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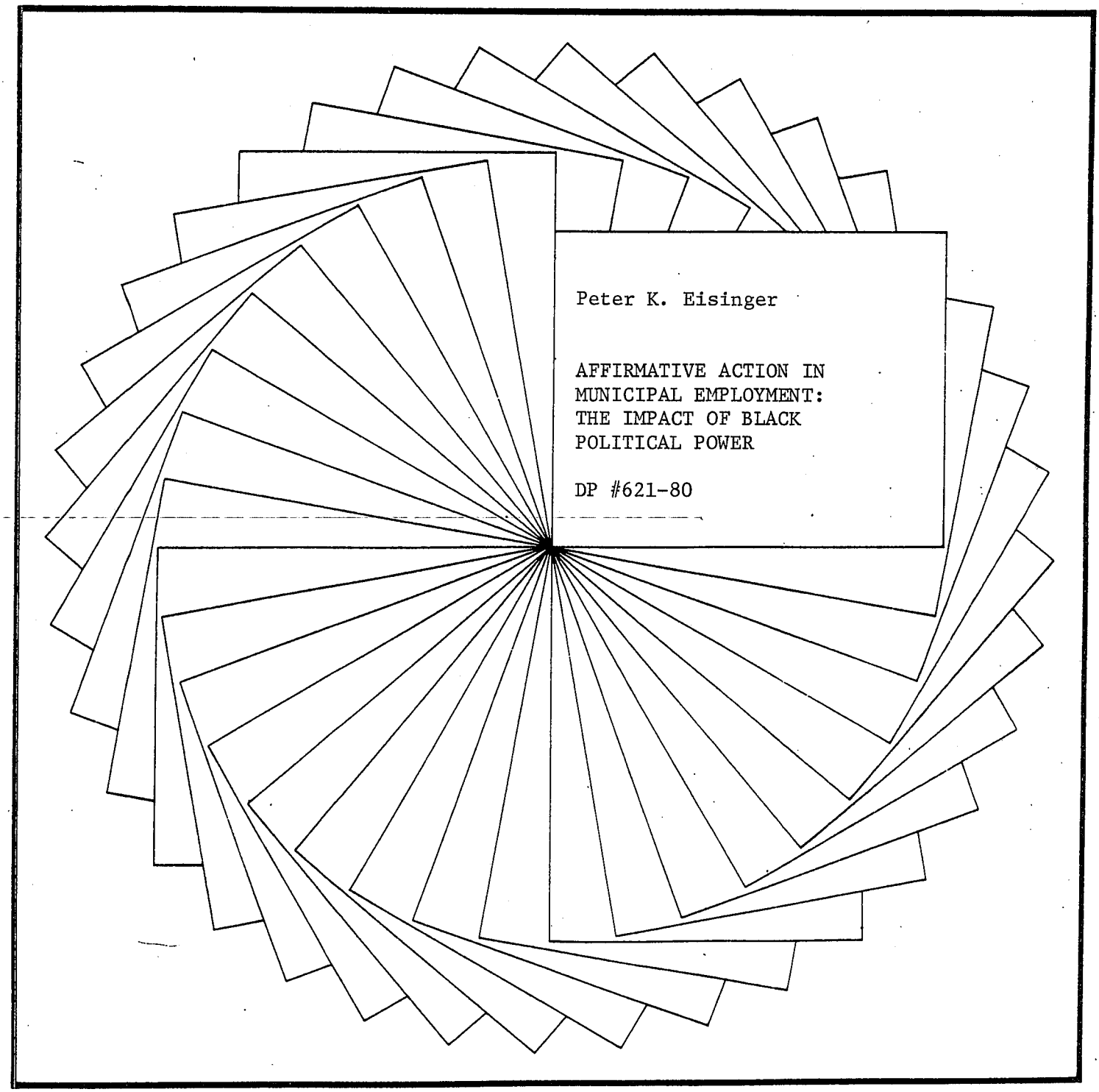

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AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYMENT: THE IMPACT OF BLACK POLITICAL POWER

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Affirmative Action in Municipal Employment:

The Impact of Black Political Power

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of affirmative action data regarding levels of black employment in the civil service of 43 U.S. cities indicates that observed variations are mainly a function of the size of the black population and the presence of a black mayor. By interpreting the size of the black population as an indicator of potential bloc voting power and by making explicit the links between the mayor's office and the personnel system, we may conclude that civil service hiring represents one tangible benefit of black political power. Other possible hypotheses explaining variations in levels of black employment are rejected, including the argument that minority employment is a function of the expansion or shrinking of the public sector. The research suggests that municipal government is no mean prize for minority groups to capture and that a politics of ethnicity, involving the distribution of divisible goods to a particular group as a consequence of its political power, is still a fruitful possibility in American cities.

Affirmative Action in Municipal Employment: The Impact of Black Political Power

The task of monitoring the accession of blacks to elected office in the United States has occupied substantial scholarly energies over the past decade (see, for example, Cole, 1974; Campbell and Feagin, 1975; and Karnig, 1976). Much of this work has accomplished what are essentially census functions, documenting the numerical revolution in black representation,[1] its regional incidence, and the distribution of black officeholders across types of jurisdictions and offices. Some of these studies have also explored the political structural and socioeconomic conditions under which blacks are likely to be elected, particularly to offices in urban government (e.g., Bullock, 1975; C. Jones, 1976). Explorations of the <u>impact</u> of black officials, however, are still few in number, and those that do exist are comparatively rudimentary in character. After more than a dozen years of sustained black electoral achievements in urban politics, it is appropriate to begin more systematic inquiry regarding the extent to which electoral political success has produced substantive benefits for blacks.

The question is of interest for the light it throws both on the possibilities for and benefits of a contemporary politics of ethnicity[2] and on the continuing debate over the significance of municipal government as a prize in the American political system. One major element in the definition of ethnic politics is the allocation of divisible symbolic or material benefits to a particular ethnic group. Most scholars have focused on the symbolic dimensions of ethnic politics, regarding the process mainly

as an exercise in what Pitkin has called "descriptive representation," where representation "depends on the representative's characteristics, on what he is or is like, on being something rather than doing something" (1967, p. 61, emphasis in the original). Thus, the ethnic factor in politics has been seen to manifest itself in the calculations of those in power and the conditions which permit the political penetration of certain groups and the exclusion of others (Lowi, 1964; Cornwell, 1980). Ethnic politics has typically been regarded as a politics of "recognition," in which the achievement of office is chiefly a symbolic accomplishment (Wolfinger, 1974, p. 336). A nationality or racial group whose co-ethnic had won or been appointed to office often experiences a kind of political coming of age, winning at least tentative acceptance among the club of electoral competitors.

It is striking, however, that few students of ethnic politics have asked the question: Did ethnics whose representatives achieved office in a particular jurisdiction get anything as a result that co-ethnics in other jurisdictions who failed to attain representation did not? Such a question suggests that ethnic representation ought to be evaluated not simply for its symbolic value, but as an activity, or in Pitkin's words as "an acting for others, an activity in behalf of, in the interest of, as an agent of someone else" (p. 113). For the political scientist, she goes on to argue, the test of representation is how well the leader acts to further the objectives of those he or she represents (p. 116).

There is, of course, a long tradition of studies of urban machines whose very raison d'etre in many cases was the ethnic quest for the substantive rewards of politics. Although some have argued that such

rewards were finally limited, both in number and significance (Wolfinger, 1974, p. 36), others have shown that the rise of the Irish in certain places at least led to the disproportionate capture by that group of jobs in the public sector (Erie, 1978; Clark, 1975). One problem with our understanding of the Irish phenomenon, however, is that there has been little systematic comparative effort to relate Irish employment gains to variations in Irish political power. Furthermore, since the benefits, if any, that have accrued to other groups which practiced a politics of ethnicity have not been studied systematically, it is possible to interpret Irish achievements, if we continue to insist upon a political explanation, as a product of their special political genius in an age before the rationalization of municipal personnel systems through civil service reform. The question of whether other groups--blacks in the present case--can expect similar gains as a result of their political successes in the contemporary period remains open. To put the matter another way, is it still possible (assuming it ever was) to produce ethnically particularized substantive benefits through the capture of local political office?

Ethnic politics, while not wholly absent from the state and national arenas, is, of course, preeminently an urban phenomenon (Lane, 1959, p. 239). Yet municipal government is regarded these days in some quarters as an anachronism; local power is on the wane (Lowi, 1979). In this view the black achievements of the last decade--not quite two dozen mayoralities of major cities, several hundred city council positions, and so on--represent a supreme irony: the cry of "black control of the central city," William Wilson observes, "has a hollow ring when one . . . [realizes] that the

fundamental bases of the urban crisis are not amenable to urban political solutions" (1978, pp. 139-140).

Given the weaknesses inherent in municipal government, the capture of city hall is not expected to bring with it access to significant benefits that might be distributed to one's co-ethnics. Yet I shall argue that the city, for all of its evident fiscal troubles and its economy of dependency, is a more important prize for minority groups than has been understood. There do exist resources, the distribution and redistribution of which can be controlled or influenced by city hall; these resources are indeed divisible in such a way that distribution can be aimed especially at particular ethnic or racial minorities; and these benefits can apparently make a genuine difference in the collective and individual well-being of their recipients.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION[3] IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT

One benefit of control of city hall is employment in the local public sector. Using affirmative action data with regard to municipal employment has a number of virtues that bear on the study of black electoral impacts.

To begin with, it is an issue of continuing high salience (Rosenbloom, 1979). Sears and his associates have classed affirmative action, along with busing, as "one of the two major current flashpoints of conflict over racial policy in the United States" (1979, p. 371). The visibility and controversial character of affirmative action may assure us that we are not dealing with a trivial area of public policy.

Furthermore, affirmative action achievements themselves have important implications for the well-being of the black community. The local public sector, Proposition 13 fever notwithstanding, is still a growth industry.[4] Work in public sector employment is not only more secure than comparable private sector work, but it is generally better paid. Blacks also have better access to high-paying managerial and professional employment in the civil service (Erie, 1978). In addition, the command of a significant number of local jobs by any single ethnic group affords that group a virtual lock on a major portion of the municipal budget: between two-thirds and three-quarters of city operating expenses are typically devoted to personnel costs. Assuming for the sake of argument that some portion of these monies is spent by black employees in black-owned businesses and saved in black-run banks, one can see that the potential economic multiplier effect can assume great importance. On several counts then, municipal jobs hold out the promise of major economic benefits for blacks (Harrison, 1971; Kranz, 1976).

Kranz (1976, p. 94) points out in addition that affirmative action in public employment enhances minority power, particularly in bureaucratic policymaking, information gathering, agenda setting, and implementation. Minority gains at the managerial level also have implications for recruitment and promotion policies within agencies which may, even in a civil service system, be advantageous to minority workers.

Affirmative action not only possesses the virtue of legitimacy and significance as a goal to be sought in politics, but for our purposes it is also an easily measurable, divisible, and relatively unambiguous prize.

These characteristics enable us to advance the analysis of the impacts of black electoral successes substantially beyond the existing literature.

The percentage of blacks in the total municipal work force of any given city, as well as the percentages of blacks in selected occupational categories in the local public sector, offer several dependent variables amenable to varieties of regression analysis. Affirmative action figures for individual cities make it possible to establish comparisons across cities as units of analysis in which black electoral representation varies. In contrast, a number of important studies to date of the impacts of black political power are case studies focusing on a single city or on a limited number of cities controlled by blacks (Keech, 1968; Levine, 1974; Cole, 1976; M. Jones, 1978; Eisinger, 1980a). Although this body of research is able to identify a variety of apparent consequences of black power, it has not always been able to distinguish with precision those consequences that occurred as a direct function of black power, it has not always been able to measure the size of the consequences, and it has not sorted out in any systematic way alternative or contributing explanations for black gains.

Another group of studies has examined the impact of black electoral success on municipal expenditure patterns (Keller, 1978; Welch and Karnig, 1979; Gruber, 1980). These studies must assume that certain expenditures, measured as aggregate disbursements for broad functions, are more beneficial to blacks than to whites. Gruber, for example, hypothesizes that public health expenditures may be regarded as black-oriented, and Welch and Karnig argue that as black power rises, there should be "more of an increase" in expenditures for social welfare functions, including health, housing,

welfare, and education. With the exception of the Keller article, this research finds modest support for these hypotheses.

Among the various problems with the use of aggregate budget expenditures, however, is that they are not divisible for analytical purposes along racial lines. It is impossible to tell if high or increased education expenditures, for example, are responsive particularly to black demands or if they benefit blacks more than whites. Furthermore, the use of aggregate expenditures in various functional areas as dependent variables requires some questionable assumptions about which broad areas are of greater or lesser importance to the black electorate and black politicians. Consider the Welch and Karnig piece: They hypothesize that the presence of a black mayor and strong black council representation will lead to less of an increase in spending for protective services and physical facilities compared to spending in white-dominated cities. Yet why would not black mayors seek to spend more for police and fire services? Blacks are the chief victims of crime, and the incidence of fire is greater in poor areas. As for spending for physical facilities, black mayors have in fact pursued vigorous public works building and economic development strategies, partly as a way of creating local jobs. It is thus equally plausible to hypothesize that black power would lead to more spending for protective services and physical facilities. Assigning special racial interests to broad functional expenditure categories introduces a high degree of ambiguity into the analysis.

We cannot, it seems, be confident of the meaning of findings using aggregate expenditure levels by function as the dependent variable. In

contrast, the distribution of public sector jobs is clearly divisible by race; variations in the level of black representation in public jobs offers an unambiguous means by which to gauge black fortunes.

Despite its obvious importance, affirmative action has scarcely been studied empirically. Benokraitis and Feagin (1978) offer a brief account of the history of federal executive orders and legislation which provide the legal basis of nondiscriminatory hiring, but their status report on minority employment in local government is based on aggregate figures no later than 1975. Similarly, the report of Cayer and Sigelman (1980) relies entirely on the same aggregate totals published by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Meier, in his study (1979) of affirmative action in state government employment in 1975, disaggregates the data by state and discovers that economic factors such as state median income and education and levels of urbanization are the best predictors of minority employment. Hall and Saltzstein (1977) examine minority employment in 26 Texas cities in 1973 and find that characteristics of the minority population (such as education) explain little of the variance in affirmative action.

Two studies suggest what is for present purposes a crucial link between the political system and affirmative action in the rational bureaucratic world of civil service hiring. Thompson's study (1978) of the administration of affirmative action policy found that personnel officials, most of whom are appointed by municipal chief executives, who are sympathetic to minorities are more likely than others to launch efforts to recruit blacks. Furthermore, they are more willing to endorse modifications in hiring and recruitment standards and practices to facilitate minority hiring. The

study does not supply data on the results of these actions. Eisinger's examination (1980b) of politics under black mayors in Detroit and Atlanta argues for the importance of mayoral leadership in achieving affirmative action gains in the civil service. The political system, as a major hypothesized independent variable bearing on the implementation of affirmative action, appears to work its way into the administration of personnel practices through the mayor's appointment of personnel administrators, through the more diffuse processes of mayoral leadership, and through political pressures from the outside world brought directly to bear on city administrations. Levels of minority employment, then, even in a world of written tests and universalistic selection practices, are apparently subject to local politics.

DATA AND HYPOTHESES

Under the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination in private employment, was extended to state and local governments (H. Hill, 1977). The law requires local government units to file annual affirmative action reports detailing the race and sex of all full-time employees--except those in the field of education--by function and occupational category. The data on which the following analysis is based are drawn from these so-called EEO-4 reports filed by individual cities with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Since the law prohibits the EEOC from releasing these data except in aggregate form, information had to be gathered from cities themselves.

City affirmative action officers or personnel departments in a sample of cities over 50,000[5] were asked to supply the percentage of blacks in the total municipal work force and in each of the two top civil service occupational categories (administrators and professionals) for 1973 and 1978. Of the 131 cities sampled, 85 (65%) finally responded. Thirty-five of the responding cities, however, had extremely small (less than 10%) or nonexistent black populations, and an additional seven cities could supply only partial data. The final analysis, then, is based on complete data from 43 cities with black populations of over 10% in 1970. Table 1 offers a summary of selected demographic and political features of the sample cities relevant to this analysis.

Affirmative action in the 43 cities is somewhat higher than the national averages compiled by the EEOC, as data in Table 2 show. Figures also indicate growth in percent black in municipal employment both in the nationally aggregated totals from 1974 to 1975 (the last year for which national data are available) and among the 43 cities between 1973 and 1978. It is interesting to note that the percent black among managers and professionals in the national private sector in 1978 (4.8% and 11.7%, respectively) lags behind black representation in local public employment (New York Times, Oct. 14, 1979).

Among the sample cities blacks are overrepresented in the total workforce, according to the Affirmative Action Effort scores, but underrepresented in the highest or "prestige" occupational categories.[6] Effort scores are ratios of the percentage of blacks in the total workforce or in individual occupational categories to the percentage of blacks in the city population. Disproportionate hiring of blacks in unskilled,

Table 1

Selected Demographic and Political Characteristics of Sample of 43 Cities

Median Size (1970)	361,000
Mean Size (1970)	537,000
Range	70,000-3,366,000
Mean % black (1970)	28%
Range	11%-69%
Number of cities with black mayors (1977)[a]	8
Mean black city council representation ratio (1977)[b]	85.4

[a]These include Atlanta, Berkeley, Detroit, East St. Louis, Gary, Los Angeles, Newark, Oakland.

[b]This is a ratio of % black on the city council to % black in the population. The source for city council data is Joint Center for Political Studies, Roster of Black Elected Officials (Washington, D.C., 1979).

Table 2

Affirmative Action Levels (% Black) in
U.S. Municipalities and the Sample of 43 Cities

	U.S. 1974[a]	U.S. 1975[a]	43 cities, 1973	43 cities, 1978
Total full-time civil service municipal work force[c]	19%	20.7%	26.5% (106.5)[b]	32.9% (119.5)[b]
City civil service administrators and officials	6.3%	7.2%	9.3% (35.9)[b]	14.8% (47.5)[b]
City civil service professionals	12.6%	13.5%	11.2% (43.6)[b]	18.2% (61.0)[b]

[a]Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Minorities and Women in State and Local Governments, 1974 (1977) and Minorities and Women in State and Local Government, 1975 Vol. I (1977). Data are based on all 1120 municipalities employing 100 or more full-time workers.

[b]Figures in parentheses are Affirmative Action Effort scores. They are mean ratios of % black in particular work-force categories to % black in the city population (1970).

[c]Does not include school personnel or CETA workers.

clerical, and menial city jobs (e.g., maintenance, sanitation, street department) accounts for the total overrepresentation. Since Effort is calculated on the basis of 1970 census data, we must be less than completely confident about the validity of the absolute magnitudes of the 1978 scores particularly and the true dimensions of the increase in these scores between 1973 and 1978. In this present analysis, gain scores, then, are not analyzed, pending availability of 1980 census data. Nevertheless, Effort scores do suggest the relative magnitude of black underrepresentation in different occupational categories within cities, and they provide the best basis of intercity comparison available.

Affirmative action among the cities in the sample varies widely, as Table 3 shows. Pearson correlation coefficients between the percentage of blacks in the total municipal work force and the percentage of blacks among administrators ($r = .83$) and professionals ($r = .86$) are high.

To explore the impact of black electoral power on variations in levels of black representation in the local public work force, we may focus on several hypotheses regarding the receptivity of the personnel system to minority hiring.[7] None of these is necessarily mutually exclusive.

Hypothesis No. 1. Affirmative action is a function of the presence of black officeholders. That is to say, as blacks gain political authority, so may their presence in public sector jobs rise. Welch and Karnig (1979, p. 106) caution that the power of mayors to implement policy goals is greatly constrained by a variety of forces beyond their control, but several case studies of cities having black mayors indicate that the racial composition of the public work force did change under the black chief executives (Levine, 1974, p. 79; Eisinger, 1980b). In some

Table 3

Affirmative Action Rankings, 1978
43 Cities

Total Municipal Work Force			Administrators/Officials			Professionals		
	% Black	Effort		% Black	Effort		% Black	Effort
1. East St. Louis, IL	78.9	114	1. East St. Louis, IL	69.0	100	1. East St. Louis, IL	71.0	103
2. Gary, IN	77.0	146	2. Gary, IN	63.0	119	2. Gary, IN	71.0	134
3. Atlanta, GA	55.6	108	3. Atlanta, GA	32.6	64	3. Newark, NJ	49.1	91
4. St. Louis, MO	55.3	135	4. Berkeley, CA	32.3	135	4. Atlanta, GA	42.2	83
5. Detroit, MI	53.9	123	5. Detroit, MI	32.2	73	5. St. Louis, MO	38.2	93
6. Newark, NJ	48.2	89	6. Newark, NJ	31.9	58	6. Detroit, MI	37.6	86
7. Hampton, VA	45.6	180	7. Hampton, VA	29.1	116	7. Hampton, VA	34.3	135
8. Norfolk, VA	44.0	57	8. Chicago, IL	26.8	82	8. Durham, NC	27.4	71
9. Memphis, TN	44.0	113	9. Oakland, CA	23.7	68	9. Berkeley, CA	27.1	115
10. Columbia, SC	43.4	140	10. Pontiac, MI	23.5	87	10. Chicago, IL	23.6	72
11. Philadelphia, PA	42.2	124	11. Philadelphia, PA	21.2	62	11. Pontiac, MI	22.4	88
12. Durham, NC	39.8	102	12. St. Louis, MO	19.3	47	12. Baltimore, MD	22.0	47
13. Columbus, GA	37.7	130	13. Columbus, GA	19.3	73	13. Philadelphia, PA	21.3	69
14. Pontiac, MI	37.0	137	14. Houston, TX	18.7	72	14. Indianapolis, IN	21.0	117

Table 3--Continued

Total Municipal Work Force			Administrators/Officials			Professionals		
	% Black	Effort		% Black	Effort		% Black	Effort
15. Berkeley, CA	36.8	153	15. Indianapolis, IN	17.0	94	15. Tulsa, OK	20.4	186
16. Baltimore, MD	36.0	77	16. Little Rock, AR	15.8	63	16. Little Rock, AR	20.0	80
17. Oakland, CA	35.8	102	17. Columbus, OH	13.8	73	17. Memphis, TN	18.0	46
18. Raleigh, NC	34.3	150	18. Raleigh, NC	13.2	47	18. Raleigh, NC	17.5	77
19. Beaumont, TX	34.0	110	19. Baltimore, MD	13.0	28	19. Oakland, CA	14.9	43
20. Cincinnati, OH	32.0	119	20. Norfolk, VA	11.0	39	20. Columbus, GA	13.5	47
21. Miami, FL	31.8	138	21. Miami, FL	9.4	41	21. Cincinnati, OH	13.0	48
22. Houston, TX	30.4	117	22. Cincinnati, OH	9.0	33	22. Houston, TX	12.7	49
23. Little Rock, AR	29.2	117	23. Durham, NC	8.8	23	23. Birmingham, AL	11.6	39
24. Indianapolis, IN	27.0	150	24. Tulsa, OK	8.0	73	24. Miami, FL	11.3	50
25. New Rochelle, NY	26.0	173	25. Memphis, TN	7.0	18	25. Buffalo, NY	10.6	53
26. Birmingham, AL	25.4	85	26. Dallas, TX	6.8	27	26. Rochester, NY	10.3	61
27. Chicago, IL	25.1	77	27. Hartford, CT	6.5	23	27. Columbia, SC	9.4	31
28. Los Angeles, CA	24.7	138	28. Waco, TX	6.2	31	28. Milwaukee, WI	9.1	61
29. Waco, TX	24.1	121	29. Beaumont, TX	6.0	19	29. San Francisco, CA	8.0	62
30. San Francisco, CA	24.0	185	30. Austin, TX	5.7	48	30. Oklahoma City, OK	7.9	49

Table 3--Continued

Total Municipal Work Force			Administrators/Officials			Professionals		
	% Black	Effort		% Black	Effort		% Black	Effort
31. Akron, OH	22.5	128	31. Birmingham, AL	5.7	19	31. Dallas, TX	7.9	32
32. Dallas, TX	21.2	85	32. San Francisco, CA	5.5	42	32. Los Angeles, CA	7.7	43
33. Tulsa, OK	20.4	186	33. Buffalo, NY	5.0	25	33. Columbus, OH	7.5	40
34. Columbus, OH	20.0	105	34. Akron, OH	4.4	24	34. Austin, TX	7.1	60
35. Pittsburgh, PA	20.0	100	35. Los Angeles, CA	4.1	22	35. Akron, OH	6.5	36
36. Austin, TX	20.0	167	36. Rochester, NY	3.3	19	36. Hartford, CT	6.5	42
37. Oklahoma City, OK	18.6	116	37. Pittsburgh, PA	2.5	13	37. New Rochelle, NY	6.0	40
38. Hartford, CT	18.4	66	38. Milwaukee, WI	2.5	17	38. Bridgeport, CT	5.5	34
39. Toledo, OH	17.4	124	39. Bridgeport, CT	2.0	12	39. Norfolk, VA	5.0	18
40. Milwaukee, WI	16.7	111	40. New Rochelle, NY	1.7	11	40. Waco, TX	4.8	24
41. Bridgeport, CT	14.9	93	41. Oklahoma City, OK	1.3	8	41. Toledo, OH	1.9	14
42. Rochester, NY	14.5	85	42. Toledo, OH	.4	3	42. Beaumont, TX	.4	13
43. Buffalo, NY	13.0	64	43. Columbia, SC	0.0	0	43. Pittsburgh, PA	.3	2

instances, mayors pushed for the establishment of affirmative action plans and in others sought the implementation of plans already in existence. Black mayors in Detroit and Atlanta appointed black personnel directors and ordered modifications in recruitment, testing, evaluation, and grievance procedures in an effort to increase minority employment.

It is also possible that as blacks achieve substantial representation on city councils, legislative pressures can be brought to bear on the operations of the personnel system. Thus we would expect that the presence of a black mayor and/or strong (proportional) representation of blacks on the city council will be associated with high levels of affirmative action.

Hypothesis No. 2. Local affirmative action is a function of the size of the black population in the city. A substantial black population may simply offer such a large labor pool that public employers will "naturally" draw heavily upon it for workers. The history of job discrimination in America, however, should make us suspicious of the power of such "natural" processes: black achievements in every area have seldom come as a matter of random happenstance but have instead been the products of agitation, pressure, and authority. A large black population alone prior to the great local electoral mobilization of blacks in the 1970s was certainly no guarantee of significant black penetration of the municipal work force, particularly in job categories valued especially by whites.[8]

A large black population indicates not only a big labor pool, however, but also a voting bloc of major proportions. Local government employment opportunities for blacks may be a function then of the size of this bloc.

Although we have no way of measuring comparative levels of black electoral turnout or mobilization, it is not unreasonable, given case-study evidence on the impact of black voting (Keech, 1968), to view affirmative action levels as responsive to black electoral pressures.

Hypothesis No. 3. Affirmative action is a function of characteristics of the black labor pool. The characteristic most relevant to assessing the employability of a particular labor pool is its education level. Hall and Saltzstein (1977) found in their study of 26 Texas cities that level of education among Hispanics (but not among blacks) explained some small part of the variance in the percentage of professionals in the city work force. We would not expect educational level to be associated with black presence in the total work force: Most cities have deemphasized written examinations for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs since the Supreme Court decision of Grigg v. Duke (1971). But it is plausible to suppose that as more blacks in the labor pool have college degrees, they will be more competitive as a group for administrative and professional occupations.

Hypothesis No. 4. Affirmative action will vary depending on whether the local public sector is expanding or contracting. Given low seniority levels among black public sector employees as a group, retrenchment strategies are said to have a greater impact on black jobs than on white. In New York City, for example, a 13% reduction in the city work force in the mid-1970s translated into a loss by 40% of the city's black male workers (Pascal, 1979). Personnel cuts in Detroit in the recession of the late 1970s also hit black workers particularly hard.

By the same logic it may be argued that in a period of expanding public employment blacks will tend to "catch up," as city governments

strive to meet affirmative action goals and/or deflect black pressures by distributing generous shares of plentiful public jobs. Such will tend to be the case especially where public employment grows at a faster rate than the city's population. Population growth, however, is in itself a good measure of expanding fiscal resources for a city and expanding demands for services. Such growth then may also lead to greater black employment opportunities on the assumption that cities with more resources will be willing to share the expanding pie more widely than cities with a declining resource base.

TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

An examination of the simple correlations between affirmative action and the various independent variables (Table 4) shows that the overwhelmingly most important independent variable is the percentage of blacks in the city population. There are two possible explanations for this finding, as we saw in the discussion of Hypothesis No. 2, and they are difficult to sort out. On the one hand it is possible to argue that municipal employers will simply draw on the available labor pool for workers and that the different races will "naturally" find their way more or less proportionally into the municipal hiring process. That is to say, black employment levels would not necessarily be responsive to black political power.

It is plausible to argue that some measure of the overrepresentation of black workers in the low-prestige public sector job categories is a function of the racially skewed distribution of low job skills (measured,

Table 4

Affirmative Action, Racial Variables, and the Public Sector:
A Simple Correlation Matrix (Pearson r)

Independent Variables	% Black in Total Work Force (1978)	Total Affirmative Action Effort	% Black Administrators	Administrator Affirmative Action Effort	% Black Professionals	Professional Affirmative Action Effort
% black (1970)	.87*	-.28**	.76*	.35***	.81*	.25
City council representation ration (1977)	.02	-.21	.15	.09	.13	-.03
Black mayor (1977)	.58*	.03	.68*	.47*	.64*	.28**
Growth of public sector (1973-1978)	.22***	.19	.12	.16	.15	.14
Size of public sector (1978)	.00	-.20***	.01	-.02	.04	-.11
% black with college degrees (1970)	.02	.48*	-.02	.18	-.03	.15
Municipal residency requirement	.05	-.34**	.11	-.20	.19	-.02
City population growth (1960-1970)	-.15	.41**	-.14	.18	-.15	.18
City population (1970)	-.08	-.16	.03	.05	-.02	-.10

* significant at .001
** significant at .05
*** significant at .10

say, by comparative racial school dropout rates. See R. Hill, 1978, p. 30). The fact that the correlation coefficients between percentage of blacks in the city and percentage of blacks in the prestige occupations are slightly lower than that measuring the relationship with black presence in the total work force suggests in this context that "natural" hiring processes probably operate to a greater degree for semi-skilled and unskilled than for prestige jobs.

This explanation would gain added power if we were to find that affirmative action levels were higher in cities with a municipal residency requirement for public employment. In such cases cities would be obliged to draw on the local labor pool; suburban whites would be eliminated from the competition for central city civil service jobs. Among the 43 cities 23 (53%) have enforced residency requirements.[9] But as Table 4 shows, the relationships between affirmative action and the existence of a residency requirement are weak and in all but one case statistically insignificant. Blacks are nearly as likely to find municipal employment in cities where they must compete with the largely white suburban work force[10] as in cities where the labor pool is restricted to central city residents. This suggests that the workings of "natural" hiring processes do not constitute a sufficient explanation. It is not simply the greater availability of black workers in cities with residency laws that account for their employment.

Case study findings which extend as far back in time as Keech's examination of the impact of black voting in Tuskegee and Durham (1968, pp. 76-78; see also Campbell and Feagin, 1975; M. Jones, 1978) suggest another interpretation, namely that black gains are a function of black

voting clout. Politicians, both black and white, are under pressure to distribute goods such as public jobs to blacks as a significant or potentially significant voting bloc.

Neither explanation can be dismissed out of hand. Data to perform a definitive test are not available. But it should be clear that factors such as the behavior of the public sector labor market in heavily black cities prior to widespread black electoral mobilization, the minimal impact of residency requirements, and case studies documenting the power of black voting tend to weaken somewhat the "natural" process explanation.

A political explanation of affirmative action need not rely entirely on the presumed influence of black voting blocs. It is a central assumption in the practice of ethnic politics that a particular group will be in a more powerful position to have its demands met if it has a co-ethnic in a position of authority than if it must supplicate an officialdom controlled by other groups. There are, indeed, strong relationships between levels of black public employment and the presence of a black mayor; but black proportional representation on city councils appears to be of little consequence.

The likelihood that a city will have a black mayor is, not surprisingly, strongly related to the percentage of blacks in the city's population ($r = .58$). This suggests that we may face a problem of multicollinearity. Although I shall deal again with this potential problem below, it is important to note that the variable "black mayor" has a certain powerful logical integrity quite separate from "black population." It has already been argued that local chief executives can be important in the personnel

process if they wish. They may or may not push for the development of affirmative action goals and plans;[11] they generally appoint personnel directors; and they exercise a certain moral authority from the vantage point of city hall. In addition to the mayor's independent effect on the personnel system, a black mayor is also an indicator in most cases not only of a sizeable black population but additionally of a highly politically mobilized one.

It is also interesting to observe that the strength of the relationship between black mayor and affirmative action increases as one moves from the percentage of blacks in the total work force to the percentage of blacks in administrative and professional positions. The relationship between the proportion of the city population which is black and affirmative action weakens slightly as one moves rightward across the table. This pattern reinforces the earlier argument that two different processes are at work, one a dynamic involving in some measure labor market factors, particularly for low-level city jobs, the other involving responsiveness to political factors, particularly for prestige city jobs. In any event, it would appear that a black mayor and the percentage of blacks in the city population are sufficiently distinct theoretically to permit their simultaneous inclusion in a multiple regression.

That seats on the city council offer black representatives little opportunity to influence personnel policies suggests the degree to which employment policy is an executive rather than a legislative function. More generally, the absence of impact of black council representation on measurable policy confirms the similar findings of Welch and Karnig (1979, pp. 111, 115).

Table 4 also shows that the black power variables are more strongly positively related to absolute levels of black city employment than to the Effort scores. That is to say, blacks are more likely to approach or exceed proportional representation where they represent a smaller part of the population. Part of the explanation for this pattern may lie in the simple arithmetic of public sector expansion and job turnover: Although a substantial number of positions in city employment have been made available to blacks in the last decade, the number of job openings may simply not have been great enough to permit blacks to "catch up" to their proportional share in cities where they constitute a large proportion of the population. But we may also speculate that white resistance to black job aspirations establishes implicit limits on black gains. In their path-breaking study of black political behavior, Matthews and Prothro (1966, pp. 115-120) found that black political participation decreased as black concentration in a county rose. As the proportion black rose, so did white racial anxieties, which had a dampening effect on black activity. It is possible that a similar process occurs in contemporary cities with regard to black claims on municipal jobs.

The variable measuring the level of black education represents an attempt to test Hypothesis No. 3, namely that affirmative action is a function of characteristics of the black labor pool. The percentage of blacks with college educations was chosen over mean black education to explore in particular the relationship between the size of an educated labor pool and the achievement of occupations requiring advanced schooling. The assumption is that the greater the proportion of people holding college degrees, the more competitive the group will be in the quest for prestige

city jobs and the more attractive the black labor pool will be to the municipal employer. Table 4 shows, however, that there is no relationship between education and absolute affirmative action in any category. Variations in black employment are not apparently a function of variations in the "quality" of the labor pool.

There is, interestingly, a relatively strong relationship between the education variable and the total Affirmative Action Effort score. This finding is perhaps understandable if we take the proportion of college-educated blacks as a surrogate measure of that racial community's resources for organization and leadership. As resources rise, we might expect an increase in black pressure brought to bear on city government to attend to black interests. As pressure rises, so does the responsiveness of the personnel system. Another interpretation of the relationship is that city governments are willing to hire more blacks--but mainly in low-prestige and low-skill occupations--as the educational level of the black work force rises. In this case, then, we would not be surprised to find a significant number of educationally overqualified blacks filling low-level city public service jobs. Unfortunately, data to explore this proposition do not exist.

Finally, let us examine the support for the expanding-pie notion, namely that blacks will tend to do better in public employment where the city work force and city resources are expanding. The data do not offer convincing support. There are slight (but in most cases not statistically significant) relationships in the predicted direction regarding changes in the size of the public sector. As we shall see, however, these

relationships not only practically vanish when the other independent variables are controlled, but they become negative. Equally slight negative relationships obtain between affirmative action and city population growth, but the signs on these also change when all else is controlled.

In an additional effort to test this hypothesis, the percentage increase or decrease in the public sector work force between 1973 and 1978 was run against affirmative action changes over the same period. If the expanding-pie notion is correct, then we should find that great public sector expansion is associated with the greatest increases in affirmative action. Changes in the latter were measured both as a percentage change and as the percentage point difference between 1978 and 1973.

Expansion or contraction of the local public sector is not related at a significant level to changes in black employment in the total city work force or at the administrator level. It is, however, related to racial changes in the professional category ($r = .32$ and $.40$, for percentage point difference and percentage change, respectively, significant at the .05 level). Once again support for the notion that blacks will do best where the number of jobs is increasing is ambiguous at best.

A MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

To determine the relative importance of the four hypotheses developed to explain variations in affirmative action, multiple regression tests were run for each dependent variable. Independent variables were entered

stepwise into each equation, beginning with two control variables (city size and the presence of a residency law), in order to determine the incremental capacity of each variable to add to the total explained variance. The black power variables were entered last in order to subject them to the most rigorous test of their ability to explain additional variance. Table 5 presents both beta coefficients and a decomposition of the total R^2 for each variable.

The three models (1, 3, 5) which seek to explain variations in the percent black are relatively powerful, producing R^2 scores of .81, .74, and .75. The ability of the independent variables taken together to explain variations in Effort (Models Number 2, 4, 6) is somewhat lower. Future research must explore the factors underlying the unexplained variance here. It is possible that lower Effort, which may be understood as a measure of policy,[12] is a function of public employee union resistance, white ethnic resistance, or the relative availability of competitive jobs for blacks in the private sector. Such speculations must await additional investigation.

The black power variables, especially percentage of blacks but also black mayor, are the most consistently dominant indicators, as the standardized beta scores show. The six independent variables added to the models before the entry of the black power variables explain 13% or less of the variance in all cases except one (Model Number 2, where the multiple R^2 for the first six variables equals .28). The percentage of blacks is extremely important as a predictor of affirmative action, as the simple correlations would lead us to expect. But the black mayor variable holds its own relative to percentage of blacks, <u>assuming greatly increased importance in explaining</u>

Table 5

Stepwise Regression Between Affirmative Action and Selected Independent Variables

	Model No. 1 % Black Total Work Force		Model No. 2 Total Affirmative Action Effort		Model No. 3 % Black Administrators		Model No. 4 Administrative Affirmative Action Effort		Model No. 5 % Black Professional		Model No. 6 Professional Affirmative Action Effort	
Independent Variables	Beta	R^2 Change	Beta	R^2 Change	Beta	R^2 Change	Beta	R^2 Change	Beta	R^2 Change	Beta	R^2 Change
City population (1970)	-.008	.007	-.213	.024	.374	.000	.399	.003	.043	.000	-.030	.001
Residency requirement	-.085	.003	.025	.105	-.020	.011	-.168	.042	.133	.039	.156	.000
Public sector growth (1973-1978)	-.005	.054	.057	.008	-.131	.025	-.113	.015	-.066	.041	-.016	.017
City population growth (1960-1970)	.058	.035	.233	.065	.151	.014	.285	.006	.199	.006	.345	.034
Size of public sector (1978)	-.105	.030	.119	.005	-.477	.001	-.428	.011	-.138	.015	-.105	.000
% Black college graduate (1970)	.086	.003	.261	.076	.047	.000	.066	.002	.099	.005	.061	.060

Table 5--Continued

Independent Variables	Model No. 1 % Black Total Work Force Beta	R^2 Change	Model No. 2 Total Affirmative Action Effort Beta	R^2 Change	Model No. 3 % Black Administrators Beta	R^2 Change	Model No. 4 Administrative Affirmative Action Effort Beta	R^2 Change	Model No. 5 % Black Professional Beta	R^2 Change	Model No. 6 Professional Affirmative Action Effort Beta	R^2 Change
% Black in city (1970)	.877	.672	-.346	.019	.715	.613	.352	.230	.731	.593	.183	.090
Representation ratio (1977)	-.018	.000	-.095	.003	.107	.018	.135	.027	.079	.011	-.019	.000
Black mayor	.111	.007	.302	.053	.314	.058	.338	.067	.262	.040	.267	.041
Multiple R	.90		.60		.86		.63		.87		.45	
R^2	.81		.36		.74		.40		.75		.20	

administrative and professional effort. It is evident that a black mayor makes a significant difference in hiring at these prestige occupational levels. Whereas a large black population alone may be sufficient to encourage substantial employment of blacks in low-level city jobs and modest employment in prestige occupations, a black mayor represents a force against the tokenism of the latter pattern. It should be noted that even when it is entered into the equations last, the black mayor variable still contributes an additional increment to the explained variance in all but Model Number 1.[13]

The expanding-pie hypothesis and the character of the labor force hypothesis do not appear to be very powerful predictors of affirmative action or very important relative to the black power hypotheses, although in a few instances their indicators produce inconsistent efforts. On balance we may reject these hypotheses as important explanations of the variations in affirmative action.

CONCLUSIONS

In an essay written near the beginning of the serious mobilization of black urban electoral efforts, Frances Fox Piven (1973) was greatly pessimistic about the capacity of blacks to penetrate the local public job sector. Blacks, she wrote, "come at a time when public employment has been pre-empted by older groups and is held fast through civil service provisions and collective bargaining contracts. Most public jobs are no longer allocated in exchange for political allegiance, but through a 'merit' system based on formal qualifications" (p. 380). As we have seen

in the foregoing analysis, such a prediction failed to anticipate not only the substantial responsiveness of white-run city governments to potential black voting blocs, but also the ability of black mayoral administrations to influence city hiring practices. Affirmative action doctrines and techniques have apparently proved to be significant forces for breaking through the barriers of civil service provisions and job discrimination.

The basic conclusions of this analysis may be summarized as follows:

1. When other factors are controlled, neither the expanding-pie hypothesis, nor the educational characteristics of the labor force explain much of the variation in black employment in municipal work forces. It should be noted particularly that decreases in the size of the public sector are not significantly associated with low black employment levels.
2. As the percentage of blacks increases in a city, so do levels of black employment both in absolute terms and proportionally to the black presence in the city. This finding holds for cities with both white and black mayors. Controlling for the presence of a city residency requirement, however, undercuts the explanation that such a pattern is a function of the great availability of black workers. Although we cannot abandon this interpretation, we have seen that an explanation which focuses on the voting strength a large black population represents is at least as plausible.
3. The presence of a black mayor has clear incremental effects on levels of black employment and on affirmative action effort,

> enabling us ultimately to conclude that a significant portion of black gains is a product of black political power. This is particularly the case in the area of hiring administrative officials and professionals. The import of this finding cannot be underestimated. The penetration by blacks of these job categories ensures black influence in bureaucratic policy-making, the internal administration of various agencies (which relates among other things to hiring and promotion of personnel), information gathering and control (processes which underlie much political and administrative decision making), and implementation policies. Furthermore, the ability to expand the black presence in prestige public occupations contributes to the formation of a relatively secure black bureaucratic middle class. The benefits of class status are, of course, intergenerational in character: In this sense, current black public employment in prestige occupations may have long-term consequences for the formation of a more sub-substantial black middle class.

It is apparent from our examination of affirmative action for blacks that the contemporary practice of a politics of ethnicity--the allocation of divisible goods to a particular group as a consequence of political influence or control--is not only proceeding in modern American cities but it has borne fruit. Future research must be alert to other ways in which such patterns of practice may be emerging, particularly in the areas of municipal contracting with minority-owned firms and affirmative action employment in private sector businesses competing for public sector contracts.

The conclusions suggest that municipal government in America may be a prize of no mean significance for minority groups to capture. It is often assumed that city government is powerless to affect the economic well-being of minority urban dwellers because local resources are neither expanding nor wholly controlled by city hall.. But affirmative action in city employment is redistributive in character. Expanding black employment requires no new spending. Furthermore, to the extent that the hiring and recruitment of blacks acquires an impetus of its own, affirmative action requires no legislative renewal. Black politics, then, has rediscovered what white ethnic groups once knew: Redistributive policies may be profoundly influenced by local political forces and officials, and the resources these policies allocate may hold substantial promise for group mobility.

NOTES

[1]In 1964, there were probably no more than 70 black elected officials at all levels of American government (Williams, 1977, p. 24). After the Voting Rights Act of 1965, black voter registration increased sharply, and several years later the Joint Center for Political Studies began to monitor black electoral achievements. The most visible initial breakthrough came in 1967 with the election of black mayors in Gary and Cleveland. By 1969, there were a total of 1185 black elected officials. In the succeeding decade the number of blacks holding office increased by 288%, bringing the total in 1979 to 4607. Twenty cities with more than 50,000 people had black mayors (Joint Center for Political Studies, 1979). It is this rapid numerical rise since the late 1960s that I have called a "revolution," although it should be noted that blacks contribute even now less than 1% of all elected officials.

[2]The terms "ethnicity" and "ethnic" subsume the category "race," a usage which follows Milton Gordon's definition of an ethnic group as "any racial, religious, and national origins collectivity (1961, p. 263)."

[3]"Affirmative action" will be used in this paper in a very limited sense to connote <u>levels</u> of black employment in city government as well as the policy efforts which underlie minority hiring, unless otherwise noted.

[4]Between 1970 and 1979 local government employment grew every year except for 1976, when a decrease of approximately 2000 employees was registered nationally out of a total of nearly 9 million workers. Since 1972, the year of passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, and

1979, the local government work force has grown by some 1.5 million employees. In the late 1970s the rate of growth slowed, but an additional 66,000 workers were nevertheless added to the local public payroll between 1978 and 1979, an increase of .7% (ACIR, 1980, p. 172).

[5]All cities over 250,000, with the exceptions of New York and Honolulu, were selected. A supplementary random sample of cities between 50,000 and 249,999 was also chosen. When it was determined that size had no apparent effect on any of the dependent variables, the samples were merged. Size is still nevertheless controlled in the merged sample.

[6]"Prestige" is used here to refer to those jobs at the top of the skill and pay hierarchy of public employment occupational categories. The term is not meant to connote the reputational attributes of particular jobs. The full EEO-4 job ranking is as follows:

1. Officials/Administrators
2. Professionals
3. Technicians
4. Protective Service
5. Paraprofessionals
6. Office/Clerical
7. Skilled Craft
8. Service/Maintenance

Officials and administrators record the highest average salaries; professionals have the second highest average, according to nationally aggregated data (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1978, p. 42).

[7]The present analysis is concerned principally with black capacities to affect recruitment and hiring practices. Future research will examine the broader context of employment opportunities for blacks that may facilitate or hinder public employment such as the nature of the local

economic base, minority employment levels in the nonlocal governmental sector, and the receptivity of the private sector to minority workers.

[8]Affirmative action figures for city employment prior to 1972 are difficult to come by. The point is illustrated, however, by looking at blacks on the police forces of major cities before and after they elected black mayors. In 1970 the average black population of the five largest cities which later elected black mayors was 49%. But the average percentage of blacks on the police forces of these cities in the late 1960s was 12%. By 1978 it had risen to 31% (Eisinger, 1980a).

[9]Data on residency requirements were obtained through a telephone survey of city clerks in the 43 cities.

[10]The black work force in metropolitan areas tends to be heavily concentrated in the central cities. An average of 78.8% of all black workers in the metropolitan areas of the sample cities (N = 33; data were missing for 10 cities) lived in their respective central cities, according to calculations based on 1970 census data.

[11]The passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 was no guarantee that cities would develop affirmative action plans. A study of minority employment in 16 Southern cities prepared by the Southern Regional Council found that only two of the cities had written affirmative action plans by 1975 (New York Times, May 25, 1978).

[12]"Effort" is a more direct measure of policy choice than the simple percentage of blacks in any given segment of the work force. Effort suggests an implicit goal (proportional representation) and a yardstick, whereas percentages are more diffuse standards.

[13]The relationship (Pearson r) between the percentage of blacks in the population and the presence of a black mayor is .58. Farrar and Glauber (1967) suggest a simple rule of thumb in assessing the possibilities of multicollinearity between independent variables. If the simple correlation in question exceeds the multiple correlation of the model, then there may be a problem. The .58 figure exceeds the multiple R in only one case (Model Number 6). Even in this instance our concerns should be minimized by the argument regarding the theoretical distinctiveness of the black mayor variable from a proportionally large black population.

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