment theory, a flaw that is present in human capital and neoclassical job-search theories as well. The flaw is that labor market processes are seen as working in the same way for all workers. Status-attainment theory assumes that a single set of variables and causal relationships among those

variables characterizes the job-mobility process of all workers. Human capital theory assumes that all productivity-related characteristics of workers that are not biologically determined are acquired through a process of investment. Neoclassical search theory assumes that all job information is acquired through a process of investment as well. None of these theories is capable, except in an ad hoc way, of incorporating discontinuities across workers in the processes by which the values of labor market variables are determined. (These processes should be contrasted with their outcomes, namely, the values of the variables themselves, which all theories predict will differ across workers). Yet just such discontinuities are suggested by the idea that different kinds of workers may perceive different kinds of labor market variables and different kinds of causal relationships among labor market variables. Workers whose model of the labor market is the one described in chapter 5 acquire certain kinds of labor market information, attitudes, and abilities in particular ways, and conceive of jobs according to a particular classificatory scheme. Workers with different models of the labor market will classify jobs according to a different scheme and will acquire different kinds of information, attitudes, and abilities, or will acquire the same kinds in different ways.

Neo-Marxian Class-Reproduction Theory. Like the theory of Bowles and Gintis, this study suggests that (at least for the workers studied here) there are social processes that tend to

channel young men into the kinds of jobs that their fathers hold. However, those processes are less direct and automatic than Bowles and Gintis make them out to be, and they depend less on the school system or on workers' belief in a meritocratic social order than Bowles and Gintis claim they do.

From the standpoint of this study, the major problem with the Bowles-Gintis theory is its assumption that the behavioral traits that youths' parents' jobs require of their occupants are stamped out more or less automatically onto youths by their families and schools. The experience of Boston's ethnic working class young men suggests that the influence of the job structure on youths' attitudes and behavior is not this direct and automatic. Instead, it suggests, the influence of the job structure on youths is mediated by the youths' model of the job structure and of their place in that structure. For the youths studied here, that model does reflect important characteristics (including labor market characteristics as well as behavioral requirements) of the jobs that the youths' parents and other adults in the neighborhood hold, but the reflection is not unique and complete. Furthermore, the model tells youths, in a very general way, not only how to behave in and how to obtain the kinds of jobs that are appropriate for adults (namely, primary jobs) but also how to behave in and how to obtain secondary jobs. The model, therefore, allows the youths to make a transition from secondary to primary jobs, a transition that the Bowles-Gintis theory seems to rule out. More generally, the idea that the movement

of workers into jobs depends on workers' models of the job structure and of their place in that structure allows for much more flexibility in the process by which workers are matched with jobs than Bowles' and Gintis' theory allows. Since it is not necessary for all youths whose parents work at jobs in a particular sector of the labor market to have the same model, it is possible to have many different processes by which the workers of that sector are reproduced. It is also possible that reproduction will not occur, i.e., that the youths will not work at the same kinds of jobs as their parents do. The Bowles-Gintis theory does not have room for these possibilities.

Bowles and Gintis also emphasize the role that workers' belief in reward according to merit plays in reconciling them to their jobs. This study, however, casts doubt on the proposition that workers really believe that jobs are distributed according to merit. The men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown believe that "good" jobs go to those who are lucky or who know the right people, not to those who are the most hard-working, most qualified or most intelligent. While it is quite possible that they respond abstractly to meritocratic ideas (e.g., when those ideas are presented to them as general propositions in an opinion poll or as political slogans), they do not believe that those ideas are relevant to their own experiences in the labor market.³⁶

Bowles and Gintis ascribe a particularly important role in the class-reproduction process to the educational system.

Although chapters 4 and 5 had little to say about schools, the very fact that youths learn so much of what they know about how to obtain jobs and how to behave on the job outside of the school system suggests that it is easy to exaggerate the role of the school. It is also worth noting that if one of the "lessons" that school is supposed to teach youths is that hard work and intelligence are rewarded, then the youths of Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods either are not learning the lesson or are finding it irrelevant to the world of work as they experience that world. In either case, the power of the school to mold youths seems not to be as great as Bowles and Gintis make it out to be.

Labor Market Segmentation Theory. This study was motivated in part by the failure of previous labor market segmentation theorists to provide an adequate explanation of the fact that some workers make the transition from secondary to primary employment relatively easily while others do so only with great difficulty or not at all. Although the study does not provide a complete theory of the secondary-to-primary transition that would apply to all workers and all jobs, it does suggest a particular set of labor market institutions and social processes that operate to make it easy for some workers to enter the primary sector and quite difficult for others to do so.

The key contribution of this study is the finding that particular groups of workers (namely, the residents of the three

ethnic working class neighborhoods) have customary social linkages to particular groups of primary (lower-tier) jobs. These linkages consist of complexes of information about particular primary jobs, attitudes toward primary jobs, general primary-job-related abilities, and personal ties to primary-sector workers. They are reproduced costlessly, through socialization into neighborhood-based extended families and peer groups in which adult men are concentrated in primary jobs. They are reinforced by primary-sector recruitment and hiring practices, which often intentionally or unintentionally favor job applicants who have personal contacts on the job. The linkages are expressed and sustained by a model of the labor market. The model both reflects the recruitment and hiring practices of the particular primary employers to which the workers are linked and enables the workers to make use of those practices in order to move into the primary sector. Workers who belong to social groups that are linked to primary jobs in this way will develop such a model and will move from secondary to primary jobs with relative ease. Workers who do not belong to social groups that are linked to primary jobs will not develop a model of this sort and will have difficulty in obtaining primary jobs. The latter workers will be disadvantaged in obtaining primary jobs both because many primary employers' recruitment and hiring practices will tend to exclude them and because they may find it difficult or impossible to acquire the information, attitudes, and abilities that workers with linkages acquire without cost.

The findings of this study suggest a new perspective on the entry of workers into the primary sector. Previous labor market segmentation researchers, motivated by policy concerns about the labor market problems of disadvantaged workers, saw the key problem of mobility as being the problem of why some workers are apparently excluded from access to primary jobs. They treated the secondary-to-primary job mobility of workers who are not excluded from access to the primary sector as a theoretically unproblematic phenomenon. Only exclusion from primary jobs needed to be explained; no particular explanation was needed for inclusion. This study suggests that inclusion in access to primary jobs, not exclusion from such access, is the theoretically important phenomenon. The labor recruitment and hiring processes of the primary sector may well operate in such a way that only those workers who are specifically provided with access to primary jobs will be able to obtain primary jobs. Chapters 4 and 5 described a mechanism by which some workers are given access to primary jobs, namely, the social linkage between workers and jobs that operates through the social structure of the ethnic working class neighborhood. Future research should try to determine whether there are other mechanisms by which other workers are given access to primary jobs. Disadvantaged workers would then be seen as workers who have no special mechanism to provide them with access to the primary sector, and the solution to the secondary-to-primary mobility problem of those workers would be to create a mechanism by which they could gain such

access. The following chapter examines the possibilities for doing this.

Local Labor Market Studies and Ethnographic Studies of Ethnic Working Class Neighborhoods. In chapter 2, I noted that most previous local labor market studies were concerned with workers' labor market decisions but did not place those decisions in the context of the structures of the social groups to which workers belonged. Similarly, ethnographic studies of ethnic working class neighborhoods provided a wealth of information about neighborhood social structures and customs, but paid little attention to the labor market. The present study bridges the gap between these two bodies of research by linking workers' labor market decisions to both the structure of the labor market and the social structure of the neighborhood. The link is provided by the workers' model of the labor market, which reflects the structure of the labor market as perceived by workers whose awareness of that structure comes from their participation in the social life of the extended families and peer groups of the ethnic working class neighborhood.

When the structure of the neighborhood is linked to the job structure in this way, previously isolated research findings take on broader significance. One of these is the finding of local labor market studies that workers often learn about jobs through personal contacts. With the exception of Granovetter's study, which was concerned with professionals and managers, no

previous local labor market study paid attention to the structure of workers' personal contact networks. The present study has found that the personal contact networks through which ethnic working class men obtain not only information about primary jobs but their entire model of the labor market are their extended families and peer groups, which are based in their neighborhoods. This finding is important because it makes possible the existence of linkages between particular ethnic working class neighborhoods and particular primary jobs. The existence of these linkages has consequences for the labor market policy issues that will be discussed in chapter 7. Such linkages may have existed among the workers described in previous local labor market studies, but those studies could not have discovered them because they neglected the structure of workers' social networks.

Another isolated research finding that takes on broader significance in the light of the relationship between the job structure and the structure of ethnic working class neighborhoods is the finding of ethnographic studies that the men of ethnic working class neighborhoods maintain strong ties to their neighborhood-based extended families and peer groups throughout their lives and do not develop many ties to people who live outside of their neighborhoods. While there may be many reasons for this, one possible reason is that the labor recruitment and hiring practices of many primary employers make it necessary for workers to rely on these ties in order to obtain primary jobs. (Of course, this statement only applies to neighborhoods that have customary

linkages to primary jobs. It cannot, therefore, be used to explain the cohesiveness of ethnic neighborhoods that do not have such linkages.) This observation casts some doubt on sociological theories in which the labor market is seen as an institution that always tends to erode traditional strong ties of neighborhood and kinship. The labor market practices of many of the primary employers described in chapter 4 operate to reinforce those ties, even though the employers do not necessarily intend them to do so.

Ethnic Enclave Economies. The literature on ethnic enclave economies has described their existence but has not explained how they can maintain their ethnic identities, i.e., how the enclave firms can continue to draw their owners and workers from a single ethnic group. Although this study cannot provide a complete answer to this question, its findings shed some light on one mechanism that could contribute to the perpetuation of the ethnic character of an enclave.

The customary linkages between neighborhoods and primary jobs described in this study resemble the linkages between ethnic groups and jobs described in the enclave literature. Access to certain primary jobs depends at least partially on residence in a particular neighborhood, just as access to a job in an ethnic enclave depends on membership in a particular ethnic group. This suggests that the process by which workers obtain jobs in an ethnic enclave may resemble the process by which

workers from Boston's ethnic working class neighborhoods obtain primary jobs. Ethnic enclave firms, like many of the primary employers described in chapter 4, may recruit and hire workers in ways that favor job applicants who already have personal contacts within the firm. They may do so in order to ensure that they hire trustworthy workers. Alternatively, they may not care who they hire as long as the new employee meets certain qualifications, but may rely on the personal contact mechanism because it costlessly provides them with workers who meet those qualifications. Members of the ethnic group from which an enclave draws its workers may belong to close-knit social networks that do not extend outside of the ethnic group. Through socialization in these networks, they may costlessly acquire the information, attitudes, and general job-related skills that make them well suited for jobs in the enclave. They may develop a model of the labor market in which jobs in the enclave are viewed as "good" jobs (in contrast to non-enclave secondary jobs, which may be viewed as "bad" jobs) and in which reliance on personal contacts is seen as the way to obtain a "good" job. By acting in accordance with that model, they may obtain enclave jobs. In this way, the linkages between a particular ethnic group and a particular set of enclave jobs could be perpetuated.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. For a particularly clear exposition of this theory, see Simon Rottenberg, "On Choice in Labor Markets," Industrial and

Labor Relations Review 9 (January 1956): 183-199.

2. Cf. Michael Piore, "Labor Market Segmentation: To What Paradigm Does It Belong?" American Economic Review 73 (May 1983): 249-253. The idea that workers understand the labor market in terms of socially defined structures of perception is analogous to Kuhn's idea that scientists understand the operation of the physical world in terms of such structures (which Kuhn terms "paradigms"). See Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

3. The shaping of aspirations by perceived opportunities has been discussed by psychologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and non-neoclassical economists. See, for example, Herbert Simon, "A Behavioral Model of Rational Choice," Quarterly Journal of Economics 69 (February 1955): 99-118; Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 77-78; Jon Elster, Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Herbert Gintis, "A Radical Analysis of Welfare Economics and Individual Development," Quarterly Journal of Economics 86 (November 1972): 572-599. The shaping of aspirations by existing skills or abilities is suggested in Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action," American Sociological Review 51 (April 1986): 273-286.

4. Swidler, op. cit.

5. Herbert Simon, Models of Man (New York: Wiley, 1957), pp. 196-206; Idem, "Behavioral Model"; Idem, "Theories of Decision-Making in Economics and Behavioral Science," American Economic Review 49 (June 1959): 253-283.

6. The idea of a repertoire of behavioral patterns is due to Swidler, op. cit.

7. Bourdieu, op. cit., chapter 2, refers to this type of structure as a "habitus." The remainder of this section draws heavily on the previously cited works by Bourdieu, Swidler, and Kuhn.

8. Economists who attempt to incorporate customary behavior into formal economic models typically make use of a much narrower, more rigid, and, I believe, less useful concept of custom than that employed in this chapter. For example, in Gary Becker and George Stigler, "De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum," American Economic Review 67 (March 1977): 76-90, a custom is a "rule of thumb" that an optimizer might use in order to reduce the cost of acquiring information; customary behavior is a kind of surrogate for the calculus of optimization. In George Akerlof, "A Theory of Social Custom, of Which Unemployment May be One Consequence," Quarterly Journal of Economics 94 (June 1980): 749-775, a custom

is a rigid rule, the violation of which generates both social sanctions and "psychic costs"; an individual's decision about whether or not to follow the rule is itself the result of utility maximization.

9. Kuhn, *op. cit.*

10. This account of the individual worker's apprehension of the model as common sense or taken-for-granted truth draws on Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 19-28; Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-171; and Clifford Geertz, "Common Sense as a Cultural System," in Geertz, Local Knowledge (New York: Basic, 1983), pp. 73-93.

11. The emphasis on socialization as a continuous process that involves participation in the ongoing social relations of a group avoids an important criticism that Mark Granovetter has levelled against what he refers to as an "oversocialized" conception of human behavior that is found in the works of some sociologists and institutional economists. According to this "oversocialized" conception, people act as they do solely because they have been socialized to the norms of a group. Once socialized, they carry the group norms in their minds and act in accordance with them, regardless of their subsequent experiences and regardless of the particular social relations into which they subsequently enter. See Mark Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," American Journal of Sociology 91 (November 1985): 481-510.

12. See Kuhn, *op. cit.*, chapter 10. Also cf. Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers (New York: Free Press, 1962), pp. 255-256, which gives a similar account of individual movement out of the "peer group society" of an Italian neighborhood in Boston.

13. For example, urban renewal in the West End of Boston and the consequent resettlement, largely on an individual basis, of the neighborhood's former residents (described in Gans, *op. cit.*, chapter 13) may have had this effect, but there is no follow-up study of which I am aware that provides evidence on this point.

14. Some evidence that suggests that a sustained economic boom can change the way a group of workers sees the labor market may be found in Michael Young and Peter Willmott, Family and Kinship in East London (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), pp. 96-97. In this particular case, the boom changed the workers' conception of what a "good" job was.

15. See Kuhn, *op. cit.*, chapter 6, for examples.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Lloyd Reynolds, The Structure of Labor Markets (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951).
18. Young and Willmott, op. cit., esp. pp. 95-97.
19. Gans, op. cit.
20. See, e.g., Elliot Liebow, Tally's Corner (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), chapter 2; and Elijah Anderson, "Some Observations on Black Youth Employment," in Bernard Anderson and Isabel Sawhill (eds.), Youth Employment and Public Policy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), pp. 64-87.
21. August Hollingshead, Elmtown's Youth and Elmtown Revisited (New York: Wiley, 1975), chapter 14.
22. Tamara Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
23. Charles Myers and George Shultz, Dynamics of a Labor Market (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951).
24. Charles Myers and W. Rupert Maclaurin, The Movement of Factory Workers (New York: Wiley, 1943).
25. This remark also applies to Reynolds' study (cited in note 16 above), which was conducted during the late 1940's. The leading sources on the historical development of the primary sector in the U.S. are David Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, Segmented Work, Divided Workers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and Sanford Jacoby, Employing Bureaucracy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
26. There have been very few published studies of any aspects of these workers' lives. One such study, which focuses on the family lives of blue-collar workers in the suburbs of San Francisco (but which has very little to say about the labor market) is Lillian Rubin, Worlds of Pain (New York: Basic, 1971). Another study (also conducted in the San Francisco area), which is concerned primarily with the beliefs and expectations of middle-aged workers who had already settled into primary jobs in an automobile factory, is Bennett Berger, Working Class Suburb (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).
27. Piore has made this argument about secondary labor markets that are dominated by long-distance migrants, who, he argues, behave similarly to the type I youths described here. See Michael Piore, Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 95-96.
28. The formal theory of the hedonic approach is presented

in Sherwin Rosen, "Hedonic Prices and Implicit Markets: Product Differentiation in Pure Competition," Journal of Political Economy 82 (January/February 1974): 34-55.

29. On the wage response of non-union employers to the threat of unionization, see William Dickens, "Wages, Employment, and the Threat of Collective Action by Workers," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper #1856, March 1986.

30. For a survey of the literature on efficiency wages, see Janet Yellen, "Efficiency Wage Models of Unemployment," American Economic Review 74 (May 1984): 200-205. A specific application of the efficiency-wage theory to labor market segmentation is provided by Jeremy Bulow and Lawrence Summers, "A Theory of Dual Labor Markets with Application to Industrial Policy, Discrimination and Keynesian Unemployment," Journal of Labor Economics 4 (July 1986): 376-414.

31. These theories have been advanced by post-Keynesian and institutionalist economists. See, e.g., Eileen Appelbaum, "The Labor Market in Post-Keynesian Theory," in Michael Piore (ed.), Unemployment and Inflation: Institutional and Structuralist Views (White Plains, NY: Sharpe, 1979), pp. 33-45.

32. Examples of theories of customary wage structures can be found in the following articles, all in Piore (ed.), Unemployment and Inflation: John Dunlop, "Wage Contours," pp. 63-74; E. Robert Livernash, "Job Clusters," pp. 75-93; Arthur Ross, "Orbits of Coercive Comparison," pp. 94-111; Michael Piore, "Fragments of a 'Sociological' Theory of Wages," pp. 134-143.

33. This section does not provide citations to specific books or articles, since the literature to which this section refers is the same literature that was cited in chapter 2. Complete citations may be found in the notes to chapter 2.

34. What about apprenticeships in the construction trades? Are they not human capital investments required for entry into primary jobs? Workers do not seem to think of them in this way. Instead, they regard them as primary jobs, since they are in fact the entry-level positions in the construction trades' internal labor markets. Moreover, workers do not enter them because they are willing to forego income that they could otherwise earn in order to learn the trade. As chapter 4 showed, even beginning apprentices earn more than workers in secondary jobs.

35. This information may very well be costly for other workers, e.g., blacks, to acquire. This fact is important for labor market policy, and I will discuss its implications in chapter 7. It is not, however, relevant to my criticism of search theory.

36. Cf. Joan Huber and William Form, Income and Ideology (New York: Free Press, 1973), pp. 88-94, which finds that a divergence exists between abstract, ideological beliefs and concrete, common-sense beliefs about economic opportunity in the U.S.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 6: WORKERS' MODELS AND THE WORKING CLASS

Throughout this study, I have referred to the workers who are its principal subjects as "ethnic working class" young men. Thus far, the term "working class" has remained undefined. This appendix briefly discusses the sense in which I have implicitly been using the term "working class." In order to do so, it draws on the findings of chapters 4 and 5 and on the theory elaborated in part 1 of chapter 6. Since the purpose of this discussion is the modest one of explicating the sense in which the term "working class" has been used in this study, the discussion does not aim to rule out alternative definitions of the "working class" that may be used for purposes that differ from those of this study. Nor does it aim to provide a complete categorization of the class structure of the U.S. or to develop a theory of social class that can be used to make generalizations about patterns of conflict and alliance in the workplace or in the larger political arena. The accomplishment of these latter goals would require data that go well beyond anything provided in the present work.

Chapter 4 showed that primary-sector lower-tier jobs differ systematically from secondary jobs along such dimensions as pay, job security, internal labor market structure, and employers' labor recruitment and hiring practices. Other authors have gone

further than this and have shown that primary lower-tier jobs differ systematically from both secondary jobs and primary upper-tier jobs along these dimensions and others (such as wage-determination processes and authority relations in production).¹ Findings such as these led to the hypothesis that each of the three segments of the labor market is governed by a distinctive set of institutional rules that differs from the sets of institutional rules governing the other segments. For the purpose of defining the term "working class," I wish to make use of the part of this hypothesis that asserts the distinctiveness of the institutional rules that govern the lower tier of the primary sector. It is in these institutional rules that the "working class," in the sense in which I have implicitly been using that term, is rooted.²

Chapter 5 showed that the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown have a model of the labor market, of which several key features correspond to the institutional rules of the primary lower tier, especially the rules governing labor recruitment and hiring. As part 1 of chapter 6 showed, this model is, in part, the product of the ongoing common experience of adult workers with primary lower-tier jobs. Behavior in accordance with the model makes young workers especially well suited to move into primary lower-tier jobs as they reach adulthood and to remain in those jobs throughout their adult working lives. The workers, then, may be said to internalize, through their habits of thought and action, the institutional rules of the primary lower-tier jobs. Because this internalization leads

successive generations of workers to behave in ways that result in their eventual movement into primary lower-tier jobs and their remaining in those jobs as adults (subject, of course, to the availability of those jobs), the workers' habits of thought and action may be said to reproduce them as primary lower-tier workers.

These processes of internalization and reproduction, which were discussed in more detail in part 1 of chapter 6, are what I wish to capture by referring to the subjects of this study as "working class" men. I describe these men as "working class" because they are socialized into habits of thought and action that fit in well with the institutional rules of primary lower-tier jobs and that lead them to "settle down" in jobs of that type when they reach adulthood. These habits of thought and action include but need not be confined to models of the labor market; the same habits of thought and action that guide the workers in the labor market may also extend into other spheres of life.

This definition of the working class has several noteworthy features. First, it implies that working in a primary lower-tier job is not equivalent to being a member of the working class, although there will be substantial overlap between the working class and workers in primary lower-tier jobs. Some primary lower-tier workers have habits of thought and action that do not fit in well with the institutional rules of their labor market segment and that lead them to seek mobility out of

that segment. (Some, but not all, of the "upwardly mobile" workers described in chapter 5 fit this description.) These workers are not "working class" in the sense in which I have defined that term. There are other workers, however, who are members of the working class even though they are not currently working in primary lower-tier jobs. The youths who currently hold secondary jobs but whose model of the labor market will ultimately lead them to primary lower-tier jobs fall into this category, as do adult men who have this same model of the labor market and are still trying to get primary lower-tier jobs but who are currently still working in the secondary sector.

Second, there need not be a single set of job-relevant habits, or a single model of the labor market, that characterizes all members of the working class. There may be many patterns of thought and action that are compatible with workers' internalization and reproduction of the primary lower tier's institutional rules. The pattern described in chapter 5 may be only one of these. Similarly, different workers may be socialized into the relevant habits through participation in different kinds of social institutions; close-knit networks of extended families and peer groups need not be the only such institutions. As part 1 of chapter 6 suggested, these are matters for future empirical investigation.

Third, the existence of the working class depends on the continued existence of primary lower-tier jobs. A change in the job structure that eliminated these jobs would eliminate the

working class, in the sense in which I am using that term. My definition of the working class is, therefore, quite historically and societally specific.

Fourth, the members of the working class need not be conscious of what makes them a distinctive group, nor need they be conscious of a common class interest. Indeed, to the extent that what they have in common is something that they treat as common sense and, therefore, take for granted, there is no reason to expect them to exhibit a distinctive "working class consciousness."³

Finally, not all of the "ethnic working class" neighborhoods described in ethnographic studies are "working class" neighborhoods in my sense of the term. Only those neighborhoods in which a large proportion of men have the habits of thinking and acting that tend to lead them to primary lower-tier jobs qualify as working class neighborhoods. Neighborhoods in which all or nearly all adult men work at secondary jobs are not working class neighborhoods by my definition.

NOTES TO APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 6

1. See, for example, Richard Edwards, Contested Terrain (New York: Basic, 1979).

2. Piore has also associated primary lower-tier jobs with the working class. However, in contrast to my view, his view seems to be that the working class is a distinctive subculture whose existence does not depend on the existence of primary lower-tier jobs. In fact, he speculates that the characteristics of primary lower-tier jobs may depend on the prior characteristics of this subculture. See Michael Piore, "Notes for a Theory of Labor Market Stratification," in Richard Edwards, Michael Reich, and David Gordon (eds.), Labor Market Segmentation (Lexington,

MA: Heath, 1975), pp. 125-150.

3. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 81, 216 (note 28).

CHAPTER 7: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

The preceding chapters of this study described and analyzed the secondary-to-primary job mobility of workers for whom such mobility is a relatively routine, more or less expected, and apparently unproblematic part of life. Not all workers, however are able to move from secondary to primary jobs with such relative ease. Many members of disadvantaged minority groups, such as inner-city blacks, find it difficult or impossible to make this transition. Rapid, large-scale, permanent losses of primary-sector manufacturing jobs in the U.S. pose mobility problems for the workers who have been displaced from those jobs; the displaced workers face the problem of avoiding downward mobility from primary to secondary jobs. Although this study is not explicitly about disadvantaged or displaced workers, its analytical perspective offers important insights into the ways in which public policy might best respond to the mobility problems of those workers. These insights are the subject of this final chapter. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is concerned with disadvantaged minority workers, the second with workers who have been displaced from primary jobs.

1. THE ECONOMIC MOBILITY OF DISADVANTAGED MINORITY GROUPS

One of the public policy issues that motivated this study,

as well as much of the early work on labor market segmentation, was a concern about the economic mobility of disadvantaged minority groups, especially black men in American inner-city areas. These groups appeared to early segmentation researchers to be somehow "trapped" in secondary jobs, unable to move into the primary sector in the manner described in this study. This observation suggested that the public policy problem posed by disadvantaged groups was the problem of how to promote their mobility into the primary sector without adversely affecting the mobility of other groups into that sector.

In this section, I will assume that the problem of secondary-to-primary mobility should be viewed as the central problem of public policy with respect to disadvantaged minorities. In analyzing this problem, I will make two empirical assumptions. The first assumption is that there are many primary jobs that are characterized by the kinds of job structures and recruitment and hiring processes described in chapter 4 and by the kinds of customary worker-job linkages described in chapter 5. The second is that members of disadvantaged groups actually want the kinds of primary jobs described in those chapters, or would want them if they were more familiar with them. If either of these assumptions is false, then the policy analysis presented in this section will be misleading.

The findings of this study suggest that the major reason why members of disadvantaged groups have difficulty in moving from secondary to primary jobs is that those groups lack a particular

mechanism that would afford them access to any primary jobs. If many primary jobs are ordinarily obtained in the manner described in this study, then the problem, more specifically, is that disadvantaged groups lack customary social linkages to any primary jobs. There are two reasons why the absence of such linkages creates a barrier to entry into the primary sector. First, the methods that many primary employers use to recruit and hire workers tend to favor job applicants who belong to groups that have such linkages. The latter workers have the information and/or "pull" that can be provided by friends or relatives who are already working for those employers. They also have the information about job availability that comes from simply belonging to a group in which certain primary jobs are customary. As chapter 4 showed, there are several kinds of recruitment and hiring practices that work to the advantage of these workers and to the disadvantage of workers who lack customary connections to primary jobs. The owners of some small primary firms explicitly set out to hire their own friends and relatives or those of their senior employees. In several of the construction trades, the apprentice-selection process favors applicants who have knowledge (about both the application process and the trades themselves) that is most easily gained from friends or relatives who work in the trades. The hire-the-first-qualified-applicants strategy, used by several large primary employers, favors applicants who know exactly when job vacancies will occur, so the successful applicants tend to be those who have the "inside information"

that only personal contacts can provide. Even some of the civil service jobs favor applicants who belong to groups that have traditionally been employed in those jobs. In the city and state governments, for example, it is sometimes possible for government agencies to circumvent the "open" hiring process by making "provisional" appointments.

Even if all primary employers recruited and selected workers in ways that conveyed no advantages of information or "pull" on particular groups of workers, workers who belonged to groups in which primary jobs were customary among adults would still have advantages over other workers in making the transition from secondary to primary employment. The reason for this is that the taken-for-granted habits of thought and action needed to apply for, qualify for, and remain in primary jobs are, for the most part, acquired through socialization into groups that have customary linkages to such jobs. Workers who lack these linkages will not move easily into those jobs because the requirements of those jobs are not "common sense" to them in the way that they are to the men of East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. Inner-city blacks and other disadvantaged groups may not know about the pay and job security that particular primary jobs provide. They may not know whether particular primary jobs are appropriate to their aspirations at various stages of their lives. Even if they know what procedures to follow to apply for primary jobs, they may be uncomfortable with those procedures. They may not have the basic reading/writing/arithmetic and/or general

mechanical skills needed to qualify for certain primary jobs. They may not know or be comfortable with the demands that primary employers make of their employees. While basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills and information about pay and job security can be learned in school, the other habits of thought and action mentioned above would be quite difficult to learn except through socialization into a group in which those habits were taken for granted.

This diagnosis of the source of disadvantaged groups' mobility problem was obtained indirectly, through inference from a case study of men who move from secondary to primary jobs with relative ease. In order to determine whether or not the diagnosis is correct, one would have to undertake a similar case study of a disadvantaged group, with the aim of discovering how the members of that group view the labor market, how their view regulates their behavior, and how their view is related to the structure of the labor market and of the group. Although there have been many statistical studies of disadvantaged workers in the labor market, there have been few case studies that shed light on the reasons why such workers have difficulty in obtaining primary jobs.

Some limited evidence for the case of American inner-city blacks, however, is available from ethnographic studies¹ and from open-ended interviews that I have conducted with representatives of three neighborhood-based social service organizations in black neighborhoods of Boston and three black teenagers from those neighborhoods. The picture that emerges from these studies

and interviews does not provide conclusive evidence in favor of the diagnosis advanced above, but it is at least consistent with that diagnosis. The model of the labor market held by inner-city black teenagers and young adults seems to be one in which the kinds of primary jobs described in chapter 4 are almost entirely absent. Except for those few who have relatives in such jobs, young blacks seem to know little more about those jobs other than that they exist and are mostly filled by whites who obtain them through personal contacts. Representatives of black neighborhood organizations recounted stories of youths, whom they had sent to apply for jobs with some of the public utilities in Boston, who were told that the jobs were already filled; these experiences reinforced the youths' view that those jobs were filled by whites who have the right personal contacts. Black youths do not know about the pay, job security, or availability of those jobs, do not know anyone who works at them, and do not know whether they are appropriate to their aspirations. Their model of the labor market appears to include secondary jobs, illegal activities, and professional and managerial (i.e., primary-sector upper-tier) jobs. Although the latter jobs are considered very desirable because of their very high pay and good working conditions, they are unattainable by those who do not want to or who are unable to attend college. Those who do not attend college, then, see their options as being secondary jobs and/or illegal activities, either of which may be alternated with spells of non-employment. Many of the youths who work at secondary jobs,

however, are not willing to settle for a lifetime of work in the secondary sector. They view secondary jobs as degrading, dead-end jobs that are not worth taking seriously. Therefore, they engage in the kind of highly unstable labor market activity that characterizes type I youths in East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown. But unlike the white youths, who are temporarily "on vacation" from a labor market in which they perceive, however dimly, that they will eventually land a primary job, the black youths do not view their current labor market situation as part of a "vacation." They perceive their situation as one that will continue indefinitely, with no prospect of a primary job in the future.²

What policies should be adopted in order to remedy this situation? Before presenting my own recommendation, it is instructive to consider the strengths and weaknesses of some existing policies in the light of the analysis that I presented above. I will consider the following policies: (a) education and training programs, (b) job-readiness programs, (c) "job development" by neighborhood-based employment counselors, and (d) affirmative-action programs adopted by some of the primary employers described in chapter 4.

The primary jobs described in chapter 4 do not require specific training or advanced education prior to entry into the internal labor market, such training and education. Furthermore, the things that those jobs do require prior to entry into the internal labor market are mainly habits of thinking and acting

that would be difficult or impossible to teach in formal education or training programs. For these reasons, such programs are not helpful in promoting the mobility of disadvantaged workers into those primary jobs. Is there any role, then, for education and training to play in assisting the transition from secondary to primary employment? There seem to be two roles. First, some of the primary jobs described in chapter 4 require a high school diploma and others that do not require a diploma nevertheless require basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Therefore, high school or high school equivalency education and training in basic skills can facilitate movement into the primary sector. Second, there may be other primary lower-tier jobs that do require advanced education or specialized training. In order to design the appropriate programs, it is necessary to have detailed knowledge about the demand for workers in those jobs (so that workers are not being trained for nonexistent jobs) and about the actual recruitment and hiring practices of the employers that offer those jobs (so that the trainees can actually obtain the jobs for which they are being trained). The role of education and training in promoting mobility into primary jobs, then, is a modest one.

"Job readiness" programs attempt to provide instruction in job-search techniques (e.g., resume-writing, use of newspaper help-wanted advertisements) and in the general kinds of behavior that primary employers expect of their employees (e.g., punctuality, obedience to instructions). These are sometimes combined with

instruction in basic skills.³ The analysis presented earlier in this section suggests that these programs are of little or no relevance to the kinds of primary jobs with which this study is concerned. Formal job-search techniques are not useful in obtaining those jobs; primary employers do not use resumes and newspaper advertisements in their recruitment and selection processes. (Of course, there may be other primary jobs for which formal job-search techniques are important, just as there may be other primary jobs for which advanced education or training is important. This, however, is a separate issue.) The things that are useful in obtaining the kinds of primary jobs described in chapter 4--namely, the information and "pull" that one can only obtain by belonging to a social group in which those jobs are common--cannot be taught in a "job readiness" program. Nor is formal instruction likely to be effective in conveying to young job applicants exactly what it means to behave appropriately on the job. Although it is certainly possible for a job counselor to tell a youth that workers in a primary job are required to come to work regularly and punctually, obey supervisors' instructions, etc., the youth can learn the behavioral requirements of the job more easily from informal socialization in a family or peer group than from formal instruction. When he regularly sees people with whom he identifies behaving in the ways that primary employers require and listens to them talk about "how to act on a 'good' job," he is more likely to identify with and internalize that behavior than if a job counselor simply gives him a list of

behavioral rules. In the former case, the behavior is likely to seem so "obvious" and "natural" to him that it becomes "common sense" to him, while in the latter case he is learning only a list of abstract rules that he may not know how to translate into behavior and whose relevance to his life may not be obvious to him.

Unlike policies that emphasize education, training, or "job readiness," all of which try to promote the mobility of disadvantaged workers by changing the characteristics of the workers, "job development" by neighborhood-based employment counselors attempts to make primary jobs more accessible to those workers by changing the methods by which primary employers recruit workers. A counselor, or "job developer," contacts primary employers and tries to persuade them to commit themselves to inform the counselor of job openings as soon as they arise and to give some hiring preference to applicants whom the counselor refers to them. The counselor promises the employer that he or she will pre-screen the applicants to ensure that they are qualified before referring them to the employer. Counselors involved in job development recognize that primary employers' recruitment processes often favor applicants with personal contacts. Through job development, they try to make themselves into "substitute" personal contacts for disadvantaged workers who do not have any personal contacts of their own in primary jobs. If job development is successful, then the applicants whom the counselors refer to primary employers should enjoy the same advantages of "inside information" and

"pull" that are currently enjoyed by workers who have customary social linkages to primary jobs. Because the counselors whom I interviewed had only recently begun to cultivate contacts with primary employers, it is too early to evaluate the success of job development as a strategy for promoting mobility into the primary sector. However, it is possible to use the findings of this study in order to assess its potential for success. Job development is based on the correct understanding that disadvantaged workers need personal contacts in order to gain access to primary jobs on the same terms as workers who have customary social linkages to those jobs. It does not, however, provide disadvantaged workers with a perfect substitute for those linkages, since its success depends on primary employers' willingness to provide job counselors with "inside information" and to give hiring preference to applicants whom the counselors refer to them. In contrast, the customary linkages that white ethnic working class men have to primary jobs do not, for the most part, require the employers to go out of their way to make information available or to give any explicit hiring preferences. (It is possible, though, that job development will, if practiced successfully for a long enough period of time, lead to the establishment of self-sustaining linkages between previously-disadvantaged communities and primary jobs. Over time, these linkages may come to operate independently of the job counselors. This suggests that the need to maintain employers' goodwill may not be as big a problem for job development as it initially appears to be.) A more important drawback of job

development is that it is likely to be successful only with new primary employers or with primary employers that are experiencing labor shortages. Primary employers, like those described in chapter 4, that already obtain excess supplies of qualified job applicants by relying on walk-ins and on the personal contacts of their current employees, are unlikely to be interested in developing relationships with job counselors in disadvantaged neighborhoods unless they are under pressure to meet affirmative-action goals. This suggests that the success of the job development strategy depends critically on local labor market conditions. Even in a tight local labor market, though, there will still be primary jobs that have surpluses of qualified applicants. Job development can only "open up" the latter jobs to disadvantaged workers if employers incorporate it into their affirmative-action programs.

Affirmative action is, of course, another attempt to make primary jobs more accessible to disadvantaged groups by changing the practices of employers. Several of the primary employers described in chapter 4 have affirmative-action programs that include extensive advertising of entry-level job vacancies in black neighborhoods and hiring preference for qualified black job applicants. However, the personnel managers of some of these firms reported that they had difficulty in meeting affirmative-action hiring goals. The analysis presented above suggests two possible reasons for this. First, an employer's recruitment and hiring strategy can create subtle informational disadvantages for

blacks (or members of any other groups that they do not presently employ in large numbers) even if job vacancies are advertised. As chapter 4 showed, the "hire the first qualified applicants" strategy has this effect, even though that strategy looks racially neutral on its face. Second, an employer may set job qualifications that serve to screen out many blacks (or members of other disadvantaged groups) who may in fact be able to perform competently on the job. Examples of such qualifications may include educational credentials (such as a high school diploma) that are not clearly related to job performance, or the requirement that a job applicant have a relatively stable secondary-sector employment history (which may not be a good predictor of stability on a primary job). Because primary employers always have more job applicants who meet their current qualifications than they have available job vacancies, they face no labor market pressure to eliminate hiring requirements like these.

How could an affirmative-action program avoid these pitfalls? Such a program would have to include a recruitment strategy that both includes active recruitment of black job applicants and is free from subtle informational barriers that might impede such recruitment. One way for a primary employer to implement such a strategy would be to enter into formal "job development" relationships with job counselors in black neighborhoods. This is probably the simplest and least costly path for the employer, since it requires only minor adjustments to the employer's existing recruitment strategy. An alternative, which could be

much costlier, would entail not only advertising job vacancies in black neighborhoods but also redesigning recruitment and hiring systems to eliminate any possible informational advantage that the friends and relatives of a firm's current employees might have over other job applicants. In practice, this would mean that firms would have to set and advertise definite application deadlines for primary jobs and refrain from acting on anyone's job application until the deadlines passed. (This is the way the MBTA's application process works. It is also the way the civil service examination system works.) It might only be necessary for primary employers to adopt such a system temporarily. Once a sufficient number of blacks were employed in the primary sector, recruitment practices that favor the friends and relatives of current employees would no longer work to the detriment of black job applicants, so employers could safely revert to their old ways. Nevertheless, it might not be possible for all primary employers to change their recruitment strategies in the way that I have suggested, even for only a few years. Small primary employers, in particular, would be unable to advertise their job openings extensively and would have difficulty administering a relatively bureaucratic recruitment process. In addition, any primary employer that could not predict entry-level job vacancies well in advance of their occurrence and that required the vacancies to be filled immediately would be unable to recruit workers in the manner suggested here.

In addition to requiring changes in a primary employer's

recruitment methods, an effective affirmative-action program would require the employer to eliminate hiring criteria that are not directly related to the ability to learn or perform jobs. Such criteria can screen out blacks and other members of disadvantaged minority groups who may be quite competent on the job. Some criteria of this type, such as arbitrary high school graduation requirements or use of an applicant's secondary employment record as a "stability screen," are relatively easy to identify. Others, however, are much more ambiguous. In primary jobs where training is truly a costless process that is purely a by-product of socialization into a work group, a worker must be accepted by other workers in the group in order to learn the job. If his race, ethnicity, neighborhood of residence, or behavioral traits affect his acceptance into the group, then they also affect his ability to learn the job, given the current system of training. Should the employer be permitted to screen job applicants in order to determine whether they will "fit into" the existing work groups? Or should the firm be required to reorganize its training process, perhaps at great cost, in order to eliminate any possible need for such screening?

Even in cases in which it is possible to change recruitment and selection procedures in the ways outlined above, the affirmative-action employer still faces the problem of deciding which applicants to hire if there are more qualified applicants than job vacancies. A random procedure, such as the MBTA's lottery, seems to be appropriate at this stage, since it does not allow the employer

to use arbitrary selection criteria that could work to the detriment of blacks or other disadvantaged minority groups. In order to increase the primary-sector employment of these groups very quickly, the final selection procedure could be biased in favor of these groups, as the MBTA's lottery system is. This bias, though, should be a temporary feature of the affirmative-action program, to be eliminated when target numbers of workers from disadvantaged groups have entered the relevant primary jobs.

Overall, no one of the above policies or combination thereof addresses both of the reasons why inner-city blacks and other disadvantaged workers have trouble moving into primary jobs. Programs that provide advanced education, job training, or "job readiness" instruction do not address either reason. "Job development" and affirmative action can be used to address the problem of disadvantaged workers' lack of "inside information" and "pull" in primary jobs, but neither policy can make the requirements of those jobs seem like "common sense" to workers who have never held primary jobs or known anyone who has held a primary job. There is, in addition, a third potential problem that none of the aforementioned policies address. This is the problem of primary job scarcity, if it is in fact a problem. If there are not enough primary jobs for all of the workers who currently apply for and are qualified for them, then it is necessary to create new primary jobs in order to promote the mobility of disadvantaged workers into the primary sector without adversely affecting the mobility prospects of other workers.

A policy that would address all of these concerns would be one that transformed into primary jobs some jobs that are currently in the secondary sector. The jobs that should be targeted for transformation into primary jobs are those secondary jobs in which adult men from disadvantaged groups are currently employed. The transformation would involve raising the wages paid in these jobs and improving their job security. A necessary condition for these changes may well be the development of extensive internal labor market structures in these jobs.

A policy of this sort would circumvent the barriers of information and "pull" that make it difficult for disadvantaged workers to enter the primary sector, since the jobs that would be converted into primary jobs are those in which disadvantaged workers are already employed. The proposed policy would also deal with the problem of making the requirements of primary jobs seem like "common sense" to disadvantaged workers. As the jobs were transformed from secondary to primary jobs, the workers who currently work at them would learn the requirements of primary-sector employment through their own on-the-job experience. Their model of the labor market would change to incorporate those requirements. Through the ordinary process of socialization, other members of their social groups would also learn the new model and would, therefore, view the requirements of the primary sector as "common sense." Finally, the proposed policy would create new primary jobs for workers who do not presently have access to any primary jobs. It could, therefore, be successful

regardless of whether or not there is a shortage of primary jobs among workers who already have customary linkages to those jobs. In effect, the new policy works by creating new linkages between workers and primary jobs.

Is this policy feasible? If so, what means could be used to implement it? These are obviously questions that must be answered if the policy is to be put into practice, but there is, unfortunately, very little information available that would help to answer them. The jobs that are now primary jobs did not become so as a consequence of a deliberate public policy that was aimed at converting secondary jobs into primary jobs. Instead, they acquired their character as primary jobs through a complex historical process that involved simultaneous changes in wages, job security, technology, training processes, supervisory methods, and systems of labor-management relations.⁴ There are several theories of the origins of the primary sector. Each of these theories attempts to isolate a key variable that was supposedly responsible for setting this process in motion, although the theories are not mutually exclusive. In the absence of more direct evidence about how secondary jobs could be converted into primary jobs, perhaps the best way to assess the feasibility of such a conversion is to consider what each of the theories of the origins of the primary sector would imply about it.

One explanation of the primary sector centers around skill specificity in firms' production technologies. Internal labor markets arise as a cost-minimizing response by firms to the

existence of firm-specific skills and complementarities among those skills.⁵ Since firm-specific skills can, when combined with cost minimization by firms, also give rise to other characteristics of primary jobs in addition to internal labor markets (e.g., job security and high wages⁶), the firm-specificity of skills and the complementarities that exist between those skills can generate the primary sector or at least create room for the primary sector to develop. This theory implies that a successful transformation of secondary jobs into primary jobs requires transformations in firms' production technologies that would tend to create firm-specific skills and complementarities among those skills. It is not clear whether this could be accomplished through public policy or, if so, how it could be accomplished. Perhaps persistent labor shortages in secondary jobs would induce employers to redesign those jobs and link them together on a firm-specific basis in order to assure themselves of a reliable supply of labor. Perhaps pressure from labor unions (see below) could induce the necessary redesign of secondary jobs.

A second theory roots the primary sector in the extent and stability of demand for a firm's products. When much or all of a firm's product demand is high and stable over time, or can be made high and stable by the firm itself, then the firm will satisfy the high and stable portion of its demand by using a very capital-intensive technology to produce long runs of a standardized product. It is possible for the firm to offer

stable employment opportunities (including formal job-security guarantees) to the part of its work force that works with this technology. Moreover, this technology lends itself to the creation of the kinds of specialized, firm-specific jobs that the theory outlined above associates with the primary sector and that, in fact, seem to characterize the lower tier of that sector.⁷

According to this second theory, then, it is necessary to increase and/or stabilize product demand in order to turn secondary jobs into primary jobs. This might be accomplished with government demand-management policies that are aimed at the particular industries (and, if necessary, the particular firms) in which the targeted jobs are located.

A third theory locates the origin of the primary sector in employers' attempts to control the labor process under circumstances in which it is very costly or impossible for supervisors to monitor workers' job performance in an immediate and direct manner. When immediate and direct monitoring is very costly or impossible, employers may offer workers indirect incentives—such as above-market wages, job-security guarantees, and the possibility of upward mobility within an internal labor market—to induce them to work hard. Jobs in which these indirect work incentives are provided have the characteristics of primary jobs.⁸ This theory suggests that secondary jobs can be turned into primary jobs if immediate and direct monitoring of workers is made more costly to employers. How this could be done is not entirely clear; the answer depends on one's view of the circumstances

in which immediate and direct supervision would be costly to the firm. For example, if firm-specific skills or highly mechanized technologies make monitoring costly, then the policies suggested in the two preceding paragraphs might be appropriate. Perhaps conflict or the potential for conflict between labor unions and management over work discipline increases the cost of monitoring and leads employers to respond by turning secondary jobs into primary jobs. If so, then unionization of the targeted secondary jobs should be encouraged.

A final explanation of the origin of the primary sector stresses the role that labor unions played in inducing employers to offer jobs with the characteristics that we associate with the primary sector. The influence of unions may have worked through several channels, some of which were mentioned in the theories discussed above. Shop-floor conflict between unions and managers may have induced firms to transform secondary jobs into primary jobs.⁹ Unions' successful demands for higher wages and improved working conditions may have led firms to reorganize production in ways that were compatible with the satisfaction of these demands.¹⁰ In some industries, such as longshoring, unions may have regularized the supply of labor, thereby making it possible for relatively stable jobs to exist.¹¹ If strong unions are essential to the transformation of secondary jobs into primary jobs, then it is necessary for public policy to create the legal and economic conditions that would be conducive to the formation of strong unions in the targeted secondary jobs.

Taken together, these theories of the origin of the existing primary sector suggest a potpourri of methods by which the secondary jobs now held by disadvantaged workers might be converted into primary jobs. Among these methods are unionization, tightening of secondary labor markets, and stabilization of demand. Whether these recommendations could be implemented in the present economic environment, however, remains an unanswered question. Are policy recommendations drawn from the economic history of the early and mid-twentieth century U.S. relevant to the very different economic environment of the late twentieth century? Is it possible, for example, to stabilize demand in particular industries during a period of great economic flux, when the parameters of the relevant demand functions may be changing in unpredictable ways? Is a standardized product or a highly capital-intensive technology a prerequisite for the establishment of primary lower-tier jobs, or can such jobs be made compatible with other products and production technologies? Is it possible to create strong labor unions in jobs that are now secondary jobs at a time when union membership is declining in the economy as a whole? Is it possible to create new primary lower-tier jobs in an economy that is losing many of its traditional primary lower-tier jobs? How much of a reduction in the size of the secondary sector is possible in the present U.S. economy? What other kinds of changes in the structure of the economy might be required in order to reduce the size of the secondary sector?

Answers to these questions may be difficult to obtain,

especially during a period of rapid structural change in the U.S. economy. Nevertheless, they are essential if a strategy of transforming some secondary jobs into primary jobs is to be adopted as public policy.

2. DISPLACEMENT OF PRIMARY-SECTOR WORKERS

A second contemporary policy problem on which this study can shed some light is the effect of rapid, large-scale, permanent losses of primary-sector manufacturing jobs on displaced workers and their communities. How do displaced workers react to the labor market changes that are occurring? Are they able to find new primary jobs? If not, what public policies might help them to do so? Since I have not conducted a study of displaced workers, and since previous studies of displaced workers have not paid much attention to the qualitative aspects of worker adjustment to labor market change,¹² my comments in this section are necessarily speculative. As noted in chapter 6, further research on the impact of major labor market changes on workers is needed in order for researchers to move beyond the speculations that I will offer here. In this section, I will discuss the implications of the present study's findings for the problems of re-employing displaced primary-sector workers in new primary jobs and providing the children of these workers with access to primary jobs. I will assume that the jobs being lost are primary lower-tier jobs whose recruitment, hiring, and training processes resemble those of the jobs described in chapter 4. I will also

assume that the displaced workers and their children belong to extended families and peer groups like those of chapter 5,¹³ and that they have models of the labor market that resemble the model described in chapter 5.

The analysis presented in the first section of this chapter suggests that the large-scale, rapid loss of customary and fringe primary jobs among a group of workers will break down these workers' customary model of the labor market without providing them with a new model to put in its place. The workers' awareness of how the labor market operates and of how to operate in the labor market is based on the continued existence of the customary model, which, in turn, is based on the continued availability of the primary jobs to which the workers' extended families and peer groups are linked. If those primary jobs suddenly disappear or decline drastically in availability, then displaced workers no longer know how the labor market works or what their role in it ought to be. They do not know what jobs might be available to them, how to evaluate any jobs that might come their way, or how to go about finding new jobs. Without this knowledge, they are not able to make labor market decisions that could possibly be characterized as "rational" according to any definition of rationality. Instead, their labor market behavior is likely to be confused and undirected. They may cling to their old job-finding habits even though those habits no longer work, simply because they do not know what else to do. Or they may desperately try out new strategies that they think

might lead to new jobs (e.g., enrollment in retraining programs) without knowing whether those strategies are likely to be effective. There is no reason why behavior of this sort should be expected to lead the displaced workers to new primary jobs, even if primary jobs are available in their local labor market. More generally, there is no reason to expect confused, undirected behavior to lead the displaced workers to jobs that make the best use of their productive abilities. It is, therefore, for both allocational and distributional reasons that a public policy response is necessary.

The policy problem, moreover, is not confined to the displaced workers themselves, although they are certainly hurt most directly by the loss of their primary jobs. In a social group that is experiencing rapid and substantial losses of the primary jobs to which it has customary linkages, the labor market perceptions and behavior of young secondary-sector workers may also change. Not only will youths be unable to make the transition from secondary to primary employment in the manner described in chapter 5, but they, like their elders, may lose their customary model of the labor market without immediately gaining a new model with which to replace it. If this occurs, then the youths will not know how to go about getting primary jobs. They may come to believe that they will never be able to get primary jobs and may, therefore, engage in extremely unstable labor market behavior while remaining in the secondary sector. Or they may desperately pursue strategies of higher education or geographical

mobility in the hope that these strategies will lead to primary jobs, but they may not know how to use these strategies to obtain primary jobs. (For example, if a youth moves to a new city in search of a primary job, he may not know what primary jobs are available there or how to go about getting the primary jobs that are available.) In pointing out the potential labor market problems of youths whose social groups are experiencing sudden, major losses of primary jobs, I do not mean to suggest that those problems are as serious as the problems faced by older workers who lose their primary jobs. However, I do wish to suggest that the ability of the youths to obtain primary jobs is a legitimate concern of public policy. It is, moreover, a concern that previous studies of worker displacement have overlooked.

Another noteworthy feature of the worker displacement problem is that the problem may affect particular groups of workers (e.g., particular neighborhoods) regardless of the overall condition of the metropolitan area labor market. The reason for this is that the ability of workers to obtain primary jobs depends on the continuing existence of social linkages between particular groups of workers and particular primary jobs. Hence, displaced primary-sector workers from a particular neighborhood may have great difficulty in obtaining new primary jobs even if many new primary jobs are being created in their metropolitan area. (Conversely, particular neighborhoods may be unaffected by substantial losses of primary jobs that occur within their metropolitan areas, as long as the customary and

fringe primary jobs of those neighborhoods are not being lost.) This suggests that policies to help displaced workers and their communities may have to be targeted at particular neighborhoods or particular jobs, even in metropolitan areas that are economically healthy.

Policy responses to the problem of worker displacement from primary-sector manufacturing jobs may be divided into two categories. Some policies accept the loss of particular primary jobs and try to help workers find new primary jobs to replace the lost jobs. Other policies attempt to prevent the loss of primary jobs in the first place. A comprehensive evaluation of the relative merits of these two kinds of policies is well beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it is possible to use the findings of this study to evaluate some particular policies that might be used to help displaced workers find new primary jobs. By showing the limits of those policies under current labor market conditions, it is also possible to suggest some larger labor market issues that arise in the consideration of whether public policy should try to prevent the loss of primary-sector manufacturing jobs.

The analysis presented in this section suggests that policy-makers concerned with displaced workers must not assume that the workers are immediately able to make job decisions outside of the social and institutional environment in which they are accustomed to making those decisions. In order to cope with mass displacement and with the large-scale change in the job structure that accompanies mass displacement, workers need some

continuity in the institutions that structure their labor market decisions. Therefore, services to workers who are displaced or who are soon to be displaced should be delivered by neighborhood-based organizations, labor unions, and/or the employers that are laying the workers off. Furthermore, policies to help the workers find new primary jobs should, to the extent possible, avoid disrupting the workers' extended families and peer groups. (This makes geographical relocation a policy of last resort. I shall have more to say about this below.) In addition, policy-makers should not assume that the workers are able to make job decisions quickly, since the rapid, large-scale loss of primary jobs leaves the workers, at least temporarily, without any labor market model in terms of which those decisions might be made. Without a model, the labor market makes no sense to them. A new labor market model, i.e., a new way of making sense of the labor market, can only be expected to develop gradually. Policies that give displaced workers time to begin developing a new model (e.g., requirements that employers give workers prior notice of plant closings, extension of unemployment insurance benefits), therefore, are advisable, as are policies that enable workers to determine whether it might be possible for them to save the old model (e.g., subsidies for worker buyouts of factories, requirements that unions and management explore ways to save jobs).¹⁴

What policies might assist displaced primary workers (and younger members of their social groups who are still working at secondary jobs) in finding new primary jobs? Education, retraining,

and instruction in job-search techniques have often been proposed. Much of what I said about these policies as strategies to assist the disadvantaged applies to the case of displaced workers as well. The efficacy of these policies depends on the kinds of recruitment and hiring processes and training methods that are used for the primary jobs that remain available to the displaced workers. If the remaining primary jobs can only be obtained with advanced education, specific external training, and/or formal job-search techniques, then policies that provide these things will be helpful. However, if the remaining primary jobs do not require advanced education, provide specific training exclusively on the job, and/or are filled only through informal recruitment channels, then some or all of these policies will be useless. As in the case of disadvantaged workers, careful design of external labor market policies such as these requires careful attention to the methods by which primary employers actually recruit, select, and train their workers. Policy-makers should not simply assume that such policies will help displaced workers regardless of the kinds of recruitment, hiring, and training institutions that now exist in the primary sector.

Job development is another policy that might be relevant to displaced workers. Job development might be used as a transition strategy to enable these workers to establish social linkages to new primary jobs. The major problem with this strategy is that it is likely to work only in areas where new primary jobs are being created or where employers are experiencing labor shortages

in existing primary jobs. Since the latter conditions do not always exist in locales where large numbers of primary-sector manufacturing jobs are being lost, job development cannot always be used to help displaced workers. However, job development can be useful when sudden, large-scale worker displacement is confined to one or a few neighborhoods in a large metropolitan area, provided that the number of primary jobs in the entire metropolitan area is growing.

In areas where the total number of primary jobs is stable or declining, it is sometimes argued, the only way to help displaced workers find new primary jobs is to encourage them (perhaps by means of government subsidies) to move to areas where the primary sector is expanding. Although geographical mobility may sometimes be necessary if displaced workers are to obtain new primary jobs, I believe that long-distance worker relocation should be a policy of last resort. There are three reasons why a policy that relies heavily on relocation is undesirable. First, as noted above, workers need their social networks in order to cope with major changes in the structure of the labor market. If workers' social networks consist of geographically localized peer groups and extended families, then relocation of workers on an individual basis would break up those networks, depriving workers of an important resource that would aid them in adjusting to a changed labor market. Second, previous studies have shown that displaced primary lower-tier workers feel strongly attached to their geographically localized social networks and are, therefore,

reluctant to make long-distance moves.¹⁵ The value that these workers place on their social networks should be respected as part of a more general public policy of respecting non-market social ties among individuals. Finally, the fact that a worker moves to an area where primary jobs are plentiful does not imply that he will have a high probability of obtaining a primary job, even if he is qualified for one. If most primary jobs are filled in ways that favor workers who already have customary social linkages to them, then the long-distance migrant who has no family or friends in the new location will find it difficult to get a primary job.

If workers must be encouraged to move in order to obtain primary jobs, then public policy should attempt both to ensure the migrants access to primary jobs at the new location and to minimize the disruptive impact of migration on the migrants' social networks. Ideally, it would be desirable to transfer each social network from a location where primary jobs are being lost to one where new primary jobs are being created and to re-employ all of the adult male members of the network in primary jobs at the new location. In a capitalist economy, it is probably impossible to design a policy that would realize this ideal. Nevertheless, a policy that at least moves in the right direction is one of what I will call "long-distance job development." In long-distance job development, neighborhood-based social service agencies, labor unions, and/or the employers that are about to lay off large numbers of primary-sector workers would

establish job development agreements with primary employers in areas where the number of primary jobs is growing. (These agreements would be roughly analogous to the inter-plant transfer rights that some primary employers already provide to displaced workers. Instead of operating within a single firm, though, long-distance job development would operate between two or more firms, or between a local union and a firm(s), or between a neighborhood organization and a firm(s). Moreover, job development agreements would provide displaced workers only with hiring preference for new primary jobs, not with guaranteed new primary jobs.) Job developers from each neighborhood, firm, or local union would target their job development efforts on a particular geographical area where the availability of primary jobs is growing. By doing so, they would give displaced workers from each neighborhood or workplace the opportunity to move to new primary jobs in the same new geographical area. This would give the workers a chance to move along with at least some of the other members of their existing social networks. When used in conjunction with relocation subsidies, long-distance job development would relieve displaced workers of some of the heaviest burdens of long-distance migration when migration is the only solution to their problem. Long-distance job development, though, should not be regarded as a panacea. It suffers from all of the drawbacks of conventional job development. In addition, it is likely to be more difficult to establish and maintain job development agreements on a long-distance basis than within a single metropolitan

area. Long-distance job development also requires greater change in the labor recruitment practices of primary employers than does conventional job development, since the employers on the receiving end would have to hold their job vacancies open until the relocated workers arrive at their new locations.

The limitations of ameliorative policies in dealing with the problem of worker displacement lead to the question of whether public policy should attempt to eliminate or minimize the displacement of primary-sector workers. Full consideration of this question is beyond the scope of this study. However, the study does illuminate some of the labor market issues that would arise in any attempt to answer the question.

An economy that is undergoing rapid structural change, as the U.S. economy is during the 1980's, must have the capacity to shift workers readily from one kind of task to another. There are, broadly speaking, at least two ways in which this "flexibility" can be achieved. One way, which might be termed "external labor market flexibility," gives employers a great deal of latitude to hire and fire workers in response to changes in economic conditions, restricts employers' ability to redeploy labor within internal labor markets, and relies mainly on institutions external to the firm (e.g., the price system) to reallocate labor during periods of rapid structural economic change. An alternative, which might be called "internal labor market flexibility," restricts (but does not eliminate) employers' ability to discharge workers for economic reasons and gives employers the ability to design

internal labor markets that allow relatively flexible redeployment of labor.¹⁶ The current U.S. system of labor allocation in the primary sector, like the system of external labor market flexibility described above, makes it relatively easy for employers to hire and fire workers for economic reasons and relatively difficult for them to reallocate labor within internal labor markets (because positions within internal labor markets are defined narrowly and the structure of the internal labor markets is fairly rigid). However, the current U.S. system does not enable labor to be reallocated easily during periods of rapid structural change because the U.S. economy lacks external labor market institutions that are able to cope with the allocation problem during such periods. As shown in chapter 6, the price system cannot allocate labor in a rapidly changing economy that contains a large number of workers like the ones described in this study, even if it is capable of doing so in a more stable economy. In the absence of alternative external labor market institutions that would play the allocative role that the price system is incapable of playing during periods of rapid structural change, the current U.S. system is inadequate during those periods. This suggests that the U.S. needs to move in the direction of either more external labor market flexibility or more internal labor market flexibility.

One way to evaluate the desirability of policies to prevent the loss of some existing primary jobs is to do so in the context of a discussion of whether the U.S. should move toward more internal

flexibility or toward more external flexibility. In this context, policies to prevent primary job losses would be policies to make the discharge of primary-sector workers more costly to employers. If such policies are to be adopted, then the U.S. must move toward more internal flexibility. If the U.S. were to move toward more external flexibility, then policies to discourage worker displacement would be both unnecessary and undesirable. This study cannot resolve the question of whether more internal flexibility or more external flexibility is desirable. However, it can suggest how the labor market institutions that it has described would have to change in order to accommodate a move in either direction.

A move in the direction of greater external labor market flexibility would probably require substantial and perhaps quite costly changes in the methods that primary employers use to recruit, select, and train workers. A labor allocation system that relied primarily on external flexibility would be one in which the customary worker-job linkages described in this study could not exist. In such a system, primary employers could not rely, as those described in chapter 4 now do, on the costless transmission of job information and general job-related skills or on the surpluses of "qualified" job applicants that the customary linkages provide. Primary employers may, therefore, have to redesign the institutions by which they recruit and hire workers, moving in the direction of more active labor recruitment and more extensive screening of job applicants. They may also

have to rely on schools, external training programs, and/or labor market intermediaries to supply them with job applicants who possess the general skills and attitudes that they require of entry-level workers. (Since the latter institutions do not currently perform these functions for the kinds of primary employers described in this study, substantial changes in those institutions may also be required.) In addition, a system based on external flexibility would have to provide a means by which displaced workers could acquire the skills needed to perform new primary jobs. In the system of labor market institutions described in chapter 4, the only way for a displaced worker to learn new skills is to enter a new internal labor market at the entry level (where no specific skills are required) and receive on-the-job training as he progresses through the ranks. It is difficult to see how a training process of this sort could be widely used in a rapidly changing economic environment if a labor allocation system based on external labor market flexibility were to be adopted. A system of external flexibility would require job-specific training to be performed in such institutions as public or private schools or training programs instead of or in addition to the on-the-job training that now occurs within internal labor markets. Primary employers would have to redesign their internal labor markets to make them compatible with the widespread provision of job-specific training outside the firm. This would mean that primary-sector internal labor markets would have to be less rigid than most of those described in chapter 4;

at a minimum, they would have to allow workers with the appropriate external training to enter at many places in addition to what is now the "entry level." A solution to the problem of worker displacement that relied on external flexibility, then, would be likely to require replacement or substantial alteration of many of the labor market institutions with which this study has been concerned.

A solution that relied on internal flexibility would also require some important changes in the institutions described in this study, but those changes would probably be confined to the internal labor market structure of the primary sector and to the training processes that occur within that structure. A labor allocation system based on internal flexibility would require employers to train workers in a wide variety of tasks. This could mean that primary employers would have to provide classroom-type training in addition to on-the-job training. It could also mean that they would have to provide more costly training (whether on-the-job or not) than most of the employers described in this study now provide. A system of internal flexibility would also require internal labor markets that would enable employers to shift their broadly trained workers between tasks readily. This would probably mean that positions within internal labor markets would be defined more broadly than those described in this study. It could also mean that lines of internal labor market progression would be less clearly defined than those described here. Despite the major changes in training methods and internal labor market

structures that a system of greater internal flexibility would probably require, such a system need not require major changes in primary employers' labor recruitment or hiring procedures or in the social processes by which workers move from secondary to primary jobs. Although the content of the primary jobs could differ considerably from that of today's primary jobs, workers could still enter internal labor markets without job-specific skills and could still receive all of their job-specific training within internal labor markets. Primary employers could, then, use hiring methods similar to those described in chapter 4. Workers could still view the process of obtaining a primary job in much the same way as the subjects of this study view that process. Customary linkages between particular groups of workers and particular primary jobs could be maintained, so employers would not need to change their recruitment practices. The complex of institutions and social processes described in this study would, on the whole, have to change less in a move toward more internal flexibility than in a move toward more external flexibility. (Of course, this does not, by itself, imply anything about the comparative costs of the two alternatives to workers, employers, or society.)

Ultimately, then, the question of what to do about the problem of displaced primary-sector workers, like the question of how to help disadvantaged workers move from secondary to primary jobs, is not so much a question about how to design a manpower policy as it is a question about how to redesign our labor

market institutions. Although this study has had many implications for the design of manpower policies, it has also suggested that those policies cannot adequately address the problems that they are intended to address. The policy debates about worker displacement and the mobility of the disadvantaged must be reoriented in the direction of institutional redesign. This study has barely touched on the issues of how to go about the task of redesign. However, it has provided a detailed description of the structure and functioning of some of our current labor market institutions and a theoretical perspective on the way those institutions affect workers. Using this description and theoretical perspective, it has suggested why institutional redesign is needed in order to solve some of our major labor market policy problems and what general directions redesign might take. Therein lies its contribution to the policy debates.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. Liebow, *op. cit.*, and Anderson, *op. cit.* The latter study is more useful for my purposes than the former because it deals with black youths in the late 1970's, while the former deals with adult black men in the early 1960's.
2. The evidence on black youths' attitudes toward secondary jobs is drawn mainly from Anderson, *op. cit.*, supplemented by my own interviews.
3. "Job readiness" and "job development" programs were described to me by job counselors at the downtown Boston, Roxbury, and Dorchester offices of a community-based anti-poverty organization, where these programs have been offered.
4. See the historical sources cited in note 24 above.

5. Oliver Williamson, Michael Wachter, and Jeffrey Harris, "Understanding the Employment Relation: The Analysis of Idiosyncratic Exchange," Bell Journal of Economics 6 (Spring 1975): 250-278. Peter Doeringer and Michael Piore, Internal Labor Markets and Manpower Analysis (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1971), pp. 13-17, also refer to skill specificity as one determinant of the existence of internal labor markets.

6. Gary Becker, Human Capital (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 16-37; Walter Oi, "Labor as a Quasi-Fixed Factor," Journal of Political Economy 70 (December 1962): 538-555.

7. Michael Piore, "The Technological Foundations of Dualism," in Michael Piore and Suzanne Berger, Dualism and Discontinuity in Industrial Societies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), chapter 3.

8. Richard Edwards, Contested Terrain (New York: Basic, 1979), esp. chapter 9. The efficiency-wage literature on segmented labor markets formalizes this explanation of the primary sector. See Bulow and Summers, op. cit.

9. Edwards, op. cit.

10. Jacoby, op. cit.

11. Lawrence Kahn, "Unions and Labor Market Segmentation" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1975).

12. Previous studies have emphasized the quantitative dimensions of worker displacement, including measurement of displaced workers' income losses, job-search techniques, effects of job loss on mental health, and multiplier effects of plant closings on local economies. Surveys of these studies are provided in William Haber, Louis Ferman, and James Hudson, The Impact of Technological Change (Kalamazoo, MI: Upjohn Institute, 1963); and Jeanne Gordus, Paul Jarley, and Louis Ferman, Plant Closings and Economic Dislocation (Kalamazoo, MI: Upjohn Institute, 1981).

13. A study of displaced steelworkers in Youngstown, Ohio, for example, describes those workers as residents of close-knit ethnic working class neighborhoods in which extended families play an important role. See Terry Buss and F. Stevens Redburn, Shutdown at Youngstown (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 106-108.

14. The analysis provided here resembles Peter Marris' analysis of loss and grieving in the lives of individuals. Marris analyzes major losses in the lives of individuals (e.g., the death of a loved one, eviction from a home as consequence of

slum clearance) as disruptions of the patterns of meaning (or, in the terminology of the present study, the models) that individuals impose on experience. He views grieving as a process by which they try to find new patterns of meaning in their lives after experiencing these losses. Central to the process of finding those new patterns of meaning are the passage of time, the maintenance of social ties that are not disrupted by the loss, continuity in the aspects of one's life that are not directly affected by the loss. In extending his analysis from the individual to the group level, Marris also suggests the need for groups to be able to test whether they must accept losses imposed on them by others. See Peter Marris, Loss and Change (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), esp. chapters 5 and 8.

15. See, e.g., Felician Foltman, White and Blue Collars in a Mill Shutdown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 97-100; Luke Smith and Irving Fowler, "Plant Relocation and Worker Migration," in Arthur Shostak and William Gomberg (eds.), Blue-Collar World (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 91-97.

16. The analytical framework used here is based loosely on that of Michael Piore, "Perspectives on Labor Market Flexibility," Industrial Relations 25 (Spring 1986): 146-166.

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