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Confronting Anxiety and Uncertainty in Planning: New Insights for Advancing Justice

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The piece considers anxiety's relevance to planning, and highlights five typical anxiety-influenced dynamics relevant to planning scholars and practitioners, on both theoretical and practical grounds. We conclude with potential theoretical and practical benefits of deeper understanding of and engagement with anxiety in our work, focusing attention on wellness and constructive dimensions of working with emotion as implicit themes (Manderscheid et al., 2010, Lyles & Swearingen White, 2019). Wellness, crucially, encompasses positive life experiences along with "the capacity to manage one's feelings and related behaviours, including the realistic assessment of one's limitations, development of autonomy, and ability to cope effectively ..." (Manderscheid et al., 2010, p. 1). Our ultimate hope: that greater understanding of anxiety and its implications will empower planners who encounter it in their practice and scholarship, in ways that accept their own humanity and susceptibilities to anxiety.

1. Introduction: Why Anxiety Matters to Planners

Emotions influence planning, and yet their role in planning processes receives insufficient attention. This is partly due to our field's longstanding engagement with the rationality (Campbell, 2014; Forester, 1993; Friedmann, 1987; Hoch, 2006). Recent exceptions to this gap include works by Hoch; Lyles & Swearingen White, 2019; Legacy, 2021; Tate, 2021; Trapenberg-Frick, 2016. We need even more of this work.

Plain use definitions of anxiety emphasize uneasiness and distress sparked by uncertainty, especially when linked with danger. The future *is* uncertain; and so professional planning helps society cope by promoting informed decisions about the future in the near-term, increasingly through collaborative processes that debate visions and values. Planners thus risk failure when ignoring anxiety's contemporary pervasiveness; its visceral strength in most people when encountering threats; and its intertwined relationships with anger and mistrust.

Our contemporary challenges underscore anxiety's role. Climate change looms over all aspects of social stability, from access to food, shelter, energy, and at a basic level, a habitable

environment. Terrorism, war, and other violent conflicts plague nations across virtually every time zone, which leaders use to justify reductions in civil liberties and massive increases in militarized 'homeland' security (e.g. Hirvonen, 2017). In the United States, far-right extremism, flamed by misinformation and cynicism, intertwines with hate-motivated mass shootings. Reactions against these such as the Black Lives Movement, the Indigenous-led anti-pipeline movements, and other social-political protests likewise point to high anxiety about the future. Meanwhile the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic instability exacerbates these challenges. In both Canada and the US, public health officials have faced many terrifying threats for simply doing their jobs, an experience which may become more common for planners as climate change becomes unavoidable. The latter became evident in the UK through recent conspiracy theories about, and threats to, an Oxford city planner, advocating proposals to implement goals for the Fifteen Minute City (CNN, 2023).

This context worsens existing challenges to constructive dialogue, especially when anxiety manifests as government mistrust, incivility towards those with different views, and outright refusal to comply with laws and norms. As Campbell observes, "in our public discourse, rancour, resentment and rudeness dominate, to the point that being confrontational, regardless of the available evidence, has been normalised" (2021, p. 3). Seeking to avoid such confrontations, public agencies can be tempted to control engagement through so-called *post-political* processes (Legacy, 2016).

Even if these global and national-scale drivers of anxiety resolved overnight, planners still would encounter local anxieties. As Inch (2015) argues, planning processes can exacerbate anxiety triggered by local planning deliberations, especially if public participation is superficial or performative. When communities face steep learning curves and/or resistance from planners and elected officials, these concerns amplify. Similarly, planners may clumsily escalate anxiety when discussing big ideas (e.g. sustainability, equity, affordability), in scary and overwhelming ways (Whittemore, 2014, p. 305). They would do better with more attention to shared local understandings of reality, and greater willingness to present new information and ideas in ways that resonate with, rather than destabilize, such understandings (Whittemore, 2014, pp. 306–307). In response, planners could more fully anticipate and appreciate the potential uncertainties and losses of control which local residents might associate with new information and new proposed developments.

2. What is Anxiety? Can/Should we Distinguish it from Fear?

Fear and anxiety alert humans and animals to potential dangers or threats (Remmers & Zander, 2018, p. 50). Recent experimental neuropsychology research using fMRI brain scans show deep interconnections between the areas of the brain thought to be involved with fear (the amygdala), and anxiety (the striatum) (Adolphs, 2013). Given difficulties in teasing apart fear and anxiety, we commingle them under the term anxiety.

Anxiety can grow with uncertainty, which should give all planners pause as we work locally amidst global and national-scale challenges like climate change and rising authoritarianism. A key factor here is one's relative sense of agency and control (Lerner & Keltner, 2001).

The psychology literature also underscores anxiety's *negative valence*, meaning people avoid rather than approach it (see Lewin, 1951). Other emotions with negative valence include grief, contempt, and anger, creating opportunities for conflating all these emotions. This dynamic is particularly challenging because emotive expression (e.g. body language, facial movement, and

verbal tone) can vary across time and context; and the exact same behaviors by the exact same person may signal different emotions in different contexts (Barrett, 2017) Moreover, internal biases can distort our evaluations of other people's emotions; that is, one observer may perceive a behavior as a sign of anger, another observer may perceive anxiety, and another might perceive passion. During planning engagement, such confusion can intensify when participants express strong feelings in large group settings if emotions swirl 'out of control.' As shown in **Table 1**, there are distinct associations between anxiety, low levels of certainty and control, and high degrees of risk perception.

From the philosophical perspective, Martha Nussbaum argues that societal fear can foster a narcissistic, asocial political culture, which presents a penetrating insight for our times. While fear can motivate safety-seeking behaviour, fearful individuals may also deny and avoid what is frightening, potentially becoming selfish (Nussbaum, 2018, pp. 40–45). By extension, anxiety about risks that are uncomfortable emotionally may cause people to overestimate reasonable fears, thus further undermining joint problem solving, and individual wellness.

Anxiety's spatial implications also matter. When social anxieties accompany demographic changes, a key concern is *othering* particular populations and associating them with fear-inducing neighbourhoods. Such fear is easily amplified for political purposes, enabling groups to systematically create spaces which exclude, rather than invite *others* in, often using safety-based narratives (Abu-Orf, 2013, p. 168). *Othering* worsens equity gaps, by reducing opportunities. Bollens explored these dynamics in war-torn and divided cities, illustrating the perils of politicization of anxiety and pathways for place-based reconciliation (2012). Similarly, Jabareen contends that uncertainty, experienced by outsiders with insufficient local knowledge, triggered new disputes between the Nazareth's Palestinian Christian and Muslim residents during development of a proposed new plaza. These outsiders included foreign architects, the Israeli national government, the Vatican, and US President George W. Bush, who presumed the two groups and their places of worship could not co-exist. A halt to building a new mosque (accepted locally by Muslim and Christian groups), created new anxieties and uncertainties, disturbing the prior balance of what Jabareen calls acceptable '*light*' *tension* in Nazareth (2006, p. 317). These new local uncertainties further reduced trust, and created new *spaces of risk*, arguably enhancing levels of

Table 1. Associations between control and risk perception: Anxiety and other emotions.

	Illustration with Emotions with Negative Valence		Illustration with Emotions with Positive Valence	
	Anger	Fear	Pride	Surprise
Certainty	High	Low	Medium	Low
Pleasantness	Low	Low	High	High
Attentional activity	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Anticipated effort	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Control	High	Low	Medium	Medium
Responsibility	High	Medium	Low	High
Appraisal Tendency	Perceive negative events as predictable, under human control, & brought about by others	Perceive negative events as unpredictable & under situational control	Perceive positive events as brought about by self	Perceive positive events as unpredictable & brought about by others
Influence on relevant outcome	Influence on risk perception Perceive low risk	Perceive high risk	Influence on attribution Perceive self as responsible	Perceive others as responsible

Source: Reproduced from Lerner and Keltner (2000). This table drew from an extensive review of experimental and theoretical literature, which Lerner & Keltner then used to shape their own experimental research.

collective (group-based, rather than mere individual) anxiety. The current surge in multi-national and civil conflicts (e.g. Ukraine, Taiwan, and the 2021 US insurrection) and the spectre of global to local disruptions from climate change suggest that planners should anticipate more, rather than less, generalized anxiety in future.

In sum, across diverse relevant literatures we see calls to understand: connections between anxiety and uncertainty; hyper-vigilant information seeking; loss of control; negative valence, (and avoidance responses); and perceptions of high risk. Of particular concern are fear-driven *othering* inducing greater spatial segregation and, in turn, ongoing oppression.

We now consider five dynamics as anxiety impacts planning, using the term *dynamics* to imply that planning may need more data to further address the various overlaps, triggers, and co-mingling of anxiety with other constructs in empirical settings before teasing out its specific planning dimensions. We avoid the term *dimensions*, because it suggests an already strong base of empirical study (see discussion in Tate, 2023). Planning conceptualization of anxiety, however, remains nascent compared with other literature. Thus, we advocate more empirical work, informed by our review, as a next step in conceptualizing anxiety in planning.

3. How Does Anxiety Impact People Facing Decisions? Five Dynamics of Interest

3.1. Anxiety and Information-Seeking

Anxiety can impact perceptions, debate, and decision-making process. Beneficially, when anxiety triggers quests for safety, it is often accompanied by vigilant information-seeking behaviours (e.g. Huddy et al., 2007). This has potential political advantages. When citizens connect more deeply to, and become more informed about, the very issues that may induce anxiety, they may ultimately address perceived threats more effectively if they can then boost commitment to shared goals. At the same time, scholarship suggests that cumulatively these impacts are negative, especially when anxiety goes unrecognized and unmanaged. Notably, those experiencing anxiety may make more pessimistic information appraisals, which can cause confirmation bias as they discount or mistrust positive information relevant to a decision (e.g. Clore & Storbeck, 2006; Stöber, 1997; Wegbreit et al., 2015 on negative moods more broadly). These impacts may be further compounded in group settings, when particular cues sent within a group may trigger new reactions and waves of anxiety (see preliminary research in Brader et al., 2008). At the very least, unaddressed anxiety can limit the scope of knowledge use in deliberations, even undermining efforts to provide detailed information, a dynamic observed during the COVID-19 pandemic as local meetings about masking and other healthy measures were influenced by some favoring conspiracy theories. These dynamics hint at the merits of appropriately spotting and unpacking anxiety, while also highlighting related complications. They also suggest a need for research that delves further into the dynamics created when larger groups experience anxiety (Brader et al.).

3.2. Anxiety and Information-Processing

Information-processing emphasizes how people actually use what they know to inform a future judgment or action. In this context, anxiety can impede planners who support elected officials and the public in informed and reality-based decisions.

Besides narrowing one's focus, anxiety can also temporarily weaken working memory (Eysenck, 1992; Eysenck et al., 2007). Recent research infers that high cortisol releases (triggered by perceived threats) may harm memory and executive function capacities – both vital to sound decision-making (Carrion & Wong, 2012; Hartley & Phelps, 2012). Similarly, anxiety can impede intuitive, non-verbal information processing, further undermining effective communication (Remmers & Zander, 2018). Moreover, most human thought involves non-verbal information processing, which requires the least amount of energy (Kahneman, 2011; Mercier & Sperber, 2017). Thus, by distorting information processing, anxiety can constrain knowledge use in planning.

Additionally, anxiety may lead people to abandon principles and/or prior decisions, as they prioritize new information (Marcus et al., 2005). Beneficially, this could incentivize greater engagement in political learning and discourse (Albertson & Kushner, 2015). Yet, as Nussbaum argues, it could also incentivize political actors to manipulate people's fears (2018, p. 46). In fact, where anxiety is linked to a complicated decision, people may further seek to narrow the information they absorb (Ehrlinger, 2004; Sparks & Ehrlinger, 2012).

Where anxiety directly impacts group dialogue, it could significantly block perspective-taking and, ultimately, mutually acceptable solutions. Planners might consider the experiences of therapists experiencing higher anxiety, who were less effective at displaying empathy for clients (Bowman & Giesen, 1982; Negd et al., 2011). Independent assessments suggested that such therapists' professional performance diminished, compared with therapists displaying more empathy (Bowman & Giesen, 1982). In therapy, empathy directly affects outcomes through enhanced trust (e.g. Wilson & Birdi, 2008). Moreover, patient compliance in completing treatment-related homework rises with more empathetic therapists (Hara et al., 2017). While planners are not therapists, their work likewise depends on trust and respect and, may address individuals and communities experiencing myriad traumas due to past planning decisions (e.g. dislocation of communities of color for highway expansion). By extension, similar benefits may arise when planners mitigate anxiety, thereby reducing harms to empathy and perspective-taking. Lyles and Swearingen White point to various social-emotional activities available to planners to enhance their own ability to address emotions in planning, including anxiety (2019).

3.3. Anxiety and Inaction

Anxiety can make us freeze and/or avoid action, rather than effectively confronting a problem. This dynamic often manifests through decision deferrals (Hartley & Phelps, 2012; Maner et al., 2007). Anxiety can engender particularly harmful inaction in the face of large-scale existential social threats. We know that climate change will produce life-threatening, or at least life-disrupting future consequences for virtually everyone. Yet, global and local responses to date have been insufficient, with many individuals and organizations retreating to inaction. Conversely, anxiety can trigger signals to motor circuits responsible for action (El Zein et al., 2015), thereby motivating action, pointing to a form of uncertainty as to whether anxiety will lead to 'fight, flight, or freeze' behaviors.

Addressing anxiety in climate policy and planning generally, and emergency-preparedness specifically, can inform other types of planning. Anglo-Czech psychologist and lecturer Joseph Dodds (2021) notes that humans tend to respond quickly and effectively to immediate and fast-moving threats (acting from acute fear), while being less responsive to slower-moving ones (inaction because of latent anxiety). This is a cognitive bias, wherein typical brain processing is

mismatched to the problem at hand. Research on successful emergency preparedness activities suggests benefits arising from training and reflection on how to confront the instinctive cognitive biases (Oberlin, 2017). Planning scholars can find convergence in this line of research with longstanding debates about the role of rationality in decision-making.

Social dilemmas, which planners recognized as wicked problems, are further complicated when anxiety reveals conflicts between individual and collective needs. For example, climate crisis awareness and subsequent anxiety may arise from not only the actual dangers of climate change, but reduced trust that others will act in the collective interest, which may reinforce inaction (Dodds, 2021; see also Foddy et al., 1999; Axelrod, 2006). Incentives for collective thinking and action could address this second type of inaction, which likely requires leaders (including planners) to candidly identify the magnitude of anxiety-inducing threats while also enabling authentic dialogue that builds community and trust, instead of downward spirals of anxiety and inaction.

Another planning solution is to challenge and disrupt manipulations that deliberately promote inaction. Resource extraction industries and their political supporters effectively focus attention on near-term threats of job loss and community economic hardship –threats often exaggerated or distorted. Emphasizing likely near-term costs of action can exacerbate fears of change, and obfuscate proactive decisions. We see this dynamic in the media coverage of Central American migrant ‘caravans,’ wherein thousands of those displaced (because climate change makes subsistence agriculture untenable) were met with hostility from large swaths of the American public. To the extent the migrants’ presence signals a potential warning, the events in Honduras and Guatemala could have catalyzed widespread compassion. Instead, several groups stoked fear of the ‘other’ with thinly or unveiled racism and jingoism.

3.4. Anxiety and Anger

When anxiety intertwines with other emotions, particularly anger, planning implications become more complex. Anxiety and anger share negative valence and unpleasantness. Still, anger and anxiety remain distinct, even as they influence each other (e.g. Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009; Huddy et al., 2007).

One crucial difference appears to be in the source of the emotions. Anger’s main causes seem to be actions by others that block one’s own interests and/or related goals (Depue & Zald, 1993; Ortony et al., 1988). In essence, anger targets a very concrete, knowable event with clear parameters (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Unlike anxiety, anger does not emphasize uncertainty and is less future-oriented.

By appreciating distinctions in causes for anxiety and anger, particularly anger’s natural links to blame, planners may fine-tune engagement. As Nussbaum argues, “Blame gives us a strategy [for taking action] ... But it also expresses an underlying picture of the world: the world [must] give us what we demand. Where people don’t do that, they are bad” (2018, p. 70). Blaming behaviours reveal another important distinction: anger emphasizes individual control, and can compel (re)action and score-settling, whereas anxiety tends towards avoidance or prevention (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009).

Anger and its provocation to fight for agency has its benefits, especially in energizing those understandably angry over prolonged injustice and inequity. The recent Black Lives Movement, with its emotional resonance of anger at injustice, provides a prime example relevant to planning. Unsurprisingly, anger can galvanize political participation (Weber, 2013), more so given its

association with a person or organization to hold accountable (Sell et al., 2009; Wagner, 2014). A common interplay of anger and anxiety in planning occurs when processes claim, to address issues causing collective anxiety, yet lack meaningful impact. Unmet needs are thus conflated with broken promises, fuelling anger. Vitally, all planners must recognize the place-based histories of the communities they work with; anger at today's planners likely arises from unresolved anxieties from previous planning interactions (or the government more generally). There has been some limited consideration of anger in other planning research, in response to planning practices perceived as unfair (Trapenberg-Frick, 2016), but additional research on anger is merited.

3.5. Anxiety and Risk

In the face of uncertainty anxiety is natural. This relationship arises at least in part because with uncertainty comes risk. Risk entails possible harm, and humans have notoriously uneven abilities to evaluate different types of risk. We often discount risks that seem farther away in time and space, as well as when the risks may harm others more than us. Risk's ubiquity means that we experience it on a continuum from tolerable or intolerable. As we've argued, when impacting information search and uptake, along with inaction, and anger, the relationship between anxiety and risk is complex (read: emotionally messy). Unfortunately, planners bound to rationality may find this vexing enough to inhibit further public engagement. Nussbaum reminds us that risk distortion is natural because humans often take shortcuts in assessing risk, influenced by memories of past experiences, in ways that tend to overestimate risk levels (2018, pp. 47–51). Thus, a bunker mentality in planning offices, while natural, should be a red flag that unresolved anxiety pervades and should be addressed. In turn, planners in government and non-profit agencies must expand their conceptions of risk to acknowledge and address its connections to anxiety (Tate, 2021, pp. 267–269). Two lines of thought further refine this dynamic.

First, risk prevention, wherein people act to prevent threats, arises across planning domains. Mitigation actions to reduce the risks of natural hazards like wildfires and floods may be among the most obvious. While cyber-attacks and domestic terrorism may also merit risk prevention, so too can less-sensational planning topics like rising housing vacancy problems, pedestrian and cyclist traffic injuries, and loss of habitat for other-than-human creatures. Additionally, though, we should consider risk prevention in our relationships. Knowing that anxiety naturally accompanies risk and uncertainty, then risk management requires addressing the emotional weight of people's concerns. A structured, problem-solving approach with room for fostering relationships may help reduce the stresses on planning processes induced by frightening outcomes (Weber & Johnson, 2008, Tate, 2021, pp. 267–269).

Most structured risk-management approaches require extensive information-gathering, consistent with the tendency of anxiety to induce information-seeking. Conceptual work arising after financial crises highlights that risk management systems consist of "extensive evidence, audit trails and box 'checking' ... demand[ing] considerable work [with] daily pressure on operational staff to process regulatory requirements" (Power, 2009, p. 852; see also McGivern & Ferlie, 2007). Yet, regardless of origin, information-seeking can induce disproportionate actions if we obtain incomplete or incorrect information. Alternately, pre-occupation with information seeking can direct much-needed resources from programs and supports towards auditing and box-checking.

These problematic responses to risk can include myopia. For example, narrow conceptions of institutional risk may translate every risk into 'simple' and 'understandable' financial terms. Unfortunately, reductionist approaches often overlook deeply held values difficult to price,

which more unfortunately makes them easy to dismiss or marginalize. Myopia can stifle important debates about different risk perspectives, which likely vary within and beyond organizations (Power, 2009, pp. 850–851). To illustrate, increasing voter registrations for city elections and making public meetings more accessible can support longer-term equity by reducing risks associated with civic disengagement; but it will be difficult to attach a dollar value to corresponding social justice benefits using conventional cost-oriented risk assessments. A related problem: fear that helping will incentivize benefit misuse. Such anxieties, combined with systemic information-seeking and box-checking behaviors, may have helped encourage (or at least rationalize) the rise of intrusive and draconian monitoring and eligibility assessment systems. Eubanks (2018) offers the example of a poorly designed electronic benefits assessment system in Indiana, aimed at dramatically and arbitrarily reducing total people qualifying for welfare and related health care. She notes:

Cumbersome administrative processes kept people from accessing the benefits they were entitled to and deserve. Brittle rules and poorly designed performance metrics meant that...[any] mistakes... were always interpreted as the fault of the applicant, not the state or the contractor. The assumption that automated decision-making tools were infallible [meant these tools overrode] other procedures intended to provide applicants with procedural fairness (Eubanks, 2018, p. 179).

Eubanks' analysis parallels the negative aspects of anxiety-induced information seeking detailed above. It provides cautionary notes for planners who need to carefully consider if and how they can address risk without exacerbating inequity.

A second overlap between risk and anxiety arises when planning discussions evoke past individual or collective trauma and/or generate new trauma. For example, public discussions of important issues that planners might eventually mitigate can rekindle past trauma (re-traumatization). Zgoda et al. define re-traumatization as "...a conscious or unconscious reminder of past trauma that results in a re-experiencing of the initial trauma event. It can be triggered by a situation, an attitude or expression, or by certain environments that replicate the dynamics (loss of power/control/safety) of the original trauma" (2016, n.p.). While we cannot always avoid re-traumatizing people as we discuss pressing policy issues, we can be attuned to the needs of those who may be harmed and understand how the anger, withdrawal, or other responses is natural and potentially constructive if handled compassionately.

Re-traumatization risks may also impact staff and community members who are part of a racialized group, who identify as someone with a non-dominant gender or non-dominant sexual orientation, or who speak for an historically marginalized and oppressed group (Ejiogu & Ware, 2019; Richardson/Kianewesquao & Reynolds, 2014; Sandos, 2019; Zgoda et al., 2016). Planning organizations should support staff in fostering processes and settings that are less likely to traumatize (January 14, authors' brainstorming discussion via Zoom on practice implications of anxiety). They could offer counselling and/or culturally relevant supports for racialized staff to engage in self-care. Both actions can enhance policy benefits gained by hearing from more voices. Again, further planning research into risk, anxiety, and trauma could significantly improve practice if it could de-escalate trauma from triggering planning discussions.

4. Planning Take-Aways: How Can Engaging with Anxiety Help Practice and Theory?

Anxiety impacts planning in complex and intersecting ways. We offer four concluding thoughts for planning responses, aimed at inspiring and empowering more scholars, practitioners and students

in our field to refine and extend them through praxis. We also hope these insights could inform new empirical research which effectively conceptualizes anxiety in a planning context.

First, we benefit by consciously engaging with anxiety in ways that support more favourable social, environmental and economic outcomes. In an ideal world, planning pursues justice (*op cit*), including for those facing disadvantage (Davidoff, 1965; Fainstein, 2005). Yet, theory and practice have not done enough to achieve justice-oriented planning goals. This slowness has coincided with failure to truly advance beyond traditional rational planning. By more intentionally unpacking and addressing anxiety in decision-making, planners might make further strides in both advancing justice and better understanding and engaging with the strengths and weaknesses of the rational planning paradigm. In a context of general unwillingness to accommodate other non-rational thinking modes, planners make much more of a difference with greater awareness of, and skills in working with, the emotional aspects of their work, and thereby better able to prevent some of anxiety's more negative dynamics.

As Friedmann once observed in passing, "human beings may be more ready to act because of fear – the fear of a dystopia – than out of a desire to 'create heaven on earth'" (1987, p. 6). Thus, both practice and theory that directly confronts anxiety/fear might stand a better chance of promoting justice. To use Campbell's words, this will require more concerted practical wisdom and more emphasis on the "art and craft" of planning, compared with specialist expertise (2021, p. 5).

To this end, Lyles and Swearingen White (2019) urge planners to consciously develop and enhance their broader emotional literacy. Lyles and White have traced the broad lines of a conceptual model for planners to use. Their deeply empathic model has three dimensions: planning leadership (including self-awareness and self-management during encounters with difficult emotions); cultural humility (asking planners to assess and improve their own skills and attitudes in working with difference); and cultivating compassion (calling for planners to empower community members through compassion and a more relationship-focused approach). In all three dimensions, planners and the communities they serve benefit when planners appreciate how specific emotions impact their own perceptions and behaviours as well as those of others with whom they engage.

Second, grappling more intentionally with anxiety may help bring about emotionally attuned leadership models that resonate more with people in communities and groups that have experienced various forms of systemic oppression. Particularly germane in settler societies like Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand, this encompasses many non-European models of leadership and community work that prize collaboration over competition. For example, in their discussion of the need for alternative leadership models for Indigenous American women, Hill and Hoss (2018) observe that the stronger community focus of traditional Indigenous teachings calls for more listening, humility, and inclusion, among other things. Implicitly, such an approach also recognizes the emotional states of others. By extension, increased, and more nuanced, awareness of anxiety (along with its influence on decisions and negotiations) might better support traditional and emerging models of leadership for communities that have long been denied justice. One example is the Native Women Indigenous Pathway, developed by Margo Hill and elaborated in Hill and Hoss (2018).

Third, working effectively and consciously with anxiety supports planners' task of advising, or conveying knowledge to decision makers, who then choose future actions (Tate, 2021). Planners may fail to acknowledge both the anxiety connected to the decision itself, and the potential anxiety arising when elected officials must learn about technical information embodied in

professional advice. Anxiety-inducing factors which could potentially impede elected officials' decisions and learning include: cognitive busyness (the state of facing many challenging cognitive demands at once); increasingly hostile decision environments (Tracey, 2011) and growing risks from distraction (Gazzaley & Rosen, 2016). Planners could hone more learning-focused tactics in conveying information, and greater professional empathy for decision-makers undergoing anxiety (Tate, 2011, Chs 4, 6 & 7).

Finally, deeper emotional (and social) intelligence can support direct activism and nourish the emotional energy and courage it requires. Activists' work often requires them to adopt leadership roles, which require skills like those discussed by Hill and Hoss (2018) and by Lyles and Swearingen White (2019). Moreover, activist-planners could bolster alliances with other activist groups facing their own risks of anxiety, thereby potentially enhancing the power and support behind their advocacy. Finally, activists could appreciate the role that their own efforts, such as those to reduce injustices, can play by boosting longer term gains in reducing anxiety. These ultimately bring broader societal benefits.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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