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THE SEGMENTATION OF THE LABOR MARKET IN THE UNITED STATES. THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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L'articolo analizza il problema della segmentazione del mercato del lavoro negli Stati Uniti e la collocazione della forza lavoro giovanile in questa segmentazione. Il peso dei giovani nel mercato del lavoro statunitense ha cominciato a divenire significativo negli anni '60 ed ha poi continuato ad accrescersi, al di là delle differenze di sesso e razziali. Ciò non significa ovviamente che non vi siano discriminazioni nel mercato del lavoro giovanile degli USA, ma piuttosto che esse hanno assunto caratteristiche nuove direttamente connesse al ruolo assunto dai giovani nel mercato del lavoro secondario.

Una analisi dinamica dei cambiamenti avvenuti nella struttura dell'occupazione negli USA mostra, in analogia con quanto a suo tempo avvenuto con la forza lavoro femminile e le minoranze etniche, il peso crescente dei giovani nella formazione e nella crescita del mercato del lavoro secondario, dove le forze di lavoro giovanili vanno progressivamente sostituendosi a quelle femminili e alle minoranze etniche. Questo fenomeno trae origine dagli ostacoli sempre più frequenti che incontra la libera utilizzazione delle differenze razziali e sessuali e quindi dal decadere di queste come supporto alla sopravvivenza del mercato del lavoro secondario; in questo senso il ruolo assunto dai giovani nel mercato del lavoro secondario appare l'avvio di un processo di sostituzione di donne e neri cominciato negli anni '60 in coincidenza dell'affermazione in quel periodo dei movimenti per i diritti civili.

Questi cambiamenti non vanno letti come un fenomeno soltanto quantitativo avvenuto nella struttura dell'occupazione, poiché essi tendono ad influenzare il ruolo e il funzionamento del settore secondario e la struttura della segmentazione del mercato del lavoro nel suo comples-

so. In particolare occorre tener presente il carattere transitorio dei profili qualitativi della forza lavoro giovanile che per questo non appare adattabile ad una suddivisione del mercato del lavoro in segmenti rigidi.

L'articolo analizza le contraddizioni che sono sorte in ragione della collocazione dei giovani sul mercato del lavoro secondario negli USA e individua nella sfera educativa l'area in cui queste contraddizioni possono essere attenuate.

INTRODUCTION

Starting in the sixties the specific role of the youth labor market in the United States has grown more and more significant, over and above differences of sex and race. This of course does not mean that there are no differences and discriminations of sex and race within the youth labor market; but these differences take on new characteristics that are specifically linked to the role of youth employment in the secondary labor market.

A dynamic analysis of the changes in the structure of employment shows that, somewhat as with the historical experience of women and ethnic minority groups, young people have begun to play an important role, partly in substitution of that of women and blacks, in contributing to the survival and growth of the secondary labor market. This phenomenon is rooted in the tendential crisis of the free utilization of racial and sexual differences as the primary source of support for the secondary labor market; it appears as a thorough-going process of sub-

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stitution of blacks and women with young people that started in the sixties in connection with the upsurge of the civil rights movements in that period.

These changes in the structure of employment do not represent a merely quantitative phenomenon, but tend to affect the role and the functioning of the secondary sector and of the segmentation in general. In particular the qualitative features of the youth labor force, differently from women and blacks, are by definition transient and therefore not easily fitted to a subdivision of the labor market into rigid segments.

The article analyzes the contradictions that have arisen from the presence of young people on the secondary labor market and identifies the sphere of the social reproduction of the labor force, in particular education as the area where these contradictions will tend to be mitigated.

THE THEORY OF SEGMENTATION

Since the end of the sixties there has been a growing number of studies in labor economics that have explicitly abandoned the hypothesis of a homogeneous labor market. The literature on what is generically known as the «theory of labor market segmentation» (TLS) is vast and there are just as many reviews of the literature on this theme¹. In this article I shall briefly put forward what in my opinion is the most correct approach to the aspects of the TLS that are relevant to this analysis.

According to the TLS the functioning of the labor market is characterized by the presence of two structurally different sectors. There is a primary sector with well-paid jobs that are highly stable and union-protected and that offer career prospects; this sector is divided into two sub-sectors: the independent primary and the subordinate primary. The elements distinguishing the two sub-sectors are essentially linked to the level of qualification and profes-

sional expertise needed to carry out particular jobs. The secondary sector on the other hand consists of badly-paid, insecure and non-unionized jobs, offering no career prospects and requiring little or no professional expertise.

In defining the sectors it is fundamental to refer first and foremost to the structural characteristics of the jobs and not to those of the labor force employed in them. The confusion that generally arises is due to the fact that almost always a segmentation of jobs is matched by a segmentation of workers; in fact, irrespectively from how it is defined, the secondary sector shows a more than proportional presence of «weak» workers: women and blacks².

In the definition of the theoretical premises we shall refer to, our major stimulus has come from the latest work of D.M. Gordon, R. Edwards and M. Reich (1982) which in my opinion constitutes a decisive step forward in the definition of a theoretical frame of reference for the TLS.

The most notable aspect of the contribution of these authors is that they analyze the theme of segmentation in the framework of a historical analysis of the changes that have taken place in the work process in the USA. Segmentation is thus identified as a specific historical phase in the evolution of the structure of the work process.

The three historical phases that have characterized the work process in the development of American capitalism are: proletarianization, homogenization and segmentation. Proletarianization entails a change in status from independent worker to wage worker, without necessarily involving a change in the way of working. Homogenization is a process that directly affects the way of working and tends to standardize and simplify the work process by incorporating the technological knowledge of the workers into machinery. Segmentation, on the contrary, tends to differentiate qualitatively in their logic and in their dynamic jobs and labor markets (Gordon et al., 1982:165).

The problem of segmentation is only one

part of the analysis of Gordon, Edwards and Reich; in their work they aim at broader objectives: in this article however I shall confine myself to indicating those aspects of their work that seem to me to be more pertinent in connection with the aims of this work.

In particular, the most important points are in my opinion four:

1. It makes sense to talk of the segmentation of labor only in a historical phase characterized by an explicit strategy on the part of enterprises to differentiate systematically the work process, both by introducing new technologies and by management policies.

2. The segmentation can only be analyzed by a dynamic approach: attempts to catalog and identify the various segments of the labor market as static elements, separately from a dynamic analysis of their transformations, will lead to nowhere.

3. When analyzing the functioning of the labor market, the non-economic aspects, which come under the heading of what is called the «multi-dimensional character of capitalist accumulation», are of decisive importance.

4. For a theory of segmentation to be significant it must not only be able to explain the features whereby the segmentation phase goes beyond the two previous phases, but also to identify the contradictory elements within the new phase.

In this article I shall analyze the changes that have come about in the internal composition of the workers in the various segments of the labor market. As I pointed out previously it is true that the segments should be identified independently from the characteristics of the workers employed in them, but to my mind the composition of the labor force within each segment has no small effect on the functioning of the segmented work process. In other words I believe it to be inadequate and a source of error to consider the labor market so malleable that it can adapt itself to any segmentation of the work process. If it is only partly true that enterprises have complete control over the organization of production and therefore of the type of job

segmentation, it is even less true that this control extends to the labor force. The differentiations within the labor force have multivariuous characteristics, and depend on historical, social and political as well as economic factors. The possibility that these differentiations may become homogeneous with the segmentation of jobs should be analyzed as an area of conflict and a source of contradictions, to the point that one may posit the hypothesis of a feed-back effect on the process itself of segmentation of the work process.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The attention of economists and labor sociologists vis-à-vis problems concerning the youth labor force has mainly been concentrated on studying and commenting on themes connected with unemployment and rates of participation. Strangely little interest is devoted to the analysis of the structure of youth employment, its modification over time and its specific feature with respect to the average structure³.

Young people are commonly considered to be part of the weaker section of the labor force and hence suitable as one of the components, together with women and blacks, of the secondary labor market. The peculiar characteristics that make young workers suitable for the secondary labor market can be grouped under two headings: the first is of «objective» characteristics such as the lack of experience and specialization; the second is of «subjective» characteristics connected with the cultural attitudes of young people towards work. As regards the objective characteristics their significance is confined almost exclusively to those professions from which young people are structurally excluded inasmuch as by law or tradition they require a superior degree of schooling; in fact lack of experience cannot be considered a characteristic precluding access to employment on the primary market. A widespread view, which in my opinion is wrong, sees young people en-

tering the secondary labor market so as to acquire the experience that will enable them to move on to the primary market. The characteristic feature of secondary jobs is that they do not require, and therefore do not give, any professional expertise: on the contrary the experience needed for primary jobs is acquired by entering directly (albeit in a subordinate position) the primary market.

The subjective characteristics may be summed up by the so-called «spirit of adventure». On the one hand this attitude leads young people to look on their first entry into the labor market as a possibility of economic independence. Work is seen as a mere source of income, independently from career prospects or the quality of the work itself: this makes them agreeable to accepting secondary jobs. On the other hand this «spirit of adventure» appears in the eyes of employers in the primary market as a lack of those characteristics of reliability, credibility and serious-mindedness which can be found more easily in older people. When looking at young people's willingness to undertake a secondary job their cultural attitude must be considered significant for those young people who have, or think they have, good chances in the immediate future of obtaining a better job on the market or even a complete change in status. These are therefore predominantly young white middle class males whose first job constitutes a second and secondary occupation with respect to their studies and is seen as a temporary parenthesis in their lives⁴. For other young people (women, blacks and poor whites) entering the secondary job market turns out to have nothing to do with their being young but a lot to do with their being women, black and poor; their chances of leaving the secondary job market are therefore considerably smaller.

If the problem of the functioning of the youth labor market were confined to these aspects it would lose its specific character, or rather, as regards the analysis of the structure of employment, it would be reduced within the

problems of the employment of women and racial minority groups and of intergenerational mobility. It is therefore no accident, as we have already mentioned, that the interest of those concerned with the youth labor market has mainly focussed on the problems of unemployment and rates of participation.

In this paper I shall analyze the themes of youth employment as a specific segment of the labor force. The identification of the specific characteristics of the youth labor force will be made possible by an analysis of the historical dynamic of the qualitative structure within the secondary labor market.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE LABOR FORCE

We give some data which offer an overall view of the composition of the labor force in the USA, highlighting the role and specific weight of the youth labor force.

The data shown in tables 1, 2 and 3 refer respectively to the dynamic and to the structure of the labor force, to the rates of participation and those of unemployment for the years 1960 and 1980.

The most significant phenomena concern women and young people: both these categories increase considerably within the labor force and this growth is independent from demographic factors insofar as their rates of participation also increase. The black labor force shows a slight increase in the total over the twenty-year period, while it remains constant amongst young people.

What we are concerned with here is to identify the peculiar characteristics of the youth labor force with respect to the average. There are three main points:

1. The rate of participation increases both for young males and females; for adults there is, in contrast, an increase for women and a reduction for men.
2. The rates of participation for adult, blacks

TABLE 1. *Civilian Labor Force by Sex, Race and Age 1960-1980*

	$\frac{1980}{1960} \cdot 100$	Percent of All Workers	
		1960	1980
		Percent of All Workers 16-19 years	
		1960	1980
All Workers	150.4		
Female	192.4	33.3	42.6
Black and Other	169.4	11.1	12.5
All Workers			
16-19 years	190.3	6.9	8.8
Female			
16-19 years	209.1	42.5	46.7
Black and Other			
16-19 years	185.5	11.7	11.4

Source: us Department of Labor, Employment and Training Report of the President.

TABLE 2. *Participation Rate by Sex, Race and Age 1960-1980*

	Total	White		Black and Other	
		Male	Fe-male	Male	Fe-male
Total Labor Force					
1960	59.4	83.4	36.5	83.0	48.2
1980	63.7	78.2	51.2	71.5	53.6
Labor Force 16-19					
1960	44.0	55.9	40.2	57.5	32.8
1980	56.7	63.7	56.2	43.3	35.9

Source: See Table 1.

TABLE 3. *Unemployment Rate by Sex, Race and Age 1960-1980*

	Total	White		Black and Other	
		Male	Fe-male	Male	Fe-male
Total Labor Force					
1960	5.5	4.8	5.3	10.7	9.4
1980	7.1	6.1	6.5	13.3	13.1
Labor Force 16-19					
1960	14.7	14.0	12.7	24.0	24.8
1980	17.8	14.8	12.7	31.7	31.3

Source: See Table 1.

and whites, show the same dynamic ((reduction for men, increase for women), whereas the rates of participation for young blacks and whites follow a different trend. For young white males there is an increase; for women the increase is greater than in the adult female labor force; amongst young blacks there is a heavy drop in the rate of participation for males and a slight growth for females.

3. The unemployment rate for young women is lower than for young men, while amongst adults it is the other way round.

As regards the first point the significant aspect is that the increase in the youth presence in the labor force coincides with an increase in the presence of young white males on the labor market. Any differences in behavior between the youth and adult labor markets cannot therefore be attributed to a greater female presence, insofar as the phenomenon of «feminization» of the labor force has been more accentuated, in the period we are looking at, amongst adults than amongst young people. The second point indicates how racial discrimination on the youth labor market takes on different charac-

teristics than it does with respect to the adult labor force. Even if the unemployment rates for blacks and whites, both amongst young people and adults, are equally far apart (for blacks the rate is twice as high), the level reached by the youth unemployment rate for blacks is so high that it has devastating effects even on the rates of participation.

The third and last observation concerns the difference in unemployment rates between men and women for young people and for adults. The fact that the unemployment rate for young women is lower than for young men cannot be simply interpreted as a phenomenon of discouragement from entering the labor market: in fact the rate of participation for young women has grown considerably and has nearly reached the rate for young men. A plausible explanation is that sexual differences in job opportunities have dropped or at any rate are smaller amongst young people than amongst adults.

THE SEGMENTED LABOR MARKET

As regards the analysis of the structure of jobs and the distribution of employment we shall refer to the subdivision worked out by Gordon et al. (1982) which not only from a theoretical but also from an empirical standpoint has stood up well to tests of consistency⁵. We have therefore grouped jobs into three segments: the independent primary, the subordinate primary and the secondary.

The problem of attributing the various jobs and professions to each of the three segments is far from simple. It would involve a detailed analysis of the contents of the various jobs and their evolution over time, and therefore a very high availability of disaggregation. The solution adopted here is a simplified version of the analysis, effected by Gordon (1982) and not yet published: the simplification is dictated above all by the availability of data on the structure of employment by age groups⁶.

I have considered as belonging to the independent primary sector all non-manual jobs in management and requiring highly professional expertise, and also those manual jobs that, on account of their highly professional and specialized nature, have considerable possibilities of controlling the organization and effort of their own labor. The subordinate primary market includes those jobs, non-manual and manual, that we could call «structural»: although these jobs have characteristics that are typical of the primary market (job security, career opportunities, negotiating capacities, etc.) the worker has a limited control over his own labor owing to the fact that his level of professional expertise is confined to the specific tasks in which he is employed. Lastly the secondary market is made up of manual jobs with no specialization and of manual jobs in sectors dominated by the fragmentation of jobs and workers. In a note I give a more analytical classification of the various professions⁷.

A classification of this type naturally gives rise to many problems. I shall refer briefly to the main ones: the independent primary market includes some professions that ought to be in the subordinate market (for example, teachers in the lower levels of the school system); certain white-collar professions and salespeople ought to be placed in the secondary market but are in the subordinate primary; in the subordinate sector we find certain guaranteed and «wealthy» professions (policemen, firemen) that ought to be in the subordinate primary market.

Given the level of disaggregation of the data it has not been possible to correct all possible errors of classification; the fact however that we are conducting a dynamic analysis limits at least partly these deficiencies, since what is important is not so much to photograph the different breadth of the segments as to observe the changes in the internal composition of the various segments. Since the classification errors have limited weight within each segment they are not able to falsify the overall trends, even if

their behavior were to be completely anomalous. Furthermore this study addresses principally the role of youth employment in the segmentation and it does not appear that classification errors can have a decisive influence on the structural changes of this segment of the labor force.

The data on the structure of the labor force were processed for three years (1960, 1970, 1980), while for previous years we shall refer mainly to the results of the analysis conducted by Wool and Phillips (1975).

Table 4 shows the distribution of the total of the employed, and of women, blacks and young people, into the three segments. Our first remark is that within an overall growth of employment (+48% over the twenty years) there do not appear to have been considerable changes in the relative weight of the three sectors: it can therefore be stated that the overall structure of the segmentation is substantially stable⁸.

In this frame of stability in the structure of jobs it is interesting to see how great the

changes have been in the composition of employment within each segment. First of all it can be noted how the data on women and blacks confirm their definition as weak members of the labor force, given their disproportionate presence in the secondary sector. However if we analyze the dynamic of the data over the last twenty years we see that the relative presence of both these segments of the labor force in the secondary sector has gone down considerably.

For the blacks this phenomenon occurs against a background of substantial stability as regards their weight in overall employment, accompanied by a drop in their rate of participation. This leads to a sharp reduction in the weight of black workers within the secondary sector: from 27% in 1960 to 18.4% in 1980. For women, whose weight within total employment grows considerably, there is a slight increase in their relative presence on the secondary market, although this is much smaller than the total increase (between 1960 and 1980 the weight of women in employment goes up from 33.3% to 42.4%, whereas the figures for the secondary

TABLE 4. *Distribution of Workers among Segments by Sex, Race and Age (1960, 1970, 1980)*

Segments	$\frac{1980}{1960} \cdot 100$	All Workers			Female		
		1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980
Independent Primary	157	39.2	39.8	41.7	19.0	20.4	25.9
Subordinate Primary	146	39.6	41.4	39.1	53.2	56.0	52.6
Secondary	133	21.2	18.8	19.2	27.8	23.6	21.5
Total	148	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.

	Black and Other			All Workers 16-19 years		
	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980
Independent Primary	16.6	21.8	27.8	10.5	8.1	11.2
Subordinate Primary	29.2	39.0	40.7	54.6	48.8	42.3
Secondary	54.2	39.2	31.5	34.9	43.1	46.5
Total	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Earnings.

TABLE 5. *Percent of Workers in the Segments by Sex, Race and Age (1960, 1970, 1980)*

Segments	Female			Black and Other			16-19 years		
	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980
Independent Primary	16.0	19.3	26.4	4.4	5.8	7.4	1.8	1.5	2.1
Subordinate Primary	44.9	51.1	57.0	7.8	10.1	11.6	8.7	9.2	8.4
Secondary	43.7	47.3	47.6	27.0	22.3	18.4	10.3	17.8	19.0
Total	33.3	37.7	42.4	10.5	10.7	11.2	6.3	7.8	7.8

Source: See Table 4.

sector are respectively 43.7% and 47.6%). In correspondence with the drop in the weight of women and blacks on the secondary market we have a growth in their presence in the primary sectors: for the blacks this growth takes place evenly over the whole twenty-year period and is distributed almost proportionately between the independent primary and subordinate primary; for women on the other hand there is a sharp increase in the subordinate primary sector during the first ten-year period, whereas from 1970 to 1980 the increase is concentrated in the independent primary.

These phenomena, which emerge from the analysis of the changes in the composition of the segments of employment, can be interpreted in general as an improvement in the structure of female and black employment, in the sense of their tending to assume a structure of employment more like the average⁹. Of course this is a tendential process of improvement that is still far from eliminating completely the traditional discrimination: even in 1980 the figures for secondary sector employment for women and blacks were respectively 21.5% and 31.5%, as against an average of 19.2%¹⁰. It should be pointed out that, at least as regards female employment for which the pre-1960 data are available, there is a change in tendency beginning in the sixties¹¹.

Even if it is not possible in this article to develop the theme of job market discrimination against women and blacks, I think it is impor-

tant to point out that a deeper analysis of discrimination within the single segments shows how this tendency to overcome the traditional subordination of women and blacks on the job market poses new problems for the study of the functioning of segmentation. The point that seems most important, and to which we refer briefly, is the parallel way in which, as the presence of women and blacks increases in certain professions on the primary market (for example, clerical and teaching), so the rating of those professions deteriorates. It seems as if we have a reversal of the cause-effect nexus between type of job and characteristics of the worker: a) In the classic situation we start with the existence of degrading jobs, and racial and sexual discrimination within society is used in such a way that, almost as a natural phenomenon, these jobs can easily be attributed to these categories of workers; consequently the social discrimination of women and blacks tends to reproduce itself.

b) In the new situation there is a social thrust to overcome discrimination on the job market for women and blacks. Women and blacks have greater access to professions from which they were previously barred; at the same time there is a change in the structure of the work process in these professions tending to introduce new differentiations. This process is facilitated and accelerated «painlessly» by the utilization of blacks and women for the «degraded» sectors of these professions (for them in any case it

represents a social betterment) while white adult males continue to be used for the better positions.

This phenomenon is a significant indication of how, even in a situation of relative stability in job structure, it is important to analyze the dynamic of the internal composition of segmentation. In particular, the utilization of sexual and racial differences within the labor market has been undergoing a transformation. A phase in which stress was placed mainly on an «absolute» inequality, relegating the weaker position of the labor force, namely women and blacks, to occupations on the secondary market, has been succeeded by a phase in which the inequality tends to be «relative», in the sense that this labor force is utilized more and more to accentuate the stratification of the primary labor market into independent and subordinate sectors. As we shall see more clearly below this phenomenon is of decisive importance for the understanding of what has happened in youth employment.

THE STRUCTURE OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The picture is completely different when we look at the data on the youth labor force in Tables 6 and 7.

Employed youth between the ages of 16 and 19 increase their share of total employment between 1960 and 1970 and then stabilize at

around 8%. Looking at their distribution in the three segments of employment, we see that young people, like women and blacks, are more than proportionately present in the secondary sector. But the dynamic during the period considered is completely different than that for women and blacks: starting from 1960 the quota of young people employed in secondary sector jobs increases considerably, while their quotas in both primary sectors diminish¹².

In 1980 the weight of employed youth within the secondary sector is 19%, and 46.5% of employed youth has a secondary sector job; in 1960 the figures were respectively 10.3% and 34.9%¹³.

Two important aspects of this phenomenon should be noted:

a) The redistribution of youth employment appears to be a structural phenomenon uninfluenced by factors of the dynamic of the supply of youth labor force. In fact this redistribution takes place both in the sixties and in the seventies: in the first of these two decades the weight of young workers increases, while in the second it remains constant. Furthermore the youth labor force increases by about 50% in the first decade whereas in the second it goes up by almost half, 27%.

b) The redistribution is also independent from factors of the dynamic of the demand for labor. There is no correlation between the variation in the number of jobs and the variation in the presence of young people¹⁴. Furthermore the

TABLE 6. *Distribution of Workers 16-19 years among Segments by Sex and Race (1960, 1970, 1980)*

Segments	Male			Female			Black and Other		
	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980
Independent Primary	13.5	11.4	16.3	6.1	4.0	5.4	6.2	8.5	n.a.
Subordinate Primary	46.0	39.8	31.2	66.0	60.2	54.8	28.5	49.4	n.a.
Secondary	40.5	48.8	52.5	27.9	35.8	39.8	65.3	42.1	n.a.
Total	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	n.a.

Source: See Table 4. For Black and Other: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Characteristics.

TABLE 7. *Percent of Workers 16-19 years in the Segments by Sex and Age (1960, 1970, 1980)*

Segments	Female			Black and Other		
	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980
Independent Primary	24.7	21.8	22.7	6.0	9.7	n.a.
Subordinate Primary	51.9	54.8	61.1	5.3	9.4	n.a.
Secondary	33.8	37.2	40.2	16.3	8.5	n.a.
Total	42.9	44.5	47.2	10.3	9.3	n.a.

Source: See Table 6.

rates of unemployment (total and youth) vary considerably over the twenty-year period without this having any notable effects on the structure of youth employment.

It can therefore be stated that the changes in the structure of youth employment are not only independent from general cyclical factors but cannot even be explained if we confine ourselves to analyzing the dynamic between specific supply and demand for the youth labor force.

A more precise picture of what has happened in the structure of youth employment can be obtained by analyzing the composition of youth employment according to sex and race.

The figures given in Table 6 show that, contrarily to what has happened for total female employment, young women have increased their presence within the secondary labor market. Also for young males there is an increase in the weight of secondary employment: amongst young people, in contrast to the case of adults, there is a homogeneous dynamic between male and female employment.

The distribution of young women amongst the three segments of employment, which in 1960 was similar to the average for female employment, tends, over the twenty-year period, to move closer to the average for young people.

For young blacks the situation appears very different: at least in the first of the two decades – but there are indications that this is also true

in the second¹⁵ – the structure of employment changes notably with a shift towards the primary market. As already mentioned, this takes place against a backdrop of dramatically rising unemployment rates, declining rates of participation and a reduction in the weight of young blacks in youth employment. The reduction in the weight of secondary occupations for young blacks (it is also a reduction in absolute terms) is to be interpreted as a phenomenon whereby young blacks are expelled from the secondary labor market which traditionally employed over 60% of young black workers. So for young blacks too, one can speak of a deterioration in the employment situation: this deterioration does not take place within the structure of employment, but in society as a whole, taking into account the increase both of the unemployment rate and of the rate of participation.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions that can be drawn from the results illustrated in this paper come under three headings.

The first point concerns the specific problem of youth employment. Young people have increased their numbers in employment irrespective of demographic phenomena. This increase has not been proportional in the three job segments. Starting in the sixties the youth labor force – in particular male and female

whites – played a growing role in the feeding and reproduction of the secondary sector. Young people tend to replace the traditionally weaker part of the labor force, blacks and women, who, over the last twenty years, have been employed more and more in professions belonging to the primary market. This phenomenon cannot be explained by factors of demography and/or the quantity of the supply of work. In fact the increment in the percentage of women employed in the primary sector is much higher than the increment in the weight of female employment, whereas the weight of blacks in employment and in the labor force increases very little and in any case it is much smaller than their increase in weight in primary jobs.

The general cause of this process should rather be sought in the powerful mass movements for civil rights of the sixties, the main objective of which was equality of opportunity and an end to discrimination against women and blacks. It should be stressed that the betterment of employment conditions for women and blacks must not be interpreted as a natural evolution of civil life: in fact, as already mentioned, between 1940 and 1960 there had been a worsening in the structure of employment at least against women. What happened in the sixties was a real change-around in direction.

The aims pursued by the movements of the sixties often took concrete shape in specific legislative attitudes against the discrimination of blacks and women in schooling and work. But, over and above the anti-discrimination laws, important as these were, it was the political and cultural changes that facilitated the access of women and blacks to professions that had hitherto been rarely accessible.

In the transformation of the structure of the working process after the second world war the possibility of utilizing the weaker parts of the labor force like women and blacks in the secondary market has played a key role in the strengthening of the process of segmentation.

Since the sixties there has been to a greater

and greater extent a definite reduction in the readiness of women and blacks to apply «a priori» for secondary jobs. This reduction has been matched by an increase in the utilization of youth in the secondary sector: the net effect has been a stability in the quota of secondary jobs, but with a considerable change in the structure of the employed labor force¹⁶.

This substitution process was originally based on a change in the qualitative character of the traditional quota of the supply of weak labor; at the same time it is encouraged by the birth of new qualitative factors in the supply of youth labor force.

From the end of the war until 1960 youth employment played a both numerically and qualitatively marginal role: the distribution of young people within the segments had undergone few changes and in any case in the direction of an overall improvement.

It is clear that young workers possess qualitative characteristics which objectively make them more suitable for professions belonging to the secondary market. As already mentioned these characteristics are partly objective (lack of experience and professional expertise) and partly subjective (expectations of mobility, readiness for part-time work); but until the sixties this participation in the secondary market was scarce and was declining.

In the sixties the sudden increase in the demand for labor for jobs in the secondary sector encounters a ready response from young people. The cultural aspect is, in my opinion, the most important factor contributing, as it evolved, to the ease with which youth employment spread in the secondary sector. It should in fact be remembered that this phenomenon is exclusively confined to young whites (males and females) in whom the subjective characteristics making them more suitable for secondary jobs are more prominent.

In my opinion the most significant cultural aspects reinforcing the willingness of young whites to accept secondary jobs are two:

a) The great increase in their spirit of independ-

ence from their families. Youth employment used to be encouraged by families for household budget reasons or as an ideological-educational introduction to work; it has been turning more and more into a precocious search by young people for freedom from economic and psychological dependence on their families.

b) The new attitude to work. No longer viewed as a value in itself, work is now looked on as a mere instrument for obtaining income, and many of the illusions of self-actualization through work no longer hold good¹⁷.

Both these elements have considerably reinforced the scarce selectiveness with which young people choose their first jobs; as a consequence the greater availability of secondary jobs has been matched by a generic increase in the supply of white youth labor force.

Many of these changes in the cultural attitude of youth are a direct result of the opposition movements of the sixties: it may be asserted, paradoxically, that the same themes of the mass movements that led blacks and women to move higher up the employment ladder facilitated, on the contrary, the filling of secondary jobs with youth labor force.

The other two points concern the TLS. Undoubtedly the approach to the study of the changes in the employment structure which utilizes the scheme of the segmented labor market has turned out to be extremely useful. But above all what matters is the ability to view the phenomena under examination in the perspective of a TLS that sees segmentation as a dynamic phenomenon transforming the work process: it is this that gives us the possibility of interpreting the phenomena themselves.

1. In the course of this study it has emerged clearly that in order to understand the functioning of the segmented labor market it is important to analyze not only the quantitative but also the qualitative changes in the structure of employment. The modifications that have taken place in the secondary labor market do not concern merely the massive entrance of

young whites; but also a change in the quantitative characteristics of the youth labor force.

The traditional mechanisms of mobility for young people employed in the secondary sector used to be the following: for young women there was a high probability of their remaining inside the secondary labor market or, as an alternative, of their leaving the labor market altogether; for blacks there was the virtual certainty of staying in the secondary market «for life»; also for young whites who entered the secondary labor market, the chances of their remaining in it were very high¹⁸. In synthesis, the expectations of the young people who entered the secondary labor market were, for the most part, to stay there for ever; even if in terms of numbers they were marginal, the role of youth on the secondary labor market was to feed it by growing old. The employment pattern of the young people who entered the secondary labor market was the same as the overall structure where the elements of discrimination were sex, race, and class origin.

The transformations that took place between 1960 and 1980 constituted a radical revolution of both the quantitative structure of the secondary market and the expectations of young people:

a) for young women expectations of upward mobility have risen considerably, and it is a much less frequent occurrence for them to leave the labor market;

b) for young whites, of whom huge numbers have entered the secondary market, the fact that they take secondary jobs is closely linked to their ideological attitude to work;

c) for young blacks there has been at one and the same time an increase in the difficulties they encounter in entering the secondary labor market and greater expectations of better conditions of work.

In correspondence therefore with the modifications in social status of women and blacks and the reduction in the proportion of adults, there has been within the secondary sector an increase in expectations of upward mobility.

2. There now arises the question of how these modifications may influence the role and functioning of the secondary labor market.

If the expectations of mobility tended to have objective bases the secondary labor market would lose one of its principal features: its scarce upward mobility. An ever greater quota of employees would tend to leave the secondary market, after a short stay, and move to higher levels of employment. The problem arises insofar as these expectations of mobility are for the most part destined to remain unsatisfied both owing to the lack of a sufficient number of better jobs (unless we envisage a highly improbable corresponding downward mobility), and because the organization of the segmented labor process is based precisely on the difficulty in moving from one segment to another. Even if it is in practice impossible to supply statistical proof as to the mobility of young people who begin their working lives on the secondary labor market, there are substantial indications that their expectations of spending only a short time in the secondary labor market are to a great extent false hopes¹⁹.

A neglected, but to my mind central, theme of the TLS is the relationship between the structure of jobs and that of the work-force. In the case of the secondary labor market, on account of the structural change in the labor force employed in it, we find a contradiction between the rigid functioning of the secondary market and the expectations of mobility entertained by a growing portion of the workers employed in it.

The development of this contradiction not only poses problems to the correct functioning of the secondary labor market, but also tends to reflect on the entire economy²⁰. The «conflict» between the segmentation of jobs and the structure of the work-force, which characterized the functioning of the American labor market in the seventies, can be resolved in two alternative ways: either the jobs are transformed or the workers are transformed. The tendency towards the transformation of secondary jobs

ought to develop in the sense of their acquiring certain characteristics typical of primary jobs. For example the thrust towards mobility from one segment to another could be mitigated by the introduction of career possibilities in secondary jobs. It is clear that this process would constitute a real turn-around in the now historically consolidated tendency of the transformation of the work process via the introduction of segmentation, and would have broad repercussions on the general economic set-up. It is much more probable that a tendency will prevail whereby the labor force is homogenized to secondary jobs.

The traditional channel through which the labor force is induced to accept secondary employment «willingly» is to use recessive phases, i.e. the threat of unemployment. In my opinion this channel is not efficacious if it is not at the same time accompanied by a policy for reproducing a new type of labor force that is socially and culturally more suited for remaining within the secondary labor market. In fact a somewhat rigid behavior on the part of the labor force has now become consolidated vis-à-vis cyclical phases and unemployment rates. It therefore becomes important also to introduce a qualitative type of policy for the supply of labor. The increase in non-selective and scarcely professionalized schooling, often objectively critical with respect to the ruling order and principles of American society, is one of the results of the mass schooling of the seventies. On the one hand this contributed considerably to producing young people who were unsuitable for a disciplined entrance onto the primary market²¹, and on the other young people who could only temporarily be used in the secondary labor market owing to the increase in the number of years they spent in school and their greater expectations of mobility. A re-equilibrium in the secondary labor market therefore implies decisive action vis-à-vis the school system as the main *locus* for the social reproduction of the labor force. This action, already under way for some time, aims at the massive

introduction within the schools of a segmentation that will reflect more faithfully the segmentation of the job structure.

It is of course impossible to foresee what results there will be from a policy of this kind: what we can forecast is that the problems of the functioning of the labor market will affect more and more the sectors of social reproduction.

¹ The literature on the TLS has become most voluminous. We shall confine ourselves to indicating, besides the now classic two reviews Cain (1975), Cain (1976) some subsequent studies: Rubery (1978), Edwards (1979), Loveridge and Mok (1979), Gordon et al. (1982), Hodson and Kaufman (1982).

² In the course of the article I shall extend the meaning of «blacks» to cover other minorities, mainly Hispanics and Asians.

³ Notable exceptions are the studies by: Kalachek (1969), Wool and Phillips (1975), Osterman (1980), Freeman and Medoff (1980).

⁴ The presence of these young people within the secondary labor market is often interpreted as a further accentuation of inequality against the interests of the poorer classes. See for example: Piore (1975), Osterman (1980).

⁵ For an analysis of the empirical studies that use this subdivision, see Gordon et al. (1982).

⁶ The level of disaggregation of jobs is very low when it is combined with the age distribution of those employed. This is particularly true as regards the data given in «Employment and earnings».

⁷ The classification used is the following: Independent primary sector (professional and technical, managers and administrators, farmers and farm managers, craft and kindred workers). Subordinate primary sector: (sales workers, clerical workers, operatives). Secondary sector: (farm and nonfarm laborers, service workers).

⁸ This phenomenon of stability in the overall structure of the labor force is confirmed by studies that utilize different classifications and data from those utilized in this work. Freeman and Medoff (1980) use both census data and data from the cps, in Gordon et al. (1982) a different classification is used and the data are those of the census, but in all cases a picture of substantial stability emerges.

⁹ We have calculated an index of segregation in the various years for blacks, women and young people. The method used is the «standardized segregation index» which measures the change in size of the various profes-

sions (Burriss and Wharton, 1982). The results, which I am not giving here for space limitations, confirm a definite drop in segmentation for blacks and women and an increase for young people between 1960 and 1980.

¹⁰ The data for 1982 confirm this trend: the distribution of blacks and women employed in the secondary sector diminishes slightly from 1980 while the number of secondary jobs increases a little.

¹¹ For women there is a worsening in the structure of employment from 1940 to 1960. For blacks no data are available for the years before 1960.

¹² This process begins in the sixties. From the data produced by Wool and Phillips (1975) it appears that between 1940 and 1960 young people improve their employment structure.

¹³ The data for 1982 confirm this trend. In 1982 49.3% of young people in employment are in secondary jobs.

¹⁴ For example in two fast-growing areas of employment (clerical and service workers), young people are diminishing in the former and increasing in the latter. In two other, slow growing or static types of job (farm and nonfarm laborers) young people remain constant in the first and increase in the second.

¹⁵ At the time of writing, data on jobs classified by age-group are not available from the 1980 census.

¹⁶ Nothing can be asserted as to what the number of secondary jobs would have been if the availability of women and blacks had remained constant or risen. Certainly a more or less determined resistance to take on certain jobs can limit their numerical growth. The increase in the readiness of young people may have, at least in part, balanced out the situation.

¹⁷ On the youth culture of the sixties and seventies and its impact on the world of work the literature is profuse. See for example Institute of Industrial Relations (1970), Sheppard and Herrick (1972), Aronovitz (1974), Yankelovich (1974), O'Toole (1977), Osterman (1980).

¹⁸ In the years before 1960 it was much less common for young whites to take secondary jobs. Young people who started their working lives in the secondary sector were mostly of relatively low social origin.

¹⁹ Mobility from the secondary labor market towards other segments continues to be low for young people too. On the contrary horizontal mobility within the secondary sector is very widespread. Overall, the chances are high that a young person who enters the secondary labor market will be forced to remain there (Sommers and Eck, 1977; Irra, 1978).

²⁰ The contradiction between high unemployment rates and labor shortages in particular professions is well known. Around 1970 this phenomenon begins to

become significant not only and not so much for highly specialized professions but also within the secondary labor market, to such an extent that immigration stays high even in recession.

²¹ On the difficulty of young people in adjusting to jobs that are well-paid and stable, but alienating and fatiguing (to a large extent jobs on the subordinate primary labor market) see the studies cited in footnote 17.

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