This article, based on a study of a large, randomly selected group of American planners, looks at what planners think is ethical, and why. Although many planners have similar views about what is ethical, sharp differences are also clearly apparent. Chief among the reasons for these differences is role orientation. Consistently, the most politically oriented planners have a more liberal interpretation of what is ethical than the most technically oriented ones, with a third group—high on both the technical and political dimensions—falling in the middle. Other factors such as political views, attitude towards agency, and propensity to express values in the job were also found to be important in explaining why some planners think differently than others about what is ethical. The implications of these findings are drawn for planning theory, practice, and education.

Suppose a planner who works for a high-income suburb recognizes that the community's land development regulations are exclusionary. This makes it quite difficult for poor people or minority group members to live there, even though job opportunities for them exist in the area. The planner, as part of her regular job activities, decides to organize support from local people she knows are in favor of opening up the community so that they will put pressure on the suburban government's officials to change the community's zoning policy.

In acting this way, does this planner behave ethically or unethically? A study conducted by the authors of a random sample of 616 planners who belong to the American Institute of Planners and work for public planning agencies, indicates that opinions differ sharply. Slightly more than half thought the planner's behavior would be ethical. Slightly more than a third thought it would be unethical; and the rest were not sure, one way or the other. Reactions to this short scenario and fourteen others describing the behavior of planners in situations involving ethical dilemmas are the subject of this study. Figure 1 gives a brief description of each scenario, the tactic the planner used, and the intended beneficiary of the planner's action.

For planners, ethics set the boundaries of acceptable behavior. In theory, a set of commonly held behavioral norms make up the body of professional ethics. Some, but by no means all, of these norms have been codified in the American Institute of Planners' Code of Professional Responsibility. Whether codified or not, these norms ideally represent guidelines for planners to adhere to in conducting themselves as professionals.

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The paper is organized into four sections. We start out with a discussion of the study design. We then consider what planners as a whole think is ethical and unethical behavior, looking particularly at areas of consensus and disagreement, and at the fit between planners' attitudes about ethics and what they say they would actually do. Going beyond the descriptive level, we then consider some important reasons why planners make different ethical choices. Here we focus on the variables mentioned above such as role, political views, and other job related attitudes. Finally we explore some of the implications of our findings for planning theory, practice, and education.

**Study design**

We sent a mail survey to 1178 members of the AIP, with an overall response rate of 69 percent, and a use-
able response from people working in public planning agencies of 616 questionnaires or 53 percent. All responses were completely anonymous. The questionnaire was made up of three parts. The first was made up of a series of 15 short scenarios, each describing how a planner had dealt with a particular ethical dilemma (see Figure 1 for synopses of the scenarios). The respondent was asked if he thought the planner’s action was ethical, using a five-point scale; and if he would do the same, using a similar scale.

The issues dealt with in the scenarios were selected to reflect real and difficult ethical dilemmas in the profession. In the interests of keeping the questionnaire to a manageable length, however, we made no attempt to be comprehensive, nor could we provide the respondent with information on the scenario’s political and social setting.

**Figure 1. (Continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Issue benefiting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 Regional planner who worked on a wetlands preservation study, without authorization, gives certain findings to an environmental group, because planner feels the agency’s director purposely left out those findings, which were objectively documented, from the study draft because they do not support agency policy</td>
<td>leak information</td>
<td>environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Planner who favors increased mass transit use and is preparing a study on need for mass transit decides not to include information from a study done several years ago showing that majority of community’s residents opposed expanded mass transit system.</td>
<td>distort information</td>
<td>mass transit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Economic planner who initially criticized on technical grounds a proposal by a community development corporation to develop a small industrial park in a ghetto area before the plan commission, later recommends the project to the commission after being told by the director of the director’s support for the project.</td>
<td>change technical judgment due to pressure</td>
<td>low income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 City planner who is a member of Chamber of Commerce, without authorization, gives information to the head of the Chamber of Commerce on an agency study being prepared that will recommend reducing number of on-street parking meters in CBD to lessen traffic congestion.</td>
<td>leak information</td>
<td>development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Planning director undertakes a campaign to create a crisis atmosphere about the pollution and health hazards of the city’s waterways by holding press conferences next to the city’s most polluted waterways to get media coverage.</td>
<td>dramatize problem to overcome apathy</td>
<td>environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 City planner gives draft recommendations on scattered site public housing plan to the representative of a white homeowner’s group who requests them; no agency policy exists about releasing such information.</td>
<td>release draft recommendations upon request</td>
<td>low income (anti)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 County planner, without authorization, gives information and advice on own time to a citizen’s group which is trying to overturn in court a county rezoning decision which the county planning staff had opposed; the rezoning allows an oil company to build a refinery on a large, tree-covered waterfront property.</td>
<td>assist group overturn an official planning action</td>
<td>environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second part of the questionnaire was designed to elicit attitudes about roles in planning, value commitment, orientation toward agency, citizen participation, and about various substantive issues in, or groups affected by, planning: mass transit, the environment, development, and low income and minority groups. The respondent was asked to give his opinion on fifty-three strongly worded statements, using a six-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The third part of the questionnaire included a variety of demographic questions as well as questions on the respondent's education, political views, and work situation. Of necessity, a mailed questionnaire limited us to information on peoples' attitudes about roles, issues, and ethics. We did, however, come closer to actual behavior in one respect by asking the respondents not only whether they think the planner's behavior in a given situation is ethical, but whether they would do the same thing if faced with the same situation. Although there have been a number of good in-depth case studies of the behavior of planners on which we could build, none explicitly addressed the question of ethical behavior (Meyerson and Banfield 1955, Altschuler 1965, Rabinovitz 1969, Needleman and Needleman 1974, Jacobs 1978). On the other hand, there has been virtually no research on large numbers of planners—probing into their attitudes on roles, issues, and ethics—so that the tradeoff between behavioral data and larger numbers of respondents seemed worth making.

What planners think is ethical and unethical

Today's planners do agree strongly about the ethical propriety or impropriety of some kinds of behaviors. On other kinds of issues, there is considerable disagreement; and on any issue there is always a fairly constant ten percent who are uncertain whether any particular behavior is ethically appropriate or not. Differences in the responses seem mainly to be related to the tactic presented in each scenario rather than to the substantive issue or group that benefits. Initially we will discuss the effect of the tactics, and then we will consider the effect of substantive issues. The order of tactics, ranging from most to least acceptable, is given in Table 1. It should be understood that all the scenarios were designed to include political tactics that we thought would be somewhat questionable. Therefore, the rankings reflect planners' opinions of how unacceptable each tactic is.

For eight of the fifteen scenarios, consensus was high; from 66 to 80 percent of the respondents always answered that the behavior described is either ethical or unethical. In these cases, no more than 25 percent of the respondents ever took the opposite position from the majority. Actions to dramatize a problem to overcome apathy, the use of expendables as a tradeoff, and assistance given on the planner's own time to a group trying to overturn an official action—all of which reflect a fairly activist role in trying to get support for a particular policy—are viewed as the most acceptable tactics. Planners consider threat, distortion of information, and leaking of information as the most unethical tactics, in roughly that order.

It is interesting to note that planners' low tolerance for distorting information is consistent with the rule of discipline in AIP's Code of Professional Conduct, which admonishes planners against deceitful conduct. Section (a) of the Rules of Discipline reads: "A planner shall not engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation." Nevertheless, for the three scenarios in which the planner distorts information (2, 10, and 3), from 13 to 22 percent of the respondents still said that the planner's action was ethical.7 Strictly interpreted, these planners would be in violation of the AIP rule.

On the other seven scenarios, there was considerably more disagreement. The actions that seemed consistently to provoke such disagreement were releasing the draft recommendations of an unfinished report to a group which requests them, and leaking inside departmental information to an outside group. These issues present particularly clearly the choice between loyalty to one's department and loyalty to some outside group or idea of the public interest.

The scenarios where the planner leaks information to an outside group (4, 8, and 12) actually conflict with Rule of Discipline (d) of the AIP Code, which reads: "Except with the consent of the client or employer . . . a planner shall not reveal . . . information gained in the professional relationship . . . the disclosure of which would likely be detrimental to the client or employer." In each of these scenarios, the planner does in fact reveal information gained in the professional relationship without the employer's consent. Such disclosure might well be interpreted as being "detrimental" to the employer. Although for two of these three scenarios nearly 60 percent thought such an action was unethical, about 33 percent still said the action was ethical. These planners also might be considered to be potential violators of the AIP Code on this point. Clearly, for a minority of planners, the AIP Code of Professional Conduct does not stand up as an irrefutable guide to ethical conduct.

Most planners are generally able to make a choice about the ethical propriety of a particular behavior, even if they do not always agree. But for every one of the scenarios, some always said they were uncertain about the ethical propriety of the behavior described. For all scenarios, the median number of undecideds was 9 percent of the total. The fewest number of undecideds (3 percent) were in the two scenarios where consensus was greatest—scenario 5, where the plan-
Table 1. Rank order of tactics by ethical acceptability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Percent total response ethical</th>
<th>Percent total response unethical</th>
<th>Percent total response not sure</th>
<th>Meanb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dramatize problem to overcome apathy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Use expendables as tradeoff</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assist group overturn official action</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Release draft information on request to environmental group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Release draft information on request to white homeowners group</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Organize coalition of support to induce pressure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Release draft information on request to developer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Change technical judgment due to pressure</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Leak information to low income group</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Leak information to environmental group</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Distort information</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Distort information</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Leak information to Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Distort information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Threaten</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Percent for some scenarios is less than 100 percent due to rounding.
b The lower the mean score, the higher the number of ethical responses; the higher the mean score, the higher the number of unethical responses. The scale was (1) clearly ethical (2) probably ethical (3) not sure (4) probably unethical (5) clearly unethical.

ner used a threat tactic (the most unacceptable) and scenario 13, where the planner tried to overcome public apathy by dramatizing a problem (the most acceptable). The greatest uncertainty was for scenario 11—where the planner, bowing to pressure from a superior, changed his technical judgment. The split was almost even between those who viewed this behavior as ethical and unethical, but the undecideds accounted for nearly 20 percent of the total response.

Previously, we noted that planners react more to the tactic than to the beneficiary in making their ethical choice. This is clear, for example, in the three scenarios (2, 10, and 3) where the planner distorts information to gain more support for a preferred policy. Respondents overwhelmingly consider such an action to be unethical. In each of these scenarios, the issue benefitting would be mass transit, which planners strongly favor.a Therefore, the tactic clearly outweighs the issue in this instance.

Yet the benefiting issue, a possible surrogate for values, apparently has some effect on how planners view ethics. Consider Table 2, which shows the responses to three similarly constructed scenarios (1, 14, and 7) where the planner gives the draft recommendations of a plan to someone who asked for them, when no specific policy exists about releasing such information before a plan is completed. Although the tactic is the same, the beneficiary changes in each scenario. While more respondents view this behavior as ethical than unethical in each of these scenarios, a higher proportion apparently feel that giving such information to the environmental group representa-

tive is more acceptable than giving such information to the white homeowners' group representative or to the land developer. Since planners are more pro-environment (70 percent) and pro-low income (57 percent) than pro-development (50 percent), as indicated by their averages on the three attitude items in favor of each issue, values apparently have some effect on ethical choice; though the developer may also be less acceptable because he is also an individual who would benefit financially from the information provided.

The three scenarios (12, 9, and 4) dealing with a planner who leaks information to a representative of a group also suggest the possible effect values might have on ethical choice (see Table 3). Although respondents consider the planner's behavior in these scenarios as much less ethical than that of the planner described in the releasing information on request scenarios (see Table 2), when the leak is to a repre-

Table 2. Effect of values on releasing draft recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Releasing draft recommendations requested</th>
<th>Percent total responses ethical</th>
<th>Percent total responses unethical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to a representative of an environmental group (scenario 1)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to a representative of a white homeowners' group (scenario 14)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to a land developer (scenario 7)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Effect of values on leaking information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leaking information without authorization</th>
<th>Percent total responses ethical</th>
<th>Percent total responses unethical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to a representative of a low income group (scenario 4)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to a representative of an environmental group (scenario 9)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to a representative of the Chamber of Commerce (scenario 12)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sentative of a low income group or to an environmental group, the pro-ethical response is almost twice as high as when the leak is to a representative of the Chamber of Commerce. Again, since planners are less favorable to development than to the environment or to low income groups, values also come into play here.

The relationship between attitudes and behavior

When a respondent says that a planner in one of the scenarios acted ethically, that person is reflecting an attitude about ethics. If, however, that person was faced with the same situation confronting the planner in the scenario, would he behave likewise? To determine whether planners would behave consistently with their ethical perceptions, we not only asked respondents to judge the ethical propriety of the planner's action in each scenario, but we also asked them whether they would behave as that planner did.

We found that there is indeed a strong relation between ethical attitudes and potential behavior. For every scenario, at least 75 percent (in most cases over 80 percent) of the respondents say they would behave consistently.

But this means that for any scenario, from 10 to 25 percent of the respondents would switch—i.e., their attitude does not dovetail with their potential behavior. Two groups of switchers are worth a closer look: those who say the planner's behavior in the scenario is ethical but they would not do it or were not sure they would do it, and those who say the planner's behavior is unethical but they would or might do it anyway. Of the two groups, more judge the behavior as ethical but wouldn't do it than the other way around. Probably the main reason why some say they wouldn't do what they see as ethical is because it's risky. Although threatening someone or going around a superior by leaking information to another group, for example, might be viewed by some as ethical, the possibility of being found out and reprimanded or punished in some way is obviously a deterrent. Not surprisingly, the most acceptable tactics are also the least risky ones. For these scenarios, the number of switches in this direction are lowest. The average percentage of

switches for the three most acceptable tactics (scenarios 13, 6, and 5) is only 13 percent, while the average percentage of switches for the four least acceptable tactics (scenarios 5, 2, 12, and 10) is nearly three times as high or 35 percent.

Far fewer planners would switch the other way; i.e., judging the behavior to be unethical but still saying they would or might do it. For most scenarios, only 5 to 8 percent of those who say the behavior is unethical would switch. But for three scenarios (13, 11, and 6) about 20 percent of those saying the behavior is unethical would switch. Two of these three scenarios (13 and 6) have the highest ethical responses. So, even some planners who saw the behavior as unethical were likely to behave the same way as the great majority who saw the behavior as ethical.

Why planners have different ethical views

What kind of variables seem to explain the differences in ethical choices among planners? Probably the central variable is role. All the scenarios involved situations that were political and actions that were of questionable acceptability. Consistently, the most politically oriented planners found the scenarios more acceptable than did technically oriented ones. In addition to role, there are statistically significant differences on ethics between liberal and conservative planners, between those more and less committed to their agencies—if challenging the agency is an aspect of the scenario—and between value committed and value neutral planners.

We had also hoped to be able to examine the effect of these variables on attitudes about various substantive issues such as the environment, mass transit, development, and redistribution. However, the substantive attitude scales did not effectively measure people's attitudes on these subjects, so that the only way we can get at this effect is by examining the scenarios where the tactic can be held constant and only the issue varied as we did in the last section.

Let us look more closely at the relation between these various independent variables and the dependent variable, acceptable or ethical behavior, starting with the role/ethics relationship.

Roles and ethics

Initially, we thought that an important explanation for differences in ethical perceptions among planners could be traced to a central and continuing conflict in planning, how can planners maintain their technical integrity, yet at the same time, be politically effective? Planning has been struggling over the question of its proper stance as a public profession in a democratic society for many years. The issue has often been posed as a choice between the polar models of the planner as technician (Beckman 1964, Walker
1950, Meyerson 1956) and the planner as a political actor (Rabinowitz 1969, Needleman and Needleman 1974). The former type is supposed to be technically expert, value neutral, and responsible to the public through the political decision-makers he serves. But he is also dependent on those same political decision-makers for the implementation of his “good” advice and plans. The latter, as an ideal type, is more value committed, more responsive to the groups or issues he thinks are particularly related to the public interest, and more willing to work actively through the political system to see that plans are implemented. Only in recent years have there been attempts to think in terms of a role which combines aspects of both technical and political roles to achieve both integrity and effectiveness (Meltsner 1976, Benveniste 1972, Catanese 1974).

For the study, a person’s role orientation was determined by his score on two scales, one concerned with technical orientation or attitudes toward analysis, and one concerned with attitudes toward political behavior in planning. For ease in interpreting the results, each scale was dichotomized, and three roles were created (see Table 4): technicians, low on the political scale and high on the technical one; politicians, who had the reverse pattern; and a third group who are high on both scales, who we called “hybrids.”

The large number of hybrids is interesting, since those who have developed models which combine both the technical and political dimensions of role seem to indicate that planners who play the combined role are few and rather special. But if our findings are any indication, these polar role types, even combined, are outnumbered by the people who wish to combine aspects of both roles.

As Table 5 indicates, on all scenarios except 9 and 10, the three roles ranked in the same order, with politicians finding the scenarios most ethical, technicians, the least, and hybrids in between; on the two exceptions, politicians and hybrids were virtually identical. On all the scenarios except 10 and 11, the differences between the two extremes, the politicians and the technicians, were statistically significant at the .05 level or better.

The scores of the hybrids are particularly interesting, since they indicate that there seems to be some tension between the two role dimensions. On all but three of the scenarios, the hybrids were not statistically different from the politicians. However, on scenario 5 (on the punitive use of A-95 review power, one of the most unacceptable tactics to all groups) hybrids were not significantly different from technicians. In the remaining scenarios, on expendables (6) and on organizing opposition to the zoning ordinance (8), where the range of opinions was particularly large, the hybrids were significantly different from both other groups. Thus, although hybrids frequently resemble politicians, they are almost always more moderate than politicians in their judgments, pulled at least somewhat by their similarity to the technicians as well. In some situations, they may shift to an independent middle ground, while in others they may move all the way to the technical side. With more different kinds of scenarios, this pattern might show up more clearly.

In terms of what planners say they would do on each scenario, the three roles ranked the same way as for ethical judgments. It is interesting, also, that respondents generally are somewhat more conservative about what they say they would do, than about what they think is ethical, and that this does not differ by role.

### Table 4. Planner's roles (n = 577)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political scale</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(not used as a role)</td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>n = 26</td>
<td>n = 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical scale</td>
<td>Technicians</td>
<td>Hybrids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>n = 153</td>
<td>n = 293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% is percent of total sample included in table.

### Table 5. Means by role for each scenario*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Politicians</th>
<th>Hybrids</th>
<th>Technicians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 release info/env't</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 distort info</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 distort info</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 leak info/low income</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 threat</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 &quot;expendables&quot;</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 release info/developer</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 organize coalition</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 leak info/env't</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 distort info</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 technical judgment</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 leak info/C of C</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 media hype</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 release info/whites</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 assist opponents</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The range for the mean score is from 1 (clearly ethical) to 5 (clearly unethical).
people (3.7 percent of the sample), so that each was combined with the next most liberal or conservative group to make five categories, ranging from conservative to radical.

We thought that political groups might rank the same way roles had, with liberals thinking the scenarios were most ethical, and conservatives the least. In fact, two dominant patterns emerged (see Table 6). The hypothesized pattern did show up for four scenarios (1, 8, 9, and 15) which suggests no obvious logic except that three do deal with environmental issues. Conservatives, however, didn't fit the pattern on five of the scenarios. Surprisingly, on scenarios 3 and 7 they were more like radicals or liberals in their opinions, and on the others they were all to the left of moderate. On 3, 5, and 6, all dealing with tactics, their more liberal stance has a somewhat Machiavellian flavor. On 7 and 14 they were more favorable to the developer and the white homeowners' group, which might have been expected.

In relation to role, we thought that the most political planners might be the most liberal, and technicians the most conservative, with hybrids in between. In actual fact, the single largest group overall is liberals (31 percent of the sample). Politicians were the most liberal, while technicians, though generally more conservative, have a slightly bimodal pattern with high points at both liberal and moderate. Hybrids did have a pattern between the other two, but again it was bimodal like the technicians.

Agency orientation and ethics

A classic dilemma found in any public service profession, including planning, is the possible conflict between what the agency, which presumably serves the public, defines as the public interest, and what the individual professional thinks the public interest is. Whistleblowing (Nader et al. 1972, Finkler 1971), though risky, is not difficult to justify if the issue involves dishonesty on the part of the agency, but what if it is purely a difference of opinion on policy?

In our sample, most planners are quite loyal or committed to their agencies, with 70 percent above the midpoint on the agency orientation scale. On scenarios which involved a challenge to agency policy—all the leaking scenarios, helping the environmental group fight the refinery, and organizing support to challenge zoning policy—these agency-oriented planners thought the action significantly (.05 level) more unethical than the less committed ones. The difference between the two groups was largest on leaking information about the wetlands study (scenario 9), where the challenge to the agency director was most open.

Values and ethics

Overall, 57 percent of the sample had scores above the midpoint scale, measuring propensity to express values in one's work, indicating that despite the idea of the value free planner, the majority of planners think it is acceptable to be open about their values. It is also perhaps not surprising that the values scale has a high correlation ($r = .6744$) with the political role scale, indicating that value commitment and a willingness to act on it possibly go together.

Planners who think that they should act on their values in their work are different in their ethical judgments from planners who wish to be value neutral. When the scenarios are grouped together by similar issues, the difference between the value orientations is significant at better than .01 for giving out recommendations, leaking information, and for the most acceptable tactics (scenarios 6, 8, and 15). There is no significant difference, however, between the two groups on the scenarios concerned with the misrepresentation of information.

Table 6. Means for ethics scenarios by political views*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>Radicals</th>
<th>Liberals</th>
<th>Lib/Mod</th>
<th>Moderates</th>
<th>Conservatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 release info/env't</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 distort info</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 distort info</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 leak info/low income</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 threat</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 &quot;expendables&quot;</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 release info/developer</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 organize coalition</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 leak info/env't</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 distort info</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 technical judgment</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 leak info/C of C</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 media hype</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 release info/whites</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 assist opponents</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The range for the mean score is from 1 (clearly ethical) to 5 (clearly unethical).
Moreover, as we saw earlier, many planners do seem to be influenced, at least to some extent, in what they think is ethical by the intended beneficiaries of their actions. The same tactic used in behalf of different groups is judged differently. We expected this effect to be much stronger for politicians, who approve much more of open value commitment, than for technicians who generally wish to be value neutral. Actually, the results are rather mixed. On the scenarios giving out recommendations (1 and 14), politicians are influenced more by the issue than are technicians; but when it comes to leaking information, there is no difference between the two roles. There is, however, an interesting difference on the leaking scenarios in that the beneficiary is much more important to planners who are not strongly committed to their agencies than for those who are.

Role types

All the variables discussed so far obviously have an effect on what planners think is ethical. But the key variable seems to be role, with the other variables clustering around it in coherent patterns. We will now look more closely at each role type—the technician, the politician, and the hybrid.

The most traditional image of the planner is as a technician. The two major aspects of the technical role are its faith in the efficacy of analysis and its value neutrality; and on both of these, the comparison between the technicians in the sample and the politicians is dramatic. Fully 81 percent of the technicians indicated that they were value neutral compared with only 15 percent for the politicians. Even more strikingly, 94 percent of the technicians said that a planner’s effectiveness is based primarily on his reputation for objective, accurate, and in-depth analysis, while only 51 percent of the politicians agreed. Technicians are also much more likely (63 percent) than politicians (12 percent) to argue that plans should stand or fall for their acceptance on their technical quality and internal logic.

In line also with their value neutrality, technicians were more committed to their agencies, and less likely to challenge agency policy. Grouping together all the scenarios which involved leaking information or challenges to agency policy, the technicians on the average thought that those scenarios were more unethical than all the rest of the scenarios grouped together, while the politicians thought those scenarios were more ethical than all the others combined. Technicians were also more committed to their agencies, with 76 percent over 3.5 on the scale, compared with 64 percent of the politicians. On the scenario involving leaks to outside groups, where the tactic could be held constant, planners who were more oriented to their agencies had a narrower range of scores over the three scenarios, indicating that they were more swayed by the impropriety of the tactic itself, and less by any ties to outside groups.

Given these characteristics and views, it is not surprising that technicians would be the most conservative overall in their view of what is ethical, since the scenarios present situations involving challenging the authority of an agency by leaking information or organizing outsiders to change policy, misrepresenting information in analysis, and generally being politically active in trying to get plans adopted. Thus, there were no scenarios where the mean for all technicians was below 2.00, the point on the scale that indicates a judgment of “probably ethical.”

Since the quality and integrity of technical analysis is particularly important to them, it is not surprising to find that misrepresenting information (scenarios 2 and 10) is unacceptable; the mean for all technicians on these two is over 4.00, the score for “probably unethical.” Moreover, when faced with a conflict of loyalty between agency and analysis, in scenario 11, analysis continues to exert a strong pull. Agency oriented technicians were more likely to think that the economic planner’s capitulation was ethical, but the difference between them and the non-agency oriented technicians was smaller than for any other agency-oriented scenario except one.

Politicians, of course, are at the opposite extreme from technicians in our typology. Overall, they are more interested in influencing policy than the other groups, and are most willing to use a range of openly political tactics to do it. For example, 51 percent of the politicians ranked influencing policy among the three most important aspects of their job, compared with only 30 percent of the technicians. As Table 7 indicates, politicians clearly are much more prone to lobby, mobilize support, and neutralize opposition than are technicians. They are also more interested than technicians in routinely being involved in policy disputes; and a majority, unlike the technicians, think that the quality and depth of analysis done by planners has little to do with their effectiveness.

In general the politicians are more accepting of the political tactics in the scenarios than the technicians are, although this does not mean they think all tactics are ethical. As Table 5 indicates, the mean for all politicians is less than 2.5—in the probably-clearly-ethical range—for six scenarios compared to only two for the technicians. Even though politicians are significantly more accepting than technicians of the use of A-95 power as a threat, and of distorting information, the means for these four scenarios (2, 3, 5, 10) range from 3.58 to 4.03, putting them all in the “probably unethical” range.

Politicians are also somewhat less likely to be committed to their agencies and are more likely to have an independent commitment to issues or client groups. They are as value committed (85 percent) as the tech-
Table 7. Support for political tactics by role in percentages (n = 577)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Tactics</th>
<th>Politicians</th>
<th>Hybrids</th>
<th>Technicians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lobby actively to defeat harmful proposals</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop groups to support plan</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutralize opposition by mobilizing support</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May have to work covertly to gain support</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning should be placed in govt. so it can get involved in disputes</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality and depth of analysis has little to do with effectiveness</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

nicians are value neutral (81 percent). As indicated previously, they are relatively more willing than technicians to say it is ethical to give recommendations to the environmental group (scenario 1); and although willing to accept the principles as ethical, they are more unwilling actually to give recommendations to the white homeowners’ group (scenario 14) or to leak information to the Chamber of Commerce (scenario 13).  

Hybrids are the group of planners who are high on both the technical and the political scales. Since they feel the tension between the two role dimensions most, they tend to score between the politicians and the technicians on most variables. Consequently, there are relatively few instances where hybrids are obviously unique by virtue of having scores dramatically higher or lower than the other two groups. Instead, the analysis of this role has to focus on when they seem to be more like politicians, when they are more like technicians, and what kind of overall pattern this produces.

Simply by virtue of the way their role is defined, hybrids are quite close to technicians in their attitudes about analysis, and close to politicians in their attitudes about political tactics. For example, they are similar to technicians in thinking that the effectiveness of planners is based on good analysis, and that plans should stand or fall on their quality and logic. On the political attitudes listed in Table 7, they are virtually identical to the politicians except on the last item on analysis where, again, they are more like the technicians.

In terms of ethics, this means they tend to be more like politicians on tactical scenarios. On the scenarios dealing with leaks and giving out of recommendations, and on the symbolic campaign over pollution, the two groups were statistically indistinguishable. But as the tactics get more varied, and then more questionable, the differences increase. On using expendables as a bargaining device (scenario 6) and on organizing support (scenario 8), they are statistically different from both other groups; while on the use of A-95 review as a punitive tool (scenario 5), they shift to agreement with the technicians.

It is harder to see clearly the effect of their technical values, since the scenarios posing issues of distorting information (2 and 10) or giving in on a technical judgment (scenario 11) have a much smaller overall range. This means that even if the difference between technicians and politicians is significant, the hybrids in the middle are difficult to sort out from either.

In terms of who they are, they seem generally to be more like politicians than technicians, though they are still always more moderate. They are liberal, though not as much as politicians, with 42 percent left of center and only 34 percent right of center. Sixty-seven percent are value committed, much closer to the politicians’ 85 percent than the technicians’ 19 percent. A similar pattern holds for orientation to agency, though the overall range is much smaller. As with politicians, these last two characteristics tend to make them more independent, and possibly more active participants in the planning process. This helps to explain the hybrid’s greater acceptance of the scenarios on giving out recommendations, leaking information, and challenging agency policy.

There are also a few interesting and unique qualities of hybrids which give a more rounded image of them. They are somewhat more likely to be over 40, and are disproportionately found in the groups with the least (0 to 2) and the most (21 or more) years of planning experience. This might suggest that the attempt to combine the two aspects of role, while a significant characteristic for all kinds of planners, is somewhat more likely to be true of the inexperienced and possibly idealistic young, and the older, more experienced members of the field.

Also the only instance where they hold views stronger than both other role groups was on the belief that planning should be long range. When taken with their combined technical and political approach to planning, this attitude may indicate a more ambitious idea of what planning should be than is held by either other group.

This image of the hybrids gives some support to Meltser’s (1976, pp. 36–47) idea of the entrepreneurial, technically sophisticated politician: a more active, independent, and skilled actor than either of his other kinds of analysts. Because of its base in attitudes, however, our study tends to emphasize the tension and balance aspects of this role. If, on the other hand, the ethical dilemmas posed in our scenarios are seen as a restraint on the political aspects of the planner’s role, these hybrids are generally no more limited than their fellow politicians.
Conclusions

Overall, planners' views of ethics fall into two categories. The first are core professional values, shared by virtually all people in the sample. Two core values that clearly emerge from the study are the unacceptability of using threats or distorting information. Then there is a large area where values or ethics seem to be relative, with judgments influenced more by such factors as role, political views, and agency orientation. Tactics or means seem to have a more important effect on ethical choices than do the substantive issues or ends the tactics are used to achieve, though substantive issues do have some impact. Since tactics are important, role, which particularly relates to planning strategy and tactics, is an important determinant of planners' ethics. A variety of other variables closely related to role, such as political views, agency orientation, and value orientation, cluster around it in characteristic patterns, having similar effects on what planners think is ethical. It is also significant that planners say that they would act consistently with their ethical views.

Much of our description of planners simply provides greater insight into the already well-developed political and technical role models. Our research can enable us to give an indication of how many are in each group, and what they are like, with more statistical precision than previous studies.

But the role we have called the hybrids provides some new insight into the practice of planning, since these people are trying to bridge the gap, combining the characteristics of both roles. Since there are more hybrids in our sample than politicians and technicians combined, it may perhaps be more difficult to maintain one of the polar roles in practice than in theory. But if hybrids have become, and can be expected to remain the dominant group, this poses a number of issues about the adequacy of the ethical standards now in force in the profession.

Our data indicate that ethical standards in planning are relative. It is certainly true that some kinds of behavior, such as distorting information, are considered unacceptable by the vast majority of all planners. But even for these behaviors, there remain some planners who still consider them ethical. And for many political tactics, planners disagree much more about acceptability, depending on such things as their role orientations, political views, value commitment, or sympathies toward the substantive issues at stake.

This variability in ethical judgments means that it is very difficult to establish any single ethical standard that is meaningful to the whole profession. At the extreme, it is not difficult to think of behavior that most people would agree is unethical. Bribery clearly qualifies, and so, probably, does distortion of information; but what about providing information to outside groups so they can fight your agency, or using threats, tradeoffs, or symbolic appeals to get a plan approved?

One might make the argument that it is better for planning to have a restrictive set of ethical standards. Why? Because in a democratic society planners are not decision makers who can be held responsible by the public. They are experts who "attempt to provide public . . . decision makers with the best possible information, analysis, and recommendations to promote the public welfare" (AIP 1977, p. 2). Such a definition would argue that planners should avoid taking upon themselves the right to define the goals that guide the definition and solution of problems, or trying to openly and actively get their own particular views adopted in the political system. They should have a restrictive view of the scope of planning. Our data indicate that the most effective way to ensure that planners have such a restrictive view of planning and of ethical behavior would be to train people as technicians, since, of our three roles, they have not only the narrowest view of the planners' range of discretion, but are even more restrictive in what they are actually willing to do in practice. This is, in effect, the way the present role of ethics of the AIP is drawn; and historically the dominant role model presented to planners had been the technical one.

But according to our study, hybrids are actually the dominant group in the field. In practice, they have a broader image of the proper role of the planner and a less restrictive view of what is ethical. In this they are quite similar to, though more moderate than, the politicians, and between them the two groups make up 70 percent of our sample.

This raises the question of whether it is useful to have a code of ethics, some provisions of which are more honored by many in the breach than in the observance. As Francine Rabinovitz (1969, pp. 133–134) wrote in 1969:

The profession . . . still officially discourages political roles, having developed no code of conduct that defines what types of political strategies are ethically acceptable and what types are expedient but unprofessional.

Might it be better to reconsider portions of the code in light of the evolving practice of planning? Planners often make ethical judgments implicitly in making strategy and methodological decisions, but they may not give them the sustained and systematic thought that they give to the more practical issues. Moreover, the more political they are in their planning activities, the more they have to face the kind of dilemmas posed in our scenarios, which are not adequately dealt with in the AIP's code of ethics.

Obviously the possibility of making the code less restrictive raises the problem of the tradeoff between technical integrity and political effectiveness. To be
too permissive about tactics might lead, as Rabinovitz suggests (1969, Chapter 6), to a loss of legitimacy. On the other hand, to be too restrictive raises the problem, much discussed since the publication of Altshuler's *The City Planning Process*, of being ineffective and unable to carry plans through to fruition.

But the interesting aspect of our study is that it is the hybrids who dominate, not the politicians; and it is the hybrids who make the greatest effort to combine both the technical and the political aspects of role. This would indicate that they are likely to be sensitive to both the problem of loss of legitimacy and the problem of lack of effectiveness. The two aspects of their role do involve a tension which may at times be difficult to balance. As educators, it may be our role to try to develop ways to either reduce the tension or to enable planners to deal more effectively with it. Simply making clear that it exists and that both the political and the technical aspects of role orientation are legitimate and necessary for a balance, may be a step in that direction. Going further, educators could deal head-on in the classroom with the kinds of ethical dilemmas posed in our scenarios, having students grapple with such problems early instead of waiting until they become practitioners to puzzle through the issues these dilemmas pose. But it may also be the role of the professional organization to provide a more carefully thought out and realistic set of guidelines to behavior in this difficult area of practice.

**Notes**

1. The authors would like to thank all the members of the AIP who participated in the study.

2. Peter Marcuse (1976) demonstrates quite convincingly the divergent ethical prescriptions that underlie professional planning ethics. These include: allegiance, autonomy, knowledge and competence, guild loyalty, concern for the public interest, dissent, loyalty, advancement of knowledge, and statutory responsibility.

3. The public interest concern is most directly reflected in Section 1.1(a) of the Canons of AIP's Code of Professional Responsibility—"A planner serves the public interest primarily." The loyalty to the planner's claim concern is reflected in Rules of Discipline (d) of the AIP Code.

4. We also would like to be able to determine what factors are most important in affecting planners' ethical choices. The study was designed with a fairly complex path analysis model in mind. But testing the strength and simultaneous effect of a large number of independent variables (26) on each other and on the dependent variable is a difficult methodological task, especially when, as is the case here, most of the variables are measured only at the ordinal level. This particular paper examines the relationships between six of the twenty-six independent variables and the two dependent variables.

5. Every sixth person on the AIP mailing list was chosen unless that individual's address clearly indicated that he worked for a planning consulting firm, a university, or a private development, or if the code indicated that the person was a student or an affiliate. (The method of choice was count, discard, re-count.) The sampling fraction was increased from 12.3 percent to 18.5 percent to allow for the elimination during the sampling procedure of people who obviously did not belong in the sample, and for an additional estimated 27 percent of the final sample who would also turn out to be in one of the categories listed above. We sampled members of the AIP because their mailing list was the only list of professional planners available. We have no way of knowing, however, whether AIP members were typical of all planners.

6. The only two other empirical studies of ethics we could find both use the same kind of scenario format (Carlin 1966, Beard & Horn 1975). One, a study of the ethics of congressmen, uses the same five-point scale.

7. These percentages would increase to 20 to 30 percent if those who were uncertain about the ethical propriety of the action were added to those who said the action was ethical.

8. Planners come out strongly in favor of mass transit on the transportation scale in Part 2 of the questionnaire. Seventy percent are pro-mass transit while 30 percent are anti-mass transit.

9. It is interesting to note that, in fact, five of these scenarios form a Guttman scale. A cutpoint of 3.0 was used so that the "not sure" were included along with those who thought the scenarios were unethical. The coefficient of reproducibility for the scale was .9058, and the coefficient of scalability was .7351. The order for the scenarios is the same as in the tables above: scenario 1 is the most acceptable, followed in order by scenarios 14, 7, 4, and 12. This means that the 16 percent of the sample who would leak information to the Chamber of Commerce (scenario 12), would accept providing information to all other kinds of groups; while the 35 percent who would not or were not sure that they would provide information to an environmental group on request, would not provide or leak information to any other kind of group.

10. The variability on substantive issues was much higher in the final sample than in the pretest group. Items used in the construction of Likert scales, which had explained from 30 to 60 percent of the variance in the pretest, explained only from 4 to 20 percent of the variance for the final sample. This makes them weak tools for analyzing substantive attitudes, and we have not relied on such scales in our analysis.

11. We were particularly concerned about the construction of the scales measuring role orientation. Originally, following the drift of much of the literature on planners, we thought of role as a simple dimension with the technical and political orientations as its two reverse sides. However, a factor analysis of the pretest results indicated that the items should be separated into at least four scales, a political one, a technical one, one concerned with the planner's attitude toward his agency, and one concerned with attitudes about value commitment. A factor analysis of the final sample showed this pattern even more clearly. The factor analysis used principal factoring with iteration. Both orthogonal (varimax) and oblique rotation were tried, with similar results. For the final construction of the scales, orthogonal (varimax) rotation was used. This grouped the items into six factors. Items with factor loadings of more than .5 were used to create the scales. The political scale included items on political tactics and cynical attitudes toward analysis. The technical scale was made up of two factors, one of which had five items stressing the importance of rationality and technical expertise, and a second, with two items on long-range planning and value neutrality.

Generally, Likert scales of this type have about 20 items in them, but scales with as few as 5, 7, and 10 items are acceptable
The technical and political scales had six and seven items, respectively. The agency orientation and value commitment scales had five items each. Item analysis of the four role scales came out quite strong. Correlations between each item and its scale were not only significant at the .001 level (due in part to the sample size), but also had in each instance, an r2 explaining at least 25 percent of the variance.

12. The fourth possible role, low on both scales, had only 25 respondents in it, so we did not name it or use it. Melsner (1976, p. 15) calls the comparable category in his typology the "pretenders."

13. These roles are quite parallel to Melsner's (1976, Chapter 2) in their underlying dimensions, though not necessarily in their associated characteristics. They were, interestingly enough, developed independently, before either author had read Melsner's book. They arose logically out of the factor analysis of the pretest results. Melsner uses the term "entrepreneur" for his high/high category, drawing also on Bardach (1972). The term indicates that these are the most skilled and active analysts of his typology. We wanted a somewhat less value laden term which would indicate that the primary characteristic of our high/high group is that they try to balance the two dimensions of role, and come between the other two roles on a number of our variables. The term "hybrid" denotes "anything of heterogeneous origin or incongruous parts," as animals (especially swine) of mixed parentage.

14. Of Melsner's group of 116 analysts at the Federal level, only 25 percent were entrepreneurs. However, he was looking at their political and analytic skills, while we have only been able to look at planners' attitudes about what they "should" do. We cannot infer from our data whether the planners interviewed have the skills, opportunity, or even the personal inclination to play the roles they say are best.

15. The measure for action was the mean for each scenario. The means for action were lower than for ethics on 11 out of 15 scenarios for each role, though which 11 scenarios had lower means for action differed from one role to another. Only on one scenario for technicians and on two each for politicians and hybrids, were the action means higher than the means for ethics.

16. Overall, the differences between radicals and conservatives were significant for all scenarios except 2, 5, and 10 (among the least acceptable) and scenario 11 (the most ambivalent). Looking at liberals and moderates reduces the number of scenarios where the difference is significant to seven (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 15). Even between the three middle categories, some differences still hold up.

17. Influence is determined by looking at the difference between the means for each scenario. We would expect that if the tactic is held constant, as it is in scenarios 1 and 14, and also in scenarios 4, 9, and 12, the difference in means would be due to the influence of the issue or beneficiary. The size of the difference can be compared for any other variable such as role or agency orientation; the larger the difference is the more the issue or beneficiary matters. Thus, if the difference between scenarios 1 and 14 is larger for politicians than for technicians, then the issue or beneficiary matters more to the politicians.

18. The exception was scenario 12, the leak to the Chamber of Commerce. There was no real difference between the two groups. The beneficiary was less acceptable, and all technicians thought the scenario was unethical.

19. The influence of the environment as an issue was determined in the same way as described in Footnote 17. On unwillingness to act, the mean for action was less than the mean for ethics, and the difference in the means was larger for politicians than for technicians.

References


Commentary

Planners and Political Philosophy

Timothy Beatley

There is little question that planners need a broad range of specific analytic tools, such as economic analysis (e.g., Windsor, 1986). But in their zeal to acquire tangible tools and techniques planners must not lose sight of the need for the more synthetic skills of reasoning and conceptualizing. One category of broader thinking skills that planners often overlook is that of political philosophy—the normative theories and concepts about the purpose and legitimate functioning of society as expressed through laws, public policy, and political authority. The practice of public planning raises numerous questions of political philosophy, including basic questions about the extent of legitimate public interference with individual liberties and the extent of public obligations to the poor and disadvantaged.

Planners should be capable of developing political-philosophical positions and arguments, first to guide their own independent decision-making responsibilities, but perhaps more important to assist other public officials and the public at-large to develop and clarify more precise normative positions. At least two dimensions to political philosophy are relevant to planners: one is substantive, the other methodological.

Substantive dimension

The substantive dimension suggests that planners should be able to address key questions in three categories about the legitimate and appropriate function of government: 1) Which political-philosophical principles, standards, or concepts are appropriate or valid for guiding the social allocation of rights, duties, benefits and burdens? 2) How should society make decisions about those principles and their application to public policy (e.g., what is a fair distribution of power; what constitute fair and equitable decision-making processes; what is the appropriate function of representation in a democratic planning framework)? and 3) How do we define the relevant public (or moral community) to which these concepts and principles should apply (e.g., temporally, geographically, and interspecies)? While these categories do not encompass all relevant substantive questions about appropriate governance, they do include the most important ones.

To help answer each of those questions a well-developed philosophical literature provides specific concepts and moral theories. In response to the first question, concerning the appropriate distribution of rights and benefits, utilitarian theory would view planning decisions and policies as legitimate or morally defensible only when they maximize net social welfare. In contrast, I have argued strongly that before we think in terms of net good, we should first attempt to maximize benefits for the least-advantaged, linking planning policies to Rawls’ “difference principle” (Rawls 1971). Other major concepts and standards, such as culpability and merit, expectations and promise-making, minimum social rights and duties, and need, can also be applied pragmatically in planning and policy situations.

The second set of questions important in the substantive area pertains to the theories and concepts that help determine whether planning procedures and political processes are fair. What constitutes an equitable distribution of power, and when does a maldistribution of power become so severe that it raises questions about the integrity of resulting planning decisions? For example, many planning dilemmas revolve around conflicting beliefs about the role of representation: Must elected city council members, and indirectly, hired planners, consult their constituencies at every stage before acting on controversial planning issues (e.g. through questionnaires or public hearings) or should they make judgments and serve as leaders, perhaps even when their decisions conflict with the signals received from constituents? (Bowie 1981). I would argue that although citizen participation and constituent input are important in planning and policymaking, they cannot and should not replace the judgment of elected officials. Broader notions of equity and public interest will sometimes require elected officials, and the planners they employ, to take actions that may be opposed by a majority of their constituents.

How to define the relevant public, the third question, raises other issues for planners and public policymakers. For example, in considering whether or not to permit the development of a unique natural area do we, as local planners or policymakers, consider only the interests and preferences of the immediate population, or do the potential consequences of our recommended actions require us to consider the rights and interests of broader populations? While there are

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different positions on this question, I would argue strongly that particularly with respect to irreplaceable environmental resources (e.g., wilderness areas, endangered species) we have an obligation to at least protect the option of future populations to enjoy those resources (see for instance, Partridge 1981). The public can be defined in other ways as well. For instance to what extent are we as planners and policymakers in one locale obligated to take actions to mitigate or reduce the impacts of our planning decisions on adjoining jurisdictions, on the broader region, or even on the nation? I would argue strongly that in many situations we do have such obligations.

Resolution of competing political-philosophy concepts can be approached in several ways. For instance, an individual may conclude that although she believes two principles are legitimate (e.g., the right of freedom of speech and utilitarian welfare maximization) they should be applied sequentially. That is, where both standards apply, the action or policy should seek to maximize the first before moving on to the second. That contrasts with a “balancing” concept, in which a planner or public official seeks to mediate between two equally legitimate ethical principles. Normative positions may be considerably more complex than that, but this illustrates the kinds of practical organizing of principles that can occur.

Methodological dimension

A methodological dimension is also important to planners and public officials. Three areas are particularly crucial: 1) how political-philosophical principles and theories are justified and defended (“justifying”); 2) how they are tested against numerous possible planning and policy circumstances (“testing”), and 3) how they are fitted or applied to actual planning dilemmas and cases (“fitting”).

Much of political philosophy has to do with justifying and supporting particular concepts, principles, and perspectives. There are different strategies by which to do this (e.g. Pennock and Chapman 1986). One approach, offered by Rawls and others, is a procedure of placing oneself in a hypothetical “original position,” divorced from detailed personal knowledge that might unfairly bias the adoption of a particular standard or procedure.

Once candidate theories and principles are derived, a second important methodological step is that of “testing” theory, or applying them to a range of hypothetical or actual policy circumstances to determine the extent to which they successfully resolve policy problems and facilitate decision making. Such a process can help uncover inconsistencies and intuitively unacceptable outcomes that may cast doubt on the appropriateness of a standard or concept. There may be good reasons for embracing a utilitarian standard, yet when applied to certain policy areas (e.g., affordable housing or siting of transportation facilities) the results may prove intuitively unacceptable and lead the planner to modify the standard or search for a different one. I have found ethical scenarios useful in testing the implications of various normative theories.

A third and crucial methodological step concerns how tested concepts and principles are employed to resolve specific and actual planning and public policy problems. Here the focus is not on testing and refining the normative principles, but rather on making principled decisions. What must occur is a process by which basic concepts and principles are “fitted” to particular circumstances. Depending on the actual issues some principles or standards will be of greater relevance while others may not apply at all. While the political-philosophical standards and theories help in orienting and structuring decisions, planners and policymakers must make whatever additional marginal adjustments are necessary to “fit” the case at hand. This fitting process requires skills of organization, the sorting-out of facts and values, value scanning and synthesis, and the ability to generate creative resolutions to political-philosophical problems consistent with normative standards. These are judgment skills and planners should be encouraged to develop them.

Together the skill in applying methodological procedures, and the knowledge of the substantive content of political philosophy, could be of immense help to planners and policymakers as they deal with many public policy questions. We must begin to place much greater emphasis on the substance and methodology of political philosophy both in graduate planning education and in professional training programs.

References
Four Perspectives on Ethics

Publication of the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct in 1981 and the APA Statement of Ethical Principles for Planning in 1987 has given planners two beacons to guide them in maintaining high ethical standards in practice and teaching. While these two sets of guidelines are clear and direct, like any body of principles, they can often be difficult to apply. Any given situation in planning raises special dilemmas. In the following commentaries, the authors explore the ethical dimensions of particular problems and situations, illuminating and drawing conclusions on a wide array of ethical challenges.

Planners in Conflict

Carol D. Barrett

Professional decisions, like personal ones, rarely rest on clear-cut issues. Though planners sometimes can achieve consensus on appropriate behavior in given circumstances, frequently they differ over which action to take.

The case set forth below demonstrates why it may sometimes be difficult for planners to agree upon a single course. The case is largely a fictional composite reflecting the actual experiences of several planners. The case was constructed to encompass ethical concerns that arise when professional planners conflict with planning commissioners and elected officials, when personal and professional beliefs do not coincide with professional responsibilities, and when citizens attempt to influence the process using methods outside the commonly established procedures.

The Scenario

A Texas oil company decided to build a refinery on several thousand acres of tree-covered waterfront property, which it owned. The comprehensive plan, adopted within the past five years, showed this area, which was zoned for residential and agricultural use, as residential at varying densities. The oil company requested a zoning change to a heavy industrial classification.

In this area, all zoning requests are subject to review by the planning commission after the staff prepares a recommendation for action. The planning director and staff wrote a thorough report that relied heavily upon the existing adopted comprehensive plan. The staff report opposed the rezoning, saying that the scenic area should be recognized as an invaluable natural resource. The report recommended that some portions of the land be preserved, and that the remainder be developed for recreational and residential use.

The rezoning was aired at a public hearing before the planning commission, a five-member body appointed by the county supervisors that included a real estate broker, an architect, a former county supervisor, a homemaker, and a school teacher. Although citizens groups testified in opposition to the proposal, there was little debate or discussion among the planning commissioners before they approved the request by a four-to-one vote.

The following month the rezoning request was scheduled for action by the county board of supervisors. Again, the opposition testimony seemed to have no impact at the public hearing.

Although the staff report had been attached to the planning commission's recommendations, there was no evidence that it had been read or considered by the supervisors. The planning director was present at the supervisors' meeting, but was not invited to make a presentation nor to answer any of the questions raised by the general public. The supervisors unanimously approved the request for the rezoning.

Residents who live near the proposed refinery site are threatening a court challenge of the planning commission's and supervisors' action. Two of the elected officers of the newly formed citizens' group opposed to the refinery meet with the planning director during office hours and ask him to provide behind-the-scenes assistance to the citizen group as it prepares its case. They also ask him to testify regarding the desirability of rezoning the area.

Assume that you are the planning director, responsible to the county supervisors for your employment, to the chair of the planning commission for the day-to-day administration of your affairs, and to all planning employees as their supervisor. You face several choices:

1. Make available all technical data and internal memoranda used in reaching the staff's conclusions. Provide no personal assistance in interpreting the written material.

2. Counsel with the group, but only after hours and not in any official capacity. Make no written material available except for that already presented in public hearings.

3. Make available a copy of the final staff recommendation, which is already a matter of public record. Decline to cooperate in any other way with the understanding that you may be subpoenaed and compelled to testify if the challengers go to court.

4. Support the group entirely because their lawsuit is consistent with the staff's original recommendations. Provide assistance during office hours and access to departmental staff and other resources.
5. Meet with the one planning commissioner who voted against the rezoning and who generally supports good planning. Explain that you wish to help the citizens and to advance a course of action that will lead to improved environmental quality for the county's residents. Seek an endorsement from the planning commissioner for this intention.

**Key Issues**

You are challenged in this instance to identify a course of action consistent with the AICP Code of Ethics. But the Code offers inconsistent guidance for this kind of situation. The Code specifically states:

A planner's primary obligation is to serve the public interest. While the definition of the public interest is formulated through continuous debate, a planner owes allegiance to a conscientiously attained concept of the public interest, which requires these special obligations. . . . A planner must strive to protect the integrity of the natural environment.

But the Code also says:

A planner must accept the decisions of a client or employer concerning the objectives and nature of the professional services to be performed unless the course of action to be pursued involves conduct which is illegal or inconsistent with the planner's primary obligation to the public interest.

Thus, while the Code sets forth your responsibility to serve the public interest and calls for you to protect the integrity of the environment, it also maintains that you accept the decisions of your employer.

How can you resolve these seeming contradictions as you decide what to do in the oil refinery case? Clearly you need additional information before you can make your decisions. At a minimum, this scenario sets off a series of questions whose answers will help build your ultimate position. Searching for the answers to the questions will allow you to determine more accurately whether the public interest is truly threatened in this matter. (If the answers are not readily available, then perhaps the original findings were not very persuasive. Sometimes planning offices lack the time and staff to do a detailed analysis of every rezoning request. If this was the case, then the real problem has to do with the lack of money available to do good planning, not the nature of the zoning decisions being made by the elected officials.)

As you answer the questions, you should also consider whether you are bringing your personal values to work. As Howe and Kaufman have shown (1979), many planners seem to judge what is ethical according to who benefits from their actions. Some planners use protection of the environment, for example, to justify such means as working to overturn an official action. Professional ethics do not condone this kind of value orientation. Bearing this fact in mind, consider the following questions:

1. What was the basis for the original designation in the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance?

2. Is the waterfront unique? Are any endangered species inhabiting the area?

3. Are other policies in force that might have influenced the planning commission and supervisors? For example, has the Economic Development Commission approved a plan calling for the expansion of the petroleum industry? Has a major employer suffered a sudden economic downturn and created a high unemployment rate that would make the prospect of immediate new construction jobs especially attractive to a community and its elected officials?

It is not unusual for land-use-planning-related functions, such as economic development or capital-improvement budgeting, to be located outside the planning department. If such is the case in this situation, then the supervisors may have had to choose among competing public policies. You as planning director should have drawn upon all of a jurisdiction's planning framework, not just those documents formally titled zoning ordinances and land use plans. When planners must attempt to balance a variety of legitimate (yet competing) claims, it is best to consider who will benefit from different decisions. Did your staff do so in their original work?

4. Given that neither the supervisors nor the planning commission followed your advice, is there any evidence suggesting something more than an honest difference of opinion? Few planners are offered bribes, according to studies. Elected officials are far more likely to receive inducements to favor a certain course of action. But, to be scrupulously fair, you should consider whether the staff planners may have been influenced by outside relationships with citizen groups, who are often well equipped to apply pressure.

This issue is important because the supervisors have been elected to represent the public interest. Some form of bribery or coercion, if its exists, undermines the entire basis of the decision-making process and seriously calls into question whether the public interest has been served or has even been given fair consideration in this situation. If you discern a pattern of corruption, you would be well advised to consult with the executive director of the AICP or the AICP Ethics Committee. The executive director may suggest that you speak with APA counsel, who can advise you on possible courses of action.

Another possible explanation for the decisive vote against your recommendation may be a personality conflict between you and the elected officials that is manifesting itself in a "we versus them" mentality. You may wish to speak with an APA chapter professional development officer to consider what actions might be taken to ameliorate prolonged strained relations.

5. Did the planning staff consider designing adequate environmental safeguards that would permit a mixed use development and thereby balance competing objectives?
Alternatively, could the planning staff identify other sites within the community that might be appropriate for an oil refinery?

An astute planning director will often sense when a particular development proposal is likely to win political support regardless of its consistency with land use policy. In such instances, it may be more cost-effective for the planning staff to devote its resources to coming up with a variety of schemes for mitigating the potential negative consequences than to frame eloquent staff reports in opposition to the development.

6. Is there a formally adopted policy affecting how employees can express dissent from actions by elected officials or the planning commission?

You may be prohibited, under terms of employment, from taking a public position that could be interpreted as conflicting with those of the elected officials. Or, more likely, you may sense a strong unwritten rule. If such is the case, a planner still may decide to take a position of public dissent: the planner should do so with the knowledge that a job search may soon be required.

7. Who best determines the public interest? Underlying this scenario is the high-minded assumption that this is the function of the planning profession. Most elected officials would strongly assert that the public interest emerges from debate and healthy give and take and that it cannot be determined solely on the basis of a report signed by the planning director.

Can you, as the planning director, assume that your definition of the public interest is the correct one? Is upholding the zoning ordinance the supreme test of the public good?

The 'Right' Answer

As planning director you have been asked by a group of citizens to assist them in a lawsuit against the county. But you would not want deliberately to expose the county to potential liability. Given today's legal environment, if the rezoning had been denied, the oil company would have also been likely to pursue a lawsuit.

It is probable that the elected and appointed officials consider the planning staff to be their employees. They would undoubtedly be surprised by public efforts by planners to overturn their decisions, especially if the initiatives were to come from the planning director. Planners who move into management positions must be perceived as objective if they are to be seen as effective. Because the responsibilities of being a manager of planning impose additional constraints, the planning director ought to do little more than keep the lines of communication open. There are two notable exceptions. If the director has reason to suspect that the decisions were unduly influenced by outside forces, or if new and important information is now available, then more direct action may be warranted. But let us assume that neither of these two exceptions has come into play. In this case, because a lawsuit has been declared to be the preferred citizen strategy, it would be best if you provided the citizen group only the data normally available to the public. No other response would be highly ethical for a planning director.

REFERENCE


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When Planners Lie with Numbers

Martin Wachs

Planners do a great deal of analysis. They rely increasingly on data banks, statistical methods, mathematical models, and computers. Planning schools must teach quantitative methods to qualify for accreditation. While not every planner employs every method, analytical techniques in common use include cohort-survival population forecasting, benefit-cost analysis, input-output analysis, shift-share analysis, traffic impact studies, regional transportation forecasting, housing market studies, and many more. Planners also do surveys, construct databases using survey results, and employ such complex technical databases as land-use information systems. In carrying out their responsibilities, planners want to be appreciated as skillful analysts who adhere to high standards of technical ability and truthfulness in the use of data.

Planning, however, is not just analytical. We work in the fishbowl of politics and public-policy making. We serve as staff to politicians, consultants to government bodies, and representatives of private landowners and real estate developers. These roles are usually associated with clearly articulated interests. Our agencies, employers, and clients favor particular policies or programs for reasons that may be derived more directly from ideology, political commitments, or economic self-interest than from the results of analytical studies.

Planners, then, are constantly trapped between two competing models of their role. On one hand, planners may see themselves as "scientists," who analyze data to discover the truth and to arrive at the best course of action. On the other hand, planners see themselves as "advocates," who use data and models to prove that a
course of action preferred by a client or employer is the best choice in a given situation.

These two roles inherently conflict with one another. Hence it is not surprising that the AICP Code of Ethics seems to embody the conflict. The Code says, for example, that the planner must "exercise independent professional judgment." But in the next sentence it says that a planner must "accept the decisions of the client or employer concerning the objectives and nature of the professional services." In reality, it is often difficult to do both.

The most effective planner is sometimes the one who can cloak advocacy in the guise of scientific or technical rationality. Rather than stating that we favor a particular highway project or renewal program for ideological reasons or because our clients stand to gain more from that project than from alternatives, we adjust data and assumptions until we can say that the data clearly show that the preferred option is best. Our recommendation is not merely personal judgment or preference, we claim, but the result of a neutral process of analysis.

I have experienced this conflict between planning as science and planning as advocacy in my own consulting, and have accumulated dozens of case studies from alumni who return to the university to talk about their anxieties and conflicts as professionals. Very often these situations involve data, models, or statistics. Here are a few examples:

- A public opinion survey is done regarding a new real estate development, and the planner is urged to publicize results that are favorable to the project, while remaining silent about those that are critical of it.
- A consultant estimates the demand for a new light rail transit route to be about 2,000 passengers per day, but the chairman of the county board of supervisors urges her to reconsider the assumptions and rework her models until the demand rises to 12,000 daily riders. The higher number is needed to justify a federal grant.
- Each county in the state prepares a population projection as the basis for its request for sewage-treatment plant construction funds. When the populations projected by the individual counties are added up, the sum exceeds the state-wide population forecast by a factor of six. Each county assumed it would be a center of growth, but in reality not every county in the state will grow.
- A benefit-cost study shows that the costs of dredging a harbor will exceed the economic benefits of the project, so indirect benefits are enumerated that are large enough to result in an excess of benefits over costs. This project has long been favored by the governor.

That planners view methods sometimes as objective tools of scientific judgment, and sometimes as devices for convincing others of the rightness of a cause leads us to be inconsistent in the way we report technical results to clients and the public. We also tend to criticize the analyses done by our opponents, while readily accepting incomplete analysis that supports our position or that of our client.

Computerized databases, statistical procedures, and forecasting models are not transparent to planning commissioners or homeowners; all the more reason why their details should be available to experts who might wish to replicate, verify, or merely critique our use of technical procedures. Yet, technical reports often provide little information on the assumptions employed to obtain particular results.

Every mathematical procedure requires that certain values be assumed for particular parameters, but those values are often not stated in technical reports. Similarly, a quantity estimated by a statistical or mathematical procedure is subject to error. But we commonly see forecast values presented as single numbers, without confidence intervals. A population forecast of 100,000 having a 90 percent confidence band of 5,000 is very different from one having a confidence band of 40,000. Yet, planners frequently present the estimated quantity without the accompanying information about statistical variation that would enable others to evaluate the salience of the forecast. Sometimes this amounts to nothing more than sloppy report writing, but at other times it may be done deliberately in order to obscure weaknesses in the work leading up to the final report.

Even more disturbing are the many cases in which planners, in the absence of reliable hard numbers, "fudge" data by applying findings from one city to policy making in another, or by assuming that ten-year-old facts are still valid where there is good reason to be skeptical. In many instances, such "fudging" is not documented in the technical reports that purport to present the analysis that was performed. Finally, there are instances in which data sets are falsified, either because the actual numbers do not exist, or because the analysis damaged the case that the analyst was trying to make. Our profession does little to discipline planners who fudge data or deliberately misrepresent the truth through technical manipulation of data or models.

Such abuses arise because we live at a time when it is necessary to support one's position with facts and figures in order to be convincing. A professional judgment unsubstantiated by facts or modeling results is not as valid as one that is. Yet, in some situations the facts are not readily at hand, and the cost and time required for gathering them are prohibitive.

"You're the expert," says the client. "If you can't produce an estimate, nobody can." "I'm not paying you for guesses," says the supervisor. "Where are the facts to back up your position?" I once told a client that I could not in good conscience produce a forecast of the daily use of a proposed facility because there had never been a facility of that type in the region, and there was no experience on which to base a forecast. I was told, without even a pretense of politeness, "If you won't forecast, I'll get another consultant." Another consultant was hired, and a forecast was made and paid for. Should the
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forecast be considered a good technical estimate, or a fiction produced to garner a fee by pleasing the client? Information can also pose ethical problems related to the complex issue of confidentiality and privacy. Planners often possess information about people and land that can influence development plans or social programs, or can affect the outcome of an election. Under what circumstances is a database to be held in confidence, and under what conditions is it necessary to make data available to any member of the public who requests it? Survey procedures pose a specific problem in this regard. It has become nearly routine to inform the citizen who participates in a survey that "the results will be used for statistical purposes only, and your responses will be kept confidential." What does such a pledge really require of the planner? When a newspaper reporter asks for the details of a survey in order to verify the validity of our claims, must we refuse to divulge the information because of the confidentiality that was pledged to the respondents? If it is likely that we will release survey information to people who request it for a good reason, perhaps we should not inform the respondents of an intent to keep the data confidential, even though the absence of such a pledge might lower the response rate.

ethical standards for data and analysis

The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct of the American Institute of Certified Planners, and the recently adopted Statement of Ethical Principles for Planning of the American Planning Association have similar purposes. They provide guidelines to planners, helping them to address everyday chores and to cope with occasional crises in the manner that best serves the public interest. The code and the statement of principles inform the public of the high standards that planners are expected to meet, and the code provides a basis for "adjudicating any charge that a member has acted unethically."

To be most useful and significant to a profession, a code of ethical principles must be a living document. It must be interpreted and reinterpreted according to changing conditions and the tests posed by particular cases. The AICP Code recognizes this necessity by stating that "the planner's primary obligation is to serve the public interest," while acknowledging that "the public interest is formulated through continuous debate." Recent "advisory rulings" of the AICP Ethics Committee go beyond the general language of the code by offering more specific guidelines in areas of recent concern, such as sexual harassment and the acceptance of outside employment by planners (moonlighting).

After reviewing our code and comparing it with those of other professions, I find it to be relatively silent on standards of technical analysis and reporting, data management and analysis, and statistical and mathematical modeling. This omission is serious, given the growing use of computers in planning and the increasingly analytical nature of work done by planners.

Planners are not, of course, the only professionals who make extensive use of statistics, models, and data. We have a great deal to learn from other professions that have adopted explicit ethical standards addressing the issues raised here. The Ethical Guidelines for Statistical Practice of the American Statistical Society require, for example, that members:

- present their findings and interpretations honestly and objectively;
- avoid untrue, deceptive, or undocumented statements;
- collect only the data needed for the purpose of their inquiry;
- ensure that whenever data are transferred to other persons or organizations, this transfer is in conformity with the confidentiality pledges established;
- be prepared to document data sources used in an inquiry; known inaccuracies in the data; steps to correct or to refine the data; statistical procedures applied to the data and the assumptions required for their application.

The members of the American Association for Public Opinion Research are bound by their Code of Professional Ethics and Practices, which includes the following principles:

- We shall recommend and employ only those tools and methods of analysis which, in our professional judgment, are well suited to the problem at hand;
- We shall not select research tools and methods of analysis because of their capacity to yield misleading conclusions;
- We shall not knowingly make interpretations of research results, nor shall we tacitly permit interpretations that are inconsistent with the data available;
- We shall not knowingly imply that interpretations should be accorded greater confidence than the data actually warrant.

Principles of this kind should apply to planners as well as to statisticians and opinion researchers. Granted, it is not possible to anticipate in advance every use of data or every situation in which an ethical quandary might arise. But it is possible and appropriate to enumerate ethical principles that represent the aspirations and norms of the planning profession.

Given the growing importance of databases, statistical procedures, survey research, and computer modeling in urban planning, the time has come to address the ethical dimensions of technical information within our profession. The Ethics Committee of the AICP should review the current AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct to assess its adequacy and shortcomings regarding technical information and forecasting. It should then propose amendments to the Code, or elaborations upon the code in the form of "advisory rulings," that deal spe-
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cifically with ethical standards of information management, statistical practice, and forecasting in planning.

The principles, perhaps modeled after those from which I have quoted above, should be available to young professionals in planning schools as they learn the tools of the trade, and to practicing planners as guidelines in their work. Violations should be investigated and disciplinary measures employed to ensure that the highest ethical standards of the planning profession are applied to quantitative analysis, as they are in other areas of professional concern.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author expresses appreciation to Stuart Meck, AICP; Richard Bickel, AICP; and Ned Levine for valuable comments on an early draft.

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Four Constituencies Revisited:
Some Thoughts on Planners, Politicians and Principles

Let's pretend that you are the planning director of a medium-size town whose economy was heavily dependent on a military base which has just been closed. The Defence Department is, however, willing to sell the land and buildings to the town for a dollar (remember, this is let's pretend). A developer has moved in quickly with a proposal to purchase the site and build a regional shopping centre plus office and condominium towers, with the rest to be leased for industrial use.

You have been instructed to prepare a report on this proposal. You already know very well where the mayor and most of the council stand; as far as they are concerned, it is a great deal. They claim that it will add substantially to the tax base, create badly needed jobs; attract shoppers from out of town; and help to put your town on the map, to the benefit of every citizen.

But after pecking at your computer for awhile and looking at the cost of servicing the proposed development, you are not so sure of the fiscal benefits. The jobs created immediately will be few and poorly paid. You cannot figure out who is going to buy the new condos, rent the office space or lease the industrial sites. But you are pretty sure that the shopping centre will eventually leave the old downtown, which you have been working hard with the Chamber of Commerce to improve, a wasteland of empty stores and run-down buildings.

And there's more to it than that. The former base includes abandoned military quarters that would provide badly needed low-cost family housing. Other buildings could easily be converted to accommodation for the aged, also urgently needed. There are excellent recreation facilities, in a town in which lack of occupation for young people is becoming a problem. Furthermore, a pleasant creek valley tortuously preserved within the boundaries of the former base provides habitat for a butterfly which may soon be entered on the endangered species list.

So you are faced with an ethical problem, turning on the question of what is the "right" or "proper" course to pursue. Do you, as a dutiful municipal employee, give your council the report you know it wants and expects? Or, as a planning professional, do you choose a different course, and if so, which one, and how do you justify it?

Ethical problems are like planning problems in that when faced with one, it is always wise to analyse it carefully and identity its different aspects. Some ten years ago I suggested (Richardson, 1980) that the planner is ethically responsible to four "constituencies": conception, values, office and community. Let us apply this paradigm to your dilemma to see if it helps to sort it out.

As a socially and environmentally aware person, you believe that your town should provide low-cost housing for the needy, accommodation for the aged, and recreation facilities for the young, and that the creek valley should be preserved and its wildlife protected. Fair enough; but can you represent these aims as in some sense "good planning"? Perhaps you can; but if they are expressions of your personal convictions, and no more, are you entitled to allow your report to be influenced by such convictions? (As a perhaps more graphic and contemporary illustration of the issue, consider the responsibilities of a planner of strong convictions asked to report on the amendment of a zoning by-law to provide for abortion clinics.)

With regard to professional standards you feel that you stand on somewhat firmer ground. As a good planner, you have carried out a fiscal cost-benefit analysis, you have looked at the traffic and transportation implications of the proposed development, you have compared proposed floor space with foreseeable demand . . . and so on. You do not feel that your conclusions favour the proposal, but you are confident that you cannot be faulted either on the grounds of technical competence or of objectivity.

But professional standards are a matter of more than just technical competence, you realize. As a member of a professional institute you are subject to a code of conduct governing your relations with your employer, your staff and your professional colleagues. But there is little there that seems to have any particular application to the dilemma with which you are confronted, so in that area at least your problems are not compounded. On the other hand, you are not given any help, either, and somehow you feel that you should be; should not a code of planning ethics give guidance to the planner confronting an ethical problem peculiar to the practice of planning?

Bypassing, for the moment, your third ethical constituency you must now let us
consider the fourth: the public interest, the community, the general good. Here, you decide with a sigh of relief, is where you justify your personal concern for the homeless, the old, young people and the environment: protecting all of these is in the interest of the community. But how do you know? By what criteria? Which community, anyway? After all, your council, elected by "the community," obviously does not agree, or at least apparently believes that the net general benefit from the developer's scheme will be greater. What entities you, as a municipal official, to substitute your judgement for theirs? As I pointed out in the earlier paper, planners "...should be very cautious about assuming that they are gifted with special virtue to know the public good, or special wisdom to do the public will."

And so back to the remaining constituency, your council.

It goes without saying that you owe a certain loyalty to the council that hired you and pays your salary. On this point, furthermore, such diverse authorities as the CIP's Code of Professional Conduct and the New Testament ("Render unto Caesar ...") seem to support the provisions of your province's Municipal Act. You accept the principle, but you wonder just how much that loyalty demands of you. After all, you are only too well aware that some members of council are not exactly intellectual heavyweights, and the majority (elected by less than 30% of the eligible voters) has an unmistakable bias towards the interests of a particular socio-economic sector of the town's population. You know that there is evidence that the mayor him/herself is on notably friendly terms with the developer. Nevertheless, in addition to being your employer, the council has been duly and democratically elected to represent the people of the town and is accountable to them. You are accountable to them. You are accountable to the council, even though you feel that the term "public servant" ought to be taken seriously.

You seem, in fact, to be back where you started, with the problem of deciding your course of action when the wishes of your council conflict with your own judgement. But in fact the issue has been somewhat clarified. You have concluded that where your personal value cannot be translated into objectively defensible planning criteria, you have three options: to set them aside altogether, to identify them clearly for what they are, or, if you feel strongly enough about them, to disqualify yourself from advising on the issue. You do not feel that the third course is called for, and suspect that the second might only weaken your submission by appearing both gratuitous and pretentious; so you decide not to refer to your personal views at all. You have rejected the idea of employing generalities about "the public interest" or even "the needs of the community," though you consider that it is quite within your professional competence and responsibility to document the present inadequacies in the availability of certain kinds of facility in the town, and the extent to which these inadequacies could be remedied by the use of facilities existing on the former base. You even feel comfortable about quoting the views of various provincial, federal and even international bodies with regard to the protection of endangered species.

You have, in short, defined to your own satisfaction your professional responsibility to your council. You can now report, as objectively as a human being ever can, on the range of pros and cons attaching to the proposed development. You can, and indeed should, conclude by offering your best professional judgement — which ultimately is the most important thing you are paid to provide — as to whether, on balance, the proposed development scheme, re-use of the existing buildings and facilities, or perhaps some third option, would be in the best interests of the town; but if so, you must explain what you mean by "best interests," and you should probably point out that to some extent your judgement (and anyone else's) depends on the weighting attached to the value of particular factors.

Having done all this to the best of your ability, you believe that you have carried out your responsibilities conscientiously and ethically both as a public servant and as a professional person. In return, you believe that your council has certain responsibilities to you and, perhaps more to the point, to the public. It should not penalize you for doing your job, even if it does not like the results, unless it really does want a planning director who will simply give it the reports it wants. It is not entitled to suppress or misrepresent your report, and it is not entitled to expect you to misrepresent your own analysis or conclusions.

Well, despite the complaints of a couple of councillors about officials who do not do what council wants, you do not get fired. Your report is covered (inaccurately) by the local paper and radio station, and is available in full to be read by anyone who cares to visit the town clerk's office. As you expected, the proposed development has been approved by council, and you now have some more ethical dilemmas to confront. The necessary amendment to your general plan has to go before a public meeting which will certainly be attended by some voca-
ferous opponents — quoting your report. It will then have to be approved by the province’s Municipal Planning Board. And after it is approved by the Board (as you are sure it will be) you will have to work with the developer in refining and implementing his scheme.

The second and third hurdles do not give you too much concern. The provincial Board is quite accustomed to distinguishing between the case presented by a municipal official on behalf of his or her council, and that official’s own professional opinion; and your mayor understands that you will be under oath and bound to give your professional opinion if asked to do so. As to subsequently working with the developer, the final decision having been made by those politically responsible for doing so, you foresee no ethical problem in implementing that decision while doing what you can to gain some of the ends for which you argued in your report.

No, what worries you is that public hearing, which is unlikely to be as sensitive as the Board to subtle role distinctions. You will be grilled hard, and you will have to tread a very fine line to avoid betraying either your duty to your council or your professional integrity. All you can do, you decide, is to stick firmly to the facts: the proposal, the content of your report to council, and council’s decision. You must not be led or bullied into giving an opinion on that decision. But is it ethical for you, a public servant, to refuse to do so, when of course you have such an opinion? Your own position is clear from your report; nevertheless . . .

While the particular case I have described may be fictitious, it encapsulates a number of real ethical dilemmas which planners are very likely to encounter, some of them often, in their professional careers. I believe that the principles adopted by our imaginary planning director in dealing with the council are sound; in summary:

☐ In general, the planner should set aside both his or her purely personal views (biases, as they would be called by those who disagree with them) and unfocused notions like “the public interest” and simply state the professional (which does not necessarily mean quantified) and defensible planning criteria. The principal exception arises where the case involves strong moral or religious convictions which the planner cannot (and should not) ignore; in such circumstances the proper course is to make his/her position known and suggest that he/she be relieved of the responsibility.

☐ As both a public servant and a professional person, it is the planner’s responsibility to give an employer the full benefit of her/his professional training, experience and judgement, even where those lead to a position different from that favoured by the employer. A political decision having been made, it is also a planner’s responsibility to work conscientiously and in good faith to carry it out, even if he/she believes it to have been the wrong decision.

☐ These (or any) guidelines do not provide a solution to every potential ethical problem, and sooner or later any conscientious planner may have to fall back on personal judgement as to the “right” course of action. But in such a situation it may be helpful for the planner to analyse the ethical responsibilities relative to the four constituencies with which we started out: conscience, profession, employer, and the community at large.

This discussion suggests, however, that the blanket use of the term “professional standards” to identify one of the four constituencies seriously oversimplifies what is in fact a group of related but distinct kinds of obligation. In the words of Jennings, Callahan and Wolf (1987), “professionalism should be more than technical expertise . . . in ethical terms, to be a professional is to be dedicated to a distinctive set of ideals and standards of conduct.” Newton (1982) elaborates on the theme: “. . . the professional must begin with a sense of who and what he [sic] is, as a professional, of which the first derivation is a powerful sense of responsibility for the conduct of his own professional life, the conduct of the profession as a whole, the protection of the area of his profession’s expertise.”

Thus the term “professional standards,” as applied to planners, arguably embraces at least three distinct kinds of obligation.

First, there is, simply, fair and honest dealing, an aspect which should not need to be elaborated, and which is the main concern of the CIP’s Code of Professional Conduct.

Second is what might be called the integrity of the good artisan to do your work as well as your knowledge, skill and experience allow, and to present it without bias and without concealing its deficiencies.

And, finally, there is the aspect of professional ethics which deserves much more attention from Canadian planners than it has so far received: our particular responsibility, as planners, to Canadian society. Fair dealing and technical integrity, after all, should characterize any profession, but some professions rightly undertake a commitment to something more, to the furtherance of some broad social goal; as Jennings et al. would put it, to a positive contribution to “the common good” as distinct from mere respect for “the public interest.”

Given the social, environmental and economic implications of urban and regional planning, our profession has a greater obligation than most to assume an explicit responsibility to “the common good.” While a detailed elaboration might be out of place here, I would propose that the fundamental guiding principle and rule of professional conduct of the planning profession should be a commitment, in essence, to the creation of a socially, biologically and physically healthy environment for everyone.

Would the adoption of this third ethical criterion help our imaginary planning director to resolve his/her dilemmas? It must be acknowledged that in practice it would be unlikely to make life any easier for him or her and might well have the reverse effect (no one ever said that true professional responsibility is a light burden). But at least, if justifiable, it might sometimes provide him/her with professional resources in the struggle for causes that would otherwise have to rely on those
More to the point, it might help the planning profession to gain — and deserve — the collective sense of purpose, self-confidence and public credibility that it now rather notably lacks. And that would be to the advantage of our planning director and all the rest of us.

References
Richardson, Nigel H. 1980. Four Constituencies: Dilemmas of the Planner as Public Servant. Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute.