

## ASIAN AMERICAN EMPLOYMENT IN THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE

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### ABSTRACT

How is Asian American employment in the federal bureaucracy different from other minority employment? Do Asian American employment patterns differ substantially? This paper examines the ways that agency types, occupational structure, and grade levels (especially the SES) are related to Asian American employment patterns in the federal service. Findings indicate that Asian Americans tend to be doing much better than other minorities at every grade level except the SES. While all minorities are severely underrepresented at the top levels, the drop-off in representation of Asian Americans at the top levels is so much more dramatic than for other minority groups. Occupational structure, however, does not appear to be related to underrepresentation of Asians in the senior executive positions. Further, Asian federal civil servants are likely to be overrepresented in certain regulatory, distributive, and independent agencies, where other minorities are underrepresented. The Senior Executive Service (SES) also shows similar trends as other grade levels with regards to agency types.

### INTRODUCTION

Past studies on minority employment in the civil service indicate that with regards to grades minorities tend to be underrepresented in higher-level grades, while they are overrepresented in lower and middle-level grades (Rosenbloom, 1980; Riccucci and Saidel, 1997); in references to occupations minorities appear to be heavily concentrated in clerical jobs as opposed to professional and administrative jobs (Saltzstein, 1986; Hale and Kelly, 1989; Mladenka, 1989; Kelly, 1993; Cornwell and Kellough, 1994); and with regards to agencies minorities are more likely to be underrepresented in regulatory and distributive

agencies, while they are highly overrepresented in redistributive agencies (Krislov and Rosenbloom, 1981; Newman, 1994; Miller, et al. 1999).

How is Asian American employment in the federal bureaucracy different from other minority employment? Do Asian American employment patterns differ substantially? These research questions are directly related to Asian Americans' perception that Asians have been well employed in the civil service and they are rare in the top positions even though they have a relatively higher education and perform well. Most studies on representative bureaucracy have focused on women, African Americans, or Hispanics and have treated Asian Americans the same as other minorities. (1)

Through an examination of the recent demographic data of the U.S. OPM (Office of Personnel Management), this paper investigates the distribution of grades and occupations of Asian federal employees, as well as representation of Asian Americans in the senior executive positions. This study also analyzes whether agencies that employ high percentages of other minorities in the federal bureaucracy also employ high percentages of Asian Americans. The objective of this study is to empirically examine in what ways Asian Americans are similar to or different from other minorities in their employment patterns, particularly in representation of Asians in the Senior Executive Service (SES). After reviewing the literature on Asian American employment in the federal service, this study will conduct multiple regression analysis concerning Asian senior executives in the federal bureaucracy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Lewis and Kim (1997) pointed out that “over half the Asian males [employed federally] had engineering degrees” (p. 267) and “Asians were more than twice as likely to study engineering as whites of the same sex” (p. 267). Lewis and Kim (1997) also noted that while “white women and blacks who had earned engineering degrees held positions at about the same grades as comparable white men” (p. 268), “Asian men and women lagged 0.3 and 1.3 grades below comparable white men, respectively” (p. 268). Further, Kim and Lewis (1994) indicated that compared to whites of the same sex Asian federal employees with engineering degrees are less successful in advancing to supervisory or managerial authority. In other words, Asian Americans with engineering degrees are likely to remain in lower grades than similarly educated and experienced whites and other minorities in the federal service. Kim (1993) and Kim and Lewis (1994) suggested that while Asian federal employees had a grade distribution much more like that of whites than of other minorities, a large proportion of Asian Americans were found in middle manager positions.

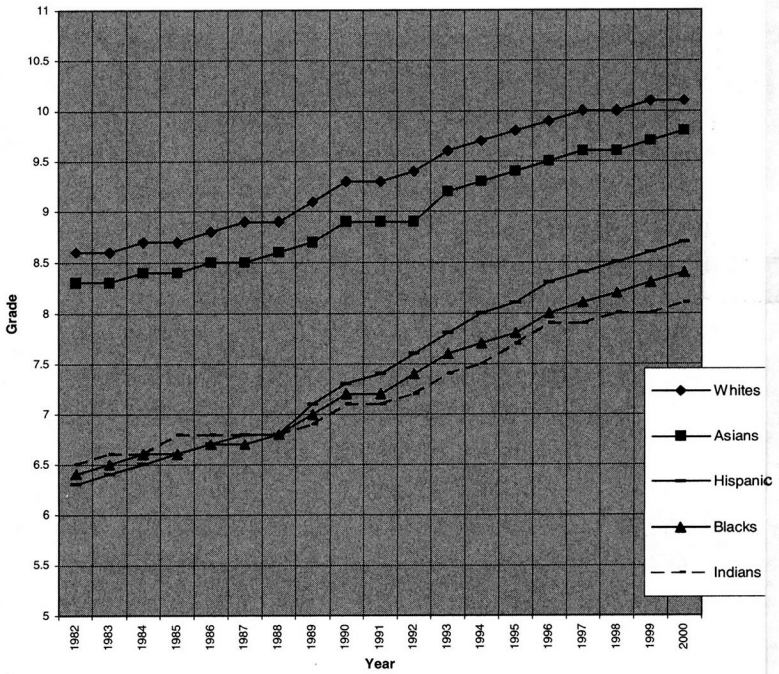
In the U.S. forty-three percent of Asian Americans completed four years of college in 2000, the highest college graduation rate among racial groups (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). Twenty-eight percent of whites, 16.4 percent of African Americans, and 10.6 percent of Hispanics finished four years of college in 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). While Asian and white men appear to have more college education than Asian and white women, other minorities show no significant difference in college graduate rate by gender. Despite the high levels of education, Asian Americans ranked only behind whites in the federal civil service in 2000.

Figure 1 shows that Asian Americans in the federal service tend to be in far higher grades than other minorities but

slightly lower than whites. For the period of 1982-2000, however, the degree of increase pertaining to the average white-collar grade by race and ethnicity was different: African Americans 2; Hispanics 1.8; Native Americans 1.6; and both whites and Asian Americans 1.5, respectively. In regard to the degree of increased average grade, Asian Americans are slower than other minorities. Meanwhile, Table 1 indicates that at all grade levels of the General Schedule (GS) except the Senior Executive Service (SES) Asian representation in the federal civil service matched or exceeded Asian presence in the general population. The representation ratio is the index of a group's percentage in the government to that group's percentage in the general population (for application of this measure, see Nachmias and Rosenbloom, 1973; Kellough, 1990; Meier, 1993; Guajardo, 1996; Riccucci and Saidel, 1997). (2) Although Asian Americans and whites had a similar average grade, whites were two and a half times higher than Asians in the SES representation. By contrast, Hispanics were underrepresented at all levels, and African Americans were heavily concentrated in lower and intermediate level grades. Black females tend to be heavily concentrated in lower-level grades and clerical and technical occupations. Other minority groups appear to be less successful in federal government careers than Asians.

More importantly, Table 1 shows that the representation index for Asian federal employees falls much more dramatically between the GS 13-15 and the SES than it does for any other group. This finding indicates that Asian federal employees in the middle manager positions are less successful in advancing to the senior executive positions. On the one hand, the glass ceiling may apply more severely to Asians in promotion to the SES than to other minorities. On the other hand, Asian Americans may apply at a lower rate

Figure 1 Average Grade of Minorities and Non-Minorities in the Executive Branch



Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (1981-2000). *Affirmative Employment Statistics*. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC.



Table 1 Representation Ratio of Minorities and Non-Minorities by Grade, 2000

SES*	GS 1-4	GS 5-18	GS 9-12	GS 13-15	
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Asians	1.34	1.0	1.12	1.2	.45
Only Women	1.75	1.25	.93	.69	
Whites	.77	.84	1.01	1.13	1.20
Only Women	.96	1.08	.82	.62	
Blacks	2.21	2.06	1.21	.79	.72
Only Women	3.1	3.0	1.51	.85	
Hispanics	.71	.67	.55	.33	.24
Only Women	.92	.82	.45		.20
Native Americans	6.14	3.86	2.37	1.36	1.57
Only Women	7.92	5.32	2.32	.85	
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Sources: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2001a). <i>Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce</i> . Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. p. 39-88; U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census (2001). <i>Resident Population Estimates of the United States by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin</i> . <a href="http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/intfiles3-L.txt">http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/intfiles3-L.txt</a> ; U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2001c). <i>Guide to the Senior Executive Service</i> . Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.					
Note: *data on the female SES members by race or ethnicity are not available.					

than whites for promotion due to a voluntary self-selection or a discouraged worker syndrome. The demographic data of the U.S. OPM, regrettably, have not displayed the federal civil servants' average years of service, average age, promotion rate, or turnout rate over time with regard to race or ethnicity.

Minorities could possess less experience than non-minorities since many minority federal employees are immigrants and since

the federal civil service requires citizenship. The 2000 census reveals that approximately seventy percent of Asian Americans had citizenship. In addition, according to the OPM data, men are older

Table 2 Representation Ratio of Minorities and Non-Minorities by White-Collar Occupational Categories (PATCO), 2000

	All White-Collar	Professional	Administrative	Technical	Clerical	Other
Asians	1.16	1.92	.79	1.0	1.08	.71
Only Men	1.20	2.34	.87	.76	.49	1.20
Only Women	1.1	1.55	.70	1.1	1.6	.25
Whites	.98	1.1	1.03	.88	.81	.88
Only Men	1.1	1.4	1.27	.81	.30	1.6
Only Women	.87	.81	.81	.95	1.25	.18
Blacks	1.37	.71	1.24	1.86	2.4	1.46
Only Men	.88	.55	.95	.97	.88	2.34
Only Women	1.81	.86	1.50	2.60	3.7	.64
Hispanics	.54	.37	.52	.61	.64	1.28
Only Men	.55	.40	.60	.52	.28	2.23
Only Women	.52	.34	.44	.69	1.01	.27
Native Americans	2.86	2.0	2.14	4.7	3.86	2.86
Only Men	2.18	1.64	2.19	3.28	.82	4.64
Only Women	3.16	2.1	1.84	5.5	6.3	.79

Sources U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2001a). *Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. p. 89-196; U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census (2001). *Resident Population Estimates of the United States by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin*. <http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/intfiles3-L.txt>.

and likely to serve longer than women; minorities are younger and appear to serve shorter than non-minorities in the federal bureaucracy. If minorities, on average, possess less experience, the average grade levels should be lower. Although Asians have a shorter immigration history than other minorities, the average grade level of Asians is far higher than that of other minorities.

Time in grade and years of experience, however, could be a potential determinant of representativeness at higher-grade levels, especially in the SES.

Table 3 Average Salary of Minorities and Non-Minorities by White-Collar Occupational Categories (PATCO), 2000 (In Dollars)

	All White-Collar	Professional	Administrative	Technical	Clerical	Other
Total	51,856	66,381	60,825	34,627	26,928	35,363
Only Men	58,703	71,603	64,237	37,798	24,747	36,149
Only Women	45,003	58,779	56,506	32,532	27,429	30,221
Asians	52,906	66,432	56,409	32,684	25,559	30,053
Only Men	59,091	70,390	58,910	35,037	24,702	30,835
Only Women	46,649	60,884	53,598	31,133	25,795	26,581
Whites	54,668	67,559	62,401	35,626	27,216	35,593
Only Men	61,045	72,541	65,630	39,220	24,905	36,265
Only Women	46,919	59,285	57,570	32,682	27,758	30,015
Blacks	43,278	59,999	56,971	33,444	27,023	33,850
Only Men	48,381	65,106	59,669	34,413	24,691	34,824
Only Women	41,507	57,023	55,426	33,128	27,519	30,654
Hispanics	45,278	61,696	54,670	33,050	25,656	37,531
Only Men	49,622	66,010	56,906	34,664	24,094	38,259
Only Women	40,745	56,369	51,623	31,834	26,102	31,589
Native Americans	40,798	54,807	56,399	29,323	25,610	32,366
Only Men	47,554	60,967	61,847	31,495	23,908	33,199
Only Women	36,515	50,492	50,902	28,045	25,812	27,364
Total Minorities	45,171	62,163	56,319	32,918	26,555	34,974
Only Men	50,777	67,239	58,840	34,243	24,535	35,938
Only Women	41,657	57,470	54,318	32,327	27,008	30,434

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2001 a). *Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. p. 89-196.



Table 2 displays that while Asian federal employees, especially males, were highly overrepresented in professional jobs, they were severely underrepresented in administrative jobs. Lewis and Nice (1994) found that the occupational distribution of Asian American males is closer to that of white males than to any other group and that the Asian Americans are likely to be more heavily concentrated in high paying occupations than are white men. With regard to the professional job representation ratio, Asians were nearly two times greater than whites and three to four times greater than African Americans and Hispanics. Table 3, however, reveals that despite the high representation of Asians in professional jobs the average salary of Asian federal employees in professional jobs was lower than that of whites. (3) The average salary of Asian federal employees in other white-collar occupations, particularly administrative jobs, tends to be far lower than that of whites in comparable occupational categories.

The occupational structure of Asian Americans appears to be related to type of agency. Asian college graduates in scientific, engineering, and technical areas tend to be heavily concentrated in the non-redistributive agencies, while other minority college graduates are more likely to be concentrated in the redistributive agencies. Wildavsky (1979) and Newman (1994) suggest that "redistributive agencies are likely to be supportive of affirmative action goals and to hire those they have been created to serve" (Miller, et al. 1999:221). (4) While the missions of redistributive agencies are the allocation of wealth, rights and property, their missions are more oriented to women and minorities and are susceptible to the interests of women and minorities. Clients and constituencies of redistributive agencies include a large number of women and minorities. Women and minorities would be overrepresented in an agency representing their interests. Thus, women and minorities are likely to be overrepresented in welfare, health, education, and housing agencies (redistributive functions), while they are

underrepresented in the foreign service, FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), correction, and transportation agencies (regulatory and distributive functions). (5) "Women and people of color are "segregated" not only in certain jobs but also in certain agencies or departments" (Ricucci and Saidel, 1997:426).

Table 4 shows the representation ratio of minorities and non-minorities in the federal agencies. (6) African Americans appear to be overrepresented in the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2000, where whites, Hispanics, and Asian Americans were underrepresented. (7) Table 4 also presents that Asian Americans

Table 4 Representation Ratio of Minorities and Non-Minorities by agency, 2000

Agency	Asians	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	NA*
<b>A. Regulatory Agencies</b>					
Energy	1.07	1.08	.93	.46	2.0
Justice	.76	.94	1.33	1.1	1.14
Transportation	.79	1.1	.93	.42	2.14
Treasure	.87	.91	1.81	.74	1.14
State	.95	1.07	1.28	.35	.57
EPA	1.29	1.0	1.5	.39	1.14
<b>B. Distributive Agencies</b>					
Agriculture	.68	1.03	.88	.5	3.57
Commerce	1.5	.92	1.54	.35	1.0
Interior	.47	1.0	.46	.4	21.8
Labor	.84	.9	2	.59	1.0
NASA	1.4	1.09	.9	.42	1.28
<b>C. Redistributive Agencies</b>					
Education	.89	.75	3	.39	1.43
HHS	.81	.82	1.35	.48	22.7
HUD	.89	.75	2.83	.6	1.57
Veterans Affairs	1.58	.88	1.93	.54	1.14
SSA	.69	.82	2.25	.85	1.43

## D. Constituent Agencies

EOP	1.26	.94	2.02	.22	.57
OMB	1.3	1.0	1.62	.28	.28
EEOC	.92	.53	3.81	1.02	.71
GSA	.92	.87	2.33	.42	1.14
OPM	.53	.89	2.43	.33	.86
Defense	1.44	.96	1.17	.51	1.43

Sources: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2001a). *Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. p. 89-196; U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census (2001). *Resident Population Estimates of the United States by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin*; <http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/intfiles3-L.txt>.

Note: \*NA=Native Americans.

Table 5 Average Grade of Minorities and Non-Minorities by agency, 2000

Agency	Asians		Whites		Blacks		Hispanics		NA*	
	T	OW	T	OW	T	OW	T	OW	T	OW
<b>A. Regulatory Agencies</b>										
Energy	12.6	11.3	12.6	11.3	11	10.5	11.5	10.3	11.3	9.9
Justice	9.8	9.2	10.3	9.6	9.0	8.8	9.3	8.5	9.6	8.9
Transportation	11.9	10.4	11.9	10.5	10.2	9.6	11.2	9.6	11.7	10.2
Treasure	9.9	9.2	9.9	8.8	8.4	8.0	8.8	7.8	9.3	8.3
State	10.4	9.3	11.3	10.2	9.7	9.3	10.7	9.5	11.2	10.6
EPA	12.2	11.7	12.7	12.2	10.6	10.3	11.3	10.4	11.4	11.0
<b>B. Distributive Agencies</b>										
Agriculture	8.8	8.2	8.9	8.1	8.6	8.2	7.9	7.5	7.8	7.3
Commerce	11.2	10.4	10.1	8.3	8.6	8.1	8.9	7.8	8.8	7.7
Interior	9.0	8.3	9.5	8.5	8.5	8.3	8.5	7.8	7.8	7.2
Labor	10.5	10.2	11.4	10.4	9.7	9.4	10.5	9.6	11.2	10.4
NASA	12.7	11.5	12.6	11.3	10.7	9.6	11.9	10.5	11.8	10.3
<b>C. Redistributive Agencies</b>										
Education	11.1	10.4	12.6	12.2	10.9	10.7	11.5	11.3	12.5	12.4
HHS	11.3	10.7	11.7	11.2	9.8	9.5	10.7	10.1	7.0	6.7
HUD	11.8	11.3	12.2	11.5	10.9	10.6	11.3	10.6	10.8	9.6
Veterans Affairs	9.7	9.0	8.6	7.8	6.0	6.4	7.5	7.2	7.2	6.7
SSA	8.8	8.7	10.1	9.6	8.6	8.5	8.6	8.4	8.9	8.5
<b>D. Constituent Agencies</b>										
EEOC	10.8	10.0	11.7	11.3	10.5	9.9	10.9	10.4	8.9	8.8
GSA	11.1	10.6	11.6	11.2	10.4	10.2	10.1	9.9	10.7	10.4
OPM	9.6	9.4	8.1	7.5	8.4	8.3	8.1	7.9	6.8	7.1
Defense	9.1	7.7	10.0	8.7	8.1	7.5	8.5	7.4	9.1	8.1
<b>All Agencies</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>7.3</b>

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2001a). *Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. p. 39-88.

Note: \*NA=Native Americans; T= total (men and women combined); OW=only women.

are likely to be overrepresented in the Departments of Commerce, Energy, EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), Defense, and Veterans Affairs, where Hispanics are underrepresented. Those agencies except the Department of Veterans Affairs depend on a variety of engineers and scientists.

Table 5 indicates that the average grades of Asian Americans in the Departments of Commerce, Energy, Transportation, and NASA were slightly higher than, or the same as, those of whites, while the average grades of Asians in other federal agencies were lower than those of whites. Asian and white females also show almost the same trends. Discrimination against a minority group in personnel practices is related to agency circumstances. Asians could face less discrimination in agencies where Asian Americans are concentrated as opposed to agencies where they are relatively rare. Regression analysis reveals that the effect of the percent of Asians in a federal agency in 2000 on the average grade of Asians in that agency is positive and significant at 0.05 level (i.e.,  $p=.03$ ). (8) Conversely, the impact of the percent of whites in a federal agency in 2000 on the average grade of whites in that agency is not significant. (9) Additionally, the effect of the mean grade of whites in an agency on the percentage of Asians in that agency is not significant. (10)

## DATA AND METHODS

Asian Americans appear to be severely underrepresented in the senior executive positions as noted earlier. What affects representativeness of Asian Americans in the SES positions of the federal bureaucracy? The dependent variable used in this study is the percentage of all SES members who are Asian Americans in all federal career and non-career white-collar jobs, except for the U.S. Postal service and intelligence agencies. Members of the SES are above the General Schedule

(GS) grade 15 or equivalent positions in the federal service. The dependent variable represents the degree to which Asian Americans are represented in the senior executive positions. The SES comprises less than 1 percent of the federal workforce, but its impact on public policy making is significant. The SES was designed to link between presidential appointees and the rest of the federal workforce (U.S. OPM, 2001c).

The independent variables used in this study are percentage of Asian Americans in the U.S. population, size of the Senior Executive Service (SES), and occupational structure, such as the distribution of professional or administrative jobs. These independent variables represent demographic and organizational characteristics, which are main concerns of this paper. Both political or cultural factors and affirmative action policies are excluded in the independent variables because of the measurement problem or insufficient data. The unit of analysis is the year, i.e., 1979-2000. The Senior Executive Service was established by Title IV of the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) of 1978 and became effective on July 13, 1979 (U.S. OPM, 2001c). Demographic changes affect the workforce composition, although their effects take a long time. The percentage of Asian Americans in the general population can relate to Asian senior executive employment. Additionally, size of the SES, i.e., total employment of the SES, can influence minority employment patterns. A large size of the SES could provide more opportunities of employment with minorities in high positions, especially if chief executives or bureau heads pay attention to an increase of minority representation at decision-making positions.

Occupational structure also affects minority employment patterns. The percentage of all employees who are in certain occupational categories is directly linked to the minority workforce composition. As Tables 1 and 2 display, Black females in the federal service tend to be heavily concentrated in lower-

level grades and clerical and technical occupations. If the percentage of clerical jobs in the PATCO categories declines, Black females would be victims. Included are administrative and professional occupations, which are comprised of more than eighty percent of all senior executive positions, as the independent variable. Further, a group's previous employment patterns affect that group's current employment patterns. The past Asian senior executive employment patterns keep affecting the present Asian senior executive employment patterns. Thus, a lagged value of the dependent variable is included as the independent variable. The lagged variable contributes to controlling all potential factors which affected past Asian employment, not included in this model (see Licari and Meier, 2000).

The independent variables, such as population and administrative or professional occupations, appear to have the problem of multicollinearity or autocorrelation. Asian population has kept increasing. Meanwhile, the percentage of administrative and professional jobs is increasing over time, and the percentage of clerical and blue-collar jobs is decreasing (Kim, 1993). There are historical trends in these variables. The problem of autocorrelation or multicollinearity in time-series can be minimized through differencing, i.e., the change between  $X_t$  and  $X_{t-1}$  (see Mill, 1990; Gujarati, 1995). Each differencing, however, leads to losing one degree of freedom. The independent variables, such as population, administrative and professional jobs, are to be differenced. The aggregate data, the federal civilian workforce statistics, 1979-2000, were recorded in the microfiche and published by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The demographic data on federal senior executives are examined through multiple regression analysis.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 6 shows the results of multiple regression analysis

concerning Asian American senior executive employment. The results indicate that a lagged percentage of Asian senior executives and size of the SES appear to be directly linked to Asian senior executive employment, while Asian American population and occupational structure are not related to the representation of Asians in the senior executive positions. Specifically, the present Asian senior executive employment is determined by its past SES employment, as was expected. The size of the SES appears to be positively linked to Asian senior executive employment, though its impact is minimal (i.e., the slope coefficient value is .000;  $p=.043$ ).

Table 6 Impacts of Demographic and Occupational Structure on Asian-American Senior Executive Employment

Dependent variable = Percentage of Asian American Senior Executives

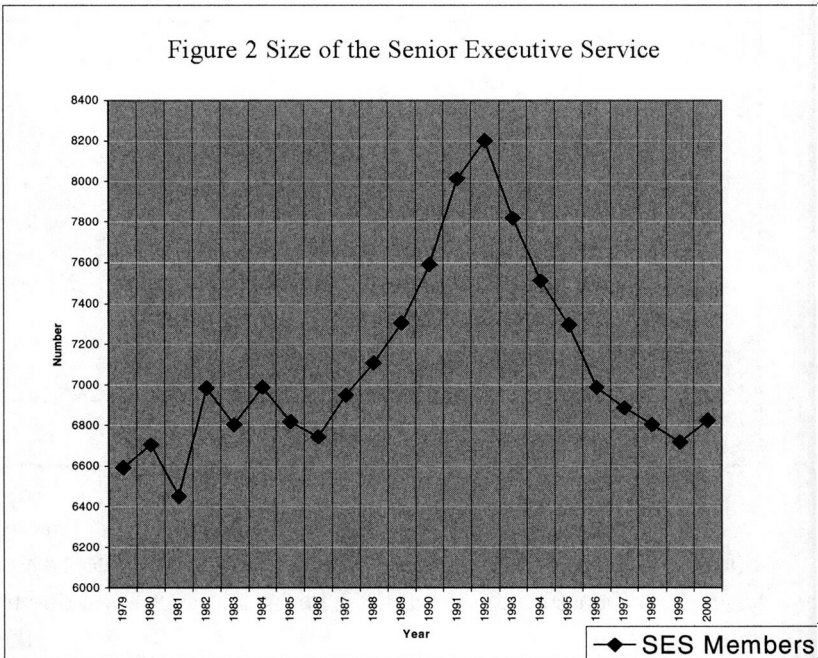
Independent Variables	Slope	Standard Error	T Score	p-level of Slope
Lagged Percentage of Asians in the SES	.943**	.065	14.81	.000
Percentage Change in Population Size of the SES	-.909	.529	-1.72	.129
Percentage Change in Administrative Job	.000*	.000	2.39	.043
Percentage Change in Professional Job	.044	.041	1.08	.311
Percentage Change in Professional Job	-.021	.027	-.78	.460
Intercept	-.921	.473	-1.93	.089
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.968			
Standard Error of Estimate	.089			
N	21 (Year 1979-2000)			

Note: Unstandardized OLS estimates.  
 All significance tests are one-tailed: \* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.001$ .

Figure 2 displays that the size of the SES kept increasing during the Carter, Reagan, and Bush administrations except a few years, and then cutting during the Clinton administration due to reinventing government and downsizing. However, the percentage of all minority groups including Asians in the senior executive positions continued to increase during the Clinton years, whereas the percentage of whites in the SES rapidly



declined in those years. For example, employment share (percentage) increase of African Americans in the senior executive positions was 2.1, Hispanics 1.4, and Asians 1.1 during the Clinton era. In fact, African Americans and Hispanics tend to be becoming more representative than Asian Americans in the SES over the period of 1979-2000. Further, Asian population does not appear to be related to Asian senior executive employment, because the civil service requires citizenship or because the SES positions require many years of service to attain. Over forty percent of career SES members in 1999 were eligible to retire within the next 5 years (U.S. OPM, 2001c). In the next five years there would be a significant change in the senior executive workforce.



Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2001b). *The Fact Book: Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics*; U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC.

More importantly, Table 6 suggests that occupational structure is not related to the representation of Asian Americans in the SES. Changes in the distribution of professional or administrative occupations in the PATCO categories are not directly linked to the representation of Asians in the senior executive positions. Approximately twenty-two percent of all senior executive positions in 2000 were in engineer or scientist job categories, 23.3 percent other professional job categories, and 42 percent administrative job categories (U.S. OPM, 2001b). While most senior executive positions are filled by professional and administrative jobs, Asian professional and administrative jobholders do not appear to be related to the representation of Asians in the SES. Approximately twenty percent of Asian professional jobholders in the federal service in 2000 were engineering, another 20 % medical, biological, and pharmacist, 8.5% attorney, contracting, and patent, 7% accounting & auditing, etc.; 17 percent of Asian administrative jobholders were computer science, 13% social insurance and miscellaneous administration, 8.5% management and program, 5.5% criminal investigation, 4.3% budget analysis, etc. (U.S. OPM, 2001a).

Occupational structure does not play a significant role in determining the underrepresentation of Asians in the senior executive positions, though many Asians hold engineering and computer science jobs less sociable, interactive, and English skills required. As the layer of hierarchy ascends, communication skills, political skills, leadership, reputation, and organizational support beyond administrative skills are required. Especially, the senior executive positions require more leadership and negotiation skills to appease both presidential appointees who seek to achieve presidential agenda effectively and career civil servants who concern organizational interests and occasionally resist to political

appointees. "The SES was designed to be a corps of executives selected for their leadership qualifications, not their technical expertise. Members of the SES (about 6800 career, non-career, and limited appointees) serve in the key positions just below the top Presidential appointees.--- They operate and oversee nearly every government activity in approximately 75 Federal agencies" (U.S. OPM, 2001c:8). "While technical job-specific qualifications are important, the essence of the SES is the ability to lead. OPM has developed executive core qualifications (ECQs) that represent the critical leadership skills all executives need to succeed today and in the future. -- - The current executive core qualifications are: leading change, leading people, results-driven, business acumen, and building coalitions/communication" (U.S. OPM, 2001c:11).

Are Asians in the SES feeder levels, who have engineering or computer science majors, lacking those skills? If so, those majors would be linked to underrepresentation of Asians in the SES. If not, are engineering and computer science majors less likely to be promoted to the SES compared to other majors, such as law, business administration, and social science regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender? Would it be applicable only to Asians? If Asians alone applied, this is a clear indicator of systematic discrimination. If this is true, underrepresentation of Asians in the SES is due to their occupations or the glass ceiling severely applied to Asians, particularly Asians who hold those occupations, in the SES feed levels. The OPM data, however, have not shown this tendency clearly. On the other hand, each professional and administrative occupation could have different paths and tendencies in advancing to the senior executive positions. In addition, agency circumstances, agency types, or politics within an agency may affect senior executive employment patterns. "Interagency differences in the employment of women and minorities are systematically related to the distribution of occupations within an agency and an agency's demographic and organizational characteristics" (Cornwell and Kellough, 1994:265

Table 7 Percent of Minority and Non-Minority SES members by agency, 2000

Agency	Asians	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	NA*
<b>A. Regulatory Agencies</b>					
Energy	2.0	89.3	4.7	3.2	0.7
Justice	1.8	88.1	7.1	3.0	0.0
Transportation	2.9	82.8	12.7	1.5	0.0
Treasure	0.7	86.6	10.4	1.8	0.5
State	1.7	90.7	2.9	4.7	0.0
EPA	2.2	85.5	8.6	3.3	0.4
<b>B. Distributive Agencies</b>					
Agriculture	1.7	78.3	14.3	4.6	1.1
Commerce	1.9	83.9	10.0	3.6	0.6
Interior	1.8	79.1	3.6	3.6	12.0
Labor	0.0	78.5	16.5	3.8	1.3
NASA	2.0	87.2	7.5	2.5	0.8
<b>C. Redistributive Agencies</b>					
Education	2.7	78.7	13.3	4.0	1.3
HHS	1.8	78.8	12.2	3.9	3.2
HUD	1.2	63.5	27.1	5.9	2.4
Veterans Affairs	1.1	88.3	8.3	1.1	1.1
SSA	1.6	64.6	22.8	10.2	0.8
<b>D. Constituent Agencies</b>					
GSA	2.0	83.2	12.9	2.0	0.0
Defense	1.7	92.7	3.1	1.2	0.48
<b>All agencies**</b>	<b>1.7 (114)</b>	<b>85.6 (5,802)</b>	<b>8.8 (596)</b>	<b>2.8 (192)</b>	<b>1.1 (7.4)</b>

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2001c). *Guide to the Senior Executive Service*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Note: \*NA=Native Americans; \*\*the number of senior executives in parentheses.

Table 7 displays the percent of minority and non-minority senior executives in 2000. African Americans and Native

Americans in the Senior Executive Service (SES) appear to be more representative in redistributive agencies, whereas whites are more likely to be representative in regulatory agencies. Asian Americans, however, are more representative in the Departments of Transportation, Education, EPA, NASA, and Energy than other agencies. Those agencies except the Department of Education are functionally non-redistributive and depend on various engineers and scientists. This finding implies that Asian Americans in the senior executive positions are well represented in the agencies based on a variety of engineers and scientists and non-redistributive. (11) Further, regression analysis shows that the effect of the percent of Asian Americans in a federal agency on the percent of Asian senior executives in that agency is not significant. (12) As Tables 4, 5, and 7 indicate, Asians in the senior executive positions are not necessarily more representative in the agency, where they are concentrated, but their average grade is not high (e.g., the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Commerce). However, Asian Americans at the top levels are more likely to be representative in the agencies, where they are not only concentrated, but their average grade also is high (e.g., the Departments of Energy, EPA, and NASA).

## CONCLUSION

Democratic representation theories indicate that responsiveness can be assured by the similarity between the characteristics of the representative and those of the represented. "A bureaucrat of the same background as a client will be more likely to perceive a situation similarly, respond more quickly, and resolve problems more effectively" (Hale and Kelly, 1989:3). Likewise, if the administrative agent as a whole has similar values to those of the people, decisions made by the bureaucracy will be similar to the decisions made by the people; therefore, the outcomes will meet citizen needs. Diversity in the civil service fosters greater bureaucratic responsiveness. A diverse workforce

with regards to race, ethnicity, national origin, or gender leads a bureaucracy to be not only internally democratic but also responsive to citizen needs.

Minorities should be more representative at the top levels which influence major policy areas concerning personnel, budgeting, management, and public programs. In the long-term personnel management perspective, the federal civil service needs to increase representation of minorities at the highest levels through fair personnel practices based on qualifications and experiences regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, or gender. Additionally, the public sector is competing with the private sector for recruiting a better workforce. Given the present and future labor shortage, the public personnel administration should provide the public with a positive impression, which personnel policies and practices are fair as well as representative, through increasing representation of minorities at the top levels.

Compared to other minority groups, Asian Americans in the federal civil service have different occupational, grade, and agency distributions. Asian Americans tend to be doing much better than other minorities at every grade level except the SES. While all minorities are severely underrepresented at the top levels, the drop-off in representation of Asian Americans at the top levels is so much more dramatic than for other minorities. Meanwhile, occupational structure does not appear to be linked to underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the senior executive positions. It is true that compared to other minorities Asian Americans hold proportionally more professional jobs, particularly engineering and computer science majors, in federal civil service. Occupations themselves, however, do not seem to cause underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the SES. A glass ceiling is more likely to be affected by agency circumstances or political situations within an agency than occupational structure. A study on underrepresentation of Asian Americans at high positions in the federal bureaucracy needs to focus on agency circumstances, agency types, political strength of Asian

Americans, or political situations within an agency.

## NOTES

1. Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders are persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Sub-continent, or the Pacific Islands, including Japan, Korea, China, Pakistan, India, the Philippine Islands, and Samoa. African Americans are those who have origins in any of the Black racial groups and do not have Hispanic origin. Hispanics are persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, and other Spanish origin, regardless of race (U.S. OPM, 2001b). In this paper, the term “whites” or “non-minorities” means white non-Hispanics.

2. A representation index of 1.0 means that agency employment is perfectly representative; a representation index of lower than 1.0 implies the underrepresentation of that group; and a representation index of greater than 1.0 indicates the overrepresentation of that group. Another measure of representation is the stratified ratio, that is, the distribution of individuals within an agency, which is a ratio of the upper levels of the organization to its lower levels or the general population (for variation of this measure, see Sigelman, 1976; Sigelman and Karnig, 1976; Dometrius, 1984; Riccucci, 1987). A higher ratio means a more equal representation. The MV (Measure of Variation) is also a measure of representation. The MV index refers to racial/ethnic heterogeneity or integration based on the number of non-minority and minority individuals (for application of this measure, see Nachmias and Rosenbloom, 1973; Kellough, 1990 and 1998). The MV index is from 1 (the presence of an equal number of employees) to 0 (the perfect absence of integration).

3. It would be easier to detect pay discrimination if individual data show differences in education and experience, as well as

major field of study in college. Regretfully, the aggregate data of the U.S. OPM have not been broken down into individual characteristics.

4. Affirmative action, an example of redistribution, might be a crucial factor of female and minority employment, even if various empirical studies concerning its impact on the workforce composition in public or private bureaucracies show contradictory findings. While compensatory employment through benign quota based on social characteristics rather than on other qualifications alone increases social equity, it could affect negatively agency accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness. Representative bureaucracy could interfere with competence, neutrality, and professionalism at the expense of responsiveness and diversity in a bureaucracy. Holzer and Neumark (2000) found that women, Blacks, and Hispanics hired under affirmative action largely matched their male or non-minority counterparts in performance. Ewoh and Elliott (1997) indicate that affirmative action programs will be substantially more limited and circumscribed in the future.

5. Krislov and Rosenbloom (1981) pointed out that federal agencies, where women and minorities are underrepresentative, such as the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Transportation, Labor, Commerce, the independent agencies, and regulatory commissions, are likely to be more specific in their missions and clientele-oriented, potentially highly representative of specific groups. While these agencies are captured by regulated industries, there exists an interchange of personnel between the agency and industry: for example, a regulated industry influences the appointment of top agency officials (Krislov and Rosenbloom, 1981:88).

6. Lowi (1985) arranged the federal bureaus with regards to agency types. He identified four types of agencies, such as regulatory, distributive, redistributive, and constituent agencies whose administrative structures might affect their personnel patterns. Since a department comprises companies of bureaus,



it is difficult to fit a department into a single category. Consequently, some departments are categorized as more than one agency type.

7. When the ratio of group members compared to representation in the Relevant Civilian Labor Force is employed, Asian Americans appear to be underrepresented only in the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, and Justice.

8. The slope coefficient is .450, its standard error is .192, its Beta is .472, the intercept is 8.972, and  $R^2$  is .222.

9. The slope coefficient is -.012, its standard error is .032, its Beta is -.089, the intercept is 11.728, and  $R^2$  is .007.

10. The slope coefficient is .254, its standard error is .206, its Beta is .279, the intercept is 918, and  $R^2$  is .077.

11. The OPM data have shown the occupational distribution of the SES in all federal agencies, not by each agency. If data are available, it would be better to run a regression of the Asian American representation on some measure of the occupational distribution of the SES in each agency.

12. The slope coefficient is .052, its standard error is .125, the intercept is 1.49, and  $R^2$  is .114.

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