

A Special Study

**FAIR & EQUITABLE TREATMENT:
A Progress Report on Minority Employment in
the Federal Government**



**A Report to the President
and the Congress of the United States
by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board**

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB or the Board) has responsibility to report periodically to the President and the Congress on whether the Federal civil service is operating in accord with statutory merit system principles. Among those principles is a requirement that employees and applicants for employment receive fair and equitable treatment without regard to race, color, national origin, and other non-merit factors. As one of the largest employers in the Nation, with responsibility for serving all segments of society, it is clearly in the public interest for the Federal Government to treat its own employees in a fair and unbiased manner. In that context, MSPB sought to determine whether minorities and nonminorities have equal access to Federal jobs and, once employed, whether they are treated equitably. This report presents the findings from that study.

The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA) reaffirms that merit is to be the cornerstone of the Federal civil service. Federal employees are to be selected and advanced solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills. However, drawing from the impetus of congressional action in 1972 which extended coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to Federal employment, the CSRA also articulates a concurrent goal of a workforce representative of “all segments of society.” In other words, Federal agencies have a dual obligation to strive for a representative workforce and to do so in a manner free from discrimination and preferential treatment. The challenge facing the Government is to ensure Federal managers successfully balance the need to meet both of these statutory objectives.

Throughout much of this century, instances of discriminatory employment practices had a clearly negative impact on the representation and careers of minorities in the Federal workforce. Over time, a number of major efforts were made

to respond to that situation. A review of current Federal employment statistics reveals that since 1978 the status of minorities has improved markedly. In fact, current overall minority employment in the Federal Government exceeds minority participation in the civilian labor force. Moreover, in administrative occupations and at the higher grade levels in professional occupations, minorities and nonminorities are now promoted at generally equivalent rates.

While recognizing the significant progress that has been made regarding minority employment, the Board’s review also finds that there are still measurable differences in the employment-related experiences of minority and nonminority Federal employees. For example, although the differences are much smaller than in previous years, minorities have not advanced as far in their careers as nonminority males *and* not all of the differences can be explained by differences in education, experience, and other measurable merit-based factors. This report concludes that

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these differences in treatment are due, in some measure at least, to the influence of subtle race- and sex-based biases that continue to influence subjective judgments on employment-related matters.

Finally, although the study found no evidence of widespread, intentional discrimination, survey responses from over 13,000 randomly selected Federal employees identified wide differences in perceptions between minorities and nonminorities with regard to how minority employees are treated in the Government. In part, this has led to an environment in which significant numbers of both minority and nonminority employees believe they are the victims of discrimination. These differences in perception are so large that they suggest that many minority and nonminority employees have great difficulty in understanding or accepting the others' perspective.

The Board's recommendations call for active efforts to continue the progress that has been made to achieve a representative workforce in a manner compatible with the requirements of a merit-based civil service system; continued vigilance for remaining instances of employment bias; and ongoing efforts to develop the best tools possible for accurately and objectively rating applicants and employees on job-related characteristics.

Findings

- **Minorities have made substantial progress in terms of gaining access to Federal civil service jobs, and are now well represented in most white-collar job categories.**

Based on the civilian labor force index of the U.S. Census Bureau (required for comparative

use in the Federal Government), Hispanics are the only minority group that remains underrepresented in the Federal workforce as a whole, primarily in technical, clerical, and blue-collar jobs. Asian Pacific Americans, while employed in the Federal Government at a rate roughly equal to their representation in the civilian labor force, are somewhat underrepresented in administrative and technical jobs. (To look more closely at the reasons underlying the continued underrepresentation of Hispanics, overall, the Board is preparing a separate report focused on the factors affecting the employment of Hispanics in the Federal Government.)

- **Minorities are not evenly distributed across the white-collar workforce.**

Minorities tend to be concentrated in lower paying occupations or in the lower grades of higher paying occupations. While the average grade of minorities (and particularly minority women) has increased substantially in professional and administrative occupations since 1978, minorities (and particularly minority women) are still at lower average grades than White males in these occupational categories.

While the progress has been slow, minorities have increased their numbers in all management categories, including executive jobs.

The proportion of Senior Executive Service or equivalent positions held by minorities increased from 4.8 percent to 11.5 percent from 1978 to 1995, while the proportion of executive jobs held by White women increased from 2.7 percent to 14.6 percent. At the same time, the proportion of these jobs held by White men decreased from 92.5 percent to 73.9 percent.

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- **Even when differences in education, experience, and other advancement-related factors are statistically controlled for, minorities have lower average grades than White men, suggesting that the careers of some minorities have been hindered by their race or national origin.**

The average grade of minorities in professional and administrative positions is lower than that of White men. This difference can only partly be explained by differences in education and experience levels between minorities and White men. Moreover, minority women are adversely affected by this disparity at an even higher rate than are minority men.

- **A comparison of current white-collar promotion rates for minorities and Whites suggests that minorities are not now subject to an across-the-board disadvantage (or advantage) in the promotion process, although some areas of difference remain.**

Continuing problem areas for some minorities are promotions at trainee and developmental grade levels (i.e., below grade 11) in professional occupations. At higher grade levels in professional occupations, minorities are now promoted at rates generally equivalent to those of nonminorities. In administrative occupations, the picture is somewhat different in that, at all grade levels, most minorities are promoted at rates equivalent to White employees. Contrary to the view of many of our survey participants, minorities do not have an advantage over Whites in terms of likelihood of being promoted in either professional or administrative jobs.

- **In professional and administrative positions, minorities receive, on average, lower performance ratings and fewer cash awards than nonminorities.**

Lower performance ratings can put minorities at a disadvantage during a reduction in force. Employee motivation and trust in the fairness of the appraisal process can also be adversely affected by differences in ratings and awards that they believe are influenced by race or national origin.

- **Survey responses further indicate that minorities are not provided with the same opportunities to demonstrate their abilities as nonminorities.**

Fewer minority employees than White employees reported that they have the opportunity to serve as the acting supervisor when the regular manager is away for a short period of time.

- **Minorities and nonminorities have significantly different perceptions about the degree to which discrimination may still be present in the workplace.**

Many minority employees believe they are not treated fairly or equitably in the Federal civil service. Substantial numbers of minorities report that they are subjected to discriminatory practices in the Government's workplace, in both blatant and subtle ways. In contrast, Whites generally believe that discrimination is minimal. For example, while 55 percent of African American survey respondents believe that African Americans are subjected to "flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices" in the Federal workplace, only 4 percent of White survey respondents share this perspective.

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■ **Minorities and nonminorities also have different perspectives on what measures, if any, are still needed to achieve a more diverse workforce.**

For example, minorities and nonminorities have sharply differing points of view about whether managers should even consider the extent of minority representation in a work unit when selecting from among equally well-qualified candidates to fill a vacancy.

■ **Substantial numbers of Federal employees lack confidence in their organization's ability to ensure equal employment opportunity.**

This lack of confidence, along with perceptions of discrimination on the part of a large number of Federal employees, has an adverse impact on motivation, teamwork, and productivity. When employee frustration and distrust are translated into protests and lawsuits, further costs to the Government are generated, as well as potential damage to its credibility.

Conclusions

The Federal Government's merit-based employment system has worked to significantly reduce incidences of obvious bias in the workplace. Notwithstanding these successes, measurable differences in the career advancement opportunities experienced by minorities and nonminorities in the Federal Government are still evident. Moreover, these differences cannot be fully explained as the effect of merit-based factors such as differences in experience and education. In some measure at least, these remaining differences can be attributed to the subjective judgments that ultimately come into play whenever decisions are

made on issues such as employee selections, promotions, and performance appraisals.

While the exercise of judgment is an integral and necessary part of the management process, continued effort must be exercised to minimize the influence of bias or group stereotyping, even if unintentional. These biases can create an unfair disadvantage for some employees, and result in perceptions of discrimination among both minority and nonminority employees.

Given the importance of the Government's role in enforcing equal employment opportunity and the potential for even inaccurately perceived inequities in the treatment of employees to disrupt productivity and teamwork, it is essential that these issues receive ongoing attention. In that regard, MSPB makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations

1. Agencies should conduct their own analysis of differences in promotion rates, performance awards, and other aspects of the personnel process.

Because our findings are based on Government-wide data, our study did not identify greater or lesser disparities between minorities and nonminorities that may exist within individual agencies and departments. After careful review of the relevant facts, each department and agency should disseminate accurate information to their workforce so that employees' perceptions and actions can be based more on accurate data rather than on rhetoric or misconceptions. Where there are differences in group outcomes between minorities and nonminorities, concerted action should be taken to find the causes and address them.

2. Assessments of progress toward ensuring equal employment opportunity should include gathering and addressing employee perceptions.

A regular mechanism should be institutionalized for identifying whether employees perceive a lack of equal opportunity or unfair treatment. Where inaccurate perceptions are identified, agencies should develop programs to remedy the problem. In addition to suggesting areas for further investigation, such assessment devices can identify areas where factual information needs to be provided to employees in order to correct misconceptions. This is essential for maintaining a workforce committed to teamwork and high productivity.

3. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and Federal agencies should continue to work toward development of better and more “user friendly” tools for assessing candidates, that allow supervisors to more accurately and objectively rate candidates on job-related characteristics.

Managers should be made aware of the potential for unconscious bias in employee selection, appraisal, and reward determinations and alerted to the need to critically examine their decisions before finalizing them. Improving the effectiveness of evaluation tools and providing supervisors and employees a better understanding of the limitations of these tools should help reduce the incidence and perception of bias in the system. OPM should form a partnership with agencies in order to share the costs of developing more effective evaluation tools and training programs.

4. When choosing from among equally qualified candidates for new hires or promotions, agencies and selecting officials should actively pursue the concurrent goals of the statutory merit system principles which call for: a) selection and advancement based solely on relative ability, knowledge, and skills combined with b) efforts to achieve a “workforce from all segments of society.”

In order to achieve a representative workforce in a manner consistent with merit principles, extra efforts may be needed to ensure that members of all segments of society are included in applicant pools when vacancies occur. Agency human resources management staffs should work with selecting officials to expand recruitment efforts as broadly as possible to ensure that highly qualified candidates from all segments of society across the nation are aware of open positions and are encouraged to apply.

5. Supervisors should understand and be able to clearly articulate to employees the criteria for evaluating employees for appraisals and awards and candidates for vacancies and promotion opportunities.

Supervisors should also provide appropriate information about the qualifications of those who were selected, promoted, or rewarded to others in the work unit to help those other employees understand the basis for the manager’s decisions.

Introduction

There are currently over 1.7 million full-time, permanent, civilian employees in the Federal workforce. For the last two decades, it has been the policy of the United States to achieve a civil service that is representative of the citizenry in terms of race, national origin, and sex. Indeed, considerable progress has been made in recruiting women and minorities into Federal employment; both groups now make up a greater proportion of the Government's workforce than ever before. However, it is less clear whether minorities and women have realized full equality of opportunity within the Government. In a 1992 report, the Merit Systems Protection Board found evidence that women continue to encounter barriers to advancement unrelated to their qualifications.¹ The primary questions addressed by the present report are whether minorities face similar disparities in Federal Government employment opportunities, whether aspects of employment such as awards and important assignments are

equitably distributed, and the extent to which employees are confident that they are working in an environment free of discrimination.

Background

Reasons to be concerned about whether minorities enjoy equal employment opportunity within the Federal workforce include the dearth of minorities in senior level positions² and ongoing protests and lawsuits alleging disparate treatment.³ Moreover, in response to a Governmentwide survey administered by the Board in 1992, 34 percent of African Americans, 30 percent of Asian Pacific Americans, 19 percent of Hispanics, and 11 percent of Native Americans said that they believed they had been denied a job, promotion, or job benefit because of unlawful discrimination based on race.⁴ It should also be noted that while the Federal Government is now

¹ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "A Question of Equity: Women and the Glass Ceiling in the Federal Government," Washington, DC, October 1992.

² U.S. General Accounting Office, "Federal Workforce: Continuing Need for Federal Affirmative Employment," GAO/GGD-92-27BR, Washington, DC, November 1991.

³ See, for example, Leigh Rivenbark, "Black workers bash Commerce for bias," Federal Times, June 13, 1994; Leigh Rivenbark, "Hispanic FBI agents claim bias continues," Federal Times, Feb. 6, 1995; Christy Harris, "Black agents' suit could grow," Federal Times, Aug. 8, 1994; Veronica Jennings, "Blacks describe how bias hurt their careers at NIH," the Washington Post, Aug. 10, 1993.

⁴ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "Working for America: An Update," Washington, DC, July 1994.

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committed to providing a workplace where equal employment opportunity (EEO) is valued, historically it has not always been a leader in the employment of minorities.⁵ It was only with the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 that Federal workers received explicit statutory protection against discrimination.

There are a number of reasons why the Federal Government should be particularly concerned with eradicating barriers to equal opportunity. One of these is that the Government is the Nation's largest employer and enforcer of laws. As such, it has a special responsibility to ensure that its own house is in order with respect to EEO. As one author noted:

****[G]reat changes in a wide arena are instigated by small alterations in governmental personnel policy. The symbolic role of public position should not be overlooked. In seeking to implement the goal of greater equality in society generally government has a special responsibility to come to others with clean hands. If the elimination of prejudice cannot be achieved in the public bureaucracy it is unlikely that it will be achieved anywhere.⁶*

The Board has previously noted that because of its leadership role, the Government's employment practices have consequences which extend

beyond the employment arena.⁷ Recently, the bipartisan Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, created by Congress to study barriers to the advancement of women and minorities in corporate hierarchies, echoed this recommendation, emphasizing the leadership role Government must take in the quest to make equal opportunity a reality for minorities and women.⁸ Given the Department of Labor's role in ensuring nondiscrimination in private sector employment, the Justice Department's role in protecting civil rights, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's role in enforcing fair housing laws, it is imperative that the Government ensure that its own workforce is diverse and free from discriminatory practices.

Another reason the Government should be especially concerned with EEO is that there is particular value in having a Federal workforce that mirrors the population in terms of race/national origin (RNO) and sex. The importance of this concept gained official recognition when Congress passed the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, which stated that it is the policy of the United States to achieve a "Federal work force reflective of the Nation's diversity." The act also called for eliminating the underrepresentation of women and minorities in all occupations and grade levels.⁹

⁵ For an overview, see David Rosenbloom, "Federal Equal Employment Opportunity," Praeger, New York, 1977.

⁶ Samuel Krislov, "The Negro in Federal Employment," University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1967, p. 5.

⁷ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "Balancing Work Responsibilities and Family Needs: The Federal Civil Service Response," Washington, DC, November 1991.

⁸ Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, "A Solid Investment: Making Full Use of the Nation's Human Capital," Washington, DC, November 1995.

⁹ 5 U.S.C. §7201.

A Federal civil service that mirrors the population has a variety of benefits for the Nation as a whole. Among them are the following:

- A diverse civil service serves as a funnel for divergent points of view and is more likely to have diverse skills and talents, making it better able to deal with the wide variety of problems that exist. Housing policies, for example, that have been developed based on the insights and experiences of a diverse group of individuals are likely to better serve the needs of diverse communities than those developed by people who share a common background.
- A diverse civil service helps ensure that social responsibility is shared, leading to a greater acceptance of governmental policies. When women and minorities can see that their perspectives have been included in developing health care policies, for example, they can have greater confidence that those policies will reflect their particular health care concerns.
- A representative Federal workforce has a positive impact on social conduct and future behavior in society as a whole. If a particular racial or national origin group doesn't see its members represented among Federal employees, its youth may see no point in investing financially or psychically in education or in gaining other prerequisites for Federal jobs, and thus a cycle of exclusion is perpetuated. Conscious efforts to achieve a representative workforce can help to break this self-generating cycle in which minority youth are signaled a lack of opportunity and, in turn, become reluctant to test the reality of the situation.

Of course, for these benefits to be realized, the Federal Government must not only include members of each racial and national origin group within its ranks, but also ensure that all those employees have an equal opportunity to advance and to be treated equitably in all other aspects of employment. These issues are of particular concern to the Board because they are found in the statutory merit principles which the Board is responsible for overseeing. Included among those principles are the following¹⁰:

- Recruitment should be from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a workforce from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity.
- All employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.

Issues To Be Examined

Although this report is concerned with the general question of minority employment in the Federal Government, we focus on several specific issues. The first of these is the question of minority representation in the Federal workforce, an issue we examine within the context of certain U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

¹⁰ 5 U.S.C. §2301 (b)(1) and §2301 (b)(2).

(EEOC) requirements. Specifically, the EEOC requires Federal agencies to compare the representation of minorities (and women) in their workforces to decennial census data regarding the employment of minorities and women in the nationwide civilian labor force (CLF). If the proportion of minorities in the Government is lower than the proportion of minorities in the CLF, it would suggest that there are barriers to the hiring of minorities into the Federal workforce. After making such a comparison on a Governmentwide basis, we focus on the equally important question of whether minorities are well represented not only in all parts of the Government but in all types of jobs, and in the highest, most influential positions.

A second major issue we address is whether career advancement patterns differ among employees from different race or national origin groups and, if so, the possible reasons for these differences.

Because certain other issues are also important indicators of equal employment opportunity, we examine them as well. For example, do minorities receive job assignments or awards at rates comparable to nonminorities?

Finally, we analyze the views of minorities and nonminorities concerning the Government's employment policies. Regardless of the actual existence of unfair treatment for any Federal employee, perceptions of inequity are certainly also a cause for concern. Such perceptions can have a detrimental impact on the morale and productivity of all employees, as well as an adverse effect on Federal mission accomplishment. Because of this impact, it is important to better understand the causes of perceptions of unfair

treatment and to identify possible corrective measures which might address the underlying factors contributing to them.

Methodology

In order to understand whether members of the various racial groups have equal access to Federal jobs and whether they are treated equitably in those jobs, we collected information bearing on these issues from a variety of perspectives. In some ways this study builds on a previous Board study¹¹ which identified some of the major factors that account for the successful advancement of employees in Federal agencies. That study identified differences in qualifications as well as subtle biases that lead to disparate rates of career advancement between men and women. Following that design, the present study examines the career advancement and employment status in general, of groups of various races and national origins by collecting information from numerous sources.

These sources were:

- **The Central Personnel Data File (CPDF).** The CPDF is a computerized data bank maintained by the Office of Personnel Management. This data bank contains information on all current civilian Federal employees, except employees in the U.S. Postal Service and in selected agencies exempt from reporting employee information (e.g., intelligence agencies). From the CPDF, we obtained information concerning promotion rates, cash awards, performance ratings, and the supervisory/managerial status of 1.7 million permanent, full-time, Federal civilian employees. This information was broken down by various demographic factors, such as race/national origin, sex, grade, job series, and employing agency.

¹¹ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "A Question of Equity" (full citation is in footnote 1).

We examined these data by looking at (1) “snapshots” of employees at two different times (1978 and 1995) to see how their distribution by occupational category and grade might have changed, and (2) promotion rates for various RNO groups over a 17-year period to examine trends over time.

- **Survey of Federal Employees.** We mailed a survey questionnaire to a representative, stratified, random sample of blue-collar and white-collar full-time, executive branch civilian employees. Of the 21,935 surveys delivered to employees, 13,328 were returned, for a 61-percent response rate. The survey, a copy of which is shown in appendix 1, asked employees questions about their career advancement and other work-related experiences with the Government, as well as their perceptions of the treatment of different minority groups in Federal service.
- **Input From Other Knowledgeable Individuals and Groups.** We collected information in writing and in focus groups from directors of equal employment opportunity or their designees at the 22 largest Federal departments and agencies. We also held discussions with officials from other Government organizations, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Department of Labor, the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, and OPM. Our contacts also included representatives from numerous minority interest groups such as Blacks in Government, the National Association of Hispanic Federal Ex-

ecutives, National IMAGE, and the Federal Asian Pacific American Council, and other knowledgeable private individuals.

- **Related Published Research.** We also conducted an extensive search of academic literature for relevant studies addressing equal employment opportunity issues. The information collected was used to supplement findings from our other data sources.

Definitions of Minority Groups

In this report, we discuss employees as members of the five major race/national origin groups defined below¹²:

- **African American** (Not of Hispanic Origin) includes all persons having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa;
- **Asian Pacific American** includes all persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands. This area includes, for example, China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, and Samoa;
- **Hispanic** includes all persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race;
- **Native American** includes all persons having origins in any of the original peoples of North

¹² Personnel records in the CPDF include a code for the race/national origin of an employee, which is typically self-reported by that employee. Similarly, employees self-reported their race/national origin to us in our survey questionnaire. All analyses in this report are based on such self-reported identification. (Survey responses also included an “Other” category, the results of which are not separately described in this report.)

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America who maintain cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition; and

- **White** (Not of Hispanic Origin) includes all persons having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.¹³

We recognize that there can be important subgroup differences within minority groups as well as among them. For example, American Hispanics trace their origins to different continents and many different countries. While many share a common language, there are also important cultural differences among these groups. Addition-

ally, within each Hispanic national origin group, there are also people from different racial groups, including Black, White, and multiracial.

That being the case, it normally is best not to generalize about members of any group of employees. However, recognizing that some compromise is necessary in order to study the issue, we chose to adhere to the five major categories listed above. Furthermore, when analyses of the survey responses or CPDF data indicated no substantial differences among minority groups, we collapsed the various groups into an overall “minority” category for brevity of presentation or whenever required by sample size for reliable analysis.

¹³ This report uses slightly different labels for minority groups than those traditionally used in Federal Government reports. For example, we use the term African American, rather than Black, and Native American rather than American Indian. Notwithstanding these different labels, the groups described in this report represent the categories specified by guidelines set by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB is currently considering the possibility of changes to its categorizations, and has held public hearings on the subject of “Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting.” However, since such changes have not taken effect, this report is based on OMB’s existing categories.

The Employment of Minorities in the Federal Government

Minority Access to Federal Jobs

Our study was concerned with numerous issues relating to the employment of minorities in the Federal workforce. The first issue we investigated was whether minorities are given an equal chance of obtaining employment with the Government. The next important questions were whether minority group members who do enter the Federal workforce are treated in the same ways as nonminority employees, both in terms of opportunity for advancement and recognition for superior performance.

To answer the first question we reviewed OPM data concerning approximately 1.7 million full-time, permanent employees working in the executive branch of the Federal Government through March 1995. This total includes about 300,000 African Americans, 64,300 Asian Pacific Americans, 98,000 Hispanics, and 30,200 Native Americans. To learn whether these data mean

that minorities hold jobs in the Federal Government in numbers proportional to their participation in the national labor market, we compared the presence of minorities in the Federal workforce with data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on minorities in the civilian labor force.¹⁴

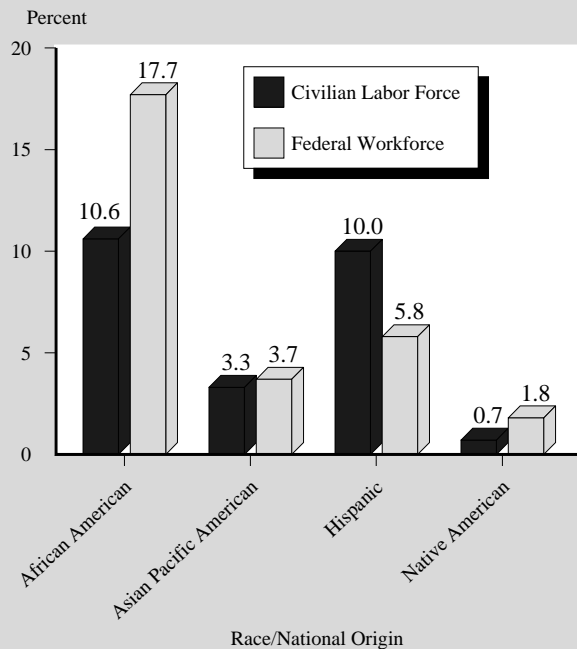
Using this type of comparison, we find that most minorities are generally well represented in the Federal workforce. In fact, overall minority employment in the Federal Government exceeds minority participation in the civilian labor force (29 percent compared to 24.6 percent). This is illustrated by figure 1, which depicts the representation of each minority group in the Federal workforce compared to the information obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

As can be seen in figure 1, the Federal Government actually employs a higher percentage of African Americans and Native Americans and, to a lesser extent, Asian Pacific Americans than are

¹⁴ The information on overall minority participation in the civilian labor force is based on information obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Civilian Population Survey as of September 1994. It should be noted, however, that although the Government is required to use information about the Civilian Labor Force (CLF) obtained from the Census Bureau to determine the extent to which minorities are well represented in the Federal workforce, there is at least one potential problem which may limit the utility of this standard for making valid comparisons. As it is currently defined, the CLF includes persons employed (or seeking employment) in the United States, irrespective of their citizenship, while positions in the Federal civil service can only be filled by U.S. citizens (except under very rare circumstances). Because of this citizenship restriction, comparisons between the CLF and the Federal workforce may be misleading for minority groups with disproportionately large numbers of non-U.S. citizens among their members.

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Figure 1.
Comparison of Minority Employees in
Civilian and Federal Workforces,
by Race/National Origin



Note: Data are for full-time permanent employees and include both blue- and white-collar employees. Civilian data are as of September 1994, and Federal data are as of March 1995.

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics CPS data, September 1994, as reported in OPM's Annual Report to Congress on the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program, CE-104, April 1995; and OPM's Central Personnel Data File, March 1995.

found employed in all of the national workforce in the 1994 Civilian Population Survey (CPS). Hispanics, however, are somewhat

underrepresented in the Federal workforce. To look more closely at the issue of the reasons behind the underrepresentation of Hispanics in the Federal workforce, the Board is undertaking a separate study of the factors affecting the employment of Hispanics in the Federal Government.

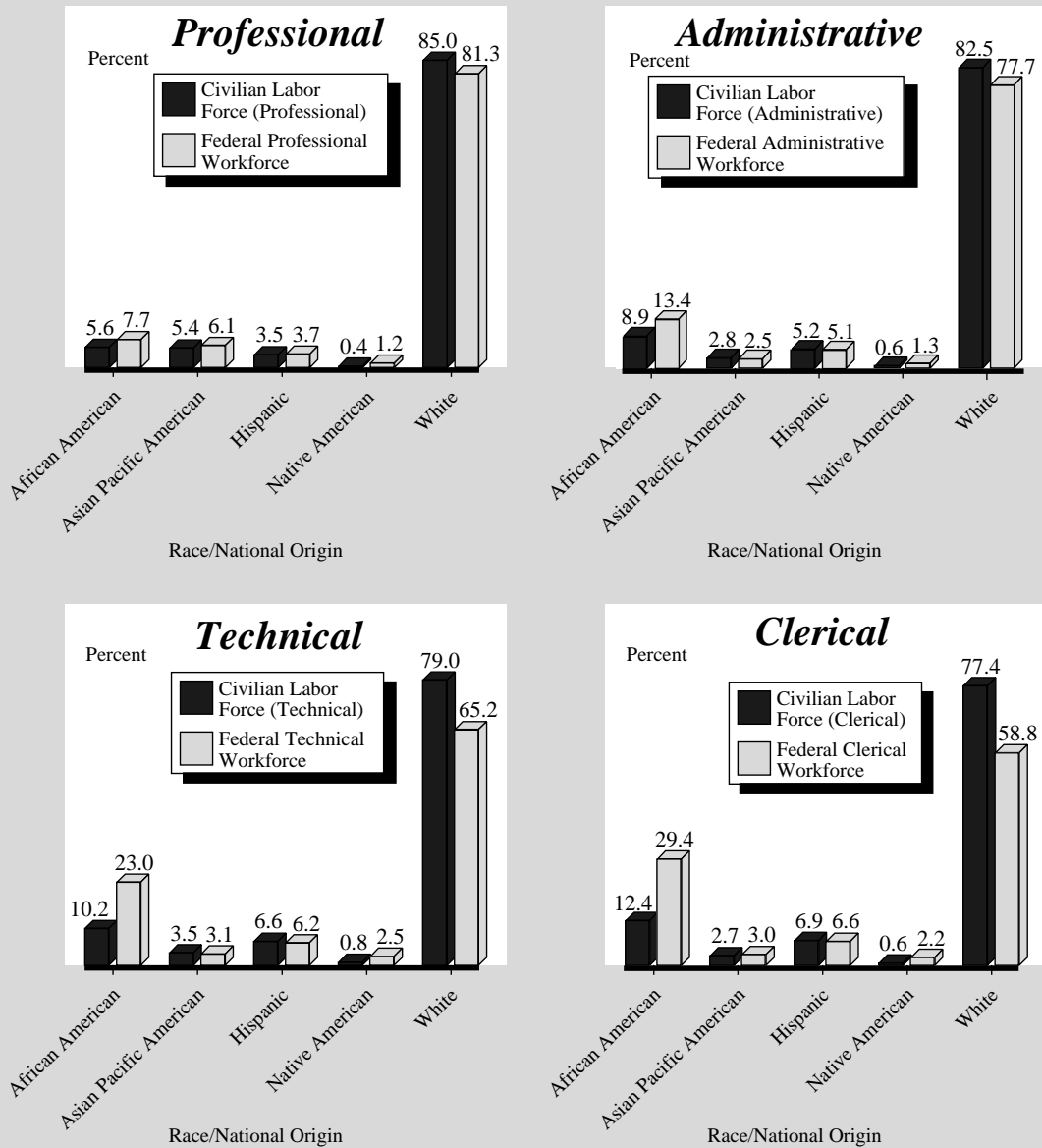
Distribution of Minorities by Occupational Category

Although the information just discussed shows that the Federal Government has been successful in employing at least a proportionate share of minorities overall, it is important to also determine whether the Government has done as good a job of employing minorities in all types of jobs. Minorities may, for example, be employed in clerical and technical jobs and not be adequately represented in professional and administrative jobs. The distinction between these categories is significant because jobs in the administrative and professional categories typically provide much greater opportunity for employees to advance to higher graded, more responsible positions than do clerical and technical jobs.

Figure 2 shows the representation of minorities and nonminorities by "PATCO" category (PATCO is the OPM acronym for the different categories of white-collar jobs; i.e., Professional, Administrative, Technical, Clerical, and Other) within the Federal Government and the civilian labor force.¹⁵ As can be seen in this figure, African Americans hold slightly more than their proportionate share of professional and administrative jobs, but, rela-

¹⁵ These categories are based on a system devised by OPM for grouping together similar types of jobs, based on the skills, knowledges, and abilities that the jobs require. In this report, jobs falling in the "Other" category are not included in our data or discussed.

Figure 2.
Comparison of Civilian and Federal Workforces,
by PATCO Category and Race/National Origin



Source: EEOC's Annual Report on the Employment of Minorities, Women, and People With Disabilities in the Federal Government, FY 1991, for 1990 CLF data, and OPM's Central Personnel Data File, March 1995.

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tive to the CLF, more than twice as many jobs in the technical and clerical categories.¹⁶

As figure 2 also demonstrates, Asian Pacific Americans and Hispanics are found in professional jobs in the Federal workforce at rates similar or even slightly above their representation in the civilian labor force in 1990. Asian Pacific Americans, on the other hand, appear to be slightly underrepresented in administrative and technical positions, while Hispanics appear to be underrepresented in technical and clerical jobs. Although not seen in this figure, Hispanics are also the only minority group underrepresented in blue-collar jobs (Hispanics hold about 10.2 percent of the blue-collar jobs in the CLF but only 7.7 percent of the blue-collar jobs in the Federal Government). Native Americans seem to be well represented in all job categories.

These findings suggest that, in general, the Government has been successful in recruiting qualified people from most minority groups for most occupations, including the jobs that provide the potential for advancement to the highest level jobs in the Government. Saying this, however, does not necessarily mean that the Government has done an adequate job of recruiting minorities in all types of jobs at all geographical locations. There may be some types of jobs for which the Government has not been successful in hiring adequate numbers of minorities. Similarly, there may be some locations where the Government's

employment of minorities is out of balance with the local labor force. For example, the local labor force in California may contain a higher percentage of Asian Pacific Americans than are employed in the Federal workforce in that area. Additionally, as the General Accounting Office (GAO) has pointed out in a study of the employment of minorities in the Government, there are wide differences in the rates of employment of minorities across Federal agencies.¹⁷ Thus, despite the fact that the Government is providing adequate access for minorities to Federal jobs in general, there are occupations and locations where minorities remain underrepresented.

Distribution of Minorities by Grade Level

While minorities seem to be well represented in the Federal workforce in most job categories (with the exception of Asian Pacific Americans and Hispanics in some types of jobs), an equally important issue is whether minorities are as well represented within the various grade levels that make up the hierarchy of jobs within the civil service. Table 1 shows the percentage of minorities and nonminorities holding jobs in each of several white-collar grade level groupings.

As can clearly be seen in table 1, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans tend to be

¹⁶The information concerning minority participation in the civilian workforce by job category is based on information obtained through the 1990 census. In contrast, the information about minorities in the Federal workforce discussed in this report is based on Federal employment as of the end of March 1995. Since almost 5 years passed between the collection of these two sources of information, all comparisons based on job category should be viewed as somewhat limited. This may be especially true for Hispanics and Asian Pacific Americans, who, because of immigration, have been increasing their participation in the national labor force at faster than average rates.

¹⁷U.S. General Accounting Office, "The Changing Workforce: Demographic Issues Facing the Federal Government," GAO/GGD-92-38, Washington, DC, March 1992.

Table 1.
Distribution of RNO Groups in the
Federal Workforce by Grade, March 1995

Grade	Race/National Origin (Percent)				
	African American	Asian Pacific American	Hispanic	Native American	White
GS 1-5	29	17	22	32	13
GS 6-10	39	26	36	35	28
GS 11-12	22	36	29	23	33
GS 13-15	10	22	13	11	25
SES	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.6

Note: Percentages in columns may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, March 1995.

concentrated in the lower grades.¹⁸ Whites and Asian Pacific Americans, on the other hand, tend to be found more frequently in higher graded jobs. Specifically, approximately two-thirds of African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are employed in GS grades 1-10, while only about 40 percent of Asian Pacific Americans and Whites are in jobs at these grade levels. Similarly, Whites and Asian Pacific Americans are twice as likely to be employed at grades 13, 14, and 15 as are members of other minority groups.

Differences in the distribution of minorities and nonminorities by grade level can also be seen by comparing the average grade of full-time, permanent employees in each RNO group. As would be

expected given the information presented in table 1, Whites (10.43) and Asian Pacific Americans (10.49) have the highest average grades. The average grades for the other minority groups are quite a bit lower, with African Americans averaging 9.21, Hispanics 9.31, and Native Americans 8.83.

Based upon this information, it is apparent that most minority employees are concentrated in lower level jobs, while nonminorities are more often found in higher level positions. In fact, minorities in total hold 29 percent of the jobs in the Government but only 10 percent of the senior-level positions that do not involve political appointments. While these numbers would appear to indicate a great disparity in the treatment of

¹⁸ The Federal Government classifies most of its jobs according to a "General Schedule" (GS) which divides white-collar jobs into 15 grades that increase in complexity and responsibility as the grade increases.

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minorities within the Government, there are a number of factors that to some degree account for these differences.

One factor which contributes to the concentration of minorities in lower level jobs (and consequently lowers their average grade) was alluded to earlier. This is the fact that, in general, minorities are more frequently found in positions in the technical, clerical, and “other” job categories. Since jobs in these three categories seldom advance beyond the grade 9 level, the employment of large numbers of African Americans in technical and clerical jobs explains some of the difference in average grade between African Americans and Whites. In fact, when members of any minority group are proportionately more often found in jobs classified in the technical, clerical, and other job categories, the net effect is that they will also more often be found in lower graded positions.

Since only professional and administrative positions provide the opportunity for advancement to highest grade levels in the Federal Government, it is especially important that minorities have adequate access to these types of jobs. As was discussed previously, the evidence suggests that for the most part this is the case. With the possible exception of Asian Pacific Americans in administrative jobs, minorities hold about the same proportion of professional and administrative jobs in the Government as they do in the overall national workforce.

Career Advancement in Professional and Administrative Jobs

If minorities have adequate access to professional and administrative jobs, the next question that arises is, “Have minorities who are in these positions been provided equal opportunity to advance to the highest grade levels?” One way to

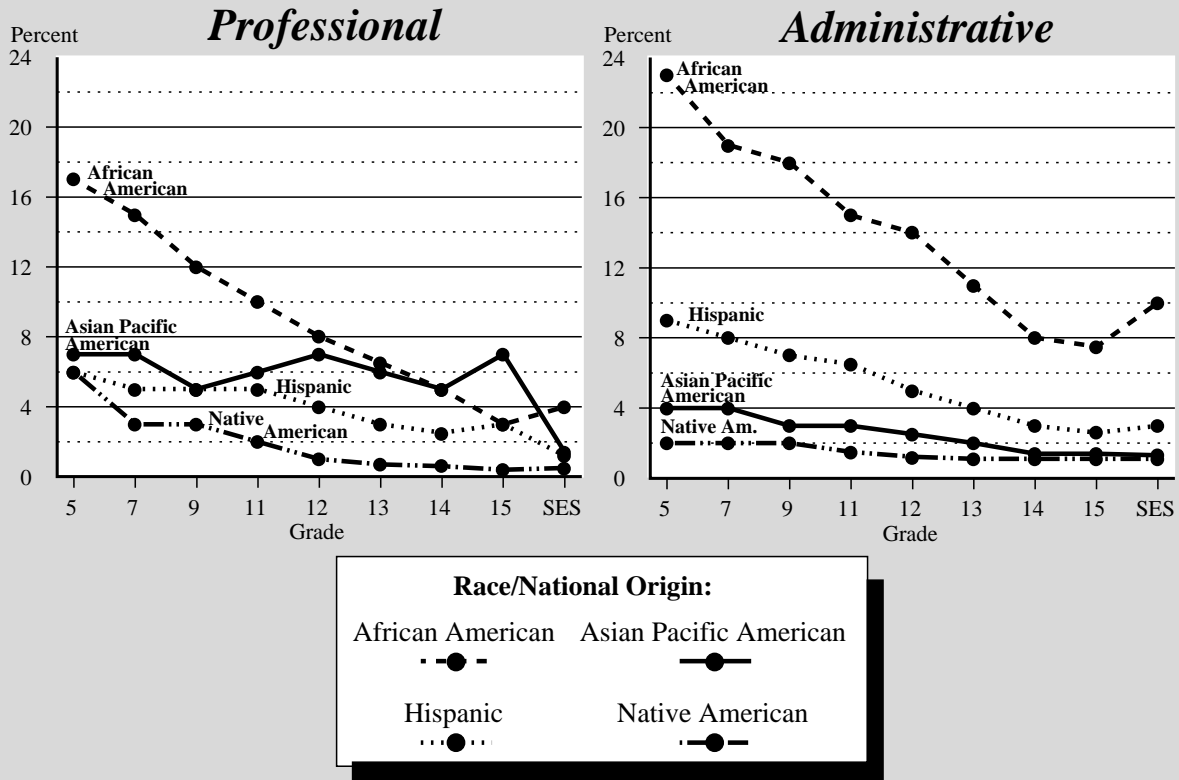
begin to look at this issue is to examine the distribution of minorities by grade level in these two job categories. Figure 3 shows the percentage of each minority group at each grade level in professional and administrative jobs.

As figure 3 illustrates, as the grade of the job goes up, the proportion of minorities typically goes down substantially. The exception to this is Asian Pacific Americans in professional jobs; members of this group hold about 5 to 7 percent of the jobs at each grade level except in the Senior Executive Service (SES). Nevertheless, at the present time it is apparent that minorities in general have not attained higher level positions in proportion to their representation in the Federal workforce. The data for African Americans in particular show a marked decline as the grade level increases in both professional and administrative positions. The main exception to this conclusion is at the SES level for administrative jobs, where the percentage of jobs held by African Americans actually increases above the GS-15 level.

Despite the fact that minorities are not currently well represented in higher graded positions, the relatively large number of minorities who are now in trainee or developmental positions (i.e., typically grades 5, 7, and, to a lesser extent, grade 9) means that the number of minorities at higher grade levels should increase substantially in the future if they are promoted at rates similar to nonminorities. As we discuss later in this report, however, based on the rates at which people in higher graded positions have historically been promoted, it will most likely be many years before minorities hold a proportionate share of the highest level jobs in the civil service.

Although there is a lack of minorities in higher level positions at the present time, it would be incorrect to conclude that progress has not been made over the last decade and a half. As table 2

Figure 3.
Percent of Minorities in Each Grade Level of Professional and Administrative Positions, by Race/National Origin, 1994



Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, calendar year 1994.

shows, with the possible exception of Native Americans, the representation of minorities in professional and administrative positions has increased significantly. The increase has been such that, as mentioned earlier, minorities, with a few exceptions, are now generally found in professional and administrative positions at rates similar to their participation in similar jobs in the national labor force.

Of course, as the percentage of professional and administrative jobs held by minorities has in-

creased, the proportion of jobs held by nonminorities has decreased by a similar amount. What is noteworthy is that while the proportion of jobs held by White employees in general has been decreasing, the proportion of jobs held by White women has been increasing. This increase for White women means a large net reduction in the proportion of jobs held by White men. This does not, however, mean that White males have lost their jobs. In fact, White men held about 446,700 professional and administrative positions in 1978 and 461,500 positions in 1995. Minorities,

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Table 2.
**Workforce Composition for Professional and Administrative Positions, by Race/
National Origin, Sex, and Time Period**

RNO and Sex	Professional		Administrative	
	1978	1995	1978	1995
White men	83.5	59.4	71.8	49.9
White women	8.1	21.9	16.1	27.8
Whites (total)	91.6	81.3	87.9	77.7
African Americans	4.3	7.7	7.7	13.4
Asian Pacific Americans	1.9	6.1	1.0	2.5
Hispanics	1.5	3.7	2.4	5.1
Native Americans	0.7	1.2	1.1	1.3

Note: Percentages in columns are computed independently and may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, 1978 and 1995.

on the other hand, collectively held 67,500 professional and administrative positions in 1978, compared to 179,100 positions in 1995.

The reason White men can hold a larger number of professional and administrative positions in 1995 but a smaller percentage of the total jobs in these two categories is that employment in both of these categories has been increasing over the last 17 years. This does not, however, mean that there has been an overall increase in Federal employment. In fact, the increase in employment in professional and administrative jobs has been more than offset by a decrease in employment in other job categories, particularly in the blue-collar area.

The net result is that the employment of White men in professional and administrative jobs has remained relatively constant over the 17-year period 1978-95, while most of the growth in these two job categories has resulted in a dramatic increase in the employment of minorities and women. This increase in minority employment again suggests that the efforts to recruit qualified women and minorities have for the most part been effective (with the exception of Hispanics and Asian Pacific Americans who have yet to achieve full representation in some job categories).

These changes mean that some White males who have been employed during the entire 17-year period may have noticed that the composition of the workforce has changed dramatically. Whereas

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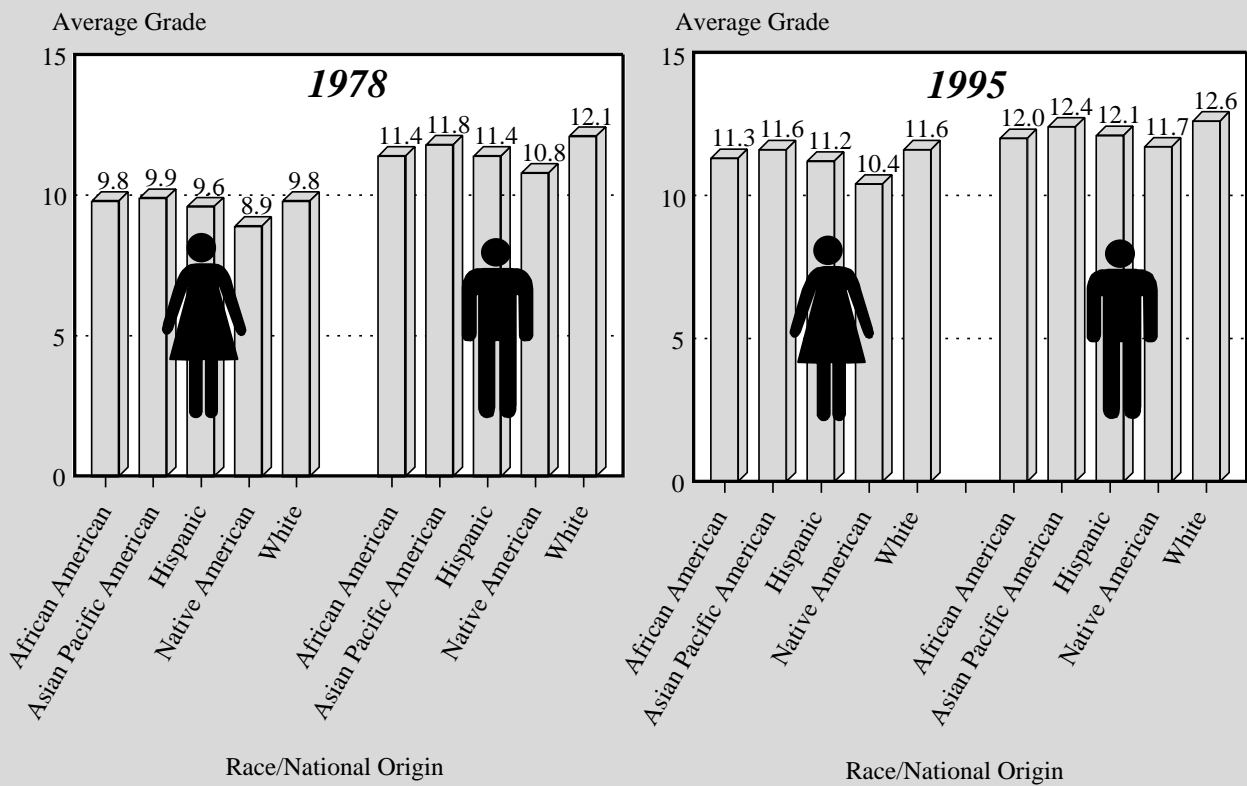
White males made up 83.5 percent of the professional and 71.8 percent of the administrative workforce in 1978, these percentages had fallen to 59.4 percent and 49.9 percent respectively by March 1995.

Although the proportion of minorities in administrative and professional positions has increased, employees from most minority groups in 1995 still find themselves concentrated in lower graded positions in these job categories. Figures 4 and 5 show the changes in average grade, by

RNO and sex, for professional and administrative occupations, respectively, between 1978 and 1995.

These figures suggest that, although the relative placement of minorities and women in the grade hierarchy of professional and administrative occupations has improved in the 17-year period 1978-95, Whites held (and still hold) a greater proportion of high-graded positions than minorities do. For the most part, White employees still have a somewhat higher average grade than employees from other RNO groups. Moreover, the

Figure 4.
Professional Positions: Average Grade by Race/National Origin and Sex, 1978 and 1995



Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, September 1978 and March 1995.

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difference in average grade was (and is still) greater between male and female employees than between minority and nonminority employees of the same sex. The net effect is that there is still a substantial gap between the average grades of minority women and White men.

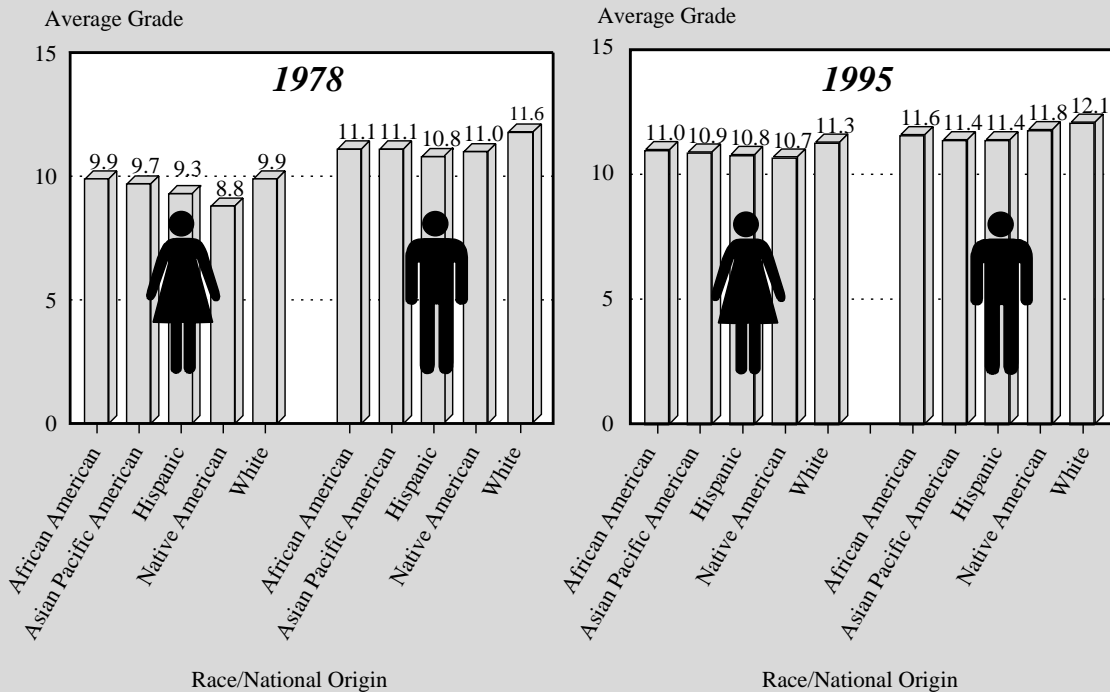
These same figures also illustrate the following noteworthy trends:

- Women have made progress in increasing their representation in higher graded positions, compared to White men. Women now hold 23 percent of the positions GS-13 and above. In

1978 women held only 6 percent of these positions. As a consequence, the gap in average grade between women and nonminority men has decreased six-tenths of a grade or more. Having said this, minority women still lag behind White men in both professional and administrative positions by at least one whole grade;

- Men from most minority groups made relatively little progress in raising their comparative representation in higher graded positions, compared to White men. With the exception of Asian Pacific American men in professional po-

Figure 5.
Administrative Positions: Average Grade by Race/National Origin and Sex, 1978 and 1995



Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, September 1978 and March 1995.

sitions, most minority men continue to be about a half a grade lower than nonminority men; and

- Notwithstanding the absolute and relative gains made by others, the average grade of White men also rose slightly during this 17-year time span.

The fact that the average grade of White men actually rose a bit during this period is an important point, because it shows that while the representation of minorities and women improved, the average grade of White males was not adversely affected. This is not to say, however, that the promotion opportunities of White men were not reduced compared to the level of advantage that they may have had in the past. Nevertheless, despite a dramatic increase in the employment of minorities and women, White men in professional and administrative positions have not lost jobs, have experienced an increase in average grade, and, in fact, continue to hold a disproportionate share of the higher graded positions.

Minority Representation in Management Positions

The above discussion focuses on the proportionately smaller number of minority employees found in higher graded positions, compared to nonminorities. A related facet of this problem is that, even though minorities have had some success of late in gaining entry into professional and administrative occupations, they have been less successful in increasing their proportional representation in the ranks of management within these occupations. The higher one looks in the managerial hierarchy, the smaller the proportion of minorities one finds, and while absolute numbers of minorities in management positions have

increased in recent years, they remain underrepresented in these important positions.

Figure 6 illustrates this point for professional positions, showing, for 1978 and 1995, the percentage of each category of position (nonsupervisory, supervisory and managerial, and executive) which was occupied by members of each RNO group. Figure 7 shows comparable data for administrative positions.

One finding that is particularly notable is that Asian Pacific Americans are relatively close to Whites in terms of average grade, but occupy considerably fewer management positions. While nonminorities hold about 81 percent of the nonmanagement professional jobs, they hold about 86 percent of the supervisory and management positions. In contrast, Asian Pacific Americans hold about 6.5 percent of the nonmanagement professional jobs but only about 4 percent of the jobs in management. This finding appears to provide some support for the view expressed by some of the people we interviewed that Asian Pacific Americans are sometimes excluded from positions of management authority.

Underrepresentation of minority employees in management positions can have a number of negative consequences. These include: fewer minorities who can serve as role models and mentors for minorities aspiring to advance in their careers; less first-hand knowledge in the ranks of management concerning the problems, concerns, and aspirations of minority employees; and possibly less commitment (and resulting effort) by the management team towards the achievement of a diverse workforce. Given such consequences, it is possible that extra efforts to increase the number of minorities in management positions may be necessary if this artifact of past hiring practices is to be overcome.

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The idea that the lack of minorities in management positions is the result of discrimination in hiring was expressed by at least one of our survey respondents, who commented on this situation as follows:

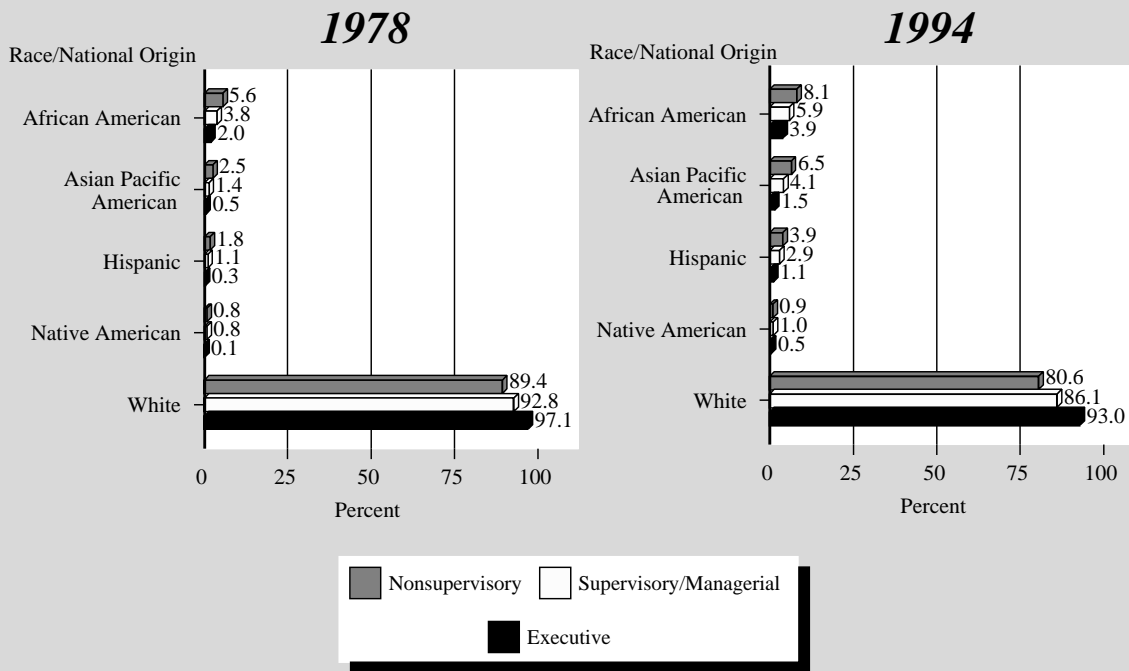
In general, the number of nonminorities in management or supervisory positions throughout the Federal Government indicates that discrimination in the workplace exists. The argument that there are not enough qualified minorities to fill

these management positions is a poor excuse. (MSPB survey respondent, GS-12 Hispanic male)

Diversity in Executive Positions

Among all the positions in management, those at the SES or equivalent levels have the highest visibility and the most power and prestige. Therefore, it is useful to look at these positions in even

Figure 6.
Professional Positions: Representation in Managerial Jobs by Race/National Origin, 1978 and 1994



Note: Data for executives reflect positions in grades 16, 17, and 18 in fiscal year 1978, and for the Senior Executive Service in calendar year 1994. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, fiscal year 1978 and calendar year 1994.

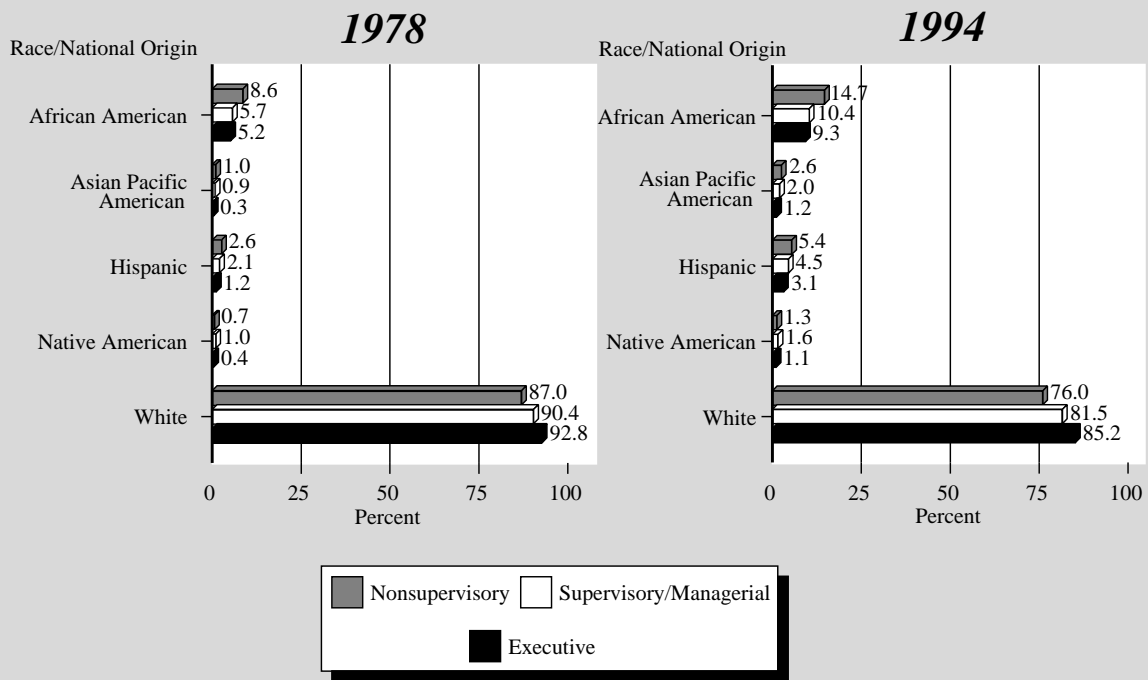
greater detail. Table 3 shows the number and percent of executive positions by RNO, for 3 different years (1978, 1985, and 1995).

As table 3 shows, minority representation in executive positions almost tripled during the 17-year period 1978-95, increasing from 301 positions to 861 positions. Even with this substantial increase, however, minorities are still substantially underrepresented in executive jobs as

compared to their representation in all professional and administrative jobs in the Federal civil service (in 1995, minorities occupied over 179,100 of the roughly 844,200 professional and administrative positions found in the Government (or 21 percent), versus only 861 of the Government's 7,494 executive positions (or 11 percent)).

Looking at groups, the largest increase in executive positions was achieved by White women,

Figure 7.
Administrative Positions: Representation in Managerial Jobs by Race/National Origin, 1978 and 1994



Note: Data for executives reflect positions in grades 16, 17, and 18 in fiscal year 1978, and for the Senior Executive Service in calendar year 1994. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, fiscal year 1978 and calendar year 1994.

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Table 3.
Number and Percentage Distribution of Federal Executives,
by Race/National Origin, Sex, and Time Period

RNO and Sex	1978		1985		1995	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
African American	202	3.3	300	4.4	527	7.0
Asian Pacific American	26	0.4	59	0.9	100	1.3
Hispanic	57	0.9	67	1.0	174	2.3
Native American	16	0.3	32	0.5	60	0.8
Subtotal Minorities:						
Men	282	4.5	395	5.8	625	8.3
Women	19	0.3	63	0.9	236	3.1
All	301	4.8	458	6.7	861	11.5
Whites:						
Men	5,741	92.5	5,978	87.5	5,541	73.9
Women	165	2.7	398	5.8	1,092	14.6
All	5,906	95.2	6,376	93.3	6,633	88.5
Grand Total	6,207	100.0	6,834	100.0	7,494	100.0

Note: Data for 1978 represent GS 16/17/18 employees, while those for 1985 and 1995 represent SES employees. Subtotal and total percentages are computed independently and may not equal individual percentages shown due to rounding.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, 1978, 1985, and 1995.

whose numbers increased from 165 to 1,092 positions over the 17-year period. White women now account for 14.6 percent of the SES, up from 2.7 percent of executive positions in 1978. African Americans achieved the smallest percentage increase, growing from 202 executive positions in 1978 (3.3 percent) to 527 such positions (7 percent) in 1995.

While these comparisons show impressive gains for minorities and women, they may be a bit misleading since they include senior executives who are political appointees as well as those who are members of the career civil service. The difference is important since most political appointees serve less than 2 years and by statute may hold no more than 10 percent of the Government's SES

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positions. Table 4 shows how the career service composition of the SES has changed between 1989 and 1995.

As table 4 shows, the percentages of minorities and women in the career SES have increased substantially over the last 6 years, although not as dramatically as would appear to be the case when political appointments are included. Nevertheless, women, both minority and White, have almost doubled their representation in senior level positions. Even so, women remain severely

underrepresented in these senior positions since they hold only 15 percent of the career SES positions, compared to about 36 percent of all professional and administrative jobs in the Government.

Members of the various minority groups (male and female) also increased their representation in the ranks of the SES, but still remain substantially underrepresented compared to their proportion of the professional and administrative workforces. African Americans now hold 6.4 per-

Table 4.
Number of Career Federal Executives by Race/National Origin, Sex, and Time Period

RNO and Sex	1989		1995	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
African American	286	4.6	431	6.4
Asian Pacific American	44	0.7	81	1.2
Hispanic	81	1.3	120	1.8
Native American	33	0.5	55	0.8
Subtotal Minorities:				
Men	372	6.0	524	7.8
Women	72	1.2	163	2.4
All	444	7.2	687	10.2
Nonminorities:				
Men	5,256	85.3	5,170	76.9
Women	463	7.5	863	12.8
All	5,719	92.8	6,033	89.8
Grand Total	6,163	100.0	6,720	100.0

Note: Percentages in columns are computed independently and may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, September 1989 and March 1995.

cent of the career SES positions, compared to 11.3 percent of the professional and administrative jobs overall. The figures for other RNO groups are: Asian Pacific Americans, 1.2 percent of the career SES positions versus 4 percent of the total professional and administrative positions; Hispanics, 1.8 percent versus 4.6 percent; and Native Americans, 0.8 percent versus 1.3 percent.

Factors Affecting the Distribution of Minorities in Professional and Administrative Positions

Differences in Experience

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, while minorities are well represented in jobs with advancement potential to the highest graded positions (i.e., professional and administrative jobs), they generally are concentrated in lower graded jobs in these occupations. The questions that need to be addressed, therefore, are: (1) "Why are minorities more often found in lower graded professional and administrative jobs?" and; (2) "When, if ever, can they be expected to hold an equitable share of positions at the highest grade levels?"

There are several possible answers to the question of why minorities are not found in proportionate numbers in higher graded jobs. One of the most obvious possibilities is that because many of the minorities currently in professional and administrative jobs have been recruited in the last 17 years, they may not have had time to gain the experience necessary to successfully compete for higher level jobs.

In order to look at the issue of experience, we obtained information from OPM's computer files which can provide a rough but useful measure of how different RNO groups compare under this criterion. Specifically, using information based on

the service computation date of Federal employees (which credits both their civilian and military service), OPM computed the average length of service of white-collar employees, by RNO group and sex. This average is only an approximate measure of an employee's experience level, since total length of service does not measure the relevance or quality of a person's experience. Neither does it count one's experience in the private sector.

Table 5 illustrates the differences in experience levels by RNO group and sex. As this table shows, there are small but real differences in the amount of experience of members of different minority groups. Generally speaking, Hispanics, Asian Pacific Americans, and Native Americans in professional positions have somewhat less experience than African Americans, who in turn have less experience than Whites. There seem to be smaller differences in experience for employees in administrative positions, with Asian Pacific Americans and Hispanics having slightly less experience than African Americans, Native Americans, and Whites.

Differences of the degree shown in table 5 may in some measure account for some of the differences in average grade seen between employees of different RNO groups. For example, since Asian Pacific American women have only slightly lower average grades than White women, it is possible that the difference in average grade between Asian Pacific American women and White women in professional and administrative jobs may be explained by the difference in years of experience between members of these two groups.

It is also possible that some of the difference between the average grade of Hispanics and Native Americans in both professional and administrative positions as compared to Whites can be explained by the fact that the average Hispanic and

Native American has less experience than the average White employee in these types of jobs. Given the fact that African Americans and Whites have only slightly different amounts of experience, it seems clear, however, that the considerably lower average grades of African Americans

cannot be explained simply by differences in the number of years of experience that they have.

It is also worth noting that, except for clerical positions, women generally have slightly fewer years of service than men in comparable posi-

Table 5.
Average Length of Service of White-Collar Employees,
by Race/National Origin, Sex, and PATCO Category, March 1995

RNO and Sex	Average Length of Service (years)			
	Professional	Administrative	Technical	Clerical
African American				
Men	15	17	15	12
Women	14	19	14	12
Total	14	18	15	12
Asian Pacific American				
Men	12	15	14	10
Women	10	14	12	11
Total	12	15	13	11
Hispanic				
Men	14	17	15	11
Women	11	16	13	11
Total	13	16	14	11
Native American				
Men	15	18	15	10
Women	12	17	13	11
Total	13	17	14	11
White				
Men	17	18	16	11
Women	12	17	14	12
Total	15	18	15	12

Note: Average length of service is computed using service computation dates, which include both Federal civilian and military service time.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, March 1995.

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tions. A similar finding was also reported in the Board's study of the glass ceiling for women, which found that some of the differences between the distribution of women and men in professional and administrative positions could be explained by the fact that women, on average, had fewer years of service.¹⁹

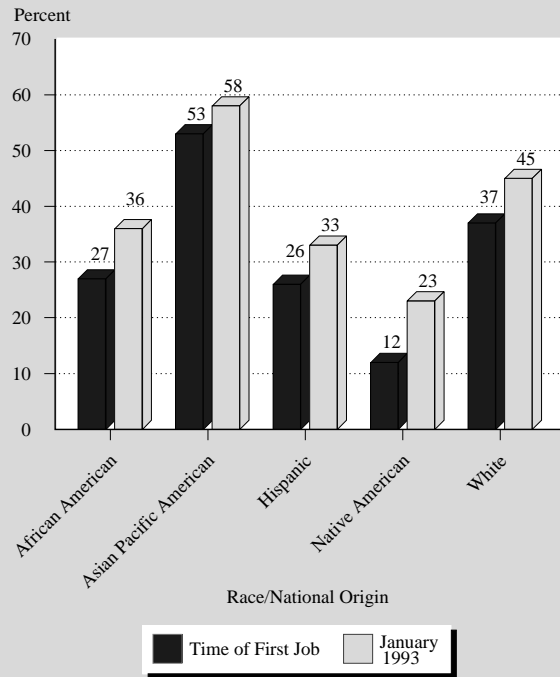
Differences in Education

Another factor that the Board previously found to be related to the grade level a person achieves in both professional and administrative jobs is the amount of formal education attained by the employee.²⁰ Figure 8, which is based on information collected in our survey, provides information concerning the educational attainment levels for members of different RNO groups. Shown in this figure are the percentage of Federal workers who had at least a bachelor's degree at the time of their first Federal job, and the percentage of employees who currently hold such a degree.

As this figure illustrates, Asian Pacific Americans start their Federal careers with the highest percentage of bachelor's degree holders of any RNO group, and they maintain this distinction as their careers progress (53 percent on initial entry to Federal service, rising to 58 percent by January 1993). Perhaps because of their high level of educational accomplishment when they enter the Government, Asian Pacific Americans show the least growth in attainment of bachelor's degree credentials while they are Federal employees.

Whites are less likely to have bachelor's degrees, both initially (37 percent) and later in their careers (45 percent), while the other minority

Figure 8.
Percent of Workforce With a Bachelor's (or Higher) Degree, at Time of First Job and in January 1993, by Race/National Origin



Source: MSPB survey of Federal employees, January 1993, question 25.

groups (African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans) show somewhat to substantially lower educational attainment. Native Americans, who both start and end with the lowest absolute rates of educational attainment among the various RNO groups, actually show the greatest rate of increase subsequent to initial hiring—almost doubling, from 12 percent to 23 percent.

¹⁹ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "A Question of Equity," pp. 13-15 (full citation is in footnote 1).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

According to 1990 Census Bureau data collected by the Glass Ceiling Commission, only 5,899 Native Americans 18 years and older had bachelor's degrees and only 3,277 Native Americans held post graduate degrees in 1990. Since data from our survey indicate that approximately 23 percent of the almost 11,000 Native Americans employed in professional and administrative positions in the Federal Government have college degrees, it is quite probable that the Government may be the largest employer of college-educated Native Americans in the country.

Differences in Job-Related Behaviors

In addition to experience and education, a variety of job-related behaviors may have an effect on how far employees advance in their careers. For example, in the Board's 1992 study of barriers to the advancement of women in the Federal workforce, we found that women were sometimes perceived as not as committed to their jobs as men because they were not as likely to be willing to relocate and were less able to work long hours or overtime. This, in turn, had an adverse impact on their careers, until they were able to prove their commitment to their jobs, in part by remaining in the workforce.²¹ In order to explore whether similar factors affected the careers of minority employees, we asked our survey respondents a series of questions about a number of work-related behaviors.

When we asked our survey respondents about their willingness to relocate, we found that about three-quarters of them had never relocated as Federal employees, while about 7 percent had relocated three or more times. Generally speaking, there were no large differences among the various

RNO groups, although Whites (8 percent) and Native Americans (8 percent) were slightly more likely to have relocated three or more times than were African Americans (3 percent), Hispanics (4 percent), or Asian Pacific Americans (3 percent).

When we asked people whether they would be willing to relocate to further their careers, Hispanics (52 percent) and African Americans (51 percent) were somewhat more likely to say that they were willing to relocate than were Asian Pacific Americans (44 percent), Native Americans (44 percent), and Whites (40 percent). The finding that 52 percent of the Hispanics say they are willing to relocate may be particularly significant given an issue that arose during our discussions with minority interest groups, i.e., the view apparently held by some Federal managers that Hispanics may not be willing to move from certain geographical locations. If so many Hispanics say they are willing to move for a job, geography may be less of a barrier to employment than has been suggested. As noted earlier, this will be one of the issues we will examine more closely in an upcoming Board report.

Another factor that could affect employees' careers is their commitment to their jobs. When we asked our survey respondents about this commitment, we found little or no difference among employees from different RNO groups, with 96 percent of our respondents indicating that they were committed to their jobs. Evidently, differences in advancement among employees from different RNO groups cannot be explained by differences in willingness to relocate or expressed commitment of employees to their jobs.

However, there were some small differences by RNO in the willingness of employees to devote whatever time is necessary to their jobs in order to advance their careers. About 75 percent of the White survey respondents indicated that they

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-22.

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were willing to devote the time required to get ahead, compared to 86 percent for African Americans, 85 percent for Hispanics, 81 percent for Asian Americans, and 79 percent for Native Americans. African Americans also reported working significantly more hours of overtime in the job previous to their current one than did other minority employees or Whites. There were no differences among RNO groups in the number of hours of overtime worked in their current jobs.

Based on these results, no overall pattern in any of these job-related behaviors would account for the difference in the distribution of minorities and nonminorities by grade level in professional and administrative jobs. Minority employees report just as much commitment to their jobs as nonminorities and appear as willing (or even more willing) to do whatever it takes to be successful.

Minorities and Career Advancement

The preceding discussion of differences between minorities and nonminorities in terms of experience, education, and job-related behaviors suggests that some minorities may be found at lower grades levels at least partly because of lower educational attainment and, to a lesser extent, less experience. Fortunately, it is possible to determine statistically the relationship between each of these variables and the grade of each employee completing our survey. Since we were primarily interested in advancement to the highest grade levels in the Government, we performed this analysis only for employees in professional and administrative jobs.

When we considered all the relevant responses to our survey questions (e.g., regarding education, experience, overtime, travel, relocations), we found that the race or national origin of the employees still had an effect on how far they advanced in their careers, independent of differences for each of these factors. On average, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans did not advance as far as either Whites or Asian Pacific American employees with the same qualifications. This is an important finding since it indicates that members of some minority groups have not been treated fairly in terms of advancement over the course of their careers.

After determining that members of some minority groups have not been treated the same as nonminorities in terms of advancement, we attempted to quantify what the negative effect of being a minority had been, using average grade data as the standard for assessing differences in people's careers. Since experience and education appeared to be the two most important objective factors which affect peoples' career advancement (and the factors for which there are greatest differences among RNO groups), we compared the careers of people from different RNO groups while controlling for the statistical effect of differences in education and experience. We then looked at the resulting differences in average grade.²²

The results of these comparisons in table 6 illustrate the extent to which, for professional and administrative positions, the careers of minority group members have lagged behind similarly qualified nonminority men. From this table we

²²It was beyond the scope of this study to determine whether the educational and experience factors discussed here are, in fact, job-related, or whether they may serve to artificially limit the career movement of those individuals who lack them.

Table 6.
Average Grade of Survey Respondents in
Professional and Administrative Positions, by RNO and Sex,
and Difference in Average Grade Compared to White Men, Not Controlled
and Controlled for Education and Experience, January 1993

RNO and Sex	Average grade (unadjusted)	Difference compared to White men	Average grade (controlling for education and experience)	Difference compared to White men
African American				
Men	11.45	(.79)	11.60	(.41)
Women	10.81	(1.43)	11.17	(.84)
Total	11.09	(1.15)	11.38	(.63)
Asian Pacific American				
Men	11.83	(.41)	11.98	(.03)
Women	10.89	(1.35)	11.51	(.50)
Total	11.47	(.77)	11.83	(.18)
Hispanic				
Men	11.48	(.76)	11.63	(.38)
Women	10.18	(2.06)	11.12	(.89)
Total	11.00	(1.24)	11.46	(.55)
Native American				
Men	11.68	(.56)	11.75	(.26)
Women	10.42	(1.82)	10.81	(1.20)
Total	11.03	(1.21)	11.32	(.69)
White				
Men	12.24	12.01
Women	10.95	(1.29)	11.34	(.67)
Total	11.79	11.77

Note: Asian Pacific American men show virtually no difference between their average grade and that of White men when education and experience are controlled for.

Source: MSPB survey of Federal employees, January 1993.

can draw several interesting insights, including the following:

- When comparisons are made between nonminority and minority employees who have equivalent credentials, the average grade differences between employees from these groups are much less extreme than when no adjustment is made for differences in education and experience. In other words, a large portion of the difference in the average grades of minorities and White men can be accounted for by differences in education and experience.

However,

- Even after controlling for differences in education and experience, there was generally a negative effect on the careers of minorities and women in professional or administrative positions because of their race/national origin and sex. The negative effect was smaller for minority men than it was for White women or minority women;
- Asian Pacific American men are an exception to this general finding about minorities, as their average grades are virtually the same as those of White men, when we control for education and experience. These data look at only the highest grade level achieved in one's career, however, and do not reflect the fact that, at any given grade, Asian Pacific American men occupy proportionately fewer supervisory or managerial positions than White men;
- The perception that minority women experience greater discrimination in their careers by virtue of their being both minority and female is supported by the data in table 6. Average grade differences are generally larger for minority women than they are for either nonminority women or minority men.

Current Promotion Patterns

The previous section showed that differences in the career advancement of minorities and nonminorities cannot be entirely accounted for by differences in education and experience. The next issue we looked at is whether current promotion patterns also show differences between minorities and nonminorities.

A review of promotion rates is particularly important because most Government employees are initially hired into trainee jobs rather than into full performance or senior-level jobs. In fact, historically, the vast majority of the Government's higher level positions have been filled by the internal promotion of current employees rather than through the selection of new employees from the outside. For this reason, the attainment of an equitable distribution of minorities in higher graded positions ultimately depends upon equitable promotion rates for all employees. Since, as discussed earlier, minorities appear to be well represented in most categories of Federal jobs, the answer to the question of how long it will take until there is a proportionate representation of minorities in higher graded positions is largely a function of the promotion rate of these employees.

There is no fixed target in the Federal Government which defines the numbers of people who will be promoted in a year. At any given instant, various factors (e.g., turnover rates, growth-or downsizing-of programs, changes in the grade levels of work being performed) may influence how many promotions occur. For these reasons promotion rates are subject to substantial year-to-year fluctuations. In fact, as we discuss later in this report, promotion rates have fallen recently for most professional and administrative positions to the lowest levels since the 1977-78 time frame. In order to avoid drawing potentially erro-

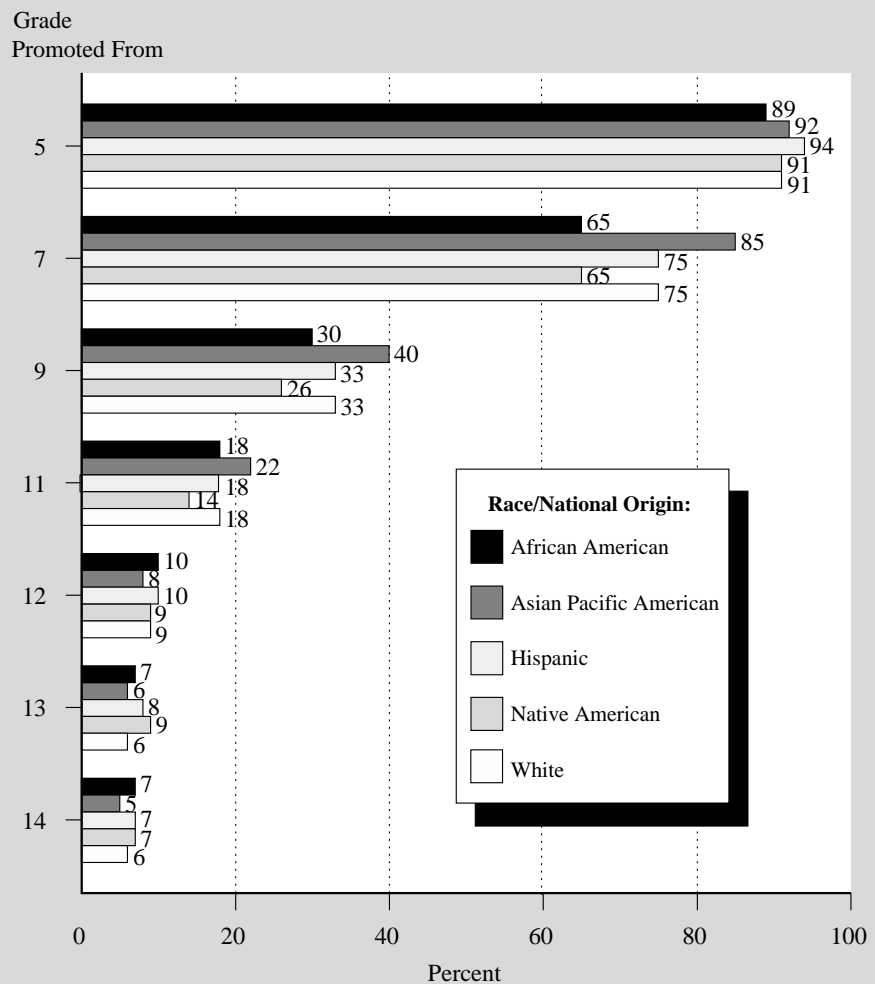
neous conclusions based on what might have been anomalous circumstances in a single year, we have chosen to use promotion rates in our analyses which are averaged over 2-year periods. We believe using 2-year averages creates a smoothing effect which provides a reasonable balance between precision and consistency.

Our analysis of promotions includes both temporary and permanent promotions because temporary promotions, while comparatively few, are an integral part of the career advancement process. We also believe that any analysis of promotion rates needs to be done at each individual grade level. The relative overrepresentation of minorities at lower grades, when combined with differences in promotion rates for different grade levels (i.e., a larger proportion of the professional and administrative workforce gets promoted from grade 5 to grade 7 each year than gets promoted from grade 14 to grade 15), makes it inappropriate in most cases to display promotion rates which put all grade levels together. Accordingly, we

have concentrated our presentation on rates broken down by individual grade level.

The average annual promotion rates by RNO group for professional and administrative positions at the grade 5 through 14 levels for the 2

Figure 9.
Professional Positions: Promotion Rates
by Grade and Race/National Origin, 1993-94



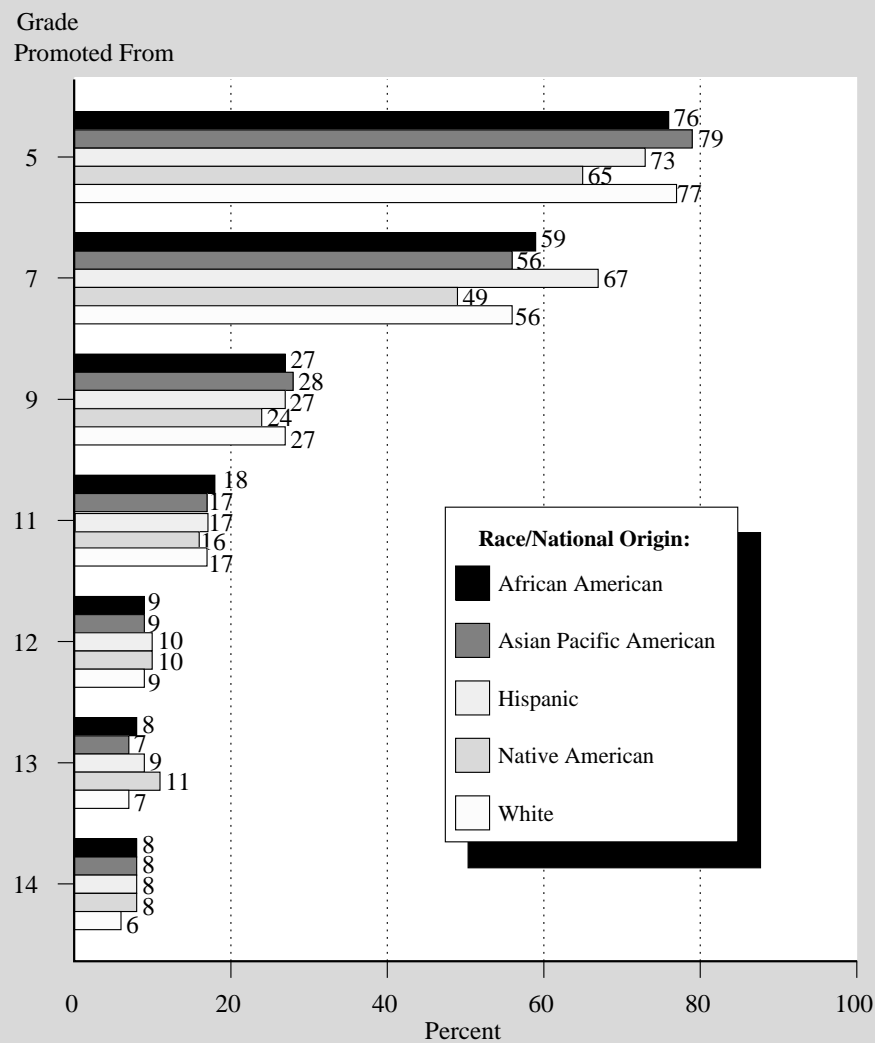
Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, calendar years 1993 and 1994.

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years 1993-94 are shown in figures 9 and 10 respectively.²³ The rates shown at each grade level represent the average annual percentage of employees at that level who were promoted to the next grade level during 1993-94. In discussing differences in promotion rates, we have chosen to concentrate our analysis on differences which appeared to be substantial in nature. Since there is no predetermined definition of what constitutes a "substantial" difference in promotion rates, we have developed our own definition for that term. Given the year-to-year variation that we found after looking at selected promotion rates since 1977, allowing for the effects of rounding errors, and recognizing that promotion rates are considerably higher at lower grade levels versus higher ones, we characterize as substantial those promotion rate differences which amounted to 5 or more percentage points at grades 5 and 7 (where most employ-

ees are promoted after only 1 year), and 3 or more points at grades 9 and above (where promotions do not usually occur each year).

Figure 10.
Administrative Positions: Promotion Rates by Grade and Race/National Origin, 1993-94



Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, calendar years 1993 and 1994.

²³ Data for promotions from grade 15 to the SES are not displayed in figures 9 and 10, since the numbers involved are so small that it can be misleading to display the data in percentage form.

Using this framework as we review the information in figure 9, we note that there were only a few grade levels at which minority promotion rates in professional positions were at a substantial disadvantage to those of nonminorities:

- **African Americans**—promotions from grade 7 and to a lesser extent from grade 9; and
- **Native Americans**—promotions from grades 7, 9, and 11.

Interestingly, there were also a small number of situations in which minority promotion rates in professional positions actually exceeded those of nonminorities by a substantial amount. These were promotions for Asian Pacific Americans from grades 7, 9, and 11.

As figure 10 shows, the promotion rates for administrative positions were slightly different from those for professional positions. As with professional positions, Native Americans were again promoted at lower rates from grades 7 and 9. Additionally, Native Americans were promoted at lower rates from grade 5. Otherwise, there were no grades at which minority employees were promoted at a substantially lower rate than Whites. Moreover, at the GS-7 level, Hispanics were promoted at a somewhat higher rate than either Whites or employees from other minority groups. Also, Native Americans were promoted at a higher rate from GS-13 than were African Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, or Whites. Thus, at least during 1993-94, most minorities were not disadvantaged in promotions in administrative positions.

In summary, the pattern that emerges from figures 9 and 10 is that African Americans were somewhat disadvantaged in professional promotions from trainee and developmental positions (i.e., grades 7 and 9), while Native Americans

were promoted at lower rates from the lower grade levels of both professional and administrative positions. Otherwise, minorities were generally promoted in both job categories at rates similar to those experienced by Whites. Based on this information it would appear that career barriers for employees from some minority groups may currently be more of a “sticky floor” than a glass ceiling phenomenon. That is, the most substantial promotion bottlenecks which minorities faced in 1993-94 were found early in an employee’s career (i.e., below grade 12) rather than at more senior levels. Of course, such bottlenecks at lower grade levels result in fewer candidates being available for promotion at the higher grade levels and, thereby, contribute to the underrepresentation of employees from these minority groups at higher grade levels.

While the 1993-94 promotion rate data examined above suggest that substantial progress has been made in eliminating systemic barriers to the promotion of minorities at higher grade levels, it is important to place these data in context. That is, although promotion rates for minorities and nonminorities at this time appear to be basically equitable except for some minority groups at the lower grade levels, the results of our analysis of our survey did reveal that there had been a cumulative negative effect for being a minority over the course of most employees’ careers. This finding suggests that promotion rates may have favored nonminorities at some point in the past.

To gain some insight into this issue and to see whether there may be different promotion patterns affecting men and women, we looked at detailed promotion data for a variety of time frames, including the 2-year periods 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, and 1993-94. The results of this review for professional positions are provided in appendix 2, which shows promotion rates broken down by RNO, grade, and sex. Appendix 3 pro-

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vides similar data for administrative positions.

Based on our review of promotion rates over the years, several important patterns emerged, including the following:

- Sticky floors (which inhibit advancement from trainee and developmental levels into higher level jobs) affected African American, Hispanic, and Native American men in professional positions through several time periods and at several levels, and thus appear to be a continuing problem;
- Over and above the problems described above for most minority men, women in professional positions faced even greater career advancement obstacles. During a number of time periods women (including both minorities and nonminorities) experienced substantially lower promotion rates from grades 7, 9, and, in some cases, 11 in professional positions than did White men (or minority men).

These are significant findings, as promotion rate disadvantages at these levels can greatly impede the advancement of minorities and women into higher level positions. This point was also raised in the Board's report "A Question Of Equity: Women and the Glass Ceiling in the Federal Government." Referring to the lower promotion rates of women in professional jobs at the grade 9 and 11 levels, that report said: "As these grades are the gateway through which one must pass in moving from the entry level to the senior level, this disparity has the effect of reducing the number of women eligible for promotion in higher graded jobs."²⁴ Based on the data contained in this report, we now know that this problem af-

fects not only women generally (and minority women particularly), but also some minority men as well.

It may be that a similar phenomenon is affecting the advancement of both women and African American and Native American men in professional positions at lower grade levels. In our earlier Board report on the barriers faced by women, we concluded that women may be required to prove their commitment to their organizations before they are given the same opportunities as men.²⁵ It could be that some minority men in professional positions also have to prove themselves to the managers in their organization, who tend to be disproportionately nonminority men. On the positive side, the current promotion rates indicate that once minorities make it through the lower grades, they are promoted at rates equal to those found for nonminorities.

It is also important to note that over the years, including the most recent ones, we found little evidence of discrimination against White men. White males, with a few exceptions, continue to be promoted at rates equivalent to employees from most minority groups at each grade level in professional and administrative positions.

Another interesting finding was that 1993-94 promotion rates for employees at GS-11 and above fell by about 20 to 30 percent from earlier levels. In all probability this reflects recent efforts to reinvent and downsize the Federal Government. In particular, it is likely that a disproportionate share of the people who took advantage of the buyouts available during those 2 years were in higher graded positions, but that efforts to reduce the number of people in middle management pre-

²⁴ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "A Question of Equity," p. x (full citation is in footnote 1).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

vented these people from being replaced. It is also likely that the lower promotion rates observed during 1993-94 will continue for the foreseeable future as downsizing will almost certainly reduce the need to promote people to higher graded positions.

The likelihood of continued lower promotion rates has at least two important consequences. The first relates to the question of how long it will be until minorities will hold a proportionate share of the higher level jobs in the Government. Although we did not attempt to develop a model to predict how long it would take for minorities to obtain parity as we did in our study of the barriers to the advancement of women, when we consider the current low promotion rates which we believe will continue indefinitely, we can only conclude that it will be many years until minorities are found in proportionate numbers in high-graded positions in the Government.

The second consequence of the lower rates of promotion for employees at the GS-11 and above levels is that the likelihood of being promoted will decline for all employees in these grades. Even before the drop in promotion rates, only about one in nine employees at the GS-12 and 13 levels was promoted each year. If the most recently observed rates continue, only about 1 in 12 of these employees will be promoted each year. The importance of this fact is that many employees overestimate the likelihood that they will be promoted and become frustrated when their expectations are not met. If the current lower promotion rates continue, the effect may be even greater feelings of frustration for both minorities and nonminorities. As we discuss in the next chapter of this report, this may exacerbate the polarization that already exists between minorities

and nonminorities in terms of how they view the Government as an employer. For example, even though promotion rates are now about equal for minorities and nonminorities, some members of each group will most likely see promotions going to members of the other group as evidence of discrimination.

Other Disparities in the Treatment of Minorities

Opportunity to Act in Supervisory Positions

Thus far in this chapter we have discussed the status of minorities with regard to their participation in the Federal workforce and the factors that affect their distribution within the hierarchy of jobs in the Government. There are, however, a variety of other areas where minorities may or may not be subjected to disparate treatment as employees of the Federal Government.

We noted in the previous MSPB report on the glass ceiling as it affects women in the Federal Government that women are more likely than men to report that developmental assignments, formal managerial training programs, and the opportunity to act in a position prior to appointment have been very important in their career advancement. We suggested one reason is that these opportunities to demonstrate their competence and abilities help break down traditional stereotypes of women as less suited for managerial positions than men.²⁶ It is likely that the same is true for minorities and so it is equally important that minorities be given the opportunity to show what they have to offer their organizations. One indication of whether minorities are given the chance to demonstrate their abilities is

²⁶ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "A Question of Equity," p. 24 (full citation is in footnote 1).

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whether they are typically asked to act in place of an absent supervisor. Our analysis of our survey data revealed this to be a particularly important issue, since we found that people who had acted in place of their supervisor were more likely to have received a greater number of promotions during the course of their Government careers.

One item on our survey addressed this issue by asking employees how often they are asked to serve as the “acting supervisor” when their supervisor is away for short periods of time. For those professional and administrative employees who are in a position to serve as the acting supervisor (should they be asked to do so), a larger proportion of minorities (29 percent) than nonminorities (24 percent) report that they “Never” or “Very rarely” are asked to do so. Correspondingly, a larger percentage of nonminorities (45 percent) than minorities (38 percent) report that they “Regularly” or “Almost always” are given such assignments.

Because some of the difference between minorities and nonminorities in response to this item may be caused by the fact that minorities are more often found at lower grade levels than nonminorities, we restricted our comparisons to employees working at the GS-11 and above grade levels. However, this limited the comparisons we could make between some minority groups and nonminorities because of very small sample sizes. As a result, we can report meaningful data for only one direct comparison between a minority group and nonminorities on this question. Specifically, comparing African Americans and Whites, there is a 10-percentage-point difference between the proportion of African Americans who report they “Regularly” or “Almost always” are asked to serve as acting supervisor (35 per-

cent) and the proportion of Whites who say this (45 percent).

Unfortunately, people who are not given the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities (or sharpen their skills) through acting supervisory assignments or special assignments such as high profile task forces or instructor duties are often thought to be less well qualified than those who have had the chance to perform these assignments. And, in fact, having not had the opportunity to improve their skills, they probably are less well qualified for promotion. The problem with such a process, however, is that it is inherently unfair, since those who did not have the chance to work on the special assignments have not had an equal chance to prove their capabilities or improve their qualifications.

Performance Appraisal Ratings

The assessment of employees’ performance can affect both their potential for career advancement and their views of their working environment. Additionally, performance appraisals are used for other, sometimes competing, purposes such as reductions in force, awards, and performance counseling. Unfortunately, despite attempts to develop objective performance standards, the appraisal process continues to be highly subjective.

For example, the Board has examined performance rating data in previous reports and found that ratings have a tendency to be inflated (e.g., more than half of all employees are typically rated as being better than average). We have also observed a tendency for women to receive higher ratings than men.²⁷ The question that we were concerned with for this study was whether there

²⁷ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, “Toward Effective Performance Management in the Federal Government,” Washington, DC, July 1988, pp. 7 and 11.

were differences in performance ratings for minorities compared to nonminorities.

To answer this question we again obtained information from OPM's Central Personnel Data File. Table 7 displays the information drawn from this file showing the average performance ratings for selected PATCO categories and the SES, by RNO and sex. Among the differences in average ratings shown in this table, some trends appear particularly noteworthy. For example, in professional positions, minorities from virtually all RNO groups have lower ratings than White men. In fact, looking at these PATCO categories and the SES, we see that, with the exception of Asian Pacific Americans in some job categories, minorities (both men and women) generally have lower ratings than nonminorities. The table also shows the previously mentioned tendency for women across all of the RNO groups to receive higher ratings than men.

While an initial reaction to the differences shown in table 7 might be that minorities are not performing as well as nonminorities, other studies suggest that this may be an erroneous conclusion. In fact, extensive research has been done in the area of performance appraisals. Consistently, this research has shown that supervisors rate employees from their own RNO group higher than they rate employees from other groups.²⁸ In general, Whites rate other Whites higher than they rate minorities. Similarly, African Americans tend to give the highest ratings to the African Americans who work for them.

Given this tendency, it is not surprising that Whites, on average, receive slightly higher performance ratings than most minorities since Whites are considerably more likely to hold supervisory

positions. Unfortunately, the disparity in the distribution of performance ratings between minorities and Whites can have a variety of negative consequences for minorities in particular, but also for the entire workforce. Lower ratings can have an effect on an employee's probability of receiving awards and promotions, and on his or her retention status during a reduction in force. The fact that nonminority coworkers receive higher ratings can also lower the morale of minority employees and increase their perceptions of discrimination. It is not surprising, therefore, that in response to one of our survey questions, minorities in general and African Americans in particular were more likely than Whites to express the view that the performance appraisal process was unfair. These perceptions can in turn lead to hard feelings and distrust that can result in a decrease in the productivity and efficiency of both minority and nonminority employees.

These very serious consequences of a disparity in performance appraisal ratings—taken together with the research showing that supervisors rate employees from their own RNO group higher—vividly illustrate why it is so important that minorities be better represented in supervisory and managerial positions in the Federal Government. Equitable treatment for minorities ultimately may depend on having a management workforce that is sufficiently diverse to offset the operation of subtle differences based on race. The ramifications of this issue are discussed later in this report.

Compensation for High Performers

While promotions are unquestionably the most desired form of recognition for performance, other monetary compensation can also fulfill an

²⁸ Kurt Kraiger and J. Kevin Ford, "A Meta-Analysis of Ratee-Race Effects in Performance Ratings," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 70, No. 1, February, 1985, pp. 56-65.

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Table 7.
Average Performance Rating of White-Collar Employees, by
Race/National Origin, Sex, and PATCO Category, March 1995

Average Performance Rating (on a 5-point scale)

RNO and Sex	SES	Professional	Administrative	Technical	Clerical
African American					
Men	4.32	3.97	4.06	3.90	3.77
Women	4.50	4.10	4.15	4.01	4.02
Total	4.37	4.04	4.12	3.98	3.99
Asian Pacific American					
Men	4.35	4.10	4.14	4.12	3.99
Women	5.00	4.12	4.30	4.20	4.27
Total	4.46	4.11	4.21	4.17	4.21
Hispanic					
Men	4.26	4.08	4.07	3.97	3.86
Women	4.53	4.14	4.18	4.11	4.12
Total	4.32	4.10	4.12	4.05	4.07
Native American					
Men	4.29	4.07	4.06	3.80	3.77
Women	5.00	4.00	4.20	3.94	3.99
Total	4.38	4.04	4.12	3.89	3.97
White					
Men	4.44	4.18	4.21	4.04	3.88
Women	4.48	4.24	4.34	4.17	4.23
Total	4.45	4.19	4.26	4.11	4.18

Note: Unabbreviated PATCO category labels included in table are: professional, administrative, technical, and clerical. Table does not reflect jobs in the PATCO "other" category. Also, SES includes all PATCO categories.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, March 1995.

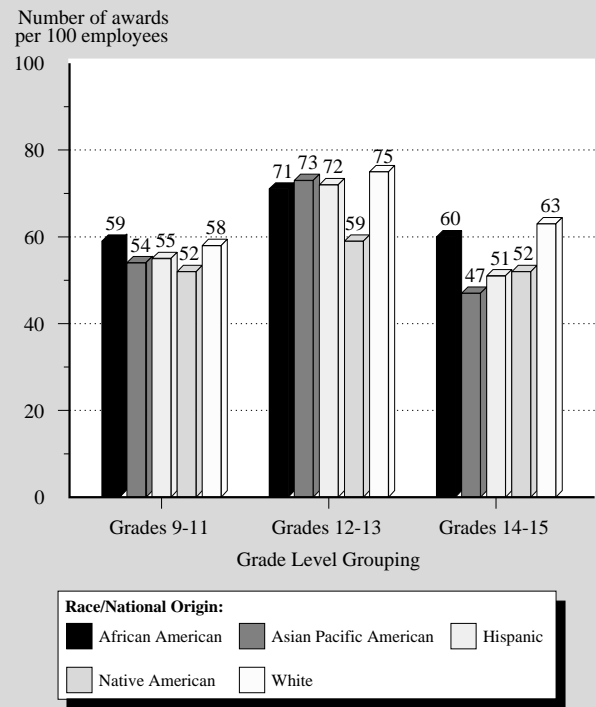
important role in motivating and honoring highly successful members of the workforce. For white-collar employees, the compensation they receive from awards can come in either of two ways—a one-time payment or an ongoing increase in base pay (called a “quality step increase” or “QSI”).²⁹ Cash awards and QSI’s also provide intangible benefits to employees, through peer group recognition, heightened self-esteem, and possibly enhanced promotion potential.

Because cash awards and QSI’s are both a reflection of how management values an employee’s contribution to mission accomplishment as well as a potentially important element in making that person more promotable, they have a double-barreled significance to an employee’s career advancement. First, if awards are not equitably granted, those who are unfairly shortchanged immediately suffer a loss in their compensation as well as their dignity. Second, since awards can be a factor in determining a person’s ranking for promotion, if employees are unfairly denied a cash award or QSI, their subsequent career advancement can be negatively affected.

Figure 11 displays selected cash award data for fiscal year 1994. Specifically, the figure shows the number of cash awards (not including QSI’s) per 100 employees for professional employees broken down by grade level grouping and race/national origin.³⁰ Figure 12 presents similar information for employees in administrative positions. The award data displayed in figure 11 reveal several important patterns:

- In each of the grade level groupings, White employees in professional positions received cash awards at a substantially higher rate than one

Figure 11.
Professional Positions: Cash Awards
by Grade Level Grouping and Race/
National Origin, 1994



Note: Award data do not include quality step increases.

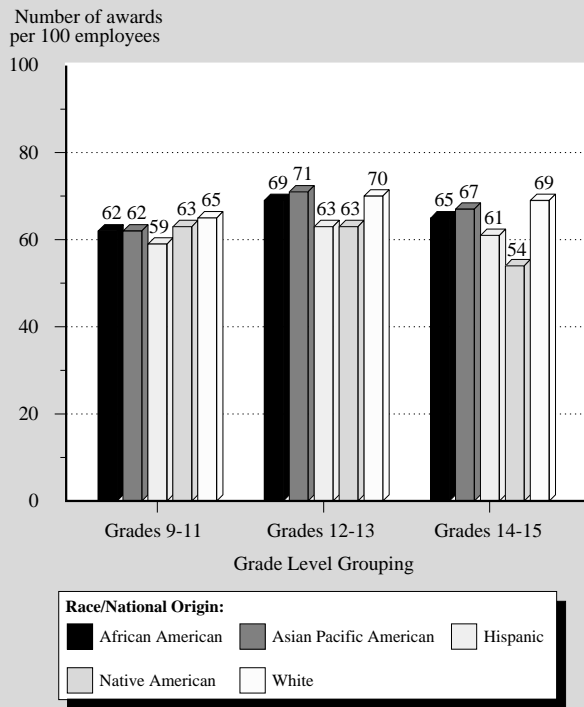
Source: OPM’s Central Personnel Data File, calendar year 1994.

²⁹ Blue-collar employees can receive one-time cash awards, but under the Federal Wage System they are not eligible for quality step increases.

³⁰ Performance awards included in our cash award data are primarily composed of the following types of awards: performance awards (e.g., sustained superior performance); Performance Management and Recognition System (PMRS) performance awards; special act or service awards; suggestion awards; and SES distinguished and Presidential rank awards. They also include a small number of other types of relatively unusual awards (e.g., gain sharing awards, invention awards). They do not include within-grade increases (which are not considered awards) or QSI’s.

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Figure 12.
Administrative Positions: Cash Awards by Grade Level Grouping and Race/National Origin, 1994



Note: Award data do not include quality step increases.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, calendar year 1994.

or two of the different minority groups. The most extreme differences occurred at GS-14 and 15, where Asian Pacific Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans received, on the average, 16, 12, and 11 fewer awards per hundred employees, respectively, than did White employees; and

- Native Americans were at a substantial disadvantage in receiving cash awards at all grade level groupings.

- In administrative positions, the award rates for minorities and nonminorities were somewhat closer than for professional positions. The largest gaps between White employees and other groups occurred for Native Americans and Hispanics at GS-14 and 15.
- At grades 9 and 11, and 14 and 15, employees in administrative occupations typically were rewarded more often than were employees in professional occupations.

Based on other data from OPM, we also noted the following trends concerning cash awards:

- In administrative occupations, women (both minority and nonminority) receive substantially more cash awards than do men. These disparities are striking in their consistency and magnitude. This pattern is also evident, though less extreme, in professional occupations.
- For professional and administrative occupations, the average amount of cash given to minorities per award tends to be lower than that given to nonminorities. For example, for professional occupations during calendar year 1994, the average award amount for minorities was 2.4 percent less than that given to nonminorities at grades 9 and 11, 6.1 percent less at the 12 and 13 levels, and 7.8 percent less at grades 14 and 15. Differences in the cash value of awards also exist in administrative occupations, but the differences are smaller.

One of our survey respondents offered the following perspective on the granting of cash awards:

It is apparent in this office that promotions [and] cash awards are based on favoritism. While this is a slightly different issue from being discriminated against based on gender and race, it is still a form

of discrimination. I have also noted that the "Favorites" are White-Anglos. (MSPB survey respondent, GS-9 Asian Pacific American female)

While QSI's are a small subset of the monetary incentive picture (and not included in any of the above discussions on cash awards), it is also noteworthy to examine what has happened with the granting of these awards. As mentioned above, QSI's are permanent increases in an employee's salary, as compared to cash awards, which are one-time bonuses. Looking at QSI data for calendar year 1994, we find that:

- For professional positions, nonminorities receive QSI's at higher rates than minorities at grades 9 and 11 (3.1 percent versus 2.4 percent), the 12 and 13 levels (4.4 percent versus 3.7 percent), and the 14 and 15 levels (5.6 percent for nonminorities versus 4.7 percent for minorities); and
- Nonminorities also receive more QSI's than minorities in administrative positions at GS-9 and 11 (3.9 percent versus 3.4 percent for minorities), but at virtually the same levels at GS-12 and 13 (5.1 percent for both minorities and nonminorities) and GS-14 and 15 (4.5 percent for minorities and nonminorities).

Discharge Rates

In 1994 OPM released a statistical report on the discharge rate of Federal employees. This report revealed that while overall discharge rates were low, they were significantly higher for minorities

than they were for nonminorities. In fact, minorities were more than three times as likely to be discharged than were nonminorities.³¹

As a result of this finding the Director of OPM called for an investigation into the reasons for this disparity. A report on that investigation was issued by OPM in April 1995. The researcher investigating this issue for OPM found that "African Americans and Native Americans working in the executive branch of the federal government were significantly more likely to be fired than comparable nonminorities, Hispanics, and Asian/Pacific Islanders."³² The report also noted that newly hired African Americans were more likely to be discharged during their probationary period than were employees from other RNO groups.

Although the study did not provide a definitive explanation for the reason for these disparities, it suggested that racially or culturally based stereotypes may affect the discipline process. Other possible reasons it cited include: differences in types of jobs held by minorities and nonminorities; poor selection, development, and accountability of supervisors and managers; and the possibility that minorities don't understand and work the "system" as well as nonminorities.

In order to better understand what may be happening in this area, the Board is currently conducting a study to look at possible reasons for the disparities in the discipline rates of minorities and nonminorities. This study is designed to help identify the underlying factors that may explain the reasons for the apparent disparity.

³¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, "Minority/Nonminority Disparate Discharge Rates," Washington, DC, February 1994.

³² U.S. Office of Personnel Management, "Federal Discharge Rates," Washington, DC, April 1995, p. D-21.

Perceptions of Minority Employment

Thus far our report has discussed two central themes. On the one hand, we have substantial evidence that the status of minorities has improved over the last 17 years. Members of most minority groups are now well represented in most Federal occupational groups. There have been marked increases in the number of minorities employed in higher graded and even executive level positions. There is also evidence that current promotion rates are nearly equitable for most occupations at most grade levels for both minorities and nonminorities.

On the other hand, we have found a continuing pattern of small but real inequities. The average grade and, therefore, pay is lower for African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and to a lesser extent Asian Pacific Americans than it is for Whites. Some of this difference can be accounted for by differences in the types of jobs typically filled by many minorities or by differences in education and experience. But we also found that a significant number of African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans have not advanced as far in their careers as Whites and Asian Pacific Americans with similar qualifications. Similarly, although they may be expected to prove their commitment to a greater degree than nonminorities, minorities are less frequently given the opportunity to serve as acting supervisors. Minorities also tend to receive lower performance ratings as well as fewer and smaller cash awards. Moreover, minorities, especially African Americans and Native Americans, are more likely to be discharged from Federal employment.

Thus, there is an improved work environment which nevertheless has a number of lingering disparities. Against this backdrop of factual findings, it is also important to understand the feelings and beliefs that employees have about what happens

around them (or to them) in the workplace since what people believe affects how they understand and respond to events.

To find out about employee perceptions, our survey included a series of questions about how employees view various issues affecting their career advancement. The responses we received suggest that there are substantial differences in views among employees from different RNO groups.

One fundamental issue which is of major concern to our study is whether minorities believe that problems in their career advancement may be linked to discriminatory practices in the workplace. We therefore asked survey respondents the following question: "In your organization, to what extent do you believe that employees from the following groups are subjected to *flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices* which hinder their career advancement?" Figure 13 shows how employees responded to this question.

Many employees from each minority group believe that they are victims of flagrant discrimination. This view was most prevalent among African Americans, 55 percent of whom thought that they were victims of discrimination to a "Great extent" or "Moderate extent." Substantial proportions of the other minority groups also hold this view: 28 percent of Hispanics, 21 percent of Asian Pacific Americans, and 19 percent of Native Americans. Generally speaking, minority employees are more likely to think that members of their own group are victims of discrimination than are members of other groups.

The depth of the feelings of minorities who believe that they are victims of discrimination was illustrated by many of the comments we received in response to our survey. Among the comments were the following:

Here we have a White female employee who never worked for the Government before. She comes on board September 1991, the last month of the fiscal year, and was given an “outstanding” [rating] for fiscal year 1991. I asked the supervisor how could he possibly justify that rating? The reply was nonsensical. Six months later, this same White female employee was given a career ladder promotion. Each time my career ladder promotion was due, I had to ask the supervisor over

and over to submit [the] paperwork to process my promotion. Needless to say, by comparison, I never received my promotions in a timely manner. Again when I questioned the supervisor about this, I received a non-justifiable answer. (MSPB survey respondent, GS-12 African American female)

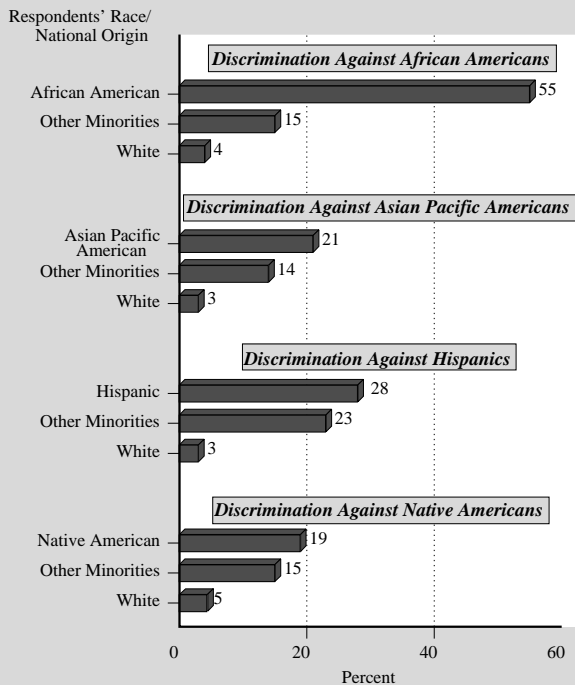
In the Federal Government the general rule for Blacks [is], if you’re Black, get back, and if you’re White, you’re all right. There are managers with no concept of what a manager is or [is] supposed to be. Managers are not concerned with your knowledge, skills, and abilities, but are only concerned with the color of your skin and/or if you are Black, would you fit in the White scope of things. (MSPB survey respondent, African American female)

Much of what I have seen and felt, I prefer to keep inside. Let’s just say that racial equality is not in sight. You can’t imagine how much it hurts to write the above comment after 30 years of service. (MSPB survey respondent, grade 15, race or national origin unidentified)

Based upon the subtle but real differences in treatment and a history of discrimination in society in general as well as in the Government, it is not surprising to find that minorities generally believe that they continue to be the victims of discrimination. What is surprising is the extent of the differences in perceptions between minorities and nonminorities. Very few nonminorities believe that flagrant discrimination against employees from any minority group exists in the Federal Government.

A similar pattern of responses, showing disparate views between minorities and nonminorities, was evident in the answers given to a related survey question. That question asked, “In your organization, if the management became aware of the ex-

Figure 13.
Extent to Which Employees Believe Minorities Are Subjected to “Flagrant or Obviously Discriminatory Practices,” by Race/National Origin



Note: Response percentages are for answers of “To a Great Extent” or “To a Moderate Extent.”

Source: MSPB survey of Federal employees, January 1993, question 46.

The Employment of Minorities

istence of *flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices* against the following groups, to what extent do you believe management would take forceful actions to stop such practices?”

In response, only 32 percent of African Americans answered that to either a “Moderate extent” or “Great extent,” management would take forceful action to stop flagrant discrimination against them, while 64 percent of Whites held this view concerning African Americans. Interestingly, however, more Whites were confident that management would take forceful action to stop flagrant discrimination against African Americans than against other minority groups (i.e., only 48 to 57 percent of White respondents believed that management would take action to stop discrimination against Hispanics, Asian Pacific Americans, and Native Americans). In fact, the difference in the views of Whites and nonminorities concerning protection from discrimination is greatest between Whites and Afri-

can Americans. Whites tend to believe that African Americans have made the most progress in moving into top-level positions and are better protected against discrimination by management than are members of other minority groups. For their part, African Americans employees are the most likely to believe that they are victims of flagrant discrimination and are least likely to believe that they have made progress in moving into top-level positions.

The survey also asked comparable questions concerning the presence of *subtle* barriers which hinder the career advancement of men and women from each minority group, and the likelihood of managers taking forceful actions to remove such subtle barriers if they became aware of them. The responses to these questions follow the same general patterns as those described above concerning flagrant discrimination, including the fact that the greatest difference in views is found between African Americans and Whites.

Table 8.
Percent of Employees Agreeing With:
“Minority women face extra obstacles in their careers because they are
both minority and female,” by Race/National Origin and Sex

Sex	Race/National Origin				
	African American	Asian Pacific American	Hispanic	Native American	White
Men	45	26	37	21	17
Women	71	47	64	54	32

Note: Response percentages are for answers of “Strongly agree” or “Agree.”

Source: MSPB survey of Federal employees, January 1993, question 39c.

Finally, the survey also included a question regarding the special circumstances which minority women may face. Specifically, it asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “Minority women face extra obstacles in their careers because they are both minority and female.” The answers we received show that substantially more minorities than nonminorities believe this to be true (54 percent versus 23 percent).

Since the insights and experiences of men and women on this question may be different, it is also useful to look at these data by sex and RNO combined. Table 8 does this, illustrating that views on this issue are very polarized, with the different sexes as well as RNO groups holding widely divergent perspectives.

Perceptions of Progress by Minorities

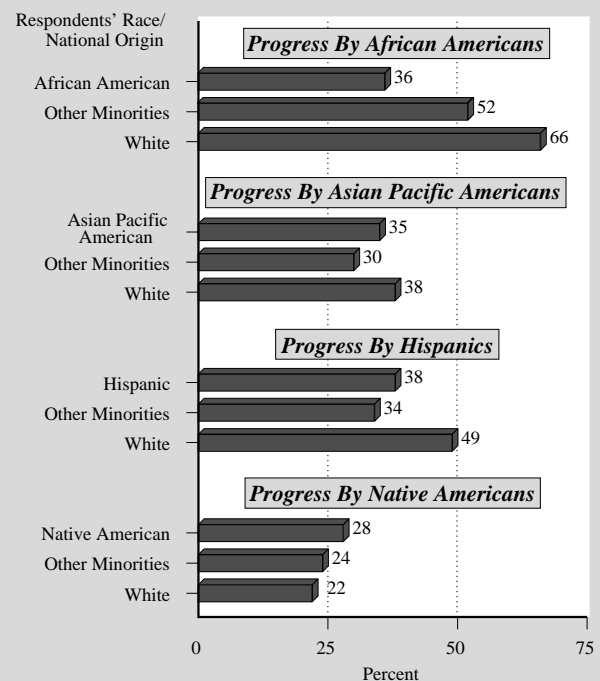
So far, this discussion of perceptions held by employees has focused primarily on *discrimination against* minorities. Our survey also asked respondents what they believe about the *progress made* by minorities. The responses to this question provide a slightly different perspective on employee attitudes. Taken together, the responses to these questions give some important insights about why it may be taking a long time to achieve full equal employment opportunity in the Federal civil service.

Figure 14 shows the responses to the question, “What is your general impression of the amount of progress each of the following groups has made in moving into top level positions in the Federal Government in the last 5 years?” The percentages shown in the figure reflect, for each minority group, a summation of the “Considerable progress” and “Some progress” answers, by the RNO of the respondent.

Looking at these responses, we see at least three things which seem noteworthy:

- Self-assessments among the various minority groups, about the progress that their own groups had made, were clustered fairly closely together. That is, 26 to 38 percent of the members of each minority group believed that their own group had made at least some, if not con-

Figure 14.
Percent of Employees Believing Minorities Have Made Progress in Moving Into Top-Level Positions, by Race/National Origin



Note: Response percentages are for answers of “Considerable progress” or “Some progress.”

Source: MSPB survey of Federal employees, January 1993, question 32.

siderable, progress in moving into top-level jobs;

- Nonminorities evaluated the progress of each minority group (except Native Americans) slightly to substantially more favorably than members of the groups themselves did; and
- Among the various groups, the greatest dichotomy between one group's self-perception of the progress it had made and the other groups' views on that progress occurred for Af-

rican Americans. All other minority groups and Whites had a much more favorable assessment of African American progress than African Americans themselves had.

Appendix 4 provides some of the overall findings discussed in this chapter broken down by RNO group. In the next section of this report we will discuss some possible explanations for the divergent views of minorities and nonminorities as well as some of the consequences.

Explanations for Disparities Between Minorities and Nonminorities

In the previous chapters of this report we have noted that minorities have made considerable progress in entering the Federal service and in advancing into top level jobs. We believe that much of this progress is directly attributable to the existence of a strong merit system in combination with continuous attention to the importance of a diverse civil service. It is the merit system that ensures that, in most instances, the most qualified candidate for a job will be selected regardless of sex, race, or national origin and that high quality work will be recognized and rewarded.

However, findings presented in the preceding chapter on the employment of minorities in the Federal Government also suggest that minorities may not be treated equally with respect to all employment-related actions in the Federal Government. While these findings do not suggest flagrant, pervasive discrimination, they do indicate that minorities continue to face some disadvantages, particularly in those aspects of employment where subjective judgments play an important role.

On average, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are found at lower grade levels in professional and administrative occupations than Asian Pacific American and White employees, even accounting for differences in education and experience. Moreover, they are more likely to

be subject to disciplinary actions than Asian Pacific American and White employees. For their part, Asian Pacific Americans are found in grade levels comparable to those of nonminorities, but are less likely to be found in supervisory or management positions. Members of most minority groups tend to receive lower performance ratings and fewer cash awards than Whites, and there is some evidence that they are not given the same opportunities for career advancement-related assignments, such as temporary supervisory roles.

In addition to facing differences in employment-related outcomes, minorities and nonminorities hold very different perceptions of the dynamics of the workplace. For example, while most White employees believe that African Americans have made some or considerable progress in moving into upper-level positions in the Government, their view is not shared by African Americans themselves. Overall, a significant percentage of minorities believe that they are victims of continuing discrimination, while nonminorities apparently believe discrimination has been nearly eliminated.

The purpose of this section is to provide some explanations as to why these differences between minorities and nonminorities continue to exist. We believe there are four major factors that interact with one another to account for most of the differences we have identified in this study. These

Explanations for Disparities

factors include (1) society's history of discrimination and racism which exists as a backdrop to, and influences, people's perceptions about work in the Federal Government and relationships with one another; (2) the continuing tendency, in the absence of objective criteria, for judgments about minorities in employment situations to be influenced by stereotypes; (3) the inadequacy of tools for evaluating employees when hiring and appraisal decisions are required, and poor communication of the reasons for such decisions; and (4) the reality that expectations of career-enhancing opportunities exceed actual opportunities. Each of these factors is discussed below.

Historical and Contextual Backdrop

One of the reasons that some disparities in the treatment of minorities continue to exist, and that perceptions of disparate treatment are so tenacious, is that our Nation has a long history of discrimination against minorities which has not been totally eradicated. Discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, or national origin has been unlawful since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and certainly we have come a long way toward providing equal opportunity in employment for all citizens. At the same time, there is widespread acknowledgment that we have not achieved complete equality of opportunity yet. When asked by a Gallup poll in 1990 if they believe Blacks have as good a chance as White people in their community to get any kind of job for which they are qualified, one-quarter of

those interviewed said "No"—a figure that has remained unchanged since 1978.³³

This reality has further been acknowledged by the Nation's leadership. President Clinton, for example, said recently, "Despite great progress, discrimination and exclusion on the basis of race and gender are still facts of life in America."³⁴ Similarly, when asked whether he believed that the Nation was colorblind, Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, responded, "We're not colorblind. I'd say it's a lie to walk into a school in America and say, 'This is a colorblind society.'"³⁵ Moreover, in a recent decision which raised questions about the constitutionality of many affirmative action programs, the Supreme Court noted, "The unhappy persistence of both the practice and the lingering effects of racial discrimination against minority groups in this country is an unfortunate reality * * *."³⁶

None of these comments was addressed directly to Federal employment, and, in fact, representation of minorities in the Federal workforce in general exceeds their representation in the private sector. Nevertheless, it is unrealistic to believe that the Federal Government, which employs a broad cross-section of the American populace, is immune from the attitudes and beliefs that pervade American society as a whole. In fact, those who have researched issues more specifically related to the employment of minorities have reached similar conclusions. For example, in its report on "Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s," the U.S. Commission on

³³ The Gallup Poll Monthly, June 1990, p. 24.

³⁴ "Clinton vows he will fight to retain affirmative action," Los Angeles Times, June 14, 1995, p. A1.

³⁵ Kevin Merida, "Gingrich offers provocative views on racial issues," the Washington Post, June 16, 1995, p. A9.

³⁶ Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, writing for the U.S. Supreme Court in *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Federico Pena, Secretary of Transportation, et al.*, 115 S.Ct. 2097 (1995).

Civil Rights noted that, “The evidence accumulated in this study convinces the Commission that the problem [of employment discrimination] is a serious one and that it pervades both private corporations and government agencies.”³⁷

Finally, we know that minority women—who comprise over half of minorities in the Government—also face disparate treatment based on their sex. The stereotypes and assumptions that minority women face as women, discussed at length in a previous Board study,³⁸ no doubt contribute to the disparity in treatment and perceptions of minorities and nonminorities discussed in the previous chapter.

Stereotypes as a Factor in Judging Employees

One manifestation of the lingering racism in our society is the tendency to let stereotypes color one’s judgment about people of different racial or national origin backgrounds. In one sense stereotyping is a normal process—not necessarily inaccurate or biased—through which people organize information about the world around them. In a sense, stereotypes serve as a kind of “shorthand.” If we know a few obvious facts about a person, we assume we know a great deal more based on that person’s membership in a group. The problem comes when people are willing to attach negative characteristics to the obvious facts such as the person’s race or national origin.

By their very nature, stereotypes can affect behavior unconsciously and strongly influence how

people act toward one another. Those who are influenced in their decisions by stereotypes normally don’t even realize that they may be making inaccurate judgments about others, or that stereotypes have anything at all to do with their personal decisionmaking process.

It is exactly for this reason that we can better understand the causes of the disparities between minorities and nonminorities identified in this study if we recognize that stereotypes can negatively influence some managers’ judgments. Stereotyping is a natural process that is engaged in by people of all races and national origins, minority and nonminority. However, it is a process which is less likely to adversely affect White employees than minorities because White employees are much more often found in positions responsible for evaluating people in order to hire, promote, discipline, or reward them.

In every case discussed in this report, the magnitude of the differences between minorities and nonminorities was small but real. Given the size of these disparities in outcomes, it may be that they can best be explained by subtle factors affecting the judgments made about minority employees. Rather than being the result of obvious and intentional discrimination on the part of nonminority supervisors and managers, it is possible that many of the differences we found resulted from the use of stereotypes in situations where there was limited objective information available for making judgments about employees. This is not to say that flagrant discrimination does not exist anywhere in the Government, but much of the disparity we found in the treatment

³⁷ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s,” February 1992, Washington, DC, p. 197.

³⁸ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, “A Question Of Equity” (full citation is in footnote 1).

Explanations for Disparities

of minorities can be explained without assuming that substantial numbers of supervisors are consciously biased against minorities.

Stereotypes create expectations about a person based not on what he or she has done, but on what he or she is assumed to be like, because of membership in a group. Stereotyping is most likely to occur when there are very few employees of a particular group in an organization, not much is known about those employees besides their appearance, and criteria for evaluating people are ambiguous.

For example, an Asian Pacific American recently promoted to a supervisory position in an organization that consists mainly of non-Asian Pacific Americans, could be a victim of judgments based on stereotypes when the time came to evaluate her performance as a “manager.” Since one stereotype that affects Asian Pacific Americans is that they are assumed to be passive and better suited for technical rather than people-oriented work,³⁹ this manager might be vulnerable to judgments that are influenced by such a stereotype, regardless of her actual skills in managing her staff.

The nature and impact of stereotypes in employment situations have been documented by considerable research conducted in experimental settings. In one example of such a study, interviews by White interviewers with African American and White candidates were videotaped. Unknown to the interviewers, the applicants had

carefully rehearsed responses to the interview questions so that their answers were identical. Yet the videotapes showed that without realizing it, White interviewers reacted more negatively to the African American candidates than to the White candidates, even though their qualifications and interview responses were exactly the same.⁴⁰ Also, as discussed earlier in this report, research has suggested that people tend to evaluate more favorably the performance of people of their own race than those of another race, particularly when those of the other race are few in number in their organization.⁴¹

Beyond providing an inappropriate and unfair basis for making judgments about a person, stereotypes have a number of additional negative effects for the person who is judged on this basis. Stereotypes can be self-fulfilling and thereby ultimately result in low self-esteem. People who are presumed to be unsuitable for a job because of membership in a group may be influenced by the reactions of coworkers or supervisors who act on the basis of the stereotype. Individuals who are victims of stereotypes may begin to doubt their own competence and may not perform up to their potential.

Stereotypes also tend to be self-reinforcing, in that people tend to ignore information that challenges a stereotype and remember information that confirms it. For example, if a White man, who fits the traditional stereotype of an effective manager, makes a mistake, it may well be dismissed as something that could happen to anyone. But if

³⁹ Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, “Good For Business: Making Use of the Nation’s Human Capital,” Washington, DC, March 1995, pp. 104-105.

⁴⁰ Thomas F. Pettigrew and Joanne Martin, “Shaping the Organizational Context for Black American Inclusion,” *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 43, No. 1, 1987, pp. 41-48.

⁴¹ Kraiger and Ford, *op. cit.*

the Asian Pacific American manager were to make the same mistake, it may reinforce the stereotype of her unsuitability for a managerial position. Conversely, when the White manager excels at a task, it may be attributed to skill; when a woman or minority surpasses expectations, it might be attributed to luck or special treatment based on the individual's race, national origin, or sex. Thus, stereotypes often operate as a subconscious sieve through which information about a candidate or employee is filtered, interfering with a thoughtful, objective evaluation of the individual.

What minority employees see as discrimination against them may well be the outcome of attitudes and behavior that stem from stereotypes held by people of different races or national origins. That minorities would interpret such attitudes and behavior as discrimination is certainly reasonable given the history of discrimination in our society. This problem is exacerbated when supervisors lack tools for objectively evaluating employees without falling prey to the subjectivity of stereotypes.

The Challenges of Impartial Evaluation and Effective Communication

One reason stereotypes can influence judgments and result in disparities in the treatment of minorities and nonminorities and in perceptions of disparate treatment is because managers often lack the tools and skills they need to effectively manage a diverse workforce. These can include the tools for recruiting and selecting high-quality

candidates, and the skills for effectively communicating the reasons for nonselection to those who are not chosen. They can also include the skills to clearly communicate performance expectations and the tools to objectively evaluate performance outcomes. Previous Board reports have addressed shortfalls in management skills, which arise out of the tendency for agencies to emphasize technical rather than supervisory skills in selecting supervisors, and to neglect sufficient training of new supervisors once they are selected.⁴² We believe these shortfalls contribute to disparities in the treatment of minorities and nonminorities and to employees' perceptions of disparate treatment.

There is probably no part of a supervisor's job that is more important and at the same time less well-understood than the process for evaluating an employee's performance and potential for future performance. Yet supervisors must make such assessments every day in order to make hiring and promotion decisions, assign work, allocate scarce training resources, write performance appraisals, and make tough decisions regarding disciplinary actions. While the Government's merit system ensures that such evaluation processes serve to maximize fairness and minimize the potential for bias, no system can ever be completely without judgment or the potential for inequity.

To illustrate this point, let us look at the selection process. In an effort to ensure that applicants for a job are evaluated objectively, many agencies use a system of assigning them numerical scores according to how closely candidates' qualifications meet ranking factors pre-specified on a crediting

⁴² See, for example U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "First-Line Supervisor Selection in the Federal Government," Washington, DC, June 1989; and U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "Federal First-Line Supervisors: How Good Are They?," Washington, DC, March 1992.

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plan. Since there are few situations in which we can determine precisely what attributes will lead to success on the job, crediting plans are normally based on a series of assumptions. One such assumption is that past behaviors are reliable predictors of future performance, which is not always the case. This is especially true when the vacancy to be filled involves job requirements that differ from the requirements of the jobs previously held by the applicant.

Additionally, the development of crediting plans requires making subjective judgments about which skills and aspects of past performance should be included and how much weight each should be assigned. Is it more important for the team leader to have demonstrated technical competence, leadership skills, or teamwork? Should 3 years of experience as a supervisor be given more or less weight than an advanced degree, or 10 years of technical experience in the field? There is nothing scientific about how these decisions are made; they are based on judgments which at times are not much better than guesswork.

Compounding this problem for minorities is that judgments made about the qualifications necessary to succeed in a job are often based on the experience of those who have traditionally held those jobs. Since the incumbents, particularly in higher graded jobs, are likely to be White men, the evaluation process can fall prey to a self-perpetuating cycle in which those who fit a traditional image have an advantage. Add to this the fact that minorities often have fewer opportunities to demonstrate their abilities (see previous chapter on employment of minorities in the Government) and what looks like an objective, neutral process in reality can work to the disadvantage of minorities.

Once the best qualified candidates are referred to a selecting official, further subjectivity enters the process. In the absence of any other effective means for deciding which of the few top-scoring candidates is really the best for the job, supervisors may easily fall back on selecting someone in their own image, or selecting someone based on the recommendation of someone they know. Again, both of these tendencies can work to the detriment of minorities, even though that is not the intention of the selecting official. One survey respondent expressed her perception of how this process operates this way:

The subtle barriers are those that concern me. Management's general lack of respect and mistrust of anything other than the White male is the real problem. Management should have more training to overcome their fear of minorities.
(MSPB survey respondent, GS-13 White female)

There is yet another factor that also may work to the disadvantage of minorities: the Federal hiring process is often slow and cumbersome. In the interest of getting someone on board quickly so that the job can get done, supervisors sometimes sacrifice quality for expediency, selecting from among the first qualified candidates available, rather than waiting for one who will be a better employee for the job in the long run.⁴³ This can pose a problem for selection of minorities when the job is advertised in such a way as to solicit applications from a limited range of people—i.e., the “area of consideration” has been defined narrowly—making it difficult to find a diverse group of highly qualified applicants. Moreover, when presented with a list of qualified candidates, most supervisors have neither been trained for the selection process nor given the tools to choose the best person for the job among those on the list.

⁴³ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, “The Rule of Three in Federal Hiring: Boon or Bane?,” Washington, DC, December 1995.

Actually, the fact that the selection process involves a great deal of supervisory discretion can, under some conditions, serve as a disadvantage to nonminorities as well as minorities. This can occur when a supervisor believes it is important to correct underrepresentation of women or minorities in his or her work unit and so feels compelled to overemphasize the race, national origin, or sex of applicants without ensuring first that they are also high-quality candidates. The experience of one of our survey respondents illustrates this situation:

As an applicant, I have been denied positions because I am a White male. As a supervisor, I have been pressured to select applicants who had less experience and in my judgment, less ability, though they did “qualify” for positions. (MSPB survey respondent, GS-14 White male)

It is important at this point to clarify some very common misperceptions about the nature of the Government’s affirmative employment program. Affirmative employment in the Federal Government currently means that supervisors *may* take race/national origin into account in choosing among qualified candidates. They may *not* choose an unqualified candidate over a qualified candidate. There is no Governmentwide requirement for supervisors or agencies to meet “quotas”; rather, where the representation of minority groups is below their representation in the civilian labor force so that a “conspicuous absence or manifest imbalance” exists, the agency may, but is not required to, develop reasonable goals to address the imbalance.⁴⁴ Such affirmative employment programs are often designed to overcome the unconscious bias that adversely affects minorities and women, as described above.

However, while the requirements of affirmative employment programs in the Government do not mandate selection or promotion of minorities, this does not mean that in practice, decisions have not been made which emphasize the minority status of the candidate selected at the expense of fitting the right person to the job. Particularly in agencies where underrepresentation of minorities has been severe, pressure has been put on managers to increase diversity at all levels within their organization. However, because these managers are often in a hurry to fill vacancies, they may not take the time to try to recruit from a broader applicant pool in order to find highly qualified minorities. Consequently, in some cases it is likely that some managers have selected or promoted minorities from a limited, local applicant pool who are not as well qualified as people they might have found if recruitment had been carried out more broadly.

Due to the subjective nature of the selection processes we have just discussed, supervisors also select White employees who are not well qualified. The problem, as noted in our earlier discussion of stereotypes, is that mistakes made by minorities can be much more visible and more likely to be remembered than mistakes made by poorly qualified nonminorities. Thus, the perception by nonminorities that affirmative employment programs have resulted in the selection of minorities over equally or better qualified nonminorities is probably accurate in some cases. It is also true that less qualified nonminority employees have probably been selected over better qualified minorities; these instances are just less visible and more easily forgotten. Our preceding analysis of current promotion rates showed that minorities and nonminorities are promoted at comparable

⁴⁴ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, EEO Management Directive MD-714, issued Oct. 6, 1987. Although this directive was scheduled to expire at the end of fiscal year 1992, it has been extended indefinitely.

Explanations for Disparities

rates. This suggests that while the best qualified candidate may not always be selected initially, affirmative employment programs have succeeded in ensuring that minorities and nonminorities are affected about equally by the promotion process.

Comments we received from survey respondents also suggest that when one or more of their own subordinates applies for a promotion, supervisors sometimes intentionally or unintentionally misrepresent the reasons for their selection decision. Rather than risk alienating a White employee who may have been passed over for a promotion because he or she was not the best qualified, some supervisors allow employees to believe that there was no option but to select a minority candidate, even when there was. While we have no way of knowing how common this practice is, it is unlikely that very many supervisors intentionally mislead their subordinates. But, as we discuss later, there is a natural tendency for many people who are not selected to assume that some external factor unrelated to their qualifications was operating to influence the decision not to select them. Any hint by a supervisor that suggests affirmative employment considerations entered into the selection decision may be interpreted by employees as the reason they were not selected even when the successful candidate was better qualified.

In short, there are a number of weaknesses in our system for recruiting and selecting employees that reinforce each other and can result in the perception that minorities have unfair advantages in career advancement. In some instances, higher level management may put pressure on first-level supervisors to correct underrepresentation without first ensuring that those supervisors have the support and tools they need to recruit and evaluate enough minority candidates to identify the best person for the job. In those instances, the potential exists that a minority will be selected who

is not an ideal match for the job. This in turn contributes to a perception of “reverse discrimination,” and in some cases also sets up the minority employee for failure. The imprecision of the instruments we use for ranking candidates exacerbates this problem because in the absence of an explicit reason (such as the goal of achieving a representative workforce) for selecting one candidate over another, unintentional bias may insert itself into the process. When first-level supervisors are unable or unwilling to effectively or honestly explain their selection decisions to nonselected employees, misperceptions are further heightened and resentments fueled.

The paucity of appropriate feedback on selection decisions is illustrated by the responses to one of our survey questions. When we asked survey respondents who indicated they had not been selected for a competitive promotion for which they had applied in the last 3 years whether they had asked for and received useful feedback about why they were not selected, less than half (48 percent) indicated they had asked for feedback. More importantly, only 8 percent of respondents indicated they both asked for and received useful feedback as to why they were not selected. It certainly would be a good management practice to make this information readily available to unsuccessful applicants, whether they asked for it or not.

As this discussion has shown, inadequate skills and tools with respect to selection and communication can contribute to disparities in the treatment and perceptions of minorities and nonminorities. Supervisors, under pressure to fill jobs quickly and to correct underrepresentation, sometimes select the first candidate available to them from a list of qualified candidates, rather than taking the time to recruit a more qualified candidate. Lack of careful selection is even more likely to occur when the supervisor lacks the tools

to effectively evaluate candidates on the list received from the personnel office. If the selected candidate is a minority group member, nonselected employees are left to assume (or in some cases are even told) that they were passed over because of affirmative employment requirements. Meanwhile, because of hasty selections, some minority employees are put in a position where not only is success more difficult but their failings are very visible.

Mismatch Between Expectations and Opportunities

A final factor that feeds the perceptions by both minorities and nonminorities that their groups are subject to discrimination is the reality that there aren't very many opportunities for promotion available. This creates considerable frustration for all employees (minority and nonminority) and frequently causes them to attribute their lack of advancement to something other than the fact that a lot of people were in competition for a rare promotion opportunity, and a better qualified candidate was selected.

The scarcity of available opportunities for advancement is evident from the previously presented data (see figs. 9 and 10) showing promotion rates by grade for 1993-94 in professional and administrative positions. As we noted earlier, advancement beyond GS-12 is almost impossible for employees who are not in professional or administrative jobs. In fact, there are very few technical positions above GS-12 or clerical positions above GS-9. Moreover, even in professional and administrative positions,

promotions beyond grade 12 are relatively rare. While the majority of employees who begin their careers in a GS-5 professional or administrative job will be promoted to GS-7 and then to GS-9 relatively quickly, promotions slow down greatly from that point on. Only a little more than one-quarter of the employees in GS-9 jobs were promoted to GS-11 in 1993-94, and only about one-sixth were promoted from GS-11 to GS-12. At grades 12, 13, and 14, fewer than 1 in 10 employees were promoted, and fewer than 1 in 100 employees in GS-15 jobs were promoted to the SES in 1993-94. Moreover, for all employees, promotion rates above the trainee level (i.e., above GS-7) were lower in 1993-94 than they were in 1991-92. It is no wonder, then, that employees become frustrated as their opportunities for promotion become increasingly restricted.

Moreover, when people fail to achieve an objective they have set for themselves, it is human nature to attribute that failure to something external to themselves.⁴⁵ Thus, as mentioned above, it is only natural for people to attribute another candidate's success in gaining a promotion for which they also competed to external factors such as affirmative employment objectives (or discrimination) rather than to the fact that they may have been less qualified than the other candidate. In many situations, nonminorities may attribute their failure to achieve a promotion to affirmative employment requirements, while minorities may attribute their failure to achieve a promotion to racism. These tendencies are, of course, exacerbated when applicants don't receive feedback from selecting officials as to the real reasons for the selection.

⁴⁵ G. Weary, M.A. Stanley, and J.H. Harvey, "Attribution," Springer Verlag, New York, 1989.

Conclusion

Overall, the Government's merit system and emphasis on achieving a diverse workforce have succeeded in ensuring that in most instances minorities and nonminorities enjoy an equal opportunity to pursue successful Federal careers. However, as outlined in the previous chapter, some differences in employment outcomes and larger differences in perceptions remain. This chapter has described some of the factors that can work in combination to explain these disparities. The attitudes and biases that are found in the Federal Government reflect those that are found throughout our society, and that is a society in which racism and discrimination persist at least to some degree. Moreover, Federal employees are human, and human nature is such that we tend to stereotype groups different from us and to act on the basis of assumptions inherent in those stereotypes. Embedded in those stereotypes is a mismatch between the characteristics we associate with various minority groups, and characteristics we associate with certain kinds of jobs. Mistakes made by minorities in jobs traditionally held by nonminorities (such as supervisory positions) are likely to reinforce those stereotypes.

Human nature also is such that we tend to attribute our failures to something other than our

own shortcomings, and so when we encounter difficulty in competing for promotions beyond entry-level grades, we assume those who were successful had an advantage other than their qualifications.

The adverse effects of these factors are exacerbated by hiring, promotion, and performance appraisal processes which involve considerably more subjective judgment than we usually acknowledge. Those processes force supervisors, who often lack the training and tools required to make good and objective judgments, to make decisions based on other criteria. When they believe the priority is to correct underrepresentation in their workforce, and to do so in a hurry with a small number of candidates, the result is sometimes the selection of minority candidates who are not ideally suited for the job. On the other hand, without other criteria, unintended bias may creep into the selection process—an effect that prevents minority candidates from being given adequate consideration. The result is not only the disparities in treatment described in the previous section, but a severe polarization in the perceptions of both minority and nonminority Federal employees.

The Consequences of Disparate Treatment and Perceptions

Differences in the treatment of minorities and nonminorities, however subtle, and differences in the perceptions of the two groups have a significant and adverse impact on the Federal workforce. Even perceptions of discriminatory treatment cost the Government in terms of turnover, loss of credibility, and lost productivity. Particularly in these times of fiscal constraint, when the Government is demanding more than ever from its employees and requiring increased levels of cooperation and teamwork, such perceptions have a detrimental effect on employee and work group productivity.

The Impact of Stereotypes

As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the ways in which stereotypes of minorities adversely affect employee productivity is in creating self-fulfilling prophecies. Considerable research has shown that people who hold stereotypical beliefs adjust their behavior to those whom they stereotype and as a result those who are subject to stereotypes tend to behave in such a way as to confirm the stereotype.⁴⁶ For example, if a White employee assumes, based on a stereotype, that his African American coworker is unqualified for her job and incapable of meeting performance re-

quirements, he may act in ways which undermine his coworker's confidence in her own work performance. As a result, she performs less effectively. The White employee may even make it more difficult for the African American to succeed by denying her access to the kind of informal relationships or networks which can be helpful in providing information and advice. If the White employee is the African American employee's supervisor, he may give her less challenging assignments.

Thus, stereotypes indirectly deprive the Government of some of the potential contributions which minority and female employees can and should make to their organizations. In many cases, the differences in the ways minorities are treated as a result of stereotypes are subtle and difficult to detect. As one survey respondent told us:

It was difficult to respond to some of the [survey] questions because [the] treatment and behavior of those above me are subtle and imperceptible, but I "feel" some form of bias exists. (MSPB survey respondent, GS-14 Asian Pacific American male)

Nevertheless, when we asked survey respondents how much stereotypes based on their race/national origin have adversely affected how they are

⁴⁶ Ann Morrison, *The New Leaders: "Guidelines on Leadership Diversity in America,"* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1992.

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treated in their organization's, nearly half of African Americans and one-third of other minorities answered "Greatly" or "Moderately." However subtle the expression of stereotypical beliefs may be, a significant portion of minority Federal employees believe that they exist and that they are affected by them. Given the backdrop of small but real disparities in the treatment of minorities that were discussed earlier, it is really not surprising that substantial numbers of minorities hold these views.

Research outside the Federal sector has shown that minorities sometimes avoid situations where they are likely to be subjected to stereotypes.⁴⁷ They often choose not to apply for positions where a minority will be highly visible, and to leave organizations where they believe their visibility subjects them to particular scrutiny. While we do not have any direct evidence from the Federal Government on stereotypes as a cause of employee turnover, we do know that a significant number of minority survey respondents (nearly one in five) reported that they chose not to apply for a promotion or developmental assignment because they believed that no one from their race/national origin group had a chance of being selected (see fig. 15). This suggests that at a minimum, there have been many instances in which Federal supervisors have lost the opportunity to consider a full range of qualified applicants for jobs.

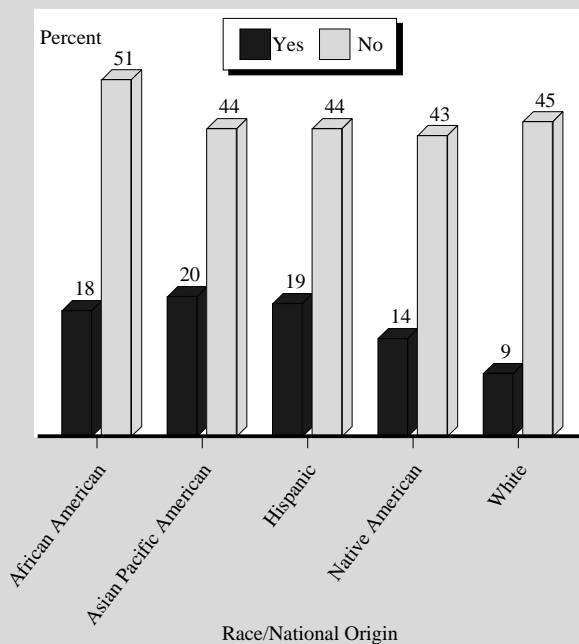
Some Consequences of Employee Perceptions

Figure 15 illustrates another point, which is that some White employees (in this case about 1 in 10) also believe that because of their race/national

origin they might be denied consideration for a promotion or developmental opportunity. This was also a common theme among many of the comments we received in conjunction with our survey. The following statement is typical of these comments:

I have been turned down for a job simply because I was not a minority. This is discrimination-

Figure 15.
Responses to a Survey Question Concerning Whether Employees Chose Not To Apply For a Job Because of Their Race/National Origin



Note: Percents for each RNO group do not total 100 because responses of "Not applicable" and "Don't know/Can't judge" are not displayed on the chart.

Source: MSPB survey of Federal employees, January 1993, question 33.

⁴⁷ Pettigrew and Martin, op. cit.

Consequences of Disparate Treatment and Perceptions

plain and simple. (MSPB survey respondent, GS-13 White male)

There are both minorities and nonminorities, then, who believe their race or national origin adversely affects their career advancement. In the previous chapter we provided several explanations for the relatively common perception that Federal supervisors are giving undue weight to nonmerit factors in making selection and promotion decisions, including the lack of effective communication about the basis for their decisions to employees who were not selected. We also noted in an earlier section that minorities and nonminorities have very different views of the extent to which minorities face discriminatory treatment in the Federal Government. In the section below, we discuss the consequences of such perceptions in the Federal workplace.

Views on Affirmative Employment

One of the areas where minority and nonminority employees' views diverge the most is on the value of affirmative employment programs. For example, when we asked our survey respondents whether they believed selecting officials should consider whether minorities are underrepresented in the work unit as one of the important factors in deciding among otherwise equally qualified minorities and nonminorities, more than half of minorities but less than one-third (30 percent) of nonminorities agreed. While these responses may reflect, in part, the self-interest of minority respondents who stand to gain from affirmative employment programs and nonminority respondents who do not, respondents' attitudes toward affirmative employment are not based on self-interest alone. (If they were, we would expect there to be even greater agreement on the part of minorities and even less agreement on the part of nonminorities.) Rather,

support or opposition to affirmative employment policies also reflects the extent to which employees believe discrimination is still a problem in Federal agencies, and whether minorities have made sufficient progress in gaining access to higher level jobs. Of those White employees who believe that African Americans have made some or considerable progress in moving into top-level positions (see fig. 14), for example, only 30 percent agree that minority underrepresentation should be considered in selection decisions, and 54 percent disagree. Among White employees who believe progress by African Americans has been minimal or nonexistent, these numbers are reversed; 50 percent agree that minority underrepresentation should be a consideration in selection decisions, and 31 percent disagree.

A similar pattern can be found when comparing those nonminorities who believe minorities are subject to flagrant discrimination to a moderate or great extent versus those who believe they are subject to discrimination to a minimal or no extent. Likewise, minorities who believe that little progress has been made are more supportive of considering underrepresentation in hiring decisions than those who believe minorities have made considerable progress.

This relationship between support for affirmative employment programs and the perception of the extent to which minorities continue to face barriers in career advancement speaks to the need for agencies to ensure that employees receive accurate information about the status of minorities (and women) in their own workforces. Where there are real disparities in opportunities available to particular groups of employees, and employees are apprised of the situation, they are more likely to support efforts to make opportunities equal. Similarly, where the facts indicate that minorities are equitably represented in organizations and there is no evidence of disparate treat-

Consequences of Disparate Treatment and Perceptions

ment, informing the workforce of these facts may help to dispel some misperceptions that create a perceptual gulf between minorities and nonminorities. When employees do not have facts, but are left to rely on their own perceptions, the result instead is a polarization of the workforce with all of its adverse consequences.

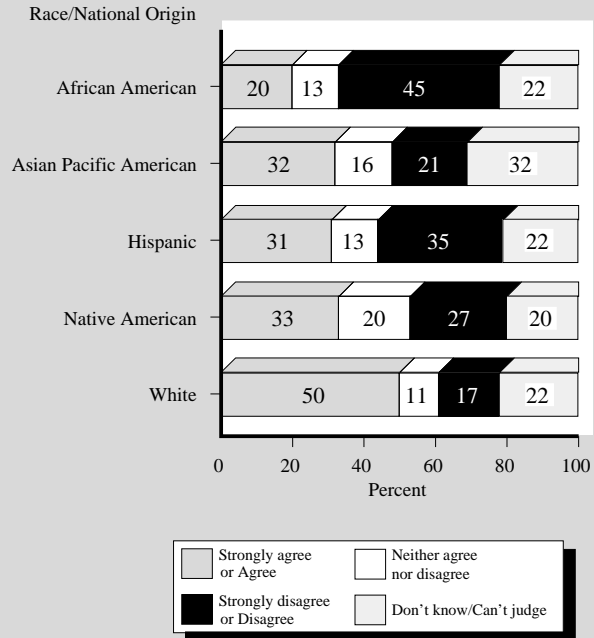
Lack of Confidence in the Government's Commitment to EEO

One consequence of the polarization of views between minority and nonminority Federal employees that permeates the Federal workplace is that many employees lack confidence in their organizations' commitment to equal employment opportunity. When we asked employees whom we surveyed whether they agreed that their organizations truly support EEO, very few employees expressed agreement. Only about one in four employees (26 percent) agreed with the statement, "My organization gives positive recognition and rewards to supervisors and managers who actively support the goal of equal employment opportunity for all employees."

Of even greater concern than the lack of confidence in their organization's promotion of EEO is employees' lack of confidence that discrimination complaints would be resolved fairly by their organization. Figure 16 shows the responses of employees to a survey question which asked them whether they believe their organization's management would impose appropriately strong disciplinary measures against a supervisor or manager found to have discriminated against an employee. Fewer than half of all employees (43 percent) agreed that such action would be taken. Almost one-quarter (22 percent) of employees disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while an equal percentage were unsure.

Moreover, when we asked employees if they believe an action they filed charging race/national origin discrimination would be resolved in a fair and just manner by their organization, even fewer employees (34 percent) agreed. One-quarter (27 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed, while one-fifth (21 percent) were unsure. Among survey respondents, African Americans have the least confidence in their organizations; only 18 percent

Figure 16.
Responses to a Survey Question
Concerning Whether Supervisors
Who Discriminate Receive
Appropriately Strong Punishment



Note: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: MSPB survey of Federal employees, January 1993, question 39j.

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agreed or strongly agreed that an EEO complaint would be resolved fairly by their organization's management, and nearly half (49 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed. White respondents have the most confidence, although 22 percent disagree or strongly disagree that management would resolve such an issue fairly. This distrust of the EEO process was also reflected in the written comments of some survey respondents. The following is one example:

Employees perceive EEO programs as lip service. Complaints and grievance processes are a joke because even though everyone knows that management cannot or is not supposed to retaliate against an employee for filing a complaint, they know it happens. We need to stop talking about EEO and affirmative action and just do it. It has to start at the top. (MSPB survey respondent, GS-12 Hispanic male)

Thus, one consequence of employee evaluation processes which inevitably involve subjective judgment and too little communication with employees about why selection, award, and punishment decisions are made, is that a significant percentage of Federal employees lack confidence in the Government as an employer committed to equal employment opportunity. At times, the absence of confidence translates into anger, which is expressed in lawsuits, demonstrations, and other forms of protest, which are often reported in the press.⁴⁸ Not only do employees, then, doubt the Government's commitment to EEO, but upon learning about the discontent, the public may also lose its confidence that the Federal Government, the Nation's largest employer and enforcer of its

EEO laws, is truly dedicated to equality of employment opportunity.

The fact that the EEO complaint system lacks credibility also reinforces the importance of monitoring employment-related data, employee perceptions, as well as formal charges of discrimination. In response to a question on our survey, only 12 percent of those employees who believed that they were victims of discrimination in the last three years said they filed a complaint. Those who did not file a complaint were given a list of reasons why they chose not to and asked to mark all that applied. The most commonly selected reasons were fear of retaliation (marked by 50 percent); that it was not worth the effort (marked by 40 percent); and the disbelief that they would get a fair hearing (marked by 37 percent). Thus, while the EEO complaint system serves an important role in providing redress for aggrieved individuals, it is not realistic to rely on it as the only gauge of whether discrimination or perceptions of discrimination are issues in any particular organization.

Costs Incurred by the Government

In addition to damaging the credibility of the Government as an equal opportunity employer, perceptions of discrimination can result in real monetary costs to the Government. For example, the Government may well have to incur the expense of replacing employees who ask for reassignment or who resign because they believe they do not have an equal opportunity to advance. While we don't have the data required to estimate

⁴⁸ See, for example, Leigh Rivenbark, "More bias charges at Justice," the Federal Times, May 9, 1994; Veronica T. Jennings, "Blacks describe how bias hurt their careers at NIH," the Washington Post, Aug. 10, 1993; Tracy Everbach, "U.S. government hires too few Hispanics, study says," Dallas Morning News, Apr. 22, 1991.

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these costs in the Federal Government, one private sector company, Corning Incorporated, estimated its cost of recruiting, training, and relocating replacements for women and minorities who left the company at \$2 million to \$4 million a year.⁴⁹

In addition to giving rise to recruitment and replacement costs, perceptions of discrimination can cost the Government in terms of lost productivity. The Board's latest study of sexual harassment in the Government, which did collect data regarding the impact of a hostile work environment on employee turnover, use of sick leave, and individual and work group productivity, estimated the sum of these costs to be \$327 million over a 2-year period.⁵⁰

We can assume from these studies that there is a real cost to the Government from employees' perceptions of discrimination. This is in addition to the \$31 million paid to Federal employees and their attorneys as a result of discrimination complaints in fiscal years 1993 and 1994.⁵¹

Beyond the potentially quantifiable direct costs related to turnover, lost productivity, and litigation, such perceptions are also bound to have indirect and less measurable (but still detrimental) impacts on the ability of Federal employees to work together to get the job done. When such a large percentage of employees lack confidence in their supervisors and the EEO process, and perhaps their coworkers, it is bound to have an adverse impact on collegiality and teamwork. As

the Government downsizes, it is imperative that members of the workforce learn to work in new, more productive ways. To the extent that animosity exists among members of the workforce, this will not happen. Employees who do not believe they have been treated fairly are unlikely to go out of their way to cooperate with their supervisors and coworkers.

Perceptions of discrimination also have an impact on employees' motivation. When we asked survey respondents the extent to which their motivation on the job has suffered because of the way people from their race/national origin group have been treated in regard to career advancement, 24 percent answered to a "Great" or "Moderate extent." Again, African Americans are the most affected, with 41 percent indicating that their motivation has suffered to a "Great" or "Moderate extent."

Thus, in a variety of measurable and unmeasurable ways, the Government as an employer, and therefore the taxpaying public, is paying a price for the differences in the treatment and perceptions of employees outlined in this report. Even small differences in the treatment of employees are resulting in large differences in perceptions of their own and others' opportunities for advancement, and to a lack of confidence in their organizations' commitment to EEO. This distrust, in turn, costs the Government in terms of employee turnover, unwillingness of employees to make themselves available for promotion, loss of productivity, and lack of teamwork.

⁴⁹ Morrison, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁵⁰ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace: Trends, Progress, and Continuing Challenges," Washington, DC, October 1995.

⁵¹ U.S. General Accounting Office, "Discrimination Complaints: Monetary Awards in Federal EEO Cases," GAO/GGD-95-28FS, Washington, DC, January 1995.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Considerable progress has been made toward achieving a Federal civil service that reflects the Nation's diversity, as envisioned by the Civil Service Reform Act in 1978. The Government employs a higher percentage of African Americans and Native Americans than are employed in the civilian labor force, and about as many Asian Pacific Americans. Hispanics are underrepresented in the Federal workforce, and that is the subject of an MSPB report to be issued in 1996.

In addition to making noteworthy progress in entering Federal jobs, minorities are making considerable progress once they enter Government service, with more minorities than ever holding top-level positions in the Government. In general, it appears that adherence to merit principles and the Government's conscious effort to achieve a diverse workforce have gone a long way towards ensuring equal employment opportunity for men and women, minorities and nonminorities. However, parity has not yet been fully obtained and it is clear that some barriers to complete equality of opportunity continue to exist. On average, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans have not advanced as far as White or Asian Pacific American employees in white-collar jobs—a disparity that can only partly be explained by the fact that a greater proportion of employees within these groups tend to be found in lower graded technical and clerical jobs than in professional and administrative jobs which have advancement

potential to higher grades (albeit less and less in the continuing environment of downsizing and restructuring). Among employees in professional and administrative jobs there is a tendency for minorities to be concentrated in the lower grades. This disparity can also only partly be explained by differences in education and experience and is not accounted for at all by other work-related factors, such as job commitment and availability for geographic relocations. Minority women are at a greater disadvantage than nonminority women or minority men. While Asian Pacific Americans are found at grade levels comparable to those of White employees in professional and administrative jobs, they are less likely to be in supervisory or management positions.

The situation has improved over time in that, currently, at most grade levels, promotion rates are fairly comparable for all groups. However, African Americans continue to be promoted at lower rates than other employees in trainee and lower-graded positions in professional occupations (GS-7 and GS-9), while Native Americans are promoted at lower rates in both professional and administrative positions at grades 7, 9, and 11. Moreover, because Governmentwide downsizing and restructuring have resulted in a considerable reduction in overall promotion rates, it will take a long time for minorities to be fully represented in senior levels.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Minorities also tend to be at a disadvantage in terms of job rewards, which no doubt has an impact on their job satisfaction as well as career advancement in the long run. They receive fewer opportunities to act temporarily for their supervisors, lower performance ratings, fewer and smaller cash awards, and fewer quality step increases at most grade levels. Moreover, African American and Native American employees tend to be discharged at a significantly higher rate than White employees, Asian Pacific Americans, or Hispanics—a subject that is being explored in greater depth in another Board study that is underway.

The disadvantages faced by minorities in their Federal careers are small in terms of the size of the aggregate statistical differences, but these disadvantages are very real. They appear in those aspects of the employment process in which individual judgment is required; e.g., promotions, assignments, rewards, and discipline. A major reason that such disparities continue is that the Government has not found a way to successfully build in mechanisms for ensuring that the subjective judgments necessarily involved in these processes are free from bias or other phenomena that inadvertently work to the disadvantage of employees who don't fit the traditional mold. Some people believe that the system is inherently racist. What we found was not intentional racism, but rather processes for allocating job rewards that have a built-in inertia in favor of the status quo, a status quo that was defined in an era when White men held the vast majority of professional jobs.

These disadvantages for minorities have consequences that will grow in significance as the Government continues to downsize. As long as minorities are few in number in top-level positions, they are likely to be subject to stereotypes. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle in which their performance is judged more harshly, their

mistakes are remembered, and their opportunities to demonstrate their abilities are fewer.

Equally significant are substantial differences in the ways minorities and nonminorities view the dynamics of the workplace. African Americans, in particular, are very likely to report that they are subject to flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices, while very few White employees perceive this to be the case. Conversely, African Americans have little confidence in management's commitment to stop such discrimination, while White employees have greater confidence that management would take steps to eliminate discrimination against African Americans than against other minority groups. White employees also tend to have a more positive assessment of the progress made by minorities in moving into top-level positions than do minorities themselves.

It is clear that many of these perceptions reflect a significant degree of misunderstanding on the part of many minority group members and Whites. Minorities are subject to disparate treatment in some instances, but we found little evidence that they are subject to flagrant discrimination, at least with respect to those job outcomes we could measure. Minorities have made progress in moving into senior-level positions, although they face more barriers in making that progress than many White employees recognize. Nor did we find evidence that "reverse discrimination" against White employees actually occurs to any great extent. In the absence of factual information about the nature of work-related opportunities in their own agencies, employees have been left to make inaccurate assumptions, resulting in a polarization that harms workforce effectiveness.

Employee misperceptions have a significant cost to the Government in terms of turnover, lost pro-

Conclusions and Recommendations

ductivity, and ineffective teamwork. Moreover, misperceptions lead employees to distrust the Government's employment policies, thus contributing to a self-perpetuating cycle in which efforts to make opportunities more equitable instead contribute to stereotypes and increased polarization.

With these conclusions in mind, we offer the following recommendations:

- 1. Agencies should conduct their own analyses of differences in promotion rates, performance awards, and other aspects of the personnel process.** Because our findings are based on Governmentwide data, our study did not identify greater or lesser disparities between minorities and nonminorities that may exist within individual departments, agencies, or subunits of those departments or agencies. After ascertaining their own situation, agencies should disseminate the findings of their analyses to employees so perceptions can be based on accurate data rather than on rhetoric or misconceptions. Where there are disparities between minorities and nonminorities, concerted action should be taken to find the causes and address them.
- 2. Assessments of progress toward ensuring equal employment opportunity should include gathering and addressing employee perceptions.** This can be done through surveys, interviews, focus groups, or some combination of the three. What is important is that some regular mechanism be institutionalized for identifying where employees are likely to perceive unfair treatment or a lack of equal opportunity. Where perceptual problems are identified, agencies should develop programs to remedy these problems. In addition to suggesting areas for further management investigations of actual disparities, such assessment devices can identify areas where factual information needs to be provided to employees in order to correct perceptions that some employees receive better or worse treatment than other employees as a result of their race or national origin. This is essential for maintaining a workforce committed to teamwork and high productivity.
- 3. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and Federal agencies should continue to work toward development of better and more "user friendly" tools for assessing candidates that allow supervisors to accurately and objectively rate candidates on job-related characteristics.** For example, OPM should consider developing sample questions for assessment interviews. Moreover, with OPM guidance, agencies should provide training to supervisors in how to use these tools in such a way as to minimize the bias that often inserts itself into the evaluation process. Managers should be made aware of the potential for such unconscious bias in their selection, appraisal, and reward determinations so that they can critically examine their decisions before finalizing them. OPM should also include in its training for supervisors instruction in how to effectively communicate to the workforce both the criteria that will be used to evaluate candidates/employees and the reasons for selection and reward decisions once they are made. As better evaluation tools are developed and as supervisors and employees gain a better understanding of the limitations of such tools, the polarization within the Federal workplace will be lessened, enhancing productivity, justifying the expenditures required to develop better tools and training programs. OPM should form a partnership with agencies in order to share the costs for

Conclusions and Recommendations

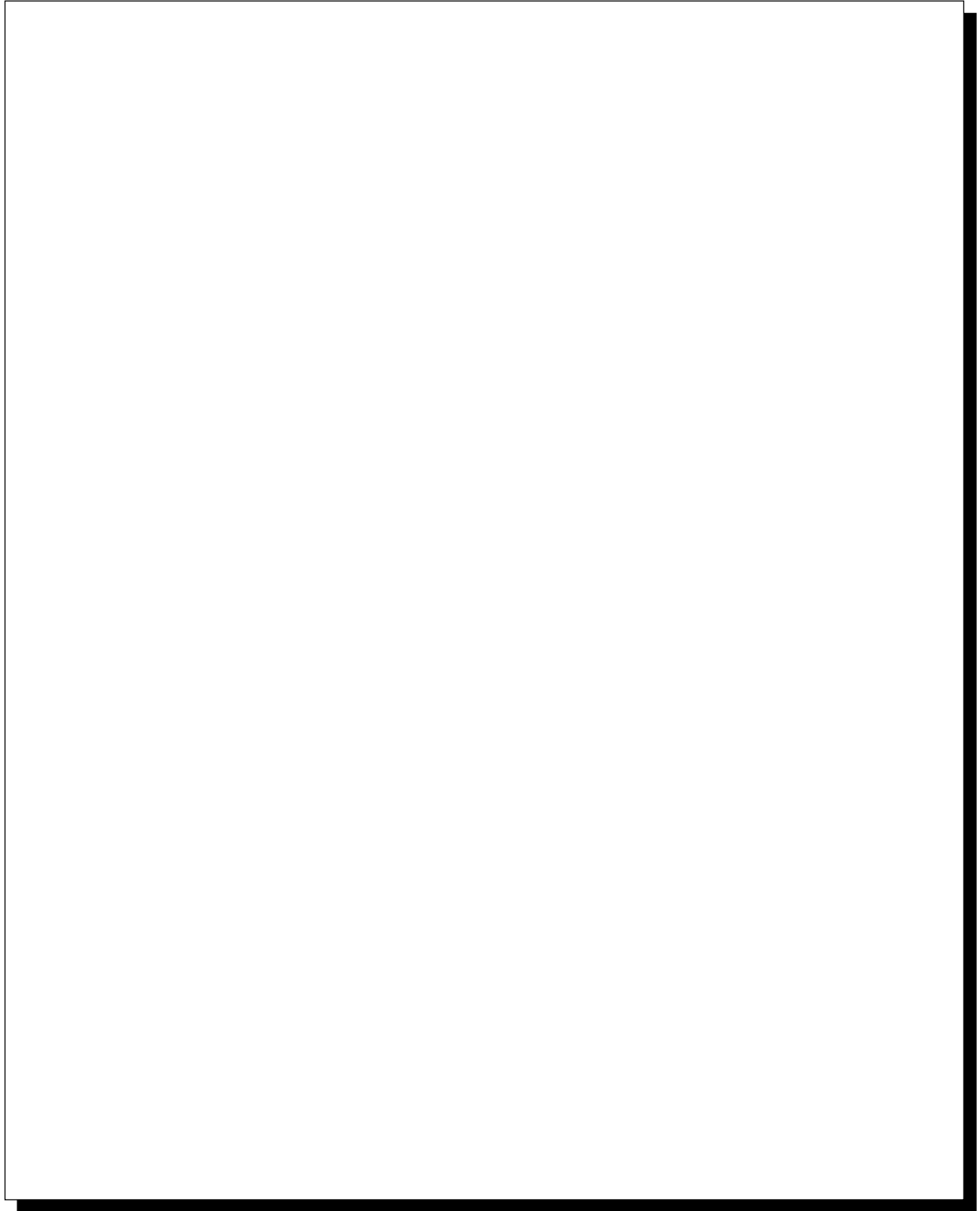
developing more effective evaluation tools and training programs.

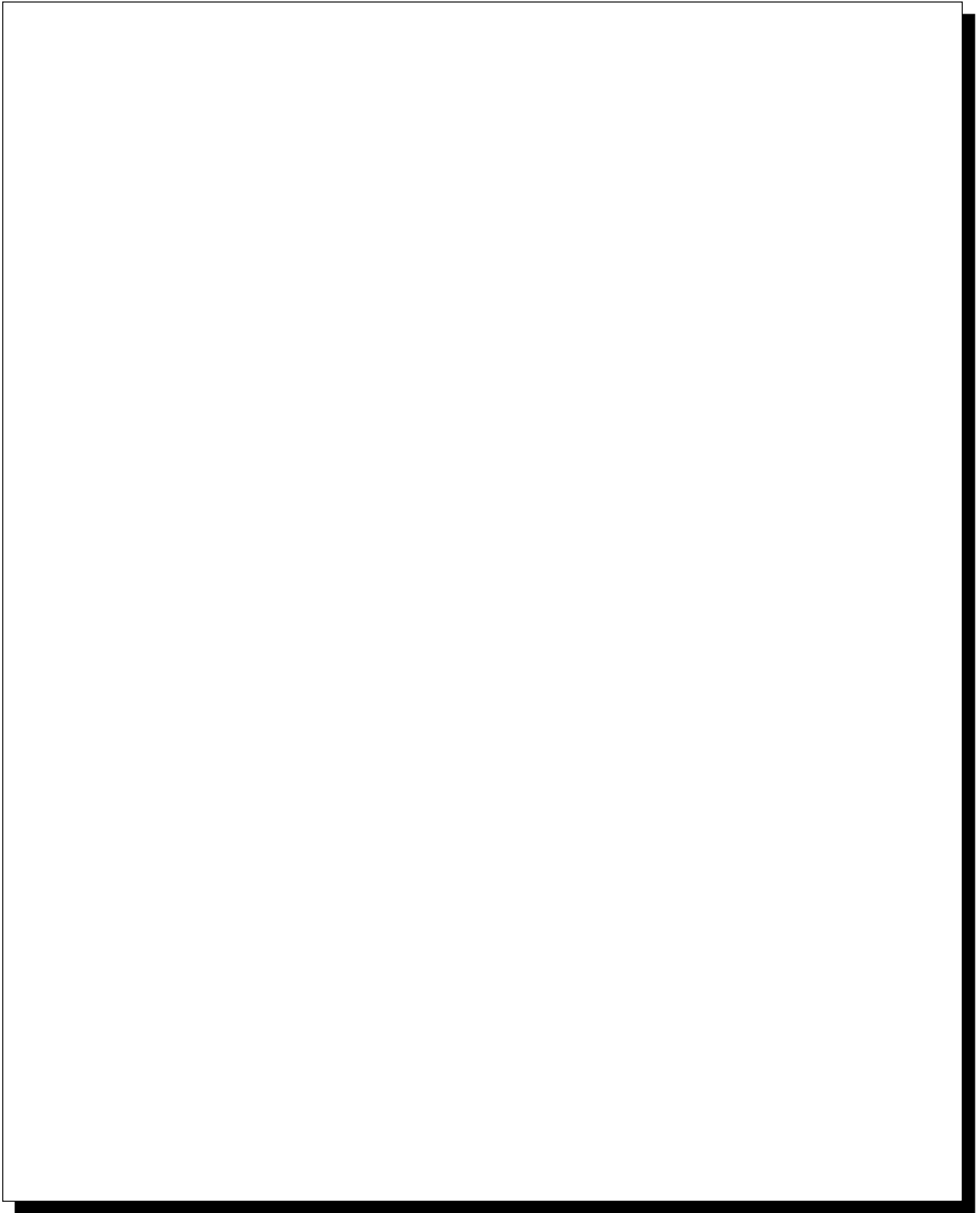
4. **When choosing from among equally qualified candidates for new hires or promotions, agencies and selecting officials should actively pursue the concurrent goals of the statutory merit system principles which call for: a) selection and advancement based solely on relative ability, knowledge, and skills combined with b) efforts to achieve a “workforce from all segments of society.”** In order to achieve a representative workforce in a manner consistent with merit principles, extra efforts may be needed to ensure that members of all segments of society are included in applicant pools when vacancies occur. Agency human resources management staffs should work with selecting officials to expand recruitment efforts as broadly as possible to ensure that highly qualified candidates from all segments of society across the nation are aware of open positions and are encouraged to apply.
5. **Supervisors should understand and be able to clearly articulate to employees the criteria for evaluating employees for appraisals and awards and candidates for vacancies and promotion opportunities.** Employees should be made aware of the imprecision of such assessment procedures in general. They should also be educated about the Government’s policy goal of having a diverse workforce. Supervisors should also make it a point to provide information about the qualifications of those who were selected, promoted, or rewarded to others in the work unit so those other employees understand the basis for their decisions.

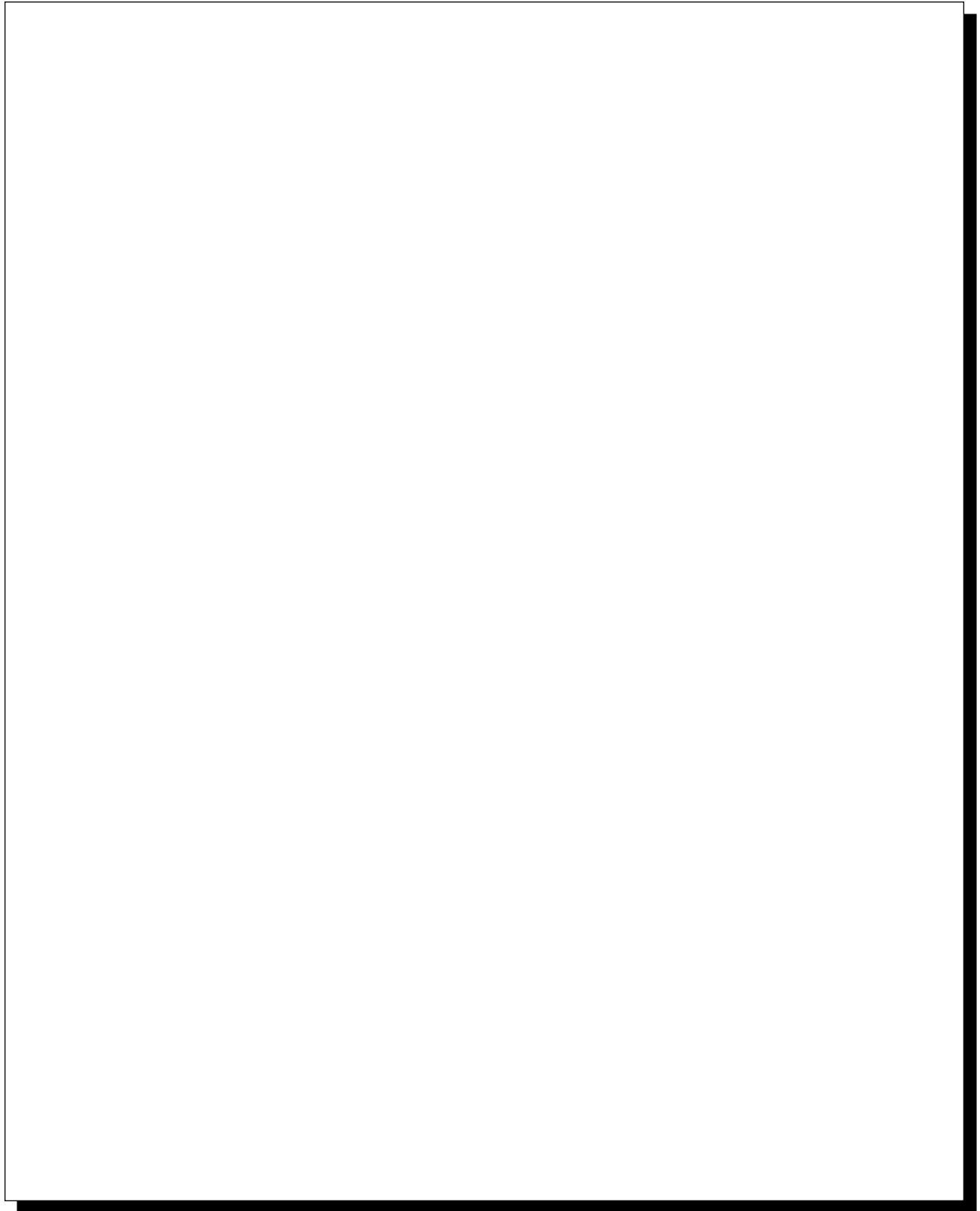
Given the importance of equal employment opportunity to the effective operation of the Government and the Government’s role in enforcing equal opportunity, we believe continual monitoring of potential disparities in employment opportunities as well as employees’ perceptions of their treatment within the Government are in order. For over 15 years MSPB has addressed potential problems with respect to equal employment opportunity. In future assessments of the Federal civil service we will continue to pay particular attention to the issues addressed in this report, and encourage agencies to do the same with their own workforces.

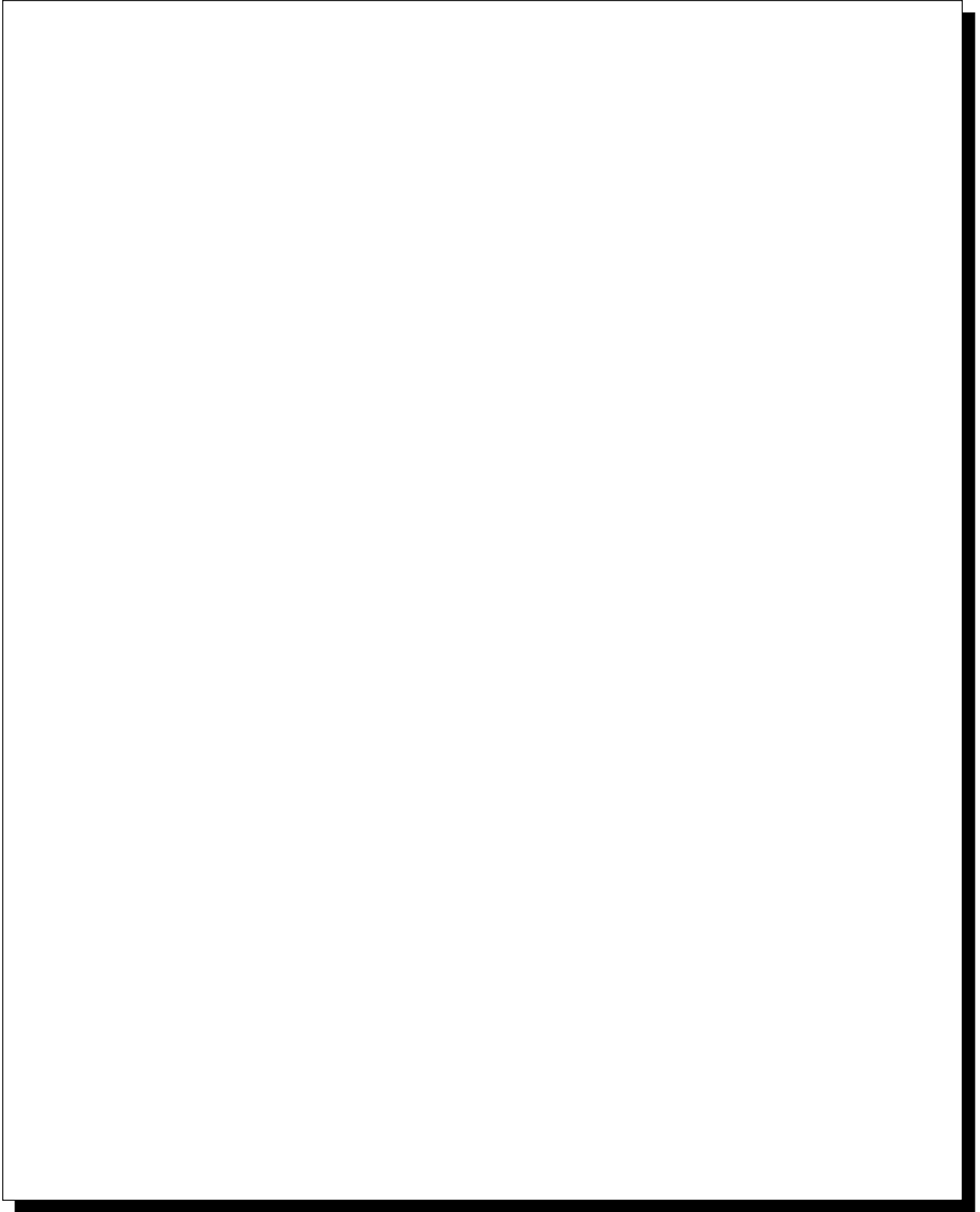
APPENDIX 1:

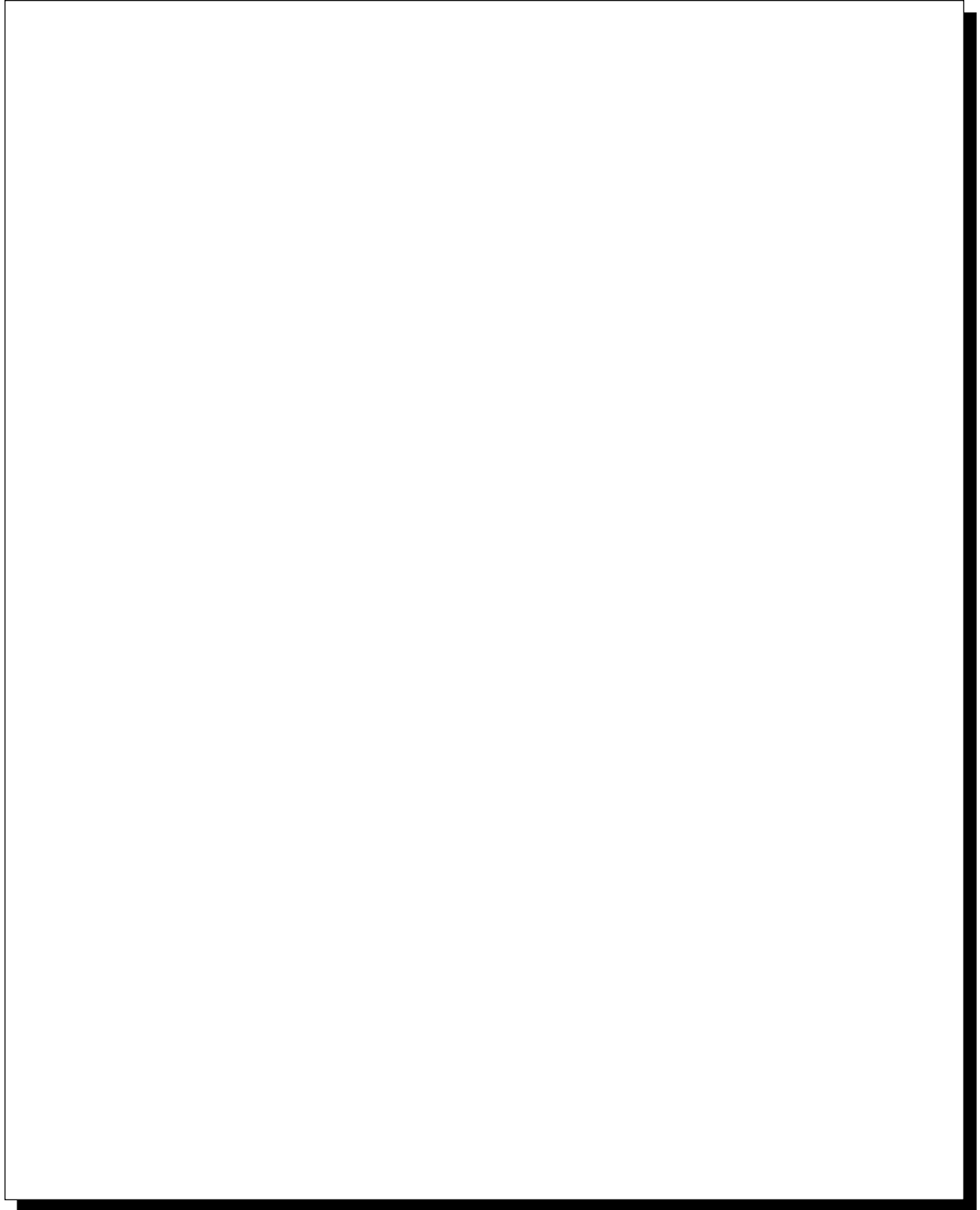
Survey on Career Advancement and Workforce Diversity in the Federal Civil Service

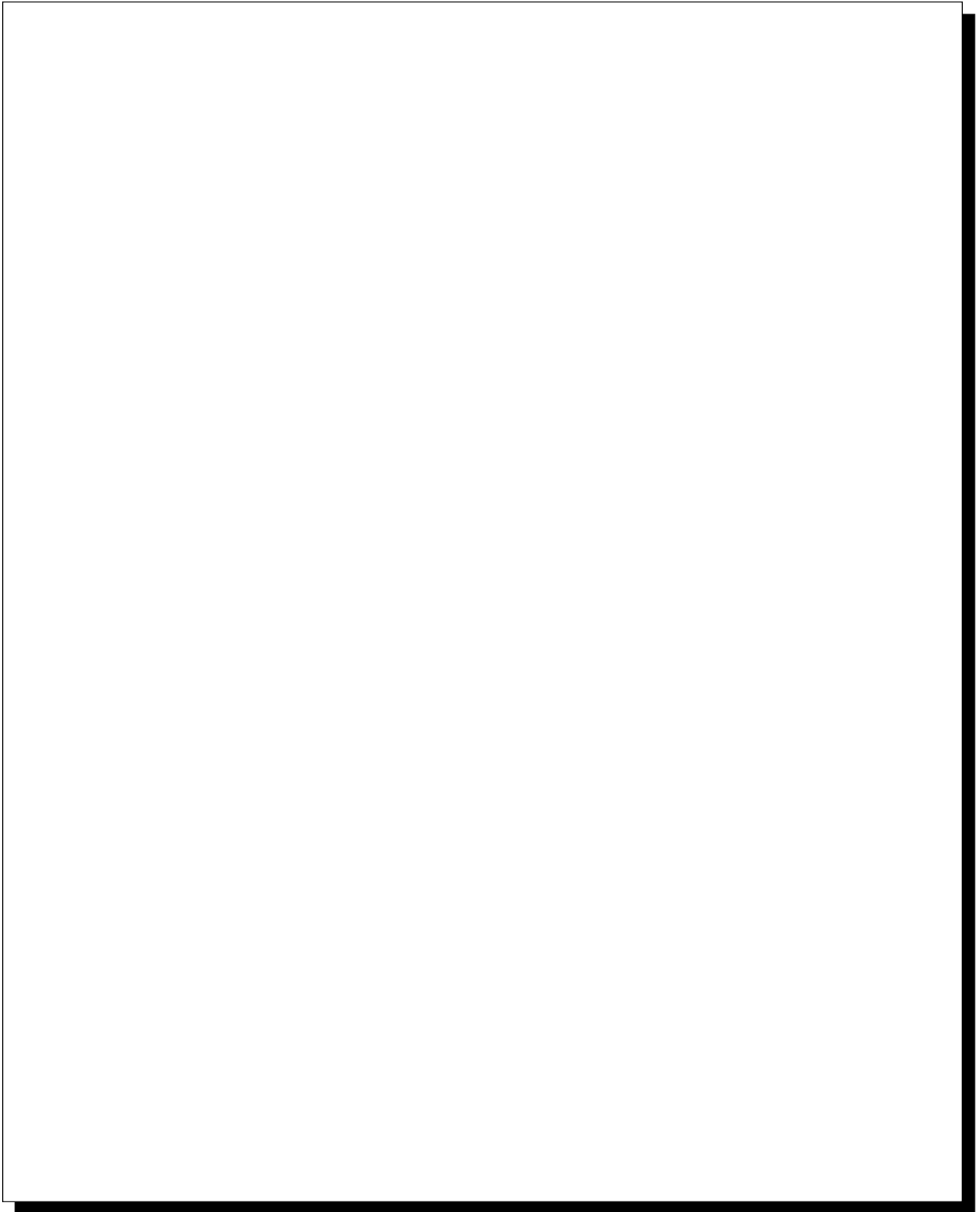


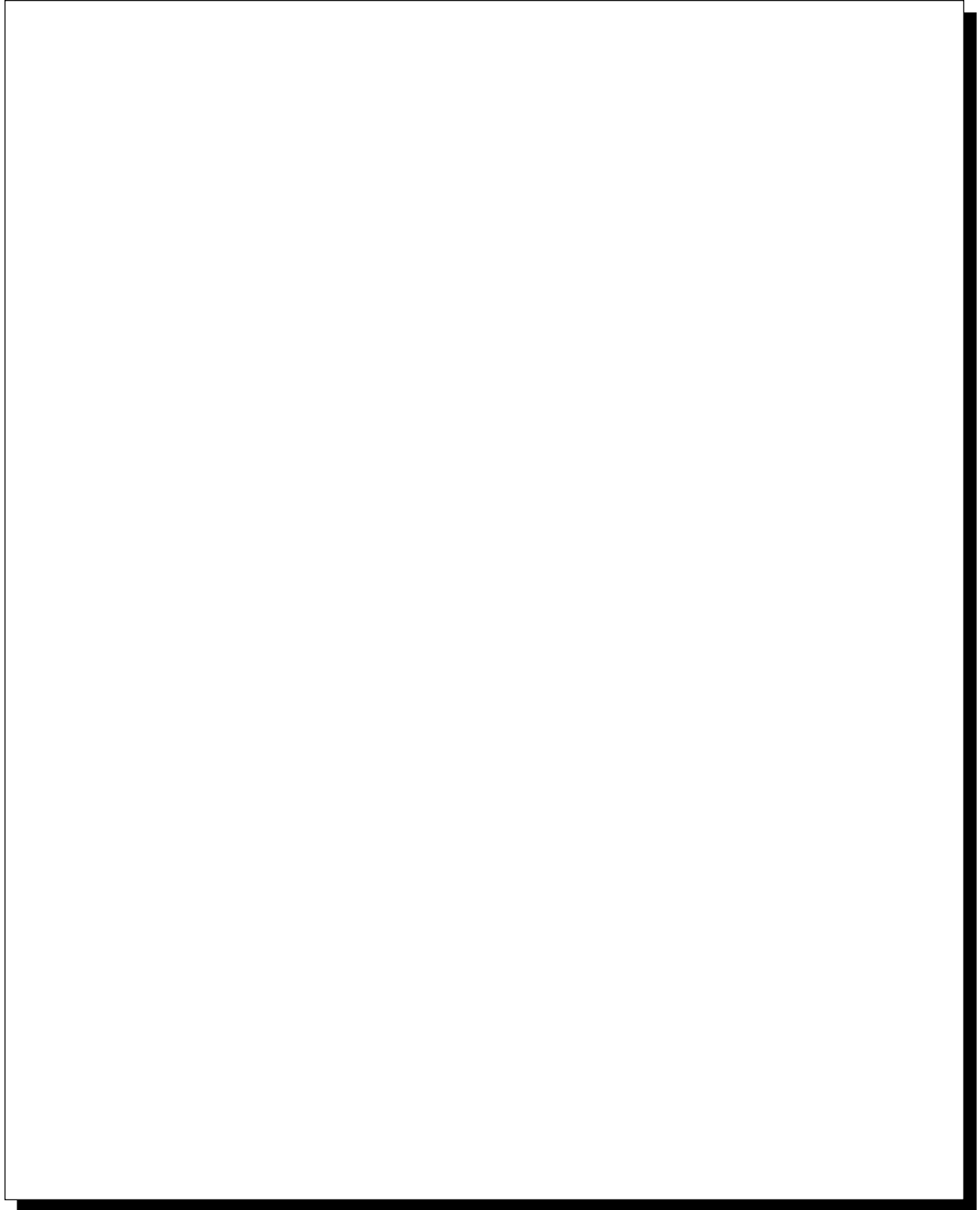


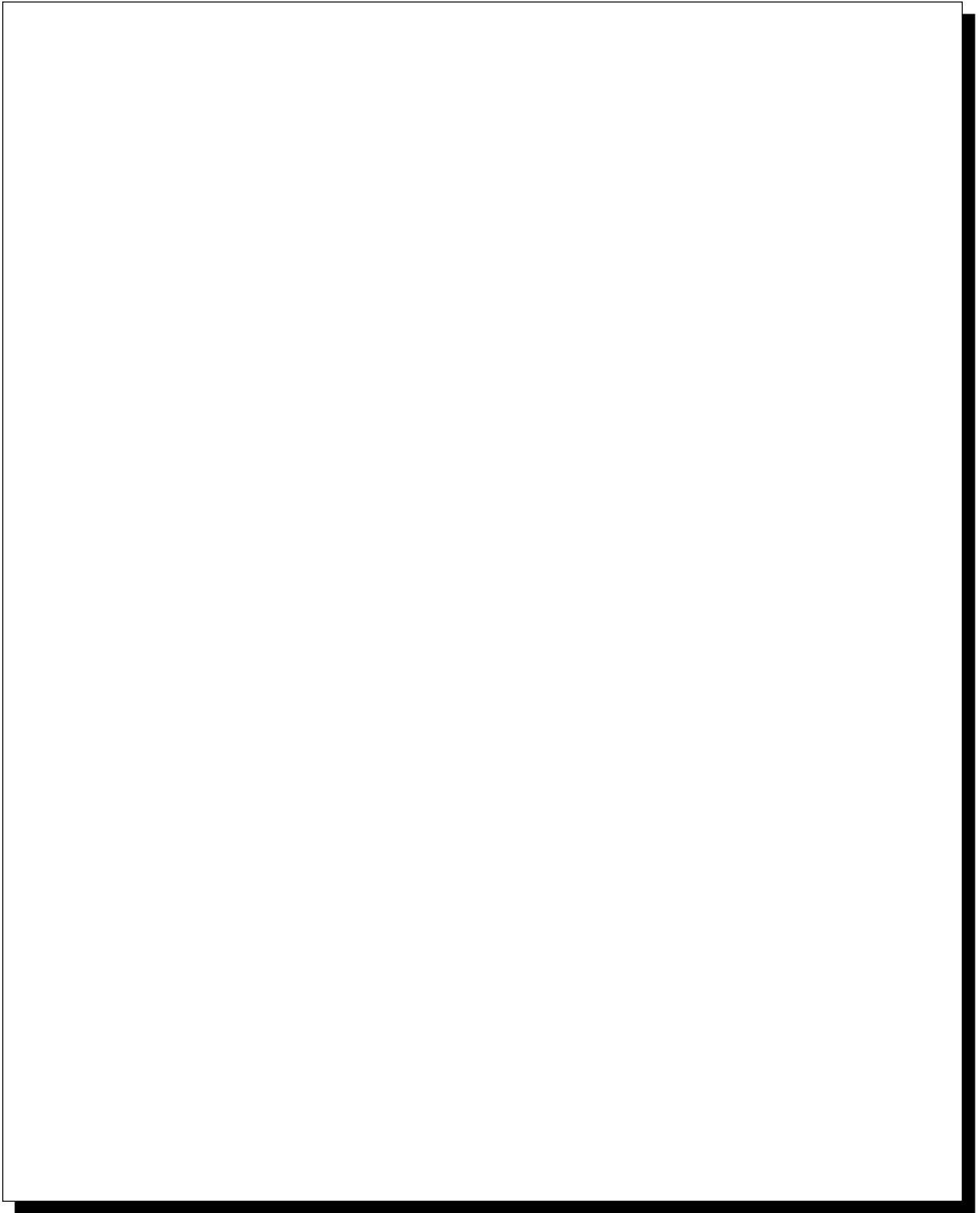


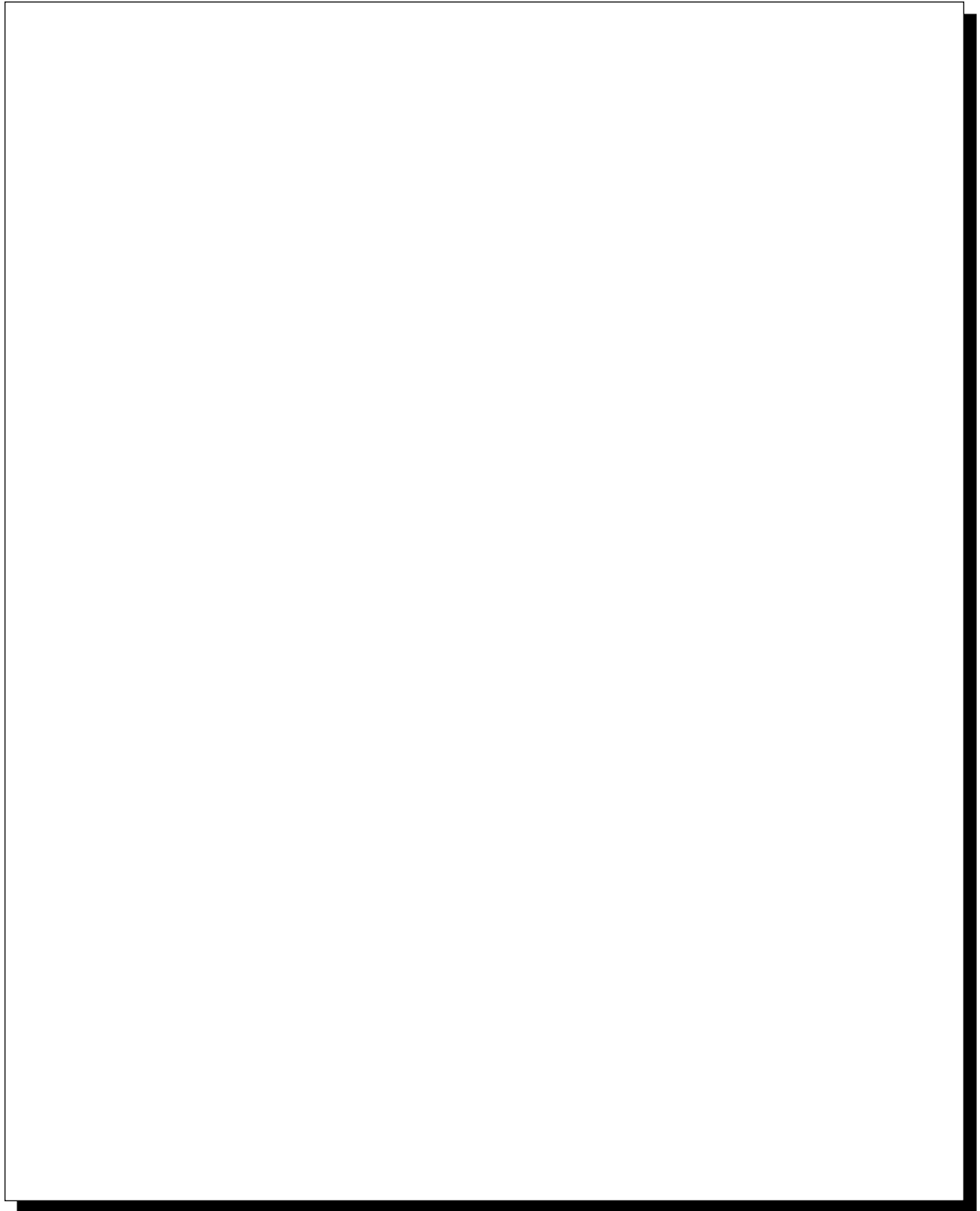


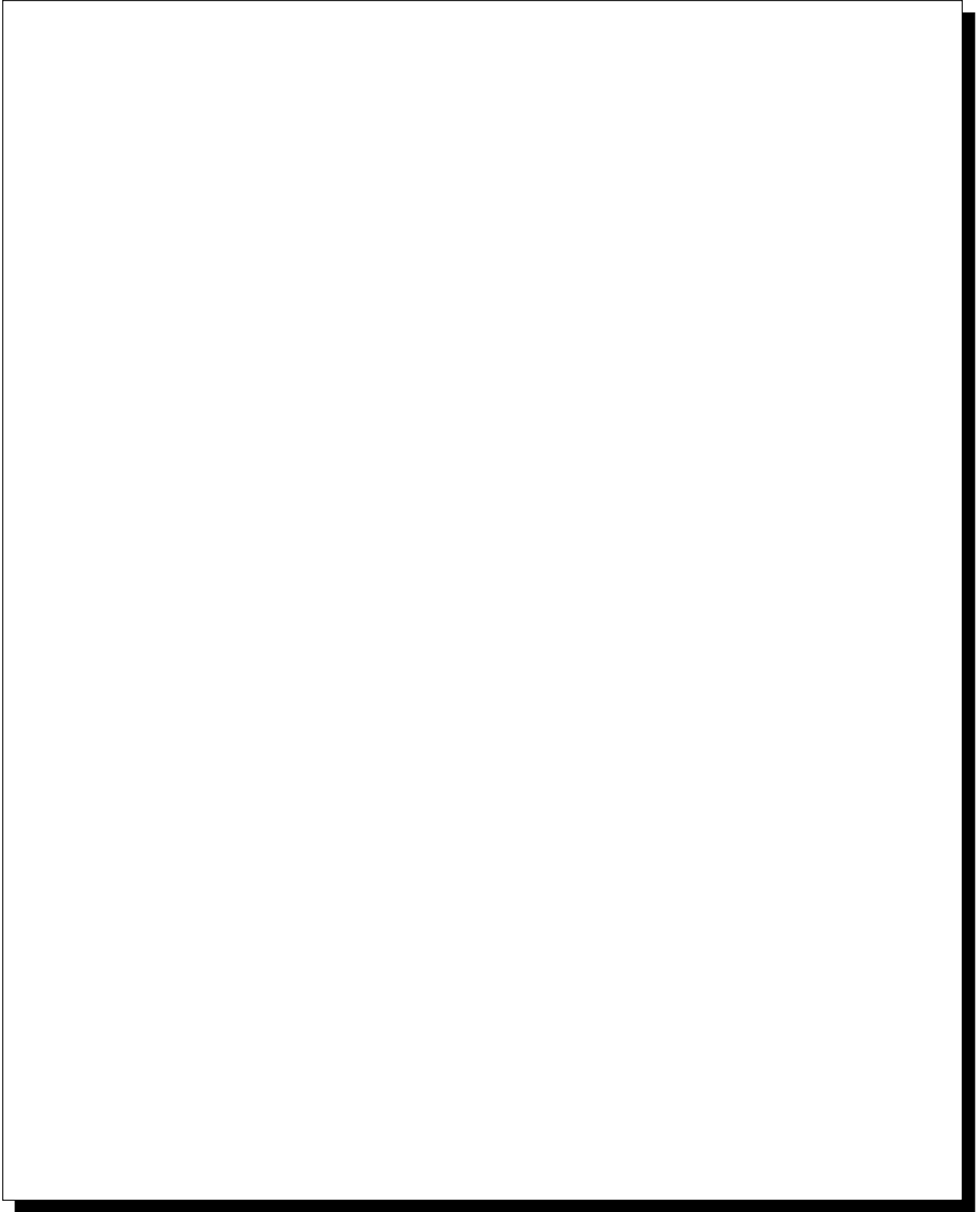


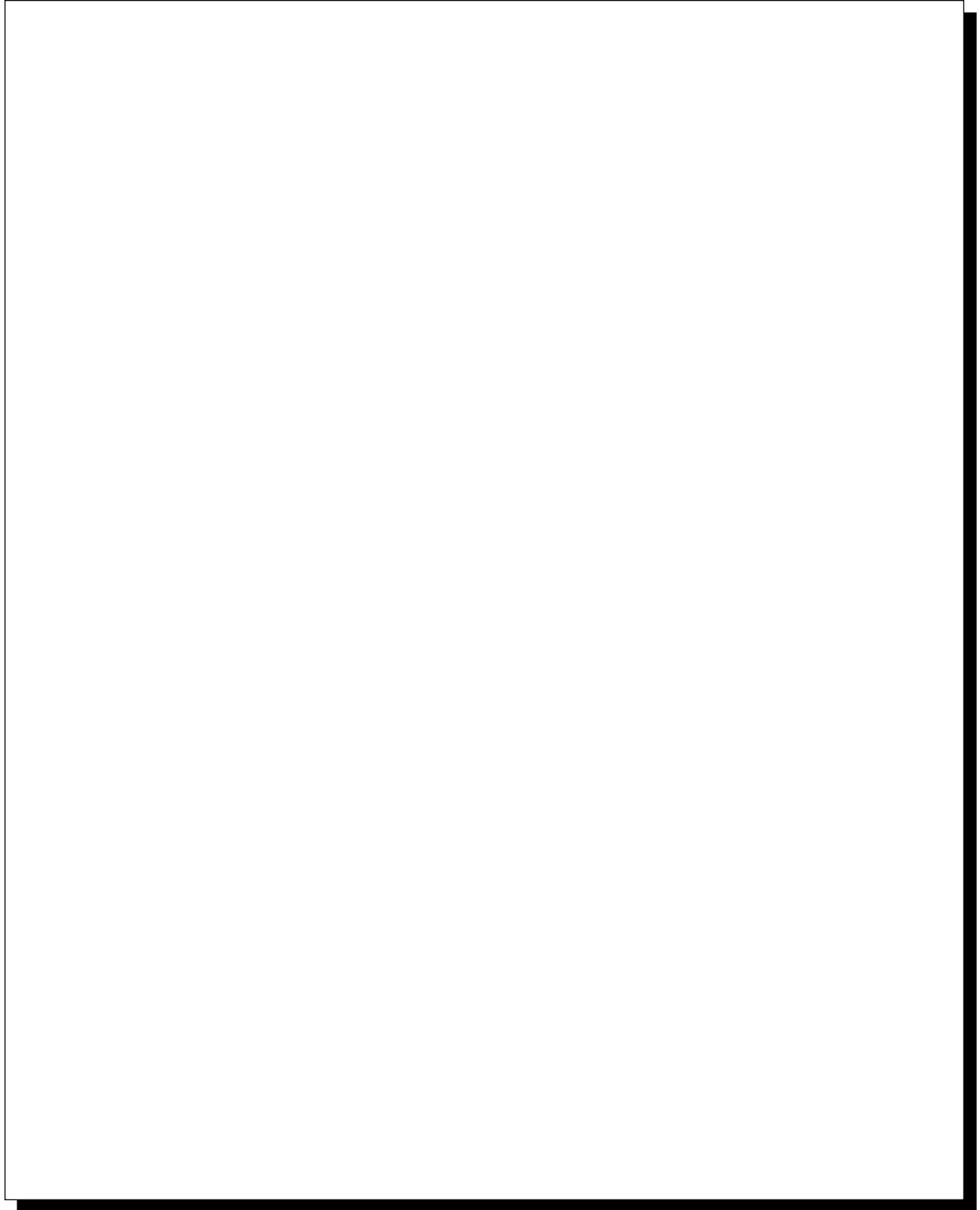












For a copy of this survey, please contact:

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APPENDIX 2:

Promotion Rates for Professional Positions, by Grade Promoted From, Time Period, Race/National Origin, and Sex

Column labels: M = Men; W = Women; and T = Total

Promotion Rates (in percent)

Time period	African American			Asian Pacific American			Hispanic			Native American			White		
	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T
Promoted from Grade 5															
1977-78	82	85	84	81	75	79	79	77	79	65	57	60	77	84	78
1984-85	85	86	85	95	94	95	101	99	101	84	83	84	92	91	91
1991-92	89	86	87	100	102	101	85	81	83	88	116	99	92	88	90
1993-94	94	85	89	92	91	92	99	90	94	90	91	91	93	89	91
Promoted from Grade 7															
1977-78	51	43	47	61	34	53	60	43	56	58	51	54	63	39	56
1984-85	69	77	73	77	85	80	83	76	81	65	66	65	78	76	78
1991-92	72	68	70	85	79	83	87	76	82	75	66	70	84	72	79
1993-94	73	61	65	95	74	85	87	64	75	80	54	65	81	68	75
Promoted from Grade 9															
1977-78	27	25	26	40	27	36	45	25	40	16	7	11	39	23	35
1984-85	31	36	33	51	37	46	37	28	34	25	31	27	39	31	36
1991-92	37	33	34	57	38	49	39	34	37	35	29	32	43	35	39
1993-94	31	29	30	48	32	40	34	32	33	24	27	26	35	30	33
Promoted from Grade 11															
1977-78	16	16	16	18	16	18	20	17	20	15	12	15	18	17	18
1984-85	16	17	16	23	21	23	19	19	19	13	15	13	17	21	18
1991-92	22	22	22	28	22	26	25	20	24	20	19	20	24	24	24
1993-94	18	17	18	23	20	22	19	17	18	12	15	14	18	19	18
Promoted from Grade 12															
1977-78	11	12	11	8	11	8	9	19*	10	12	9*	12	9	14	9
1984-85	10	14	12	11	17	12	12	18	13	10	10	10	11	17	12
1991-92	12	14	13	9	14	10	13	16	13	15	12	14	11	16	12
1993-94	9	10	10	7	10	8	9	14	10	8	11	9	8	12	9
Promoted from Grade 13															
1977-78	7	8	7	5	7*	6	5	4*	5	8*	3*	8	6	9	6
1984-85	7	9	8	8	8	8	8	9	8	4	10*	5	8	12	9
1991-92	9	13	11	9	12	10	10	12	10	11	19	13	10	15	11
1993-94	7	8	7	6	7	6	7	10	8	9	9	9	6	9	6
Promoted from Grade 14															
1977-78	4	7*	4	7	11*	8	6	12*	7	9*	0	9*	5	7	5
1984-85	5	8	6	8	9	8	7	5*	7	7*	12*	7*	7	10	7
1991-92	9	11	10	6	9	6	10	9	10	10	11*	10	8	13	9
1993-94	7	8	7	5	7	5	6	10	7	6	9*	7	5	9	6

* These percentages may not be meaningful as they represent 10 or fewer actual promotions per year.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, fiscal years 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, and calendar years 1993-94.

APPENDIX 3:

Promotion Rates for Administrative Positions by Grade Promoted From, Time Period, Race/National Origin, and Sex

Column labels: M = Men; W = Women; and T = Total

Promotion Rates (in percent)

Time period	African American			Asian Pacific American			Hispanic			Native American			White		
	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T
Promoted from Grade 5															
1977-78	62	70	67	74	83	79	67	66	67	28	26	27	81	77	79
1984-85	69	67	68	65	64	64	70	68	69	69	74	72	70	71	70
1991-92	72	78	76	74	79	77	82	79	81	74	76	75	72	82	77
1993-94	71	78	76	80	78	79	74	71	73	72	62	65	74	79	77
Promoted from Grade 7															
1977-78	45	63	56	50	49	49	49	54	51	39	36	37	57	54	56
1984-85	47	51	50	40	52	46	53	55	54	43	36	38	55	55	55
1991-92	58	66	63	62	62	62	70	66	68	57	53	54	59	63	62
1993-94	52	62	59	54	57	56	68	65	67	50	49	49	54	58	56
Promoted from Grade 9															
1977-78	25	33	29	21	31	25	27	40	30	21	25	22	25	30	27
1984-85	25	27	26	23	29	26	25	32	27	25	25	25	28	32	30
1991-92	30	35	33	31	35	33	27	34	30	25	27	26	30	33	32
1993-94	25	28	27	25	30	28	23	31	27	24	24	24	25	28	27
Promoted from Grade 11															
1977-78	14	16	15	11	15	12	14	14	14	13	13	13	13	13	13
1984-85	16	17	17	15	18	16	17	17	17	13	16	14	18	21	19
1991-92	19	21	20	17	22	20	19	20	19	16	19	17	19	21	20
1993-94	17	19	18	15	19	17	17	18	17	15	17	16	16	18	17
Promoted from Grade 12															
1977-78	8	8	8	8	13*	8	9	8*	9	8	8*	8	8	8	8
1984-85	9	9	9	9	10	10	10	12	11	13	14	13	11	13	12
1991-92	12	13	13	11	12	11	14	14	14	12	16	14	12	14	13
1993-94	9	9	9	8	9	9	10	10	10	9	12	10	8	10	9
Promoted from Grade 13															
1977-78	9	6	8	7	8*	7	9	2*	8	13	6*	12	9	6	9
1984-85	8	8	8	9	10	9	10	10	10	12	9	11	10	12	10
1991-92	12	13	12	10	14	12	12	15	13	14	13	14	11	14	12
1993-94	9	8	8	6	9	7	9	9	9	10	12	11	7	8	7
Promoted from Grade 14															
1977-78	6	4*	5	3*	7*	3*	5	9*	5	5*	5*	5*	5	6	5
1984-85	6	8	6	7	6*	7	7	11*	7	10	4*	9	7	10	8
1991-92	11	12	12	10	16	11	10	12	10	11	12	11	9	12	10
1993-94	8	9	8	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	8*	8	5	8	6

* These percentages may not be meaningful as they represent 10 or fewer actual promotions per year.

Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File, fiscal years 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, and calendar years 1993-94.

APPENDIX 4.

Summary of Career Advancement Findings for Specific Race/National Origin Groups

In the sections below, we present highlights of the data collected for this report, organized and summarized by RNO group. First, however, we provide some general findings to set the stage for the detailed RNO summaries that follow:

- Minorities, with the exception of Hispanics, are generally represented in the Federal workforce at rates at or above their representation in the civilian labor force.
- The average grades of minorities in professional and administrative positions are lower than that for White men, due in part to differences in education and experience levels between minorities and White men. However, even when the effect of these differences in education and experience are eliminated (by statistically controlling for these factors), minorities, with the exception of Asian Pacific American men, still have lower average grades than White men. Moreover, the average grade of minority women is even lower than that of minority men.
- With the exception of Asian Pacific Americans, a smaller percentage of minorities than Whites in the Federal workforce have completed at least a bachelor's degree.
- In professional and administrative positions, minorities generally receive lower performance ratings than Whites.
- The proportion of Senior Executive Service or equivalent jobs held by White men decreased from 92.5 percent in 1978 to 73.9 percent in 1995. While minority representation in executive positions increased from 4.8 to 11.5 percent during this period, the proportion of executive jobs held by White women increased from 2.7 percent to 14.6 percent.
- In response to a survey question, fewer minority employees than White employees reported that they have the opportunity to serve as the acting supervisor when the regular manager is away for a short period of time.
- Almost one-third (30 percent) of supervisors, managers, and executives expressed the view that their own career advancement would not be affected by the EEO practices they follow as a part of management.
- In response to a survey question on why they were not selected for a recent promotion, the most common major reasons cited by employees were preselection of candidates by manage-

ment and the existence of a “buddy system.” Also, 14 to 38 percent of employees said that their race or national origin was a major reason for their nonselection.

- Another survey question asked whether employees had chosen not to apply for a position because they felt someone from their RNO group had no chance of being selected. Some 14 to 20 percent of minorities and 9 percent of Whites said they had chosen not to apply for jobs for this reason.
- Among employees who had recently applied for a promotion and not been selected, only 8 percent of these employees were able to ask for, did ask, and then did receive useful feedback on the reasons for their nonselection. Some 32 percent of employees chose not to ask for feedback.

African Americans

Attitudinal findings from MSPB survey:

- In our survey of Federal employees, African Americans expressed the highest levels of concern of any group about the presence of “flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices” in the workplace, with fully 55 percent saying that members of their group were subjected to such discrimination. In contrast, only 4 percent of Whites had this view about discrimination against African Americans.
- Similarly, while 66 percent of Whites believe that African Americans have made “some” or “considerable” progress in moving into top-level positions, only 36 percent of African Americans share this perspective.

- Substantially more African Americans than members of the other RNO groups believe that managers should consider underrepresentation of minorities in a work unit as one of the important factors when making selections for a vacancy.
- In response to a survey question asking whether individuals felt that they had hit a road block in their careers compared to others at their grade level, 65 percent of African Americans in white-collar jobs answered “Yes.” In comparison, 43 percent of Whites said “Yes” to this question.
- Regarding reasons why they believed they had not been selected for a recent promotion, 38 percent of African Americans believed that race or national origin discrimination was a major factor in their nonselection, including 11 percent who reported this as being the single most important reason for their nonselection.
- Fewer African Americans than Whites reported that they are given the opportunity to serve as the acting supervisor (when the regular boss is away).

Statistical data:

- In professional, administrative, technical, and clerical occupations, the Government employs a higher proportion of African Americans than are found in comparable sectors of the civilian labor force.
- Looking specifically at professional occupations in the Government, from 1978 to 1995, African American representation increased from 4.3 percent of the workforce to 7.7 percent,

while in administrative occupations, it increased from 7.7 percent to 13.4 percent.

- By grade level, representation of African Americans in professional and administrative positions declines steadily the higher one looks in the hierarchy (except at the SES level of administrative jobs). In professional positions, it declines from a high of 17 percent at grade 5 to a low of 4 percent in the SES, while in administrative ones, it declines from 23 percent at grade 5 to 10 percent in the SES.
- The average grade of African American women in professional positions increased substantially from 1978 to 1995 (rising from 9.8 to 11.3), while that of African American men, which started at a much higher level, rose much less (from 11.4 to 12.0). In comparison, the average grade of White men in these positions rose from 12.1 to 12.6.
- In administrative positions, the average grade for African American women rose from 9.9 to 11.0, and for men from 11.1 to 11.6. The average grade for White men in administrative positions rose from 11.6 to 12.1.
- Among professional positions in 1994, African Americans filled 8.1 percent of nonsupervisory positions but only 5.9 of the supervisory and managerial positions and 3.9 percent of the executive positions. For administrative occupations, the comparable numbers are 14.7, 10.4, and 9.3 percent.
- From 1978 to 1995, African Americans increased their representation in executive positions from 202 (or 3.3 percent) to 527 (or 7.0 percent).
- In professional positions at grades 7 and 9, African Americans are promoted at lower rates than Whites, while at other professional grade levels, and for administrative positions, African Americans are promoted at rates substantially equal to those of Whites.
- In professional and administrative positions, African Americans receive slightly fewer cash awards than Whites.

Asian Pacific Americans

Attitudinal findings from MSPB survey:

- In our survey of Federal employees, 21 percent of Asian Pacific Americans indicated that they felt that members of their group were subjected to “flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices,” while only 3 percent of Whites had this view about discrimination against Asian Pacific Americans.
- In contrast to attitudes expressed by other minority groups, Asian Pacific Americans and Whites both judged the extent to which Asian Pacific Americans had made progress in moving into top-level positions at about the same level. Specifically, 35 percent of Asian Pacific Americans and 38 percent of Whites said that Asian Pacific Americans had made “some” or “considerable” progress in moving into such jobs.
- About half (49 percent) of Asian Pacific Americans believe that managers should consider the level of minority underrepresentation in the work unit as one of the important factors when making a selection for a vacancy. In contrast, only 30 percent of Whites agreed.
- In response to a survey question asking whether individuals felt that they had hit a road block in their careers compared to others

at their grade level, 42 percent of Asian Pacific Americans in white-collar jobs answered “Yes.” In comparison, 43 percent of Whites said “Yes” to this question.

- Regarding reasons why they believed they had not been selected for a recent promotion, 30 percent of Asian Pacific Americans believed that race or national origin discrimination was a major factor in their nonselection, including 5 percent who reported this as being the single most important reason for their nonselection.

Statistical data:

- A comparison of Asian Pacific American representation in the civilian labor force and the Federal workforce shows that Asian Pacific Americans hold a smaller percentage of administrative and technical jobs in the Government than they do in other sectors of the American economy. In contrast, they hold a slightly larger percentage of professional and clerical jobs in the Federal sector than they do in the civilian labor force.
- Looking specifically at professional occupations in the Government, from 1978 to 1995, Asian Pacific American representation increased from 1.9 percent of the workforce to 6.1 percent, while in administrative occupations, it increased from 1.0 percent to 2.5 percent.
- By grade level, representation of Asian Pacific Americans in professional and administrative positions declines only slightly up to the SES level. In professional positions, it is at the highest level at grades 12 and 15 (with 7 percent of the workforce being Asian Pacific American), and at its lowest level in the SES (with slightly more than 1 percent being Asian Pacific American). In administrative positions, Asian Pacific American representation declines from 4 percent at grade 5 to about 1 percent in the SES.
- The average grade of Asian Pacific American women in professional positions increased substantially from 1978 to 1995 (rising from 9.9 to 11.6), while that of Asian Pacific American men, which started at a much higher level, rose much less (from 11.8 to 12.4). In comparison, the average grade of White men in these positions rose from 12.1 to 12.6.
- In administrative positions, the average grade for Asian Pacific American women rose from 9.7 to 10.9, and for men from 11.1 to 11.4. The average grade for White men in administrative positions rose from 11.6 to 12.1.
- Among professional positions in 1994, Asian Pacific Americans filled 6.5 percent of nonsupervisory positions but only 4.1 percent of supervisory and managerial positions, and 1.5 percent of executive positions. For administrative occupations, the comparable numbers are 2.6, 2.0, and 1.2 percent.
- From 1978 to 1995, Asian Pacific Americans increased their representation in executive positions from 26 (or 0.4 percent) to 100 (or 1.3 percent).
- In professional positions, Asian Pacific Americans are promoted at a higher rate than Whites and other minorities at the GS-7, 9, and 11 levels, while at most other grade levels of professional positions and all grades in administrative positions, Asian Pacific Americans are promoted at rates about equal to those of Whites.
- In professional positions at grades 14 and 15, Asian Pacific Americans receive substantially fewer cash awards than Whites, while in other grade levels (for both professional and admin-

istrative positions), the award rates for Asian Pacific Americans and Whites are comparable.

- Asian Pacific Americans have the highest proportion of bachelor's degree holders of any RNO group, with 53 percent having such a degree at the time they were hired into the Government, and 58 percent having achieved such a degree by January 1993.

Hispanics

Attitudinal findings from MSPB survey:

- In our survey of Federal employees, 28 percent of Hispanics indicated that they felt that members of their group were subjected to "flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices," while only 3 percent of Whites had this view about discrimination against Hispanics.
- Similarly, while 49 percent of Whites believe that Hispanics have made "some" or "considerable" progress in moving into top-level positions, only 38 percent of Hispanics share this perspective.
- About half (51 percent) of Hispanics believe that managers should consider the level of minority underrepresentation in the work unit as one of the important factors when making a selection for a vacancy. In contrast, only 30 percent of Whites agreed with this perspective.
- In response to a survey question asking whether individuals felt that they had hit a road block in their careers compared to others at their grade level, 49 percent of Hispanics in white-collar jobs answered "Yes." In comparison, 43 percent of Whites said "Yes" to this question.
- Regarding reasons why they believed they had not been selected for a recent promotion, 29 percent of Hispanics believed that race or national origin discrimination was a major factor in their nonselection, including 3 percent who reported this as being the single most important reason for their nonselection.

Statistical data:

- Among all minority groups, Hispanics show the greatest disparity between their representation in the Federal workforce and their representation in the civilian labor force. Specifically, Hispanics hold a smaller percentage of technical, clerical, and blue-collar jobs in the Government than they do in other sectors of the American economy. In professional and administrative occupations, Hispanics hold about the same percentage of jobs in the Federal sector as they do in the civilian labor force.
- Looking specifically at professional occupations in the Government, from 1978 to 1995, Hispanic representation increased from 1.5 percent of the workforce to 3.7 percent, while in administrative occupations, it increased from 2.4 percent to 5.1 percent.
- By grade level, representation of Hispanics in professional and administrative positions declines fairly steadily the higher one looks in the hierarchy. In professional positions, Hispanic representation declines from a high of 6 percent at grade 5 to a low of about 1 percent in the SES, while in administrative positions, Hispanic representation declines from 9 percent at grade 5 to about 3 percent in the SES.
- The average grade of Hispanic women in professional positions increased substantially from 1978 to 1995 (rising from 9.6 to 11.2), while that of Hispanic men, which started at a much

higher level, rose much less (from 11.4 to 12.1). In comparison, the average grade of White men in these positions rose from 12.1 to 12.6.

- In administrative positions, the average grade for Hispanic women rose from 9.3 to 10.8 and for men from 10.8 to 11.4. The average grade for White men in administrative positions rose from 11.6 to 12.1.
- Among professional positions in 1994, Hispanics filled 3.9 percent of nonsupervisory positions but only 2.9 percent of the supervisory and managerial positions and 1.1 percent of executive positions. For administrative occupations, the comparable numbers are 5.4, 4.5, and 3.1 percent.
- From 1978 to 1995, Hispanics increased their representation in executive positions from 57 (or 0.9 percent) to 174 (or 2.3 percent).
- In most professional and administrative positions, Hispanics are promoted at rates substantially equal to those of Whites. (At grade 7 in administrative occupations, Hispanics are promoted at a rate higher than that of Whites.)
- In professional positions at grades 14 and 15 and in administrative positions at grades 9 through 15, Hispanics receive substantially fewer cash awards than Whites.

Native Americans

Attitudinal findings from MSPB survey:

- In our survey of Federal employees, 19 percent of Native Americans indicated that they felt that members of their group were subjected to “flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices,” while only 5 percent of Whites had this

view about discrimination against Native Americans.

- The proportion of Whites and other minorities who believe that Native Americans have made progress in moving into top-level positions is actually smaller than the proportion of Native Americans themselves who believe they have made progress. Specifically, only 22 percent of Whites (and 24 percent of other minorities) believe that Native Americans have made “some” or “considerable” progress in moving into top-level positions, while 28 percent of Native Americans have this perspective.
- Somewhat more than one-third (37 percent) of Native Americans believe that managers should consider the level of minority underrepresentation in the work unit as one of the important factors when making a selection for a vacancy. In contrast, only 30 percent of Whites agreed with this perspective.
- In response to a survey question asking whether individuals felt that they had hit a road block in their careers compared to others at their grade level, 45 percent of Native Americans in white-collar jobs answered “Yes.” In comparison, 43 percent of Whites said “Yes” to this question.
- Regarding reasons why they believed they had not been selected for a recent promotion, 22 percent of Native Americans believed that race or national origin discrimination was a major factor in their nonselection, including 4 percent who reported this as being the single most important reason for their nonselection.

Statistical data:

- A comparison of Native American representation in the civilian labor force and the Federal

workforce shows that Native Americans hold a higher percentage of white-collar jobs in the Government than they do in other sectors of the American economy.

- Employment of Native American in professional and administrative occupations increased substantially from 1978 to 1995, but not nearly as markedly as for other minority groups.
- Looking specifically at professional occupations in the Government from 1978 to 1995, Native American representation increased from 0.7 percent of the workforce to 1.2 percent, while in administrative occupations, it increased from 1.1 percent to 1.3 percent.
- By grade level, representation of Native Americans in professional and administrative positions declines steadily the higher one looks in the hierarchy. In professional positions, Native American representation declines from a high of 6 percent at grade 5 to a low of about 0.5 percent in the SES, while in administrative positions, Native American representation declines from 2 percent at grade 5 to about 1 percent in the SES.
- The average grade of Native American women in professional positions increased substantially from 1978 to 1995 (rising from 8.9—which was substantially lower than the average for any other RNO- or gender-group—to 10.4, which is still the lowest of any RNO's or gender group's average). Native American men, who started at a much higher average grade level than Native American women, also experienced a substantial growth in their average grade during this time period, rising from 10.8 to 11.7. In comparison, the average grade of White men in professional positions rose from 12.1 to 12.6.
- In administrative positions, the average grade for Native American women rose from 8.8 (again, the lowest of any group's average) to 10.7, while for Native American men, their average grade rose from 11.0 to 11.8. The average grade for White men in administrative positions rose from 11.6 to 12.1.
- Among professional positions in 1994, Native Americans filled 0.9 percent of nonsupervisory positions, 1.0 percent of the supervisory and managerial positions, but only 0.5 percent of executive positions. For administrative occupations, the comparable numbers are 1.3, 1.6, and 1.1 percent.
- From 1978 to 1995, Native Americans increased their representation in executive positions from 16 (or 0.3 percent) to 60 (or 0.8 percent).
- In both professional and administrative positions at grades 7 and 9 and at grade 11 in professional positions, Native Americans are promoted at lower rates than Whites, while at most other grade levels in these occupational categories, Native Americans are promoted at rates substantially equal to those of Whites. During 1993-94, Native Americans in administrative positions at grade 13 were promoted at a higher rate than Whites.
- In professional positions at all grade levels and in grades 12-15 in administrative occupations, Native Americans receive substantially fewer cash awards than Whites. Only at grades 9 and 11 in administrative positions are the award rates between Native Americans and Whites basically comparable.

Whites

Attitudinal findings from MSPB survey:

- In response to a survey question about the presence of “flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices” against each of the minority groups in the workplace, very few Whites (3 to 5 percent) expressed the view that this type of behavior occurs. This was in sharp contrast to the views of minorities; in particular, 55 percent of African Americans believe that their group was subject to flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices, versus the 4 percent of Whites who shared this belief concerning African Americans.
- In response to a survey question asking whether individuals felt that they had hit a road block in their careers compared to others at their grade level, 43 percent of Whites in white-collar jobs answered “Yes.” In comparison, minority group members said “Yes” to this question at rates of 42 to 65 percent.
- In response to a survey question asking employees who had not been selected for a recent promotion why they thought they had not gotten the job, 14 percent of Whites indicated that their race or national origin was a major factor in their nonselection. Included in these responses were 3 percent of Whites who said that their race or national origin was the single most important reason for their nonselection.

Statistical data:

- A comparison of White representation in the civilian labor force and the Federal workforce shows that Whites hold a smaller percentage of white-collar jobs in the Federal Government than they do in other sectors of the American economy. The level of representation of White

men versus White women varies substantially, however, among different job categories (e.g., professional, administrative, technical, and clerical).

- The proportion of jobs held by White men in the professional and administrative jobs declined substantially from 1978 to 1995. Specifically, White men declined from 83.5 percent of the professional workforce to 59.4 percent, and from 71.8 percent of the administrative workforce to 49.9 percent. Nevertheless, there was actually a small increase in the number of White men employed in these types of positions over the 17-year period. In 1978, 446,700 White men were employed in professional and administrative positions, while by 1995 the number had risen to 461,500.
- During this same time period, the representation of White women and minorities increased. In the professional workforce, the proportion of White women rose from 8.1 percent to 21.9 percent, while minorities increased in the aggregate by about 10 percentage points from 8.4 percent to 18.7 percent. For administrative positions, the representation of White women increased from 16.1 percent to 27.8 percent, while minorities increased about 10 percentage points from 12.2 percent to 22.3 percent.
- From 1978 to 1995, the average grade of White men in professional and administrative positions increased by about 0.5 of a grade in both categories (from 12.1 to 12.6, and 11.6 to 12.1, respectively), while the average grade of White women increased by 1.8 grades in professional positions (from 9.8 to 11.6) and 1.4 grades in administrative ones (from 9.9 to 11.3). In both categories, White women and minorities of both sexes still have lower average grades than White men.

- During 1978-1994, while the proportion of Whites in various categories of professional and administrative positions declined, Whites continued to hold a disproportionate share of supervisory and managerial positions. In 1994, although Whites held about 81 percent of nonsupervisory professional jobs and 76 percent of nonsupervisory administrative jobs, they held 86 percent and 82 percent of the supervisory and managerial jobs in these two categories.
- Looking at executive positions from all PATCO categories together, White representation declined from 95.2 percent to 88.5 percent from 1978 to 1995. The proportion of White male representation dropped from 92.5 percent in 1978 to 73.9 percent by 1995. During this same span, the proportion of White women increased from 2.7 percent to 14.6 percent.
- In professional positions, Whites during the 2 year period 1993-94 were promoted at rates equal to or greater than minorities at all grade levels with the exception of Asian Pacific Americans at grades 7, 9, and 11. At these grade levels, Asian Pacific Americans were promoted at somewhat higher rates than Whites. In administrative positions, Whites were promoted at equivalent rates to minorities except for Hispanics at grade 7 and Native Americans at grade 13.
- Looking at cash awards, Whites during 1994 consistently received these awards at rates that equaled or exceeded those for minorities at all grades levels in both professional and administrative positions.