

Employment gains by minorities, women in large city government, 1976-83

Minorities and white women made significant gains in upper-level city government employment over the 1976-83 period; however, their salaries continued to lag those of white men

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Employment in the public sector has played an important role in the occupational mobility of blacks and, to a lesser extent, women in the United States. Historically, better educated blacks have found more job opportunities and higher pay in the public sector than in the private sector. This was first true for the Federal Government and more recently for State and local governments. More educated women also have preferred jobs and received higher pay in the public sector.¹ However, although it is still important as a source of job opportunity, the public sector may now be less so. Using unique data provided by the U.S. Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), this article analyzes the job gains minorities and women have made in city government in recent years.

In the 1960's and 1970's, both supply and demand conditions favored the growth of minority and female representation in State and local government work forces. State and local governments generated a large fraction of all employment growth during this period. From 1965 to 1975, almost one-fourth of all net new jobs were in State and local governments.² Since then, however, some of the conditions that made local governments a preferred source of job opportunity for minorities and women have changed. The work forces of local governments have

grown very little since 1976, and local government activities have begun to shift from those that created many job opportunities for minorities and women. Still, other factors, such as increases in the share of city labor forces comprised by minorities and women, continue to favor more penetration of local governments by minorities and women.

What is the net result? Have minorities and women increased or decreased their share of local government jobs? This article answers this question for work forces of major U.S. cities for the period 1976 to 1983. The data are from reports submitted annually by State and local governments to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Since 1972, under the provisions of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, State and local governments have been required to report the numbers of employees, classified by function, occupation, salary grade, race, and gender to the Commission.³ The analysis below are based on the reports from a sample of 222 U.S. cities, including all large cities and most of those with large public work forces.⁴ This study ends at 1983 because the data on which it is based are confidential and a unique arrangement was required to obtain access to them. At the time this arrangement was made, 1983 was the most recent year for which data were available.

The analysis shows that, on average, groups other than white men continued to make moderate progress in gaining city government jobs over the study period. However,

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the pace of progress was slower than in earlier years. The gains were relatively fewer at the upper end of the salary distribution than at the lower end, and fewer in city governments whose overall work forces were not growing than in those with expanding work forces. In the next section, some of the factors likely to effect changes in the racial and gender mix of city government work forces are discussed.

Economic and political influences

Both demand and supply factors should be important in determining the composition of workers in city government jobs. The mix of services a local government provides affects the demand for different groups of workers because particular types of workers are preferred for particular types of jobs. The relative supply of each group of potential employees also influences the number of jobs each group holds.

On the demand side, social service and antipoverty programs historically have offered more job opportunities for minorities and women than have other activities of government such as police and fire protection, and sanitation.⁵ Although black men have made progress in the protective services occupational category, as is discussed below, it is the functional categories of social services, health, and welfare that have generated the most jobs for minorities and women overall. Many social service programs serve minority populations and are or were financed and overseen by the Federal Government. In a number of cases, antipoverty programs carried explicit or implicit directives for hiring minorities and women. Expenditures on social programs grew substantially in Federal and city budgets during the 1960's and early 1970's, but then declined as a fraction of all city expenditures from about 7 percent in 1975 to 6 percent in 1982.

On the supply side, blacks, Hispanics, and women have continued to increase their shares of the local labor force in major U.S. cities. This should work to increase the share of city government jobs held by blacks, Hispanics, and women, all other things equal. Between 1970 and 1980, blacks increased their share of local labor forces by 3.5 percentage points, from 15 to 18.5 percent. Hispanics increased their share by a little less than 2 percentage points, from 5.8 to 7.5 percent, and women increased their share by about 6 percentage points from 40.4 to 46.3 percent.

Further, increases in the overall level of demand for labor by the city government should increase not only the number but also the share of jobs held by minorities and women, if minorities and women show a relatively greater preference than white men for city government jobs, or there is a greater excess supply of minorities and women for city government jobs. The reverse is true for decreases in overall demand. There is reason to believe that blacks and women have a relatively greater preference for city government jobs, compared with white men. Blacks and

women of comparable education and experience earn more on average in the public sector than in the private sector. Further, blacks and women often appear to prefer jobs in the public sector over those in the private sector.⁶ This may be due to a history of greater access to the public sector and less discrimination in salary because of more formalized pay scales, and it may be due to a relative preference for government jobs.

Total employment in the sample city governments increased very slightly, about 1.5 percent between 1976 and 1981, and then declined by about 2.5 percent from 1981 to 1983. The net change between 1976 and 1983 was a decline of slightly more than 1 percent. Three factors suggest that this demand change would increase shares of blacks and women slightly between 1976 and 1981 and then halt or reverse this increase after 1981, all other things equal. The first is the relative difference in preference or excess supply noted above. The second is that minorities and women tend to be more recent hires. With lower seniority, they will be more likely to lose jobs during reductions in employment. Finally, job opportunities are scarce, and it is likely to be more difficult to redistribute job opportunities to minorities and women when the overall number of jobs is not growing.

Beyond supply and demand conditions in the labor market, political and regulatory factors affect city government hiring. City governments depend on support from their constituents and from State and Federal governments. Hiring practices can influence political support for the city government.

Political and regulatory factors have worked toward an increase in jobs for minorities and women. Greater numbers of minorities now hold elected office in city government, and minorities are a large and more cohesive political force in many cities than they previously were.⁷ Too, the Federal Government has been involved in antidiscrimination efforts through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Federal courts to increase the hiring of minorities and women in city government.⁸

Because little growth has occurred in city government employment recently, changing economic and political conditions will affect the race and gender distribution of jobs primarily through turnover. The rate of job turnover in city governments has declined. In 1976, the ratio of new hires during the year to total employees in the city governments was 12 percent in the sample cities. By 1983, the ratio had fallen to 9 percent. Combined with slow or negative employment growth, this lower turnover means that, over the observed sample period, the existing distribution of jobs probably changed more slowly than in earlier years in response to the changing political circumstances.

Employment gains and losses

Some of the economic and political changes described above should increase the share of city government jobs

that minorities and women hold while others should decrease that share. How then did minorities and women fare in city government employment over the study period? The answer to that question is presented in table 1, which reports the percentage of jobs held, by gender and race, in total full-time city work forces and in upper level occupational and salary categories for the years 1976, 1981, and 1983. The numbers refer to full-time employees aggregated across all city functions.⁹ Table 1 also presents separate estimates for protective services employees, who are primarily police and firefighters, because they hold jobs that are visible and considered prestigious, and because there has been disproportionate antidiscrimination activity regarding access to these occupations.¹⁰ The top-salary category reported in these data represents employees earning \$25,000 or more in 1983 dollars.¹¹

Redistribution of jobs took place during the sample period as the share of jobs held by white men in total city work forces and in every individual job category declined from 1976 to 1983. All groups other than white men increased their share of jobs in the total work force and in almost all of the individual job categories. The gains for all of the groups other than white men in almost all occupational categories were less between 1981 and 1983 than between 1976 and 1981, even after adjusting for the different length of time. The slowdown in advancement in the later period is consistent with the cessation of growth of employment, as discussed above.

Except for white men, black men had the greatest share of total city government jobs and top salary jobs, but gained the least of any group during the sample period. Black men did gain noticeably in protective service occupations. They also gained in the top salary grades of the officials and administrators category by a small amount. However, there was a loss of similar size in black men's share of jobs in the top salary grades for all occupations. Black men had a substantially smaller share of top salary jobs than of all jobs, although their representation in top salary jobs was better than their representation among professionals and officials and administrators.

Black women appear to have gained more than any of the other groups. They increased their share of total city government jobs, official and administrator jobs, and professional jobs during both the 1976-81 and the 1981-83 periods. The increase was relatively large for official and administrator jobs, and was about the same as the gain made by white women. By the end of the sample period, black women had about the same proportion of official and administrator jobs as black men. As was the case for black men, black women did not make progress in top salary jobs aggregated across all occupations, but did make slight progress in top salary official and administrator jobs.

Hispanic men increased their share of total city government jobs and protective services jobs by an amount

Table 1. Percent representation of selected demographic groups in city government 1976-83

Category	1976	1981	1983
White men:			
Total work force	55.1	49.6	48.8
Officials and administrators	75.3	64.4	62.5
Professionals	55.8	49.4	48.1
Protective services workers	82.6	75.8	73.1
Top salary — officials	78.4	74.1	71.4
Top salary — all occupations	76.8	74.1	72.0
White women:			
Total work force	13.0	13.4	13.7
Officials and administrators	10.3	15.3	15.9
Professionals	21.2	22.6	23.2
Protective services workers	2.0	3.2	3.9
Top salary — officials	8.2	10.7	12.1
Top salary — all occupations	5.1	6.6	7.5
Black men:			
Total work force	16.3	17.2	17.3
Officials and administrators	8.1	8.0	8.2
Professionals	7.0	7.6	7.3
Protective services workers	10.7	13.3	13.7
Top salary — officials	7.1	7.8	8.2
Top salary — all occupations	11.0	10.6	10.2
Black women:			
Total work force	8.7	10.3	10.6
Officials and administrators	3.3	8.3	8.8
Professionals	9.4	11.3	11.5
Protective services workers	1.0	2.0	2.6
Top salary — officials	2.5	3.6	3.9
Top salary — all occupations	2.4	2.4	2.6
Hispanic men:			
Total work force	4.3	5.0	5.6
Officials and administrators	2.0	2.2	2.4
Professionals	2.1	2.7	2.7
Protective services workers	3.2	4.8	5.6
Top salary — officials	1.8	2.3	2.6
Top salary — all occupations	3.0	3.7	4.6
Hispanic women:			
Total work force	1.2	1.6	1.9
Officials and administrators .....	.3	.8	.9
Professionals	1.1	1.6	1.9
Protective services workers .....	.1	.3	.4
Top salary — officials .....	.2	.4	.6
Top salary — all occupations .....	.2	.3	.5

NOTE: "Top salary" represents earnings of \$25,000 or more in 1983 dollars.
SOURCE: Author's tabulations from EEO-4 Reports for 222 sample cities.
See text footnote 3.

comparable to the increase for black men in these two categories. Hispanic women had a very small share of city government jobs, although there was some small increase in all occupational categories.

White women, by comparison, gained less in total city government jobs than did black men, black women, or Hispanic men. Nonetheless, their share of jobs in the upper level occupations, especially in the officials and administrators category, grew quite significantly.

Although the proportion of city government employees who are black and Hispanic grew slightly from 1981 to 1983, the total number of city government employees fell, so that, on net, the level of employment of blacks and Hispanics declined by about 2 percent. The level of city government employment of whites declined much more, because whites also decreased their share of jobs relative to both blacks and Hispanics.

The major gains appear to be those made by women—white women and black women advanced by a similar

degree in official and administrator jobs, and in professional jobs. The gains made by black and Hispanic men in protective services occupations, and the fact that this is the only occupation in which black men and Hispanic men showed significant gains, is consistent with the focus of affirmative action and political pressure on opening up protective services jobs to minorities.

Table 1 gives the shares of each demographic group of the combined work forces of all the sample cities. The numbers reported in the table are weighted averages—that is cities with larger work forces have more impact on the numbers. Beneath these averages is a substantial variation across the individual cities that make up the sample. In some cities, the share of jobs held by minorities and women decreased significantly over the study period. An unweighted average across the sample cities—that is, an average in which each city counts only once, regardless of the size of its work force—of the change from 1976 to 1983 shows that the average share of total city government jobs held by white men declined 5.1 percentage points, from 60.8 to 55.7 percent, with a standard deviation for the change of 6.1 percentage points. The proportion of white women holding official and administrator jobs increased an average of 3.4 percentage points, from 10.4 to 13.8 percent, but with a standard deviation for the change of 9.0. The average change by black women in the professional occupations was a gain of 1.6 percentage points, from 3.7 to 5.3 percent. The standard deviation of these changes, however, was 4 percentage points. The variation in these changes across cities presumably is due in part to variations across the cities in the political and economic factors discussed earlier. One important factor hypothesized to influence the size of the gains made by nonwhite groups is the degree to which the total city government work force is growing.

The impact of work force growth

As discussed above, we expect cities in which the public work force is growing to show more gains for minorities and women than cities whose work forces are not growing. The evidence on this is mixed, as table 2 shows. The table gives the average change in the share of jobs held, by race and gender, for cities whose work forces grew during the period and for those whose work forces did not grow. In cities with growing work forces, white men lost larger shares of all categories of jobs (except those in top salary categories) than in cities with shrinking work forces. White women increased their share of jobs by a larger amount in cities with growing work forces, with a striking difference in the officials and administrators category.

Black men showed greater gains in cities in which the work force did not grow than in cities with a growing work force. There was, however, a negative association between growth in a city government work force and growth in the share of the local labor pool that was black.¹² The increase

in the black share of the area labor force pool might have overshadowed any effect of the lack of growth in the city work force. The pattern for black women is not consistent across occupational categories. Black women gained a much greater share of official and administrator jobs in cities with growing work forces, but a larger share of professional jobs in cities whose work forces did not grow. Growth of the work force did not seem to influence changes in shares of jobs for Hispanic men or Hispanic women.

Growth of the work force appears to offer some partial explanation of the variation in the gains of blacks and women. Factors such as changes in the composition of the labor force as well as economic and political changes may also help to explain the wide variation across cities.

Table 2. Change in percent representation in the local government work force and in local government employment, by race and gender, 1976-83

Category	Growing work force ¹			Shrinking work force ¹		
	1976	1983	Percentage point change	1976	1983	Percentage point change
White men:						
Total work force	53.6	46.2	-7.4	56.6	52.0	-4.6
Officials and administrators	75.2	58.1	-17.1	75.4	70.3	-5.1
Professionals	52.5	43.8	-8.7	59.0	53.7	-5.3
Protective services workers	83.0	73.0	-10.0	82.2	73.1	-9.1
Top salary jobs	76.3	73.9	-2.4	77.3	70.1	-7.2
White women:						
Total work force	12.9	14.2	1.3	13.2	13.0	-.2
Officials and administrators	10.5	18.1	7.6	11.9	10.1	1.8
Professionals	20.9	24.8	3.9	21.4	21.2	-.2
Protective services workers	1.8	4.0	2.2	2.2	3.7	1.5
Top salary jobs	5.0	7.7	2.7	5.3	7.4	2.1
Black men:						
Total work force	14.9	16.0	1.1	17.7	18.9	1.2
Officials and administrators	7.4	7.2	-.2	8.8	10.1	1.3
Professionals	7.1	6.8	-.3	7.0	8.0	1.0
Protective services workers	9.0	11.5	2.5	12.1	15.9	3.8
Top salary jobs	11.0	9.1	-1.9	11.1	11.4	.3
Black women:						
Total work force	9.7	11.6	1.9	7.7	9.3	1.6
Officials and administrators	3.1	11.2	8.1	3.4	4.4	1.0
Professionals	11.6	13.2	1.6	7.2	9.3	2.1
Protective services workers .....	.8	2.5	1.8	1.2	2.8	1.6
Top salary jobs	2.6	2.8	-.2	2.0	2.7	.7
Hispanic men:						
Total work force	6.3	7.5	1.2	2.4	3.3	1.1
Officials and administrators	2.7	2.8	.1	1.2	1.7	.5
Professionals	2.9	3.3	.4	1.3	1.8	.5
Protective services workers	4.9	7.6	2.7	1.9	3.5	1.6
Top salary jobs	3.6	4.6	1.0	2.4	4.6	2.2
Hispanic women:						
Total work force	1.7	2.6	.9	.8	1.1	.3
Officials and administrators .....	.4	1.3	.9	.2	.3	.1
Professionals	1.5	2.6	1.1	.6	.9	.3
Protective services workers .....	.1	1.7	1.6	.1	.4	.4
Top salary jobs .....	.3	.5	.2	.1	.5	.4

¹ 117 cities had growing work forces, and 104 had shrinking or stagnant work forces.

SOURCE: Author's tabulations from EEO-4 Reports for 222 sample cities. See text footnote 3.

Table 3. Percent representation of selected demographic groups in private sector managerial and professional occupations, 1971-80¹

Category	White men	White women	Black men	Black women	Hispanic men	Hispanic women
Managers:						
1971	69.1	12.1	1.6	.5	1.4	.3
1980	74.5	17.1	2.8	1.2	2.2	.7
Professionals:						
1971	66.3	28.4	1.4	1.5	1.1	.5
1980	55.8	34.1	1.8	2.5	1.4	1.0

¹ Data are averages for those Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas containing the cities selected into the sample described in text footnote 4.

SOURCE: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission *Job Patterns for Minorities in Private Industry*, Reports for 1971 and 1983.

Other indicators

Are the changes in shares of jobs shown in table 1 big or small? Data from earlier years are not available, so these changes cannot be compared to previous periods during which growth in local government employment was more substantial. However, several comparisons can be made to help judge the size of the changes. First, how do the changes in the shares of city government occupations by gender and race compare to the same changes in comparable private sector occupations? And how do changes in shares of city government jobs by race and gender compare to the changes in the composition of the local labor pool? Finally, how do the changes in shares of city government jobs by gender and race compare to changes in the median salaries by the different demographic groups in city government jobs?

Table 3 gives the average shares of managerial and professional jobs in the private sector held by each demographic group in 1971 and 1980 for the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas that contain the sample cities.¹³ The data in table 3 are not completely comparable to the data in table 1. Managers and professionals are the two top occupational categories for the private sector data and, while not exactly the same occupations, offer the closest comparison for the officials and administrators and professional categories in the public sector. The beginning and ending years, and therefore the study period, in the two tables are different.

Blacks hold a much smaller share of upper level jobs in the private sector than in the public sector. Black men gained a greater share of managerial jobs in the private sector than of official and administrator jobs in the public sector, however, even after adjusting for the different length of the study period. Black women, in contrast, increased their share of official and administrator jobs in the public sector by a greater amount than their share of managerial jobs in the private sector. Black women also

increased their share of professional jobs by a much greater amount in the public than in the private sector. The level and the change in representation in upper level jobs of Hispanic men and women were comparable in the public and private sectors.

Table 4 gives the race and gender composition of the relevant local labor forces in the census years 1970 and 1980. As in table 3, the study period does not correspond exactly to the time period in table 1. The changes in labor force share by race and gender over the 10-year period are comparable to the changes in share of the total city government work force over the 7-year period for all groups. Most groups increased labor force and city government work force shares by about 1 percentage point. Black women increased both shares by about 2 percentage points, while white men had a decrease of about 5 percentage points in labor force share and 6 points in city government work force share.

The median salaries for the different race and gender groups in city government employment are shown in table 5. The salaries in the table are not adjusted for inflation. The numbers in parentheses give the ratio of each group's median salary to the median salary of white men in the same occupational group. The reader should look across a row to compare the salaries of the groups, and look down the table to compare the relative position of each group over the time period by occupation or for all occupations. White women had lower median salaries than white men in all categories, although their relative median salaries increased in every category, except officials and administrators.

The median salaries of black men were significantly closer to those of white men in the upper occupations than they were across all occupations. In protective services occupations, the median salary level for black men was practically the same as that for white men. From 1976 to 1983, the relative median salary for black men declined slightly in each category, however, and declined substantially in official and administrator jobs. Black women's

Table 4. Demographic composition of the labor force in major U.S. cities¹

[In percent]

Year	White men	White women	Black men	Black women	Hispanic men	Hispanic women
1970	47.9	31.2	8.1	7.0	3.6	2.2
1980 ²	43.3	33.9	9.2	9.3	4.4	3.1

¹ Data are for the labor force of the sample cities, not the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas containing the sample cities.

² The 1980 total sums to more than 100 percent because in the 1980 Census of Population, persons of Spanish-speaking origin could be of any race. For example, black persons of Spanish-speaking origin could be counted as both black and of Spanish-speaking origin.

SOURCE: U.S. Census of Population, 1970 and 1980, Volume 1: *Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, Bureau of the Census).

Table 5. Median salaries of employees in city government, 1976 and 1983

Category	White men	White women	Black men	Black women	Hispanic men	Hispanic women
All city employees:						
1976	\$14,208	\$9,732 (.68)	\$11,154 (.79)	\$7,481 (.53)	\$6,865 (.48)	\$11,096 (.78)
1983	23,450	17,058 (.72)	18,346 (.78)	15,499 (.66)	18,527 (.79)	15,301 (.65)
Officials and administrators:						
1976	19,223	16,465 (.86)	19,111 (.99)	17,210 (.90)	14,791 (.77)	18,872 (.98)
1983	34,500	26,544 (.76)	30,544 (.88)	22,408 (.65)	31,810 (.92)	23,849 (.69)
Professional workers:						
1976	16,965	13,440 (.79)	14,418 (.85)	13,697 (.81)	13,188 (.78)	15,265 (.90)
1983	28,108	22,724 (.81)	23,066 (.82)	21,978 (.78)	24,546 (.87)	21,290 (.76)
Protective services workers:						
1976	14,869	11,615 (.78)	14,270 (.96)	11,322 (.76)	14,026 (.94)	11,258 (.76)
1983	24,200	21,159 (.87)	22,555 (.93)	19,455 (.80)	23,716 (.98)	21,563 (.89)

NOTE: The numbers in parentheses are the ratios of the particular median salary to the white male median salary in that row.

SOURCE: Author's tabulations from EEO-4 Reports for 222 sample cities.

relative median salaries were much lower than those of black men, but they did increase overall from 1976 to 1983. As with black men, black women's relative median salaries in official and administrator jobs declined, and the decline was more severe than that for black men.

Hispanic men significantly increased their relative median salaries overall from 1976 to 1983, and in the top occupations, their salaries were close to those of white men. The relative median salary of Hispanic women declined in all categories, except protective services.

The decline in the relative median salaries of white, black, and Hispanic women officials and administrators may reflect their recent increased entry into these jobs, as table 1 indicates. We cannot use this explanation for the decline in relative median salaries of black men, however, because black men did not gain shares in these jobs over the period.

Conclusion

The public sector continues to employ relatively more blacks and women in upper level jobs than does the private sector. While the share of total city government jobs held by groups other than white men continued to increase over the entire 1976-83 period, the increase was smaller among the highest paying jobs than overall. One reason for the smaller penetration of the top salary jobs may be that minorities and women are still relatively recent entrants to higher level occupations, and it will take time for them to rise to the top of these occupations. This explanation seems more plausible for white women and black women than for black men, because these women are moving into upper occupations to a greater degree than are black men.

The trends in the factors that have affected the employment patterns reported here should continue. City governments are not likely to grow as fast in the near future as they did in the 1960's and 1970's. From 1983, the ending date of this study, to 1987, total State and local government employment grew by about 7 percent. However, total employment in all sectors of the economy grew by about 13 percent, so that State and local government declined as a share of total employment, as it has since 1976.¹⁴ Social service and antipoverty program spending is not projected to increase. These two factors will be balanced against a probable increase in the nonwhite share of the population, the electorate, and the labor force in the major U.S. cities. □

FOOTNOTES

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¹See Richard Freeman, *Black Elite: The New Market for Highly Educated Black Americans* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1976), chapter 6; George Peterson, "Finance," in William Gorham and Nathan Glazer, eds., *The Urban Predicament* (Washington, The Urban Institute, 1976); Michael K. Brown and Stephen P. Erie, "Blacks and the Legacy of the Great Society," *Public Policy* 29, Summer 1981, pp. 299-330; and Rebecca Blank, "An Analysis of Workers' Choice Between Employment in the Public and Private Sectors," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, January 1985, pp. 221-24.

²George Peterson, "The State and Local Sector," in John Palmer and Isabell Sawhill, eds., *The Reagan Experiment* (Washington, The Urban Institute, 1982), pp. 157-217.

³The data are referred to as the EEO-4 data because State and local governments record their employment information for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on the EEO-4 form. A set of EEO-4 forms is filed each year with the EEOC by all State governments and a sample of all local (city, town, municipal, and county) governments. All local governments with 100 employees or more are included in the sample survey each year. A different form is filed for each of 15 functional areas listed below in footnote 9. The data used in this article are aggregated across all functions. Further description of the EEO-4 data and a wide array of results from the data are given in *Minorities and Women in State and Local Government, 1974-1984*, Program Research Report, No. 86-104 (Washington, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, July 1986).