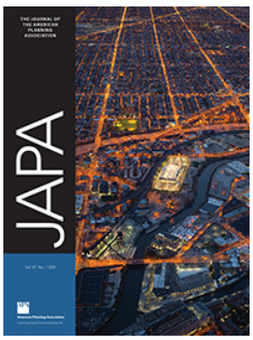

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of the American Planning Association

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjpa20

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To cite this article: Ivis García, April Jackson, Stacy A. Harwood, Andrew J. Greenlee, C. Aujean Lee & Benjamin Chrisinger (2021) "Like a Fish Out of Water", Journal of the American Planning Association, 87:1, 108-122, DOI: 10.1080/01944363.2020.1777184

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2020.1777184

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The Experience of African American and Latinx Planning Students

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ABSTRACT

Problem, research strategy, and findings: Many planning practitioners, faculty, and students have worked to address diversity and inclusion. However, only a few studies have examined specifically the ways in which African American and Latinx students perceive and experience instruction related to racial/ethnic diversity and the overall diversity climate as part of their urban planning education. This study, conducted by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Planners of Color Interest Group (POCIG), is based on 451 surveys with urban planning students of all racial/ethnic identities and 14 in-depth interviews with African American and Latinx students. Survey results show that most students report an overall supportive and positive climate for diversity within their programs. Nonetheless, survey data also show differences between African American, Latinx, and White students' experiences of bias and discrimination. Furthermore, interviews revealed that African American and Latinx students continue to face challenges in urban planning programs.

Takeaway for practice: The educational training of planners, in general, does not attempt to undo discriminatory practices; instead, these racialized tensions move from the classroom to the workplace. Ultimately, strategies to diversify the planning profession fail because of exclusionary interpersonal and institutional practices. Findings provide insight into how to better support African American and Latinx students in academia and as future practitioners. Results also suggest that greater representation of African American and Latinx students, coupled with mentorship, the creation of counter-spaces, and faculty/staff training on racial microaggressions, could foster more inclusive learning environments in urban planning institutions. Fostering inclusive environments will, in turn, help students learn how to develop healthy relationships with diverse communities. These interpersonal skills likely will translate into a more welcoming workplace and expand opportunities for effectively engaging Latinx and African American communities.

Keywords: diversity, microaggressions, planning education, planning practice, racism

Core planning institutions—AICP, APA, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), and the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB)—are implementing strategies to increase the representation of racial and ethnic groups in planning processes. These institutions are actively working to build cultural competency and equip planners to work with diverse communities. Thomas argues that incorporating a socially responsible practice in planning and the AICP has been a battle led by advocacy and activist planners who have stood against injustice (Thomas, 2019). These advocacy battles resulted in AICP mandate A.1.F: "[Planners] shall seek social justice by working on expanding choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration" (APA, 2016, p. 2).

Professionals and educators can benefit from the scholarship about racism, including microaggressions[1] and implicit bias.[2] This growing field of study is a window into the everyday world of interpersonal violence that maintains the uneven playing field and ultimately undermines the ASCP's, APA's, AICP's, and PAB's efforts to achieve excellence in promoting diversity, justice, and equity in planning. This research is particularly important as communities and neighborhoods in the United States experience demographic changes (Agyeman, 2013; Frey, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2006). Given both the history of the profession concerning African American and Latinx communities and its recent struggles to diversify research and practice, it is essential to address critical questions about how students of planning from these groups experience their training to become planners.

Although the vastly unequal distribution of resources along racial–ethnic lines has much to do with both urban planning and urban planners, planning education often confines these lessons to history curricula and,

DOI: 10.1080/01944363.2020.1777184

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instead, focuses on how planners may avoid discriminating by race (Hoch, 1993). In other words, planning practitioners, faculty, and students might recognize discrimination as a problem; however, they struggle to create more inclusive planning programs and workplaces that reflect greater diversity (Jackson, Parker, et al., 2018; Solis, 2020; Tiarachristie, 2016). Still, little work has examined the experience of African American and Latinx students, particularly how classroom interaction and diversity in planning education reproduce racial and ethnic hierarchies that invalidate their experiences. The educational training of planners, in general, does not attempt to undo such practices. One of the assumptions we make here is that these racialized tensions move from the classroom to the workplace. Ultimately, strategies to diversify the planning profession fail because of exclusionary interpersonal and institutional practices.

Here we examine the experiences of African American and Latinx undergraduate and graduate degree–seeking students in U.S. planning schools, focusing specifically on how these students perceive and experience the teaching, practice, and performance of diversity within their planning degree programs. Our study draws from the voices of African American and Latinx planning students to understand the implications of their experiences with diversity during planning education and draw lessons for practice. We begin by describing trends related to racial–ethnic diversity within planning educational programs. Next, we present the methodology and results of surveys and interviews with planning students and finally discuss how despite reports of an overall supportive and positive climate for diversity, African American and Latinx students still describe occurrences of bias and discrimination. We conclude with recommendations for planning schools and implications for planning practice.

Making a Case for Diversity and Inclusion in Planning Practice

Today's urban planners have to contend with the legacy of 20th-century legal, spatial, and social planning practices that reflect bias, discrimination, and the misguided application of planning principles to the segregation of African American and Latinx communities into separate and unequal neighborhoods. Zoning ordinances, a mainstay of the American planner's toolkit, have proven to be a powerful mechanism for perpetuating racism with systematic and long-lasting exclusion from opportunity (Rothstein, 2017; Silver, 1991; Whittemore, 2017). As planners reckon with this legacy and advocate in partnership with communities of color, new challenges emerge.

Planners continue to confront how bringing outside investments to structurally disadvantaged communities directly or indirectly drives their displacement (Bobo et al., 2002; Galster & Hill, 1992; García, 2018b; Goetz, 2003; Squires & Kubrin, 2005; Winders, 2005; Wyly & Hammel, 2004). In the face of neighborhood change and increasing diversity, planners must address such contradictions and effectively work with people from multiracial and multicultural backgrounds (Agyeman & Erickson, 2012; Burayidi, 2000; Mitchell et al., 1970; Sandercock, 1997; Thomas, 1996; Umemoto, 2001). Although long-term structural change is needed to create a society at large that promotes equity and redistributive justice, short-term interventions can help to address racism, microaggressions, and implicit bias.

With short-term interventions in mind, in 2018 APA adopted a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which connects planning practice and planning schools to "actively address barriers to and support the recruitment and retention of underrepresented peoples in the profession" (p. 2) by creating an inclusive work environment. However, these efforts are not new. For instance, the Planning and the Black Community Division, established in 1980, and the Latinos and Planning Division, established in 2005, have sought to also increase the number of Latinx and African Americans in the profession (Eley, 2009; Vazquez, 2007).

Although ACSP has long recognized issues of ethnic–racial underrepresentation within academia, it was not until the 1990s that ad hoc committees on diversity began to gain traction (Hibbard et al., 2011). The culmination of these efforts led to the creation of the Planners of Color Interest Group (POCIG) in 2007 and the Committee on Diversity in 2010 and the launch of the POCIG's study about inclusion and diversity in planning education in 2015 (Greenlee, Jackson, García-Zambrana, Lee, & Chrisinger, 2018). Since 2016 POCIG has produced the *Person of Color CV Book* yearly and the Committee on Diversity produced the *Syllabus Book* in 2013 and 2018. The PAB increasingly recognizes the importance of fostering inclusivity in professional practice by training all students to work with individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds (Sandercock, 1997; Sen, 2005; Sen et al., 2017; Sweet & Etienne, 2011). For example, PAB encourages accredited programs "to advance diversity and a culture of inclusion among the planning profession's future practitioners in the program, particularly concerning historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities" (PAB, 2017, p. 6).

Scholars have noted that it is necessary to hire a workforce (regardless of race and ethnicity) that can interact positively with colleagues and communities from diverse backgrounds (Jackson, Parker, et al., 2018; Tiarachristie, 2016). Others have noted that a strategy to increase diversity in the planning workforce could be

achieved through a relevant non-Eurocentric curriculum and the introduction of alternative pedagogies (Alizadeh et al., 2017; Balsas, 2012; García, 2017; Lowe, 2008; Savan, 2004; Sletto, 2010; Thomas, 1996). Furthermore, improving classroom climate by creating an inclusive classroom through cultural competency training, policies, and continued activities that address everyday racism is another strategy that faculty members are embracing (García, 2018a; Jackson, Parker, et al., 2018). Finally, an increased positive interaction that addresses inequities within African American and Latinx communities might inspire young people to pursue an education in planning (Tiarachristie, 2016).

Nevertheless, African Americans and Latinx are still underrepresented and experience day-to-day difficulties in their work environments (Thomas, 2008). The struggles to hire a diverse planning workforce raise questions about what is happening in the educational pipeline. Conceptually, fostering diversity (welcoming people from different races, ethnicities, etc.) and inclusion (promoting culturally responsive interventions) as part of planning education has important spillovers for planning practice and the social good (Figure 1). In the end, our study calls academics and practitioners to put an end to planners as technocrats aiding the growth machine and to ethically commit to be part of the solution toward addressing racial and ethnic justice (Molotch & Logan, 1984). In the next section we address some practices and actions that are needed to change planning education to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity.

Changing Planning Education to Address the Lack of Diversity

One of the main goals of PAB's 2012 Strategic Plan was to "promote and encourage a systematic approach to diversity and multicultural understanding throughout each planning program" (Ozawa et al., 2019, p. 1). Through its accreditation standards and guidelines, PAB strives to "prepare, support, and advise" diverse students "to pursue and contribute successfully to the field of urban and regional planning" (PAB, 2017, p. 6). PAB asks planning programs to document student and faculty demographics as well as explain how they attract and retain students of color, including African American and Latinx students (PAB, 2017). Despite the push for more diversity, a 2015 PAB report found that 30 of 76 planning programs did not mention diversifying planning student enrollment as a goal in their most recent accreditation documents (Ozawa et al., 2019).

According to PAB data from 2008 to 2018, the percentage of Latinx and African American students in planning programs has increased (PAB, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019; Sen et al., 2014). The African American percentage increased from 7% to 11% (389–367) of all graduate planning students, and the Latinx student percentage increased from 8% to 14% (423–466). For Latinx, the undergraduate percentage grew from 7% to 19% (100–195), but the African American percentage only increased from 9% to 10% (120–100). However, the absolute numbers show little change for master's students and declines for undergrads in the last 10 years.

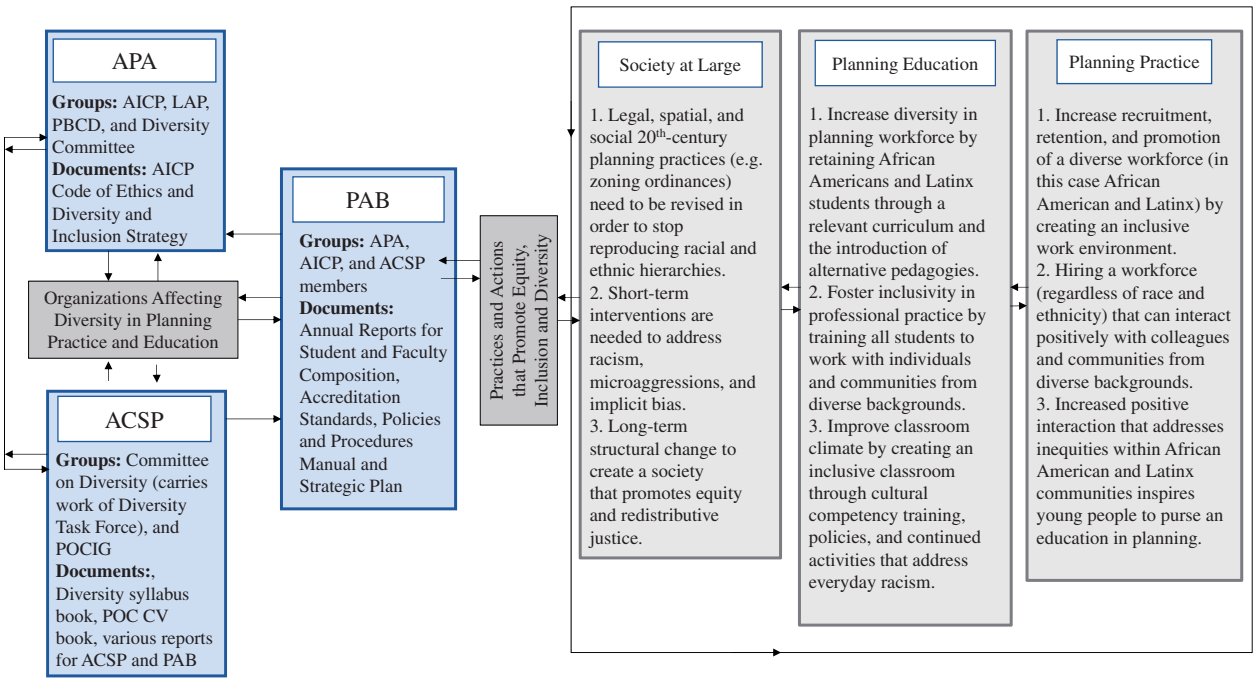

Figure 1. Organizations, practices, and actions that affect diversity in planning praxis and education.

The number of White students declined from 3,159 to 2,114, which explains most of the gains in racial and ethnic diversity for graduate planning students.[3] African Americans and Latinx continue to be underrepresented by about 50% compared with the overall population aged 18 to 29 (see Table 1).

Previous research has identified increasing the number of students of color who become practitioners and attracting and retaining faculty of color as critical elements for addressing diversity in planning practice and strengthening planning literature on race/ethnicity (Sweet & Etienne, 2011). The composition of planning faculty lags behind the changes in the student body as well as the national demographics. According to a 2018 annual PAB report, African Americans comprised 8% of full-time faculty and Latinx comprised 7.6% (U.S. citizens and residents) at PAB-accredited planning programs in 2018, compared with 6% and 6.2% in 2013, respectively (PAB, 2014, 2019).[4] As Hibbard et al. (2011) note, this general trend is "one slightly hopeful sign" (p. 2).

Faculty of color do not feel supported and end up leaving academia or moving from institution to institution seeking a more welcoming environment (Wubneh, 2011a, 2011b). Faculty diversity also affects the learning environment. For example, Greenlee, Jackson, García-Zambrana, and Lee (2018) find that the lack of faculty of color in programs limits how and whether discussions of race and ethnicity are addressed in the classroom, regardless of the student's background. All students benefit from faculty of color, including a) having exposure to planners of color, b) mentorship, c) studio courses in diverse communities, and d) access to a cultural competency curriculum (Jackson, Parker, et al., 2018).

Trying to increase the numbers of faculty and domestic students of color in planning programs and, ultimately, in the profession requires more than merely increasing the numbers in the pipeline (Hibbard et al., 2011). Student perception of the campus climate, particularly concerning race and ethnicity, is a significant factor that hinders the degree to which African Americans and Latinx thrive in higher education environments (McCabe, 2009; Pittman, 2012; Yosso et al., 2009). In the context of campus climate, racial discrimination and prejudice are more than explicit acts of bigotry and include microaggressions and everyday actions linked to unconscious attitudes and implicit bias (Coates, 2008; Dovidio et al., 2002; McConahay, 1986; Pierce, 1995; Sears, 1988; C. Smith, 1997; Sue et al., 2008; Thompson & Neville, 1999).

Although several planning scholars have emphasized the inclusive nature of a multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural society, the experiences of people of color run counter to this planning value (Burayidi, 2000; Forsyth, 1995; Lung-Amam et al., 2015; Qadeer, 1997; Sandercock, 2000; Sen et al., 2017; Umemoto, 2001). "Everyday racism, whether physical, verbal, or visual, impedes mobility, limits access, facilitates segregation, and undermines the legitimacy" of African Americans and Latinx everywhere, including in the planning classroom, professional workplaces, and communities where planners engage (Harwood et al., 2018, pp. 1246–1247).

Of particular interest here are the formal and informal spaces. In a study of undergraduate Latinx in three elite predominately White institutions across the country, Yosso et al. (2009) find that Latinx students created spaces outside of the classroom, or *counter-spaces*. Counter-spaces allow racial–ethnic minority students to express their cultural identity (Lee et al., 2020; Yosso et al., 2009). Broader literature partially explains this observation of the experiences of students of color in higher education, who report feeling both invisible and hypervisible (Douglas, 1998; Greenlee, Jackson, García-Zambrana, & Lee, 2018; Pyne & Means, 2013). African American and Latinx students often hear negative stereotypes about their intelligence in classroom discussions (Greenlee, Jackson, García-Zambrana, & Lee, 2018; Joshi et al., 2015; Yosso et al., 2009). These and other experiences contribute to an overall hostile campus climate. In the context of planning education, hostile encounters work against efforts to increase diversity and inclusion as defined by the APA Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2018).

Nonetheless, curriculum changes in planning education are happening. The PAB expects planning schools to include diversity topics in some of their required courses instead of dedicating full (but elective) courses. Scholars have reimagined classroom pedagogy to accommodate for these changes (Alizadeh et al., 2017; Balsas, 2012; García, 2017; Lowe, 2008; Savan, 2004; Sletto, 2010; Thomas, 1996). In a theoretical essay about planning education, Thomas (1996) discusses the importance of reconstructing the planning curriculum to one that is more visionary, acknowledging pluralistic and multicultural differences for social action; that is, one capable of combating the inequities that exist in planning. To achieve this vision, in agreement with PAB methods, she proposes planning schools integrate multicultural concerns for professional practice throughout regular core class sessions, even when programs might also choose to dedicate full courses to diversity. Increasingly, studio courses and university–community partnerships are used as pedagogical approaches to equip planning students to work effectively with diverse communities (Alizadeh et al., 2017; Balsas, 2012; García, 2017; Jackson, García-Zambrana, et al., 2018; Lowe, 2008; Meléndez, 2018; Savan, 2004; Sletto, 2010; Thomas, 1996).

The mentor–mentee relationship has also proven to be important in supporting a climate for diversity because African Americans and Latinx tend to seek

Table 1. Master's and undergraduate student composition in accredited planning programs for full-time and part-time U.S. citizens and residents, 2008–2018, and U.S. population aged 18–29.

Master's student composition, 2008–2018

Race/ethnicity	2008, *n* (%)	2009, *n* (%)	2010, *n* (%)	2011, *n* (%)	2012, *n* (%)	2013, *n* (%)	2014, *n* (%)	2015, *n* (%)	2016, *n* (%)	2017, *n* (%)	2018, n (%)	Change 2008–2018 (%)
Latinx	423 (8)	435 (7)	402 (7)	450 (8)	469 (8)	477 (9)	477 (12)	465 (13)	430 (12)	441 (13)	466 (14)	75
Black	389 (7)	448 (7)	447 (7)	438 (7)	399 (7)	366 (7)	385 (10)	405 (11)	380 (11)	410 (12)	367 (11)	57
White	3,159 (60)	3,223 (54)	3,626 (60)	3,484 (59)	3,171 (56)	2,969 (54)	2,603 (67)	2,452 (67)	2,291 (65)	2,273 (65)	2,114 (64)	7

Undergraduate student composition, 2008–2018

Race/ethnicity	2008, *n* (%)	2009, *n* (%)	2010, *n* (%)	2011, *n* (%)	2012, *n* (%)	2013, *n* (%)	2014, *n* (%)	2015, *n* (%)	2016, *n* (%)	2017, *n* (%)	2018, *n* (%)	Change 2008–2018 (%)
Latinx	100 (7)	165 (9)	164 (10)	157 (10)	121 (9)	137 (11)	159 (19)	143 (15)	157 (17)	100 (12)	195 (19)	171
Black	120 (9)	154 (9)	135 (8)	117 (7)	97 (7)	87 (7)	94 (11)	93 (10)	86 (9)	76 (9)	100 (10)	11
White	644 (46)	991 (51)	1,112 (65)	964 (61)	780 (60)	741 (57)	481 (59)	686 (73)	588 (63)	613 (71)	630 (61)	32

U.S. racial/ethnic composition of U.S. population aged 18–29, 2010–2018

Race/ethnicity	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)	2013 (%)	2014 (%)	2015 (%)	2016 (%)	2017 (%)	2018 (%)	Change 2010–2018 (%)
Latinx	20	20	21	21	21	21	21	21	22	10
Black	14	14	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	7
White	58	57	57	56	56	55	55	54	54	−7

Source: PAB Annual Report data (Planning Accreditation Board, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019); American Community Survey, 1-year estimates 2010–2018.

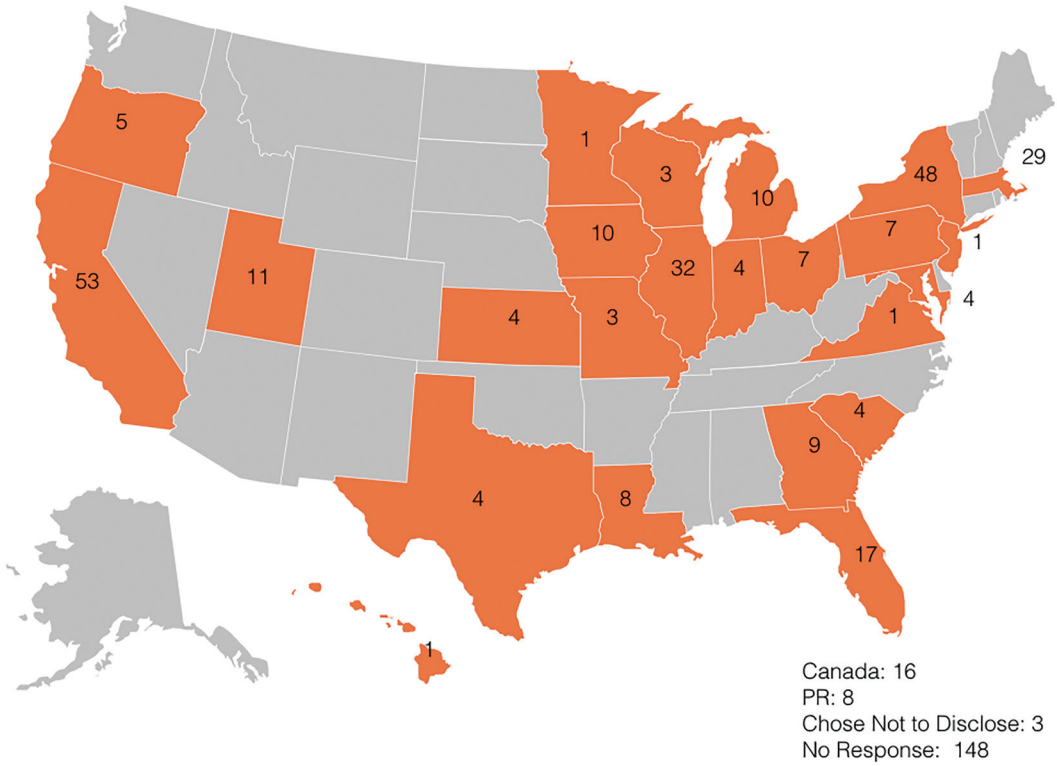

Figure 2. Survey respondents' locations.

mentors they can relate to based on their background (Alvarez et al., 2009; Greenlee et al., 2015; Jackson, Parker, et al., 2018; Martinez & Fernández, 2004; Nuñez, 2009). In a study of 35 Latinx students at the State University of New York, Geneseo, Schneider and Ward (2003) find that family support makes a unique contribution to Latinx students' emotional and academic adjustment. They also find that there is a positive correlation for peer, faculty, and institutional assistance (Schneider & Ward, 2003). Despite all of these strategies, planning programs are still grappling with practical ways to address diversity in both education and practice (Lung-Amam et al., 2015; Solis, 2020). To overcome this gap, researchers have recommended more collaborative work between academia and the planning profession (Godschalk, 2014; Myers & Banerjee, 2005).

Methods: Examining Planning Student Experiences and Perceptions

Our study includes an online survey of planning students from all ethnicities and races to compare the impressions of African Americans and Latinx with those of other student groups. Our research team assembled a list from current degree-seeking students in programs cataloged in the 2015 *ACSP Guide to Planning Schools* (ACSP, 2015). Researchers sent an invitation email to the 165 department heads and program directors for 105 institutions located in the United States and Canada. A total of 451 students completed the survey. Figure 2 maps respondents by state (for respondents who reported their location). Table 2 summarizes respondents' education characteristics. Most (89%) were graduate students, including master's and PhD students. A full description of the survey design, methods, and findings is reported in Greenlee, Jackson, García-Zambrana, and Lee (2018).

Later, we conducted semistructured interviews using video conferencing to delve deeper into the experiences of African American and Latinx planning students in the United States specifically. Our research team recruited from the pool of participants who completed the online survey, which included an optional question about willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. We interviewed 14 African American and Latinx students from the United States between July and October of 2016. All 14 students come from R1 doctoral universities of very high research activity on the West Coast ($n = 4$) and East Coast ($n = 3$) and in the Southwest ($n = 1$), South ($n = 4$), and Midwest ($n = 2$). Two students were undergraduates and the rest were graduate students.

Although 14 interviews are not representative of all planning programs, they complement the online survey with testimonies from African American and Latinx students. Another limitation is that there are many variations in planning programs' approaches to diversity. This study does not report on how effective or

Table 2. Respondent educational, racial/ethnic, nativity, and gender characteristics.

Degree level	*n* (%)	Nativity	*n* (%)	Race/ethnicity	*n* (%)	Gender	*n* (%)
Undergraduate	45 (10)	Native born	222 (49.22)	Black	35 (8)	Male	132 (29.27)
Master's	314 (70)	Foreign born	34 (7.54)	Latinx	56 (12)	Female	182 (40.35)
PhD	87 (19)	Other	15 (3.33)	White	196 (43)	Genderqueer	16 (3.55)
Dual degree	3 (1)	Prefer not to answer	N/A (N/A)	Other	44 (10)	Prefer not to answer	N/A (N/A)
No response	2 (0)	No response	180 (39.91)	Prefer not to answer	28 (6)	No response	121 (26.83)
Total	451 (100)	Total	451 (100)	No response	92 (20)	Total	451 (100)
				Total	451 (100)		

ineffective these diversity efforts have been. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 min, and questions were explored according to an interview guide, which can be found in *ACSP-POCIG Student Climate Study: Summary of Findings* on POCIG's website (Greenlee, Jackson, García-Zambrana, & Lee, 2018). A professional company transcribed all of the audio recordings. We used inductive coding to discover themes and organize them into categories (Jones & Alony, 2011).

Table 2 shows that most of our sample (43%) was White, 8% identified as Black, 12% identified as Latinx, and 10% were categorized as "other."[5] About 6% preferred not to answer the question of race/ethnicity, and about 20% of respondents skipped the question.[6] Of those who responded, 82% reported they were U.S. native-born. Forty percent of the sample was female, 29% was male, 3.5% identified as genderqueer or gender nonconforming, and 27% did not answer.

Survey Findings: Different Experiences With Bias and Discrimination

Students responded to questions regarding experiencing bias or discrimination in the classroom or department (Table 3). Responses differed about citizenship status (Question 12.3), race/ethnicity (Question 12.6), and nationality (Question 12.10). Latinx respondents reported more incidences of personal discrimination (15%) based on citizenship status compared with Black (6%) or White (3%) students. Latinx and Black respondents perceived more frequent personal discrimination based on race or ethnicity at higher rates (51% were more likely to agree that discrimination occurred) compared with White respondents (9%). Latinx respondents reported more discrimination based on nationality (22%) compared with Black (9%) or White (3%) students.

Table 4 shows that about 51% of Black and 56% of Latinx students agreed that they had been singled out in class because of their identity, compared with 23% of White students. Question 14.5 shows that 69% of Black and 56% of Latinx students agreed that they have to work harder to be perceived as a good student because of their identity, compared with 24% of White students. White students are more likely with disagree (73%) that they have heard faculty express stereotypes based on their identity, compared with Black (65%) and Latinx (57%) students. These six critical questions from the survey findings support in-depth interviews, specifically about key survey questions such as a personal experience of bias or discrimination and level of agreement with statements related to differential treatment.

Interview Findings: Stories of Bias, Discrimination, and Exclusion

This section adds nuance to the survey results above. The interviews with Latinx and African American students in planning schools provide further evidence of bias, discrimination, and racial–ethnic exclusion. Four main themes emerge from the qualitative data: 1) lack of representation and feeling alienated, 2) feeling singled out and tokenized, 3) working twice as hard and feeling hypervisible, and 4) not being taken seriously and feeling dismissed.

Feeling Alienated: Lack of Representation

Students expressed challenges with peer and student–faculty relationships within their programs. In our interviews, Black and Latinx students expressed a desire to see other students and faculty who were like them and disappointment that this often did not happen. "I have felt like a fish out of water," Valeria, a Latinx in a majority White school, said. "It's like I'm not really part of this group" (referring to her program). This lack of representation leads to feelings of alienation among many students. "Overwhelmingly, it's been very hard to connect with students," Valeria said. "It's been very hard for me to find a point of connection, like do we do similar work, do we have similar interests, do we socialize?"

Other students described feeling lonely, rejected, and ignored. Debra, a Black student who moved to a school in a majority White community, said, "I don't know what to do. I've never been in a situation where I'm, like, different." "I cried every day," said Olivia, who is

Table 3. Personal experience with bias or discrimination.

	n (%)	*n* (%)
Race/ethnicity	**Never**	**Have experienced**
Q12.3: Personal experience of bias or discrimination: citizenship status		
Black	33 (94)	2 (6)
Latinx	47 (85)	8 (15)
White	182 (97)	5 (3)
Q12.6: Personal experience of bias or discrimination: race/ethnicity		
Black	17 (49)	18 (51)
Latinx	27 (49)	28 (51)
White	171 (91)	16 (9)
Q12.10: Personal experience of bias or discrimination: nationality		
Black	32 (91)	3 (9)
Latinx	43 (78)	12 (22)
White	181 (97)	6 (3)

Note: Total $N = 35$ Black, 55 Latinx, 187 White.

Table 4. Perceptions related to differential treatment.

	n (%)	*n* (%)
Race/ethnicity	**Disagree**	**Agree**
Q14.4: Singled out in class or have felt like the "spokesperson" for a group		
Black	17 (49)	18 (51)
Latinx	24 (44)	31 (56)
White	144 (77)	43 (23)
Q14.5: Work harder than other students to be perceived as a good student		
Black	11 (31)	24 (69)
Latinx	24 (44)	31 (56)
White	142 (76)	45 (24)
Q14.9: Have heard faculty express stereotypes based on social identity		
Black	20 (57)	15 (43)
Latinx	36 (65)	19 (35)
White	137 (73)	50 (27)

Note: Total $N = 35$ Black, 55 Latinx, 187 White.

a Black Latinx from New York City. "Even right now, I'm thinking about getting really emotional because I do not feel like I belong." Even though diversity is often discussed and almost always encouraged, students said planning programs are rarely as diverse as they claim to be. Olivia continued, "We do talk a lot about diversity, and we talk a lot about sharing our experiences, and they pride themselves on doing all these studies. Out of 30 people accepted in my program, there's two of us." Some domestic Black and Latinx students might find kinship with international students because they might also feel alienated. "In terms of friendship, it's almost always the international students," Valeria said. "There's a richness of culture; that is, there's more likely to be a cultural exchange, which is really great, so we introduce each other to different foods. Maybe they're as lonely as I am." Feelings of loneliness can have severe repercussions for educational success.

Feeling Tokenized: Singled Out

Given the lack of diversity at many institutions, African American and Latinx students also felt tokenized. Students observed a disconnect between the discussion of embracing diversity and the genuine commitment to supporting diversity in the classroom. At times students felt their physical presence was evidence of diversity, merely a way to satisfy diversity

requirements. William explains the rhetoric versus reality contradiction:

> I knew, regardless of what university that I chose to attend for grad school, that I would be a token or "domino" in the cogs of the university forever emblazed as proof of its commitment to diversity for years to come as my image would be recycled upon its publications.

With so few Latinx or African American students in a classroom, at times, students feel pressured to speak or represent for the entire racial/ethnic group. Patty, a second-generation Mexican student who was not an immigrant herself, explained that she felt uncomfortable speaking for all Mexicans. She did not have the same experience as someone who is an immigrant or crossed the border and who dealt with not being a citizen. Similarly, she "passes" as White, and most people do not realize she is Latinx. Patty, who goes to a predominately White school, describes her experience:

> My family, all of us can pass for White. Most of the racism I have experienced has been like, "Oh, I thought nobody around here was, you know, I didn't think there were any brown people around. So, I thought it was okay to say." You know? Like, you're like, "Let's tell this joke." And then, "Oh, crap, I didn't realize that you would take it personally because I didn't think you were Mexican."

Although Patty's experience could be interpreted as tokenism, it is also possible that she feels threatened by her loss of White privilege. Overall, Latinx and African American students felt they should not be the only ones discussing or teaching topics of race, ethnicity, and the Global South.

Feeling Hypervisible: Must Work Twice as Hard

African American and Latinx students described the pressure of being "remembered" for their mistakes. "If you're like the only Black person in a class full of White people, you're going to be singled out anyway," Debra said. "It's horrible because if you do something wrong or if you're on your phone texting, if you do anything, your professor will remember you. Anything that happens, you did it. If you get a bad grade, it's you." Sometimes differential treatment was even more explicit. Erica described it this way: "I don't know how to phrase it other than you have to be twice as good." Olivia talked about having to work harder to overcome this pressure: "I had to work harder than everybody else." Olivia points out that not only does she work hard to avoid making mistakes, but this effort comes at a cost: falling behind and extreme stress.

Feeling Dismissed: Not Taken Seriously

Students spoke extensively about not being taken seriously in classroom discussions, when seeking help with homework, or when contributing a perspective that differed from the dominant way of thinking. For some, feeling dismissed, invalidated, and ignored led them to rethink how and when they participated in class. Sarah described what it was like being ignored in the classroom: "I would answer the question correctly. He would say it was incorrect. Then someone else would say the same exact thing that I had just said, and he would be like, 'That is correct.' … I was just like, "Seriously?"

This type of treatment extended to instances when Latinx and African American students asked for help. Olivia said she was learning about illustrating design principles when she asked her peers about how to complete a simple procedure.

> They [White students] would say, "Oh, it's very easy, don't you know how to draw?" or "Didn't you learn this before?" And I was like, "No, I didn't … that's why I'm asking you, help me". … I actively seek help, but I would constantly be shut down.

Olivia attributed her not knowing Photoshop and other necessary planning skills to growing up in a large city and attending a public high school. Meanwhile, she believed that her White peers all went to private school or were not New York City (NY) residents.

Sarah, an African American woman, experienced something similar. "I didn't understand why I got a specific grade on a specific assignment. So I went to the professor to ask for help or clarification. And instead of the professor wanting to kind of assist me, he insinuated that I was being hostile." Sarah thought that if a White male student asked for reconsideration of their grade, the professor would not have reacted this way. When a Black female does the same, Sarah argued, they are labeled as "hostile and aggressive." She added that many professors would regard a Black woman as a "problem student" or someone who does not "work hard" or is not really "getting it."

Participants also described experiences of being penalized for expressing their ideas, whereas professors showed preferential treatment for those in the dominant group. Juana, who grew up in California, recalled feeling marginalized when speaking up about an issue important to her. "'Oh, well, of course, you have something to say about it because you're the feisty Latina' [they would say]. They're not taking you seriously."

Often, students said, professors were apprehensive about dialogue involving inequality. Juana recalled:

> There was one particular person who would always say, "Oh, you always go to the extreme," or "That doesn't happen. That's not real. You know, people aren't living in those bad conditions." And I have had other students tell me, like, "Why do you fight with him? He's just not going to change his mind."

Juana's professor also characterizes her as being exaggerated and having "a bad attitude." Unfortunately, Juana is not alone. Latinx and Black students report experiencing such ethno-racial invalidations. By rejecting the challenges that her family and friends have faced as people of color in the United States, the entire classroom loses out on hearing a perspective that is all too often missing from the classroom. The professor, in this case, did not take Juana seriously. He was defensive and blocked conversations by repeatedly invalidating Juana's lived experience. However, in this case, Juana, who is older than most of her cohort and very secure of herself, kept raising her hand to offer her opinion. She did this because she felt it was her responsibility to educate others.

Feeling dismissed and being treated as inferior led to students holding back from speaking up in class. Some of the most common reasons students decided to hold back included not wanting to cause contention, feeling like they would be ignored or misunderstood, and not having the energy to get into an argument. Similar incidents made students feel the need to hold back from engaging in the classroom. "I'm already on the outside, so I cannot rock the boat too much," Olivia said. Jacob agreed, saying, "It's not allowed. I don't want to be put into a label. As a Black man with a certain level of consciousness, I definitely know I have to watch what I say," Jacob added. "And that is not something necessarily unique to this program. It's everywhere. I don't want to cause any dissension," Jacob alleged. He continued, "I don't want to offend anyone. At some point, I want to just make it through the program and move on. This is just me being completely honest." Valeria sums up this classroom experience succinctly: "On a scale of 1 to 10, how are they addressing the issues of diversity? I'd say about a 1.5 because I feel like I could just drop off the face of the earth, and the major players in this department would go, 'Oh, well, hmmm … okay, what's next?'"

Discussion: Planning Education as a Contradictory Space

Findings suggest planning schools fail to acknowledge or embrace the contradictions that seem apparent to the interviewees. As previously described by African American and Latinx students, these experiences are not unique to planning education but rather are a systemic contradiction that students of color must navigate, particularly in predominantly White institutions (Harwood et al., 2018). Racial–ethnic microaggressions are commonplace in higher education; these practices disrupt and constrain everyday routines and leave students feeling unwelcome. This unwelcoming environment is particularly problematic in planning programs because academics claim to teach students how to undo injustices and create inclusive communities. At the same time, the space in which students learn reproduces those injustices by treating African Americans and Latinx as second-class citizens.

The survey and interviews with African American and Latinx students highlight the lack of diverse faculty and students, the Eurocentric curriculum, limited pedagogical styles, and a hostile classroom setting, all of which effectively erase African American and Latinx voices from the classroom. The subtle and everyday forms of racism described above create an environment that directly contradicts the claims planning programs make about their learning objectives. The inability of the faculty to facilitate meaningful conversation further exacerbates the problem. The classroom experience contributes to African American and Latinx students feeling alienated, tokenized, and dismissed in planning programs. These feelings lead some students to stop speaking and others to modify how they contribute. Alternatively, if students participate and share their opinions, they are left feeling responsible for calling out ignorance or experience eventual fatigue in addressing these comments (W. A. Smith et al., 2007). Mateo puts it more bluntly: "I wish we could have more honest discussions about race and privilege, and that those who talk the most [White people] could somehow be shut up in those discussions." Although well-meaning faculty and students give lip service to diversity and inclusion, they have not learned how to listen and engage in dialogue that centers alternative stories and perspectives.

Ironically, Latinx and African American students are attracted to planning for the profession's potential to make a difference. Students enroll in planning programs expecting to learn about inclusive practices and how to engage with historically marginalized communities. For example, typical responses to the question about what attracted them to planning include, "I wanted to study urban planning because I thought it would become a forum for me to speak about race and social justice issues." Another student picked planning because of " … the ability to make a difference in the lives of people in cities, especially those traditionally marginalized from the decision-making process." African American and Latinx students pointed to courses about

community engagement and workshops embedded in diverse neighborhoods as helping to prepare them to achieve these career goals. Nonetheless, when asked whether they feel the planning program is preparing them to work in a diverse community or with diverse populations, they expressed severe reservations.

African American and Latinx students see the disconnect between what programs say they do and what they actually do. Debra, an African American woman, said, "Discourse on the department website was attractive . . . . We can talk about diversity, but we are not applying the discourse into practice. I hardly believe we are developing our skills to be culturally sensitive planners." Maria made a similar assessment:

> I was initially attracted to [the planning] program because of its "commitment" to social justice principles and practices. The program promotes itself as one rooted in principles of social justice. As a community organizer, I wanted to be a part of a program that would value my work and knowledge as an organizer. Unfortunately, I realized that the department's commitment to social justice is limited to a promotion strategy used to recruit students.

Another student called this superficial commitment to diversity "disingenuous" because it is done only to meet accreditation requirements. Another student with a background in youth development and organizing summed up planning this way: "I think planning education basically prepares students to push paper as bureaucrats in government or private sector for the growth machine. Social and political issues/realities are not addressed adequately to help planners become competent advocates for the public good." Overall, Latinx and African American students believe that planning programs must make strides in walking the walk that align with the values espoused in the classrooms and institutions.

Conclusion: Leveraging Diversity into Better Planning Practice

African American and Latinx students reported, in both surveys and interviews, experiences of alienation, dismissal, tokenism, and inferior treatment, which discouraged them from expressing their opinions and actively participating in the classroom. Although this is among the first studies on African American and Latinx students in planning programs, the survey and interview findings contribute to the existing literature on minority students' higher educational experiences (Greenlee et al., 2015; Jackson, Parker, et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; McCabe, 2009; Pittman, 2012; Yosso et al., 2009).

We conclude by returning to the literature to see what other scholars have suggested as ways to improve the campus climate. In the classroom, it is vital first to expand cultural competence and racial awareness among students by introducing separate courses that focus on diversity while at the same time integrating diversity throughout the required curriculum (Thomas, 1996) and, second, to teach studio courses with university–community partnerships in diverse communities (Alizadeh et al., 2017; Balsas, 2012; Dearborn & Harwood, 2011; García, 2017; Jackson, Parker, et al., 2018; Lowe, 2008; Meléndez, 2018; Savan, 2004; Sletto, 2010; Thomas, 1996).

Because students feel alienated from their departments, African American and Latinx students often resort to looking for opportunities outside of the classroom. We offer four recommendations outside of the classroom. First, departments need to strengthen peer relations and encourage family support (Schneider & Ward, 2003). Second, programs such as mentoring can enhance campus climate for ethnic diversity (Alvarez et al., 2009; Jackson, Parker, et al., 2018; Martinez & Fernández, 2004; Nuñez, 2009). Third, it is vital to build counter-spaces in which students can discuss their challenges and foster a sense of belonging with those of similar backgrounds (Lee et al., 2020; Yosso et al., 2009).

In agreement with Harwood et al. (2018), we also recommend that planning programs develop training for staff and faculty on microaggressions. It is not enough just for African American and Latinx students (and future practitioners) to increase in number. Planning education and planning professional environments need to implement these proposed strategies to create a supportive institutional culture. Practicing these strategies will help students like Valeria stop feeling "like a fish out of water."

What are some implications for practice? Though the planning professional work environment is not the focus of this study, this early socialization about the profession is reinforced and reproduced in the workplace. The racial climate of the office and the way planners treat diverse residents do not magically change after graduation. The racially biased and discriminatory behaviors continue and often go unnoticed. If the planning field does not address racial and ethnic exclusion within the workplace, attracting and retaining planners of color will remain a challenge.

In addition, professionally trained planners who are ineffective at creating spaces for diverse residents to participate become practitioners who are blind to much of the interpersonal violence occurring within some communities. Planners then are unable to address interpersonal dynamics throughout various planning

processes. Residents of color are often left feeling unheard and tokenized and will wind up not wanting to participate. These interpersonal skills are essential for practitioners to learn before entering the field. We hope that when building inclusive planning programs, students—and thus future practitioners—will learn to develop welcoming workplaces, communities, and neighborhoods. Taking deliberate steps for a more inclusive environment is how the planning profession will achieve its aspirational goals.

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RESEARCH SUPPORT

This work was supported by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning.

NOTES

1. Sue et al. (2007) defines racial microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (p. 271).

2. Planners will need to take the time to understand and move beyond their own implicit biases (attitudes and stereotypes about groups), which may often be hidden from themselves. People develop blind spots because of their background and experiences, as well as broader societal narratives. Examples of implicit bias might be that women are better at taking notes, Asians are smart, African American men have experience with crime, or the Latinx must be the intern and not the executive director.

3. Departments and universities must consider approaches to increase diversity beyond counts and proportions to address systematically racist structures in higher education (Hurtado et al., 1998).

4. "Black" might include faculty from outside of the United States; these figures could be overestimating the percentage of African Americans (Tewari et al., 2018). Similarly, Latinx scholars might include people from Spain and Portugal or those who have a Spanish surname but are White. Some argue that these practices are Eurocentric and thus further colonialism (Herlihy-Mera, 2016). Furthermore, international students/faculty contribute to diversity numbers and tuition targets, but their experiences in programs/departments are not always solicited or explored (Lee et al., 2020).

5. The analysis did break out categories for American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. However, in this study, we aggregated these data as "other" to highlight the numbers for Whites, African Americans, and Latinx. There is a difference between people selecting the "other" category versus people selecting groups, but we aggregated them for the sake of analysis.

6. A limitation of the study is that we asked demographic information near the end of the survey. Unfortunately, many initial respondents did not finish the study.

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