

5 How To Hoard Opportunities

My friends who make their living from survey research would not have approved. Our rambunctious interview did not conform to professional standards. During the spring of 1988, Pierine Piras, Philippe Videlier, and I sat drinking coffee and nibbling cake in the living room of a modest house in Mamaroneck, New York. Mamaroneck lies on Long Island Sound, about twenty miles north of New York City. We were speaking with a man I'll name Franco Bossi, born in Roccasecca, Italy, not far from Rome, ninety-two years earlier.

Given our standard options of English, French, or Italian for the interview's language (none of us had mastered the dialect of Roccasecca), Mr. Bossi had chosen Italian. Mrs. Bossi, in her eighties, and their daughter Rosa, in her sixties, interrupted frequently to contradict, refresh, complete, or refine Mr. Bossi's recollections when they were not urging him to shift from his rusty Italian to his accented, ungrammatical, but fluent English. Mr. Bossi remembered the Mamaroneck of the World War I era as very Italian:

Tutti qui, sto villaggio dove stamo me now, tutti Italiani, Italiani, Italiani! La most part era Roccasecca. Tutte le zone . . . Siciliani . . . Calabresi assai, Calabresi assai . . . Napolitani . . . Down in Mamaroneck they use to call a "Guinea Town" because the Italians they calls the "guinea," it's a nickname.

As of the 1910 census, in fact, only about a sixth of Mamaroneck's population was Italian-born. In Washingtonville, the section of Mamaroneck away from the water on the wrong side of the railroad tracks, about a third of all households then had Italian-born heads. But teenaged Franco Bossi, recently arrived from Roccasecca with his parents, surely lived in a much more Italian world than that.

Not that his parents had come straight from the old country. "I was not born yet, my father left my mother pregnant," reported Mr. Bossi.

He went to Brazil. It was a lot of people that say: "Let's go to Brazil! Let's go to Brazil!" A lot of work over there. So my father went there and all the day he picked coffee, bananas, all this stuff, rice, fruits, but the most were in Brazil for coffee. They must have been in the country, but I don't know the name, but that's where they grew coffee. He only stood one year over there. The heat! *La calor*, ooh! . . . You can't stay there! And the bugs! My father came over here.

Franco Bossi's father came to the United States around 1898, roughly midway through the first important wave of migration from Roccasecca to Mamaroneck and the rest of Westchester County, which lasted from 1890 or so to World War I. He became a construction laborer in Mamaroneck, while Franco himself later found work as a gardener on one of the estates that were springing up along Long Island Sound as the new railroad, and then paved motor roads, made Westchester easily accessible to Manhattan. In a clear example of opportunity hoarding with little or no exploitation, Franco Bossi, his fellow emigrants, and later arrivals concentrated themselves in Westchester's gardening, public works, and connected enterprises, gaining collective advantages by pooling access to jobs and firms.

American restrictions on immigration after World War I greatly slowed the movement of workers from Roccasecca to Mamaroneck and

nearby towns. At that point, many more Ciociari (as people from the *paese* including Roccasecca identify themselves) began migrating to France, especially to Lyon's industrial suburbs. But after World War II a new round of migrants took the American road. "My mother and father got married," one fifty-year-old immigrant we can call Anthony Bianco told us, "and went to France because he had three sisters there, one in Saint-Romain-le-Puy and two in Villeurbanne [both towns in the vicinity of Lyon]. My father stayed three years but then he wasn't happy with life there, it was too hot living next to the glassworks, so he went back to Roccasecca. My brother and I had been born in France—my older brother, who now works for the railroad in Rome. My uncle had a motel in Mamaroneck, and we had gotten married, he was there when we got married and said, you were born in France, I can sponsor you, so three months later I came here on my French papers."

Anthony Bianco worked for a year as a gardener and then spent nineteen years in construction before becoming a laborer for the county government. His family now has branches in Italy, France, and the United States, each of them concentrated in a few adjacent locations. Other natives of Roccasecca we met in Mamaroneck had lived in Brazil and Argentina. Some had relatives in Toronto, although (in what may be a testimony to either Toronto's hospitality or the United States immigration controls) we encountered no Roccaseccani who had first emigrated to Toronto only to move on to New York. But a well-established network of kinship and acquaintance link Roccasecca and nearby villages in central Italy, Villeurbanne and adjacent industrial towns in France, São Paulo in Brazil, Buenos Aires in Argentina, Toronto in Canada, and the northern suburbs of New York City.

Fitting fragmentary evidence from Mamaroneck and Lyon into analogies with other migration systems, I conjecture that migration chains connecting Roccasecca with Mamaroneck first took shape in contacts among the village's stonecutters, who went from site to site for construction in Europe, only to return to their farms in the off season. When contractors starting building dams and reservoirs to meet New York City's enormous demands for water late in the nineteenth century, some of them reached out to Italy for their stonecutters. Most of the stonecutters

brought laborers with them, I speculate, and most of them returned to Italy when their jobs were done. But others—both stonecutters and their less skilled helpers—liked the opportunities they saw in the New York area and stayed on. Later migrants moved directly into the construction of roads and railways or into gardening on the great estates that lined the nearby Atlantic shore. Many more made their bundles and returned to Italy, but again some stayed on, married, settled their families, and bore children who were Americans. By this speculative account, Anthony Bianco arrived in the United States sixty years or so after those who established the Roccasecca-Mamaroneck link, Franco Bossi and his compatriots.

Piras, Videlier, and I undertook the research on migration between Roccasecca and Mamaroneck because it investigated an imperfect but revealing natural experiment in the creation of durable inequality. From a thousand-person agricultural village, hundreds of emigrants went to Mamaroneck and vicinity, hundreds more to Villeurbanne and vicinity. In Lyon's suburbs, they generally took factory jobs; their children rapidly became working-class French people with Italian names but little other Italian identification. In Westchester, Italians whose families originated in Roccasecca concentrated heavily in landscape gardening, where the current generation enjoys a near-monopoly of the local business; others cluster in construction, public works, and retail trade. Within family firms, a Catholic parish, and ethnic neighborhoods, they have retained a much stronger identification with Italy and small enterprise than have their relatives in France. The situation of ethnic Italians in Mamaroneck clearly illustrates the possibility of opportunity hoarding in the absence of major exploitation: Italians gain modest but secure existences by controlling adjacent economic niches and excluding non-Italians from those niches, but in the process they employ little or no non-Italian labor. More so than their French cousins, they survive by hoarding opportunities.

Anthony Bianco lived a complicated migration history, but not much more intricate than the average. In any case, his history tells us something far more important than how complicated life is. In Roccasecca, Anthony's family and most of their neighbors were peasants. In New

York's suburbs, Mr. Bianco's *paesani* have become shopkeepers and landscape gardeners, while others having essentially the same origins have become French industrial workers, Brazilian businesspeople, or perhaps schoolteachers in Toronto. (My collaborators uncovered a similar range of destinations among closely connected people during their interviews in the region of Lyon.) Transplanted Italians now bear different kinds of names, speak different languages, wear different clothes, follow different politics, do different kinds of work, have different memories and hopes for the future. What caused these divergences? In these cases, we're tempted to answer that it was luck. Ability, determination, and prior wealth or education certainly seem to have mattered little, while the presence of a relative who could provide aid and information mattered a great deal. That presence, however, was not a lucky coincidence but the pivot of an extensive migration system that brought Roccaseccani to Mamaroneck and nearby towns while carrying their close kin and neighbors to Lyon, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, or Toronto. However much the experience of any particular migrant might seem to depend on chance and individual taste, the experience took shape within stringent limits set by preexisting contacts.

Anyone who studies migration and ethnicity has recognized in my rambling account of Mamaroneck's migrants telltale signs of chain migration and niche formation. A well-defined migration chain fed individuals and families into a set of connected economic niches. Mamaroneck's Italian immigrant niches lack the neatness of those Roger Waldinger and Alejandro Portes have identified in New York, Miami, and Los Angeles, but they likewise illustrate how the path by which a given category of people entered the American economy had a strong impact on the opportunities open to subsequent members of that category.

In fact, the Mamaroneck story shows us not the perpetuation but the creation of a category—Italian-Americans—by the migration process itself. It also shows us how subsequent generations use the created category: in a classic case of opportunity hoarding, members of a categorically bounded network retain access to a resource—in this case, a set of employers, clients, and jobs—that is valuable, renewable, subject

to monopoly, supportive of network activities, and enhanced by the network's modus operandi. Matching the category Italian-American to the business of landscape gardening sequestered opportunities for poor Italian peasants and their descendants, but it also fenced off those opportunities from other people, including the growing number of black residents in Mamaroneck and adjacent Westchester towns. Thus, as compared with Lyon, **it reinforced Italian identity as a basis of everyday social relations in Mamaroneck. It sustained dense, bounded networks containing many triads, all three of whose members recognized each other as Italian.**

Ciociari who came to Mamaroneck were solving an everyday problem—finding paid work in a strange land—and creating categories more or less inadvertently, but as they did so there took shape a set of social ties in which multiple parties had stakes. Interested parties included kinfolk in Italy and America, fellow Ciociari emigrants, and a variety of local employers. By analogy with other niche builders who tell similar stories today, we can reasonably suppose that they hoarded information about opportunities, shared it chiefly with closely connected others, excluded strangers, and maintained contact with their place of origin through letters, remittances, and occasional visits. Thus their interactions with others created durable categorical inequality.

Consider parallels with steelmaking Johnstown, Pennsylvania. In *For Bread with Butter* (1985) and *Insecure Prosperity* (1996), sociologist-historian Ewa Morawska has chronicled the experiences of various East Central European groups and of East European Jews between 1890 and World War II. Americans of Western European origin dominated Johnstown's industry, real estate, and finance. But immigrants from Poland, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Slovakia, Hungary, and adjacent regions constituted the city's rank and file. Typically beginning as general labor, East European Gentiles gravitated toward well-marked niches in manufacturing. Johnstown's Jews, in contrast, moved overwhelmingly into retail trade. In both cases, chain migration prevailed. To some extent the two populations re-created their European relations, with frequently multilingual Jews providing merchandise, credit, and literate services for their Slavic and Hungarian neighbors. While both groups were

integrating into a system of categorical inequality with American capitalists occupying dominant positions, Jews and Gentiles hoarded opportunities in complementary Johnstown niches.

Similarly, in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, women find work in low-wage *maquiladoras* chiefly through networks connecting them with women already on the job. When researcher María Patricia Fernández-Kelly looked for work in a *maquiladora* by scanning newspaper advertisements, she followed the exceptional path:

By using newspapers as a source of information for jobs available, I was departing from the common strategy of potential workers in that environment. As my own research would show, the majority of these workers avail themselves of information by word of mouth. They are part of informal networks which include relatives, friends and an occasional acquaintance in the personnel management sector. Most potential workers believe that a personal recommendation from someone already employed at a *maquiladora* can ease their difficult path.

This belief is well founded. At many plants, managers prefer to hire applicants by direct recommendation of employees who have proven to be dependable and hard-working. For example, at Electro Componentes de Mexico, the subsidiary of General Electric and one of the most stable *maquiladoras* in Juárez, it is established policy not to hire "outsiders." Only those who are introduced personally to the manager are considered to fill up vacancies. (Fernández-Kelly 1983, 110)

Members of those same networks—often networks of chain migration from rural regions—also supplied child care, lodging, and social support to women workers. Without enormous effectiveness, networks sustained themselves by hoarding access to low-wage employment in American-owned manufacturing plants.

NETWORKS AND OPPORTUNITY HOARDING

Mamaroneck Italians' concentration in landscape gardening excludes other potential workers from the business, but it hardly qualifies as exploitation; neither secure control of a productive resource, incorporation of effort by excluded parties, nor appropriation of a substantial surplus

marks the position of these modest people. Rather, the term "opportunity hoarding" describes their generally successful strategy. By sequestering technical knowledge, ties to wealthy households and institutions, reputations for good work, and access to capital within an ethnically defined network, they have fashioned a classic immigrant niche. Similarly, Johnstown's Jews lodged themselves in retail trade without creating a system of exploitation.

In neither Mamaroneck, Johnstown, nor Ciudad Juárez, indeed, do we witness the strong complementarity that often develops between exploitation and opportunity hoarding. It occurs when the effort of a favored minority provides a resource-owning elite with the means to extract surplus from an essential but otherwise unavailable larger population. South Africa showed us extensive complementarity between exploitation by Europeans and opportunity hoarding by collaborating members of subordinate racial categories. In Mamaroneck, Johnstown, and Juárez, we observe opportunity hoarding in a relatively pure, independent form, with crucial resources largely created by the efforts of the hoarding community.

What distinguishes opportunity hoarding from other organizations of effort? If members of a network acquire access to a resource that is valuable, renewable, subject to monopoly, supportive of network activities, and enhanced by the network's *modus operandi*, network members regularly hoard access to the resource, creating beliefs and practices that sustain their control. If that network is categorically bounded, opportunity hoarding thereby contributes to the creation and maintenance of categorical inequality.

Opportunity hoarding often rests on ethnic categories, members of which reinforce their control over hoarded resources by means of their power to include or exclude other members with respect to language, kinship, courtship, marriage, housing, sociability, religion, ceremonial life, credit, and political patronage. Far-ranging trade diasporas of Gujaratis, Cantonese, Jews, Armenians, Lebanese, and other ethnically homogeneous networks constitute extreme forms of a very general phenomenon.

In all these instances, ethnicity and/or religion supplies the categori-

cal basis of opportunity hoarding. In other circumstances, however, selective migration streams single out community of origin or lineage as the salient categorical principle. Race, gender, schooling, professional training, political affiliation, and sexual preference all, at times, constitute the networks and categorical distinctions on which opportunity hoarding builds.

How? Opportunity hoarding in general brings together these elements:

- **A distinctive network**
- **Valuable resources that are renewable, subject to monopoly, supportive of network activities, and enhanced by the network's modus operandi**
- **Sequestering of those resources by network members**
- **Creation of beliefs and practices that sustain network control of the resources**

Such a network may take a great variety of forms—large or small, hierarchical or egalitarian, organizational or otherwise—but its monopolizing work depends on explicit monitoring and sanctioning procedures that discourage defection, on the presence of many interdependent triads, or both.

We can make a rough distinction between forms of opportunity hoarding that attach their participants directly to an exploiting organization and those that bear only contingent or indirect relations to exploitation. The creation of immigrant niches within manufacturing firms falls emphatically into the first set, regardless of the extent to which the immigrants themselves benefit or suffer from exploitation. A firm or an alliance of firms that establishes monopoly or oligopoly over production and sale of a given commodity simultaneously practices exploitation within firm boundaries and opportunity hoarding with respect to all other potential producers and sellers.

More contingent and indirect (albeit powerful) relations of opportunity hoarding to exploitation stem from inheritance within households, kin groups, and ethnic categories. Under capitalism, inequality in regard

to inherited wealth generally exceeds inequality in regard to monetary income, since the wealthy customarily draw important returns from their wealth in nonmonetary forms and hoard some portion for transmission to heirs. As income inequality has sharpened in the United States during the past two decades, wealth has become even more unequally distributed (Oliver and Shapiro 1997; Wolff 1995). Clever lawyers and a favorable tax regime have made it easy for America's wealthy to retain their property from generation to generation (Drew and Johnston 1996). In this case, beliefs in wealth as property, in the inviolability of property rights, and in the priority of interpersonal ties based on birth and marriage all reinforce the centrality of inheritance as a mode of opportunity hoarding.

Other forms of opportunity hoarding lie between immigrant niches and inheritance. Family farms, family-run stores, and other types of small-scale enterprise often operate with little or no directly exploited labor, but nevertheless gain from the "rents" (to take the economist's term) provided by exclusive use of a site, stock, and clientele (Sørensen 1996). Similarly, members of exclusive crafts such as nineteenth-century glassblowing, printing, and silversmithing characteristically hoarded opportunities by maintaining collective control over production and sale of their commodities without employing more than a few exploited helpers and apprentices. All of these arrangements, and more, gain advantages from combining a distinctive network, a set of valuable resources, and sequestration of the resources as well as beliefs and practices sustaining network control of the resources.

Professions, for example, are organizations among practitioners of some common art who control the licensing of all practitioners of that art within their shared territory; exclude unorthodox, unworthy, unlicensed persons from practicing; and thus secure a monopoly over dispensation of the art's products to nonmembers. Professions typically succeed in establishing their monopolies by enlisting state support for licensing, exclusion, and fee-setting in return for a measure of collective responsibility and self-policing. They typically set up their own institutions for recruitment, training, initiation, and discipline of new members. They engage in quintessential opportunity hoarding without

necessarily drawing on exploitation as well. Professions do, however, vary greatly in the extent to which they couple opportunity hoarding with exploitation. Within American health care, for example, physicians who ran hospitals and clinics long combined the two. Nurses, pharmacists, midwives, and members of other such subordinated health professions, in contrast, had to settle mainly for opportunity hoarding.

In capitalist countries, dentists, lawyers, and physicians commonly operate very effective monopolies, while professionally organized architects, scientists, social workers, pharmacists, accountants, nurses, midwives, priests, and engineers all have more trouble excluding competitors from their terrains. But all do what they can to maintain categorical barriers between themselves and nonprofessionals. In France, veterinarians were spectacularly successful at adopting the medical model of practice, organization, ideology, and licensing during the nineteenth century. They followed the classic trajectory of professionalization: establishing schools based on medical science, acquiring recognition from public authorities as experts on such matters as the inspection of meat, excluding rivals such as blacksmiths and butchers from their domains, and finally creating a state-backed monopoly of animal medical practice for graduates of their three official schools (Hubscher 1996). Nevertheless, French veterinarians generally operated on too small a scale to make significant gains from exploitation; they acquired their prestige, power, and income from opportunity hoarding.

Organizationally, licensed trades such as hairdressing typically resemble professions. On the grounds of protecting public health against dangerous practices, they acquire state protection of a monopoly over services in return for subjection to oversight by a state agency. Often they strengthen that position by establishing their own schools and insisting that licensed practitioners pass through those schools successfully. Take the case of cosmetologists, who in most American states must acquire licenses to administer beauty treatments, including hair care. In New York State, cosmetologists have come into competition with braiders, who generally learn how to create African-inspired hairstyles from friends and relatives. In order to sell their services legally, New York's braiders must receive cosmetology licenses:

"If we have to take a minimum of 1,200 curriculum hours and pay up to \$10,000 to learn our trade, why shouldn't braiders?" said Barbara G., a black cosmetologist who asked that her full name not be used, expressing concern that her comments might create tension in the mid-town Manhattan salon where she works alongside braiders. (Williams 1997, 4)

Advocates for braiders argue that little of the cosmetology curriculum deals with braiding, that the knowledge involved is distinctive, and that the present arrangement drives braiders into the underground economy.

Given the character of opportunity hoarding, New York's braiders will most likely become yet another licensed trade, authorized to operate in a niche just adjacent to those of hairdressers, barbers, and cosmetologists.

Among both professionals and other opportunity hoarders, the valuable resources in question take a wide variety of forms: not only the shared knowledge and access to clients that constitute the major hoarded resources for professions but also ore deposits among miners, reliable suppliers among import-export merchants, well-cultivated friendships among talent scouts, access to government property and officials among Russian ex-apparatchik entrepreneurs, able graduate students among academic departments. Sequestered knowledge that bestows advantages, furthermore, sometimes resides in scripts, local knowledge, and interpersonal ties that members of a network carry over from other experiences, as in the leverage enjoyed by multilingual brokers at the frontiers of distinct but interdependent monolingual populations.

In general, resources that lend themselves well to opportunity hoarding have the characteristics enumerated earlier: they are renewable, subject to monopoly, supportive of network activities, and enhanced by the network's *modus operandi*. These characteristics apply, to be sure, within specifiable limits; a successful opportunity-hoarding drug ring need only control the supply of its narcotics within its own turf and fight out precise divisions of territory with neighboring rings. A university department that hired all the world's experts in a given specialty might well find outside demand for its expertise declining rather than increasing as a well-behaved monopoly would lead one to expect, since in many academic fields demand depends on having

well-placed graduates, clients, and collaborators elsewhere. The value of resources depends on their potential uses outside the circle of hoarders.

Sequestering of resources sometimes takes the form of governmental authorization and licensing favored by organized professions. It often centers on the selective transmission of lore to members of an in-group. But it can also rest chiefly on the withholding of crucial information such as the location of a precious commodity, the formula for an elixir, the means of repairing a complex machine, the turns of hand that virtuoso violinists, surgeons, and potters teach their students and colleagues. Although craft labor markets of printers and glassblowers certainly relied on measures of training and exclusion resembling those of professions, they operated effectively only so long as craft workers themselves knew much more about the manufacturing of the product than their bosses did; beyond that point, bosses generally found less skilled substitutes for stubborn, expensive crafts workers (Jackson 1984; Montgomery 1987; Scott 1974).

Network, valuable resources, and sequestering combine into effective opportunity hoarding when together they yield advantages in relations with actors outside the network. Such advantages do not necessarily depend on or produce categorical inequality. By and large, commercially successful painters hoard access to galleries, critics, and purchasers without drawing sharp lines between themselves and the *hoi polloi* of painting. Nevertheless, interior categories and their matching with exterior categories lower the cost of hoarding. Within hospitals, the actual work of physicians and nurses overlaps considerably, but the sharp professional line between them reinforces the advantage conferred on physicians by their formal rights to prescribe drugs and courses of treatment. The common matching of that line with gender, ethnic, and class distinctions lowers its enforcement cost. In such circumstances, opportunity hoarding relies on and produces categorical inequality.

Intersection between opportunity hoarding within an organization and categorically segregated sources of supply for new recruits to the relevant network provides a mutually reinforcing system of exceptional power and generality. We discover it recurrently in professional training, residential segregation, aristocratic or caste recruitment of military

officers, and a variety of other settings. But in today's capitalist world many of the most dramatic instances take the form of immigrant niches. Hence my concentration here on that very special form of opportunity hoarding.

The admirable literature on immigrant niches and entrepreneurship to which Ivan Light, Roger Waldinger, Alejandro Portes, and their co-workers have made major contributions abounds with evidence concerning the organizational forms and processes involved in opportunity hoarding. Waldinger's study of New York, for example, documents the centrality and persistence of work niches, both job-centered and entrepreneurial, in the varied experiences of major ethnic and racial categories since 1940 (Waldinger 1996; see also Model 1985, 1992, 1996; Watkins-Owens 1996). As my own story about Italians in Mamaroneck suggested, even through momentous changes in the overall economy, the migration and employment histories of previous generations cast long shadows over the fates of today's category members.

Waldinger makes many of the same observations I have offered on the basis of his and other people's research: ethnic-racial niches form within limits set by the preferences of owners and established workers, but once established these niches easily reproduce themselves because of their reliance on categorically segregated networks for a wide variety of activities on and off the job. Through long struggles, native black residents of New York formed effective niches in segments of public employment and health care; but in recent decades they have repeatedly been beaten into the expanding areas of private-sector and entrepreneurial work by immigrant streams whose members formed niches, supplying compliant, low-wage workers and/or gaining access to ethnically pooled capital. Waldinger also stresses a consequence I have understated so far:

Frequent interaction in a highly concentrated niche promotes a sense of group identity. Participation in the niche, one of the salient traits that group members share, helps define who they are. Thus, greater attention is paid to the boundaries that define the niche, and the characteristics of those who can and cannot cross those boundaries. The niche, in other words, identifies an "us" and a "them." (Waldinger 1996, 304).

He might have added that it also serves to define the limits of solidarity, trust, and mutual aid. To the extent that collaboration within a niche enhances the quality or efficiency of work, and that denial of collaboration accordingly degrades work performance, an effective niche reinforces its survival by delivering superior results to customers and other segments of the same organizations.

Waldinger takes a deeply historicist view, stressing path-dependency, arguing that each category's coping strategies and relations to opportunities at a given time significantly constrain its available strategies and opportunities in the next round. In that regard, he conforms to recent trends in the history and sociology of American immigration (Morawska 1990, 1994; Portes 1995). A historicist view helps make sense of the connections between migration and durable forms of inequality, especially those forms that people organize as ethnicity—as structured differences according to imputed national or racial origin. It shows the formation of opportunity hoarding not as an instantaneous rational decision but as a struggle-ridden and error-ridden process sometimes extending over a generation.

For a long time, the standard vision of the immigrant portrayed someone who leaves the old country's security, passes through a period of risk and turmoil, and then establishes a definitive equilibrium in the new country. If the immigrant comes to a great city such as New York or Los Angeles, most people find this vision all the easier to accept. Yet actual immigration experiences rarely approximate the classic model. Instead we find people moving back and forth over long distances; relying heavily on colleagues, kin, and Landsmänner as they make their way; maintaining their preexisting personal networks at considerable expense; and generally refusing to become disorganized in the ways that classic theories predict. By now, a whole generation of researchers has documented the dense social ties that commonly accompany long-distance migration and subsequent problem solving.

The old theories required active suppression of knowledge that most of us already have—for many of our own family histories, thoughtfully considered, generally belie all these antitheses of immobility and mobility, order and disorder, contingency and constraint. Our individual and

family histories vibrate with movement, with fortuitous connections, with chance meetings, with contingencies having very serious consequences over long periods of time. Yet, seen in perspective, they also embody striking regularities.

Let me illustrate with a personal example. I would not exist—that is, my parents would almost certainly never have met—except for the last-minute decision of my grandfather, a Welsh miner in a time of the mines' decline, not to take an available mining job in South Africa but instead to accept the invitation of his brother, a locomotive driver who had emigrated fifteen years earlier, to join him and his family near Chicago and look for work there. (A disputed family tradition says Uncle Chris, the Chicago brother, sent a telegram skillfully mediating between threat and dire prediction: "If you go to South Africa," he is supposed to have cabled, "I'll never speak to you again.") My grandfather ended up maintaining the machines of an Ovaltine factory in Villa Park, Illinois. His daughters, including my mother, met and married men who lived around Chicago, bore and raised children in the Chicago region. They constructed a tight kinship group consisting chiefly of their family's Chicago branch but ramifying back to Wales and England. Later, I worked summers in the Ovaltine factory to earn money for college . . . and my family often drank Ovaltine.

In one perspective, nothing could be more contingent and individual—a last-minute change of mind about a risky job seals the destiny of an entire family, not to mention their descendants. My grandfather's whim, however, did not cause his brother to leave for Chicago in 1908 or the Rhondda Valley's mines to falter in the 1920s. (Uncle Chris, furthermore, had joined their half-brother Sam, who even earlier had migrated to Chicago to work in retail trade.) My grandfather's apparently arbitrary choice took place within strong limits set by previous actions—his and other people's—and had significant effects on all his later choices. Few moments in most lives pose such fateful alternatives as Hugh Stott's 1925 decision to join his brother in Chicago, but much of long-distance migration brings together similar combinations of contingency and constraint.

CHAIN MIGRATION

Although no one involved at the time would have recognized the term, my mother's family was involved in a system of chain migration. We have already encountered the phenomenon among Italian migrants to Mamaroneck. *Chain migration* is the arrangement in which numerous people leave one well-defined origin serially for another well-defined destination by relying on people from the same origin for aid, information, and encouragement; most chain migrations involve considerable return of migrants to their place of origin.

Many chain migrations begin as *circular migrations*: seasonal, annual, or longer-cycle movement of agricultural workers, craftspersons, or petty merchants from a base to some other well-defined place where temporary work awaits them. Migration from Roccasecca to Mamaroneck probably started with just such circuits of stonecutters. In my mother's family story, the chain was short: from Sam Stott to Chris Stott to Hugh Stott and perhaps a dozen cousins, children, and siblings. Yet it came recognizably from the same sort of process that produces chains spanning multiple generations.

The essence of chain migration was, and is, the existence of continuing contacts between a specific community of origin and a specific community of destination—Roccasecca and Mamaroneck, a Welsh mining village and Chicago, a Polish *shtetl* and Johnstown. It involves frequent moves of persons between the two communities, with help and encouragement from persons at both ends. Even including the forced migration of Africans (who arrived literally, not figuratively, in chains), this sort of continuously connected migration system accounts for the great bulk of immigration to the Americas during the past five centuries. That fact in itself should alert us to the likelihood that what happened to migrants at one point in time, and how they organized their migration, significantly affected the fate of both their *descendants and later migrants*.

We could stop there. By now we have plenty of evidence showing that the presence or absence of prior contacts has a strong effect on the *paths and consequences of long-distance migration*. In Toronto, Grace Anderson showed twenty years ago that the initial ties of very similar

Portuguese immigrants to the metropolitan labor market significantly influenced the kinds of jobs with which they began, which in turn made a large difference to their relative success later on; ability and ambition paled in the light of prior social ties. In New York, Suzanne Model has shown that among Jews, Italians, and blacks, employment by members of the same ethnic category, on the average, contributed significantly to better jobs and higher incomes (Model 1985). Model's later work supports those findings with three important qualifications: (1) expanding niches promote such advantages more than fixed or declining niches; (2) as an ethnically segregated migration network saturates a niche, advantages to latecomers decline or even disappear; (3) niche advantages depend on the presence of similarly qualified but excluded populations of potential workers. Roger Waldinger's findings generally confirm Model's conclusion. The mutual employment in question grows up especially as a consequence of collectively organized migration and constitutes a striking case of opportunity hoarding.

Even in the case of solitary migration, migrants commonly drew information, assistance, and financial aid from network members who had already gone to America. The frequency of remittances from emigrants to homefolks and of steamship tickets prepaid by people at the American destination reveals the extent of that mutual aid. After a New Jersey lecture in which I made the same point, however, a second-generation Italian came up to me in indignation, objecting that "mutual aid" hardly described the situation in which relatives in Newark sent his father a steamship ticket, only to reveal on his arrival in America that he would have to work off the passage in their bakery at starvation wages. The day he finished repaying, the father quit his job, left town, and severed connections with his rapacious cousins.

Let no one think, then, that the processes I am describing exclude exploitation, conflict, or antipathy. The tying together of people by mutual aid and obligation often breeds rancor as well as respect. Many immigrants gritted their teeth until they had enough money to go back to their communities of origin or rush off to another destination within their networks. Among streams connecting Mediterranean regions with North America, typically half or more of the immigrants returned home.

The high proportion of Mediterranean migrants who returned after trying their hand in America, or who swung back and forth between the two continents as employment opportunities dictated, superficially a sign of inefficiency in the migration system, actually testifies to the quick, effective flow of information about affairs at both ends of the many chains from the Mediterranean to North America.

In 1906, 435,000 people left Italy for the Americas, but a full 158,000 returned, and many “pendulated” between continents for some time (Harney 1984, 74; see also Harney 1985). Although that sort of evidence tells us nothing about how organized or disorganized the migrants were, it contradicts any notion of the desperate cutting of ties to the old country. From what else we know about Italian migration, it depended heavily on spectacularly long chains between very specific origins and destinations within the continents. *Padroni*, or labor contractors, who recruited Italian workers for construction or agriculture in distant America did exist, but they profited from or emerged out of existing migration chains. In any case, they accounted for only a small minority of Italian immigrants.

For decades, American factories did much of their work through subcontracting, farming out the production of major goods to job bosses or independent entrepreneurs who actually hired their own labor forces and delivered the goods for a price agreed upon in advance. Subcontracting articulates beautifully with chain migration, since the *padrone* has access to an indefinite supply of willing workers and can exercise great control over the fate—and hence over the job performance—of those workers. Where an industry’s recruitment and supply networks connect with a migration chain and gain exclusive access to the relevant jobs, an ethnically segregated occupational monopoly appears. Since subcontracting is again actually increasing, as what David Harvey calls “flexible capital accumulation” extends in capitalist countries, we can reasonably predict an increase in the ethnic segregation of work in cities like Chicago, where chain migration still prevails (Harvey 1989, 141–172). Again, opportunity hoarding thrives.

Ethnic entrepreneurship often forms through a very similar process. When I lived in Toronto during the 1960s, my next-door neighbors were

Macedonians. A steady stream of visitors from Macedonia came through their house. One day my neighbor explained, in roughly these terms: "We have short-order restaurants [the day of "fast food" had not yet arrived], and when we need someone to work in one of them, we send back home for a young man. He cleans up and starts cooking as he learns English, then graduates to running the counter. When he's saved up some money and gotten pretty good in English, we try to set him up in his own restaurant. Then he hires newcomers." At that point, as my neighbor didn't say, the new restaurant owner owed plenty of money to his relatives and had to rely on them for help in recruiting his work force; these ties reformed the migration chain. In that way, retail trades often become semi-monopolies of one national group or another—Indian newsstands or Korean groceries in New York, Macedonian short-order restaurants or Italian barbershops in Toronto.

Opportunity hoarding obviously also takes place far outside of immigrant niches. It operates, for example, in the hearts of capitalist firms. Firms combine categories with the special sorts of coercion-containing networks that institutional economists call hierarchies. Firms do a significant part of their organizational work through the creation and operation of interior categories: divisions, departments, ranks, and more. They frequently match those interior categories with exterior categories. With Veblenian irony, for example, Arthur Stinchcombe has identified a relevant puzzle:

The fundamental generalization about entry into craft and professional jobs (and, as we have argued above, into higher management and top staff jobs in bureaucratic organizations) is *the more democratic control over recruitment into a set of jobs is—that is, the more entry and training are controlled by workers in that set of jobs—the fewer women, blacks, Mexican-Americans, or immigrant workers are employed in the group.* (Stinchcombe 1990a, 261)

While we do not usually speak of the problem in terms of democracy, Stinchcombe has it right: given an interior categorization of desirable jobs that afford their occupants considerable collective control over entry, training, tenure, advancement, and separation, participants

regularly match interior with exterior categories. They do so because powerful parties to the arrangement—both managers and workers—make substantial organizational gains from the arrangement and because recruitment occurs chiefly through the categorically segregated networks that participants bring to the firm. They do so because in these circumstances exploitation and opportunity hoarding complement each other.

In recent years, a combination of exploitation and opportunity hoarding has contributed to the increasingly perilous position of black men within U.S. labor markets. The relative advance of black women and of better-educated black men in recent decades makes across-the-board racial discrimination a less plausible explanation of black disadvantage. In the light of narrowing black/white educational gaps, furthermore, the mismatch of young black males' skills with available jobs cannot account for their rising unemployment (Grant, Oliver, and James 1996; Wilson 1996a, 1996b). The evaporation of jobs from predominantly black big-city areas and the incarceration of many young black males have surely reduced job prospects for less-educated black men. But something is happening in recruitment to jobs that young black males could, in principle, fill. Estimating (rightly or wrongly) that black job applicants will contribute less to value added than their competitors or will even disrupt production, employers have avoided hiring them.

Philip Moss and Chris Tilly interviewed employment officers in four industries—auto parts manufacturing, retail clothing stores, insurance companies, and the public sector—in the Los Angeles and Detroit metropolitan areas. Interviewees indicate that such firms shy away from hiring young black males not because they lack “hard” skills of literacy and numeracy but because the jobs in question call for “soft” skills:

We identify two clusters of soft skills that are important to employers in our interviews. The first, *interaction*, regards ability to interact with customers and co-workers, including friendliness, teamwork, ability to fit in, spoken communication skills, and appearance and attire. A second cluster we call *motivation* encompasses characteristics such as enthusiasm, positive work attitude, commitment, dependability, and willingness to learn. (Moss and Tilly 1995a, 361)

Although public-sector employers do regularly require some minimum of education, in general these employment officers stress soft skills more heavily than hard ones. The greater the contact with the public entailed by the job, the more they stress soft skills. The more they stress soft skills, the more often they rely on screening interviews instead of references from existing employees. Moss and Tilly identify two somewhat different modes of recruiting compatible, effective employees: co-optation by existing workers, where worker-to-worker cooperation is central to production (e.g., in auto parts); and screening for personal style, where interaction with superiors and the public is crucial (e.g., in retail sales). Both of them operate categorically, but the first provides more scope for opportunity hoarding by current employees.

In such circumstances, categorical inequality—in this case, black/white inequality in employment—emerges from multiple categorically differentiated experiences. First, segregated housing, schooling, and social life produce distinctive personal styles that promote mutual fear and misunderstanding. Second, white and black job-finding networks remain segregated from each other. Third, both employers and prospective fellow workers screen potential employees on personal style in some combination of personal predilection and predictions about likely performance on the job. All three lend themselves to opportunity hoarding on the part of white workers. In general, black workers have greater opportunities for employment and advancement in large organizations, especially public-sector organizations (Grant, Oliver, and James 1996). That is probably so because large organizations afford less scope to opportunity hoarding: racial inequality becomes more visible on the large scale, governments find it easier (or more politically expedient) to intervene on behalf of affirmative-action laws, civil rights groups have larger incentives and more effective means of exerting pressure directly or via government, and, under pressure, large organizations find it easier to reorganize work in ways that favor integration.

Even in large organizations, nevertheless, opportunity hoarding often couples with exploitation in one of two ways. Either exploiters directly enlist an opportunity-hoarding minority in the exclusion of others from full value added or exploiters and opportunity hoarders attach

themselves to adjacent, complementary resources. In the first case, well-rewarded male machinists collaborate in relegating women to lower-paid, sex-segregated production work. In the second case, networks of Indian immigrants acquire exclusive rights to operate lucrative newsstands in and near major business buildings. When either complementarity appears, it reinforces the categorical inequalities in opportunities, capacities, and rewards on which it builds. Thus the two major mechanisms of categorical inequality—exploitation and opportunity hoarding—interlock over a wide range of social processes.

In British nutritional differences, South African apartheid, American manufacturing firms, chain migrants' small enterprises, and many more organizational settings, then, we discover similar self-reproducing patterns of categorical inequality. While each set of categories carries its own historical baggage, recurrent organizational problems lead to parallel structural solutions. Over and over again, exploitation by powerful people and opportunity hoarding by less powerful people articulate to favor the establishment of unequally rewarded categories, while emulation and adaptation fix such categories in place. The creation of interior categories and the matching of interior with exterior categories build durable inequality into organizations and attach them to networks—internal and external—in ways that favor their reproduction, even their transmission to new members of the categories.