

# Advancing Construction Industry Diversity: A Pilot Study of the East Central Area Building Trades Council

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EAST CENTRAL ILLINIOS BUILDING TRADE "A" TESTS TAKERS AND PASS RATES						
YEAR	MINORITY	PASSED/%	FEMALE	PASSED/%	WHITE MALE	PASSED/%
2014	68	24/35.2%	6	1/16.6%	223	117/52.4%
2013	94	30/31.9%	36	9/25%	359	112/31.1%
2012	43	14/32.5%	16	5/31.2%	169	59/34.9%
2011	100	32/32%	30	7/23.3%	539	152/28.2%
2010	2	0/0%	2	1/50%	27	15/55.5%
TOTAL	307	100/32.5%	90	23/25.5%	1,317	455/34.5%

After a student has applied for the training, applicants are required, among other measures, to take a proficiency test. In order to be accepted into the programs, prospective students must score high enough to pass the exam. While only one trade provided data on tests takers and pass rates, they do give us a sense of how well different groups perform. In the case of Trade "A" we have results from 2010-2014. There is a wide disparity between the raw number of female and minority, and white male test takers, but relative comparability on the percentage of each group that passed the test.

DEMOGRAPHIC OF EAST CENTRAL ILLINIOS BUILDING TRADES APPRENTICE INSTRUCTORS				
TRADE	BLACK MALE	ALL FEMALE	LATINO MALE	WHITE MALE
Carpenters	0	0	0	4
Cement Masons	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pipefitters				
Glaziers	0	0	0	1
Electricians	0	0	0	8
Iron Workers	0	3	0	9
Laborers	0	1	1	13
Painters	0	0	0	1
Operating Engineers	0	0	0	5
Sheet Metal Workers	NA	NA	NA	NA
TOTAL	0	4	1	41
PERCENT	0%	9.7%	2.4%	82%

Once enrolled in a trade apprenticeship program the demographics of the instructional staff is important to student performance. Consequently, in addition to the race and gender of apprentices, programs also provided a breakdown of demographics of their school instructors. Instructor race and gender were examined because educational research reveals that where minority and female students – adults included – have examples of classroom teachers who look like them, the learning environment is more inspiring.

## BACKGROUND

Recognizing the importance of the construction trades and apprenticeship programs as a unique and unparalleled pathway into middle class job opportunities for non-college graduates, the Project for Middle Class Renewal in the Labor Education Program (LEP) at the University of Illinois' School of Labor and Employment Relations invited building trades' apprenticeship programs to participate in a pilot diversity study.

The study was designed to determine not only levels of access and involvement in the apprentice building trades by minority and female workers, but also to recommend practices that would enhance inclusivity in the industry. The goal was to address the question of how to make the "apprentice-able" construction trades the preferred labor force for both white and non-white workers. While our study focused on the apprenticeship training experience we recognize that the employer bares heavy responsibility for employing a workforce that genuinely represents the diversity of the population. As the authors of a study on women in the trades bluntly state, the "construction worksite is where the rubber meets the road on this issue. Construction contractors - the employers of record on construction sites - have the legal responsibility for increasing the numbers of women [and minorities] on the job and providing workplaces free of discrimination, harassment, and coercion" (Moir, Thompson and Kelleher 2011). This study however does not examine employer hiring or recruitment practices.

In response to the request for participation in the study ten unionized building trades affiliated with the East Central Illinois Building Trade Council agreed to participate. No non-union apprenticeship program operated by the non-union Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) chose to participate. The ABC's non-participation however had no discernable impact on the study's findings. Studies and state and federal records indicate that non-union apprentice programs make up a miniscule number of the apprentice trades in Illinois (Bruno and Manzo 2016). Studies also reveal that in Illinois and in other states people of color and female participation in non-union programs is substantially lower than in joint apprenticeship training (JAT) programs. A national study found that 80 percent of female apprentices participated in union-sponsored programs, while nearly three-quarters of people of color apprentices enrolled in joint programs (Mulligan-Hansel et al. 2013).

Consequently, this study's findings represent not only the exclusive records of the JAT programs, but almost certainly the conditions of the state's only genuine and viable apprentice training programs. The importance of equal access to employment in the construction industry is underscored by both the estimated growth in employment opportunities and the challenge to recruiting enough skilled workers.

Over the next decade, construction industry job growth is projected to expand by 12.4 percent in Illinois - twice the pace of the overall state economy (Bruno and Manzo 2016). But in a 2015 survey by the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC 2015), 64 percent of contractors in Illinois report difficulty in finding workers to fill these construction occupations and 36 percent expect it to become more difficult.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The study, *Advancing Construction Industry Diversity: A Pilot Study of the East Central Area Building Trades Council* was designed to determine not only levels of access and involvement in the apprentice building trades by minority and female workers, but also to recommend practices that would enhance inclusivity in the industry. The goal was to address the question of how to make the "apprentice-able" construction trades the preferred labor force for both white and non-white workers.

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EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS APPRENTICE DEMOGRAPHICS, 2015						
TRADE	BLACK MALE	ALL FEMALE	LATINO MALE	WHITE MALE/Other*	% FEMALE/MINORITY	TOTAL
Carpenters	26	8	6	260	13.3%	
Cement Masons	2	0	1	13	18.5%	
Pipefitters	4	1	1	29	20%	
Glaziers	0	0	0	5	0%	
Electricians	1	0	0	16	6.2%	
Iron Workers	0	0	0	39	0%	
Laborers	9	5	6	75	21%	
Painters	0	1	0	10	10%	
Operating Engineers	3	21	3	107	25.2%	
Sheet Metal Workers	3	0	1	46	8.6%	
TOTAL	48	36**	18	702	14.5%	

\*In some cases there were Pacific Islanders and/or Native Indians. In no case were there more than 2 of either. \*\*There were 3 black females. Data submitted by union locals.

