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POLITICS, THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND IRISH SOCIAL MOBILITY: SAN FRANCISCO, 1870-1900

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FROM the 1940s through the early 1960s several leading social scientists outlined a "political" model of immigrant, primarily Irish, social mobility in late nineteenth and early twentieth century urban America. The most elaborate statement of the argument was made in Robert A. Dahl's 1961 analysis of New Haven politics, *Who Governs?* Its general contours, however, were evident in earlier work by William Foote Whyte (1943), Robert K. Merton (1949), and Daniel Bell (1953).¹

Dahl made the following four arguments:

(1) The Irish in New Haven moved rather rapidly from working-class to middle-class status — surprisingly quickly considering their meagre job skills and the discrimination they encountered. Thus by 1959 first, second, and third generation Irish Catholics in the city ranked second only to Jews in having the fewest numbers in working-class occupations, ahead of American Protestants, Northern European Protestants and Catholics, Italian Catholics and Blacks.²

(2) Public sector economic resources were sufficient to serve as a major conduit of social mobility. Dahl did not elaborate on this point, critical to his overall argument, but strongly implied that white-collar public jobs significantly aided Irish movement into the middling stratum of New Haven society.³ Daniel Bell, James Q. Wilson and others, however, have emphasized two other important public sector resources: (a) municipal contracts and franchises, especially significant in an era when cities were making their major capital improvements, e.g., public buildings, roads, subways, traction lines and utility systems;⁴ and (b) "unofficial" patronage — private sector jobs (usually with firms franchised by or doing business with the city) filled on the basis of political considerations.⁵

(3) Celtic political, especially mass electoral, activity was crucial for securing a disproportionate share of these resources, and hence for accelerating group mobility.⁶

¹ William Foote Whyte, "Social Organization in the Slums," *American Sociological Review* 8 (February 1943): 34–39; Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1949) (1968 Edition), pp. 125–36; Daniel Bell, "Crime as an American Way of Life," *Antioch Review* 13 (Summer 1953): 131–54.

² Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 59–60.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴ See Bell, "Crime as an American Way of Life," and James Q. Wilson, "Corruption: The Shame of the States," *The Public Interest* 2 (Winter 1966): 33–34, reprinted in Arnold J. Heidenheimer, ed., *Political Corruption: Readings in Comparative Analysis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 298–306, at p. 302.

⁵ For an argument concerning the increased significance of "unofficial" patronage as civil service reforms protected ever larger portions of the public payroll, see William Bennett Munro, *The Government of American Cities*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1920), pp. 172–74. For a critique of Munro's argument, suggesting that contractors and public service corporations preferred to pay cash for political favors rather than hire inefficient party workers, see Robert C. Brooks, *Political Parties and Electoral Problems*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper, 1933), p. 214.

⁶ Dahl's argument deserves to be quoted at length. "Whatever else the ethnics lacked, they had numbers. Hence politicians took the initiative; they made it easy for immigrants to become citizens, encouraged ethnics to register, put them on the party rolls, and aided them in meeting the innumerable specific problems resulting from their poverty, strangeness, and lowly position. To obtain and hold the votes, the political leaders rewarded them with city jobs. They also appealed to their desire for ethnic prestige and self-respect by running members of the ethnic group as candidates for elective offices. . . . Nothing less is revealed than a massive invasion of the political system by the ethnics. City jobs,

(4) Other immigrant groups did not necessarily follow the Irish route from rags to riches. In New Haven, Italians and Russian Jews, more accustomed than the Irish to the business world, became peddlers and small shop-owners, later using socioeconomic gains to attain elective political positions.⁷

CRITIQUES OF THE IRISH POWER THESIS

In recent years portions of this argument have come under attack, the critique having taken two forms: (a) a reassessment of the extent to which the Irish even *after* their political conquest of Northeastern cities moved into middle-class ranks — compared to less politically influential groups such as the English, and Russian and Polish Jews; and (b) a reappraisal of the magnitude of public sector resources and of Irish willingness to exploit them for group economic gain.

The first argument was made most persuasively by Stephan Thernstrom in his study of population growth, migration and social mobility in Boston, 1880–1970.⁸ Thernstrom attempted to estimate the likely economic impact of the Irish political takeover of Boston in the late nineteenth century, first by comparing the occupational attainments of first-generation Irish in 1890 with those of second-generation Irish born in the 1860s and 1870s whose careers unfolded subsequent to the Irish political conquest and second by contrasting the economic progress of the politically powerful second-generation Irish with that of the politically weaker second-generation British and Western Europeans (predominantly Germans and Scandinavians).

Second-generation Irish fared notably better than their fathers although much of their success was only apparent. While nearly 40 percent of the former finished their careers in white-collar jobs (compared to only 10 percent of the latter) many of the American-born were marginally middle class, in clerical or sales work rather than in business or the professions.⁹ Furthermore, second-generation British and Western Europeans climbed the occupational ladder far more quickly than their Irish counterparts.¹⁰ The Irish “. . . political triumph in Boston was early and decisive. . . . To translate group political power into group economic power, however, was to prove a slow and difficult task.”¹¹

minor offices, major elective and appointive offices — all fell before the irresistible tide of the plebes and explebes of immigrant stock. With respect to city jobs, a survey of 1,600 New Haven families made in 1933 by the Yale Institute of Human Relations furnishes an interesting snapshot of the state of affairs at that time. By 1933, the Irish had become by far the most numerous in holding city jobs; politics was evidently one of the main routes the Irish took to climb out of the wage-earning class. Although the Irish comprised only 13 percent of the families in the sample, they held almost half the jobs in city government. Not all city positions were, to be sure, white-collar jobs; but as school teachers, clerks, aldermen, commissioners, and even mayors; the Irish had gained a place for themselves in the middling strata of New Haven. . . . With a foothold in the middle classes gained through politics and city jobs, in the next two decades the Irish moved rapidly into business and professional life.” Dahl, *Who Governs?* pp. 34, 40–41. Bell made a similar argument, but pointed to a slightly different conduit: “Irish immigrant wealth in the northern urban centers, concentrated largely in construction, trucking, and the waterfront, has, to a substantial extent, been wealth accumulated in and through political alliance, e.g., favoritism in city contracts.” For evidence from a variety of cities in the Northeast and Midwest of the ability of the Irish to translate electoral activities into government jobs, see Terry Nichols Clark, “The Irish Ethic and the Spirit of Patronage,” *Ethnicity* 2 (1975): 305–59, especially 327–43.

⁷ Dahl, *Who Governs?* p. 42.

⁸ *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis 1880–1970* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 132–33, 142.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 133–35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 132. For a critique of Thernstrom’s argument, see Andrew M. Greeley, *The American Catholic: A Social Portrait* (New York: Basic Books, 1977). For an assessment of Irish economic progress since World War II, see Greeley, *That Most Distressful Nation: The Taming of the American Irish* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972); pp. 122–28.

The second argument was made by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, among others, in their influential study of ethnic patterns in New York City.¹² They too found that Irish progress out of working-class ranks was exceptionally slow and traced much of the difficulty to the limited nature of public sector rewards and to the parochial Irish conception of political success. Politics was not a lucrative calling, for the primary rewards were low-grade civil service jobs.¹³ In addition, though they ran the city, "... the Irish just didn't know what to do with their opportunity. They never thought of politics as an instrument of social change — their kind of politics involved the processes of a society that was not changing."¹⁴

The Need for an Empirical Assessment

Most of these arguments, unfortunately, have little empirical foundation. Thus Dahl's conclusion that "... politics was evidently one of the main routes the Irish took to climb out of the wage-earning class..."¹⁵ exaggerated the evidence at hand, a 1933 sample survey of 2,008 New Haven families conducted by Yale's Institute of Human Relations.¹⁶ Thernstrom's analysis was the best documented but did not provide a public versus private sector comparison of immigrant economic progress in Boston. Second-generation Irish public servants well may have climbed the occupational ladder more readily than their privately employed brethren, accounting for what Irish mobility there was. Glazer and Moynihan did not analyze the nature and ethnic distribution of public sector resources in New York. Were there proportionally fewer white-collar jobs in the public than private sectors, as their argument implied? Did the Irish fail to exploit the available opportunities? These kinds of questions have not been the object of empirical investigation.

Notwithstanding major data collection problems, owing to the political sensitivity of these kinds of allocations,¹⁷ a more empirical effort is called for, especially

¹² *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1964), pp. 229, 259–60. The argument is also made by Raymond E. Wolfinger in "The Development and Persistence of Ethnic Voting," *American Political Science Review* 59 (December 1965): 896–908.

¹³ For the "swarms of Irish descending on the city government after the Civil War, . . . there was little cumulative improvement from one generation to the next. The economic rewards in American over the past century have gone to entrepreneurs, not to *functionnaires* . . ." Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, p. 260.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229. Also see Clark, "The Irish Ethic," pp. 321–27.

¹⁵ Dahl, *Who Governs?* p. 41.

¹⁶ Dahl was most impressed by the fact that first and second generation Irish breadwinners held nearly one-half of the public sector jobs while comprising only 13 percent of the sample. Unfortunately, he failed to explore the following three problem areas. First, his analysis was restricted to the 1,600 gainfully employed — out of an initial sample of 2,008 heads of households and their families. Though we do not know for sure, there are plausible grounds for believing that the unreported 408 individuals and families — 20 percent of the sample — may have been out of work in this depression year. The survey results are reported in John W. McConnell, *The Evolution of Social Classes* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942), pp. 84–85, 214. McConnell did not tell us why only 1,600 out of the 2,008 reported their occupations. The 1930 census, however, noted that nearly 9 percent of the workforce was unemployed in that early depression year — a percentage that could easily have doubled in the next three years. See: United States Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census: Unemployment*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933, Volume 1, Table 14, p. 25. Second, only 68 of the 1,600 employed held public service jobs — 4 percent of the gainfully employed. Government jobs, then, were a rather narrow conduit into New Haven's middle class. Third, the 68 public service jobholders — 33 of them Irish — were not categorized by whether they held white- or blue-collar posts. The 1930 census showed that white-collar jobs only slightly outnumbered blue-collar jobs — 55 percent (1808) to 45 percent (1947) — in New Haven's public sector. To the extent the city followed national trends, the Irish were far more represented in blue-collar police, fire, and laboring jobs than in white-collar teaching and clerical jobs. See: *Fifteenth Census: Population* (1933), Volume 4, Table 12, pp. 280–83.

¹⁷ As James Q. Wilson has argued, the political sensitivity of patronage allocations, e.g., municipal jobs distributed by party leaders to supporters in exchange for services to the organization, would make it extremely difficult to secure rosters of public employees —

since the thesis has become part of current American political folklore,¹⁸ serving as an important yardstick or baseline in the Black power debates of the middle and late 1960s. While Thernstrom questioned the relationship between Irish political and economic success and Robert Binstock questioned the supposed failure of recent Black electoral efforts, most writers accepted the thesis, even those who argued its inapplicability for present day Blacks.¹⁹ They argued that the Irish, without the experience of slavery, were easier to mobilize politically through registration *en masse* and bloc voting, and furthermore, that the prizes available to them in city politics were relatively greater than those available to later arriving Blacks.²⁰

METHODOLOGY

This paper examines the Irish power thesis in two ways: (1) a case study of a large city with ample public sector resources, immigrant political activity and economic progress, and (2) a national comparison of Irish political and economic progress in urban and non-urban settings.

San Francisco, a city experiencing an Irish political takeover in the 1880s, has been chosen for intensive analysis. For at least three reasons it represented a more favorable locale for examining the relationship between Irish political and economic success than New Haven or other New England cities. First, the census occupational reports suggested that Irish social mobility was far more rapid in San Francisco, 1870 to 1950, than in New Haven, Boston, or Providence.²¹ Second,

let alone lists of "unofficial" patronage recipients and the beneficiaries of city contracts and franchises. See James Q. Wilson, "The Economy of Patronage," *Journal of Political Economy* 71 (August 1961): 372, footnote 5. An analysis of public employment patterns in San Francisco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, revealed that such rosters were readily available in municipal reports, city directories and state blue books *before* civil service reform. One consequence of reform, intended or otherwise, was to make it harder to secure lists of public employees. See Steven P. Erie, "The Development of Class and Ethnic Politics in San Francisco, 1870-1910: A Critique of the Pluralist Interpretation" (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1975), pp. 457-63.

¹⁸ Stephan Thernstrom, "Black Power: A Discussion," *Partisan Review* 35 (Spring 1968): 226.

¹⁹ Ibid.; Robert H. Binstock, "The Ghettos and the New Left," in Roland L. Warren, ed., *Politics and the Ghettos* (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), pp. 193-94. There is a sizable body of literature making the Irish-Black comparison. For representative discussions, see Harold Cruse, "Freedomways, Summer 1963: Black Economy—Self-Made Myth," in his *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: From Its Origins to the Present* (New York: William Morrow, 1967), pp. 315-16; Chuck Stone, "Irish Political Power," in his *Black Political Power in America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), pp. 110-18; National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Commission), *Report* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), chapter 9, "Comparing the Immigrant and Negro Experience," pp. 278-82; Norton E. Long, "Politics and Ghetto Perpetuation," in Warren, ed., *Politics and the Ghettos*, pp. 31-42; James P. Comer, "The Social Power of the Negro," in Floyd B. Barbour, ed., *The Black Power Revolt* (Boston: Extending Horizons, 1968), pp. 72-84; Robert M. Fogelson, *Violence as Protest* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 128-37. For a less heated, pre-Watts comparison see Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*. For a more general analyses of Black politics, see Edward S. Greenberg et al., eds., *Black Politics: The Inevitability of Conflict* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), and Hanes Walton, Jr., *Black Politics: A Theoretical and Structural Analysis* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972).

²⁰ National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*; Thernstrom, "Black Power."

²¹ By 1870 a small Celtic middle class had emerged in San Francisco, populated by traders, dealers, clerks, salesmen, restaurant owners and boardinghouse keepers. Slightly over one-eighth of the Bay Area Irish had white-collar jobs—the same proportion as for their brethren in Chicago and New York. In the Northeast, however, not even a "marginal" middle class was evident by 1870—for only one out of sixteen Irish had white-collar jobs in New Haven, Boston or Providence. Eighty years later, both first and second generation Irish in the Bay Area—and in the West in general—had far higher median socioeconomic status scores than either generation of New England Irish. Indeed, they ranked higher than first and second generation Irish in the New York and Philadelphia metropolitan areas, and in all regions of the country except for the South. See Erie, "The Development of Class and Ethnic Politics," pp. 427-29; U.S. Census Office,

demographic, economic, and political forces made the Bay Area public sector unusually large in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²² Third, the Irish takeover in the West occurred in the early 1880s, when immigrant economic needs were greater, a generation *before* the Celtic takeover of New England cities.²³

The case study attempts to answer the following questions:

(1) How much social mobility did various immigrant groups, particularly the Irish, experience prior to and after the immigrant takeover of local government in the 1880s? The study explores the economic track records from 1870 to 1900 (the last date for which the requisite census information was available) for the city's nine major ethnic groups: Yankees, Blacks, Irish, Chinese, Germans, Scandinavians, Italians, English, and Canadians. Social mobility will be captured by an aggregate occupational measure: the thirty-year change in the proportion of white-collar workers. Aggregate changes, it should be noted, reflect more than the movements of countless individuals up and down the economic ladder. They also reflect structural changes in the economy, e.g., the changing proportion of white-collar jobs, and changes in the composition of the workforce, e.g., new workers replacing those leaving the labor force.²⁴ We partially have corrected for the latter type of change by comparing the occupational experiences of the first generation in 1870 with those of the first and second generation in 1900. While there are greater validity threats with an aggregate rather than individual level analysis, the aggregate approach represents an adequate first approximation.²⁵

Ninth Census, 1870 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), Volume 1, Table 32, p. 796 (Providence); and Charles B. Nam, "Nationality Groups and Social Stratification in America," *Social Forces* 37 (May 1959): 332.

²² Three important causal factors deserve mention. (1) In the nineteenth century the city's population and economic growth dwarfed that of other cities in the West. As a result it was the site for important federal and state activities, e.g., the Custom House, Mint, Post Office and Presidio. (2) Owing to the fact that the city and county consolidated in the 1850s, significant since California counties performed a much greater range of functions than counties in the East, there was an unusually large supply of municipal jobs. (3) Owing to the "consensual" nature of Progressivism in the city, San Franciscans embarked on one of the earliest and most extensive capital improvement programs in the nation, designed to make the city the "Paris of North America." These programs had substantial ethnic and labor support, and the necessary capital improvement bonds secured large majorities in all sections of the city. Such programs well may have been delayed in the East, where, as Richard Hofstadter has argued, reform aroused considerable immigrant and working class opposition.

²³ The Bay Area Irish had been active and influential in the "Tammany" wing of the Democratic party since the early 1850s. From 1882 until 1891, Chris Buckley, Irish-born leader of the party, ruled the town, helping to "'Hibernianize' the police force and other departments of the city government." As a result of these early political forays they secured a disproportionate share of public jobs at a much earlier date than their Northeastern counterparts. By 1890 they held nearly one and one-half their "expected" share of government jobs in San Francisco (based upon their proportion of the workforce). In Boston, New Haven and Providence, however, they only held 65 to 88 percent of their expected quotas. See Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), p. 108. For an analysis of Buckley's rule, see Alexander Callow, Jr., "San Francisco's Blind Boss," *Pacific Historical Review* 25 (August 1956): 261-80. Regarding Irish public employment patterns, see Erie, "The Development of Class and Ethnic Politics," pp. 422-26.

²⁴ For a discussion of the problems of aggregate mobility analysis, see Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians* (1973), pp. 48-52, 116. For discussions of the methodological and substantive problems involved in individual level social mobility — particularly occupational — analysis, see Clyde Griffen, "Occupational Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America: Problems and Possibilities," *Journal of Social History* 5 (Spring 1972): 310-30; Michael B. Katz, "Occupational Classification in History," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3 (Summer 1972): 63-88; Theodore Hershberg et al., "Occupation and Ethnicity in Five Nineteenth-Century Cities: A Collaborative Inquiry," *Historical Methods Newsletter* 7 (June 1974): 174-216.

²⁵ The author is engaged in a companion individual level analysis, tracing the twenty-year occupational experiences of 1,000 San Franciscans randomly drawn from the 1880 manuscript census schedules — 500 from the private sector and 500 from the public sector. They are being traced with the aid of city directories and voter registration rolls.

(2) What kinds of economic resources were available in the public sector and how were they distributed? We have determined the following: (a) the nature and magnitude of municipal expenditures, particularly the relative amounts budgeted for salaries and for capital improvement projects; (b) the nature, number and ethnic distribution of civilian public jobs (federal, state and local) relative to the private sector; and (c) the ethnic composition of those industries and occupations most affected by municipal capital improvement programs, the building trades and the ranks of unskilled labor, and by demands for “unofficial” patronage, the private utilities and municipal transportation concerns. The governing question is the extent to which immigrant, especially Irish, economic progress could be explained by control over public sector resources (broadly defined to include the resources of companies doing business with or franchised by the city).

(3) How effective were ethnic political strategies in capturing the public sector and affecting overall social mobility? Specifically, to what extent did “mass” electoral factors — voter registration, turnout, bloc voting — and “elite” political officeholding for the various ethnic groups predict changes in public sector fortunes and in aggregate economic status? Following Thernstrom’s lead we shall look to see whether politically active immigrant groups had significantly different public employment and social mobility rates than less politically energetic groups.

A second way to test the thesis involves comparing rates of Irish public sector and overall economic progress in large cities under Celtic control with rates in small towns and rural areas where they were less prominent politically. Significant differences in Celtic mobility rates and in the magnitude of public sector resources between the two kinds of locales would help confirm the thesis. In the following pages, then, we shall present evidence from the survey as well as case study approaches.

ETHNIC SOCIAL MOBILITY IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1870–1900

In the late nineteenth century San Francisco was preeminently the city of the immigrant. Nearly one-half of the 1870 population of 150,000 was foreign born, the highest proportion for the nation’s fifty largest cities.²⁶ Ethnic heterogeneity would continue into the new century, for three-quarters of the 1900 population of nearly 350,000 was of foreign parentage. The largest ethnic groups were the Irish (23 percent of the population) and Germans (19 percent); in relative size both rivaled the native stock. There were smaller colonies of English (8 percent), Chinese (5 percent), Scandinavians (5 percent), Italians (5 percent), Canadians (3 percent), French (3 percent), and Blacks (1 percent).

By 1870 two different ethnic occupational patterns had evolved. The Yankees, Germans, English and Canadians primarily were engaged in white-collar or skilled blue-collar work, the proportions ranging from 58 to 72 percent. Barely one-third of the Irish and Scandinavians, and considerably fewer of the Chinese and Blacks, were similarly situated. More than two-thirds of the members of these four groups worked in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs.²⁷

To what extent was there significant occupational mobility, particularly for the working-class groups, in the next thirty years? Table 1 compares the proportions of ethnic workers in white-collar occupations in 1870 and in 1900. While all of the middle-class groups registered moderate to substantial gains, the working-class pattern was far more varied. The Irish and Chinese, the most and least

²⁶ See David Ward, *Cities and Immigrants: A Geography of Change in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), chapter 2, “The Cityward Movement of Immigrants,” pp. 51–83.

²⁷ United States Census Office, *Ninth Census, 1870* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), Volume 1, Table 32, p. 799.

politically active groups, scored major gains. Despite the impressive percentage increases, however, they continued to be underrepresented in white-collar ranks. The Scandinavians and Italians, on the other hand, had proportionately *fewer* white-collar workers in 1900 than in 1870. For the former, a close connection with the docks and sea effectively confined them to blue-collar work. For the latter, the massive post-1880 influx of peasants from the south of the country outweighed the fourfold increase in the number of white-collar workers. Many of these changes in group occupational attainments, it should be noted, could be attributed to structural changes in the local economy rather than to individual mobility patterns, for the overall proportion of the labor force in white-collar jobs rose by nearly one-third, from 28 to 37 percent.

TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS IN WHITE COLLAR OCCUPATIONS:
By Ethnic Group, 1870 and 1900

Country of Birth, 1870; Parents' Country of Birth and Race, 1900	PERCENTAGE IN WHITE-COLLAR JOBS*		Percent Increase (Decrease) in White-Collar Proportion, 1870 Base
	1870 %	1900 %	
United States, White	41.4%	49.3%	17%
United States, Black	N.A.	15.7	N.A.
Ireland	14.5	29.3	102
Germany	42.6	44.8	5
Great Britain	29.3	40.6	39
China	8.3	22.0	165
Scandinavia	16.4	14.9	(9)
Canada	22.9	46.0	101
Italy	41.9	34.1	(19)
Other Foreign	32.1	35.2	10
All	28.2%	36.8%	30%
(N)	(18,569)	(58,208)	

SOURCE: 1870 and 1900 federal census reports.
* Refers to *estimated* proportions for non-agricultural pursuits. For a discussion of the estimating procedure and occupational classification scheme, see Steven P. Erie, "The Development of Class and Ethnic Politics in San Francisco, 1870-1910: A Critique of the Pluralist Interpretation" (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1975), p. 132 and p. 245, footnote 52.

PUBLIC SECTOR RESOURCES AND SOCIAL MOBILITY OPPORTUNITIES

(1) Public Jobs: Mass or Elite Mobility? How large was the local public sector in the late nineteenth century? Could it serve as a major conduit into the middle class for working-class ethnic groups? Table 2 places San Francisco's public sector, 1870-1900, in both a twentieth-century and national context. For the city and nation, public employees were a small element in the civilian labor force until the middle of this century. In the Bay Area, government employed less than 10 percent of the labor force at the start of World War II; that percentage doubled by 1970. The nation-wide increase was as dramatic and latecoming. In 1930 government employed less than 5 percent of the labor force; in 1970 it employed 16 percent. These increases at the local and national levels, however, occurred long *after* the period of immigrant political ascendancy. Owing to its small size in the pre-New Deal era, the public sector more likely served as a channel for elite rather than mass ethnic social mobility.

How did San Francisco's ethnic groups fare in competing for this limited pool of public jobs? Table 3 shows ethnic public employment rates for 1870 and 1900 and graphically demonstrates that there were sharp limits to the Irish takeover of local government. The proportion of Irish in the public service rose only from 1.7 to 7.3 percent. Other immigrant groups had even fewer of their number on the public payroll.

TABLE 2. THE GROWING SIZE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR:
SAN FRANCISCO AND THE NATION, 1870-1970

Year	SAN FRANCISCO			THE NATION		
	Public Service* (N)	Labor Force (N)	Percent Public Service	Public Service* (N)	Labor Force (N)	Percent Public Service
1870	1,580	68,352	2.3%	236,490	12,924,951	1.8%
1880	2,874	104,650	2.7	401,441	17,392,099	2.3
1890	4,623	147,269	3.1	582,807	23,318,183	2.5
1900	7,249	163,858	4.4	794,663	29,073,233	2.7
1910	10,179	223,713	4.6	1,121,939	37,370,794	3.0
1920	15,106	265,666	5.7	1,485,336	42,433,535	3.5
1930	23,065	333,573	6.9	2,089,251	48,829,920	4.3
1940	29,130	316,659	9.2	3,845,000	53,299,000	7.8
1950	43,838	359,060	12.2	5,495,690	59,071,655	9.3
1960	48,619	331,156	14.7	7,860,565	64,639,256	12.2
1970	60,666	318,311	18.9	12,320,637	76,553,599	16.1

SOURCES: For San Francisco, city directories, municipal reports, state Blue Books and census reports; for the nation, census reports and Alba M. Edwards, *Comparative Occupational Statistics for the United States 1870 to 1940* (1943).

* Includes local, state and federal employment.

TABLE 3. THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND ETHNIC EMPLOYMENT: 1870 AND 1900

Country of Birth, 1870; Parents' Country of Birth and Race, 1900	Public Employment ¹ (N)	1870 Total Employment* (N)	Percent Public	Public Employment* (N)	1900 Total Employment* (N)	Percent Public
United States, White	995	20,071	5.0%	2,098	31,280	6.7%
United States, Black	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	5	878	0.6
Ireland	265	15,613	1.7	2,551	34,807	7.3
Germany	106	9,392	1.1	717	26,931	2.7
Great Britain	75	4,015	1.9	619	13,043	4.7
China	5	9,828	0.1	48	12,626	0.4
Scandinavia	13	1,433	0.9	167	8,175	2.0
Canada	29	991	2.9	144	3,145	4.6
Italy	3	1,079	0.3	51	5,049	1.0
Other Foreign	89	5,089	1.7	850	23,223	3.7
ALL	1,580	67,511	2.3%	7,249	159,155	4.6%

SOURCES: City directories, municipal reports, state Blue Books and census reports.

* These are estimated totals. Agricultural pursuits have been excluded from the workforce totals, accounting for the slight discrepancies between these figures and those reported in Table 2.

(2) Elite Mobility — White-Collar Employment in the Public Versus Private Sectors: In 1870 the public sector, though a very small component of the local economy, was more highly weighted with white-collar jobs than the private sector. White-collar jobs comprised nearly two-thirds of government employment compared to slightly over one-quarter of private employment. But by 1900 the two occupational structures were far more congruent. White-collar jobs then comprised under one-half of public employment compared to over one-third of private employment.

From the perspective of the city's working-class ethnic groups this developmental pattern was doubly ironic. Most in need of avenues of economic advancement in 1870, they encountered limited, though largely white-collar, public employment opportunities. In the next thirty years the public sector would double in relative size. Yet, the newer jobs were largely of a blue-collar sort, at the navy shipyard and the city Public Works Department, thereby offering proportionately fewer opportunities for upward social mobility.

To what extent were *some* immigrants able to take advantage of white-collar patronage? Table 4 displays ethnic employment rates, 1870 and 1900, for white-

and blue-collar strata in the public and private sectors. In 1870 government was largely a Yankee preserve. The native born held nearly two-thirds of all governmental posts in that year, dominating both white- and blue-collar strata. Among the foreign born, the English-speaking immigrants were beginning to achieve parity. While the Irish, Canadians, and English were well represented in public (and white-collar) employment, the non-English speaking groups, whether middle-class Germans or working-class Italians, Scandinavians, and Chinese, were still highly underrepresented in public, particularly white-collar, posts.

By 1900 the Irish had doubled their share of governmental jobs (from 17 to 35 percent) and were highly overrepresented at both white- and blue-collar levels. Other ethnic groups, though, had improved their position only marginally. The English and Canadians continued to be equally well represented in both sectors, particularly with respect to white-collar work. Working-class Scandinavians and Italians still received less than one-half their expected shares of public jobs, while Blacks and Chinese fared even worse, securing respectively only 17 percent and 8 percent of their predicted quotas of government posts.

(3) Additional Mobility Opportunities — Capital Improvement Programs, Franchises, and “Unofficial” Patronage: The public payroll was not the only resource available to immigrants since city contracts, especially for capital improvements, and franchises afforded additional opportunities. One can gauge the magnitude of capital improvement allocations by comparing expenditures for schools, hospitals, parks, playgrounds, sewers, water supply and utility systems with those for salaries.

In 1880 over half of the city-county budget of nearly five million dollars went for salaries. The remainder was divided rather evenly between capital improvements and supplies and expenses.²⁸ In 1890, after ten years of Irish rule, the city budget remained under five million dollars. However, the proportion devoted to capital improvements had decreased (to 19 percent).²⁹ Boss rule in San Francisco then, was marked by fiscal conservatism. By 1900, though, after a decade of reform, city expenditures had increased 10 percent, to \$5.6 million. Salaries now comprised over 60 percent of the budget, and capital improvement allocations had fallen under 10 percent.³⁰ This twenty-year pattern of marginal increases in public expenditures, under both boss and reform rule, coupled with increasing allocations for salaries and decreasing allocations for capital projects had clear consequences for immigrant economic progress. It underscored the importance, albeit rather limited, of public jobs relative to capital improvement employment opportunities.

After the turn of the century — after the period, then, when immigrant needs were greatest and the largest Irish political and economic successes were scored — the city, under ethnic and labor leadership, embarked on its program to make San Francisco the “Paris of North America.” Between 1900 and 1910, municipal expenditures rose threefold, from \$5.6 to \$17.4 million. The proportion allocated for salaries fell from 62 to 43 percent and the capital improvement share rose from under 10 percent to nearly 40 percent.³¹ The major beneficiaries of these projects were those working in the building trades or in the ranks of casual labor. Though union leadership in the building trades was heavily Irish, rank and file membership was not. In 1900 less than one-quarter of the industry was first or second generation Irish, the same proportion as for the entire labor force. On the other hand, fully 40 percent of the city’s unskilled laborers were Irish. Though many of these

²⁸ San Francisco Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco Municipal Reports, 1880–81* (San Francisco: Hinton, 1881), pp. 491–556.

²⁹ *Municipal Reports, 1890–91* (San Francisco: Hinton, 1891), pp. 720–54.

³⁰ *Municipal Reports, 1900–01* (San Francisco: Hinton, 1901), pp. 185–230.

³¹ *Municipal Reports, 1910–11* (San Francisco: Neal, 1912), pp. 1–75.

TABLE 4. ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT, BY OCCUPATIONAL STRATA, 1870 AND 1900

Country of Birth, 1870; Parents' Country of Birth and Race, 1900	1870 PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT			1870 PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT			PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION*		
	White Collar %	Blue Collar %	All %	White Collar %	Blue Collar %	All %	White Collar	Blue Collar	All
United States, White	67.1%	55.5%	63.0%	42.6%	23.6%	28.9%	1.58	2.35	2.18
United States, Black	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Ireland	11.2	26.2	16.8	12.0	27.7	23.3	0.93	0.95	0.72
Germany	6.8	6.5	6.7	21.3	11.2	14.1	0.32	0.58	0.48
Great Britain	5.1	4.1	4.8	6.2	5.9	6.0	0.82	0.69	0.80
China	0.5	0.3	0.3	4.4	19.0	14.9	0.11	—	0.02
Scandinavia	0.2	1.9	0.8	1.3	2.5	2.2	0.15	0.76	0.36
Canada	2.4	0.9	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.5	2.00	0.53	1.20
Italy	0.3	—	0.2	2.4	1.3	1.6	0.13	—	0.13
Other Foreign	6.0	5.0	5.6	8.6	7.2	7.6	0.70	0.70	0.74
All (N)	100.0 (996)	100.0 (584)	100.0 (1,580)	100.0 (18,569)	100.0 (47,362)	100.0 (65,931)			

Country of Birth, 1870; Parents' Country of Birth and Race, 1900	1900 PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT			1900 PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT			PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION*		
	White Collar % (N)	Blue Collar % (N)	All % (N)	White Collar % (N)	Blue Collar % (N)	All % (N)	White Collar	Blue Collar	All
United States, White	36.6%	21.8%	28.9%	26.3%	15.1%	19.2%	1.39	1.44	1.51
United States, Black	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.8	0.6	0.33	0.13	0.17
Ireland	25.7	44.0	35.2	16.7	23.9	21.2	1.54	1.84	1.66
Germany	10.1	9.7	9.9	21.2	15.0	17.3	0.48	0.65	0.57
Great Britain	8.6	8.5	8.5	9.0	7.7	8.2	0.96	1.10	1.04
China	1.3	0.1	0.7	4.9	10.2	8.3	0.27	0.01	0.08
Scandinavia	1.1	3.5	2.3	2.1	7.1	5.3	0.52	0.49	0.43
Canada	2.9	1.1	2.0	2.5	1.7	2.0	1.16	0.65	1.00
Italy	0.7	0.7	0.7	3.0	3.4	3.3	0.23	0.21	0.21
Other Foreign	13.0	10.6	11.7	14.0	15.2	14.7	0.93	0.70	0.80
All (N)	100.0 (3,498)	100.0 (3,751)	100.0 (7,249)	100.0 (55,641)	100.0 (96,265)	100.0 (151,906)			

SOURCES: See Tables 1 and 2.

* Proportion in public employment divided by proportion in private employment.

laboring jobs were dependent upon capital expenditures, they were not a channel for group economic progress.³²

It is virtually impossible to estimate the magnitude and distribution of “unofficial” patronage. One can, however, analyze ethnic employment patterns for those concerns doing business with or franchised by the city. In 1900 the Irish were *not* overrepresented on private utility and street railroad payrolls — contrary to what one would expect if such jobs had represented an important political resource.³³ Their political significance undoubtedly increased immediately after the turn of the century, as civil service reforms protected increased numbers of municipal workers. As early as 1910, though, nonpartisanship and the direct primary system, at both municipal and state levels, had begun to weaken the party system and there was much less organizational incentive to expand and systematize these extra-governmental employment opportunities.

POLITICAL STRATEGIES, PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT, AND “INDIRECT” SOCIAL MOBILITY

Perhaps the economic benefits of ethnic politics were even more indirect. The Irish takeover of City Hall well may have affected private as well as public sector opportunities. How, though, might one gauge these sorts of possibilities? An argument can be made that those ethnic groups with high rates of both electoral mobilization³⁴ and of municipal officeholding (since critical patronage decisions would be made by those in top elective posts elected by aroused ethnic constituencies) should have displayed higher public employment rates and, perhaps, higher rates of social mobility compared to less politically energetic groups.

Table 5 shows for the city's major ethnic groups the relationships between electoral mobilization, municipal officeholding, public employment, and social mobility (measured by the change in the proportion of white-collar workers, 1870–1900, and by the change in mean occupational status, a measure designed to capture blue-collar mobility as well). As expected, public employment allocations were highly dependent upon mass political activity and elite influence. Yet, there was no simple relationship between public and private sector progress. Ethnic groups such as the Irish with great political clout hardly made greater strides than groups such as the Chinese that eschewed (or were forced to eschew) political activity.

SAN FRANCISCO AND THE IRISH POWER THESIS: A RECAPITULATION

As far as San Francisco is concerned, the analysis generally supports Dahl's argument — with one important exception. (1) Compared to their brethren in the East, the Bay Area Irish moved rather rapidly from working-class to middle-class status. Their rate of economic progress was matched by the Chinese but was not shared by working-class Italians, Scandinavians and Blacks. (2) They secured a disproportionate share of public sector resources — especially public jobs, more im-

³² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Special Reports: Occupations at the Twelfth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), Table 43, pp. 720–25.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ A three-factor Index of Electoral Mobilization, capturing voter registration, turnout and bloc voting, was calculated for each ethnic group. The Irish index score for the 1890s, for example, was determined in this fashion: .70 (percentage of the Irish adult male workforce naturalized and registered to vote) \times .83 (average turnout in predominantly Irish Assembly Districts for presidential and gubernatorial contests) \times 1+.19 (one added to the average percentage “disparity” between the Irish and citywide Democratic vote) = 0.691. Local officeholding rates were a ratio of an ethnic group's proportion of elective municipal officeholders — mayor, supervisors, and department heads — relative to its proportion of the male workforce. Public employment rates captured the degree of ethnic representation relative to employment in the private sector. Regarding the occupational measures, see Table 1.

TABLE 5. "POLITICAL" PREDICTORS OF PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND OF CHANGES IN OCCUPATIONAL ATTAINMENTS: SAN FRANCISCO'S MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS, 1870-1900

“Political” Predictors	PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS (r)					White Collar Percent- age Change, 1870-1900*	Mean Occupa- tional Change, 1870-1900*
	PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT						
	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s			
<i>Electoral Mobilization*</i>							
1870s88	.91	.83	.77	.20	.01	
1880s29	.69	.85	.32	.23	
1890s81	.90	.25	.11	
<i>Municipal Officeholding*</i>							
1870s73	.82	.81	.77	.21	.15	
1890s76	.77	.05	.23	
<i>Public Employment*</i>							
1870s32	.02	
1880s20	.12	
1890s34	.12	

SOURCES: Electoral Mobilization Components—voter registration, turnout and bloc voting—secured from the annual reports of the Registrar of Voters and from the city's leading newspapers. Names of elected municipal officeholders secured from *San Francisco Municipal Reports, 1909-10* (1911), "List of Public Officers of the City and County of San Francisco, 1856-1910," pp. 1282-1435. Ethnic backgrounds supplied by newspaper articles and voter registration rolls. Public employment, see Table 3. Changes in occupational attainments, see Table 1.

* For a discussion of how these measures were constructed see footnote 34.

portant than capital project employment opportunities until after the turn of the century. They were not strategically placed, however, to take significant advantage of capital improvement possibilities (increasing after 1900) or of "unofficial" patronage prospects (important for a brief time after the turn of the century). Significantly, government was a greater employer of white-collar workers than were private sector concerns (an advantage that would decrease over the years) and the Irish (and Yankees) exploited these limited opportunities.³⁵ (3) Other immigrant groups were less rewarded politically, though English-speaking groups fared better than non-English-speaking groups. (4) More generally, ethnic political strategies at the local level affected the allocation of public jobs in the years before civil service reform; they bore little relationship, however, to overall economic progress.

(5) Yet, contrary to Dahl's argument, there remains considerable question whether politics served as a *major* no less *critical* conduit of Irish movement into the middle class. When judged by late twentieth-century standards, the public sector of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a rather limited phenomenon, even in patronage-rich localities such as San Francisco. In 1900, for example, government employed only 6 percent of all Bay Area white-collar workers and only nine percent of Irish professional, managerial and clerical workers. Government employment and mobility opportunities would be significantly greater for later arriving Blacks. In 1970, one-third of all employed Blacks in the San Francisco-Oakland metropolitan area were on the public payroll, compared to 7 percent of the Irish in 1900. Furthermore, over one-half of all Black professionals and managers and over 40 percent of all Black clerical workers were in the public sector, compared to less than 10 percent of the Irish in an earlier era.³⁶ Whether the public sector was of sufficient "critical mass" to demonstrably speed Irish economic progress in the Bay Area, it would be so for Blacks in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

³⁵ For an analysis of how the Irish held on to public jobs in the twentieth century, see Frederick M. Wirt, *Power in the City: Decision Making in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 222-27.

³⁶ For a less optimistic assessment of the role of the local public sector in aiding Black economic fortunes, see Wirt, *Power in the City*, pp. 250-71. But see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 1970* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), Volume 1, Part 6, Table 173, pp. 1684-89.

SAN FRANCISCO IN URBAN AND NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

To what extent are these conclusions generalizable to other large cities and the nation as a whole? Table 6 examines the relationship between the public sector and Irish occupational mobility, 1870–1900, for the nation as a whole, for the major cities (over 100,000 population in 1870), for San Francisco and New Haven in particular, and for small towns and rural areas. It suggests that the San Francisco pattern was generalizable to the big cities outside New England but much less so everywhere else. Nowhere, however, does it appear that Irish control of urban political machinery more than marginally affected group economic progress.

TABLE 6. THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND IRISH OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY, 1870–1900: THE NATION, MAJOR CITIES, SAN FRANCISCO, NEW HAVEN, SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Major Cities (N-14)*</i>	<i>San Francisco</i>	<i>New Haven</i>	<i>Small Towns & Rural Areas</i>
Proportion of Labor Force in Public Sector†					
1870	1.8%	2.4%‡	2.4%	2.4%	1.5%
1900	2.7	3.9	4.6	4.2	2.2
Proportion of Labor Force of Irish Parentage§					
1870	12.3	21.3	22.1	28.8	9.8
1900	11.4	19.4	21.5	31.2	8.7
Proportion of Public Employees of Irish Parentage**					
1870	6.2	11.3	16.3	5.7	2.5
1900	12.5	30.2	35.2	30.9	8.3
Percentage Public Employees Irish/Percentage Labor Force Irish					
1870	0.50	0.53	0.74	0.20	0.26
1900	1.10	1.56	1.66	0.99	0.95
Proportion of Irish Workers in White Collar Jobs					
1870	10.1	11.8	14.5	6.4	9.1
1900	22.7	26.6	29.3	19.0	19.7
Irish White Collar Percentage Change 1870–1900					
Unadjusted	12.6	14.8	14.8	12.6	10.6
Adjusted for Changes in Overall Occupational Structure††	6.2	6.0	7.1	7.6	5.2

SOURCES: 1870 and 1900 federal census reports.

* Comprises all cities with a population greater than 100,000 in 1870: New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, St. Louis, Chicago, Baltimore, Boston, Cincinnati, New Orleans, San Francisco, Buffalo, Washington, D.C., Newark and Louisville. Brooklyn became a borough of New York in the late 1890s.

† Percentage of the labor force working for government or engaged in "public" occupations, e.g., teaching.

‡ Excludes Washington, D.C. Based upon the more complete public employment information for the nation and for San Francisco, the 1870 estimate has been increased by 20%, the 1900 estimate, by 50%.

§ Non-agricultural labor force only. The Irish comprised 7.6% of all gainfully employed in 1870.

** For 1870, percentage of public employees born in Ireland; for 1900, percentage born in Ireland or of parents born in Ireland.

†† Percentage increase in proportion of total labor force in white-collar jobs 1870–1900 subtracted from Irish white-collar percentage change.

San Francisco was representative of big cities nationally in at least four critical respects: the proportion of the labor force employed by government, the percentage of public servants born in Ireland (for 1870) or born of Irish parents (for 1900), the Irish proportion of the labor force, and the thirty-year change in the proportion

of Irish white-collar workers. In two important ways the Bay Area was a more favorable case for the thesis than were New England cities such as New Haven. An Irish middle class developed earlier and more extensively outside New England, and the Irish were more successful in securing public employment at an earlier date in big cities in other regions. In 1870 the San Francisco Irish held nearly three-quarters of their expected share of public jobs. In the big cities they held one-half their quota; in New Haven (and in Boston and Providence) they held only one-fifth their share. By 1900 the Irish were highly overrepresented in public jobs in San Francisco and in other large cities; in the Northeast, however, they were just approaching parity.

Despite the impressive Irish political and economic performance in the big cities, there is little evidence that Irish political clout dramatically improved group economic prospects. In the fourteen largest cities, where over 40 percent of the nation's Irish lived in 1900, the proportion of Celtic white-collar workers rose from 12 to 27 percent; outside the big cities it rose from 9 to 20 percent. Much of this difference, however, could be attributed to the greater increase in the number of big city white-collar workers. Controlling for these structural differences, the Irish "net" white-collar increase in the big cities, where public resources and Irish political activity were greater, was about the same as elsewhere — 6.0 percent compared to 5.2 percent.

There is even less evidence that the Irish were able to use politics to move from working-class to middle-class status in jurisdictions outside the big cities and in the nation as a whole. While the proportion of Irish white-collar workers nationally rose from one in ten to nearly one in four, the Irish were unwilling (or unable) to take advantage of limited public employment opportunities. In 1870 they were underrepresented in public jobs, receiving one-half their expected share; they were even more underrepresented in white-collar posts — as administrators and officials (46 percent of their expected share), clerks (36 percent), and teachers (16 percent). In 1900 they still were underrepresented in white-collar government positions and significantly overrepresented in blue-collar public jobs, holding 80 percent of their share of administrative and teaching posts and 231 percent of their quota of police and fire jobs.

The survey findings, then, corroborate the conclusions from the San Francisco case study, though only for other major cities, particularly outside the Northeast. The Irish did make substantial political and economic strides in the big cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; however, their economic progress was as great in smaller towns and rural areas, where they were less strong politically, where public resources were even more meagre, and where the Irish were far less rewarded with public (especially white collar) jobs.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Perhaps future research will make the case for the causal connections between Irish political and economic progress that this analysis was unable to make owing to methodological limitations. First, an individual level of study of ethnic social mobility in the public and private sectors of a major city might show that politics was more important for group economic progress than the aggregate analysis has suggested.³⁷ It may not have been the sheer number of public sector jobs that mat-

³⁷ As footnote 25 indicates, the author presently is studying the changing occupational fortunes, 1880 to 1900, of 1,000 San Francisco workers. The 1880 manuscript census schedules, from which the sample was drawn, contain the following information about each of the city's residents: name, place of residence, race, sex, age, relationship to the household head, marital status, occupation, place of birth, parents' place of birth, ability to read and/or speak English, and extent unemployed during the preceding year. Because a simple random sampling procedure would yield relatively few government employees, a disproportionate, stratified "mixed" — random and cluster — technique was employed.

tered, but how they intersected individual (and family) career cycles — for they might have come at critical career junctures, affording subsequent intra- and inter-generational mobility opportunities. Second, studies of ethnic public employment and social mobility patterns could be extended into the twentieth century. However, the data collection difficulties are formidable, as the census discontinued aggregate ethnic occupational breakdowns after the turn of the century.

Finally, assuming that these conclusions are generalizable to the individual level and to the twentieth century, further research is needed outlining their significance vis-à-vis the new minorities. In the pre-New Deal era, Irish electoral strategies only marginally could further group economic progress because of the relative lack of public sector resources (see Table 2). Notwithstanding contemporary political folklore,³⁸ there is reason to believe that (1) due to the rapid increase in the responsibilities and relative size of the public sector since the New Deal, there is much greater economic incentive for present-day Blacks to engage in electoral politics (though national and presidential rather than local and legislative) than there was for earlier generations of Irish; and that (2) Blacks have responded to this incentive pattern to the extent that the development of a Black middle class is far more dependent upon public employment than the development of an Irish middle class ever was.

(1) The massive movement of Blacks from the rural South to the urban North (where Black votes would become increasingly pivotal in Democratic presidential politics), 1930 to 1970, occurred at a time of rapidly increasing governmental responsibilities — in the form of New Deal relief, recovery and reform measures in the 1930s, defense and national security policies from the 1940s onward, and after World War II, augmented state and local services, particularly in the fields of education, health and transportation, to meet the needs of a growing urban and suburban population. Thus, the proportion of the civilian workforce employed by government has increased from 4.3 percent in 1930 to 18.0 percent in 1975. Furthermore, the development of affirmative action programs directed at the private as well as public sectors would provide additional potential rewards for political involvement by Blacks.

Workers were stratified on the basis of sector. Private sector employees then were randomly selected. Public sector workers, however, were over-sampled and chosen by a cluster approach. Sets of census folio pages were selected randomly, and all government workers listed therein were included. Because of the bearing of the individual level study upon the argument advanced here, a brief discussion of (1) the rationale and (2) stage of the analysis and preliminary findings is in order.

(1) The aggregate analysis suggests that Irish economic progress was aided only marginally by public sector resources, largely because of their relative paucity during the period of greatest economic need. However, the analysis may have underestimated both the (a) magnitude and (b) function of public sector economic opportunities. (a) Unofficial patronage, contracts and franchises may have been even more evident before the turn of the century than this study suggests. (b) Regardless of magnitude, public sector opportunities may have served as a temporary yet pivotal springboard during the early phases of careers. The individual level study allows one to assess these possibilities. Using age, sex and ethnic cohorts, one can determine relative rates of intra- and inter-generational occupational mobility for three categories of workers: public employees, private sector employees working for firms doing business with or franchised by government, and all other private sector workers.

(2) While the data only are being coded at this date, patterns broadly consistent with the aggregate analysis have emerged from the data collection phase. First, public sector Irish and non-Irish do not appear to have been significantly more upwardly mobile than their privately employed counterparts (age and sex controls, however, remain to be introduced). Second, Irish public sector gains may not have been readily passed on to the next generation, for a sizable number of Celtic public servants were (and remained) unmarried school teachers. Third, both Irish and non-Irish government workers, however, were far less geographically mobile than private sector workers. Fully one-third of all public employees could be traced over the twenty-year period compared to one-fifth of those in the private sector.

³⁸ See footnote 19.

(2) Blacks have responded to this changing reward pattern. In 1900 government employed only 3 percent of the labor force and 5 percent of all first and second generation Irish. In 1975 nearly 25 percent of all employed Blacks were in the public sector compared to 16 percent of employed whites. Furthermore, the Black middle class is far more dependent upon public employment than either the earlier Irish or contemporary white middle classes. In 1900 less than 8 percent of all Celtic white-collar workers nationwide were employed by government. In 1970, though, 52 percent of all Black professionals and managers worked in the public sector compared to 28 percent of similarly situated whites.³⁹

While additional research is needed comparing the economic progress of “old” and “new” ethnic groups in the public relative to the private sector, it is becoming evident that Blacks to a significantly greater extent than the Irish will conform to the “political” model of ethnic social mobility.

³⁹ See U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, *Minorities and Women in State and Local Government 1973* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. ix; U.S. Civil Service Commission, *Minority Group Employment in the Federal Government* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), pp. iii–iv; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), Volume 1, Part 1, Section 2, Table 225, pp. 749–57, Table 238, pp. 806–13; ———, *Public Employment in 1975* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976).