Asians in the U.S. Public Service: Diversity, Achievements and Glass Ceiling

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Introduction

Over the last three decades, dramatic changes have occurred in the composition of the U.S. population. The 2000 Census confirms that the nation is becoming more ethnically and racially diverse. This new American portrait reveals demographic changes stemming from the new immigration or immigration from non-European sources. Currently, over 4% of the U.S. population—almost 11 million people—trace their roots to Asia and the Pacific Islands. Generally referred to as Asians, these groups of people are officially classified as Asian and Pacific Islander Americans or Asian Pacific Americans. Before 1976, they were fewer in number and grouped together in an “other races” Census category. Encompassing a vast mix of nationalities, Asians have become the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in the U.S. The Census Bureau has predicted that the Asian population will increase to almost 40 million or 10% of the U.S. population by the year 2050 (http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/cb96-36.html). Further, the pace of immigration and higher than average fertility is expected to expand the Asian labor force faster than other racial/ethnic groups.

Compared with other minorities in the U.S., Asians have made vast strides in education and employment. For instance, although Asians comprise 4% of the U.S. population, they comprise almost 10% of scientists and engineers in the U.S. In contrast, African-Americans (12%), Hispanics (11%) and Native Americans (1%) combined, make up 24% of the U.S. population but account for only 7% of the total science and engineering labor force (National Science Foundation [NSF] 2000). A general cultural emphasis on higher education and occupational achievement has changed the image of Asians from “yellow and brown hordes” to a “model minority.” Asians are viewed as exempt from the economic problems of poverty and unemployment. In recent years, the U.S. media, such as the NBC Nightly News, CBS’s 60 Minutes, U.S. News & World Reports, Newsweek, Fortune and Time, have devoted special coverage to the success of Asians in America. Conservatives like Thomas Sowell and Dinesh D’Souza have compared the successes of South Asians to the failures of African-Americans. Asian Indians are viewed as America’s richest ethnic minority, whose purchasing power is said to approximate $20 billion.

Regardless of these success stories, however, it is also true that Asians are far from achieving social, economic or political parity in the U.S. For example, although Asians are not under-represented in science and engineering employment in the academic sector, they are less likely to be tenured and full professors. A vast number of highly educated Asians in their 40s still hold post-doctoral appointments (NSF 2000). In the public sector, talented and qualified Asians do not reach a level in which they participate in policy and decision-making responsibilities. For example, Asians hold less than 1% of the Senior Executive Service positions in the federal government (Woo 2000). Further, because over 50 different ethnic groups are lumped together

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1 According to the U.S. Census, the greatest amount of Asian-Americans come from China, Hmong (from Laos or Cambodia), India, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Other Asians come from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Borneo, Burma, Celebese, Ceram, Indochina, Indonesia, Iwo Jima, Java, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Okinawa, Pakistan, Sikkim, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Sumatra. Pacific American groups include people from Hawaii, Samoa, Guam and other Pacific islands such as Caroline, Fiji, Kosrae, Melanesia, Micronesia, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Ponape, Polynesia, Solomon, Tahiti, Tarawa, Tokelau, Tonga, Truk and Yapen.
into a single Asian category, limited data cannot reveal such disparities as occupational underrepresentation sustained by various Asian subgroups. A glass ceiling imposes a real dilemma for Asians in the U.S. labor force.

In this article, I discuss the relevance of workforce diversity as related to Asians in public service—one of the highest services an Asian offers to the American society. I present a general profile of Asians in the U.S. before moving into public service and examine their career entry, earnings, education and access to career advancement opportunities. While some Asian groups share similar socio-economic backgrounds, education and experiences, others differ significantly. I propose that the image of Asians as a model minority has concealed both their diversity and the obstacles they face in public service. I conclude this paper with some recommendations for diversity management in public service.

Workforce diversity

Historically, racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have experienced many forms of social, economic and political discrimination. Biological or racial differences were emphasized as reasons for what was called the inferior contributions of minorities. Today, geneticists frankly concur that there are no significant genetic differences among socially identifiable groups of people. Affirmative action programs implemented by President Johnson in the 60s tried to correct the culture and climate of a workplace that was developed mostly by white males (Cross 2000). To make up for past discrimination, these programs provided preferential treatment to women and members of minority groups in education, employment, housing and other areas. As a result, women and minorities have made gains, many symbolic, while diversifying the American workforce. However, they still face inequality in incomes, jobs, housing, health, education and other conditions of life.

In recent years, affirmative action programs have become controversial. Opponents argue that they discriminate against whites in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In a landmark decision (the Regents of the University of California versus Bakke, 1978), the Supreme Court held that a separate admissions program that supported a specified quota of admissions to minority students—and which were unavailable to white applicants—violated the Equal Protection Clause. Further, critics report that affirmative action programs undermine traditional measures of qualifications such as test scores, educational achievements and quality standards.

In contrast to affirmative action programs, the concept of diversity has gained popularity and become a desirable goal in itself (Mathews 1998). Diversity initiatives are voluntary measures that support interactions among workers of different racial/ethnic and gender backgrounds. Many organizations including corporations, government, non-profit and universities, are investing financial resources, time and energy to glean benefits from the interaction of individuals with varying degrees of heterogeneity. Without workforce diversity, corporations feel they may run the risk of losing their competitive advantage in the global market. Similarly, the U.S. government, without effectively implementing and utilizing diversity, could lose confidence of people, both nationally and internationally. Many organizations have initiated diversity management to effectively utilize diversity and create an equitable and fair work environment for
employees of all racial/ethnic and gender groups (Soni 2000). Companies receiving federal contracts are bound by federal mandates to take proactive steps in identifying and removing institutional barriers to employment and advancement. Additionally, government departments are officially committed to create fair and equal access at all job levels.

In its basic form, diversity refers to the differences and similarities among employees in the workplace along a given dimension (Cox 1995). Generally, workforce diversity addresses differences among people based on gender, race/ethnicity, age, religion, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation and socio-economic class (Soni 2000). In recent years, scholars have added new elements to the concept of workforce diversity to include distinctions by, psychological backgrounds (Mamman 1996); education, skills, occupation/profession (Kramer 1993, Laudicina 1993); retirees, contract workers (Jackson 1992); and white males (Thomas 1991). Researchers and scholars propose that the concept of workforce diversity must be broadened to understand the impact of diversity and the interactions between people with different attributes (Lau and Murninghan 1998). Scholars further contend that a broad definition of diversity will minimize societal backlash against it (Thomas 1991).

In an attempt to include everyone and everything, diversity appears to have lost some meaning. Many believe that diversity is the latest “catch phrase” or a “buzz word” for affirmative action programs. Yet others believe that the word diversity is a means to dilute equal opportunity initiatives for minorities. Some see a shift in scholarly interest from racial and ethnic diversity to other aspects of diversity such as age and tenure (Cox, Lobel and McLeod 1991). Accordingly, it is proposed that diversity should address disadvantaged groups such as women and minorities (Caudron and Hayes 1997). It is also argued that since some personality differences have always and will continue to exist, workforce diversity should remain independent of such differences (Broadnax 1994).

In accordance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission laws forbidding unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, age, sex, sexual preference, ancestry, or medical condition in employment, I suggest that workforce diversity in organizations should reflect the society as much as possible. This, however, does not mean hiring or promoting unqualified people just because they have historically been discriminated against. Instead, it means aggressively seeking a pool of qualified applicants from those groups who have been systematically denied equal opportunity. This way each employer or organization would be in a more well-informed position to understand and respond to the unique needs of its community (de Geus 1997).

Organizations with homogeneous workforces are unlikely to operate effectively in an environment that is constantly changing and diverse. Common benefits of diversity in the workforce are: unique and innovative ideas to problem solving, rare skills that cannot be easily imitated or transferred through training, multilingual skills, work ethics of minorities, better communication with diverse clients, deeper knowledge of cultural values, significant insights into global markets, leadership effectiveness and organizational flexibility (Cox and Blake 1991; Wright and McMahan 1992). Perhaps most importantly, democracy demands that qualified minorities, women, immigrants, the elderly, disabled and non-conformists of all kinds are not excluded from the rest of the society. As the Dean of the University of Washington’s Law
School summed up, “In an increasingly multicultural nation with a global reach, a commitment to diversity—to broadening the boundaries of inclusiveness of American institutions—is economically necessary, morally imperative and constitutionally legitimate.”

The idea of workforce diversity, however, has been welcomed much more in the private rather than in the public sector, primarily because of profitability and markets. In theory, the practice of hiring and promoting diversely qualified personnel in public service would improve responsiveness to the public, increase the legitimacy of institutions and lead to more democratic decision-making. In practice, however, women, minorities, disabled, the elderly and people with different sexual orientations are excluded. Asians are participating in the gradual diversification of public service, but they face a number of challenges, such as upward mobility in high-ranking positions, prejudices and societal constraints.

Background and general profile of Asians

The U.S. has been a country of immigrants. For Asians, the story began in the mid-nineteenth century when they were hired to work for the gold mines and railroad construction in the western U.S. and sugar and pineapple plantations in Hawaii. However, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 banned the immigration of Chinese laborers. The Immigration Act of 1917 declared Asians inadmissible to the U.S. The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act set the quota of 100 for each Asian country. Prior to 1965, the U.S. immigration policy was based on the exclusion of “undesirables,” defined primarily by country of origin (Cafferty, et. al. 1984).

In 1965, the Kennedy-Johnson Act abolished the national origins quota system. Under the new law, immigrants were subject to a numerical limit (270,000 worldwide and 20,000 per country/per year). The justification for immigration shifted from “skin” to “skill” qualifications, though foreign-born American citizens and legal immigrants were allowed to sponsor immediate family members regardless of skills (Khadria 1999). The 1990 Immigration Act intensified the preference system for legal immigrants in accordance with job skills. In 1998, Congress passed a bill to increase the temporary H1-B visas to foreign skilled workers from 65,000 per year to 115,000 for 1999 and 2000. In 2000, the Congress increased the limit to 195,000 for each of the next three years. Each visa is valid for six years, although it must be renewed after the first three (Alvares 2000). By establishing one class of immigration solely based on skill, the U.S. has created a powerful “pull” factor for skilled Asians; the entry of potential unskilled Asians without relatives in the U.S. is restricted.

Why do Asians migrate to the U.S.? Scholars generally employ an economic model, which suggests individuals will invest in a move if the expected benefits of migration exceed the costs. Studies suggest that the propensity for immigration decreases with age and increases with education, income differentials, job opportunities and working conditions (Demery 1992; Mahanti, et.al. 1992). Accordingly, Asians migrate mostly because wages are higher, employment opportunities are broader, working conditions are better and living styles are more attractive in the U.S. than in their home country. Further, an oversupply of skilled workers in many Asian countries makes it increasingly difficult to find decent employment. Most
importantly, the U.S. has crafted its immigration policy to attract the best from Asian countries to deal with its shortage of skilled workers.

By 2000, the U.S. Asian population had increased to about 11 million from 1.5 million in 1970. In 1980, the Asian population was 3.7 million and grew ten years later to 7.3 million. This dramatic increase is the result of increased immigration from China, India, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam and other Asian and Pacific areas. Two-thirds of Asians are immigrants who primarily immigrated after 1965. Approximately 24% of the immigrants are Chinese; 20% are Filipino; 19% Japanese; 12% Indian; 10% Korean; 7% Vietnamese; 5% Hawaiian; others account for 2% or less of the Asians in the U.S. (http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/intfile3-1.txt). The Asian population is mostly concentrated in ten states: California, New York, Hawaii, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Washington, Florida, Virginia and Massachusetts (http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/api.html).

Educational achievements of Asians are high although they vary widely by group. In 1999, similar percentages of Asians and whites age 25 and older had finished high school (85% and 88%, respectively). The proportion completing high school is higher for Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Indian and lower for Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong. However, Asians are more likely to seek higher education. In 1999, 42% of Asians earned a bachelor’s degree compared with 28% for whites (http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/api.html). Significantly, Asians received 10% of the doctorates awarded by the U.S. universities, including one-third of engineering doctorates (http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/1999/cb99-238.html). (These figures exclude Asian students with temporary visas.) For Asians, higher education has been the pathway to advancement in American society. Yet, they receive increasingly lower returns for more years of education (Barringer, Gardner and Levin 1995).

In 1999, 67% of Asians were found to be more likely to participate in the labor force than the population as a whole (65%). Asian women have a higher employment rate than all women (60% versus 57%, respectively); while Asian men have about the same participation rate as all men, 75% and 74%, respectively. High labor participation is mostly due to the need to supplement family income. Among employed civilians, a higher proportion of Asians work in managerial and professional specialty occupations such as engineers, dentists, teachers and lawyers than whites. For instance, in 1999, 37% of Asian men, compared with 32% of white men, and 36% of Asian women, compared with 35% of white women, worked in such occupations (http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2000/cb00-76.html). Asians are less likely than the total population to work as a repairperson, operator, fabricator or laborer. However, Asians are self-employed in small-scale wholesale and retail trade and manufacturing. They are rarely buyers, sales managers, administrators or salaried managers in large-scale retail trade, communications or public utilities organizations (Woo 2000).

Asians have the highest median household income among the nation’s race groups. In 1998, Asian household income averaged $46,000 compared with approximately $36,000 for all families. About 33% of Asian families compared with 29% of white families had incomes of $75,000 or more. This incongruity is partially as a result of higher educational achievement of Asians. However, it must also be noted that Asians are geographically concentrated in areas where both income and cost of living are very high, so the comparisons are somewhat
inconclusive. More importantly, Asians experience poverty rates higher than all Americans do. In 1998, about 13% of Asians lived in poverty, compared with about 8% whites. For Asians and whites, poverty varies by age group, but rates are typically higher for Asians. Further, poverty has remained unchanged among Asians in the last five years (http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/1999/cb99-188.html). In general, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Filipinos and Korean fare better in income and employment, whereas Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong fare the worse, in part due to lower education and recent entry of Cambodians, Laotians and the Hmong.

Asian achievements against a glass ceiling

Asian employment has increased tremendously in all sectors of the U.S. economy, including in public service. Overall Asians (4% of the U.S. population) comprise 3.7% of the civilian labor force and 4.1% of the federal civilian force; thus, they equal or exceed their overall population representation A breakdown of federal civilian employment shows that Asians are over-represented in the Office of Management and Budget (5.1%), Office of National Drug Control Policy (4.9%) and Office of Administration (4.7%). Within executive departments, Asians are over-represented in the Department of Navy (9.8%), Department of Veterans Affairs (6.7%), Department of Defense (5.4%), Department of Commerce (5.2%), Department of Health and Human Services (5.1%) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (4.9%) (U.S. Office of Personnel Management [OPM] 1998).

Over half of all Asians in federal civilian service have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to 40% for all federal civilian employees. This high level of academic achievement is reflected in the high percentage of Asians in professional, administrative or technical occupations (34%). They are likely to continue educational and occupational achievements because they pursue higher education in top private and public universities. In 1998, Asian enrollment in elite universities was 39% for Berkeley; 38% for UCLA; 28% for MIT; 22% for Stanford; 19% for Harvard; 17% for Yale; 11% for Michigan; and 10% for Virginia (Fletcher 2000).

In general, Asian salaries approach that of whites, more so than other minorities. For instance, the average General Schedule or GS grade (the predominant white-collar pay plan in the federal government) for Asians is 9.3, which is the highest average grade of any minority group and almost equal to the average grade of federal employees overall (9.4). The average salary for federally employed Asians is $45,566 compared to $44,886 for the average federal civilian employee (U.S. OPM 1998).

Then there are prominent Asians—Daniel Akaka, Eni F. H. Falcomavaega, Ming C. Hsu, Paul M. Igasaki, Daniel Inouye, Bill Lann Lee, Yvonne Lee, Gary Locke, Robert T. Matsui, Patsy Mink, Ruby G. Moy, Eric Shinseki, Jeanette C. Takamura, Donna Tanoue, Robert A Underwood, Delmond J.H. Won, David Wu and many others—who bring visibility to their respective positions. This year, Norman Mineta and Elaine Chao made history when they were confirmed as Secretary of Transportation and Secretary of Labor, respectively. Their appointments mark the first time there have been two Asians in the President’s Cabinet. Asians hold approximately 3% of political appointments in the administration and about 3% of positions requiring Senate confirmation (U.S. Department of Defense 1997).
Even with such achievements, Asians remain under-represented when compared with the comparable civilian labor force in 13 of the 39 federal executive departments and independent agencies (with 500+ employees). They are under-represented in many departments in the Executive Office of the President, such as the National Security Council (2.4%) and Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (1.8%). Within executive departments, they make up only 2.9% of the employees in Departments of Labor and Transportation, 2.8% of the Department of Justice, 2.4% of the Department of Agriculture and 1.6% of the Department of Interior (U.S. OPM 1998).

Most importantly, even when Asians appear to be similar to whites in grade, salary and education, they are glaringly under-represented in high-level administrative supervisory positions such as grades 14-15 and above in federal civilian service (U.S. OPM 1998). Asian females consistently lag in high-paying positions in the managerial and professional categories. They tend to concentrate in the administrative support, clerical and service occupations (Wu 1997). The Greenlining Institute found that in 1997, none of the FBI’s top 620 employees was an Asian, and only one of its top 2,200 employees was an Asian woman (http://www.aagen.org/fbi2001.htm).

In many departments, the number of Asian employees remains about the same as five years ago. As a group of employees, they have received the least number of promotions. They have also become the oldest group. Getting hired and promoted is more difficult for Asians in high-ranking positions in general regardless that their education and qualifications are well above average. When Asians are promoted to managerial positions, it is after longer lengths of time. This is perhaps the biggest employment barrier for Asians: this “Glass Ceiling”—a term popularized by the Wall Street Journal’s “Corporate Woman” column in the mid-80s—refers to invisible, artificial barriers that prevent qualified Asians (or others) from advancing within their organization and reaching full employment potential. According to Joy Cherian, EEOC Commissioner 1993, Asians, despite their reasonably good record of achievement, face a real, hard, shatter-proof glass ceiling when it comes to moving up to managerial positions (cited in Woo 2000). What prevents Asians from gaining the rewards of their education and hard work?

The extensive literature on representation and employment discrimination has focused mostly on women and African-Americans. Scholars have shown that women and minorities are employed in low paying jobs, hold less prestigious occupations in the private and public sectors, and earn substantially less than white males with similar qualifications. Scant research exists that focuses on employment discrimination faced by Asians in public service (with the exception of Der and Ting 1992; Kim and Lewis 1994). Most studies tend to portray Asians as a “model minority” who have “made it” in America. If they acknowledge under-representation of Asians in high managerial and administrative positions, they point a finger at less assimilation of Asians into American society due to their recent arrival, a strong preference among Asians to take professional rather than administrative occupations, the lack of communication skills, or language barriers. In other words, for Asians the glass ceiling is either self-imposed or simply nonexistent.

So, do Asians actually face job discrimination in public service, or perhaps there are alternative explanations such as assimilation, cultural background, occupational choices, communication
skills, or linguistic abilities? Many differences between whites and Asians are real; however, they do not completely explain why Asians remain in lower grades in public service or why they take longer lengths of time to achieve managerial promotions than similarly qualified whites. A plausible explanation is that Asians indeed face a glass ceiling in moving into management positions in public service. They may face subtle biases and subjectivity in assessments from senior administrators. Typically, cultural values for promotion end up reflecting traditional “white male” values or the good “old boys” network.

It is generally proposed that Asians lack interest in managerial occupations because they are more competent in technical skills. It is true that Asians tend to differ from whites in their occupational choices. Asians pursue science and engineering much more than social sciences, law, or public affairs. For instance, Asians represent 4% of social scientists, but more than 10% of scientists and engineers (NSF 2000). This, however, does not mean that Asians are only interested in technical positions and not in administrative positions. Empirical studies show that Asians are indeed interested in being managers though a significant number of them are not optimistic about their chances to be promoted (Wong and Nagasawa 1991; Asian Americans for Community Involvement 1993).

Indeed, many Asians feel their higher education and high job performance rates are not leading them to senior decision-making and leadership positions (Wu 1997). A survey by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (1994) revealed that Asians felt that they were denied promotions due to their race. Further, different occupational choices should not lead to lower grades. Even among federal employees with engineering degrees—a field that is preferred by Asians, requires advanced quantitative skills and accommodates limited language requirements—32% of whites compared to 8% of Asians held supervisory or managerial positions (Lewis and Kim 1997).

Generally, Asians do face language barriers. With limited English proficiency, it is difficult to imagine Asians climbing to high-ranking administrative positions. English is the first language only for the American born Asians; for most Asians, English is their second language. According to a special report from the American Council on Education in 1997, over 50% of Asians did not speak English “very well” and 35% lived in linguistically isolated settings (http://www/asianweek.com/090597/report.html). Southeast Asians such as the Hmong, Laotians and Cambodians, in particular, live in limited English-speaking environments.

Still, not all Asians in public service are recent immigrants or lack communication and linguistic abilities. A significant percentage of Asians are born in or moved to the U.S. as children and thus are proficient in English. Many have assimilated into the mainstream American culture and have become distanced from their own ethnicity. They even speak with an American accent. Still, their employment grade level remains lower than whites with similar qualifications (Lewis and Kim 1997). The example of Japanese-Americans is instructive because they continue to receive lower returns on their education and hard work relative to whites of equivalent qualifications, even though they have been assimilated into the American society along a number of dimensions.

It appears that Asians remain invisible in many high administrative positions in public service because of the old notion of Asians as perpetual “foreigners,” “outsiders” and “strangers” who
are mostly hard-working imitators with no leadership potential (Fletcher 2000). Generally, upper-level administrators must possess refined conceptual skills primarily to perform strategic planning for the organization; contrarily, lower-level administrators perform specific, i.e., more predictable, functions for the organization. Both levels of administrators must have human relations’ skills. Typically, Asians are seen as good at “programmed decisions” (i.e., routine repetitive decisions that are learned in advance) rather than at “non-programmed decisions” (i.e., unpredictable, creative, quick and risky decisions that are not formalized) (Wu 1997). Consequently, Asians are viewed to be mimetic rather than original and are taken to be suited for carrying out other people’s orders and ideas. In other words, Asians should not be bosses, but be bossed. So, regardless that the overall culture and politics of the workplace in public service ideally supports diversity, Asians do not achieve managerial promotions.

It has been noted that Asians tend to observe the cultural tradition of respect for elders, modesty and self-effacement. This, however, should not be mistaken for Asians being incapable of making calculated risky decisions in high-ranking positions. It is clearly difficult to argue that among a diverse mix of Asians, there are no Asians capable of providing inspirational leadership. Furthermore, the cultural background of Asians can make them better administrators. Their participatory administration means involving subordinates in decision making, encouraging discussion and seeking egalitarian solutions to problems. Further, good cultural values should not become a liability.

Conclusion

Attaining high levels of education and occupational achievement suggest that Asians have succeeded in public service in the U.S. Asians resemble whites in education, salary and administrative positions in public service more than they resemble other minority groups. Yet they continue to face a glass ceiling for high-ranking positions, similar to other minority groups. The Asian image as a model minority conceals the problems Asians continue to encounter at work. Being treated as an over-represented minority ignores inequalities within and among Asian groups and inequalities by gender and employment. Not all Asians have made it. Further, the model minority stereotype ends up diverting public attention from the existence of discrimination since it is assumed that the battle against discrimination has been won for Asian. It penalizes Asians by assuming that they do not need mentoring or support. Most importantly, the model minority concept symbolically places Asians against Afro-Americans and other minorities because it suggests that if Asians can succeed in America, then why not others.

Diversity initiatives in public service must begin with the actual reality about Asians. They have yet to achieve parity with whites in access to high supervisory positions in public service. The glass ceiling, instead of being a “racial” issue is more of a “cultural” issue because Asians’ educational and professional achievements are appreciated, but largely ignored. Diversity management programs in public service should be directed to improve cross-cultural interactions. Otherwise, such programs will continue to marginally affect increasing sensitivity to differences; minimizing patterns of inequality, stereotyping and prejudice; improving cross-cultural interactions; and modifying organizational leadership practices.

A strategic diversity action plan should be developed to correct the detrimental model minority status held by Asians in public service. An effective and comprehensive plan should make every
effort to include the Asian experience and Asian concerns regarding professional career development. This plan should predominantly propose measures that remove the influence predetermined stereotypes have in hiring and promoting Asians. A first step should incorporate educating employees and high officials in the complexities and variabilities within the Asian population. To prevent a language bias in recruitment and the upward mobility of Asians, the plan should distinguish between the real English language and perceived deficiency (e.g., control for bias against Asian accents). English language development programs should be provided for. Similarly, management training to move beyond GS 14 should also be provided for. The plan should propose measures that help ethnic groups within the Asian population who are at risk as a consequence of their refugee and economic status. Finally, to break down stereotypes and open communication between Asians and other employees, a diversity action plan should encourage the formation of voluntary discussion groups. Diversity management essentially confers cultural rights of ethnic groups in the workplace. Advantageously, sanctioning and supporting racial and cultural diversity at all levels accommodates greater interaction and creativity. After all, the goal of diversity is to effectively utilize the diverse skill sets people with different backgrounds, such as Asians, bring to the workplace to help American to succeed.

REFERENCES


