Introduction

How people find jobs is a prosaic problem— but exactly for this reason, it relates closely to important issues in sociology and economics. Under the rubric "labor mobility" in economics, and "social mobility" in sociology, how people move between jobs and between occupations has received much study; but surprisingly little detailed attention has been given to the question of how individuals become aware of the opportunities they take. Most studies are either highly aggregated or highly individualized. At the macro level, excellent monographs detail the statistics of men flowing between categories (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Blumen et al., 1955; Carlsson, 1958); at the micro level, other studies offer plausible psychological and economic motives for particular individuals to want to change jobs (Kahl, 1953; Reynolds, 1951; Morse, 1953). Important as these concerns are, they are not those of the present study. Rather, I have chosen to concentrate on the issue of how the information that facilitates mobility is secured and disseminated. This question lies somewhere between the micro- and macro-level concerns described above, and is a potentially crucial link in their integration; it is an important part of the study of the immediate causes of mobility, and, as in other social science problems, failure to specify immediate causes leads to inability to link micro and macro levels of analysis.

How mobility information travels bears on general social theory as well. The scarcity of information available to those engaging in mobility is striking. Complete and systematic data on job opportunities is extremely hard to collect; even trained investigators with government grants encounter difficult obstacles (Dunlop, 1966; Ferber and Ford, 1965). Thus, a single individual operating with
heavy constraints on his or her time and resources is likely to uncover only a small proportion of those openings he might plausibly fill at a given time. The use of mass media advertising and employment agencies does not substantially alter this situation.

Some have assumed that the advent of "modernization" leads to widespread use of formal and "universalistic" procedures, liberating individuals from the limitations once imposed by particular social milieus (for example, Sjoberg, 1960:192). But empirical sociological studies continually demonstrate the crucial importance of informal interaction in systems that are formally rationalized (Selznick, 1949; Dalton, 1959; Crozier, 1964). The present study offers another example of this kind: the heavy dependence of individuals on their existing set of personal contacts for information about job-change opportunities. (If everyone found his or her job "through the New York Times," the subject would have little sociological interest!)

We can view this as an instance of the enormous, though often unnoticed, constraint placed on individuals by the social network in which they find themselves. A primary focus of my analysis will thus be the dynamics of information flow through such networks. In this regard, I will be pursuing the findings of earlier studies which indicated that information which leads to action is more likely to move through chains of personal contact than through mass media, or more impersonal routes (Katz, 1957; Coleman et al., 1966; Lee, 1969).

Connections with economic theory will also be probed. I must consider to what extent my findings can be explained by the usual tools of supply and demand and marginal principles of optimization. In neoclassical economics, employment is a central variable at both the micro and macro levels. But, as in the sociological analysis of mobility, the levels are not convincingly integrated. A given amount of aggregate demand is said to result in a certain level of employment; that is, when there is work to be done, it is assumed that people will be employed to do it (barring already full employment). How to make the connection between work that needs to be done and people who are willing to do it is not specified. When the mechanisms of a theory—the immediate causes—are neglected in this way,
Introduction

is likely to un-might plausibly low-banging employment.
ization” leads to procedures, liberating particular social prirical sociological tance of informal ed (Selznick, 1949; offers another individuals on their about job-change through the New ogical interest!) us, though often e social network in ny analysis will in such networks. In ier studies which is more likely to rough mass media, et al., 1966; Lee, xe probed. I must aimed by the usual ples of optimization. nal variable at both ogical analysis of ed. A given amount level of employ- is assumed that by full employment). it needs to be done fied. When the mech neglected in this way, we are at a loss to understand what happens when predicted results fail to occur, as when blacks are unemployed in periods of high aggregate demand. Where possible, therefore, I will comment on the relevance of my findings for the economic theory of labor markets.

Most of the literature in this area has been created by American labor economists motivated primarily, in many cases, by concern with either unemployment or labor shortages. They have focused on blue-collar workers. The common practice has been to divide methods of finding jobs into “formal” and “informal” ones. The “formal” category includes commercial and public employment agencies and advertisements. “Informal” methods include the use of personal contacts of any kind, and also direct application to an employer (or his personnel agent) not previously known personally to the job-seeker.

The blue-collar studies, carried out from the 1930’s to the present, in American cities of widely varying size, economic base, and market conditions, have been remarkably similar in their conclusions. All showed that formal mechanisms of job allocation rarely accounted for more than 20 percent of placements. By contrast, 60-90 percent of jobs were found informally, principally through friends and relatives but also by direct application. (See De Schweinetz, 1932; Edelman et al., 1952; Lester, 1954; Lurie and Rayack, 1968; Myers and Shultz, 1951; Myers and Maclaurin, 1943; Parnes, 1954; Reynolds, 1951; Sheppard and Belitsky, 1966; Ullman and Taylor, 1965; Wilcock and Franke, 1963; Wilcock and Sobel, 1958.)

Only a few studies have investigated white-collar workers. Female clerical workers have been shown to use agencies and ads more often than blue-collar workers (of either sex), but still to rely more on informal methods than on any other kind (Shultz, 1962). Two studies of professionals, one of aerospace engineers and one of college professors, show little difference from the blue-collar studies in incidence of job-finding methods. In the engineering study (Shapero et al., 1965:50), 68 percent found their jobs by informal means: 51 percent by personal acquaintances and 17 percent by
direct application.¹ In Brown’s massive study of college professors (1965b; 1967), 84 percent used informal methods: 65 percent personal contacts, 19 percent direct application. Brown’s conclusions are consistent with those of Caplow and McGee (1958); but exact comparison is not possible since they do not supply figures on proportions finding jobs by various methods.

Nearly all of the above studies have been done from the point of view of economists whose underlying theoretical framework has thus been that of economic theory, with its emphasis on the concept of “labor markets,” and the relation of wages to mobility.

The present study is conducted from a quite different point of view. Because, in the majority of cases, individuals hear about a new job via personal contacts, and not through general announcements of vacancies, an important sociological dimension can be introduced. The actual transmission of information about job opportunities becomes a more immediate condition of mobility than any characteristic of jobs themselves. No matter how great the “net advantage” to an individual in changing from his present position to some particular new one, he cannot move unless he secures the proper information. Should social conditions arise which block this flow of information between personal acquaintances, economic theory would be of little help in understanding the problem.

No study has gone much beyond the statement that information is secured from “friends and relatives.” I will be concerned to specify more exactly the origin, nature, and maintenance of the interpersonal tie mediating the passage of information. This involves asking how and when the job-changer first came to know the person who ultimately supplied the necessary information, whether the tie was weak or strong, forged in work or in social situations, and in what ways the relationship was maintained between the time it began and the time that information was passed. I will also be interested in the circumstances under which information came to be passed, and possession of the character changing it over to the most extreme position.

For a number of reasons, first of all because of the variable, while stratum has been a study offering workers; more often than expected by their jobs by those most like faulty; see Chap. 1. I limit amply are sufficiently would be needed.

Having selec. looked for a reasonable-size males in the sp showing the extent of order to which a view exists. I 98,000 inhabitant.

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College professors: 65 percent of Brown's conclu-
dee (1958); but supply figures on

from the point of view in the concept of ability.

For a number of reasons, at the beginning of this study I decided to concentrate on professional, technical, and managerial workers. (For convenience, I shall refer to them hereafter as PTM workers.) It was, first of all, desirable to rule out social class as a confounding variable, while nevertheless choosing a fairly general sample. This stratum has been studied less than any other—I know of no other study offering information on a general random sample of such workers; moreover, I wanted to be able to see intensive and sophisticated attempts at job search. In view of the importance attached to their jobs by these people, I suspected that they would be the ones most likely to conduct such a search. (This assumption proved faulty; see Chapter 1.) Ruling out the effects of still another crucial variable, I limited my attention to males. Female career patterns are sufficiently different from those of males that a separate study would be necessary to do justice to them.

Having selected a stratum, I then needed a sampling location. I looked for a city or town which 1) was large enough to provide a reasonable-sized sample; 2) contained a high proportion of employed males in the specified category, so as to facilitate sampling; 3) was covered by a comprehensive (commercial) city directory listing job and place of work each year for each resident and 4) was close enough to Cambridge that I could do a substantial number of interviews myself. Newton, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb of some 98,000 inhabitants seemed the best choice.

I chose a sampling method in which I compared two consecutive city directories and took a random sample of those whose employer in the later edition was different from the one listed in the earlier. In addition, every person appearing in the new directory for the first time was included in the sample, and later dropped from consideration if he turned out not to have changed his job within the last five years. (The advantage of a sample with recent mobility experience was that of more accurate recall; this was especially imp-
important since I was to ask questions in great detail about not particularly memorable events.) Those who were taking their first job were included; those changing from one to another branch of the same company were excluded.

My goal was to interview 100 such individuals personally, and to collect a mail survey from 200 others. To this end, letters were sent to 457 potential respondents; this was a 45 percent random sample of all apparently eligible persons in Newton. The final yield was 100 personal interviews and 182 mail surveys. This represented response rates of 85.5 percent in the interview, and 79.1 percent in the mail survey, of all those who were ultimately found to be eligible.2

Every method, of course, introduces systematic distortions and it is best to be aware of what these are before evaluating results. Perhaps the most serious such distortion in the present work is that it was not practicable to interview respondents’ employers. The value of conducting these interviews would lie not so much in checking the accuracy of the accounts given to me by respondents; while corroboration would be of some value, most of my questions could have been answered only by the job changer rather than the new employer. More important would be the account of what steps an employer had taken to fill the position in question, and how many prospects were considered. Comparison of how the employer was put in touch with unsuccessful candidates, to how he became linked with my respondent would be revealing. An economist would say that this study lays heavy emphasis on the supply side of the labor market, leaving out the demand process. While this shortcoming detracts from some ideal study, I do not think that it need vitiate the usefulness of the results presented here, which are more or less self-contained. Emphasis is on the sociological forces which make mobility opportunity available to individuals, rather than on how employers manage to fill vacant positions.

2. My sampling method is basically adapted from that of Reynolds (1951). A detailed account of sampling, consistency comparisons between interview and mail sample, and representativeness of the Newton population can be found in Appendix A.
A second important bias is introduced by taking only individuals who have changed jobs within five years, rather than a general random sample of PTM workers. I adopted this strategy to facilitate memory of mobility experience, as mentioned above, and also to rule out variations caused by secular trends over the longer period that a general sample would have involved. One would expect that a general sample, as compared to the present one, would be older, since younger men are more mobile, and therefore likely to be overrepresented among recent movers. It may also be that recent movers are more adventurous than the general population of PTM workers. Arguments come to mind for their being either less competent or more competent, depending on the cause of their mobility. As a consequence of these or other differences, members of a general sample might show a somewhat different picture of the job-changing process. I, myself, doubt that the bias is a serious one, but in the absence of baseline comparative data, the reader must be warned to keep it in mind.

A third bias results from studying here, only how the respondents secured information about the jobs that they took; this is clearly not the only information they receive about job vacancies, and it would be of particular interest to know more about whether there are systematic differences between how information that does and does not lead to a job change is secured. This is related to the second bias, in that men searching intensively for a new job, but not finding one to their liking during the specified five years, had no chance to be included in my sample. Some exploratory probing of my respondents convinced me, however, that I did not have the time or resources to carefully explore the problem of jobs not taken. Not the least of the problems involved was definition of what it means to say that a respondent has heard about a job that he might fill. While it is fairly clear what constitutes a hard job offer, there is a vast grey area consisting of opportunities that might or might not become hard offers depending on the actions of respondent, employer, and other interested parties. If the reader tries to write down a list of the jobs that might have been available to him during the past year, he will quickly see the difficulties involved.
A last bias is introduced by confining the study to change of employer: I have excluded job changes in the labor market internal to firms. Economists have made widely varying estimates of the significance of such markets. In a recent article, Dunlop remarks that for the “typical enterprise, hiring-in jobs are only a small fraction of the total number of job classifications” (1966:32; also see Lester, 1954:32-34.) Palmer, however, offers data suggesting that the proportion of job changes occurring without change of employer is less than 10 percent of all job changes (1954:51, 124). Her data is from the 1940’s, and is thus especially interesting in view of Reynolds’ idea that internal promotions are more likely in tight labor markets, as in the 1940’s (Reynolds, 1951:144.)

In compiling my sample, the number of cases I had to exclude because they involved mobility internal to a firm was much less than 10 percent. Changes of employer are far easier to detect than changes of “job” within a firm; no one’s job is quite the same one day as the next, particularly in the case of PTM workers. This measurement difficulty may account for much of the apparent discrepancy between expected and observed mobility within firms. It would have been beyond my scope to resolve these difficulties in this study; moreover, job change in internal markets presents a somewhat different set of substantive issues than in external ones. Thus, in what follows, “job change” or “mobility” may be taken to be synonymous with “change of employer.” Nothing else is implied.

As personal interviews were more detailed than mail surveys, some tables in the text will be based only on the 100 interviews, others on the entire sample of 282. Data from a pilot study are not included in tables, but some anecdotal material is drawn from this source; these cases are clearly indicated. Levels of significance indicated in the tables are based on the chi-square statistic.

Finding Work: Some Basic Results

PTM workers use three basic ways of finding out about jobs: formal means, personal contacts, and direct application. Included

3. In this study, I follow the usual convention in designating as “tight” labor markets those in which more vacancies exist than men to fill them; the opposite situation (surplus of men) is called a “loose market.”
under "formal means" are advertisements, public and private employment agencies (including those calling themselves "management consultants" or "executive search services"), interviews and placements sponsored by universities or professional associations, and placement committees in certain professions, notably in various ministries. The defining characteristic of formal means is that the job-seeker uses the services of an impersonal intermediary, between himself and prospective employers. By "impersonal" is meant either the lack of any personal contact (as in newspaper advertising), or use of an individual, who is specifically designated by himself or others, as an employment intermediary. "Personal contacts," by contrast, implies that there is some individual known personally to the respondent, with whom he originally became acquainted in some context unrelated to a search for job information, from whom he has found out about his new job, or, who recommended him to someone who then contacted him. "Direct application" means that one goes or writes directly to a firm, does not use a formal or personal intermediary, and has not heard about a specific opening from a personal contact. Although the three methods are distinct, in principle, and pure cases outnumber others, the differences may become blurred in specific instances. Further discussion of the coding problem involved may be found in Appendix B.

In the present PTM sample, personal contact is the predominant method of finding out about jobs. Almost fifty-six percent of the respondents used this method; 18.8 percent used formal means (9.9 percent advertisements, 8.9 percent other formal means) and 18.8 percent used direct application; 6.7 percent fell into miscellaneous categories (including "not ascertained.") If one takes into account the usual over-estimation of the use of "direct application" (see Appendix B for further discussion), these figures are remarkably similar to those generally found for blue-collar workers.

4. Direct application has, in other studies, sometimes been included, with personal contacts, in the category "informal" methods; since the use of the expression "informal" has no particular logic to it, and has served only as a negative, residual category, I have dropped it here. Direct application could just as easily be called a "formal" method, as in Brown (1967). In fact, it is different from both formal methods and from the use of personal contacts; hence the three-way classification.
We must now ask, in some detail, why a given individual uses one method rather than another to find a job. Other methods may have been used, of course, besides the one that ultimately resulted in a job change. Hence, we have, to some extent, not only a question of propensity to use a method, but also one of why the respondent was able to do so successfully.

Most respondents prefer the use of personal contacts to other means. Other labor market studies indicate that employers express a similar preference for hiring methods. It follows that external economic conditions have less influence than might be supposed on the methods that connect people to jobs. In tight labor markets, employers are forced to use less preferred methods; but this is largely cancelled by the lower motivation of job-seekers or job-changers to do so. The opposite may be said of loose labor markets. Thus, studies done under various economic conditions have shown similar distributions of job-finding methods. (The statement about “canceling” is crude, however, and ought to be subjected to more systematic investigation.)

As a first approximation, we may suppose that preferences for different methods are determined by some sort of cost-benefit analysis of job-search procedures by prospective job-changers. This is only an approximation because, as discussed in detail in Chapter 1, the image of the job-changer as conducting a search according to rational, utility-maximizing principles needs considerable modification.

Nevertheless, the preference described above is roughly justified by respondents on a cost-benefit basis; findings from various other studies support their judgment. Sheppard and Belitsky, for instance, for a mostly blue-collar sample, computed the proportion of those using a given method who obtained jobs through it. They found that “friends and relatives” received by far the highest rating (1966: 94). Brown, for each method used by his respondents, college professors, computed the number of jobs accepted as a proportion of the number of jobs found by that method; this is presumably a measure of the desirability of jobs found in various ways. The top five methods on this measure were different types of personal con-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of satisfaction</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly satisfied</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aIncludes “neither satisfied nor very dissatisfied.”
bTwo-variable tables add to 100 printing “100 percent” in each case percentages are based is given.
cAll significance levels are by chi square usable response was not obtained (1967:141). In addition, h contacts in the finding of jobs higher salaries, and greater pre-118). Next in quality of job pr letters” in most cases), followe (1965b:241).

The PTM workers to whom secured through personal contacts available by other means; a frie description—he may also indic, genial, if the boss is neurotic, a or is stagnant. (Similarly, on th-pective employees will be trust the evaluator personally.)

Various measures of the qu: substantiate their idea that bet tacts. Table 1 shows that those likely to say that they are “ver
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In addition, he reported more use of personal contacts in the finding of jobs of higher rank, smaller teaching loads, higher salaries, and greater prestige of college (1965b:227; 1967:118). Next in quality of job produced was direct application (“blind letters” in most cases), followed by the various formal methods (1965b:241).

The PTM workers to whom I spoke believed that information secured through personal contacts is of higher quality than that available by other means; a friend gives more than a simple job-description—he may also indicate if prospective workmates are congenial, if the boss is neurotic, and if the company is moving forward or is stagnant. (Similarly, on the demand side, evaluations of prospective employees will be trusted better when the employer knows the evaluator personally.)

Various measures of the quality of jobs held by my respondents substantiate their idea that better jobs are found via personal contacts. Table 1 shows that those using personal contacts are most likely to say that they are “very satisfied” with their current job,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of satisfaction</th>
<th>Formal means</th>
<th>Personal contacts</th>
<th>Direct application</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly satisfied</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p = 0.03

aIncludes “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied,” “fairly dissatisfied,” and “very dissatisfied.”
bTwo-variable tables add to 100 percent in the columns. Rather than printing “100 percent” in each case, the number of cases on which column percentages are based is given.
cAll significance levels are by chi-square test.
dOmitted from this and subsequent tables are respondents from whom a usable response was not obtained on any variable in the table.
Table 2. Level of income of respondent in present job, by job-finding method used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Formal means</th>
<th>Personal contacts</th>
<th>Direct application</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $10,000</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000–14,999</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000–24,999</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 or more</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p = 0.001$

and least likely not to express satisfaction; direct application and formal means follow, in that order. Table 2 shows the strong association of income level with job-finding method. Nearly half (45.5 percent) of those using personal contacts report incomes over $15,000, whereas the corresponding figure for formal means is under one-third; for direct application, under one-fifth.

Jobs can also be classified by the nature of their creation. In some cases one directly replaces someone who has vacated a position; or an individual may be added on to do work similar to that which others are already doing. New positions may also be created: work may be done that has not been done before, or previously scattered tasks can be put together into one job. It seems likely that the most desirable positions would be found in the category of "newly created" jobs, since these would be most apt to have been tailored to the needs, preferences, and abilities of an incumbent. Table 3 shows that those finding a job through contacts are much more likely than those using formal means or direct application, to have had jobs newly created for them.

By taking the percentages on these tables in the opposite direction, we may view the same findings from the point of view of the system of jobs. Results are parallel: The more satisfied individuals are in their jobs, the more likely they are to have found them
Introduction

Table 3. Origin of job, by job-finding method of respondent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin of job</th>
<th>Formal means</th>
<th>Personal contacts</th>
<th>Direct application</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct replacement</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added on</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newly created</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ p = 0.02 \]

through contacts. Jobs offering the highest salary are much more prone to be found through contacts than others: whereas less than half of jobs yielding less than $10,000 per year were found by contacts, the figure is more than three-quarters for those paying more than $25,000. The use of direct application falls steadily as the salary of a job rises; the use of formal methods is somewhat less regular in pattern, though least likely at the highest salary. Finally, newly created jobs are much more likely to be filled via personal contacts than are other types, and are least likely to be filled by direct application or formal means.

A related finding is that 57.9 percent of those who say they have recently thought about looking for another job found their present job through contacts, compared to 72.1 percent of those who have not considered changing (\( p = 0.09 \)). This is parallel to the finding of Shapero et al. for aerospace engineers, that those recently leaving their company were considerably less likely to have entered via contacts than those who remained (1965:50). Discussions of labor force “attachment” would do well to consider method of recruitment. The fact that “stayers” are more likely to have been recruited through contacts than “movers” may result only from the fact that better jobs are found in this way. It may also be true, however, that the man who is thus recruited is more likely to become quickly integrated into the social circles of his workplace, having an entree in the person of his contact. The data of the present study are
too limited to allow a choice between the two hypotheses.

To sum up, evidence is strong that the use of personal contacts by my respondents results in better jobs than other methods. A number of respondents even had the odd experience of being refused a job for which they applied directly, only to be accepted later for the same job through personal contacts. One postdoctoral student in biology received a letter from an institution to which he had applied for a job, saying that there were "no openings for an individual with your qualifications." But when his thesis adviser took a position there, the younger man went along as a research associate; he subsequently received an effusive letter expressing the college's delight at his appointment. An assistant professor of psychology tells a similar story; his inquiry about the position he now holds was never answered. But several months later, he received a call from someone he had once worked with, asking him if he would be interested in the position. The friend was unaware of his previous inquiry.

Since respondents prefer to find jobs through personal contacts, and this preference appears well-grounded, we must then ask why everyone did not do so. Here the influence of social structure must be probed. Some individuals have the right contacts, while others do not. If one lacks the appropriate contact, there is little he can do about it. While this is obvious enough, it is a difficult question, and a major focus of this study, to determine under what circumstances a given individual will have such contacts.

We may begin by asking whether groups with particular demographic characteristics are more or less prone to the use of certain methods. In this context, the standard sociological variables of religion, ethnicity, and educational background come to mind. Several studies have compared the behavior of black and white (usually blue-collar) workers; some found that blacks used formal means more than whites, others that they used them less often. (Crain, 1970; Lurie and Rayack, 1966:369; Sheppard and Belitsky, 1966: 174, 178; Ullman and Taylor, 1965: 283; Wilcock and Franke, 1963:130). A recent national survey of 14-24-year-old males found no racial differences in search behavior (Parnes et al., 1970:102-
Introduction

no hypotheses. 

... in other methods. A 

... of being refused 

... to be accepted later for 

... postdoctoral student in 

... to which he had 

... openings for an in- 

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... through personal contacts, 

... we must then ask why 

... of social structure must 

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... there is little he can do 

... a difficult question, and 

... under what circumstances 

... with particular demo- 

... use to the use of certain 

... ological variables of 

... und come to mind. Seye- 

... black and white (usually 

... ks used formal means 

... em less often. (Crain, 

... ard and Belitsky, 1966: 

... Milcock and Franke, 

... -24-year-old males found 

... et al., 1970:102-

Table 4. Job-finding method, by religious background of respondent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method used</th>
<th>Religious background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal means</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contact</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct application</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p = n.s. \text{a}$

$^a$Significance levels of 0.20 or less are reported; otherwise n.s. (= not significant) is indicated.

$^b$Those responding "none" to religious preference were assigned to the religious preference of their parents, if any; where both respondents' and parents' preference are reported as none, the respondents' religious background is coded none.

104). In the present PTM sample, Table 4 shows that religious back- 

... ground had no particular impact on likelihood of using a given 

... method. Similarly uninteresting tables could be produced showing 

... that ethnic background and educational level attained has no rela- 

... tion to incidence of these methods. (As the present sample is over 99 

... percent white, no data on racial differences are produced.)

This finding may be surprising insofar as one expects differences 

... in cultural background and personality traits to have an impact on 

... behavior. Sheppard and Belitsky (1966) explicitly tested, for 

... example, the notion that one's degree of "achievement motivation" 

... would affect job-seeking behavior. While they did find some effects 

... in predicted directions, these were rather weak. I will argue, in 

... general, that a much more important type of determinant of one's 

... behavior is one's position in a social network. By this is meant not 

... only the identity of the set of people one knows and his relations to 

... them but also the set known by that set, and so on, as well as the 

... structure of connections among one's friends, friends' friends, and 

... so on. The structure and dynamics of this network, though elusive 

... and difficult to analyze, largely determine what information will
reach a given person, and, to that extent, what possibilities will be open to him.

This is not to argue that culture and personality have no impact on one’s position in this structure; only that the impact is not systematic or predictable. Nor is it my argument that people make no choices. Individuals clearly do not seize every job offer that reaches them; cultural and personality factors no doubt have their impact on which job one chooses to accept. A separate study would be required to do justice to this issue. The point is that if we confine ourselves to looking at jobs that people do accept, however the choice is made, structural factors have the largest influence on the method of uncovering those jobs. By “structural factors” I mean the properties of one’s social situation that shape his contact network; one typically has little control over these factors.

An example is the effect of age. Blue-collar studies have uniformly shown that personal contacts are particularly important to individuals in the early stages of their career—especially in finding one’s first job (De Schweinetz, 1933:87, 93; Reynolds, 1951:127). In the Newton sample, the finding is reversed: Table 5 shows that those in the younger half of the sample are considerably more likely to use formal means and direct application, while nearly two-thirds of the older PTM workers find their jobs through personal contacts. 5

5. At this point, the reader might properly wonder if the earlier finding, that those using contacts find higher-paying jobs, is merely an artifact of the over-

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**Table 5. Job-finding method, by age of respondent.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method used</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 34</td>
<td>Over 34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal means</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contacts</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct application</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Table 6. Job-find of respondent.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method used</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal means</td>
<td>Personal contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

5Includes all tech professors or high school teachers.

This appears to PTM occupations; fields he has been trained in acquired few useful means and direct a specialization could be more likely that some other. In their national sample, Parnes et al. (1970:39) “friends and relatively and technical work unskilled workers. Still another step into its three consti tute, and most like. There are a particular representation of older, not the case. Controlli group. Similarly, within one was to have used very over 80 percent of those through contacts.
Introduction

Table 6. Job-finding method, by occupational category of respondent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method used</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Technical(^a)</td>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal means</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contacts</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct application</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Includes all technical, engineering, and scientific workers except college professors or high school teachers of science.

This appears to be due to the greater specialization inherent in PTM occupations; not yet having worked long in the specialized field he has been trained for, the young PTM worker will have acquired few useful contacts. He must thus fall back on formal means and direct application. In the blue-collar case, however, less specialization combined with less geographic mobility make it more likely that some older friend or relative can help the young worker. In their national sample of white, out-of-school youth, aged 14-24, Parnes et al. (1970:104) similarly found that the proportion using “friends and relatives” to find their job is smallest for professional and technical work, increasing steadily to a maximum for semi- and unskilled workers.

Still another structural factor appears if we break the PTM group into its three constituent types of occupation; the results are shown in Table 6. Technical workers are least likely to use personal contacts, and most likely to use formal means and direct application. There are a particularly large number of agencies specializing in representation of older PTM workers among those using contacts. This is not the case. Controlling for age, the relationship persists within each age group. Similarly, within each age group, the higher the salary, the more likely one was to have used contacts. Among those in the older half of the sample, over 80 percent of those earning $25,000 or more per year found the job through contacts.
technical personnel, which makes it possible to use this route more often than for either professionals or managers; direct application may also be enhanced by the size and consequent wide reputations of many firms which hire technical personnel. Another factor is more subtle, and more structural; whereas scientists and technicians may work alone or in small groups, managers, by definition, must spend a great deal of time in personal interaction. In the course of a manager's career, many more personal contacts may be established than in that of a scientist; such contacts may later be useful.  

Individual cases also illustrate the impact of structural factors. One respondent was an engineer, blinded about seven years ago. Unable to maintain as many contacts as formerly, he found it necessary to seek work by formal means. A recent immigrant, though an experienced scientist in Japan, knew very few people in his field in this country, and so, from the point of view of contacts, was just “starting out.”

In general, then, Brown's statement about the job-seeking behavior of college professors applies to the present overall PTM sample: "Formal methods [including direct application] are used only after informal contacts have failed to yield a good job" (1967: 117). Those who resort to these methods tend to be those who, for more or less structural reasons, lack the right personal contacts. There are, however, some positive reasons to use formal means:

Case #1: Albert W. was working for a large engineering firm, but was dissatisfied. He had personal contacts who could have been useful.

6. The figure for professionals must be treated with caution since 58 of the 132 professionals (43.8 percent) are college professors, an atypical situation related to the large number of colleges in the Boston area. College professors are much more likely than other professionals to find jobs through contacts: 77.6 percent do so, as compared to 44.5 percent of high school teachers and 33.7 percent of other professionals. Although older respondents and those with higher incomes are over-represented among professors, this does not explain the strong disposition to use of contacts, as the older and higher-income respondents among professors are not more likely than the younger and lower-income ones to use contacts—they are, actually, a little less likely, though one cannot take relationships seriously based on such small numbers. Note that this implies that if professors were less prominent in the sample, the general tendency for older and higher income respondents to be more likely to use contacts would be even stronger.

Introduction

but did not truly job; he therefore

Mr. W. was rat that the agency personnel man: him and realize from the room utter imperson deal with. Man-
tudes. A ghoul: services and the "flesh-peddlers"

The appointment attention by or were instituted 1947, congregations operated came to be view desirable for thought less at at the time.) R for interviews; position could members of th-

All this was the Rabbinical servative Jews Conservative r
members. A pl looking for a n may either cho
The committee

7. Anecdotal n protect the anon this sometimes is
but did not trust them enough to tell them he was looking for a new job; he therefore went to an agency specializing in technical personnel.\(^7\)

Mr. W. was rather bitter about his experience, however. He reports that the agency scheduled him for interviews in the same room as personnel managers from his company, who would have recognized him and realized why he was there; he covered his face and hurried from the room. He cites this obvious blunder as an example of the utter impersonality of such agencies, which makes them distasteful to deal with. Many of those who had used agencies had similar attitudes. A ghoulish set of terms reflects their evaluation of such services and those who run them: “head-hunters”; “body-snatchers”; “flesh-peddlers”; “warm-body shops.”

The appointment of Jewish Conservative rabbis, brought to my attention by one respondent, is an interesting case; formal means were instituted by centralized control for ideological reasons. Before 1947, congregations seeking a rabbi, and rabbis seeking congregations operated by the three methods described above. The situation came to be viewed as intolerable, as congregations considered most desirable found themselves with thirty or forty applicants; those thought less attractive had few or none. (The market was a tight one at the time.) Rabbis found themselves in “lineups” of applicants for interviews; a congregation that had an advantageous bargaining position could bid down the salary asked. Personal connections with members of the boards of trustees were of considerable importance.

All this was considered undignified for clergymen. In 1947–48, the Rabbinical Assembly, central administrative body of the Conservative Jewish movement, asserted control over placement of all Conservative rabbis. This was possible since all such rabbis were members. A placement committee now sends each congregation looking for a rabbi a list of names, a “panel,” from whom they may either choose one, after interviews, or ask for another panel. The committee chooses these names from among those rabbis who,

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\(^7\) Anecdotal material in this study has been modified as necessary to protect the anonymity of respondents. Besides the use of fictitious names, this sometimes involves changing industry names and job titles.
upon receiving the list of vacancies circulated periodically, express interest. The process continues until a rabbi is chosen. Rabbis or congregations attempting to circumvent this system are subject to effective sanctions. There appear now to be few or no exceptions to this method of placement. Its success recently stimulated the Reform Jewish movement to adopt a similar system.

In effect, this action approximated the creation of an internal labor market; individuals transfer from one congregation to another as if from one branch to another of the same firm. It is unlikely that the degree of central control necessary to implement such a system could be duplicated in larger, nonreligious groups. There are, at present, less than 1000 Conservative rabbis.

In this introduction, then, the basic theme has been set: personal contacts are of paramount importance in connecting people with jobs. Better jobs are found through contacts, and the best jobs, the ones with the highest pay and prestige and affording the greatest satisfaction to those in them, are most apt to be filled in this way. With a few interesting exceptions, those who do not find their jobs through personal contacts, would have liked to do so, but were prevented by “structural” factors. A few such factors were briefly sketched in this chapter, but for a deeper understanding it is necessary to ask more detailed questions about how people “use” personal contacts. Who are these “contacts” that play such a crucial role in filling the most coveted positions in our economic and social structure—what relation do they hold to respondents, and what relation to the jobs they channel respondents into? Under what circumstances does information about these jobs come to be passed? On whose initiative? These are the questions to which Part One is devoted.

8. Information on this placement procedure was secured through the courtesy of a personal interview with Rabbi Gilbert Epstein, Director of Placement, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City.