

Lagging Behind:

**Ethnic Diversity in the Planning Profession in the APA
New York Metro Chapter Area**

Findings and Recommendations



**Prepared by New York Metro Chapter
American Planning Association
December 2001**

Authors

Leonardo Vazquez, AICP

Juan Miguel Kanai

*Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy
New School University*

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the Chapter Presidents Council and the New York Metro Chapter of the American Planning Association for their support of this project. We also wish to thank Mitchell Silver and Tina Chiu, who provided guidance and editing support, and Dean Edward Blakely of New School University's Robert J. Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy, from which we conducted much of our research. We also wish to thank Janice Jijina, the president of the New York Metro Chapter, as well as the rest of the chapter's executive committee for its comments and patience. Finally, we wish to thank all of the planners, employers and planning school leaders who shared time and information with us and made it possible to complete the diversity study.

About this Report

This report was originally completed in September 2001, and was revised in December 2001 following comments about ethnic diversity made at the annual conference of the New York Metro Chapter of the American Planning Association

Cover Photo

Members of the New York Metro Chapter, Executive Committee meeting, October 2001.

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Summary

Two planners are working on the revitalization of a low-income neighborhood, most of whose residents are of African-American and Puerto Rican ancestry. Because the heyday of the neighborhood was in the early 20th century, one of the planners, who is White and not Hispanic, recommends creating a streetscape along the commercial corridor that evokes that period. This would make the area more desirable to residents of the city's other neighborhoods, since some of those residents trace their families' roots to the neighborhood. To keep the streetscaping consistent, merchants would be "strongly encouraged" to replace their facades with historically themed elements. The other planner pointed out that, since few, if any, African-Americans or Puerto Ricans were living in the neighborhood during the historical period, changing their storefronts might be seen as favoring one ethnic group -- which happened to have more members in politically powerful positions -- over those of the residents. The first planner was surprised to learn his recommendation could offend neighborhood residents.

Many people go into the planning profession to improve the quality of life of communities. But when planners lack knowledge about the communities they serve, they run the risk of making mistakes that could harm those communities, themselves and the profession.

But while it is common knowledge that the planning profession does not reflect society's ethnic makeup, there has been little research on the extent of the problem. That is why the New York Metro Chapter, through its Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee, conducted perhaps the most complex study of ethnic diversity in the planning profession. More than 600 planners -- perhaps 50% to 60% in the Chapter area (New York City, Long Island and the Hudson Valley) are represented in the study. Based on the information gathered, the research team compared the ethnic composition of the profession to the general population and to the makeup of the profession a decade ago, and analyzed it across sectors and localities. The research team also interviewed several planners, employers and academics to better understand issues related to diversity and to gather suggestions for increasing diversity in the profession.

The findings are mixed. The planning profession is diversifying but at a much slower rate than the general population. Moreover, there appears to be a smaller percentage of Hispanics in planning, even though Hispanics are the fastest growing ethnic group in the region. While no minority planner we interviewed spoke of facing open hostility or prejudice, they reported that they had to prove themselves more in relation to their White peers and that a lack of visibility in their organizations reduced their career advancement opportunities. On the other hand, we were impressed by the level of interest that a wide variety of planners and employers expressed in this topic.

Background

The American Planning Association has a long-standing interest in increasing diversity in the planning profession. Among its many divisions are Planning and the Black Community, Gays and Lesbians in Planning, and Planning and Women. The 2002-2003 APA/AICP Organizational Development Plan calls for attracting more minorities to the planning field as a way of pursuing social, economic and racial equity. The New York Metro Chapter also has sought to increase diversity in the planning profession. In 1994, then-Chapter President Linda Cox agreed to form a new committee called the Committee for African-American and Latino Planners. The committee, chaired by Mitchell Silver, was formed to provide opportunities for professional enrichment; increase the number of African-American and Latino planners; organize forums, workshops and other planning programs; present an African-American and Latino perspective on planning and development issues; and establish a network of design, planning and development professionals. In 1998, the Committee was renamed Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity and broadened its scope to include all ethnic groups.

In 1999, the Committee recognized that the number of minorities in planning schools, the profession and the Chapter was low and decided to undertake a study to 1) find out why so few minorities were involved with planning and 2) seek ways to recruit and retain minority planners and students. Because quantitative information and research about diversity in the planning profession was lacking, for the New York area as well as the nation, the Committee formed a research team to conduct its own study. To support the Committee's efforts, the Chapter received a Chapter President's Council (CPC) in April 2000.

Transferability

We hope through this report to create a model that other chapters and the national APA can use to better comprehend the extent to which the planning profession lags behind changes in the general population, and to provide clues to increasing the number of minorities in the profession. The most easily transferable elements of this study are the research structure and research instruments, which can be found in Appendix D.

We learned a great deal about the difficulties of conducting a study at this level of depth and complexity. We thought we could complete it over a summer's period; it took more than a year for two people working part-time on the project. The project design called for members of the committee to be involved in the interviews and other study work, but the project apparently proved too tedious for the committee members. One of the most important lessons for the study authors, which we hope will be followed by future researchers, was to triangulate information from a variety of sources. If we had depended solely on individual practitioners or employers, on surveys or interviews, we would have had a much more limited (and perhaps wrong) view of the planning profession.

One of the more difficult lessons the authors learned, which is relevant to volunteer committees that may want to undertake this work, is that it is difficult to attract or retain volunteers to do long-term research. Future research of this kind should be undertaken by academicians and professional researchers, who have the resources, and the mindset to do the careful work needed of such a project.

Key Findings

The planning profession is not keeping pace in its ranks with the increasing diversity in the New York Metro Chapter area. As a result, the planning profession is less representative of the area in 2000 than it was in 1990, although it is slightly more diverse.

Ten years ago, Whites made up 78% of the planning profession in the New York area. Today, 73% of planners are White, even though Whites compose slightly less than half of the general population (see Figure 1). The percentage of Hispanics and African-Americans in the profession appears to have dropped slightly since 1990, even as Hispanics continued to be the fastest-growing group in the area. As a result, the level of underrepresentation grew slightly (two percentage points) for African-Americans and jumped (six percentage points) for Hispanics. Almost all of the increase in diversity is due to the growing number of Asian-American planners.¹

Whites are the most overrepresented ethnicity, and Hispanics the most underrepresented, in the Chapter area and in all three sectors (private, public and non-profit).

Asian-Americans are equitably represented in New York City and the suburban sections, as well as in the private and public sectors.² They are underrepresented in the nonprofit sector. Conversely, African-Americans are equitably represented in the nonprofit sector, but underrepresented in the private and public sectors. African-Americans are underrepresented in New York City but equitably represented in Long Island and Hudson Valley (see Figures 2 and 3).

When asked about these findings, some planners speculated that the high percentage of recent immigrants among Latinos account for their underrepresentation in the field. However, this ignores the fact that a percentage of the Asian-American population is also composed of recent immigrants. In fact, in New York City, where about 40% of the population is foreign-born, there are recent immigrants and people with limited English language skills in every ethnic category.

It is likely that some Asian-Americans, African-Americans and Latinos who engage in urban planning were not counted in this survey. A planner familiar with the nonprofit sector said that a number of ethnic minorities practice community-based planning, but do not have planning titles and may not consider themselves urban planners. The size of this missing population could not be determined, but it is probably small, given the fact that land use planning tends to be conducted by larger community-based organizations.

The private sector is the least diverse of all the sectors. Asian-Americans compose the largest ethnic minority in the private sector, while African-Americans have the least representation.

In addition, there are few minority planners in senior positions in the private sector. About 82% of planners in the private sector are White, compared to 72% in the public sector and 61% in the

¹ Some notes on terminology: “White” refers to non-Hispanic White, “African-American” is used for Black; and “minority” refers to ethnic or racial minorities.

² I.e., the percentage in the profession is within five points of the percentage in the population.

non-profit sector. There are more Asian-Americans in the private sector than there are African-Americans and Hispanics combined. Because the amount of government-contracted private sector work is growing, it may be possible that there are more minority planners, but that they are involved in fewer substantial planning projects.

Some planners attributed the larger presence of Asian-Americans to the number and size of transportation planning and engineering-oriented firms in the private sector. According to the 1990 census, Asian-Americans are overrepresented in the civil engineering profession in the New York Metro Chapter area, compared to their overall population. However, the responses from individual planners to this survey proved too small to confirm or reject this hypothesis.

Asian-Americans appear to be the fastest growing segment of the planning population in the Chapter area.

In 1990, Asian-Americans comprised 3% of the planning population. Our survey found that the percentage of Asian-American planners nearly tripled to 8.6% of the planning population, despite a general population increase of only a few percentage points. Asian-Americans are also the second-largest minority in planning schools in New York State and New York City, indicating that their representation in the planning field will grow.

Although the public sector in New York City is more diverse than in Long Island or the Hudson Valley, the suburbs are more reflective of their communities.

While the planning profession in New York City is more diverse, because of the larger percentages of African-Americans and Hispanics in the city's population, the profession in the city is far less representative of its communities. In New York City, 66% of the planners are White, 14% are African-American, 11% are Asian-American, and 8% are Hispanic. In Long Island and the Hudson Valley, 84% of planners are White, 7% are African-American, 5% are Asian-American, and 2% are Hispanic (see Figure 3).

The New York Metro Chapter of the American Planning Association is far more homogenous than the overall population of planners.

Nearly 88% of Chapter members are Whites, compared to 73% of planners in the Chapter area (see Figure 8).³ Compared to other segments of the planning population studied for this report, the Metro Chapter is the least representative of the planning population and society in general.

Minority planners reported feeling that they were subject to lower expectations and given less visible or less important work than their White peers. This, combined with the low participation of African-Americans and Hispanics in the private sector, raises the question of whether minorities are self-selecting away from the private sector, or whether there exists a bias against these minorities in the private sector.

³ Based on self-reported data to APA national. 85% of the total Chapter membership reported ethnicity (see Figure 8).

This finding mirrors the ones of Charles Hoch's in *What Planners Do: Power, Politics and Persuasion*, which was written nearly a decade ago. This raises the question of how well the practice of planning management has evolved to handle the increasing levels of diversity in workplaces. A White senior-level planner said that the required inclusion of minority-owned businesses in some government contracts makes some White planners skeptical of the qualifications of ethnic minority planners brought onto a project.

Unless there is a spurt in the growth of minority planners in the New York area, the ethnic makeup of the profession does not appear as though it will change substantially in the near future.

While a more accurate forecasting requires substantially greater research than was possible for this report, a review of planning school populations provides a glimpse into the future. About 62% of the students in New York City planning schools in 1998 are White. When students from other accredited planning schools in New York, New Jersey, and eastern Pennsylvania are factored in, however, the amount increases to 69% (see Figure 4).

Figure 1

Changes in Planning Profession and the General Population in the New York Metro Chapter Area, 1990 and 2000

	Year	White, non-Hispanic	African- American, non- Hispanic	Asian- American	Hispanic	Other ¹
Percent of total population	1990	58.4	18.6	5.1	17.5	0.4
	2000	49.4	18.8	7.8	21.7	2.5
Percentage of Planners in the NY Metro Chapter Area	1990	77.6	11.6	3.0	7.7	0.0
	2000	73.3	10.2	8.6	6.0	1.9
Representation Gap²	1990	19.2	(7.0)	(2.1)	(9.8)	(0.4)
	2000	23.9	(8.6)	.8	(15.7)	(0.6)

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census and 2000 Population Estimate; Diversity Study, 2000

Notes:

¹ Other category denotes Native Americans, other ethnicities, and planners who identified with mixed ethnic identities

² The Representation Gap exhibits the over or under representation of each group in the based on expected rates (overall population distribution). A number in (parenthesis) exhibits underrepresentation within the NY Metro Chapter Area.

Figure 2

Diversity of Public, Private and Non-Profit Sector Planners, APA New York Metro Chapter Area

	Total	% of Total	Private Firms	% of Private Firms	Public Agencies	% of Public Agencies	Non-Profit Orgs.	% of Non-Profit Orgs
White, non-Hispanic	452	73.3%	141	82%	272	72%	39	61%
African-American, non-Hispanic	63	10.2%	6	3%	44	12%	13	20%
Asian American	53	8.6%	15	9%	35	9%	3	5%
Hispanic	37	6.0%	7	4%	24	6%	6	9%
Other	12	1.9%	4	2%	5	1%	3	5%
Total	617		173		380		64	

	NY Metro Population	% of NY Metro Pop.	Diversity Gap, Whole Field ¹	Diversity Gap Private Sector	Diversity Gap Public Sector	Diversity Gap Non-Profit Sector
White, non-Hispanic	6,650,564	49.4%	24	32	22	12
African-American, non-Hispanic	2,527,695	18.8%	(9)	(15)	(7)	2
Asian American	1,048,077	7.8%	1	1	1	(3)
Hispanic	2,919,039	21.7%	(16)	(18)	(15)	(12)
Other	330,571	2.5%	(1)	(0)	(1)	2
Total	13,475,946	100.0%				

Sources: APA Diversity Study Survey, 2000, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 census of population

Notes:

¹ Diversity Gap: Percentage of ethnicity in planning profession minus percentage in general population, by percentage points
 : Highest Percentage Point Gap

Figure 3

Diversity of Planners in the Public Sector, 2000

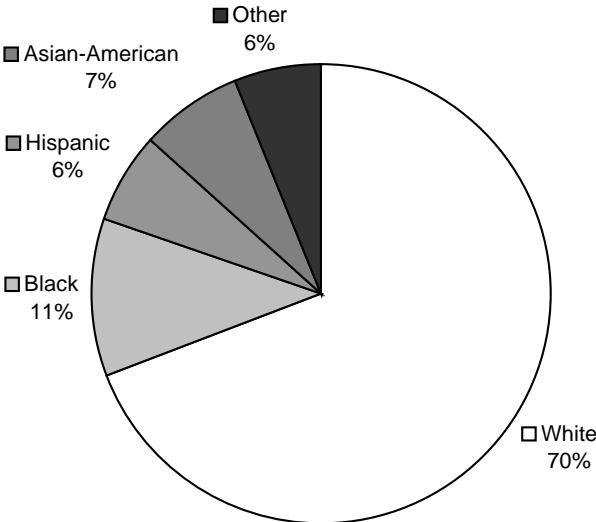
	Total	NYC	% of field	NYC Population	% of Population	Diversity Gap (%)
White, non-Hispanic	272	169	65.5%	2,912,995	34.6%	30.9
African-American, non-Hispanic	44	35	13.6%	2,050,764	24.3%	(10.8)
Asian-American	35	29	11.2%	857,094	10.2%	1.1
Latino	24	21	8.1%	2,338,447	27.8%	(19.6)
Other	5	4	1.6%	264,215	3.1%	(1.6)
Total	380	258		8,423,515		

	Long Island/ Hudson Valley Population	% of field	Long Island/ Hudson Valley Population	% of Population	Diversity Gap (%)
White, non-Hispanic	103	84.4%	3,737,569	74.0%	10.45
African-American, non-Hispanic	9	7.4%	476,931	9.4%	(2.06)
Asian-American	6	4.9%	190,983	3.8%	1.14
Latino	3	2.5%	580,592	11.5%	(9.03)
Other	1	0.8%	66,356	1.3%	(0.49)
Total	122		5,052,431		

Source: 2000 Census American FactFinder; Diversity Study

Figure 4

Demographics of Planning Schools In and Around New York¹



Source: Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, Guide to Planning Education, 11th Edition, 2000.

Notes:

¹ Includes Pratt Institute, Hunter College, Columbia University, New York University, SUNY Albany (including undergraduate), Cornell (including undergraduate), Rutgers, and University of Pennsylvania. Total number of students is 591. Based on 1998/1999 data.

Goals for Increasing Diversity in the Planning Profession

It would be impossible for the planning profession to be equally representative of all ethnic groups. Until planning and other professional schools are more reflective of society, the planning profession will continue to be a predominantly White profession. Because the profession thrives on the consent of the people it serves—and that clientele is increasingly diverse—the profession should strive to increase its level of diversity every five years and monitor its efforts in this regard. APA and the profession as a whole should adopt these goals with regard to increasing diversity in the profession.

Goal #1

Increase the number of and retain minority planners at all levels of planning.

One of the reasons there are so few planners from minority communities, especially poor ones, is that they come into contact with few planners who are like them. Strategies to meet this goal include:

Create a mentoring program for young minority planners to help retain them in the planning profession.

Identify and reach out to minority professionals in allied fields to join the American Planning Association, so that they can enjoy APA's products and services.

Incorporate minority planners in staff development and project assignments.

Provide entrepreneurship and business training opportunities to minority planners so that they can more quickly move into leadership positions in private sector firms, or create firms that are able to compete with existing private-sector firms.

Increase the number and percentage of minority planners at senior levels in the private sector.

Goal #2

Increase diversity within planning schools, especially among African-Americans and Hispanics.

Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of students in the planning schools in and around New York in 1998 -99 were White. Schools can reach out to African-Americans and Hispanics by offering scholarships targeted to these audiences, recruiting from schools with large ethnic minority populations, and designing post-baccalaureate certificates and diplomas for minority professionals in the community development and social work fields. Strategies to meet this goal include:

Increase the number of planning school scholarships to minorities.

Create a unified effort among planning schools and employers to increase the percentages of ethnic minorities in planning schools and in the profession.

Goal #3**Increase the visibility of the profession.**

Young people pursue occupations with which they are familiar and in fields which have a certain cachet in society, e.g., medicine, law, engineering, social work and teaching.. Strategies to meet this goal include:

Increase the visibility of minority planners in the media.

Increase the visibility of the planning profession in minority communities.

Arrange more joint programming with organizations likely to have large numbers of minority professionals.

Goal #4**Increase the understanding of issues of diversity in the planning profession.**

When we began this study, we were surprised by the lack of research into the issue of diversity in the planning profession. There have been several articles in the Journal of the American Planning Association and other magazines about the work of planners as well as issues of ethnicity in planning practice. But aside from, most notably, Charles Hoch's *What Planners Do: Power, Politics and Persuasion*, little research is available on diversity among planners. It will be difficult to address the issue of diversity without a deeper understanding of its many dimensions. There is one major strategy related to this goal:

Sponsor more research into the issue of diversity in the planning profession, including a national study and comparisons across major metropolitan areas.

Recommendations

Goal #1

Increase the number of and retain minority planners at all levels of planning.

Recommendation #1

Create a mentoring program for young minority planners to help retain them in the planning profession.

Older minority planners should act as mentors to younger planners or to planning school students who are going to enter the profession. Planning school students should, in turn, provide mentorship to promising college and high school students who show an interest in planning and urban studies.

As with other professions, planners who are involved with professional networks and have access to influential people within the profession tend to get greater opportunities. Networks also allow members to choose from a pool of formal or informal mentors, who can help inexperienced members avoid or properly address problematic situations. The networks among minority planners in the New York Metro Chapter area appear to be small and fragmented. Networks that extend across professional and educational lines will help create pipelines that will lead to greater opportunities for minority planners.

Responsible parties: APA national, local chapters and the Planning and the Black Community Division

Recommendation #2

Identify and reach out to minority professionals in allied fields to join the American Planning Association, so that they can enjoy APA's products and services.

A number of architects, social workers, community organizers and civil engineers employ planning skills and are involved in planning projects but do not have planning degrees or use the formal language of the profession. By reaching out to these professionals, the planning profession can increase its numbers, visibility, and ultimately its influence in society. Planning schools should work with other professional schools to develop joint degrees and cross-sector programs.

In New York City, which has a long history of conflict between neighborhood organizations and city agencies, APA can play a role in mending tensions by bringing neighborhood-based planners together with transportation, economic development, and regional planners.

Responsible parties: APA national and local chapters should reach out to community and local economic development trade groups, such as the Council for Urban Economic Development and the National Congress for Community Economic Development.

Recommendation #3

Provide entrepreneurship and business training opportunities to minority planners so that they can more quickly move into leadership positions in private sector firms, or create firms that are able to compete with existing private-sector firms.

If minority-owned firms can successfully compete for contracts with White-owned firms, the more traditional firms will see that hiring and retaining minorities will help them procure more contracts. The Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity committee, together with the Professional Development officer, can develop workshops targeted to minority planners. APA should also encourage planners to develop management and business expertise through accredited colleges and universities.

Responsible parties: APA national, Planning Schools

Recommendation #4

Incorporate minority planners in staff development and project assignments.

Several of the minority planners interviewed for this report complained that they were not given the same opportunities as their White counterparts and that they had to “prove themselves” more often than their White counterparts. This was especially felt among planners in the private sector. Whether this is due to a bias against minority planners or lack of management skills among senior level planners (many have little background in management) is a subject for further research.

Responsible parties: While the burden to change management practices falls on employers and supervisors, APA national and its local chapters can provide technical assistance to planners in effectively managing multicultural environments.

Recommendation #5:

Increase the number and percentage of minority planners in senior levels in the private sector.

Minority planners at senior levels can affect diversity in the profession in several ways. As project supervisors and chief consultants to clients, they can promote the benefits of expanding the diversity of perspectives on planning issues. As employers, they can hire and mentor younger minority planners. Finally, because senior planners are usually the spokespeople for their organizations, they increase the visibility of minority planners in the planning profession.

The private sector not only has a smaller percentage of minority planners, compared to the public sector, but also a smaller percentage of senior level planners. According to information provided by a sample of employers, 20% of minority planners in public sector agencies are at senior levels. Only 8% of minority planners in the private sector had senior level responsibilities. There was too little data from nonprofit employers to include in this comparison.⁴

⁴ These figures do not include information provided by individual planners, who were asked slightly different questions about minority managers in their questionnaire. Information from private sector employers accounted for 22 minority planners (69% of the total number of minority planners in the private sector). Information from public sector employers accounted for 76 minority planners (70% of the total number of minority planners in the private sector).

Responsible parties: The ultimate responsibility for hiring and promoting minorities belongs to employers. However, planning schools and the national American Planning Association can promote leadership and management skills that can help minority planners move into positions of higher responsibility.

Goal #2

Increase diversity within planning schools, especially among African-Americans and Hispanics.

Recommendation #1

Increase the number of planning school scholarships for minorities.

Scholarships should be tied to practice and research in minority and underserved communities so that the profession can more effectively reach out to these communities. For example, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology provides a full scholarship to students who agree to work for a community development corporation after graduation. The Milano Graduate School of New School University has partnered with the New York Chapter of the APA to offer a full scholarship to a minority student who demonstrates a commitment to community development in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. The student will receive a free membership to the local chapter for the length of the students' tenure, and be expected to participate actively in the APA.

This initiative fulfills two purposes: to increase the pool of minority planners in the profession, and to increase the visibility of the profession in underserved communities.

Responsible parties: Planning Schools, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, APA national and local chapters

Recommendation #2

Create a unified effort among planning schools and employers to increase the percentage of ethnic minorities in planning schools and in the profession.

A consortium of planning schools and employers should be created to address this issue. Planning schools can provide post-graduate training to minority planners, while employers can commit to increasing their diversity and their numbers of minorities in senior positions.

As employers made clear in the focus group, planners benefit greatly from their social, educational and professional networks. Employers said that they routinely solicit and select planning graduates from particular schools, because they feel comfortable with the quality and currency of their programs for their work. Students who do not attend these schools would be at a disadvantage. By bringing all schools together with employers, more students would share in opportunities to learn of and access jobs.

Employers of small organizations often lack the resources (and the expertise) to provide training in the subjects that planners can use to enhance their careers. Planning schools, as well as APA, can bridge this gap by developing professional development courses that are guided by the interests of employers.

The idea for the consortium was raised in the focus group of planning school deans and program chairs. The employers we interviewed said unanimously that they would consider working in partnership with schools.

Responsible parties: Planning Schools, APA national and local chapters, employers

Goal #3

Increase the visibility of the profession.

Recommendation #1

Increase the visibility of minority planners in the media.

Minority planners should be trained in media relations, so that they can increase their visibility and also increase the public's understanding of the role of planners in urban development and growth.

The focus group respondents uniformly agreed that the planning profession is not well known by the public. It is even less well known in communities where few planners live—i.e., low-income and minority communities. Moreover, increasing the visibility of minority planners may have a ripple effect within the planning profession, as the planners interviewed and featured will be seen in a more positive light by potential employers.

Responsible parties: APA national and local chapters, the American Institute of Certified Planners, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning

Recommendation #2

Increase the visibility of the planning profession in minority communities.

Programs such as Kids Day in School and the AICP Community Planning Team can be effective forums for increasing the visibility of minority planners. Similar programs should be focused in minority and low-income communities to create greater visibility for the planning profession.

Among all related professions, the social work profession is the most diverse. This may be due to the fact that there are more social workers in low income neighborhoods than there are civil engineers and architects. Moreover, Pratt Institute has by far the largest percentage of minority students among New York's planning schools. One reason cited in focus group meetings was that Pratt has a community development technical assistance organization, the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development, which works primarily in minority neighborhoods in New York City.

Responsible parties: APA national, the American Institute of Certified Planners

Recommendation #3

Arrange more joint programming with organizations likely to have large numbers of minority professionals.

APA should look for opportunities to run joint events with Planners Network and other professional organizations, such as the American Institute of Architects, the National Society of Black Engineers, and the National Association of Social Workers. Such efforts will increase the visibility of the American Planning Association among minority professionals, as well as increase the possibilities of partnerships.

According to the interviewees, APA was not viewed as a “go to” organization for minority planners. In fact, APA was criticized for being too “mainstream” and focused on the suburbs. The numbers bear this out. The New York Metro Chapter is far more homogenous than the planning profession as a whole, despite its being headquartered in New York City. Other organizations, such as Planners Network, were seen as more in league with the interests of minority professionals.

Responsible parties: APA national

Goal #4

Increase the Understanding of Issues of Diversity in the Planning Professions.

Recommendation

Sponsor more research into the issue of diversity in the planning profession, including a national study and comparisons across major metropolitan areas.

The author of this study has already spoken with APA members in the Los Angeles and north Texas areas about conducting similar studies. APA should also sponsor longitudinal or comparative studies of ethnicity within the planning profession.

There is a dearth of research in the experience of minority planners in the planning profession. A list of research questions is provided in the Transferability section.

Responsible parties: : Planning schools, grantmakers that fund research in urban planning and policy.

Considerations for Future Research

It benefits the reader to know of problems encountered in developing the findings and the limitations of the data presented.

Since this is the first study of its kind in the New York metropolitan area, comparison data was difficult to find. For 1990 comparables, the study team used Census data. Like the survey conducted for this report, the information is mostly self-reported. They are not exact matches: the Census data does not contain information on planners who work in the Chapter area but live elsewhere. Similarly, the Diversity Study survey does not contain information on planners who live in the Chapter area but work elsewhere. We decided that using the Census data for comparison was useful because:

We believe that White, African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American planners would be equally as likely to live in New Jersey or in upstate New York.

While the populations are not exactly the same, they are similar.

Because there appear to be few planning professionals with planning titles in the nonprofit sector, the response rate for this sector is lower than for the other two sectors. However, since the nonprofit sector comprises a small percentage of the total planning field, the lower response rate should not substantially affect the true percentages within the planning profession.

The research team made a key misjudgment in the preparation of the survey instruments, which ultimately impacted our ability to generate information about minorities in management positions at planning firms and agencies. Employers and individual planners were asked slightly different questions about minority managers. We also failed to ask about the number of White managers in planning organizations, thus preventing us from making comparisons of the percentage of minority managers, compared to minority planners. However, anecdotal evidence and the limited number of results show that the percentage of minority managers is small.

Additional Research Questions

Among the benefits of studies such as this are that they help researchers generate more pointed questions for future research. The following are some of the questions we hope will be explored by future researchers in the subject of diversity and the planning profession.

Why are Asian-Americans better represented in the private sector? Why are they so underrepresented in the nonprofit sector?

Why are African-Americans and Hispanics most underrepresented in the private sector?

What percentage of African-Americans and Hispanics have left the private sector for the public or nonprofit sector, and why?

How do the experiences of African-American, Hispanics and Asian-American planners differ?

Why do a number of minority planners feel they are not getting the same opportunities or highly visible projects as their White counterparts?

What are the causes for the lack of minority leadership in the planning field?

How do the experiences of minority planners in the suburbs differ from minority planners in New York City?

What are the most effective ways to mentor minority planners?

Methodology

The study was conducted between November 1999 and November 2000, with the bulk of the surveys and interviews conducted during the summer of 2000. Surveys were sent to Chapter members in the November 1999 and March 2000 issues of the Chapter's newsletter, the *MetroPlanner*, in, and an e-mail version was also distributed. Because the APA membership represents a limited universe of planners,⁵ surveys were also sent to:

Members of Planners Network. An e-mail survey was sent in March 2000.

Graduates of Cornell University and Pratt Institute with mailing addresses in the New York Metro Chapter area.

Known planning firms and employers of planners, including:

All employers listed in the Chapter's 1998-2000 Directory.

All other employers of planners known to the research team.

Information was gathered on 617 planners working in the New York Metro Chapter area. We estimate that this represents about 60% of the planning population, based on a 1990 Census report that counted 1,017 planners living in New York. (Our survey includes planners who work in the Chapter area but live outside of it, (e.g., in New Jersey), while the Census report includes planners who live in the area but work outside of it.) Occupational data from the 2000 census was not available at the time this report was written.

The direct mail survey was used to assess the levels of ethnic and racial diversity of planners in the New York Metro area.⁶ The focus was on the workplace rather than place of residency. Two survey formats were used (see Appendix D). The first was sent to organizations related to the profession and with a high likelihood of employing a significant number of planners in the Chapter area. The second was sent to alumni of graduate planning programs located in and around the area and likely to be employed in a local planning organization. Pratt Institute and Cornell University were generous enough to provide access to their alumni mailing lists. Both formats asked the respondents to report the number of planners in their organizations, their rank (entry level, middle and top management), sub-field planning specialization, and the ethnic/racial composition of the organization as a whole. The responses were classified by sector (public agencies, private firms, and non-profit organizations) and, where applicable, by Chapter section (New York City, Long Island and the Hudson Valley).

⁵ The expense of APA membership – especially when combined with chapter, division or AICP dues or other fees – makes it difficult for planners with lower incomes to be part of APA. Thus, we would expect the APA to be less diverse than the planning profession as a whole.

⁶ This methodology was chosen because of the low response rate of to previous attempts at including the survey in *Planning Magazine* and web postings as well as the methodological problems of analyzing a sample of self-selected respondents

The study uses the 1990 Census definitions for race (White, Black, Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American, Eskimo and Aleutian and Other) and ethnicity (Hispanic and non-Hispanic). The reason for using these definitions is more practical than philosophical. Although the definitions are too broad to accurately describe the range of identities in a place like the New York Metro area, for comparison purposes, the data needed to follow this classification.⁷

In addition to the surveys, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight minority planners and nine employers. Leaders of three area planning schools and the Dean of the New School's Milano Graduate School, who was formerly the Dean of the University of Southern California's planning school, were also interviewed in a focus group. The planners, employers and academics were asked for their perceptions on possible causes for the lack of diversity in the profession and potential strategies and solutions. They also reviewed the preliminary results of the surveys. For the most part, they agreed with the findings, although some felt that the profession was even less diverse than the early figures suggested.

⁷ Some notes on terminology: "White" refers to non-Hispanic White, "African-American" is used for Black; and "minority" refers to ethnic or racial minorities.

Appendix A: Interview Summaries

Individual planners:

A group of eight planners working in the Chapter area were interviewed towards the end of the study. The interviewees were carefully selected to include a broad range of opinions in the limited scope of the sample. The group represented both New York City and the suburban areas of the Chapter, a diversity of specialties and all three sectors. An effort was also made to cover a wide range of professional experience and include both males and females. The main intention of the interviews was to identify issues minority planners themselves raised.

None of the planners interviewed were surprised at the low levels of diversity found by the study and they all reported having sensed a lack of diversity ever since they entered the profession. Among the causes mentioned to explain the low participation of minorities in the profession were: 1) a lack of awareness and knowledge about the profession among communities, 2) limited exposure to or negative images of planners, 3) barriers raised by a graduate degree requirement to enter the profession, and 4) the relatively low remuneration compared to other professions.

Several of the interviewees reported coming to the profession out of an interest in the public good and were previously employed or had an academic background in either education, public policy, or the social sciences. Some of them expressed concerns about the role of the profession in bringing equity and prosperity to their communities. A community development planner working in New York City reported not identifying himself as a planner even though he had a master's degree from a planning program. This can be a possible explanation for the low response rate obtained from the nonprofit sector and the limited involvement nonprofit organizations have with APA.

None of the interviewees expressed having experienced overt discrimination, and only one planner reported that her ethnic background had significantly lowered her chances of professional advancement. However, several minority planners felt they were constantly on the spot in their organizations and that there was a need for them to prove their professional skills and working capacity vis-à-vis White planners. This pressure was particularly felt in the private sector.

Planners working in large public agencies showed concerns about the visibility of their work and the potential for career advancement. Often in charge of community relations and local coordination, they had less exposure to larger projects and therefore fewer opportunities for professional advancement in heavily centralized organizations. The solutions these planners proposed for increasing diversity in the profession included: 1) *awareness campaigns about the profession*, 2) *attracting students of all ages to planning schools*, and 3) *providing scholarships and other incentives such as internships to encourage minority enrollment in planning programs*. A more proactive role of APA in promoting diversity, both in the New York Metro Chapter area as well as nationally, was also requested.

Employers:

Nine employers were interviewed for this report – four from the private sector, four from the public sector, and one from the nonprofit sector. Three private sector employers were interviewed in a focus group, while one was interviewed individually. The four public sector employers were interviewed in a focus group, and the nonprofit sector employer was interviewed individually. In addition to the interviews, the employers were asked to fill out a short survey asking them what they would or would not be willing to do to increase diversity in the planning profession. The survey instrument is shown in Appendix D.

Appendix B: Focus Group Comments

Focus Group Summary

In October 2000, employers of planners and leaders of planning schools were interviewed in separate focus groups. While opinions on some issues diverged, there was a large amount of consistency among the groups. Specifically, the focus group participants agreed:

There is a noticeable lack of African-American men in the planning profession.

Relatively low pay in the planning profession - compared to legal, engineering and medical fields - tends to draw young people away from the planning profession.

The APA should play a larger role in increasing diversity in the planning profession.

Planning schools need to attract more minority students to increase the pool of minority planners.

Among employers overall, it was felt that:

There is a difference between the skills needed in the public sector compared to the private sector. Consequently, planners from the public sector may have more trouble fitting into the private sector.

Among public sector employers and planning school leaders, it was felt that:

There is a lack of prestige in public service, as compared to several decades ago.

The lack of minority professors hinders efforts to recruit minority students.

Additional Comments by Individuals

(The following represents comments made by individuals in the focus group. These comments do not necessarily reflect the consensus of the group, but are listed here to demonstrate the range of concerns and perspectives of employers.)

Comments on Survey Results:

The results show the planning field to be more diverse than expected by private sector employers. (Note: early results showed a slightly higher percentage of minorities in the planning field than did the final results.)

There is a historically low presence of African-American males in planning.

Private sector firms are more competitive than those in the public or non-profit sector. The private sector needs to focus on efficiency and competitiveness rather than diversity. One employer mentioned that planners in the nonprofit sector are generally not "as good" as planners in the private sector.

Immigration over the last 10 years has had an impact on the representation gap, especially in terms of Hispanic under-representation in the planning field.

The lack of diversity is caused in part by the high costs of graduate education and mean salaries being below other professions that also attract well-educated minorities -- especially Internet-based companies. (Note: the focus groups occurred about a month before the value of technology company stocks crashed.)

Young planners with philanthropic inclinations tend to be attracted to the public sector or non-profits.

Larger schools (e.g., New York University, Columbia University) recruit nationwide and attract a higher proportion of Whites.

The public sector appears to be more "welcoming" to minority professionals. There is a lack of visibility in senior levels of minority planners. There is a particular shortage of African-American males in leadership positions.

The study needs to go beyond census categories to identify discrimination within the planning field. That is, a survey should look at the experiences of different groups within broad racial and ethnic categories to find areas of discrimination.

The public sector faces the issue of representation in front of its constituencies, while the private sector is concerned with business expansion and securing contracts. Work is organized in larger agencies for the public sector, where there tend to be more specialists. Planners working in private firms need to be more generalists. There is a perception of a mismatch of skills of planners who move from the public sector to private firms.

There are clear lines of division and stark contrasts within New York City's public sector. The borough offices tend to have a higher percentage of minority planners than does the White dominated Manhattan office. (The Manhattan office is considered elitist, serving mostly real estate interests.)

Over the last decade, the number of minority directors at the New York City Department of City Planning has not increased. The participation of women in the senior levels has only increased slightly.

Economic Value of Diversity

Employers are interested in increasing diversity to help them secure contracts from diverse communities. The employers noted that they have gone to towns where the decision makers were mostly minority, but the planning team was all White.

There is a need for responsiveness to clients and affinity with the communities served. However, employers said they were worried about hiring for the sake of diversity and losing jobs because the person was not as qualified as another candidate.

No clients have ever requested a White planner to work on their projects.

Diversity is not a value that is perceived to be high on the agenda of the private sector; i.e., it is "not on the radar screen."

Costs of Diversity

There is a need for more training for minority planners especially in language and communication skills. Training is easier to implement for larger firms with more resources.

There is a lack of understanding of suburban "social processes" (i.e., the norms and values of suburban residents) among minorities.

Possible Actions to Increase Diversity

There needs to be proactive intervention by the APA on this issue.

Major planning schools need to attract more minority students.

There has to be a broader outreach; e.g., introducing the profession to school-age children.

Networks should be established for employers to post job openings to minority planners.

Other Comments

Although a master's degree is often required to enter the planning profession, the entry level salary is a relatively low \$37,000.

Hiring outreach is mainly limited to mainstream media and planning schools with more connections (e.g., NYU, Columbia), where the student body may be more skilled but less diverse.

There were stricter standards for affirmative action 25-30 years ago.

There is a "lawyer syndrome" among immigrant communities. Professional Hispanics tend to choose better known, higher paying professions (e.g., law, medicine, etc.).

Planning skills are easily transferable to other fields. There is a loss of practitioners to more profitable industries.

There is a lack of inspirational leadership in the public sector.

APA represents the interests of "small town America." There appears to be a lack of advocacy or support for social causes.).

Other Comments

There is a tight job market in the private sector, and an overall lack of qualified planners to fill open positions.. There are almost no minority applicants.

Planning skills are easily transferred to more profitable occupations.

APA is not a good resource for minority planners. The APA tends to represent suburban communities (which are mostly White). There is a lack of advocacy and outreach by APA.

Students who approach firms for internships are mainly White.

Employers tend to refer to specific planning schools for employees. If most of the students at these schools are White, the profession will be, too.

Public Sector's Role in Increasing Diversity

Offer a good work environment to all planners e.g., compressed week, flex hours, on-site facilities (for child-care, etc.), telecommuting, professional development, conferences, workshops, and encouragement of public service exam-taking.

Need to promote civil service exam among minority practitioners as professional development advancement.

Create Internet bulletin boards, post openings on community networks, and use the New York APA Metro Chapter to attract minority planners.

Base promotions and salary-levels on objective performance criteria and apply those criteria to all employees equally.

Other suggestions

The APA needs to assume a leading role as a change agent and in sensitizing the profession. Changes are required within the organization, too. Currently there is only one seat for minority planners in APA national. Executive directors have always been White.

Programs for minority students in planning schools are needed, as well as more faculty, staff members and deans from underrepresented ethnic groups.

Findings from Planning School Administrators

Comments on Survey Results

There is a notorious lack of African-American men in planning. The profession is becoming more diverse in terms of gender.

Community activists and professionals don't see themselves as planners and don't identify with the planning profession, although they use the same kind of skills. Planners are seen as separate from community development professionals..

There is a lack of minority planners in visible, senior-level positions. There appear to be a higher percentage of minorities in senior levels of other professions, which may help attract minorities to those professions.

There hasn't been any growth of minorities in the private sector of planning over the last 15 years.

There is a little belief in planning on the part of New York City's government. There have been public statements referring to New York City as having the advantage of a city that has not been planned. There is a lack of consultation and encouragement of participatory planning processes in New York. Planners in the city are seen as "imposing" rather than "consulting." Public planners are seen as part of "the other side."

Student Recruitment

Recruitment is difficult because planning is a costly and demanding graduate program with little return compared to other professions.

There is often a higher need for financial aid among minority students as noted in a recent HUD study.

In the 1960's and 1970's, there was increased enrollment of African-Americans in planning schools related to the civil rights movement and the importance of the profession in bringing about change. There was a high visibility and presence of public figures. Today, business has a greater appeal to young people. Planning is negatively associated with "City Hall."

The public sees planners seen as "weak" compared to lawyers.

There is a lack of African-American professors in planning schools.

The high participation of minorities in social work or education is related to the presence of visible leading minority figures in these fields. Young people see a potential of achieving success in these professions.

There is a mismatch between the high social need and low remuneration of planners.

There is a need to broaden the profession's focus beyond land use.

Role of Planning Schools in Increasing Diversity

Planning schools should:

Include ethics, commitment and passion for social change, and a connection to ground-level work (e.g., with community based organizations) in planning curricula. Link content to people's concerns, including: environmental justice, social equity, affordable housing and community development.

Develop connections between schools and employers.

Secure funding for advocacy purposes, such as increasing diversity.

Locally, create a consortium of New York schools to attract funders of programs to increase minority enrollment.

Include "studio" or "laboratory" courses, providing students with real community issues to focus on.

Work with foundations to provide free tuition for minority students in exchange for two-year commitments to community development corporations.

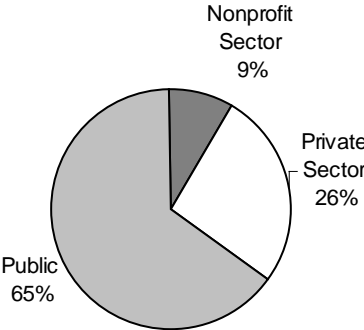
Other suggestions

The APA needs to become more of an advocacy organization to ensure the profession's diversity and contribution to the public good.

Appendix C: Additional Charts

Figure 5

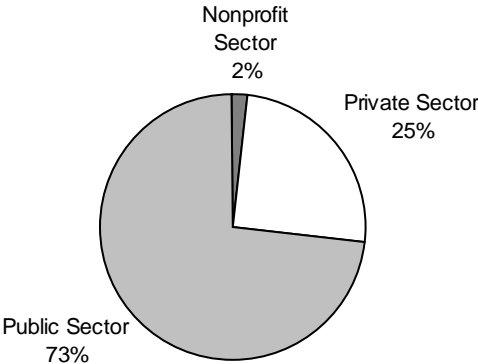
Distribution of Planners in Survey



Notes: Organizations with at least one planner = 71

Figure 6

Distribution of Planners Nationally



Source: Community Planning, Eric Damian Kelly and Barbara Becker, 2000

Figure 7

Organizations Surveyed, by Number of Planners

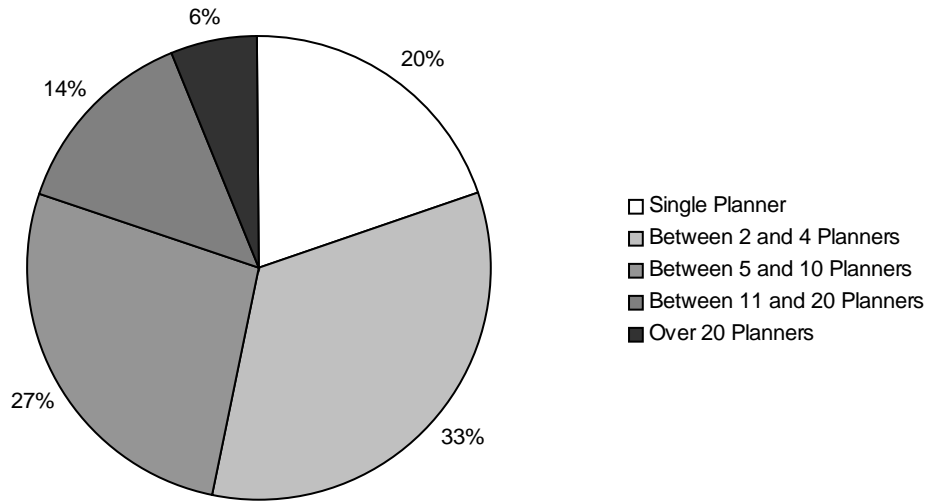


Figure 8

Diversity of APA New York Metro Chapter Area Planning Population, 2001

	Number of Planners	Percentage of APA Metro Population
White, non-Hispanic	627	87.6
African-American, non-Hispanic	23	3.2
Asian-American	38	5.3
Hispanic	18	2.5
Other	8	1.3

Source: American Planning Association

Notes: Based on self-reported data to APA National.

Appendix D: Survey Instruments

**American Planning Association New York Metro Chapter
*Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity***

Ethnic Diversity in Planning Study: Employer Survey

Dear Planning Director or Human Resources Officer:

The Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee is conducting a study of ethnic diversity on the planning profession and planning schools in the New York Metro Area. Please take some time to complete the survey below and return it to Ethnic Diversity in Planning Study, ATTN: Leo Vazquez, Milano Graduate School, 72 5th Ave., #424, New York, NY, 10011. Or you can fax your survey to **212-229-8935** . If you have any question please call Leo Vazquez at 212-229-5311, Ext. 1208.

This information will be used for survey purposes only.

Name of Organization _____
 Government _____ Private _____ Non-Profit _____
 Contact Person: _____
 Telephone # _____
 e-mail address: _____
 Total # Employees _____

Ethnicity and Race (Please Identify # of employees in each ethnic group)

How many planners on your staff are in the following ethnic categories:

African-American _____
 Asian-America _____
 Native –American _____
 White/Caucasian _____
 Latino _____
 Other/Mixed _____

Number of non-White/Caucasian planners in the following capacities:

Senior level (e.g., “manager” or “principal planner”) _____
 Mid-level (e.g. “planner” or “senior planner”) _____
 Entry-level (e.g., “junior” or “assistant” planner) _____

What percentage of your work involves providing services or plans that impact low and moderate-income communities?

_____ less than half
 _____ half
 _____ more than half

May we contact you for further questions? Yes No

Contact Name and Telephone _____

American Planning Association New York Metro Chapter
Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

Ethnic Diversity in Planning Study: Planner Survey

Dear Fellow Planner,

The Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee is conducting a study of ethnic diversity in the planning profession in the New York Metro area. Please fill the survey below and return it to the Ethnic Diversity in Planning Study in the enclosed envelope, or by e-mail to LeoVazquez@aol.com, or by fax to 212-229-8935. If you have questions, please call Leo Vazquez, Diversity Committee Chair at 212-229-5311, X1208. To help us reach more planners, please copy this form and give to other planners. Thank you.

Your identity will be kept confidential. Questions are for survey purposes only.

Background

Name _____

Position _____

Organization/Firm/Agency _____

Sector: Government _____ Private _____ Non-profit _____ Other _____

In what field(s) of planning do you specialize? _____

Member of: (circle all that apply): APA AICP ULI Other land use association _____

Ethnicity and Race

Race (please circle) And Latino Origin (please circle)

African-American Latino/Not Latino

Asian-American Latino/Not Latino

Native American Latino/Not Latino

White/Caucasian Latino/Not Latino

Other Latino/Not Latino

Mixed Race Latino/Not Latino

Professional Information:

Does your position allow you to: (circle all that apply)

A. manage projects affecting various neighborhoods?

B. solicit and choose the types of projects that you want to work on?

C. hire staff or significantly influence your organization's staff hiring practices?

D. Represent your organization to clients and communities affected by your projects?

Professional level

_____ Senior Level (i.e. influences policy and hiring decisions of organization)

_____ Mid Level (i.e., manages staff and/or projects)

_____ Entry Level

Number of years in planning profession _____

How much of your work involves providing services impacting communities in which Asian-Americans, African-Americans or Latinos make up at least 30% of the population? _____

How much of your work involves providing services impacting low and moderate-income communities? _____

How many urban planners, including yourself, work in your organization, agency or firm? _____

How many are?	African-American	Asian-American	Latino	White/Caucasian	Other Ethnicity
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

How many are managers?	African-American	Asian-American	Latino	White/Caucasian	Other Ethnicity
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

May we call you to follow up on this survey? Again, your identity will be kept confidential. If so, please list day and evening phone numbers. _____

**American Planning Association New York Metro Chapter
Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity**

Ethnic Diversity in Planning Study: Employer Survey

How Much is Diversity Worth?

Please indicate your likelihood to do the following to increase ethnic diversity on your staff.

Collaborate with planning schools to increase the numbers of planners of color	Would not do	Would consider	Would do
Of two candidates of equal ability, hire the one who will increase ethnic diversity on your staff	Would not do	Would consider	Would do
Of two candidates of unequal ability, hire the one who will increase ethnic diversity on your staff	Would not do	Would consider	Would do
Pay a higher salary to a candidate who adds ethnic diversity to your staff, than you would to another equal candidate.	Would not do	Would consider	Would do: If so, how much more (in %)
Pay to train an employee of lesser skills and experience, but who adds ethnic diversity to the staff	Would not do	Would consider	Would do: If so, how much would you pay?
Select the employee who adds diversity for promotion over other equally qualified employees	Would not do	Would consider	Would do:
Select an employee for promotion over other, more qualified employees	Would not do	Would consider	Would do

What else would you do to increase diversity on your staff?

Appendix E: Selected Sources

U.S. Census Bureau. *American FactFinder* and other sources. 1990 and 2000, generally www.census.gov

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