Cultural Competence in Urban Affairs and Planning

Tom Angotti
Marly Pierre-Louis
Laxmi Ramasubramanian
CUNY Hunter College
Sigmund Shipp
Angela Tovar

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Cultural Competence in Urban Affairs and Planning

Engaging New York City’s Puerto Rican and Latino Communities
Report Contributors:

Dr. Tom Angotti
Marly Pierre-Louis
Dr. Laxmi Ramasubramanian
Dr. Sigmund Shipp
Angela Tovar, Editor

Partners:

![CCPD](image1)
![Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños](image2)

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Introduction

In the Fall of 2009, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO) undertook the Centro Cultural Competence Initiative (CCI) with the support of a one-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). The goal of the CCI is to address the need for culturally appropriate work in a variety of professions by training students to be culturally competent practitioners. In the Fall of 2010, the Urban Affairs and Planning Department at Hunter College joined CENTRO as a partner in this initiative. Full time Professors Sigmund Shipp, Laxmi Ramasubramanian, and Tom Angotti worked with graduate assistants Angela Tovar and Marly Pierre-Louis on a year-long inquiry of cultural competency within the department.

On November 19, 2010, Professor Tom Angotti worked with graduate student Mario Quijano to coordinate and host a symposium held at Hunter College entitled: “Community Planning and Development in Puerto Rican and Pan Latino New York: Problems and New Approaches for Teaching and Practice.” The transcript of the event and the bibliography is provided here as a resource for educators who are interested in introducing key issues relating to the Latino urban communities in their course curriculum. The symposium also generated many suggestions for changes in curriculum and pedagogy. In addition, an annotated bibliography was compiled that includes representative literature on community development and planning in Latino communities.

In the Spring of 2011, Marly Pierre-Louis and Angela Tovar, supervised by Professor Laxmi Ramasubramanian, developed and conducted a student survey and face-to-face interviews with faculty members to assess existing practices within the department and how they can be improved to effectively prepare the student body to understand and engage with diverse groups of people. A presentation of findings for both the student surveys and the faculty interviews are also included in this report.

Also in Spring 2011, Professor Sigmund Shipp incorporated a community-based cultural competency student project in his Diversity in the City course. In this course, students worked in groups and used various media formats to produce modules that demonstrate how different community organizations working with Latino populations deal with issues in culturally competent ways. Included in this report are the project description as well as student summaries of the project. Additionally, a student presentation is included in the appendix.

The following report documents this year long effort to engage in discourse and to incorporate strategies to effectively introduce cultural competency into the urban planning curriculum in the Urban Affairs and Planning Department at Hunter College – City University of New York.
Community Planning and Development in Puerto Rican and Pan-Latino New York: Problems and New Approaches for Teaching and Practice
Friday, November 19, 2010

Hunter College School of Social Work

Introduction

On November 19, 2010, Urban Planning educators, professionals, activists and students convened for a symposium aimed at addressing community development and planning within the diverse Latino populations of New York City and beyond. Dr. Tom Angotti and Dr. Edwin Meléndez, professors of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College, moderated panels of Latino scholars and practicing professionals who engaged more than 60 participants in the 5-hour dialogue. Several topics were addressed during the discussion including integrating cultural competency into the educational and professional urban planning realms and the challenges associated, as well as new approaches and challenges in Pan-Latino New York.

The following is a transcription of the symposium.

Transcript

10:00 am -12:00 pm - Community Planning and Development in Puerto Rican and Pan-Latino New York City: Problems and Challenges for Professionals and Educators

Tom Angotti, Director, Hunter College Center for Community Planning & Development, Moderator

Eddie Bautista, Director, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance

L. Nicolas Ronderos, Director, Urban Development Programs, Regional Plan Association

Angotti: Welcomes everybody to the panel. Angotti begins by discussing the Centro FIPSE grant on cultural competency. Angotti explains how the goal of the project is to infuse cultural competency into the professional programs at Hunter College, including urban planning, in order to create more culturally competent professionals. He explains how this event is working in the spirit of this goal by focusing on Latinos in NYC in the context of urban planning. He acknowledges the work of the students who helped put the event together.

Next, Angotti provides some context for the conference. He argues that very often we are preparing people to work in communities that existed 30 years ago but that it is important to come to terms with the fact that those communities are changing.
He also describes how so much of the material used in urban planning classrooms presents abstract universalized communities and fails to take into account the dynamic nature of actual communities, treating communities as objects instead of subjects. He adds that the field of urban planning tends to deal with only the visible aspects of a community but so much of the community is invisible to us.

Angotti introduces the schedule of the day stating that there will be one panel in the morning and one panel after lunch with the morning focusing more on identifying problems and the afternoon on finding solutions.

Angotti introduces the panelists in the order that they are going to speak. The first speaker is Nicolas Ronderos, Director of Economic and Community Development at the Regional Plan Association of New York. He received his BA in Anthropology and Masters in Urban Policy and currently teaches at Rutgers University. He is slated to talk about a report that came out 10 years ago that discussed the lack of diversity in the profession and its continued relevance today.

The second speaker is Eddie Bautista who Angotti has known for many years as a community organizer fighting against the location of waste transfer stations in communities of color. Angotti and Bautista collaborated in the development of the Red Hook community plan and in the environmental justice campaign that Bautista led through the Organization of Waterfront Neighborhoods. He has a Masters in Urban Planning and was Angotti’s student at Pratt, where he received a Masters in Urban Planning.

After these introductions, Angotti poses the question that the panel is going to attempt to answer: What challenges are faced by Latinos in urban planning and what can be done to improve it? He emphasizes that the panel will be addressing problems and challenges for urban planning professionals in the field as well as urban planners working in the classroom as professors of the future generations of professionals.

**Ronderos:** He frames his presentation around what he terms a double conversation: (1) the effects of urban planning policies on the Latino community and (2) what Latino urban planning professionals working in Latino communities can best do to serve their community.

He shows data from the American Planning Association 2010 Survey, which looked at the number of people in the planning profession, showing that only four percent of licensed planning professionals are Latino. He notes that while only New Jersey requires a license, having the license tends to improve career outcomes because it gives access to conferences, which provide networking opportunities. He encourages professionals and students to join the association and utilize its resources for their own purposes. He then shifts gears to look closer at the local context.
He notes that in the NYC metro chapter of the American Planning Association there is a representation gap for Latinos, with only 7.7% of planners counted as Latinos in 1990 and 6.0% in 2000. This is contrasted with their percentage in the general population which was 17.5% in 1990 and 21.7% in 2000. He is waiting for census data to do a 2010 assessment to see where the numbers are today.

Ronderos describes actions that have been implemented to address this situation. He notes that from 2001-2006, he along with colleagues organized dialogues across the nation, which culminated in the incorporation of the Latino division of the American Planning Association. He stresses the importance of empowering the community to speak for themselves and notes the importance of diversifying the profession as one way of doing this.

Ronderos identifies current challenges: (1) the low number of Latino planners, (2) the changing demographics—for example, he notes how the Latino population is growing, which has led to tension with other groups as demonstrated by increasing hate crimes in Long Island and Staten Island (3) the white-dominated profession, with 90% of urban planners being white, and (4) the government dominated nature of the profession with 70% of urban planners working in government, 2% in the non-profit sector, 3% in education, and the rest in the private sector.

After describing these challenges, he identifies some emerging roles for Latino professionals in confronting them: (1) providing technical assistance—he notes the power of quantitative analysis and the vital need of connecting numbers to community needs, (2) serving as identity builders—he describes the Latino conservation initiative which is attempting to get to the historical experiences of Latino identity in the US, (3) playing the role of ambassadors that serve as liaisons between Latino communities and urban planning professionals, and (4) continuing to be advocates for the Latino community.

Ronderos then discusses future prospects that may be of use to Latino urban planning professionals: (1) GIS and other forms of technology—he emphasizes the importance of planners knowing how to use GIS to make strategic claims for the community, (2) community and economic development—some examples he gives are working for affordable housing and jobs in the community; he contrasts this idea of community development with community design that he attributes to traditional urban planning, (3) the importance of integrating sustainability into community development, and (4) the need to make social science links—as an anthropologist he attests to the importance of making these links, though he also emphasizes the need to create links with work being done in social work, psychology, and sociology.
Bautista: He thanks Ronderos for his presentation. In response to some of Ronderos’ statistics, he notes that the 6% figure referring to the number of Latino urban planners in the NYC area is unclear and he wonders how many of those are homegrown, US-born Latinos. He wonders how many US born Latinos are even aware of urban planning as an option.

Bautista situates himself in this conversation. He notes how being a Puerto Rican in the political context of the 60s and 70s has shaped his understanding of urban planning. He describes how he went to school feeling the institutional racism in the space around him and describes how he saw the impact of urban planning policies firsthand in his community. He describes his experiences with racism and how it was built into the environment. He gives one example of the city leaving a sewer open in his community and its impact on the community environment. Based on these experiences, he began to see the need for education in order to engage in a civil rights struggle.

Based on his experience Bautista doesn’t see himself as a traditional urban planner. He argues that there are many nontraditional urban planners in the Puerto Rican/Latino community. He offers the environmental justice movement as the next wave of nontraditional urban planning, which is born out of the CDC movement. The CDC movement, he explains, sought to reclaim abandoned communities.

Bautista describes the evolution of abandoned communities. He describes how redlining deprived these communities of capital, which led many landlords to begin abandoning buildings. He describes how in the most extreme cases landlords began to realize that it was more profitable to burn down buildings and collect insurance money than to maintain the buildings. He explains that entire neighborhoods were burned down. This landlord corruption was done in conjunction with the city-backed urban renewal projects of the 60s, which were designed to displace communities.

Bautista notes that his experience growing up during the urban renewal era shaped his sense of social justice. His first choice was to pursue a career as a civil rights attorney. However, once Reagan came into office and packed the courts, civil rights law became a less feasible way to create social change. This led Bautista to get involved in the environmental justice movement. He gives additional background about the origins of environmental justice in the Latino community of New York City.
Bautista describes the first Latino environmental justice campaign in the 1960s led by the Young Lords. He describes how the Young Lords assessed community needs, and found that the most pressing issue was the city’s neglect in picking up the garbage. The Young Lords, in solidarity with the community, pushed garbage into the middle of Third Avenue and burned it. CDC and other groups continued in this tradition. By the 1980s thousands of affordable housing units had been successfully saved and many Latino community activists had worked to rebuild many of the communities. At the same time however, the city began to realize that it was cheaper to rebuild on an empty lot then rehabilitate an existing structure. This prompted the city to create a process that city officials termed planned shrinkage. The idea behind planned shrinkage was to make life unlivable in communities slated for development through the cutting of public services, police, voting, etc. so that people would be forced to leave, allowing the city to save money on rebuilding.

Bautista provides some context for the experience of Puerto Ricans in NYC and how his work on environmental justice fits into this experience. He notes the historical irony of Puerto Ricans coming to NYC to look for manufacturing jobs as part of Operation Bootstrap, while manufacturing jobs were leaving the city for non-union areas of the country. This created poverty in the Puerto Rican community.

Bautista describes the impact of waste management plants on the Brooklyn communities where he was working in the 1980’s. He describes how the heavy flow of truck traffic is directly related to the high rate of children with asthma in the area. While he doesn’t support the Bloomberg administration’s policy of simply exporting the waste somewhere outside of the city, his coalition was successful in reaching an agreement with the city to use rail and maritime methods to export the waste.

Bautista provides a description of his new project which focuses on the city’s waterfront. He notes that the industrial areas where many people of color live have lower environmental standards and his coalition is working to keep the manufacturing jobs in these industrial areas while protecting the community. His group has documented all of the pollution in these communities and has developed a partnership with the city to improve conditions. He lists other community-based partners that work on this project and form part of the Environmental Justice Alliance.

**Angotti:** Reflects on the presentation and states that Bautista provides one of the most comprehensive, in-depth approaches to urban planning, adding that most people in the field might not even consider this approach. He then opens the floor for questions and comments.
Q1: Doesn’t have a question but rather a comment. He says that the point made about the importance of joining APA is well taken but feels it is important to also address the fact that the APA is a market-based organization which raises challenges to raising consciousness on racial issues.

Q2: Seconds the comment made by the first audience member. He notes that urban planning is the final frontier in NYC. He then describes his own work and how his coalition plans on filing a class-action lawsuit, which is a lot of work and very complicated. He argues that the issue is not just about representation in the profession and he thinks that diversifying the profession as a solution is overly simplistic because the battle is really between David and Goliath.

Q3: Announces an event happening on Nov. 23rd, which is a discussion with the author of The Fires. It talks about how top-down planning and the use of academics contributed to the fires in the South Bronx in the 1970s. She also adds that up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 redlining was a federal policy and was not purely a private endeavor. She then directs a question to Ronderos about the relationship between urban anthropology and urban planning.

Ronderos: He describes the use of applied anthropology in his work in urban planning. He tries to talk to people in the streets when he begins to work with a community. He describes his experiences as an anthropologist and how he was heart-broken conducting an anthropological excursion in Bogotá and seeing the conditions of the communities he studied. He grew tired of just documenting the problem and wanted to find solutions. This led him to start working on urban planning. He began working on an urban renewal project, which he also saw as part of the problem. He settled in New York where he encountered community development which he preferred to urban renewal. Working on such project in NY made him realize he could bring urban planning and anthropology together. Some of the concepts from anthropology that he still uses are the rapid assessment process, interviewing, surveying and other methodological ideas.

Angotti: Notes that when he was in graduate school he was taught the windshield survey, where you surveyed people through the window of a car as you passed by. He argues that the profession is still stuck in this old way.

Q4: What is the story with New York City’s charter revision process?
Bautista:  Notes that this was the first charter revision since 1989. He describes how an independent commission came up with the revision in 1989. In response to the revision many community activists developed further proposals. He supports efforts to reform the city's fair share policy, which provides a way to cite agencies for environmental racism. He notes that the problem before the charter revision was that the city did not do enough to make city agencies accountable and failed to regulate industries like the waste management system. The charter revision was a way to change this.

Q5a: How has organizing in East Harlem changed from the time of the Young Lords?

Bautista: Many of the organizations in East Harlem today utilize more of a social service model. Although some campaigns have dealt with environmental justice issues, many do not. For example, activists related to El Museo del Barrio saw it as a cultural preservation project but it is also part of environmental justice.

Q5b: The participant asks a question about planning for Second Avenue, which doesn’t include East Harlem in terms of select bus service and the Second Avenue subway.

Ronderos: Notes that the Department of City Planning publishes assessments of community needs online that are available to the public. He describes how the community board has identified gentrification as the biggest issue threatening the community. He argues that the rezoning of 125th Street has had some positive effects on the community but it failed in addressing the needs of the community as a whole. He compares rezoning on 125th Street with an example in Japan in which the zoning protected the original buildings in the redevelopment project. This respect for the original community that was there was not taken into consideration in the 125th street rezoning.

Angotti: He describes El Barrio as the primary neighborhood of Puerto Ricans. He wonders if the neighborhood is going down the road of Little Italy which is a memorial to Italians without any Italians. He speculates how El Barrio will preserve Puerto Rican culture without the Puerto Ricans.

Q6: A question is asked concerning Mexicans and how they are the major Latino group living in El Barrio now. The participant asks how we create a space that is more inclusive of all Latinos while at the same time preventing El Barrio from becoming just another Little Italy.

Bautista: Confesses that he is ambivalent about the demographic shift in El Barrio. He notes that some Puerto Ricans have moved on. He also points out the findings of the recent Community Service Society report that shows that Puerto Rican youth are doing worse than any other group. He argues that part of the problem is that the members of the Puerto Rican community who are mobile have left and those who are immobile have been left behind.
He notes how there have been immigrant rights campaigns and LGBT rights campaigns and that Puerto Rican organizations have been moving away from the term Puerto Rican and switching to Latino which can be dangerous. On the other hand, he celebrates the rise of another Latino group. He notes the Latino community as a whole has not been able to adequately address gentrification. If we can’t agree as a society that there are negative consequences of gentrification then we are in trouble. He points to the irony in community organizing and activism that leads to improvement of the community environment which oftentimes leads to gentrification. He provides the example of Williamsburg (Brooklyn) to demonstrate his point. He poses a question: How do we improve the community environment without displacing the community that has suffered and has now successfully resisted environmental racism?

**Ronderos:** Once again discusses the Latino Preservation Initiative. He reiterates the need to treat social scientists, planners, lawyers, scientists, and physicians as allies. New York has traditionally been comprised of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican communities but there has been a demographic explosion of Mexicans and other Latin American communities. The preservation initiative is about reclaiming the Latino history of the US and celebrating the contributions of all of these different groups. Some people say that going toward the Little Italy model is not worth it but others in the preservation initiative are moving in that direction.

**Angotti:** Adds that new immigrants are more multi-class than previous generations and acknowledges the emergence of more multi-ethnic and multi-national neighborhoods.

**Q7:** Argues that urban planning is also a public health issue. He gives the example of the issue of waste in the Harlem River. He describes how he successfully worked in the past on cleaning up the Bronx River and now there are community challenges to building a hotel there because it is a safe space for children to play. He emphasizes the importance of continuing to have conversations in our own communities.

**Q8:** One thing that is fundamentally flawed about urban planning is that there is no effort to serve the middle. There are either unlivable communities or communities that are so livable that they are unaffordable for many in our communities. He argues that the market is a roadblock to creating this middle.

**Q9:** Asks a question about the involvement of Latino professionals regionally and nationally. She wonders if there have been regional and national efforts to get the word out to encourage other Latinos to work in the profession and wonders about the role social media have played in this.
**Ronderos:** Argues that the social media aspect is interesting but that it is important to think about how to use social media effectively. He gives an example of a conference he attended with six community leaders from Newark. Two weeks later they discussed what they learned that could inform their community. The community leaders felt that technology and smart phones were not relevant to Newark. This demonstrates the need to find ways to use technology to engage the community in meaningful ways.

**Bautista:** Argues that many urban planning problems are regional but there aren’t regional organizations designed to address these issues. He notes that New York itself is a regional community. He describes people working to get national organizations to work together in strategic ways to address issues of urban planning but that with tea baggers back in charge this might be more difficult.

**Q10:** This comment addresses the distinction between Puerto Rican and Pan-Latino. He describes going to a talk about the revolutionary war that shows that the history of Puerto Ricans and Cubans go way back. He notes that in the post-WWII era, Puerto Ricans were the biggest group in New York and during the civil rights movement they were responsible for institution building. The transition to leadership of other Latinos has been difficult and slow. Puerto Ricans are an integral part of the history of Latinos in NY and he is concerned that the role of Puerto Ricans in the development of what are now Pan-Latino organizations is not widely acknowledged. This needs to be acknowledged in order to have a productive conversation about where we go from here. It is important because data is oftentimes manipulated to pit one group against another. An example he gives occurred in the 90s; when the census data came out there was a big story about the decline of Puerto Ricans that was played up for ideological reasons in an attempt to undermine Puerto Rican community power.

**Bautista:** Agrees with what the audience member said. He says that if you have an interest in social justice you have to understand the difference between Puerto Ricans and other Latinos. One of the differences is the long history with the Black community, partially because of the Puerto Rican acknowledgement of their African roots, though there are exceptions to this.

**Ronderos:** As an immigrant he sees the need to understand the shared history of the Puerto Rican and African American communities. He explains that the struggle for immigrants to find their place and identity within a community is very complicated. Immigrants are often not in a position to be very outspoken and political and have to define their relationship to other groups.

**Bautista:** Adds that Puerto Ricans and African Americans have historically struggled over civil rights together. Some of the first civil rights campaigns in New York City were led by Puerto Ricans. Acknowledging this historical fact will make it easier to work together. People
committed to a socially just New York must understand this history for bridge building. Part of the Pan-Latino movement was a result of the Puerto Rican community’s desire to be inclusive but part of it was also coming from foundations which shifted their funding priorities.

**Q11:** Continues to explore the relationship between African Americans and Puerto Ricans and argues that it goes far beyond the Civil Rights movement. He notes how both groups experienced segregation in the military and how both groups have experienced similar economic and political conditions. He argues that many Latinos that came after the Civil Rights movement have not experienced these struggles and come with their own political histories. A Pan-Latino movement loses this. He, as a Puerto Rican, thinks Puerto Ricans should start branding their communities and move back into their neighborhoods in order to develop them. Puerto Ricans talk about how they are losing their communities but they are the ones leaving their communities. He believes that a lot of the work has to be done by Puerto Ricans themselves. There needs to be a change in perspective on the ways that Puerto Ricans see their community.

**Q12:** Introduces himself as the independent evaluator of the FIPSE grant. He brings the focus back to the purpose of the grant, which is multiculturalism, and the responsibility of urban planners to train people who are more culturally competent. He thinks that changing the paradigm from being an object to being a subject is a good change that works toward making culturally competent professionals.

The Session is adjourned for the Lunch Break

**1:00 pm -3:00 PM - New Approaches and Challenges in Pan-Latino New York**

Edwin Meléndez, Director, Center of Puerto Rican Studies, Moderator

Miranda Martinez, Assistant Professor, Brooklyn College

Ricardo Soto-Lopez, Urban Planner and Community Developer

Clara Irazábal, Associate Professor, Columbia University

**Meléndez:** Reconvenes the meeting and asks people to introduce themselves and their relationship to urban planning.

Audience members introduce themselves.

**Meléndez:** Thinks they reached the goal of bringing together many different stakeholders to discuss urban planning and in the afternoon wants to focus on education and the preparation of future urban planners. He introduces the panel. The first panelist is Clara Irazábal. She is a graduate of University of California at Berkley.
Her research focuses on many migrant communities. The second panelist is Miranda Martinez whose work focuses on Latino experience of urban spaces. She has published literature on social movements and urban planning. The third panelist is Ricardo Soto-Lopez, who has an advanced degree from CUNY and is Meléndez’s former student at the New School. Meléndez asks Martinez to begin the discussion.

**Martinez:** Notes that she is one of the more junior-level experts since she is an un-tenured assistant professor, and not in an urban planning department. She teaches in Puerto Rican and Latino studies, a department that came out of community struggles. She focuses her remarks on the experiences she has had at CUNY in attempting to implement more student participation and genuine community linkages through a place-based curriculum connected to the borough of Brooklyn. Martinez explains that there are many obstacles to this outside of urban planning departments in terms of course load and tenure among other things. She argues the idea of using community-based learning has itself been gentrified. The use of community education as a way of promoting social change and community development is difficult to promote in the university setting. Place-based learning at Brooklyn College is only seen in terms of experiential learning and when it is spoken of as a means of empowering communities, administrators become very unresponsive.

**Soto-Lopez:** Introduces himself as a proud graduate of SUNY-Old Westbury on Long Island. It was very leftist at that time. He is also a graduate of the Urban Planning program at Hunter College. He provides additional background about himself. 35 years ago he was in the streets protesting budget cuts as part of a larger campaign to protect Hostos College. At the age of 17 he dropped out of high school and worked in a factory. He accidentally knocked over a bunch of shoes and felt like he was being kicked over and over again. He decided he had to go back to school, finished his high school degree and went to college.

He decided on Old Westbury because of its progressive reputation. He went to school to become a teacher and studied the progressive era and bilingual education. He took a class in urban planning and learned about Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs. He was shocked at how these two people had shaped his whole world. For example, Robert Moses built Co-op City, which Soto-Lopez had moved into it when it was brand new. After seeing the power of urban planning, it made sense for him to pursue this avenue of study, especially because at the time the Bronx was burning and he thought he could help rebuild it.

He describes how he learned a lot about politics and being a policy analyst at Old Westbury. He studied all of this with the stated purpose of going back to the Bronx to help in community development. After graduation, he worked for the city where most of the people did not want to work in the South Bronx because all of the “sexy projects” were in Manhattan.
He, on the other hand, specifically wanted to work in the South Bronx. In taking on the responsibilities of projects in the South Bronx he was able to learn a great deal because he had to present to the leadership of the Department of City Planning. The technical expertise he was able to get on the job and in the classroom helped give him the resources he needed to give back to the community.

**Irazábal**: Introduces herself as a new kid on the block because she has only been on the East coast for three years and she is still learning the situation here but before this worked with the Latino community on the west coast for six years.

Irazábal emphasizes the importance of the adoption of specific terms and what they mean. She wants to unpack the term Pan-Latino—in particular, who uses it, how it is constructed, and what the consequences are. She notes that many people from Latin America do not know what Latino means until they come here and are labeled as such. Pan-Latino has weaknesses and advantages that need to be addressed. In her mind, it is important to be able to work with each other to build coalitions across ethnic groups. Therefore, she suggests using the term Pan-Latino as part of a strategic process. This could provide the opportunity to build coalitions that are needed for community development. We are not a melting pot but a tossed salad with many different components that keep their own texture while being part of something bigger.

Irazábal also emphasizes the need to build coalitions with white, middle class, suburbanites who may be interested in “greening” as opposed to environmental justice. She explores the opportunity that climate change offers here. Climate change is approached very scientifically and can be adopted by politicians as non-political and not necessarily embedded in community empowerment. This is a strategy she believes can be taken advantage of by the Pan-Latino movement.

She also argues that cultural competency is important whether we are talking about housing, transportation, or health. It is not enough to look at these issues from the perspective of urban planning but it is necessary to conduct interdisciplinary work where instead of people looking at the same thing from different perspectives you look at all of the disciplines simultaneously.

She also notes the need to work with higher education institutions to diversify the student population. Only 5 of 57 students in the most recent cohort at Columbia are Black, Latino, or Native American. She argues for the need to build alliances with allies including students.

Irazábal also discusses the need to bring place-based learning into the curriculum and the need to supplement this with issue-based learning and service learning. Urban planning tends to offer a service learning component in undergraduate programs but not in graduate programs. Service learning should be done at the graduate level as well in ways that that raise questions about the ways of the profession and not just ways of learning.
**Meléndez:** Summarizes what the panelists have said and the questions they have raised. He notes that incorporating new Latinos into the urban planning curriculum is a challenge and a discussion he would like to have. Another issue is how to engage the community in that effort. He believes that the main conduit is community organizations that exist in any community you might approach. Making these community connections can attract more students into urban planning programs and make the community a subject and not just an object. He believes that it is one of the areas that have been neglected in the literature. He reflects on the program at Hunter and believes that the program does do that but perhaps needs to rethink how to maintain that dialogue with the professional community and not just leave it in the classroom. He wonders about ways to incorporate community members into the actual curriculum in the preparation of other urban planners. That’s a challenge that he believes plumbers and social workers have been able to address but urban planning has not. He opens the panel up to conversation.

**Angotti:** The problem with urban planning is not just a problem of how to work with communities and in making the curriculum more inclusive. He believes that there is something wrong with the pedagogy of urban planning. He refers to the term “the pedagogy of the oppressed,” which treats the teacher as the expert that tells student what to do. The students, in turn, go to communities and do the same thing. They see themselves as the experts from universities that are going to go instruct the communities what to do. He believes universities prefer this method because they can say they are supporting communities while they simultaneously bulldoze them. He argues for the need to change the pedagogy and start working with communities, not working in communities. Urban planning started as an interdisciplinary profession because no other discipline wanted to talk about poverty, but has since become more institutionalized in a separate learning silo. There may be a need to get rid of the disciplines altogether and engage directly with communities, and then seek the expertise you need based on community needs.

**Q1:** Notes that as a student what she has been grappling with is trying to ignore the discipline but she finds this impossible since she is required to write papers. She wants to remove herself from the silo of academia and has found little support in the program on how to do this. Her critique of the program is that community planners are not encouraged to talk to the community. She has been trying to find ways to do so but hasn’t found an opportunity at her school and has had to go outside and make community connections of her own. Her dilemma is how can one be successful at community planning when the current curriculum does not allow you to effectively engage. This is an important event for her because she has felt lost being surrounded by students who have the privilege of ignoring these things.

**Meléndez:** Asks if anyone has examples.
Q2: As a response to Meléndez a participant argues for the need to go a step forward from working with community to serving the community. An example she gives was a study done of people who are unbanked, meaning they have no bank account. When urban planners went in and listened they found that a check cashing place made more sense than opening a bank account and showed that at the grassroots they knew exactly what they were doing and were not ignorant people who needed urban planners to tell them what to do.

Q3: Notes the importance of making collaborative efforts with community organizers and community leaders to find the resources within the community. She shares her own experience working at Bushwick Impact. She found so much need and felt like there was nowhere to go but as she looked deeper she saw that there were resources there.

Q4: Describes how about 10 years ago there were studies looking at women, race, class, and sexuality in urban planning but that these readings have never been included in the curriculum. She argues that faculty members need to incorporate it and students need to demand it.

Q5: Notes that the conversation has been focused on the college level but she believes that there is a need to begin this process from a young age. She stresses the need to listen to children from a young age and to teach children how to express what they see so that when a college student or urban planner comes to youth they can have that dialogue and voice to express themselves. This work has to happen with youth in the community as well with students at the college level and in academia.

Q6: Discusses how the Hunter College School of Social Work is moving into East Harlem. She notes that it is not being discussed in the school at all. She addressed this by drawing from her personal experience in East Harlem and raising the issue in class.

Q7: Notes how issues of race and culture are always on the periphery of the urban planning courses she is taking at Columbia but never central to the discussion. For example, she is required to go to public meetings to see what the community participation process is and she has to conduct a community survey to assess community needs. She feels it is disheartening to hear what some class members still think in this day and age in such a progressive institution. She believes that cultural sensitivity is a must. There must be more discussion of what cultural sensitivity looks like.

Soto-Lopez: When he was at Hunter College he bounced between Urban Planning and Puerto Rican Studies. Rigorous quantitative methods never made sense to him because of deficiencies in his own education but also because it didn’t represent what was going on in the Bronx during the 70s and 80s. At Centro he met Frank Bonilla who discussed the methodology of participant observation which made sense to him.
A participant observer has to be rigorous about the methodology but must work with communities. He believes there is a need to find methodologies with a more human approach.

**Q8:** Notes that people say we live in post-racial society. We have the Tea Party which has rewritten history. He believes that professional academic planners have little interest in cultural competency. It is optional and while it is on a checklist that doesn’t mean it happens. He differentiates between having voluntary requirements and demanding a call for action. He believes there is a need to make a call for action.

**Q9:** Thanks the student who brought up critiques of the program. Confesses she was afraid to bring it up which says something about the program. She reports feeling displaced. She believes the program could better support students who feel displaced. She suggests a student of color planning group or a group for students interested in more progressive planning or to open spaces up for women to share their experiences in urban planning.

**Martinez:** States that increased community engagement is what she was trying to get at in her earlier comments. In her view, the university idea of being embedded in the community that was at CUNY in earlier times is now defunct. This has an exclusionary effect because college becomes seen as a break with community as opposed to continuing with community. She provides an example from her own experience at an event at Brooklyn College called “El Encuentro” which is a day of Latino visibility. She notes how the Latino students loved it because it was a small way that the college acknowledged community and place. A quiet student said this was one of the best experiences he had all year. Brooklyn College should not feel out of reach to him but until this day it seemed like it was. A day that the community and college were folded together he had a shift where he could now see the bridge between his community and Brooklyn College.

**Q10:** Brings up East Harlem again. She is thrilled that Hunter is coming to East Harlem. She is beginning to see collaborations between Hunter College and the community. She claims that many in the community welcome the jobs and support. She suggests that Hunter should have meetings like this in the community before it moves there.

**Q11:** Shares her experience as a practicing professional. She notes that one of the things that helped her a lot was volunteering. She encourages students to think outside the box and get outside of their comfort zone, which will help them learn more and break down racial barriers.

**Irazábal:** Acknowledges the students’ intent to create groups and encourages students to continue these efforts to do so. She also encourages students to find spaces within existing groups. Despite APA (American Planning Association) and other organizations being co-opted by market forces there are spaces within these existing organizations for progressive work.
For example, a people of color group in ACSP (Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning) could not find candidates interested in running for positions in it. APA also has a Hispanic group and diversity committee that are ways that people can get directly involved. Planners Network is another group that works for environmental justice in communities of colors. The chapter in New York is kind of dormant now so students might want to revitalize it.

Q12: He suggested that people infiltrate community planning boards. He describes reading a blog from an undergrad Columbia student who wrote about how much he learned about his community being on the community board. It is not only an opportunity to learn skills but also a way of making connections with government officials.

Meléndez: Reiterates that he wants to learn from this conversation about what can be done to improve the urban planning program. He reviews some of the ideas proposed including discussing the move to East Harlem and pedagogical change but he wants to know what specifically can be done to improve the program.

Soto-Lopez: Describes his experience at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville as part of a scholarship program in housing and how beneficial the experience was for him. The school needs to have scholarships set up for two years of graduate studies for Latino students. Then leave it to the alumni to recruit students to get the pipeline going to create the future community planners.

Meléndez: Notes that there is a discussion happening in the program on how to do fundraising but he wants to pretend there are no outside resources and to start with teaching and curriculum.

Q13: Recommends a complete overhaul of the curriculum. She believes that there is no place that diversity issues cannot be implemented. If the whole curriculum can’t be changed then there should be at minimum be a diversity requirement. Most of the students are not going to learn about these issues on their own. If Hunter is a progressive school then all students should be required to learn about issues of race, class, and gender.

Q14: Describes some of the work he is already doing to address the issues identified by the previous speaker. His idea is to have a module that could be placed in a variety of classes. A diversity course was not offered until last year. Last year they finally offered it and predominately women of color took it. Last Tuesday a White student was talking about Austin, Texas and describing the devastation and how she felt it was impossible to make change. He asked her if she ever went to the Black church, the barbershop, etc. People who decided not to take the class will make these assumptions and not know how to work with these communities.
Meléndez: Notes that there is a growing interest among the faculty to explore these issues.

Q15: Reiterates the need for trans-disciplinary work. He notes the need to address not just ethnic culture but also faculty culture, student culture. He notes that in the original FIPSE grant the thinking was to do cultural competency through the departments but maybe there is another way. He encourages students to continue to do outside work to supplement their education.

Soto-Lopez: Notes that there is a wealth of incredible organizations that have so much to do. He suggests the need to have a database of organizations that are addressing community development. One example he mentions is an oral history project that needs students.

Q16: Adds to the comments made by Soto-Lopez about the need to develop long-standing relationships between students and community organizations. Many times interns come in to a community for a short amount of time which doesn’t give students enough time to learn anything but also doesn’t help the organizations very much.

Soto-Lopez: Agrees strongly. Internships need to be at least a year if not longer.

Angotti: Thinks there are excellent ideas and proposals. Accepts the challenge that faculty need to have consciousness about diversity though he hesitates to use the term because of the shift in academia from affirmative action to diversity, noting that the black student population today is no larger than in the 1960s. He notes that the principal challenge is for faculty, especially those who have tenure. He argues that it is very difficult to have a conversation with a 95% white population when they have no community experience to relate. The small number of people of color in the class need to take that burden on. He also responds to the need for long-term partnerships with community organizations by stating that he is reluctant to encourage short-term internships. One of the challenges is that planning faculty do not get promotions for working in communities, much less working in the same community.

The whole system is pushing away from engaging with community on a long term basis. He talks about the need to change the institutions so that it becomes obligatory to maintain long term community relationships. Research shouldn’t all be for the benefit of the university.

Q17: Started as a planning student at NYU. He worked in city government and as a District Manager at a community board for many years in the 80s. He argues that community boards are struggling with austerity and budget cuts. He describes the people on those boards as very unsophisticated people. In his view, it is sad to see how unsophisticated and uneducated the people who make land use decisions are. He suggests the creation of an institute that allows urban planning students to work closely with community boards. He believes that the real lack
of expertise could be addressed by interns. He notes that there is hardly anybody who has any expertise in land use that can give them guidance to navigate proposals offered by developers.

**Q18:** Describes a program at Hunter that is doing this called the New York City Community Board Fellowship. These fellowships allow urban planning students to work with community boards on land use issues.

**Meléndez:** Closes the conversation and suggests the final 10 minutes be used for networking.
Faculty Perspectives on Cultural Competency within the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College

2011 Interview Results

By Marly Pierre-Louis

Introduction

Over the course of the Spring 2011 semester, ten out of thirteen full time professors in the Hunter College Urban Affairs and Planning (UAP) department were interviewed. The goal of the interviews was to understand the ways in which faculty members understand the concept of cultural competency, how they integrate issues of race, class, and gender into their research and courses, and their suggestions for departmental improvements in order to create a more culturally competent curriculum. Below, is a synthesis of their responses.

To begin the interview, cultural competency was defined as: the understanding and acceptance of the beliefs and values of others, as well as the demonstrated skills necessary to work with and serve diverse individuals and groups. Of the ten professors interviewed, one of them felt conflicted with the terminology of cultural competency. Professor Laxmi Ramasubramanian expressed hesitation over the “baggage and prior associations” connected to the terminology.

Cultural Competency in Planning Curriculum

Faculty was first asked whether or not they thought cultural competency has a place in planning curriculum. On this question, faculty members generally agreed that cultural competency was intrinsic to the practice of planning. Planners were described as having respect for diverse communities and having the ability to listen across differences in order to bring together disparate parties and viewpoints. Professors expressed the opinion that without cultural competency, planning cannot work properly and thus “myopic” plans and policies are developed. Professor Jill Gross emphasized the importance of planners understanding the particular population they are working in. She stated, “taking an idea from one place and just sort of plopping it down in another location without any notion about the people, the place, the history, creates bad plans and bad policies.”
When asked what the objectives of a culturally competent curriculum would be, faculty members provided a range of responses. Several professors explained that it was important for students to understand the demographic and political environment of where they were working. In addition, students should be able to understand and appreciate diverse viewpoints and perspectives presented by a broad range of populations. Professor Owen Gutfreund expressed the importance of listening and asking questions first and making conclusions last. A culturally competent curriculum would infuse critical thinking in all aspects of education in order to produce students with flexible and analytical skills. Dr. McCormick stressed the importance of students learning how to encourage participation from different groups of people. And according to Professor Sigmund Shipp, a culturally competent curriculum “ought to teach how to see the other. In other words, teach people how to understand the everyday lives of people who aren’t like them. How to listen. How to observe. How to be sensitive to the diverse needs of communities and individuals.”

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the curriculum from the perspective of the faculty, professors were asked whether or not Hunter’s Urban Planning & Affairs department adequately prepared students to work with diverse communities. The overall response was that it did not. Faculty members felt that the program could do a better job at “changing the way people look at communities” since most students still graduate with a “technocratic approach” to communities. Professor Tom Angotti wondered if such an objective was too ambitious for a two year program. Dr. Shipp thought that the program had the potential to properly prepare students - but it depended on students taking “the right professor”. “There are people who are teaching in ways that they were taught to teach and some of those methods lead to a narrow perspective in terms of planning.”

Both Professors Jill Gross and Lynn McCormick felt that Urban Affairs students, in general, were better engaged with issues of race, class, and gender than planning students. “I find unless the planning students come out of an advocacy background before they come into the program they don’t necessarily come with that awareness or that knowledge base and when they get to my elective if they don’t have it, I suspect that it hasn’t yet come through,” explained Dr. Gross.

Integration, Successes, and Challenges

Faculty were asked to describe the ways their work has evolved to include cultural competency and how they currently integrate issues of race, class, and gender in their coursework. Interestingly, when asked this question, most professors responded with the work they currently do. Two professors, however, did talk about the progression of their work over the course of their careers.
Dr. Angotti talked about the way his work has evolved to continually address issues of cultural competency. “I’m teaching a class at the Graduate Center next year in the fall which is... Urban Orientalism, which is really about the imposition of the Northern and Western models of the city and city planning on the rest of the world.” This work is based on a book that Dr. Angotti is writing. As far as his research goes, Dr. Angotti recently finished a chapter in a book on Latino Place-making in New York City. Dr. Laxmi Ramasubramanian considers her work to be “constantly evolving”, “I used to focus on race/gender, and now expand to consider class, sexual orientation, language, skills, and so on.”

Faculty described a myriad of techniques and methods that they employed in order to integrate issues related to cultural competency into their courses. The most popular tool was the use of class readings as a way to spark discussions. Dr. Shipp, who focuses on the African American experience, uses historical writers such as W.E.B Du Bois and discusses prominent African American figures such as Robert Weaver. He also introduces issues pertaining to African American and Latino communities in all his courses along with examining wealth and poverty. Dr. Gross uses readings and articles that talk about issues of race, gender, ethnicity, age, and “generational effects” in her workshop. She also uses role playing in her classes in order to encourage an “iterative and self-reflective process” so that students are forced to examine their own values, experiences, biases, and stereotypes. Dr. Gross has found giving students provocative readings that anger them (i.e. “an article that is blatantly narrow or one sided or racist or culturally biased, gender biased”) to be helpful because “they come in ready to fight” and are more inclined to engage in conversation. Additionally, Dr. Gross uses blackboard and discussion boards as another place for communication, understanding that some students may be uncomfortable discussing these topics face to face. Dr. Gutfreund assigns conflicting readings in order to stimulate class discussions. He encourages students to think about “who wins and who loses, who is left out, whose interests are served, whose are excluded.” In Professor John Chin’s Cities in Health class, he assigns books that address intersectionalities. One book about the Chicago heat wave in 1995 explored “how race and class intersected with a natural disaster... that resulted in very different death rates for poor people of color than for other people”. Another reading addressed environmental justice and explored “how race and class intersect with the practices of these big companies....to expose poor people of color to more toxins”. Professor Joe Viteritti incorporates his interests in equity and distributive justice into his courses through the use of fiction. He assigns readings by James Baldwin, Junot Diaz, and Langston Hughes to his students in order to illustrate the fact that the way one experiences New York City, “depends on who you are and where you sit.”
Several professors discussed how they infused their personal and professional politics and philosophies into their curricula. Dr. Viteritti belief that the problem in education lies in the “gap between races and classes” informs the way he teaches his Politics in Education class. In Dr. Angotti’s People, Land and Environment class, he emphasizes “how race and ethnicity has shaped the way planning has developed in the country and the way it’s applied.” Additionally, his viewpoint that “culture defines and is critical to understanding food systems” guides the way he teaches his Global & Local Food Systems course. In her Citizen Participation in Planning course, Dr. Gross encourages students to think about “what happens when you’re working with different populations, different settings, different skill basis” in order to prepare them to “use different strategies and tactics” depending on who they’re working with. Dr. Gross believes that “Americans tend to be much more parochial and narrow in their understanding of international issues and international populations.” Thus, when it comes to her Comparative International Planning course, she focuses on expressing to students the fact that our society is becoming increasingly more global and that planners need to be able to work with “all kinds of people coalescing in unlikely locations”. Dr. McCormick likes to support students who have controversial ideas; allowing them the freedom to explore more “fringe” topics. She also tries to convey to students the idea that planning isn’t just about “technical expertise” but that many victories come out of organizing and direct action by people not formally trained as planners. Dr. McCormick’s work focuses largely on poverty and class divides. For Professor Peter Kwong, political activism and academia are inseparable - “I started out as a political activist and I’m still a political activist. I see myself as an activist scholar and so this is very much part of my teaching.”

Next, professors were asked about the challenges they’ve faced within classrooms when they’ve attempted to address issues of race, class, and gender with students. The most common challenge for professors was the difficulty of discussing issues that intimidated students and made them “feel very small”. “Many of the white students feel uncomfortable when you bring up race,” said Dr. Angotti, “they don’t know how to have a discussion about it. Mostly we live in a society that doesn’t know how to have a discussion about race and gender and ethnicity and difference.” Both Dr. Angotti and Dr. Gross admitted to their own discomfort in discussing issues of race and class in their classes. Dr. Gross stated that “the topic... forces us to confront our own insecurities,” Dr. Gross goes on to say, “for a white person to talk about race, it’s uncomfortable and it’s uncomfortable because, for me... I’m white, so I’m in a position, historically, of power.” Dr. Angotti also, expressed the difficulty in dealing with these issues without sounding dogmatic or imposing but rather “in a way that’s provocative enough to get people to understand the issues and to appreciate the other.” Dr. Shipp expressed the challenge of navigating discussions with students with narrowly constructed viewpoints as well as having students believe he brings up race issues “to the point of ad nauseum”.

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Dr. Ramasubramanian brought up the issue of “inherent prejudices” and According to Dr. Gutfreund; there is a “delicate balance” to be maintained for students to feel comfortable expressing their perspectives while also listening and understanding others.

In contrast, both Professors Joseph Viteritti and John Chin expressed ease at discussing these issues in their classes since Hunter students tend to be from the city and tend to be “liberal”. According to Dr. Viteritti, Hunter has a “strong community based culture” whereas “middle class” students in other schools he has taught “just don’t get it”. This perspective conflicts with a challenge expressed by other professors over the “lack of experience amongst students with stepping outside their own reality.” According to Dr. Gross, even students from New York City have a difficult time because often they may have never left the city or even their neighborhood, thus, “teaching about things that one may not have experienced just seems sometimes a challenge.” Dr. Shipp described students who claim to be “liberal or progressive” but in actuality are quite naive. These students operate from the standpoint of knowing it all and thus need not engage in class discussions.

Another recurring challenge was the admissions process and the racial and ethnic make-up of the student body. Professors expressed difficulty having rich conversations about race and class with the majority white student body of the program. “It’s very difficult to have a discussion when people don’t have in their own experiences some encounter with the contradictions and the notions of difference,” explains Dr. Angotti, “and you can try to explain the ideas to people but if they don’t have anything in their own direct experiences to relate to it, it often comes off as very abstract and they don’t get it.” Having a more diverse student body would allow for better class discussions.

Even when there are students of color in the classroom, another challenge emerges when those students are made to be representatives of their race or ethnicity. Dr. Angotti explains, “It’s a risky... it’s a difficult position when you’re in a position of being the sole representative of an excluded group and you have to get out there... it takes a lot of courage and you can get easily discouraged from doing so if the conditions aren’t right.” This situation brings to light a tension between the different ways that professors are experiencing the students of color in their classrooms. In general, the faculty felt that the students of color in their classes were more knowledgeable about these topics. However, a contrasting and interesting issue was described by Dr. Kwong. Dr. Kwong felt that “minorities” and “new immigrants” tended to be much less prepared then their more privileged counterparts. “More privileged students,” he said, “have [an] easier time to deal with almost everything, including these issues, at least verbally.” He also observed that immigrant students tended to have a “lack of political awareness”. Other challenges that were raised were a lack of resources and lack of time.
Assessing their level of effectiveness was difficult to do for several faculty members. Most were not sure how to measure their success in this area. Dr. Gutfreund said that it was actually easier to know when you’re not successful via incompetent papers or superficial class discussions. Of the professors that were able to measure their success, their assessment was based on verbal feedback from students. Dr. Shipp said that often times his white students would talk to him after class and express how affected they were by “what’s going on in communities” and Dr. Gross’ workshop students, often come back and talk to her about what they learned in class that has been useful for them in the field.

Moving Forward

In the next set of questions, the faculty was asked for suggestions on how to better integrate cultural competency into the curriculum and the department as a whole. In terms of the curriculum, the retooling of core courses came up several times as well as finding a way to integrate cultural competency into each aspect of the curriculum. Dr. Angotti warned against the “ghettoization of this discussion of race and class”, and stressed that these issues should be part of the core curriculum. Dr. Gross suggested class conversations and dialog as opposed to lectures. She also recommended media, such as videos, as an effective and interactive way to discuss these issues. Another tool that she suggested was role playing, “I set them up so that they understand the dynamics of power and inequality and what the implications are. I somehow think that with a difficult subject it’s easier to have a more interactive, creative learning approach to it.” Other professors focused on the retraining of faculty in order to “raise consciousness” and reinforce the importance of these discussions and to give professors the tools they need to “deal with complicated issues”. Dr. Shipp explained that faculty has to be shown that a course rich with discussions on race, class, and gender is the best way to operate and that if they are doing something different, they are not being as effective. Dr. Gutfreund expressed the need for faculty to be more reflective and intentional and Dr. McCormick advocated for more explicit discussions on race, class, and gender into the curriculum. During her interview, Dr. Ramasubramanian gave an anecdotal experience she had with a white male professor in the department that clearly exposed the need for training of faculty members and stated, “Faculty has to walk the walk... and it’s hard. The talk is too damn easy.”

As far as changes within the department as a whole, Dr. Angotti said it would be important for the program director and chairperson to regularly advice, encourage, and support the faculty to make improvements in their courses.
Several professors felt that the initiative should come from the students themselves, through the use of vehicles like Urban Mondays at Hunter (UMAH), Graduate Urban Affairs and Planning Association (GUAPA) or a separate student group interested in specifically this issue. Dr. Shipp suggested that students could develop faculty seminars, discussions, and bulletins “that would help the student body to understand and maybe have impact also on the faculty.” An interesting perspective came from Dr. Gross who felt that as a whole, the faculty does not have a cohesive understanding of what’s happening with the student body since professors tend to only know the students in their classes. Thus, it would be helpful for the department to somehow have a way of knowing what students are being taught across the board, so that the gaps can be addressed. Other suggestions were tools that the department already has in place such as internships, studios, and independent studies. Additionally, Dr. McCormick thought that more skill based classes could be useful to help students learn how to initiate participation with diverse communities.

Lastly, the faculty was asked about training; was there a need for it, would they participate, and what format would best suit the subject. In general faculty members concurred that there was room for improvement within the department and that they would be willing to participate in a training session. Most professors preferred something discussion-based; however a couple preferred a more structured, skills-based training. One challenge expressed by Dr. Angotti was finding a way to set up a training that faculty would all agree to come to. For example, “setting up a symposium at a time when faculty could attend and with administrative support if the chair and program directors get out there and encourage people to come, they’re more likely to come.” Dr. Shipp suggested that students be involved in the training and to potentially even have students train professors.

**Conclusion**

The interviews conducted of Urban Affairs and Planning faculty over the course of the Spring 2011 semester offered critical insight into the departmental understanding of cultural competency, it’s place in planning curriculum and practice, as well as the challenges of integration and student class deliberation. In general, it was agreed that cultural competency (as defined above) is a central part of the planning profession and that Hunter’s curriculum offered many areas for improvement in regards to comprehensively addressing issues of race, class, and gender and preparing students to work in diverse communities. Giving students the tools to understand and engage with politically and demographically varied communities in a way that prepared them to listen and think critically was revealed as an important objective of such a curriculum. Professors felt that students currently graduated from the program with a technocratic and narrow approach to planning.
The content and methodology of integrating race, class, and gender in courses was largely dependent on the interests, politics, and comfort levels of individual professors. A few professors discussed race, while many others addressed poverty and class. Professors also offered different ideas on what they considered cultural competency such as a broader understanding of who a “planner” is and the “role” of the planner in a community process. Overall, all professors used readings of various kinds were as a basis of discussion in classes. Role playing and Blackboard discussion boards were also used. Faculty expressed a chorus of challenges in addressing these sensitive issues in their classes. The general discomfort of students in discussing race and racism was a challenge expressed by almost all faculty members. The largely white composition of the student body was also a commonly mentioned difficulty.

Looking forward, the interviewed faculty members offered several suggestions for improving the Urban Affairs and Planning curriculum at Hunter College. Some thought the retraining of faculty was most important while others felt the initiative should come from the students. A more comprehensive understanding of the curriculum that would allow professors to know what the student body as a whole was learning and where the gaps were was a significant need. A broad initiative that was supported and encouraged by the program chairperson and director and integrated throughout the department and in all courses was favored.
Graduate Student Perspectives on Cultural Competency within the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College

2011 Web-Based Student Survey Results

By Angela Tovar

Introduction

In April 2011, a web-based survey was designed and distributed to all graduate students enrolled in the Urban Affairs and Planning Graduate Program (UAP). The purpose of the survey was to draw feedback from students regarding their views toward issues relating to cultural competency. For the purposes of the survey cultural competency was defined as the understanding and acceptance of the beliefs and values of others, as well as the demonstrated skills necessary to work with and serve diverse individuals and groups. The survey also assessed the department’s current curriculum and whether or not these topics and issues were discussed adequately. Furthermore, the survey identified issues of importance by the survey respondents and leveraged commentary on how to improve the current dialogue within the UAP department as it relates to cultural competency.

The survey was sent via department email to all students enrolled in the UAP department as of the Spring 2011 semester. It was also distributed through the Hunter College Graduate of Urban Affairs and Planning Association (GUAPA) as well as the department’s Facebook page. A total of 70 individuals responded to the survey within the one month time period that it was available online. The official closing date for the survey was 11:59 pm on May 1, 2011.

Background on Student Respondents

The respondents consisted of 70 students - 38 full-time, 29 part-time and three other. 39 of the respondents were female, 28 male and three who withheld their gender identity. By race, the respondents were comprised of 51.4% White, 21.4% Latino, 18.6% African American, 4.3 percent Asian and 1.4% other. By comparison to the UAP department overall, minority students responded to the survey in higher percentages than they represent in department enrollment.

For the Spring 2011 semester, based on information for 211 enrolled students, the department was comprised of 51.8% white students, 25.3% black students, 18.7% Hispanic students, 3.6% Asian, and 0.6% Other.
Respondents were asked to provide information about their enrollment in the program, including concentration and core courses completed. 71.4% of the respondents were seeking a Master of Urban Planning degree. The remaining students, 21.4%, sought the Master of Science in Urban Affairs degree. When asked about their concentration within the two programs offered by the department, 18.6% of the students indicated transportation, followed by 15.4% who indicated community development and social advocacy as their concentration. The third highest response was sustainability and the environment at 11.4%

Students were also asked to indicate how many hours they have completed within the program. The majority of the respondents, 40%, finished between 25-48 credits. The second largest group of student respondents was newer students, 22.9%, who had completed up to 12 credit hours in the program.
Issues of Race, Gender and Class

The next segment of the survey questioned students on how well issues related to cultural competency, race, gender and class were discussed in the department’s current curriculum. Within the core curriculum, 42.9 % of the respondents felt that issues of race, gender and class were discussed in a variable way, i.e., extensively in some courses and not considered thoughtfully in some. To add further insight to the variance of these issues within the core curriculum, one student commented,

“The variance of addressing and really delving into these topics seems to be based on two issues. First, the level of interest by the instructor. Different professors bring in the topics of race, class, and gender, through readings, classroom discussion, and so on based on their own particular interest in the issues and personal skill/knowledge set. Second, in one of my core courses specifically, students frequently brought up topics of race, class, and gender, pushing the conversation to the professor and the rest of the class.”

Other students also felt that discussion of these issues varied by professor. Some students felt that the lack of acknowledgement of these issues was more apparent in core classes than in technical and skills-based classes. One student noted that issues of race, gender and class are “discussed fairly extensively in the qualitative classes and discussed less extensively in Data Analysis, Analysis and Forecasting, and GIS.”

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<th>Count</th>
<th>Discussed extensively in each of the core courses</th>
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**Issues related to race, gender and class in the CORE curriculum are:**
When surveyed about the importance of discussing race, gender and class within the core curriculum, 58.6% of the students agreed that it was very important in class discussions while another 32.9% felt that it was important. The responses were similar for both the Urban Affairs and Urban Planning degrees.

Students were also asked how well issues related to cultural competency -- issues of race, gender and class -- were discussed in their concentration courses. Overall, 37.7% of the respondents felt that the issues were discussed in a limited way in each of the core courses. 21.4% felt that these issues were discussed extensively within the core courses. By concentration, 6 of the 12 respondents who focused on transportation, which represented the highest group of respondents, felt that these issues were discussed in a limited way. Similarly, 5 of the 10 respondents who identified themselves as studying community and social advocacy planning felt that these issues were discussed in a limited way.

When surveyed about the importance of discussing race, gender and class within their concentration courses, 61.4% of the respondents felt that these issues were very important; an additional 25.7% said it was important. By concentration, all 10 of the Community and Social Advocate Planning students and all 5 of the Economic Development planning students felt that these issues were very important to discuss in their courses. 5 out of the 6 Public Policy Students as well as 4 out of the 5 Nonprofit Management students also agreed.
The next section of the survey asked students to assess how well their experience as a student, through field research, internships and required coursework in the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, has prepared them to work with diverse groups of people. A total of 30 students, 42.9% of respondents, felt that the required coursework, both core and concentration courses, made no difference in their ability to work with diverse groups of people. With regard to the internship experience, 27 of the students had yet to complete this requirement. Of those students who had completed the course, 23 or 32.9% of the respondents felt that it made no difference in their ability to work with diverse groups of people. 24 of the respondents, or 34.3%, felt that their field research -- for example, studio or any other projects where they were required to work outside of the classroom -- had made no difference in their ability to work with diverse groups of people.

**Views of Cultural Competence**

Students were asked to define their understanding of cultural competence and to assess the current curriculum using their definition as the standard. Definitions used by the students varied but generally had to do with understanding and relating to various cultures. One student defined cultural competency as “the ability to work, speak, engage, interact, with all kinds of groups and individuals who are similar and different from yourself, in a mutually respected manner.”
Another student suggested that cultural competency is “An awareness of your own cultural identity, worldview, and biases as well as an understanding, or openness to understand that, of others' to create culturally appropriate practices that increase the quality of communication and interaction between people.”

Using their own definition, the majority of the 20 total respondents felt that that cultural competence was addressed in a variable way within the core curriculum: extensively in some courses and not considered thoughtfully in others. 17 of the respondents felt that it was addressed only in a limited way. Again using their own definition, students were asked to assess the concentration courses. 20 of the respondents felt that it was addressed in a limited way in their concentration courses. 14 of the respondents felt that cultural competence was only addressed in a variable way within their concentration.

Students were next asked about cultural diversity within the department. The survey asked students whether or not they felt that the department’s student body was culturally diverse. Overall, 42.9% of the respondents felt that the student body was somewhat diverse. 27.1% felt that the student body was very diverse. 24 out of 50 Planning students that responded felt that the department was somewhat diverse, while 7 out of 20 felt the program was diverse. By race, the majority of the African American respondents, 7 out of 13, and 5 out of the 15 Latino respondents felt that the program was somewhat diverse. 5 respondents total, 2 African American and 3 Latino, felt that the student body was not diverse enough.
Students were also asked their opinion on the relevance of the diversity of the student body. Overall, the majority of the students agreed that a diverse student body is relevant and important within the department. One respondent stated that a diverse student body “is very relevant to the notion of Urban Affairs and Planning. That field embodies a lot of diversity so people trained to go out and work with groups of people should be equipped.” Another student offered that, “Each student in the department brings their own experiences and values into their coursework. Having a more diverse student body helps introduce diverse ideas and experiences into the academic setting, affords all students the opportunity to explore these diverse ideas and experiences, and reduces theorizing without context.”

**Strategies and Next Steps**
The next section of the survey allowed students an opportunity to give their suggestions and opinions on what could be done to improve to improve cultural competence and awareness within the UAP program.

Suggestions included the following:
- “Create more outlets and resources for minority students. Have a rep from the Affairs program on GUAPA. Make coursework more relate-able to important social issues.”
- “Make cultural competence a mandatory component of every core and concentration class.”
- “Making more core classes available at night to ensure that students from all economic levels can still attend the program.”
- “Having more discussions in/outside of the classroom about diversity, issues of race, class and gender, political power, societal values and cultural relevance.”
- “Incorporating more field work into class work”
- “More extracurricular activities/guest speakers to explore said subjects”
- “Educate professors about cultural competency and have them select readings and assignments that are provoking and critical.”
- “Require that all graduating MUP students are either admitted into the program or must show upon graduation basic competency in one of the five most commonly spoken foreign languages in New York. Or at least have a foreign language requirement.”
Finally, students were asked to indicate topics related to cultural competency that they would like to learn more about. These are listed below in their order of importance.

- Race: 41%
- Community organizing: 36%
- Working with diverse groups of people: 34%
- Social justice: 33%
- Gender: 30%
- Environmental justice: 29%
- Public participation: 24%
- Sexuality/sexual identity: 13%

**Conclusion**

A number of key findings have emerged as a result of the survey and are offered here as a resource for expanding the dialogue and integrating issues relating to cultural competency within the required curriculum of the UAP department.

- From the survey, we gather that **cultural competency can be expanded and integrated within the current curriculum**. The majority of students felt that issues of race, gender and class, as well as cultural competency were an important component of the curriculum. This sentiment seemed to be echoed in the many suggestions offered by the students. Many students felt that these issues were addressed in their concentrations in only a variable and limited way. The data suggests that there is room to further integrate these issues particularly within courses that teach technical skills.

- The survey also suggests that learning to work with diverse groups of people can be better addressed in required coursework including studios and workshops, and the internship that involves work outside of the classroom. Survey data suggest that a large number of students felt that they had not been adequately prepared to work with diverse populations. Courses can and should be used as a method to teach students how to effectively engage communities of color.

- Many students shared the opinion throughout the survey that diversity within the student body was relevant and should be valued. A majority of the students felt that cultural diversity is relevant within the UAP program. This was echoed by many students who suggested training in diversity awareness.
• **Students expressed the desire to learn more about some of the issues relating to cultural competency.** Many suggested that the department increase the dialogue about the issues both in and outside of the classroom. Additionally students indicated their interest in learning more about specific issues, particularly race, community organizing and how to work with diverse groups of people.
Creating a Teachable Moment: Using Multi-media to Explore Urban Life in the Puerto Rican and Latino Communities in New York City

Overview

In the Spring 2011 semester, Professor Sigmund Shipp, incorporated a project devoted to Puerto Rican/Latino cultural competency into his Diversity in The City course. As a final project, students were instructed to identify organizations and/or institutions currently found in Puerto Rican and Latino neighborhoods that address fundamental social, economic, and political issues of that community. Students were encouraged to focus on finding culturally competent organizations that use their understanding of Latino and Puerto Rican communities to support the work they do. Students were also instructed to identify social, economic and political issues facing the populations served by these organizations and their surrounding neighborhoods and how they relate specifically to the need for cultural competent solutions.

Student groups conducted numerous site visits and conducted interviews with staff and community members. The material was ultimately compiled into multi-media projects that presented the issues facing their selected organizations and examined the planning and community development activities embarked upon that illustrate the value of cultural competence. The end result was that each student group developed a module that would serve as a teachable moment to demonstrate how communities are being self-determined by confronting issues in a culturally competent way.

Overall the final project aimed to explain why the field benefits from a more inclusive, culturally competent approach to planning. Since community-based planning efforts are infrequently regarded as traditional planning practices this project led to teachable moments for students, faculty, community, and the wider planning and community development world.

The following pages include summaries, written by student groups, of two of the organizations selected for this project. Student presentations for the project can be found in the appendix section of this report.
Project Summary: El Puente: A Definition of Cultural Competence

El Puente is a community human rights institution located in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn aimed at promoting leadership for peace and justice through the engagement of members (youth and adults) in the arts, education, scientific research, wellness and environmental action. El Puente’s approach fits with the ethnic and cultural context of the Puerto Rican and Latino community, and becomes a means to engage local residents around strategies to improve their community. This approach, moreover, informs our understanding of how cultural competency should be pursued in general and specifically as it relates to urban planning.

Founded in 1982 by Luis Garden Acosta, El Puente is located in North Brooklyn. El Puente’s mission is to inspire and nurture leadership for peace and justice as well as, giving honor to the significance of culture in the daily interactions of local residents. Historically, low-income neighborhoods and communities of color have been affected by cultural “incompetence,” which has come in the form of neglect or being misunderstood by government agencies. Organizations like El Puente have been active in helping to give these communities a “voice” and opportunities to participate in the activities that affect neighborhood life.

Through long and hard fought struggles, El Puente has had many successes. Some of their major victories pertain to environmental justice—a vitally important urban planning concern. In 1996, after over a decade long battle, El Puente helped stop the construction of a 55 story incinerator that was scheduled to be built in the Brooklyn Navy Yard in Williamsburg. Furthermore, the organization was instrumental in the elimination of a chemical hazardous waste site built in close proximity to an elementary school. Strategic to each of these campaigns is a decidedly Puerto-Rican and Latino approach that gives validity to the culture as a foremost concern. Outside planners may be unaware of that validity and, this can lead to decisions that can transform communities of color into toxic dumping grounds.

El Puente has a long history of encouraging and creating educational opportunities for the community that actively involve local residents.” This approach was evident in 1999 when spearheaded an asthma study that focused on the local Puerto Rican and Latino community while examining the correlation between cultural background and asthma prevalence. The study proved that members of the Puerto Rican community had high incidences of asthma. In light of these findings, El Puente helped uninsured community members obtain appropriate medical coverage. This example demonstrates the importance of inclusion of the community in culturally competent planning purposes.
In 1993 El Puente became the first community organization in New York State to open its own high school, The Academy for Peace and Justice. The Academy serves as a model for community and human rights schools. Key to the impact of the Academy is its emphasis on culture, the arts, and student involvement in community projects. These activities instill in students an appreciation for the indigenous values of Puerto Rican and Latino life and how those values are central to maintaining the community in Williamsburg.

Culture is important at the Academy. Culture, and indeed the arts, is celebrated in other ways at El Puente that involve a wider swath of the community. One example of how El Puente goes about celebrating culture is its Three Kings Festival. For Hispanics all over the world, Los Tres Reyes represents a cornerstone of heritage and tradition; one which fosters an atmosphere of joy, giving and learning. El Puente welcomes the coming of the Three Kings with traditional food, music and a stage performance retelling the story of the journey to give gifts to baby Jesus. This story focuses on teaching children the importance of sharing and caring, as well as, the need to preserve one’s culture.

Another community wide cultural event that El Puente sponsors is its Fly Girls Event. Created about three years ago, this poetry slam/hip-hop event allows El Puente to reach out and help resolve female and male conflicts. It is aimed toward youth and teenagers and provides a positive outlet for expression and creativity. Finally in terms of the arts, the El Puente has created another form of communication about community needs and issues in the form of its Muralistas Project. This group of artists is primarily of Latino decent. The goal of the project is to create lively and boldly colored murals with a social message about asthma, street violence, and neighborhood renewal. In the last ten years, EL Puente Muralistas have completed over eight community murals throughout Williamsburg and Bushwick under the leadership of artist Joe Matunis.

The Three Kings Celebration, The Fly Girls Event, and the Muralistas Project are grounded in the contemporary and traditional Puerto Rican and Latino culture, which enables El Puente to become a trusted and relevant institution that can create positive change in the Latino community. These activities represent the very definition of cultural competence and provide examples of how outside agencies can operate to achieve meaningful purposes in the Puerto Rican community.

Not only does El Puente provide cultural events for the community, but also organizes Williamsburg and beyond. An example of El Puente’s pro-active community engagement in areas such as health is their program called The El Puente Community Health and Environment Institute (CHE).
Luis Garden Acosta launched CHE in 1997 as a community driven center for scientific research, community organizing, and wellness. Rooted in El Puente’s ideology of collective self-help and self-determination, CHE employs an indigenously led, development-oriented approach to health; one that gives rise to the notion that cultural values, traditions and heath are inextricably linked. Today, El Puente’s CHE is the only federally funded, Latino community driven, environmental justice research project in New York City.

El Puente has provided extraordinary services to the Puerto Rican and Latino community on so many levels. It has involved the community in areas of the arts, education, scientific research, wellness and environmental action. What El Puente has accomplished and what this summary represents are teachable moments that evaluate El Puente’s mastery of cultural competency and engagement in their community. These teachable moments can guide the profession of urban planning in its execution of initiatives and strategies for effective planning in Puerto Rican and Latino communities.

The following are five-study questions that are designed to stimulate discussion about the power point presentation completed by students in the graduate class on urban diversity issues.

1) How does El Puente organize the involvement of the Latino/ Puerto Rican community in culturally relevant activities?
2) What are the concerns of the community and how does your organization go about addressing them?
3) What aspects of culture do community members value most? And how is this manifested?
4) What makes your organization unique from others as it relates to the provision of culturally competent services?
5) Please describe your successes in the battle for environmental justice in the Brooklyn? What has been the role of the community in this regard?
Project Summary: Taller Boricua - El Barrio

During the 1960s, social unrest was occurring throughout the United States. Communities of color were fighting for and demanding equal rights and equal access. El Barrio, an underrepresented Puerto Rican community in Spanish Harlem, on the upper east side of New York City was badly hit during this time and struggled with race riots, arson of tenement housing, drugs, and abject poverty. Many buildings were left abandoned and the area as a whole was neglected. The need to do something that would improve conditions would lay out a path that can inform planners and others about a culturally competent approach to planning. Taller Boricua was born in the midst of this mayhem. Inspired by both the civil rights movement as well as the more radical work of the Young Lords, Martin Rubio, Armando Soto, Adrian Garcia, Marcos Dimas and Manuel Otero lead to the creation of Taller. Its purpose of was that of being an organization to provide arts and cultural programming to the residents of Spanish Harlem. It was formed to provide a means to empower community members while promoting the vibrancy and vitality of Puerto Rican art and culture.

Puerto Rico has been a colonized land since 1493; first by Spain, then by the United States in 1898. It is the United States’ last remaining colony. Thus, for Puerto Ricans living in New York, the reclamation of space and land is particularly significant as a way to create a sanctuary that Puerto Ricans can claim as their own—that allows for the celebration of the culture while providing a safe and comfortable place to be Puerto Rican. In the 1990’s as a way to create a decidedly Puerto Rican place, Taller mounted a movement to rescue and transform an abandoned school at 1680 Lexington Ave. The building was successfully revitalized and named the Julia de Burgos Latino Cultural Center, after the famed Puerto Rican poet, nationalist, activist, and feminist. Taller effectively took ownership of a physical and cultural space that was deemed worthless by the City, its planners, and the real estate development industry. In light of their history, this was no doubt a revolutionary and transformative achievement for El Barrio and its Puerto Rican residents.

Through the decades, with the work and dedication of the community, El Barrio flourished, as did Taller. The community has become home to new groups of immigrants and has nurtured a strong and vibrant culture. The community center holds regular art exhibits, lectures, panels, and social events; each transforms the place into more than a building. The activities represent beliefs, values, and behavior that are inherent to the Puerto Rican culture that should be understood and acknowledged as urban planners work in communities that similar to the neighborhood where Taller is located. In other words these are elements of cultural competence, which override preconceptions and require a sensitivity of how urban planning can operate competently in the Puerto Rican community.
Recent events allude to the need for cultural competent planning. The community has begun to thrive so much so that it is beginning to experience gentrification pressures on all sides. In recent years, affordable housing units have been replaced by luxury condominiums, white professionals have moved in and real estate developers and speculators have renamed parts of the area SpaHa and the Upper, Upper East Side. A battle for physical space is ensuing and Taller Boricua and its cultural and artist activities are on the front line.

On September 17th of 2010, The Economic Development Corporation informed Taller that a Request for Expressions of Interest or an RFEI would be issued for the space they have been leasing for over 14 years. An RFEI allows EDC the power to select any group to take over the lease of the building without approval or intervention from the Julia de Burgos Board, Taller Boricua, Community Board 11 or the El Barrio community. EDC is citing a lack of soundproofing between the Julia de Burgos Theater and the multicultural space as their motive for this action. Taller has requested on numerous occasions that a halt be put on the RFEI so that they may find alternative solutions to soundproofing the theater and sees it as an opportunity to provide jobs for workers in Spanish Harlem and a revival of the theater’s use. These requests have all been denied and no further information has been given. No community process was ever initiated where local residents could have expressed the importance of Taller to the community.

In “Latino Communities in the United States: Place-Making in the Pre-World War II, Postwar, and Contemporary City,” Irazabal and Farhat discuss the fact that the way people think about space affects their understandings of the world and their politics. For Latino communities, historically, the struggle for spatial identity has proven to be an effective means for attaining cultural recognition, economic integration, and group empowerment. The two authors write, “[s]paces of alternative binding institutions provided the community with cohesion, identity, and a sense of place and belonging.”

Similar actions have been taken against Latino organizations in the area such as La Marqueta—an open air market in East Harlem, Chica Luna and the Association for Hispanic Arts. Similarly, Irazabal and Farhat discuss how the Los Angeles elite sacrificed the Latino community on the Eastside of that city to industrial development and later on local governments used land use regulation in a way that disenfranchised the Mexican community. These efforts became essentially, a siege on Latino communities.

Taller’s tenancy in the Julia de Burgos Cultural Center, and the center’s location in the increasingly trendy 106th and Lexington Manhattan community has essentially become a roadblock in the City’s current development frenzy—that arguably has excluded a cultural competent approach to urban planning.
Thus, Taller’s continued claim and occupation of this once neglected and now desirable space becomes a subversive act against development forces focused on the building with little regard to the cultural attachment that local residents have established over time. Once again, the desire to hold on to a reclaimed space becomes urgent and the need to for a “spatial identity,” acute.

The EDC is using its power to bypass the community and take over the building. Taller sees the EDC’s insistence on issuing an RFEI as another brick in the path towards the complete gentrification of Spanish Harlem, the dismantling of the Latino community and the disregarding of a people’s history and contributions. A cultural competent approach would require something different. Should the EDC be successful, Taller would lose their space and the community would no longer have a sanctuary and haven for the expression of their culture and art.

Spanish Harlem with all its social ills and destruction had been ignored for decades. Only when the city recognized the economic potential of the area, has attention been paid, and even then, only for the purpose of displacing current residents and institutions in favor of higher income ones. Thus the pattern of imperialism and colonization continues and a people who has struggled a spatial and cultural battle for national independence and self-determination for Puerto Rico, struggles on another level to claim physical and cultural space in New York City. Planners must not continue to plan physical spaces, considering only the economic potential of that space, but should instead plan with communities and for people. By recognizing the historical context of Puerto Rican immigrants creating a home in El Barrio, culturally competent planners may begin to understand this community’s need to claim a space and be allowed to exist there freely without the threat of being priced out due to development. Moreover, by recognizing the significance of Taller rescuing the abandoned building on Lexington Avenue, culturally competent planners may begin to understand why EDC’s lack of a community process in dealing with Taller is not only wrong but deeply oppressive. To echo Irazabal and Farhat, planning tools and powers must not be used to disenfranchise communities but rather to advocate for and with them. The demonstrated success of Taller Boricua and the Julia de Burgos Cultural Center in creating community “cohesion, identity, [and a] sense of place and belonging” in El Barrio must not be undermined.
Annotated Bibliography of Latino Representation in Urban Planning Literature


Exploring critical planning issues facing Latino communities in relation to urban design and land development, the authors investigate how Latino communities collectively engage in placemaking, and look at strategies to build more sustainable and effective working relationships between Latino communities and planning professionals. The book's focus is on planning and placemaking efforts throughout the United States, and demonstrates how professionals can enhance – or inhibit – placemaking that serves the interests of Latino communities.


Discusses how the focus on real estate in New York City by both the private sector and government has been met by resistance by community organizations. The book describes how community planning grew out of necessity as a means to protect neighborhoods and residents from gentrification, displacement and other injustices. Highlights action by specific communities, including Copper Square in Manhattan and Melrose Commons in the Bronx and their fight to maintain their community.


Describes the international relationships and the changing concepts of community inside and outside Latino communities in the United States. Additionally the book provides insight on global interdependence and its effect on individuals.


Illuminating the importance of culture in community planning, this book reveals why previous planning practices have failed and suggests that improvements can be made by taking into consideration the diverse needs of a multicultural society.


Shares the notion of transnationalism and the New York City immigrant experience from the perspective of nineteen scholars. The book explains the relationship between immigrants and their connection to the New York community as well as their linkage toward their home country.

Sheds light on the forces that are threatening the urban landscape of East Harlem. Davila discusses the growing threat of gentrification and the use of Latino heritage as a marketing tool used to generate interests from outside investors. Davila also explains how the uses of government policy and other economic development strategies have only furthered this threat.


Includes a substantial historical overview of Latinos from an Urban Planning perspective. The author traces the movement of Latinos (primarily Chicanos) into American cities from Mexico and then describe the problems facing them in those cities. The book offers insight on how the planning profession and developers consistently failed to meet the needs of the community due to both poverty and racism.


An analysis of how Latino portrayal in media and politics shape the identity of Hispanics on a political and social level. Included in the analysis is Spanish language media - Television, books, magazines, demonstrating reinforcement of Latino values, unification of the group leading to assimilation and a communal sense of identity.


A collection of essays focusing on the Latino experience in New York City. The book highlights characteristics and issues from various Latino communities within the city, both past and present.


A collection of essays that collectively share the history of New York's Puerto Rican community beginning with the great migration in the 1940s to the present. Covers the experience through the lens of various perspectives and covers a wide-range of topics including culture, community and politics.


Discusses the demographic impact of various waves of Latin American immigration to New York City from 1970-1990. In addition, settlement patterns are observed and examined on the neighborhood level as well as the succession of ethnic sub-groups.

Examination of the patterns of Latino and non-Latino unconventional participation in political activities (defined as protests, rallies, demonstrations, etc) Also the article describes the differences in political participation among Latinos of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban decent.


A look at how New York City’s Lower East Side residents, working-class Puerto Ricans and middle-class white gardeners engage into politics and development in order to create in their neighborhood. In the transformations of urban neighborhoods, ethnic and cultural backgrounds can be overlooked and/or dismissed; these residents through grassroots efforts ensured their cultural identity was not ignored in the process of gentrification.


Detailed demographic information about New York City’s foreign-born residents. Includes maps and charts.


A look into the everyday life of Latina Women in the Corona Neighborhood of Queens. Explores the movement towards a pan-ethnic Latina culture as women of various nationalities, Dominican, Cuban, Colombians, etc, have formed alliances and built a cohesive network. Discusses how emergence of this pan-Latina identity has played out in various aspects of neighborhood life.


Covers a comprehensive history of Puerto Ricans in New York over a century, from the settling of Puerto Rican “colonias” to present day. Features descriptive coverage of historical events that have defined the Puerto Rican community in New York City including the Great Migration and looks at how various factors such as politics and settlement patterns helped define them.


Collection of essays that examine a broad range of historical events relevant to the urban planning field. The book explores early and nontraditional planning methods in various cultures. Essays within the book also focus on the inadequacy the current planning practice to address issues centered on race, class and gender. Finally some essays discuss improved methods of planning that focus on a more diverse, multi-cultural society.

Neighborhood study of Elmhurst and Corona, Queens and the transition to a multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-lingual population. Sanjek examines the political dynamics around Community Board 4 residents as they address concerns over the shared neighborhood’s “quality of life.


The book examines the ways in which residents in everyday interactions have forged and tested alliances across lines of race, ethnicity, and language. Focuses on the combined impact of racial change, immigrant settlement, governmental decentralization, and assaults on local quality of life which stemmed from the city’s 1975 fiscal crisis and the policies of three New York City Mayors.


A comprehensive resource which offers details of all aspects of Latino life within the United States. Issues discussed range from the Latino influence in mainstream culture to social issues surrounding immigration. Offers accounts of many notable Latinos who have influenced American history including figures such as César Chávez and Roberto Clemente.


Long-term study that explores the life of migrant families in both New York City and their homes in small town Mexico. Highlights the notion of transnationalism and the migration of people back and forth from Mexico to the United States. Explores the idea of cultural assimilation as it relates to transnationalism but argues that migrants often combine cultural, political and social characteristics from both countries. Sheds light on how migrant families are able to function and flourish in two very different worlds.


Discusses various factors such as race and politics and their linkage to urban public health and environmental justice in New York City. This book shares the story of planning, activism and injustice in four communities of color in Brooklyn and Manhattan.
Clarifying the historical connections between the African-American population in the United States and the urban planning profession, this book suggests means by which cooperation and justice may be increased. Chapters examine: the racial origins of zoning in US cities; how Eurocentric family models have shaped planning processes of cities such as Los Angeles; and diversifying planning education in order to advance the profession.


Looks at the evolution of Puerto Rican and African Americans’ roles within the political economy of New York City. Discusses how their struggle has been both interrelated and separate. Describes the historical events that have shaped the role of both minority groups within the political context of New York City and describes policy developed to address these outcomes.


Documentation of the recent growth of Latino communities in the Midwest and South. Emphasis is placed on socio-demographic analysis of new Latino communities and creating an appropriate infrastructure to provide social services (health care, education, etc.) that values cultural competency.


Latino metropolis explores the issue of race within the context of social and economic issues threatening Latinos. The book challenges current ideologies that explain the marginalization and uses examples from several Latino communities to highlight the lack of political power within the Latino community.


Leonardo Vasquez reviews the levels of minority under-representation in the private, public, and non-profit sectors of the planning profession, as well as in planning schools. Vasquez articulates, in a series of recommendations, how to diversify the profession in a meaningful way, bringing minority voices to levels of influence.

Critiques the current paradigm of the traditional Latino Studies academy and offers new proposals and approaches for teaching and understanding the discipline. The book advocates for a more updated approach focusing on the various perspectives of various Latino communities.
Appendix

- Symposium Flyer
- Faculty Interview Questions
- Student Survey Form
- El Puente Power Point
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN PUERTO RICAN AND PAN-LATINO NEW YORK: PROBLEMS AND NEW APPROACHES FOR TEACHING AND PRACTICE

A dialogue for educators, professionals, activists and students in urban and community planning

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2010
Hunter College School of Social Work,
79th St. & Lexington Ave., Manhattan
#6 train to 77 St.

Open to all RSVP: Mario Quijano marioquijano11@yahoo.com

PROGRAM

9:30 am Coffee and registration
10-12 Community planning and development in Puerto Rican and Pan-Latino New York City: Problems and challenges for professionals and Educators

Tom Angotti, Director, Hunter College Center for Community Planning & Development, Moderator
Eddie Bautista, Director, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance
L. Nicolas Ronderos, Director, Urban Development Programs, Regional Plan Association

What challenges face Latino professionals engaged in community planning and development? What roles should professional and community organizations play? What are the prospects in public, private and non-profit sectors?

12-1 pm Lunch provided
1-3 New approaches and challenges in Pan-Latino New York

Edwin Meléndez, Director, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Moderator
Miranda Martínez, Assistant Professor, Brooklyn College
Ricardo Soto-López, Urban Planner and Community Developer
Clara Irazábal, Assistant Professor, Columbia University

What resources are there in university education and what is missing? How can multicultural curricula and faculty engage the issues of Puerto Rican and Pan-Latino communities?
Sponsored by Hunter College Center for Community Planning and Center for Puerto Rican Studies. Made possible by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE).

SPEAKER BIOS

Eddie Bautista is an award-winning community organizer and urban planner who currently serves as the Executive Director of the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYCEJA), an umbrella network of community-based organizations in low-income communities of color advocating for the empowerment and just treatment of environmentally overburdened neighborhoods. Eddie recently resigned as Director of the Mayor’s Office of City Legislative Affairs, where he spearheaded efforts to pass several landmark laws, including: the City’s 20-year Solid Waste Management Plan, the creation of the first municipal brownfields remediation office in the nation; the required retrofit of all diesel-powered school buses to reduce air pollution in bus cabins; and the Greater Greener Buildings Plan, the nation’s first comprehensive package of legislation aimed at improving energy efficiency for large scale buildings. At the Mayor’s Office, Eddie also facilitated meetings for policy advocates with Administration officials on a range of initiatives such as PlaNYC 2030 (NYC’s environmental sustainability plan, which has become a model for large cities) and Mayoral Executive Order 120 of 2008, which mandates City agencies make services and documents available to immigrant New Yorkers in the top six languages spoken in the City. Previously, Eddie was the Director of Community Planning for NY Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI), where he served as its lobbying/communications/community organizing director. At NYLPI, Eddie organized numerous grassroots coalitions and campaigns, including the Organization of Waterfront Neighborhoods (OWN) and Communities United for Responsible Energy (CURE), two citywide coalitions of community-based organizations which blocked the siting of mega-waste transfer stations, large power
plants, incinerators and sludge plants in environmentally-burdened, low income communities of color, while changing City and State solid waste and energy policies. In 2003, Eddie was among 17 national winners of the Ford Foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World awards (http://www.leadershipforchange.org/).

**Miranda Martinez** has been an assistant professor at Brooklyn College since 2007. Her work focuses on community based movements and the Latino experience of urban space. Her book *Power at the Roots: Gentrification, Community Gardens, and the Puerto Ricans of the Lower East Side* will be published by Lexington Books in Fall 2010. In November 2009 her article "Attack of the Butterfly Spirits: The Impact of Movement Framing by Community Garden Preservation Activists" was published in the journal *Social Movement Studies*. Her current research project looks at the experience of indebtedness in minority communities. She received a Ph.D. in Sociology from New York University in 2002 and a B.A. in Geography from Clark University in 1989.

**L. Nicolas Ronderos** is Director of Urban Development Programs at Regional Plan Association. He works with communities in the urban areas of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region on land use, zoning and real estate and community and economic development. Nicolas holds a B.A. in Anthropology, a M.S. in Urban Policy Analysis and Management and a Certificate in Real Estate Finance and Investments. He is Adjunct Professor at the New Jersey Institute of Technology’s College of Architecture and Design and Instructor at Rutgers University’s Bloustein Continuing Education Program.

**Ricardo Soto-Lopez** has been in the urban planning and community development profession for over twenty five years and has garnered extensive experience working with a diverse range of organizations in the public and private sectors in New York, New Jersey, California and Florida. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the State University of New York in Urban and Regional Studies and a Masters Degree in Urban Planning from the City University of New York. Ricardo is currently pursuing a Master of Science Degree in Non-Profit Management with a concentration in community development finance at Milano The New School of Management and Urban Policy. He is the principal of RSL & ASSOCIATES LLC, a community redevelopment consulting practice he established in 2005. He is a member of the American Planning Association, the U.S. Green Building Council and the Central Florida Regional Leadership Academy which promotes smart growth policies.

**MODERATORS:**

**Tom Angotti** is Professor of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, and Director of the Hunter College Center for Community Planning and Development. His recent book, *New York For Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate*, won the Paul Davidoff Award and the International Planning History Society book prize. He is co-editor of *Progressive Planning Magazine* and an editor for the journals *Latin American...*
Edwin Meléndez is a Professor of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College and the Director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies. Originally from Puerto Rico, Dr. Meléndez came to the United States in 1978 after receiving a bachelor’s degree from the University of Puerto Rico. He earned a master’s degree in economics from the University of California at Santa Barbara, and in 1985 received his Ph.D. also in economics from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He began his teaching career at Fordham University in 1984, teaching economics and Puerto Rican studies. In 1999 he joined Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy in New York City. From 1999 to 2004, Dr. Melendez was the Director of the Community Development Research Center at the Milano Graduate School, and from 1992 to 1998, he was the director of the Mauricio Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He was also an associate professor in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1986 to 1992.

He has conducted considerable research in the areas of Latino studies, economic development, labor markets, and poverty. In addition to numerous scientific papers and other publications, he is the co-editor of the recently published **Latinos in a Changing Society** (Praeger, 2007), and the author or editor of ten books including **Communities and Workforce Development** (Upjohn Institute: 2004), **Working on Jobs: The Center for Employment Training** (Boston: Mauricio Gaston Institute,1996), and **Hispanics in the Labor Force** (Plenum Press,1991). In addition, he has served as invited Editor for Puerto Rico: A Colonial Dilemma **Radical America** 23(1), 1989; Puerto Rican Poverty and Labor Markets, **Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences** 14 (1), 1992; Puerto Rican Poverty and Migration, **Latino Studies Journal**, May 1993; Latinos in a Changing Society, **New England Journal of Public Policy**. 11(1-2), 1997.
Faculty Interview Questions – Cultural Competency in Urban Planning

1. Do you think cultural competency has a place in planning?

2. In your opinion, what would be the objective of a culturally competent curriculum?

3. In what ways has your teaching, research, civic involvement evolved to address cultural competency?

4. Do you integrate issues related to cultural competency in your lectures currently?

5. What are the challenges, if any, of discussing issues related to cultural competency in class discussions?

6. How does or doesn’t the planning curriculum prepare students to work with diverse communities?

7. How would you advise the faculty as a whole to better integrate cultural competency into their curriculum?

8. What can we do to make the dialog within the department (both in and outside the classroom) more culturally competent?

9. Do you think that there is space or interest within the department (faculty) to be trained or to learn from each other on how to integrate the material better with these issues?
Diversity Survey
We, Angela Tovar and Marly Pierre Louis are conducting a brief survey of student attitudes about cultural competency for Centro, Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College. Cultural competency is the phrase we are using to define the understanding and acceptance of the beliefs, and values of others as well as the demonstrated skills necessary to work with and serve diverse individuals and groups. We want to assure you that we will respect your privacy. All questions that reveal any personal information are optional. Should you choose to provide your email address, your information will be included in a drawing for a $25.00 gift certificate. The survey should take about 5-10 min to complete. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the results or having a more detailed discussion about cultural competency, please contact us at angelatovar1@gmail.com or marly.pierrelouis@gmail.com.

Your Academic Profile
What is your enrollment status?

- Full-Time
- Part-Time
- Non-Matriculated
- Other

What degree are you seeking?

- Master of Urban Planning
- Master of Science in Urban Affairs
- Non-degree

How many credits have you completed toward your degree?

- 0-12
- 12-24
- 24-48
- 48-54
- N/A

What is your concentration within the program?
Beyond your own concentration, what are your other areas of interest? (Check all that apply)

- Community Planning and Social Advocacy
- Economic Development
- General Practice
- Housing and the Built Environment
- Neighborhood Development
- Nonprofit Management
- Public Policy
- Sustainability and the Environment
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Other: 

Which of the required core curriculum courses have you completed? (Check all that apply)
• History of Planning and Theory
• Intro to GIS
• Intro to Land Use
• Intro to Planning
• Planning Methods of Analysis and Forecasting
• Planning Methods for Qualitative Research
• Structure of the Urban Region
• Urban Affairs Workshop
• Urban Data Analysis

Coverage of Race, Gender and Class in the Curriculum
Issues related to race, gender and class in the CORE curriculum are: Select one the following statements

• Discussed extensively in each of the core courses
• Discussed in a limited way in each of the core course
• Discussed superficially in each of the core course
• Discussed in a variable way, i.e., extensively in some courses and not considered thoughtfully in others
• Not at all considered thoughtfully in any core course

If you chose option 4, please elaborate:

How important are discussions of race, gender and class in the CORE curriculum?

• Very Important
• Important
• Somewhat Important
• Not Important at all
Issues related to race, gender and class within your CONCENTRATION are: Select one the following statements

- __ Discussed extensively in each of your concentration courses
- __ Discussed in a limited way in each of your concentration courses
- __ Discussed superficially in each of your concentration courses
- __ Discussed in a variable way, i.e., extensively in some courses and not considered thoughtfully in others
- __ Not at all considered thoughtfully in your concentration courses

If you chose option 4, please elaborate:

How important are discussions of race, gender and class within your area of CONCENTRATION?

- __ Very Important
- __ Important
- __ Somewhat Important
- __ NotImportant at all

Has the required curriculum enhanced your ability to work with diverse groups of people?

- __ As a result of the program, I am confident in my ability to work with diverse groups of people
- __ As a result of the program, I am somewhat confident in my ability to work with diverse groups of people
- __ The program has made no difference in my ability to work with diverse groups of people
Has your Internship experience enhanced your ability to work with diverse groups of people?

- ☐ As a result of my internship, I am confident in my ability to work with diverse groups of people
- ☐ As a result of my internship, I am somewhat confident in my ability to work with diverse groups of people
- ☐ My internship has made no difference in my ability to work with diverse groups of people
- ☐ I have yet to complete the internship requirement

Have courses that involve field work (i.e., Studio, Workshop) enhanced your ability to work with diverse groups of people?

- ☐ As a result of my field work, I am confident in my ability to work with diverse groups of people
- ☐ As a result of my field work, I am somewhat confident in my ability to work with diverse groups of people
- ☐ Field work has made no difference in my ability to work with diverse groups of people
- ☐ I have yet to complete a course that requires field work

**Your Views on Cultural Competence**
Using your own definition how would you define cultural competence? If you are unclear, you can provide vignettes or situational examples to help clarify your definition.
According to your personal definition, cultural competence within the CORE curriculum is: Select one the following statements

- Addressed extensively in each of the core courses
- Addressed in a limited way in each of the core course
- Addressed superficially in each of the core course
- Addressed in a variable way, i.e., extensively in some courses and not considered thoughtfully in others
- Not at all addressed thoughtfully in any core course

According to my personal definition, cultural competence within your area of CONCENTRATION is: Select one the following statements

- Addressed extensively in each of your concentration courses
- Addressed in a limited way in each of your concentration courses
- Addressed superficially in each of your concentration courses
- Addresses in a variable way, i.e., extensively in some courses and not considered thoughtfully in others
- Not at all addressed thoughtfully in any of your concentration courses

Do you believe that the student population within the program is culturally diverse?

- Very diverse
- Diverse
- Somewhat diverse
- Not diverse at all

In your opinion how relevant is a culturally diverse student body in achieving cultural competence as a department?
Strategies for Improvements and Next Steps
What can be done, if anything, to improve cultural competency and awareness in our graduate programs?

What specific topics/issues would you like to learn more about in your required course of study?

- □ Community Organizing
- □ Environmental Justice
- □ Gender Issues
- □ Issues of Race
- □ Public/Community Participation
- □ Sexual Identity
- □ Social Justice
- □ Working with diverse groups of individuals/communities
- □ Other: __________________________

Additional Comments

Personal Information
This section is optional.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

What is your race?
• □ American Indian or Alaska Native
• □ Asian
• □ Black or African American
• □ Hispanic or Latino
• □ White
• □ Other

What is your age?

• □ 20-24
• □ 25-29
• □ 30-34
• □ 35-39
• □ 40-44
• □ Other

**Thank You For Your Participation!**
If you have any questions please email Angela Tovar at angelatovar1@gmail.com or Marly Pierre-Louis at marly.pierrelouis@gmail.com.

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EL PUENTE
Inspiring and Nurturing Leadership for Peace and Justice

Inspirando Liderazgo, Paz y Justicia
Authors

Jack Nunn
Vanessa Rodriguez
Barbara Saunders
Gleny Miranda
Michael Synan
Tolightha Smalls
El Puente is located in North Brooklyn.
El Puente
The Community
The Community
Demographics

Williamsburg, Brooklyn

- Latino
- White
- Black
- Asian
El Puente
Services Provided to the Community

- Employee’s and volunteers come from the community

- Their events cater specifically to the Latino population

- Through culture they work to educate and promote leadership for peace and justice
Teatro El Puente

- Established as AIDS Drama Project in 1987
- First educational theatre company for adolescents in NYC
- Actors are age 16-21
- All bi-lingual
El Puente Welcomes Los Tres Reyes
El Puente Welcomes Los Tres Reyes

La Celebración

- A celebration as such, serves to teach children the values of sharing and caring in the community as well as the importance of preserving cultural values.
La Celebración

EL PUENTE

Presents Our 24th Annual

Three Kings Celebration!

SUNDAY
4 JANUARY 16

@ GRAND STREET CAMPUS
850 GRAND ST. BROOKLYN 11211

1st Show:
Doors open at 12:00pm
Show begins at 1:00pm

2nd Show:
Doors open at 4:00pm
Show begins at 5:00pm

FREE SHOWS!

EVENTOS GRATIS!

1ra Presentación:
Abrimos a las 12pm
Obra comienza a las 1pm

2da Presentación:
Abrimos a las 4pm
Obra comienza a las 5pm

Celebrando los Tres Reyes Magos!
The Fly Girls

Empowering the Latino Woman
An important cultural event that connects the youth in the community through artistic performances that praise the Latino woman.
The Fly Girls

- The Fly Girls Event created by El Puente three years ago as a means of conflict resolution celebrates Latino womanhood.
The Fly Girls

- The host uses a comedic style to engage the audience and entertain while discussing important topics.
The Fly Girls: Honoring Women in the Latin Culture
El Puentes Muralistas

Educating through art
El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice

- Established in 1993 with the NYC BOE

- Sought to improve public education by working with community groups

- The Academy reflects El Puente’s vision of education emerging from the community
El Puente and the Environment
CHE (Community Health and Environment Institute)
**CHE (Community Health and Environment Institute) Accomplishments**

- The only federally funded Latino community driven environmental justice research project in NYC.

- Engages youth and elders in the reforesting of Bushwick and Williamsburg
Youth transformed a two-story high garbage dump into a beautiful medicinal herb garden.

Defeated development of 55 story incinerator.
La Batalla Contra El Asthma
La Batalla Contra El Asthma
La Batalla Contra El Asthma
La Batalla Contra El Asthma
The Toxic Avengers:
Changing Education Through Environmental Activism
Conclusions

- El Puente’s vision comes directly from the community
- Their initiatives embody Latino culture and their struggle for a most just society
- Through education they are training the next generation of Latino leaders
Gracias!