WORKING PAPER SERIES - 248

THE ETHNIC POLITICS OF MUNICIPAL JOBS

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DRAFT: April 1993

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

LOS ANGELES

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UCLA

December 1992

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Abstract

In contrast to the traditional assimilationist approach, new trends in sociological research emphasize instead the enduring importance of economic specialization as both mode and mechanism of ethnic mobility. If a new consensus views economic specialization as the way in which ethnic groups "gain the upper hand" (Portes and Zhou, 1992), the question of how these economic specializations arise is still relatively unexplored. While most researchers emphasize the importance of social networks, the social network approach begs the issue of how to account for the insertion and consolidation of networks of new, outsider groups, as opposed to those dominated by established, incumbent workers. This article seeks to answer this question through a case study of the ethnic politics of municipal jobs in New York City government. I argue that the development of ethnic specialization in New York City's government can best be understood as part of a continuing, inter-ethnic competitive conflict over access to jobs. Each inter-ethnic conflict leaves a legacy, both in organizational structures that impede the entry of new groups, and in an ethnic division of labor, in which particular ethnic groups, each with their own supply curve, have specialized in particular functions.

Assimilation is the grand theme of American ethnic research. The classic sociological position, developed by the Chicago school, provided an optimistic counter to the dim assessments of the new immigrants prevalent at the early part of the century. Notwithstanding the marked differences that impressed contemporaries, Park, Burgess, Thomas and others contended that the new immigrant groups would lose their cultural distinctiveness and move up the occupational hierarchy. Gordon's (1964) now classic volume distilled the essence of the sociological view: immigrant/ethnic groups start at the bottom and gradually move up; their mobility takes place through individual advancement, not group collective action; in the process of moving up, ethnic groups lose their distinctive social structure; and as ethnics become like members of the core group, they become part of the core group, joining it in neighborhoods, in friendship, and eventually in marriage.

But newer trends in sociological research suggest a very different perspective, emphasizing instead the enduring importance of economic specialization as both mode and mechanism of ethnic mobility. Sociologists have now developed a variety of conceptualizations -- grouped under the rubrics of ethnic economy (Light, et. al, 1992), ethnic enclave (Portes and Bach, 1985), ethnic hegemony (Jiobu, 1988), and ethnic niche (Lieberson, 1980; Model, forthcoming) -- all of which recast the story of ethnic progress as a collective search for mobility, in which groups move up from the bottom by specializing in, and dominating a particular branch of economic life. Most scholarly attention has focussed on the consequences of specialization for the immigrant generation. But Hout (1986) has employed a cognate concept, the notion of an "enclave middle class", to explain patterns of social mobility among U.S. blacks. Similarly, Goldscheider and Zuckerman (1984) have argued that "Jewish exceptionalism in socioeconomic status" continues into the third generation and beyond, rooted in persistently high levels of self-employment and concentration in the professions.

If a new consensus views economic specialization as the way in which ethnic groups "gain the upper hand" (Portes and Zhou, 1992), the question of how these economic specializations arise is still relatively unexplored. As with so many

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other matters in ethnic research, a social network approach seems to provide the best tool for approaching the issue.   In the context of ethnic employment, networks comprise a source of "social capital", just as Coleman (1988) has specified, providing social structures that facilitate action, in this case, job search, hiring, recruitment, and training. Networks are particularly critical for their role in organizing information flows among workers, on the one hand, and between workers and employers on the other: by increasing the quality and quantity of information, networks improve a group's ability to access employment opportunities, and reduce employers' risks associated with hiring and training.

While cogent, the network approach elides a critical issue: namely, how to account for the insertion of new groups, and the consolidation of <u>their</u> networks, as opposed to the networks dominated by incumbent workers.   That is, unless newcomers move into an entirely new industry or occupation, common in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but unusual today, they must enter as replacements for some previously established group.

Succession processes have received much, perhaps too much attention from sociologists (Light, 1981; Aldrich, 1975), since replacing incumbents is hardly a foregone conclusion: prior occupants of a niche may well be organized to keep newcomers out.   After all, the same features that make networks mechanisms of inclusion also make them mechanisms of exclusion.   Under most circumstances, employers prefer to hire the workers recommended by incumbents, who also enjoy privileged access to job information (Model, 1988).   Indeed, opportunities may become detached from the open market, being rationed instead to insiders' referrals, reflecting a <u>quid pro quo</u> between incumbents and employers (Stevens, 1978).   Thus, the advantages of networks for newcomers can't explain the factors that undermine or reverse pre-existing, network-based tendencies toward social closure (Parkin, 1979).

Moreover, the social network approach ignores the broader institutional framework within which ethnic group employment is established.   As Granovetter and Tilly (1989) argue, established groups bargain with employers over sorting of individuals and groups <u>and</u> over the ranking of positions.   Incumbents seeking

to increase job control will also seek to control supply; hence bargaining relationships yield a normative consensus as to the rules of access and promotion. While the rules may be either customary or formal, and the rule-making process is often affected by conflict, the rules become adapted to the needs of incumbent groups. Consequently, the ability of newcomer networks to function as social capital may well be constrained by the rules and structures imposed by established groups. Morawska's (1983) case study of 19th century steel mills and their bifurcated "occupational circuits" based on ethnic divisions exemplifies this process, with social networks operating in precisely the fashion outlined above, yet feeding eastern European workers into a clearly delimited set of jobs with low mobility ceilings.

In a sense, these conceptual shortcomings have methodological roots. Ethnic studies tend to focus on a particular group and its experience over time; but understanding the development of a group's employment situation requires detailed attention to the other groups for whom they might be complements or substitutes. For the same reason, ethnic group studies have the wrong time line. Newcomers move into an employment structure established by earlier labor and employer groups; to understand how that structure impinges on newcomers one needs to comprehend the historical context in which that structure evolved.

This paper speaks to the conceptual and methodological issues in research on the making of ethnic economic specializations through a case study of the ethnic politics of municipal jobs in New York City government. While moving into public employment has been an ethnic mobility strategy since the mid-19th century, it has also been a story of alternating tendencies toward inclusion and exclusion. Successful machine-building in the late 19th century led the Irish to dominance over city jobs, though civil service reform undertaken by WASP reformers kept Irish control contested (Clark, 1975). By the 1920s, Irish dominance was threatened by immigrants from southern- and eastern-Europe and their children, who swept into the public sector on the heels of the New Deal (Erie, 1988). With the onset of the civil rights movement, blacks and other minority groups began clamoring for their share of city jobs. Passage of the

Equal Employment Act of 1972, which extended Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to public employers, gave hope that local government might once again be a direct of lever of ethnic mobility, as it was in days gone by (Eisinger, 1982). But once again, the question of who gets the jobs comes to the surface, as blacks and Hispanics increasingly contend with one another over the lion's share of the public's jobs.

As we shall see, inter-ethnic conflict has focussed on the rules of access and promotion, with each phase yielding a change in the structure of employment protecting incumbents and impinging on the prospects of the newest entrants. Thus, understanding the changing patterns of ethnic specialization in government goes beyond a social network approach, directing attention to the behavior of other groups and to the broader factors that influence the structure within which an ethnic group gets inserted. The characteristics of the case also help resolve the methodological difficulties in studying ethnic employment: the fact that government's employment structures are long-standing, have been subject to conflict, and are part of the public arena provide a rich and continuous documentary base.

A Job Competition Approach

Research on the ethnic politics of municipal jobs is a case study in the sorting of categorically distinctive workers into an identifiably distinct set of jobs. The case brings three phenomena into question: the creation and stabilization of an ethnic division of labor; its destabilization; and its re-formation and restabilization, following the incorporation of previously excluded groups. Sociological theory provides two perspectives on these process, one emphasizing the importance of social networks, a second underlining the centrality of wage competition. As I shall show, both are incomplete; as an alternative, I develop a job competition view.

Network approaches: This argument, widely rehearsed in the ethnicity literature, emphasizes the importance of a group's "social capital" and the fit between group characteristics and the environment they encounter (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990). Ethnic networks facilitate job search, hiring, recruitment,

and training, because they fulfill the needs of workers and employers alike, furnishing reliable, low cost information about the costs of jobs and workers, while also providing a set of controls that increase the probability that firms and/or workers will use the skills in which they have invested. Once in place, ethnic hiring networks are self-reproducing, since each new employee recruits others from his or her own group (see Granovetter, 1974). Thus, the development of ethnic specializations can be seen as an instance of the embededdness of economic actions within social relations that generate trust, establish expectations, and create norms (Granovetter, 1985).

As outlined above, however, a network approach only illuminates the supply-side; since employers can recruit among a variety of categorically distinctive workers, the question is how and under what conditions a group's supply network links up to the recruitment networks of employers (Granovetter and Tilly, 1989). In this light, arguments about the importance of embeddedness (Granovetter, 1986) can produce little insight, since they emphasize, as Coleman notes, "social organization and social relations...as a structure with history and continuity that give it an independent effect on the functioning of economic systems (1988: S97)." But the civil service is a case in which the emergence of economic specializations among newcomers groups are instances of discontinuity, where prior recruitment patterns are ruptured, often, though not always, in the aftermath of intense ethnic conflict. Since incumbents rely on more than the advantages of inside information to maintain privileged access to jobs, how, and under what conditions, do outsiders get through the door?

Split labor market theory: With employers' help, is the answer that split labor market theory provides (Bonacich, 1972; 1976). The basic, familiar argument, is that the split labor market must contain at least two groups of workers whose "price of labor differs for the same work, or would differ if they did the same work." Capital "naturally gravitates toward the employment of cheaper labor", which can be used by the employer "to undermine the position of expensive labor, through strikebreaking and undercutting."

But if split labor market theory holds, how then to account for the

stability of an ethnic division of labor, which network approaches so neatly explain. Wage reduction strategies do not necessarily coincide with labor cost reduction strategies, which is why employers so often prefer incumbents, as indicated above. Of course, one could argue that capitalists only prefer incumbents when they can't mobilize cheap labor flows -- a possibility, but one that clashes with employers' historically repeated ability to rapidly secure migrants when labor grows short, a point underscored by Piore (1979). Finally, split labor market provides little insight into the mechanisms that allow incumbents to bar access to outsiders, a criticism similar to the objections advanced by Peled and Shafir (1987).

Apart from these general considerations, split labor market theory provides little guidance to the specifics of the case. The employer in question, that is to say, government, is clearly not a capitalist; since it neither seeks to maximize profits nor minimize costs, what motivations would lead it to seak out "cheap labor"? And if government is not actively trying to depress incumbents' wages by bringing in "low-priced" outsiders, why would insiders try so avidly to keep hiring portals closed?

Job Competition: As an alternative, I briefly develop a job competition perspective, which emphasizes the interaction of economic and sociological processes in ways that successively recast the ethnic division of labor. In a job competition world hiring occurs at the entry level only (Thurow, 1975). Employers allocate jobs to the most desirable workers they can recruit and rank those workers according to criteria that have been developed through formal or informal negotiations with the established groups in their labor supply. Those rankings create a labor queue (Reskin and Roos, 1990).

Because demand tends to outrun supply under conditions of long economic expansion, groups at the bottom of the queue move up, while groups external to the labor market -- migrants -- are brought in at the bottom to fill labor short jobs. Since the predilections of migrants match the preferences of employers, who try, for reasons noted by the network approaches above, to reproduce the characteristics of the workers whom they already employ, newcomers move and

settle down under auspices of friends, kin, and "friends of friends". Thus, network hiring funnels migrants into specialized economic activities, where they often create a "niche", as Lieberson (1980) describes.

Prior skills, predispositions, and the costs and benefits associated with a particular activity, relative to the alternatives, determine the particular niche or specialization to which groups gravitate. Once in place, groups maintain control over the specialization through a variety of strategies, ranging from informal recruitment patterns, that are inherently exclusionary, to the adoption of hiring rules and practices that, while seemingly universalistic, best serve the incumbent group. Where the niche is itself a source of rewarding employment or provides mechanisms for expanding a group's economic base, specializations are likely to persist; a more confined niche, or a change in the match between a group and its original niche, may induce a shift to different positions. The crucial point is that the continuing importance of ethnic networks shapes a group's employment distribution into the second, and later generations. Thus, just as with the first generation, the second generation's search for advancement takes a collective form.

Specializations go unchallenged as long as the newest migrants are content to work in the bottom-level jobs for which they were initially recruited. Over time, however, job orientations change and groups that previously occupied stable assignments in lower level jobs seek to move up the job hierarchy. If incumbent groups have also changed their preferences, and have moved up and out of their traditional niche, that search eventuates in little or no conflict. But if incumbents remain firmly attached to a niche which newcomers seek to penetrate, the quest for mobility leads to competition for hiring slots with incumbent groups. Because hiring occurs under rules worked out, in part, to protect incumbent groups, the substance of rules becomes the object of conflict.

Conflict will depend on the degree of job competition between incumbent and outsider groups. Declines in the relative availability of incumbents will not only diminish competition but relax gatekeepers' pressure, thus widening opportunities for newcomers. Conflict will be higher where incumbents remain

attached to a particular niche. In these cases, the outcome of conflict will depend on the resource mobilization capacity of insider and outsider groups and on their ability to use those resources to affect changes in recruitment and promotional structures.

Resources include characteristics specific to job competition processes between contending insider and outsider groups involved, such as their human and social capital. However, resources also encompass those factors that enable groups to exercise leverage over broader political processes; groups' resource bearing capacity relative to other political actors therefore also enter into the equation.

Thus, in contrast to both network and split labor market approaches, the job competition view can explain conflict over and stability in the ethnic division of labor. Unlike network approaches, the job competition view brings politics and markets back into the discussion, emphasizing the importance of exogenous as well as endogenous, group specific, factors. Unlike split labor market theory, the job competition view provides a framework for understanding the conditions under which incumbents will encounter success or failure in maintaining closure over the niches they control.

In the next sections, I use the job competition view to analyze the ethnic politics of New York's municipal jobs from the early twentieth century to the present. This paper draws on a wide variety of sources. The historical portions rely on an extensive body of published and unpublished material about the evolution of New York's civil service. These include reports of the New York Civil Service Commission and Department of Personnel; special reports commissioned by the City or State on aspects of the city's personnel system; surveys conducted by the City on the ethnic composition of its workforce; unpublished EEO reports, which I obtained through freedom of information requests; legal and civil service commission rulings; tabulations from the Public Use Samples of the Census of Population; and relevant newspaper articles. For the contemporary period, this material is supplemented by 62 in-depth interviews conducted with a broad range of government officials past and present, occupying

positions from top to lower levels, as well as officials of public employee unions. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 3 hours; in a number of cases, I conducted repeat interviews which allowed me to crosscheck information and assess new hypotheses.

The Ethnic Politics of New York's Municipal Jobs

Making the Patronage System: By the end of the 19th century, government employment became one of a series of arenas over which traditional WASP elites and their immigrant contenders struggled for control. Tammany arose in the mid-19th century out of the opportunities related to New York's growing economic and ethnic heterogeneity, which undermined the traditional pattern of elite control, and provided "contenders for office with an incentive to mobilize new voters into the electorate" (Shefter, 1985: 14). Patronage was one of the mechanisms by which Tammany mobilized votes and consolidated support, leading it to structure the city's employment system in ways that maximized benefits for the machine. As Rich argues, "the Tammany-controlled departments were labor-incentive organizations, which had the flexibility to respond to an unstable marketplace. (1982: 22)" In the pre-civil service city, transactions between various city departments and the public were conducted without records, files or transcripts; workers were assigned according to experience and could rely on receiving job preferences as long as the needs of machine were met; and sponsorship was crucial for entry and mobility, with workers given no promise of security. The use of temporary day laborers was an essential and deliberate employment strategy, enabling the machine to keep its visibility high in immigrant communities. By the 1870s, one out of every 8 New York voters was on a local payroll (Keller, 1977, 239).

The machine's hold on local government was met by opposition from WASP reformers, whose antagonism towards immigrants old and new was fed by cultural conflict as well as economic interests that were threatened by the machine's depredatory ways. Reformers sought to break the machine's power by severing the link between political activity and government employment. The institution of

civil service ranked high on the reformers list of priorities, not just for ideological reasons, but because it provided a means for undermining Tammany's base of support and institutionalizing a new class of employees and positions. By imposing entrance standards, by testing applicants for fitness, by reorganizing government procedures, reformers sought to achieve two goals at once: attract native-born middle class recruits for a professionalized government service; and reduce the machine's ability to influence who got into government, and once inside, got ahead.

Though eventuating in an 1883 statewide civil service law, which established a municipal civil service commission, reform efforts were of little avail. On the one hand, control over the mechanisms of entry and promotion never really eluded Tammany's grasp. The city continued hiring workers to many postions that did not require exams, thus leaving a substantial number of jobs embedded in the patronage system. For those jobs technically accessible through formal exams only, the politically-connected enjoyed a decisive edge. Only insiders had good access to opportunities, as the Civil Service Commission rarely posted notices of job openings (Garrett, 1961). Tammany-linked cram schools, which prepped job seekers for essay exams graded by Irish examiners, held a virtual stranglehold on the flow of applicants to the Irish fiefdoms in police and fire, "training" most of the applicants and almost all of the successful candidates (Stahl, 1936). Such bureaucratic pressure groups as the Civil Service Forum, which served as adjuncts of the Democratic Party, provided privileged access to the decisions of the Civil Service Commission (Sayre and Kaufman, 1960). And the Commission maintained a loose classification system, giving politicians considerable discretion over salaries to which employees could be assigned (Forbes, 1934; Citizens Budget Commission, 1938).

On the other hand, the Irish encountered few effective competitors for city jobs. As Fogelson's (1977) analysis of that classic Irish niche -- the police -- shows, there was never any serious threat that WASP's would dislodge the Irish. Notwithstanding the episodic efforts of reformers like Theodore Roosevelt, the number of native applicants was small; few of them were interested in public

service; and even fewer were attracted to police. The increasingly numerous Poles, Jews, Italians and others who were just off the boat had little chance of doing well in essay-type exams against the Irish, who were, after all, native-English speakers. Consequently, the introduction of a civil service system had the opposite of its intended effect -- increasing the opportunities for Irish.

The Irish made the most of those opportunities and by the turn of the century had already established dominance in public employment, as can be seen from data from the 1900 Census. On an index of representation, in which a score of one for an occupation equals a group's share of employment in the total economy, Irish men scored 1.74 among government officials and 2.36 among policemen and firemen, higher than British men who shared the same linguistic advantage (1.12 and .91, respectively), and towering above the newly arrived Russian Jews and Italians (each with identical scores of .01 and .15, respectively).[1]

As long as city government stayed small, Irish dominance yielded relatively few jobs. The years following the turn of the century saw a major expansion in New York's role as employer -- eclipsing the employment potential attained even in Tammany's earlier period of unhindered patronage. The consolidation of the 5 boroughs in 1897 brought Tammany a windfall of 20,000 new patronage jobs. Thereafter local government grew substantially, especially at the lower, blue-collar levels, thanks to investment in large-scale public works. "Thousands of unskilled and semi-skilled Irish," notes Stephen Erie, "took jobs in [New York City's] municipally owned subways, street railways, waterworks, and port acilities." (1988: 87) Erie estimates that municipally owned utilities accounted for over one-half of Irish public sector jobs in New York City, between 1900 and 1930, with employment in the city's expanding police and fire departments accounting for another 21 percent. Irish employment in New York City government almost quadrupled during these years, increasing from just under 20,000 to 77,000, while the total number of city workers climbed from 54,000 to 148,000, less than a factor of three (Erie, 1988: 89).

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[1] Calculated from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1904, p. 634-7.

The liabilities of the new immigrants lasted hardly a generation; with the Jews' rapid educational and occupational advancement, another competitor entered the scene. But as long as the Irish, through Tammany Hall's grip over city government, could control municipal hiring, inter-ethnic competition posed little threat. To begin with, competition was structured in such a way as to minimize the value of Jews' educational advantages. Improved qualifications for government employment had ranked high on the agenda of the efficiency experts, social scientists, and social workers, who comprised an important component of the city's "reform vanguard". But the reform program made little headway. The Civil Service Commission increasingly emphasized experience over education, imposing few absolute educational qualifications, issuing exams at irregular intervals, ensuring that tests only included material directly relevant to the duties to be performed, which gave the "cram schools" a continuing, strategic role, and postponing appointments until 2 or 3 years after an exam had been held (Rapoport, 1971; Stahl, 1935; Sayre and Mandell, 1935).

Moreover, the patronage system functioned unencumbered, throughout Tammany's dominance between 1917 and 1933. In 1920 city hall had almost 23,400 positions to which it could hire its preferred candidates without exams; by the end of the decade, the City added another 10,000 non-competitive positions, falling into Tammany's control.[2] As late as 1933, barely half of the city's workforce was chosen by competitive exams; the magistrate and municipal courts appointed clerks without relying on civil service lists; 6,000 jobs on the locally-owned IND subway lines, almost 30,000 laboring jobs, and 11,000 positions for orderlies, untrained nurses, and scrubwomen were filled at the mayor's discretion -- or more appropriately, at the whims of his political mentors' (Thomas and Blanshard, 1932). Some portion of this patronage pot could be handed out to the newcomers, without endangering core Irish support, thanks to the overall growth of government. As Erie argues, Tammany chose the Jews as its favored junior partners, providing them with a greater share of municipal employment, especially in the legal department and the rapidly expanding school

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[2] Calculated from reports of the Civil Service Commission.

system, while confining the Italians to jobs as garbagemen, street cleaners, and laborers on the politically sensitive docks.

Making the Civil Service System: The depression brought these harmonious arrangements to an end. Fiscal stringency forced Tammany-led City Hall to prune city employment -- with the bulk of the cuts borne by teachers and social workers, whose ranks were disproportionately filled by Jews. LaGuardia's election in 1933 delivered the coup de grace.

LaGuardia's own political imperatives pushed him to restructure the competition for government jobs in ways that now favored the Jews. Keeping control of City Hall required that he undermine the material base of Tammany's power and consolidate his support among groups not firmly under Tammany's tow -- the most important of which were the Jews, who had split between LaGuardia and his Tammany opponent in 1933 (Bayor, 1979). Both goals could be accomplished in the same way, namely by giving the green light to the administrative changes long championed by the reform vanguard which comprised a crucial part of LaGuardia's coalition.

As Sayre and Kaufman noted, the reformers used "the Civil Service Commission to exclude the party organizations from any influence upon the appointment, promotion, and tenure of city employees (Sayre and Kaufman, 305)." In detaching public employment from the influence of political actors, the reformers transformed the entire structure of competition for government jobs. Their strategy proceeded along several fronts. First, they took over old Tammany preserves. Labor positions were transferred from the non-competitive to the competitive class, with 12,000 in the Department of Sanitation alone, another 10,000 in the municipal hospitals, and an entirely new, competitive classification created for skilled workers. The ranks of provisional workers were whittled down from 13,530 in 1938 to just over 3,000 in 1940 by transferring the home relief division of the city's welfare office, which had been set up on an emergency, appointive basis. By obliging incumbents to take the appropriate exams, the commission overhauled their ranks, as the exams winnowed out as many as 90 percent of the workers in some occupational categories, with one-third of

those in the professional social service category failing. By the end of 1939, 90,000 workers had been brought into competitive positions, accounting for three quarters of the city's payroll, and up from 58 percent in 1933.[3]

The second step involved internalization -- limiting entry portals to the bottom and establishing careers lines for promotion through the ranks. The reformers restructured access to the vast array of basic clerical functions, establishing the high school graduation or its equivalent as a prerequisite for entry level jobs, closed the next grade to open competition, and raising the third grade to college graduates only. The commission made "filling higher positions by promotion examination...a prime objective (City of New York, Civil Service Commission, 1939: 8)," creating an administrative service for jobs paying more than $3,000. Increasingly, the commission sought to fill the highest jobs through exams, attempting at one point to bring the entire personnel of the Department of Water Supply, Gas, and Electricity into the competitive civil service up to and including the post of Commissioner (City of New York, Civil Service Commission, 1940).

Third, the reformers established new criteria for hiring and promotion. Long critical of the traditional techniques that "ignore(d) or even indirectly penalize(d), the training embodied in public education" (Sayre and Mandell), the reformers who dominated LaGuardia's Civil Service Commission raised the entrance requirements for examinations, changed the relative weights given to the evaluation of experience and education, and increased the educational content of tests (Rapoport, 1971).

The depression provided the labor market conditions under which this strategy could be successfully pursued. In contrast to conditions at the turn of the century, when reformers could entice few highly qualified applicants to the government jobs that they wished to transform, mass joblessnessness made public employment attractive. This was an opportunity that the reformers avidly grasped. As the Civil Service Commissioner noted at the end of the War:

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[3] Data on positions and classifications from reports of the Civil Service Commission.

> In the years of depression...the Commissioner's general policy was
> to take advantage of the existing labor market and to encourage many
> well-trained citizens seeking employment to enter City service
> (Rankin, 1945)

Moreover, the city's workforce had been upgraded during the 1920s, as a result

of longer school attendance (Stahl, 1935). With the ranks of the unemployed

filled with high school graduates, as well as a large number of persons who had

spent at least some time in the city's burgeoning public college sector,

circumstances were ripe for restricting employment to persons who met the

reformers' desired criteria.

The transition to the new civil service regime took the route of replacing

experience-based, with educational, qualifications. The Commission's 1937 report

enunciated its basic policy:

> There is no way in which the Commission can test in 4 or 5 hours
> what a college or high school faculty can test in 4 or more years,
> no matter how expert the Commission may become. Not only is the
> area of civil service testing definitely limited but certain factors
> cannot be summarily tested. Diligence and application, patience and
> perseverance are vital elements of character for all public servants
> which can hardly be measured in a limited test But if a candidate
> has done well over a 4 hour test in school, it means that he has
> these qualifications. To secure them, this Commission must rely
> heavily on education (Civil Service Commission, 1938: 23).

The commission lowered the maximum age for nearly all positions, especially in

the labor class, so that the "City can have the benefit of the longest possible

period of useful service from trained employees" (Civil Service Commission, 1936:

35). In 1934 and 1935, the Commission raised requirements in favor of additional

training for 34 of the 110 position titles and grades for which examinations were

given (Rapoport, 1971: 50). The 1936 exam for social investigator in the Home

Relief Bureau required a college degree, where previously no college education

had been required, and it set the experience equivalent at a maximum of four

years. The commission provided further incentives to highly educated job

seekers, by adding educational credits to scores in examinations for positions

like chemist, lawyer, and even policemen, a decision that proved highly

controversial (Sayre and Mandell, 1935). And it allowed education to be accepted

in partial fulfillment of experience requirements.

In sum, the reformers revamped the structure of competition -- which they

also encouraged by embarking on a vigorous recruitment campaign, with special efforts focussed on the high schools and colleges. Made hungry for jobs by the depression, competitors arrived in droves. In 1933, under Tammany, 6,327 individuals applied for government jobs; six years later, 250,000 job seekers knocked at the municipal service's door. Openings in just one city agency, the newly competitive welfare department, attracted 100,000 testtakers in 1939. The search for upward mobility through civil service also accelerated, as applications for promotional exams climbed from 6,270 in 1935 to 26,847 in 1939.[4]

Whether or not the depression allowed the city to "command the best personnel available for public service" (Rankin, 1939: 195), as the reformers contended, it clearly furnished government with its most highly educated workforce ever. 5,000 men waited in line till daybreak one night in 1938 to apply for a porter's job: among the first 500, nearly 40 percent had attended high school and 10 percent were high school graduates (Civil Service Commission, 1938: 13). The commission pointed to the results of the 1938 patrolmen's exam, which attracted 30,000 testtakers, as evidence that its "positive recruiting program has shown impressive results" (Civil Service Commission, 1940: 32)" :the top 200 men who headed the new police list had an average of 3 years college education, with 12 percent possessing professional training. The next year, more than 85,000 men applied for the Sanitation labor jobs transferred to the competitive service, among whom were "an unusual number (of) college graduates and a few (with) post graduate degrees" (Civil Service Commission, 1940: 9).

The new structure of competition displaced those who had previously enjoyed privileged access to city jobs -- namely, the Irish -- while increasing access to Jews. In 1935, Paul O'Dwyer, then representing the United Irish Counties Association, argued that the commission's new emphasis on education worked to the detriment of applicants with relevant experience -- such as those that he represented (Civil Service Commission, 1935: 23). In later life, O'Dwyer contended that educational requirements eliminated many Irish, particularly of

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[4] Data on applications for new positions and for promotions from annual reports of the Civil Service Commission.

the first and second generations, who did not have the necessary schooling but nonetheless desired civil service jobs (Bayor, 1979).

One instance of Irish-Jewish conflict, related to the new structure of civil service competition, was the welfare department -- where the replacement of appointees by the finalists on exams led to heavy Jewish incursions (Bayor, 1979). Far more explosive was the situation in the police, where 300 men were selected to join the department in 1940, out of 29,000 who took an exam in 1939. This class of 1940, comprised the first significant proportion of Jews to enter the police, as indicated by a survey of the surviving members of the class indicates that 38 percent were Catholic and 36 percent Jewish, with Russia and Ireland the leading countries of origin of the respondents' grandparents (Herrnstein, n.d.).

Testtaking success took the Jews through the police department's door; but it left them exposed to incumbents' hostility. As one Jewish veteran of the class of 1940 recalled:

> The police was an Irish enclave: how do you think they felt about it? There was overwhelming prejudice. A lot of our people were sent to punishment districts. It took a long time for Jews to be accepted in the Police Department. Took a lot of good physical efforts -- some times fights -- to show that we could be cops.

The Jewish incursion into the police fanned the flames of resentment, which had already been kindled by the depression, the daily encounter with Jewish shopkeepers, by competition over geographical space. When LaGuardia's civil service commissioner sought further control over corrupt police, Father Coughlin, the Irish, anti-semitic radio priest, waded in to protect "the boys from Cork and Galway and Yorkshire and Bavaria...90 percent of them good Christians" against their opponents "who could not tell a nightstick from a streak of salami" -- codewords for Jews. As seen by Social Justice, the Coughlinite paper read by many Irish, LaGuardia's preference for "college boys" meant that "a man must be up on his Greek, mathematics, zoology, astronomy, and Hebrew before he can be a good cop" -- boding ill for the heretofore "vastly Christian" force (Social Justice, 1939a, 1939b).

Consolidating the Civil Service System: Up to the end of World War II, the

politics of municipal jobs were driven by a sequence of competitive conflicts, in which political elites contended with one another over votes and control over personnel systems, with competition among workers for government jobs conditioning efforts to close off or open up avenues for municipal employment. In the aftermath of the second World War, however, all of these competitive processes subsided.

As Martin Shefter (1985) has argued, the post-1945 political regime halted the cycle of electoral competition. When the machine returned to power in 1945, it accepted the status quo in the civil service, rewarded Jews and Italians with a greater share of influence and appointments, and made administrative and budgetary concessions to the reformers. Accommodation yielded two results: the machine eliminated earlier sources of conflict while maintaining the exclusion of less powerful groups -- blacks and Puerto Ricans.

The attenuation of political competition had an equally potent effect on the city's personnel system. Reformers and the machine had previously battled for control, with each group seeking to bolster its position by developing satellite relationships to employee groups. But acceding to civil service reforms was the price the machine paid for regaining power; and the reformers, having achieved victory, "fell away, their mission seemingly accomplished (Sayre and Kaufman, 1960:)." Thus control slipped away to the bureaucrats themselves, who benefitted handsomely from the structures and ideologies that the reformers had developed. The bureaucrats gained further influence from the new political arrangements, as the post-war Democratic machines gradually eased the road to unionization, with full-fledged collective bargaining emerging by the early 1960s.

Finally, the advent of post-war prosperity diminished competition in the labor market, with two consequences for municipal employment. As the labor market tightened, government's former advantages in recruitment receded, weakening its bargaining position relative to its employees. The 1952 Report of the Mayor's Committee on Management Survey found that "The City does not seriously compete, from a salary point of view, with other employers in the New

York area (Mayor's Committee on Management Survey, 1952: 177)," a conclusion seconded by other assessments appearing over the next ten years. In contrast to the 1930s, the surplus of highly skilled labor could no longer be used to refurbish the ranks of the civil service, with the City instead attracting less qualified, security-oriented workers who met its hiring requirements. But these workers were beginning to flex their muscles: maintaining the pre-war system became one of the goals that the fledgling public employee unions sought to achieve.

Second, contention among white ethnics for public jobs subsided, replaced by a stable ethnic division of labor, with Jews in professional and technical jobs, and Irish and Italians sharing the uniform services and skilled or laboring jobs. Earlier flashpoints, like police, no longer provoked conflict: on the one hand, the civil service structure allowed for upward mobility for those Jews who had entered the department; on the other hand, Jewish recruitment into police dwindled, as the well-educated Jews who flocked into the department in the thirties, found better opportunities elsewhere.

Under these circumstances, the structures established in the 1930s hardened, sheltering incumbents while heightening barriers to newcomer groups. The mantle of reform ideology proved to be remarkably well-suited to the interests of civil servants and their organizations, with the doctrine of the "impartial" or "neutral" career civil servant providing a well-tuned instrument for increasing status and influence. The creed of "promotion from within", advanced by reformers to limit the intervention of party leaders was transformed by civil service interests into a method of limiting the discretion of all outsiders.

More importantly, the force of inertia pushed the system of personnel control in a direction that satisfied the bureaucrats' ends. Though the City increasingly lost out in the competition for the most qualified workers, the inflated eligibility requirements developed during the 1930s remained in place. The written test similarly remained the principal selection mechanism, as test-mindedness proved "a policy that (was) easy both for management and for some

employee groups to accept." (Stanley, 1971: 41) Not until the late 1960s, when city officials realized that "many of our examinations tested for education and training achievement levels higher than those required for satisfactory performance on the job" (Department of Personnel, 1970: 26), were entry requirements relaxed. Indeed, the elaborate mechanisms devised to "protect" civil servants and "preserve" the merit system lived on long after the political machine had lost the ability to influence personnel matters, with distinctive, and unintended consequences. As one former director of the Personnel Department wrote, this involved "procedures that emphasize pre-audit and double checks, and policies that discourage line agency initiative and authority" (Hoberman, 1974: 9). Chronic underfunding and understaffing reinforced this tendency, as personnel policy came to mean selecting and promoting by the rules, with few, if any attempts at either oversight or support functions. Bureaucratic debility made the personnel system still less responsive to either agency or staff needs, since budget officials exercised control over lines and positions, and their concern was to curb expenditures (Stanley and associates, 1963). Thus, hiring policies, while complying with the "merit system" rarely produced meritorious results. The laborious application procedures and the long waiting times required to make appointments discouraged the most attractive candidates; too often, the City was left with those applicants who passed civil service tests but had less than brilliant prospects elsewhere (New York City Personnel Council, 1972).

Whereas the reformers had pursued internalization to develop a career civil service, that strategy now served a different purpose, namely reducing competition and maintaining the bureaucracy's stranglehold over the allocation of jobs. Jobs at the very bottom tier -- low skilled positions in "non-competitive" titles -- were detached from the job ladders established for moving ahead. Promotional routes were in turn narrowly circumscribed, with experience at the next lowest title usually the most important qualification for movement to the next step up (Morse, 1974). By ensuring that mobility would proceed from the ranks -- one study from the late 1960s found that 72 percent of the City's

top managers had never changed agencies (Allen, 1969) -- internalization wedded bureaucratic managers to their subordinates, while distancing both from their nominal, appointed leaders, as one veteran tartly pointed out:

> The stability of the workforce is paramount, with continuity, since the heads change every four years. If we were to change people all the time, it would be chaos. We run the department out of people's heads. They know what has to be done, what are the rules.. nobody knows how to get things done except for the old-timers.

As with so much else in the civil service system, promoting insiders and reducing opportunities for lateral movement meshed neatly with the interests of the newly ascendant unions. Narrowing the scope for competition came to rank high on the unions' agenda. They compiled an enviable scorecard, with successful opposition to open, competitive exams; agreements to give priority to departmental, rather than city-wide promotional lists; and strong pressure on managers to accept the "rule of one" instead of the "rule of three" in making appointments from examination lists, counting among their achievements (Horton, 1972; Stanley, 1972).

Under these circumstances, the civil service, notwithstanding its size and importance, became a hermetic, self-enclosed entity. Because the weak, understaffed Personnel Department was preoccupied with administering exams, doing little to either encourage new workers to seek out City employment or encourage incumbent workers to upgrade their skills, recruitment had become a peripheral function as early as 1952, as noted by the Mayor's Committee on Management Survey. A report prepared for the City by the Brookings Institution in 1963 was even more scathing, deriding the "budget and staff for the central recruiting and public relations work" as "pathetic" (Stanley and associates, 1963: 95). Ten years later there had been little improvement, with the Personnel Department rarely departing from its legal mandate to advertise openings in "certain, specified, obscure places, and in formidable terminology: the formal descriptions, in 'bureaucratese', of ... narrow kinds of specialties..." (Savas and Ginsburg, 1975)

With little in the way of an active recruitment effort, potential applicants with no prior connections had few signposts to an appropriate source

of vacancies. Indeed, a 1963 survey of more than 7,000 civil servants in professional occupations found that almost half found out about their initial job through friends or family, with an additional 18 percent obtaining information in a civil service paper (Stanley and associates, 1963: 101).

Thus, whereas the events of the 1930s overturned the pre-existing ethnic division of labor, the developments of the post-war era consolidated the ethnic division of labor that had emerged out of the depression. The transformation of the 1930s increased Jewish and Italian access to municipal jobs; as these networks were embedded in the municipal system they became self-reproducing. But power shifts gave the change in the composition of the city's recruitment networks added impact. With the City's retreat from an active personnel policy, the population of persons with ties to municipal workers virtually became the applicant pool. Prosperity diminished the city's appeal to the type of high skilled competitors who had displaced the previous era's incumbents while the eligibility requirements inherited from the 1930s kept less-skilled competitors at bay. The altered balance of political power gave further influence to employee views; once in place, the new groups of white ethnic workers became engaged in bargaining games that sheltered them from competition. In the end, the civil service became reconstituted as a protected enclave for white ethnics.

Consolidation occurred just as a new set of outsiders were becoming a sizeable presence. In the early years of the 20th century, local government, like most other New York employers, closed its door to blacks: in 1911, Mary White Ovington counted 511 black city employees (Ovington, 1911), almost all of whom were employed as laborers. In the early 1920s, Tammany installed the leader of its black client organization, the United Colored Democracy, as a member of the three-person Civil Service Commission, but black access to public jobs changed marginally. By the late 1920s, the city counted 2,275 black workers on its payroll, of whom 900 were in laboring jobs, and an additional 700 in other non-competitive or per-diem positions (Colored Citizens' Non-Partisan Committee, n.d.). The reform regime did more for blacks (Levinson, 1974), pushing black

employment above parity by 1940.[5] But these effects occured as a result of the government's burgeoning payrolls, and they were mainly felt in the black concentrations of hospitals, sanitation, and public works, where more than 80 percent of the city's black job holders worked in 1935. (Katznelson, 1973: 82). Moreover, blacks remained vulnerable to discriminatory practices, as in the city-owned subway system, where blacks only worked as porters, with the exception of a few stations in Harlem (Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, 1935). Most importantly, the employment system that emerged during the depression put blacks at a structural disadvantage in competition with whites. Lacking the educational skills and credentials needed to qualify for most city jobs, black and Puerto Ricans found themselves channeled into non-competitive positions, of which the single largest concentration was found in the municipal hospital system. From here there were few routes of movement upward, as these bottom-level positions were disconnected from the competitive system, which promoted from within. Thus, the initial placements of outsiders of the post-World War II period, which strongly affected their later employment trajectory, took place within an organizational matrix that reflected the interests of an earlier group of outsiders; reordering that matrix has been the issue that has dominated the ethnic politics of municipal jobs since the 1960s.

Contesting the Civil Service System: Though leaders like Adam Clayton Powell had been pressuring New York's mayors to increase black employment in government ever since the LaGuardia years (Hamilton, 1991), race only gradually transformed the politics of municipal jobs. For the first two decades of the post-war era, personnel policy revolved around unsuccessful attempts to regain administrative control over a system that had been captured by the bureaucracy. By the early 1950s, the personnel system had come under attack, as some of the disillusioned reformers of the 1930s realized that they had created a cumbersome system more oriented toward protecting civil servants than responding to governmental needs (Sayre, 1947). Reflecting the machine's sensitivity to reform

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[5] Calculated from the 1940 Census of Population, Public Use Samples.

complaints, reorganization followed in 1954, though with little effect. While personnel officials realized that "the system of the 1930s and 1940s couldn't continue", as a former Personnel Director recalled, the City's difficulties in recruiting professional workers dominated personnel concerns. These priorities led the city to commission the Brookings Institution to study the problems of professional employees, culminating in a 1963 report that contained no mention of issues involving race (Stanley and associates, 1963). Efforts at reform focussed on ways of "broadening the market" when the city could no longer "get the best of the market": in 1963, the city finally repealed the depression era Lyons Act, which required employees to be residents of New York City, marking the curtain call of the traditional reform program. Rather than widening the pool of potential applicants and improving workforce quality, repeal facilitated white migration out to the suburbs, yielding the unintended effect of making civil service jobs more attractive to incumbents and the members of their core networks. As a symbol of how fast and completely the tables would turn, reviving the residency requirement became a clarion call of the new generation of reformers preoccupied with equity rather efficiency concerns.

Race jumped to the top of the agenda in 1965 when John Lindsay arrived in office, the first reformer elected Mayor since LaGuardia. Elected with the votes of liberals and minorities, Lindsay lacked his predecessor's commitments to the interests of civil service workers, and pledged to increase black and Puerto Rican employment in city agencies. But the new mayor quickly discovered that the civil service structure was not easily amenable to change. The requirement that low-paid clerks and typists be high school graduates -- a product of the depression -- remained in force until 1968 (Kihss, 1968). And after revoking this rule, the city continued to rely on tests to screen its clerical applicants -- which provoked protest from minority workers on provisional lines who were being pushed into the competitive service (New York Times, 1968). Reducing eligibility requirements went on in dozens of other low-ranking titles, but resistance proved severe when officials attempted incursions in the better-paid ranks. Firefighters, for example, successfully opposed a city proposal to drop

the minimum height requirement below 5'6" so that more Puerto Ricans could be employed (Stanley, 1972). Recreation leaders blocked efforts at hiring minority high school graduates as playground assistants. Street workers in the city's youth services agency successfully disputed an attempt to reduce the requirement of a college degree for that position (Horton, 1972).

But Lindsay's main focus, in contrast to earlier reform administrations, was to evade the civil service system and its unionized defenders. The Lindsay administration embraced the "new career" movement (Haskell, 1969); the city created new, less-skilled positions -- for example, nurse's aid or case aid trainee -- in which minority residents could be more easily hired. But the new careers movement never involved large numbers. More importantly, it left existing eligibility requirements unchallenged, shunting minority recruits into dead end jobs where they were marooned. Trainees in the police department, for example, could move up one step beyond the entry level spot, but never into the ranks of police officer (Stanley, 1972). Even where promotional ladders were developed, trainees often lacked the requisite skills: despite considerable coaching, many of the case aid trainees never succeeded in meeting the qualifications for next title (Morse, 1974). Agency officials often proved unenthusiastic about the new careers project. And union officials were prone to footdragging, seeing efforts at creating promotional opportunities for trainees as unfair "to current employees, many of whom are poor at city salaries and stuck in dead end jobs." In the end, as one analyst concluded, the city was unwilling or unable to "pay the price" to implement new careers on a widespread basis (Rapoport, 1971: 95-96).

Far more resistance arose when the administration sought to use the Model Cities programs to create positions that would funnel minority residents into the uniformed services, always vigilantly defended by their incumbents. No sooner did the Brooklyn Model Cities program create a new title in fire fighting for a "model cities fireman's aid", calling for a separate exam and job classification, than the Firefighters' union successfully challenge the action in court. A later attempt to a create a salvage corporation that would clean-up the debris left

after a fire had been extinguished -- which would have put Model Cities residents in competition with the members of private salvage companies -- was squashed after firefighters threatened to act in concert with their threatened brethren in the private sector (Gitell, 1973). And the uniform services received judicial relief again when courts struck down a third initiative designed to require applicants for uniformed jobs in Model Cities areas to live and work in those areas (Perlmutter, 1973).

Whereas conflict took the form of clashes between unions, on the one hand, and black residents on the other, the pattern of ethnic specialization within municipal functions guaranteed ethnic mobilization when ethnic interests were threatened. Nowhere was this more so than in the 1968 teacher's strike -- which erupted after a community school board removed a number of teachers and pitted the largely Jewish teachers' union against the black- and Puerto Rican-supported community boards (Ravitch, 1974). In conflicts that took a more institutional form -- as in court battles waged by civil rights organization to open up police and fire jobs to affirmative action procedures -- the fraternal organizations representing each group of white civil servants lined up behind their respective unions and the Personnel Department to defend the "merit system".

Lindsay backed off from his confrontations with the civil service system and its defenders in the aftermath of the disastrous 1968 teachers' strike. Where the Mayor could both accommodate the unions and pursue his earlier goals of increasing minority employment he did -- mainly, by tripling the number of exempt workers and shifting them from agency to agency to avoid the requirement of taking an examination (Shefter, 1985). But in other instances, pressure from civil service interests proved overwhelming. Thus, when the city received funding from the 1971 Federal Emergency Employment Act, designed to provide transitional public service jobs for the un- and underemployed, the jobs created were defined in terms of regular civil service requirements, and the beneficiaries were mainly white, college-educated employees (Gittell, 1974).

Abe Beame's accession to the Mayoralty in 1973 seemed to presage the return to the status quo ante of the 1950s -- combining ardent defense of civil service

structures with adroit manipulation of the remaining patronage opportunities. But the city's worsening fiscal condition soon put an end to patronage games, as the ranks of exempt and provisional employees plummeted precipitously in his first two years. And when bankruptcy loomed, in 1975, even civil servants were let go. Layoffs initially threatened minority workers under the last in, first out principle, but the city and the unions instead opted to reduce the workforce through attrition. While this policy entailed a more onerous workload for remaining workers and left the city with an aged workforce, it accelerated ethnic transition. As the most senior employees, whites left city service at a higher rate than blacks or Hispanics; consequently, the city's workforce became more representative of its population, with minorities comprising almost 37 percent of employees in Mayoral agencies by 1979 (McCormick, 1984).

Pluralizing the Civil Service: With the election of Edward Koch as Mayor in 1977, the prospects for expanding the minority base in city employment seemed to dim. Koch's election coincided with a precipitous drop in black political influence. Blacks lost representation in the city's highest governing body, the Board of Estimate, for the first time in 25 years. Moreover, Koch's electoral base allowed him unprecedented independence from minority leaders, leading to the political isolation of the city's blacks, a condition that endured until the late 1980s (Mollenkopf, 1992).

The city's official employment and hiring policies quickly revealed the change in priorities. Entering office as an avowed opponent of racial quotas of any kind, Koch immediately shelved an affirmative action plan, complete with goals and timetables, that had been developed in the waning days of the Beame administration. He then sought to shift equal employment monitoring functions from the city's human rights commission to the Personnel Department, in effect proposing to let the Personnel Department monitor its own activities, at first backing away from the idea in the face protest from minority leaders, but later pushing the proposal through (Stafford with Dei, 1989). Growing pressure to increase minority hires then led the Mayor to appoint an Equal Employment Opportunity Committee in 1981, but the committee had little power and only seemed

to yield results when its Chair -- a deputy mayor close to Koch -- personally
intervened (Mayor's Commission on Black New Yorkers, 1988: 99). To further allay
criticism, the Mayor also established a "Talent Bank", ostensibly to "ensure that
the City service attracts the widest possible array of candidates, particularly
in the protected groups--women, minorities, handicapped individuals, and Vietnam
veterans (Citywide Equal Opportunity Committee, 1988: 58)." But the Talent Bank
was later exposed as a patronage device that mainly provided high-paying, but
low-skilled jobs to whites as a favor to the machine politicians with whom Koch
had allied. By 1989, New York remained the only major city without a public
sector affirmative action plan. In the end, as one high personnel official told
me:

> There was no EEO policy under Koch. On paper [there was]. But the
> EEO bureau was a backstore operation. It wasn't computerized; it
> was a lip service to everything. When Koch lost the governor's race
> [in 1982], he just threw EEO straight into the trash. Unless
> commissioners felt personally responsible, they didn't care. It was
> just business as usual. The corrupt talent bank had no impact.
> There was really no EEO policy.

Notwithstanding Koch's opposition to affirmative action, and the disfavor
with which minority leaders greeted his hiring policies, the Koch years of 1977
to 1989 saw the ethnic composition of the municipal workforce completely
transformed. By 1990, whites comprised 48 percent of the 375,000 people working
for the city and just slightly more -- 50 percent -- of the 150,000 people
working in the agencies that the Mayor directly controlled.[6] The declining white
presence in municipal employment chiefly benefitted blacks. Comprising 25
percent of the city's population, and a still smaller proportion of residents who
were older than 18 and thus potentially employable, blacks made up 36 percent of
the city's total workforce and 38 percent of those who worked in the mayoral
agencies. Though blacks were still underrepresented in some of the city's most
desirable jobs, as we shall see below, the earlier pattern of concentration at
the bottom was overcome. The municipal hospital system, which employed two-
thirds of the city's black employees in the early 1960s, now employed less than
a fifth, reflecting the dispersion of blacks throughout the municipal sector.

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[6] Data from unpublished E.E.O reports; see Table 1.

And higher level jobs were clusters of considerable black over-representation as well, with blacks accounting for 40 percent of the administrators and 36 percent of the professionals employed in the direct mayoral agencies.

In both the magnitude and pattern of change, the Koch years represented a sharp change with the record of the earlier Wagner and Lindsay administrations. Data from two earlier city-sponsored ethnic surveys of its workforce, one conducted in 1963 and the other in 1971, provide a comparative view; as the city did little hiring from 1975 until the early 1980s, the 1971 survey provides the best benchmark for assessing shifts over the Koch years. In 1963, as Table 1 shows, blacks made up 20.9 percent of the municipal workforce; by 1971, after nine years of intensive efforts to expand minority employment, the city had added another 26,000 black workers. By contrast, blacks gained 44,000 jobs between 1971 and 1990, more than their total in 1963, with the sharpest proportional growth occurring among the direct mayoral agencies.

Table 1 about here

Moreover, the dynamics of change varied sharply between the two periods. During the Lindsay years growth provided the driving force behind black employment change, as the city's payrolls expanded and increased social service spending expanded agencies like hospitals or social services in which blacks had been originally concentrated. Black gains in share, resulting from increases in the proportion of blacks employed in specific agencies, were far more meager, reflecting the resistance of entrenched whites. Consequently, blacks piled up in their original clusters -- many of them concentrations of dead-end jobs. By contrast, when government expansion stalled, as it did during the Koch years, growth generated far fewer new municipal jobs for blacks. Instead, the black employment base expanded due to gains the black share of specific agencies. The direct mayoral agencies felt this shift with particular force: whereas gains in share were less than half the gains from growth during the Lindsay years, they exceeded three times the gains from growth during the Koch years.

Thus, unlike Jews and Italians, whose convergence on New York's public sector occurred during a period of growing ethnic influence, municipal government became a black employment concentration just when blacks' political influence in city politics had sunk to its post-war nadir. Notwithstanding this divergence, the underlying processes of employment change were similar in both cases, as blacks, like their predecessors, benefitted from simultaneous shifts in the structure of employment and in the relative availability of competing groups.

Changes in the structure of employment came from a variety of sources. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 prohibited discrimination in local government. By requiring local governments to maintain records on all employees by race and gender and to submit them to the EEOC, with the clear expectation that governments would show improvement over time, the Act also led to institutional changes. As EEO functions were established in each city agency, recruitment and personnel practices changed in ways that benefitted previously excluded groups. Recruitment became focussed on minority and immigrant communities, as the EEO director of the Sanitation Department explained:

> I control recruitment for the sanworkers title. In 1984, I hired an ad company and they created a campaign. And we got 87,000 people, of which better than 55 percent were protected candidates. We did this by targeting candidates. We spent close to $300,000 on that campaign. We know from census tracts where minorities are highly concentrated. We had people go into buildings with leaflets, recruiting people. They sold the job. With my first list, I affected the department for four years; [as a result of the second exam] we now will have an effect for 10-12 years total. If you take all the fraternal organizations, the unions, etc., they won't put half a million [dollars] into a campaign. From the perspective of who can put out resources and affect process, this has enduring impact. That's what you do. Create policies that are going to survive. You institutionalize...it's hard to go back to the old ways.

Notwithstanding contrary signals from City Hall, commissioners tended to endorse an affirmative action approach. "If you consider yourself a professional manager in the 1980s and 1990s," noted one informant who had occupied two important Commissionerships during the Koch administration, "one of the issues you have to deal with is managing diversity." Thus, control over recruitment and promotion tended to slip away from previously incumbent groups. As one long-time Jewish union official representing workers in a heavily black agency complained:

> The agency goes to black organizations, the black press for recruiting. There's no real effort to recruit white workers, othen than ads in the New York Times and The Chief. When the agency was soliciting [job applicants], it tried to reach out to minorities. There was no honest effort to try to recruit whites.

Moreover, the 1972 Equal Employment Opportunity Act provided minority employees with new levers on more recalcitrant agencies, which they used with greatest effectiveness in the uniformed services. In 1973, the Vulcan Society (the organization of black firefighters) successfully challenged the results of a 1971 exam, leading to an imposition of a 1:3 quota for the duration of that list (1973-1979). In 1977, the Guardians Association, the organization of black police officers, along with their Hispanic counterpart, sued, with partial success, to prevent the Police Department from firing or recalling any police offers until seniority lists were reordered to account for past discrimination. The Guardians and the Hispanic Society again challenged the 1979 Police Officer's exam; court-findings of disparate impact led to the imposition of a 33.3 percent minority quota for the duration of the list. This decision was applied to settle a Guardian-initiated challenge to the 1978 Sergeants' exam, resulting in a quota that reflected the ethnic and gender composition of the test-takers. A challenge to the 1981 Police Officers' exam, also brought by the Guardians, led to a change in the passing score and the selection of officers from broad bands of scores rather than strict rank order. The last challenge involved the 1983 Sergeants exam; when the city concluded that it would be impossible to defend the 1983 exam as sufficiently job-related, it established a quota system that would reflect the racial composition of the police officers who took test (Mayor's Advisory Committee for Police Management, 1987).

While blacks enjoyed weakened political influence during the Koch years, so too did civil service interests. In the post-fiscal crisis era, the push for efficiency rearranged job ladders and requirements, creating new portals of entry for previously excluded groups. The twin gospels of "civilianization" and "specialization" spread widely through the bureaucracy, supplanting higher-paid, better trained personnel -- whether uniformed or college-educated, as among case workers -- with upgraded clericals, who were often black:

A new title [eligibility specialist] was created: at first, primarily civil service, entrance-level people already employed in civil service who took the promotion exams. In the explosion of the early 1970s, it became open competitive, people came in from the street, along with promotion exams. In the beginning as it is now, primarily female, primarily minority.

Where the quest for productivity prevailed, as in Sanitation, organizational innovation and the accretion of new functions and capacities created new titles to which incumbents no longer had first claim. As the agency expanded beyond "on line cleaning and collection people" to recycling, planning, waste planning, and analysis, it opened up to "people (who) while they may have a civil service title, they're not from the list, you get a real mix."

More importantly, the civil service itself came under attack from the Mayor and a new generation of reformers. The reformers saw the civil service as a chief impediment to badly needed administrative changes. For Koch, it was also a brake on the executive's power and a source of strength for the public employee unions, with whom he was locked in conflict. Whereas the leaders of the bureaucracy, and later the public employee unions had always sought to control personnel systems, the Koch administration tried to shift influence to City Hall. At first, Koch tried to convince the state legislature that the number and authority of municipal managers was inadequate and that the city needed relief from restrictive civil service laws. But the municipal unions prevented the Mayor's proposal from reaching floors of either the State Assembly or Senate; from then on, as one well-informed observer noted, "municipal officials ... tried to beat the system rather than change it (Horton, 1985: 193)". Beating the system meant subverting the civil service process, as a 1989 report of the New York State Commission on Government Integrity discovered:

The New York City civil service system is in a state of crisis. Anecdotal evidence related by experts and confirmed by a number of commission staff interviews, suggest that Civil Service Law is now widely regarded as something it is desirable to bypass or avoid, when possible. Adherence to the law is viewed as hampering the effective recruitment, deployment, and retention of employees (New York State Commission on Government Integrity, 1989: 73).

Though the crucial factor, in the words of a personnel official, "was City Hall," other factors further weakened the traditional civil service approach. Equal Employment laws and guidelines made for a much more complex process in

civil service examination preparation. As one high-level Personnel official noted, "Where we used to be able to grind out one of our standard multiple choice tests -- which used to take us a few months -- we now have to do research to show that the test is job related..." Consequently, "it could now take 2-3 years from when we start [preparing a test] to actually establishing an eligible [hiring] list. So you have a proliferation of provisionals because we didn't get lists out."

For these reasons, "people hired whom they wanted", in the words of a high level Department of Personnel officials. The City relaxed its hiring requirements, bringing the great bulk of new hires into the bureaucracy as "provisional" employees. Between 1979 and 1990, when permanent employment in the direct mayoral agencies grew by only 7,500, the number of provisionals soared from 6,583 to 40,340.[7] With the exception of the uniformed services, where law prohibited the hiring of provisionals, and needs for specific training made provisional hiring undesirable, virtually every agency saw its roster of provisionals increase. Unlike civil servants, provisionals were hired directly, without recourse to exams, bypassing lists.

If, as a labor relations manager in a large agency argued, the preference for provisional hiring was designed to "keep people in line, keep them controled," the policy had the unintended effect of opening up a hermetic system, whose slowly grinding, complex procedures had excluded outsiders. These circumstances put a premium on incumbents' knowledge of vacancies, and the value management placed on their referrals. "Our biggest recruitment is by word of mouth," explained a labor relations director. "People who are in the department are sharing with their respective communities openings that they became aware of." A leader of the heavily black, clerical workers of over 30,000 members made a similar point:

> My people have an excellent communications system: they know that
> jobs are available; they refer cousins, sons, daughters. People

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[7] New York City Department of Personnel, Annual Report to the New York State Civil Service Commission, 1979-1989, unpublished; Memorandum from Douglas White, Director of the Department of Personnel to Mayor David Dinkins, Quarterly Report on Provisionals, December 31, 1990.

> walk into personnel and drop off resumes like there's no tomorrow.
> You'll find that many people are relatives.

An executive in an engineering agency explained how this "communications system"
affected his recruitment efforts:

> There seems to be a tremendous network of friends and family; real
> contacts socially. Even in the past when we were first conducting
> our own provisional hiring pools, with no lists, we would post or
> gather resumes, send out call letters, and then have them come to
> hiring pools. We would invite 50 people and 80 would show up, oh my
> brother's friend's cousins called and said there would be a
> position...

While provisional hiring opened the City's door to the external labor
market, the municipal services had always relied on network recruitment, as noted
earlier. But whereas incumbents' contact networks had previously furnished a
flow of white, ethnic workers, they no longer functioned with the same effect.
The city's attraction to its traditional white, ethnic labor force had begun to
diminish even before the fiscal crisis. Professional occupations were the first
to suffer: by the early 1960s, vacancies in selected professional, technical, and
managerial occupations were in the neighborhood of 20-25 percent. The staffing
problem had diverse origins. In some instances, the City suffered from an
absolute shortage of trained personnel; more commonly, it could not compete on
salary and compounded this problem by bureaucratic delays that chased qualified
people away. Finally, new hires proved unstable, with one out of every 5 newly
recruited worker with a college degree having to be replaced each year (Stanley
and associates, 1963).

Fiscal crisis exacerbated and extended the city's recruitment difficulties
among its traditional workforce. The layoffs and hiring freeze of the mid- to
late-1970s disrupted networks between white incumbents and their contacts who had
been accustomed to seeking city jobs. By the time large-scale hiring resumed in
the early 1980s, public employment had become an less attractive option than it
had been before. As one veteran executive reflected:

> Civil service has become tarnished, because of the layoffs. Before
> the last round of layoffs people looked at civil service, the only
> time you got fired was when you stole something. Now layoffs are
> publicly discussed. People think it's just another job.

Moreover, municipal salaries and benefits took a severe beating during the fiscal

crisis (Horton, 1985); though compensation edged back upwards during the 1980s, real gains never recaptured the losses endured during the 1970s. The strength enjoyed by New York's private sector during the 1980s pulled native white workers up the hiring queue and out of the effective labor supply for many City agencies. As the attachment of white ethnic groups to municipal work ebbed, so too did their organizational presence and influence wane. The Council of Jewish Civil Servants, for example, reported a membership loss of 60 percent over the 1980s, with entire chapters disappearing in agencies like Transportation, Environmental Protection, and Buildings.

In a situation where "the City was hiring a great deal and not turning away anyone who was qualified," as one deputy commissioner explained in an interview, the disparity in the availability of minority and white workers led to rapid recruitment of minority workers. Minorities had comprised only 40 percent of the new workers hired in 1977, making up the majority in only two, low-paid occupational categories. By 1987, minorities made up 56 percent of all hires, dominating the ranks of new recruits in 5 out of 8 occupational categories.[8]

Thus, in most city agencies, diminished competition with whites and a shift in control over personnel systems, with the bureaucracy losing influence relative to City Hall, produced the dramatic growth of minority employment that we have already seen. Where neither condition held, traditional barriers to minority employment remained in place, as examination of the continuing conflict over residency rules and of the City's most deviant case, the Fire Department, make clear.

Abolishing the City's residency requirement in 1963 was reform's last gasp, yielding the unintended effect of encouraging white migration to the suburbs. By the early 1970s, when the wheels turned, with a new generation of reformers seeking to reimpose residency requirements in response to minority protest, the uniformed services and their organizations prevented any return to the status quo ante. In the early 1970s, the uniformed services' unions prevailed on the state legislature to reject a bill reimposing the residency requirement. A successful

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[8] Calculated from Citywide Equal Employment Opportunity Committee, 1988:6).

repeat performance occurred in 1978, when the City Council passed a residency requirement, at the urging of Mayor Koch, only to have it reversed by the legislature immediately. Failure met with similar efforts in the mid-1980s, with the result that New York City imposed a residency requirement for new <u>civilian</u> employees only, implicitly acknowledging the uniformed services' mobilization and political clout.

Conflict over hiring rules reflected the continuing attachment of white ethnics to the uniformed services, particularly the Police, and most emphatically the Fire Department. In 1990, whites comprised 93 percent of the Fire Department's employees, down from 96 percent in 1963! Whites remain so dominant, in part, because the department continues to attract an extraordinarily large white applicant pool. Incumbents' contact networks continue to be self-reproducing. Firefighting has a reputation for intergenerational succession, with informed sources suggesting that one-third to one-half of firefighters have family members in the City department or suburban departments (Lynton, 1987). Thus, the 1987 firefighters test attracted almost 40,000 applicants, of whom 33,000 actually sat for the test. Unpublished data from the Department of Personnel indicate that whites made up almost 72 percent of the testtakers, but 95 percent of the 8,000 applicants who passed high enough to be hired over the life of the list. In contrast to other components of the city's bureaucracy, established civil service procedures reign unchallenged in the Fire Department, where provisionals are not hired, and civilianization -- a force promoting minority hiring in other uniformed agencies -- has had virtually no effect. Similarly, established civil service groups have lost little influence over personnel policies, with the current situation essentially the same as it was when analyzed by Sayre and Kaufman during the 1950s.

Conflict in the pluralized civil service: By 1990, when David Dinkins became New York's first black mayor, the phase of black for white succession in municipal employment was nearly complete. Blacks held just over 35 percent of all city jobs; though unevenly represented among the city's many agencies, they were often a dominant presence, accounting for more than 40 percent of employment

in 6 of the 10 largest agencies, and more than 50 percent of employment in 3 of the largest 10. As in the past, the City's strong tendency to rely on incumbents' contact networks to furnish recruits led to a process of cumulative causation, as blacks moved into a government at a quicker rate than others.

The comparison with Hispanics underlines blacks' advantage in the new ethnic division that has emerged in city government. Whereas the city's Hispanic and Black populations are equal in number, Hispanics hold one-third as many municipal jobs as do blacks. The discrepancies are even greater as one moves up the occupational hierarchy into the ranks of managers and professionals. And blacks have been far more successful than Hispanics in gaining in new permanent civil service jobs, rather than the provisional appointments on which Hispanics have mainly relied. The disparity has not gone unnoticed, as the Commission on Hispanic Concerns pointed out in a 1986 report:

> Hispanics are significantly underrepresented in City government and, further, even in an era of increased awareness of the need for minority recruitment. Hispanics have not been as successful as Blacks in obtaining city jobs...What accounts for the fact that Blacks have continued to enjoy a percentage of the new hires in excess of their representation in the population, while Hispanics remain at lower levels? The Commission believes that one answer to th(is) question is that "minority" is too often taken to mean "Black" (Mayor's Commission on Hispanic Concerns, 1986: 109).

Of course, other answers might be invoked to explain Hispanics' municipal jobs deficit relative to blacks. As in the past, human capital factors -- most notably higher rates of high school and college graduation and of English-language facility among blacks than among Hispanics -- helped in the competition for public jobs. So too did resource bearing capacity in the political arena -- with blacks far less fragmented and more politically active than the heavily immigrant Hispanic population. But whatever the precise explanation, Mayor Dinkins' continuing conflicts with the Hispanic community suggest that earlier patterns of inter-ethnic competition over municipal jobs remain alive and well.

Conclusion

The case profiled in this paper shows that the development of ethnic specializations in New York City's government can best be understood as part of a continuing, inter-ethnic competitive conflict over access to jobs. Irish

immigrants and their descendants were the first to move into public employment in large numbers, and they gained dominance over entry portals and promotional ladders through a web of interlocking formal and informal mechanisms that effectively barred outsiders. Irish dominance persisted well after their population crested, not only because recruitment networks into government were self-feeding, but because the political environment kept employment controls within Irish hands. When the balance of power shifted to the city's newer ethnic groups during the depression, control mechanisms shifted as well. Reformers restructured the civil service, encouraging competition and the influx of new, better educated workers; in the straitened circumstances of the depression, job conflict took on heavily ethnic overtones. With the advent of the post-war recovery, the depression era conflicts among white ethnic groups subsided, yielding a stable ethnic division of labor within city government, and a sharp decline of competition in the electoral arena. Under these circumstances, control over personnel systems shifted again, this time, to organized civil servant interests themselves. As these interests consolidated their gains, the structures put in place during the depression hardened, sheltering incubments, while heightening barriers to the latest arrivals -- blacks and Puerto Ricans. In the mid-1960s, the revival of electoral competition, accompanied by a rising level of ethnic mobilization, encouraged these groups to expand their employment base; these attempts involved direct attacks on the depression-era structures, reigniting the types of ethnic job conflicts characteristic of the 1930s. While these first confrontations were partly successful at best, later changes in the power and social structure of white, incumbent groups yielded a new ethnic division of labor in the 1980s. Blacks replaced white ethnics who moved up the labor queue and fell out of the city's labor supply, a process facilitated by political changes that opened up civil service structures. By 1990, blacks had emerged as the successors to the Irish, while other outsider groups, most notably Hispanics, enjoyed much scantier access to the public's jobs.

But is the story of the ethnic politics of municipal jobs one that extends to other branches of economic life? Before concluding, let my suggest by way of

example, how the civil service case, and the framework developed to study it, can hold insights for other complex, delineable occupational or industrial settings.   I do so by considering a case of an utterly different industry -- construction -- profiled by two recent studies (Quadagno, 1992; Waldinger and Bailey, 1991) Even more than government, construction exemplifies the embedding of ethnic networks within the processes of recruitment and training, and the use of ethnic connections to maintain openings for the members' of incumbents' core networks, while excluding outsiders.   Blacks, who had long been confined to unskilled, laboring jobs, began agitating for access to the skilled, unionized trades in the late 1950s.   Although exclusion was rooted in informal processes, government was a potentially important player, due to its role as a consumer of construction services and the prevailing wage policies it used when awarding contracts.   This latent influence was activated by the mid-1960s, when shifts in the power of black protestors relative to white-dominated construction unions led governments at various levels to open up apprenticeship programs and impose minority hiring goals on public jobs.   Those changes led to substantial increases in the number of black apprentices and black building trades union members by the late 1970s, though effects were much more modest in the non-union sector, where training structures were less institutionalized and government influence was less strongly felt.   As black influence over government policies waned in the 1980s, white building trades workers effectively reasserted control.

Thus, as in New York's municipal sector, the ethnic division of labor in construction has evolved under the interplay of endogenous and exogenous factors. As in those civil service segments to which white workers have remained firmly attached, the social capital of white construction workers has served as a powerful mechanism of exclusion.   Notwithstanding the power of these mechanisms of social closure, shifts in the relative balance of political power between incumbents and outsiders have led to policy changes that altered recruitment practices -- as was the case in government.   The construction case further suggests that the range of exposure to exogenous forces varies with the characteristics of labor market arrangements.   Change was greatest in the union

sector -- where hiring and recruitment practices were most institutionalized, and thus more like the conditions encountered in the public sector; by contrast, racial practices were most invariant in the non-union sector, where reliance on informal mechanisms makes government intervention difficult.

While the recent correctives to the assimilation perspective treat economic specialization as both a mode and mechanism of ethnic mobility, this paper focusses on the issues of how such specializations are made and maintained. Much of the recent literature emphasizes characteristics endogenous to the groups that develop ethnic employment concentrations, underlining those features of social structure that shape the expectations and behavior of worker and employer groups alike. Though necessary, the embeddedness of employment relations within ethnic social structures is not a sufficient condition of the making of an ethnic niche, since such social structures as hiring or recruitment networks are mechanisms of exclusion as well as inclusion. By contrast, the job competition perspective developed in this paper illuminates the conditions under which outsider groups succeed or fail in gaining access to privileged positions in the ethnic division of labor. While groups do indeed move up from the bottom by specializing in, and dominating particular branch of economic life, these processes breed strong tendencies toward social closure. Once in place, specializations may long go unchallenged, but conflict will emerge when upwardly mobile outsider groups seek entry to the jobs and promotional structures that an earlier arrived, incumbent group controls. Under these circumstances, job competition alters the mechanisms of control: in the end, exogenous, as well as endogenous, group-specific characteristics, determine the formation and reformation of the ethnic division of labor.

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Table 1: Change in Black Employment, 1963-1990

Agency	Total Employment			Black Employment			Percent Black			Components of Change 1963-1971		1971-1990	
	1963	1971	1990	1963	1971	1990	1963	1971	1990	Size	Share	Size	Share
All Agencies	196,870	271,249	314,474	41,162	67,219	111,172	20.9%	24.8%	35.4%	15551	10505	10712	33242
All Non-Mayoral	98,861	140,599	171,053	27,836	42,583	58,513	28.2%	30.3%	34.2%	7906	6841	8134	7796
Bd of Education	55,840	88,641	111,923	6,108	16,303	28,810	10.9%	18.4%	25.7%	3588	6607	4282	8225
Hospitals	34,511	40,646	47,604	18,720	22,032	23,246	54.2%	54.2%	48.8%	3328	-16	3772	-2558
Housing Authority	8,510	11,312	11,526	3,008	4,248	6,457	35.3%	37.6%	56.0%	990	250	80	2129
All Mayoral Agencies	98,009	130,650	143,421	13,326	24,636	52,659	13.6%	18.9%	36.7%	7248	3553	6411	21635
Police	25,000	35,310	32,572	1,407	2,650	6,807	5.6%	7.5%	20.9%	580	663	-205	4362
Social Svces	10,485	23,237	31,069	4,218	10,304	19,738	40.2%	44.3%	63.5%	5130	956	3473	5961
Correction	2,910	3,681	12,849	1,036	1,600	7,291	35.6%	43.5%	56.7%	274	290	3985	1706
Fire	13,320	14,873	12,727	554	614	751	4.2%	4.1%	5.9%	65	-5	-89	226
Sanitation	13,890	15,304	12,545	1,088	1,909	2,770	7.8%	12.5%	22.1%	111	710	-344	1205
Transportation	4,151	4,097	7,757	251	548	3,281	4.5%	11.0%	42.3%	-2	299	401	2332
Environmental Prot	1,433	4,107	5,428	58	165	1,123	4.0%	4.0%	20.7%	107	0	53	905
Housing	872	4,863	4,456	185	509	2,141	21.2%	10.5%	48.0%	847	-523	-43	1675
Health	3,988	5,962	4,455	1,487	2,165	2,498	37.3%	36.3%	56.1%	736	-58	-547	880
Parks	5,963	4,895	4,426	774	939	1,342	13.0%	19.2%	30.3%	-139	304	-90	493

Source:

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Note: Employment in specific mayoral agencies shown for top ten as of 1990, only.