

# Who Cares?

## Arnstein's Ladder, the Emotional Paradox of Public Engagement, and (Re)imagining Planning as Caring

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### Abstract

**Problem, research strategy, and findings:** What should planners do when members of the public “care loudly” at them? Planning scholars have recently called for more attention to the emotional dimensions of our profession. In the context of reflecting on Arnstein’s “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” we identify the emotional paradox of public engagement. This paradox arises because our emotions often motivate us to plan so that all people in our communities can flourish rather than suffer, but our instincts, reinforced by our education, training, and professional norms, may lead us to try to control or avoid emotions altogether in the actual work of planning. Our research strategy involves critically analyzing the language of Arnstein’s article for its emotional content. We systematically review contemporary sources of guidance and training for planners (including from the APA, the AICP, and the Planning Accreditation Board) to determine whether and how the emotional dimensions of planning are addressed. We synthesize insights on contending with emotion from the psychology and neuroscience literatures and also synthesize practice-oriented resources for leveraging emotional and social intelligence to overcome the emotional paradox. We find that Arnstein’s article evocatively reveals the emotional paradox. Our review of the contemporary knowledge, training, and skills available from major planning organizations demonstrates contemporary pervasiveness of the paradox. Research from psychology and neuroscience demonstrates, from a basic scientific standpoint, that trying to maintain the paradox is impossible, which helps to explain common pitfalls that planners fall into when doing their work.

**Takeaway for practice:** Planners should reflect deeply on how they engage emotions in their work and how their approach constrains and enables their effectiveness. Deepening emotional, social, and cultural intelligence holds considerable potential for meeting our field’s aspirational goals of fostering more compassionate and inclusive communities.

Keywords: Arnstein, compassion, emotion, participation, planning

“What I hear when I’m being yelled at is people caring loudly at me.”— Amy Poehler as public servant Leslie Knope on *Parks and Recreation* (Season 1, Episode 2).

## **Arnstein’s Ladder and the Emotional Paradox of Public Engagement**

Half a century ago, Sherry Arnstein (1969) depicted citizens *caring loudly* in reaction to their lack of power in public engagement processes. Her scrutiny of systemic barriers to public participation continues to inform public engagement theory and practice, reflecting Arnstein’s lasting influence. Simultaneously, what does it say about our work as public servants that angry voices and awkward interactions remain so commonplace that they serve as plotlines for situation comedies such as *Parks and Recreation*? Fifty years later, our field continues to struggle with something at the core of our work with the public.

This retrospective provides a timely opportunity to reconsider what participatory public engagement means, as well as what it means to be a planner. Beyond the resonance of her ladder metaphor, Arnstein’s skillful use of language establishes the power of her classic article. She describes citizens’ emotional states as heated and volatile, highlighting the contentious nature of public engagement. She depicts public officials’ ambivalence toward citizen participation, suggesting that many would prefer to avoid it even though they understand its benefits. Interestingly, Arnstein then largely discards the matter of emotion. Her presentation of the ladder and its rungs barely engages whether and how planners are to grapple with their feelings in emotionally charged contexts.

Examining Arnstein’s uneven references to emotions and the assumptions that her words convey reveals a paradox still relevant today. Just as her vivid, emotional language draws readers into her article, planners enter participatory processes motivated by emotions as well as thoughts. For example, some planners anticipate shared excitement about visions and proposals for the future, others fear that latent anger will surface and derail an agenda, and still others resent expectations to facilitate a meeting more symbolic than substantive. The *emotional paradox of public engagement* arises when planners experience the need to minimize and contain the influence of emotions in their work. Planners thus contend with contradictory notions of emotion. They must respond to and manage strong emotions from the public while simultaneously tamping down, censoring, or disguising their own feelings. The paradox generates tension as planners navigate complicated relationships characterized by unpredictable and sometimes precarious emotions, especially when planning exposes long legacies and current realities of conflict, trauma, and oppression in communities.

The roots of the emotional paradox of public engagement extend at least as far back as the early 20th century when the use of scientific, rational analysis to guide decisions was encoded in our field’s DNA (Baum, 2015; Brooks, 2002; Johnson, 2018). Baum (2015) labels this habit of downplaying emotions as “planning with half a mind” (p. 498). Building on recent arguments for more emotionally attentive planning (Agyeman & Erickson, 2012; Ferreria, 2013; Inch et al., 2017; Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2015; Sweet, 2018), we aim to chart a practice-relevant path forward to help planners more deeply and effectively approach their work with the care needed to cultivate more compassionate and sustainable communities in the face of climate injustice, economic inequity, and political extremism.

In this study, we describe Arnstein's ladder metaphor and highlight reasons why it remains so relevant today. We analyze further how her use of emotion is emblematic of the emotional paradox of public engagement. Next, we engage key insights about human brains from recent psychology and neuroscience research to help understand basic processes that generate and shape emotions of planners and the public. We then present evidence of the emotional paradox in contemporary planning by showing how a variety of practice-oriented resources leave the issue of working with emotion unresolved. From there, we summarize advice that planners may find helpful to strengthen their emotional, social, and cultural intelligence and maybe even approach public engagement with excitement and passion. We conclude by presenting a six-element conceptual framework for reimagining planning as caring and providing a set of prompts for self-reflection that planners can use to deepen their own abilities to engage the public with effective leadership, cultural humility, and compassion.

## **Honoring Arnstein's Ladder**

Arnstein (1969) depicts a planner positioning a ladder of citizen participation against the side of the house of democracy. At that time, the house was aflame in no small part because of widespread, persistent inequities between some "haves" and many "have-nots" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). By planning from the lower rungs of the ladder, which Arnstein labels "nonparticipation" and "tokenism," planners may well stoke the flames of injustice, making the fire hotter and more dangerous. In contrast, in public engagement efforts that manage to ascend to the upper rungs of the ladder, which Arnstein terms "citizen power," the powerful share power with the "have-nots." Engaging the public on the higher rungs theoretically allows planners to foster collaboration and begin to extinguish the flames that oppression ignites.

Arnstein's ladder is still relevant because it provides a simple, coherent metaphor with theoretical power and practical relevance. Toxic inequalities persist, and our house of democracy remains ablaze, perhaps more so than at any time since the late 1960s. Planning processes still rarely occur much higher on the ladder than the placation or partnership rungs. Two less obvious reasons also help explain the article's continued resonance. First, Arnstein's "haves versus have-nots" framing engages narrative structures of good versus evil, underdog against powerful, and "us" the people challenging "them" the oppressors. Second, Arnstein subtly and deftly acknowledges the ambiguity that public officials face in the haves and have-nots dichotomy by not clearly assigning them to either side of it. Arnstein's framing not only creates suspense and moral tensions but it also presciently foreshadows many of the key issues that planning scholars and practitioners have grappled with over the last 50 years, including concepts of equity and justice (Friedmann, 1987; Krumholz, 1982); identity, diversity, and difference (Agyeman & Erickson, 2012; Sandercock, 2003; Sweet, 2018); roles and leadership (Howe & Kaufman, 1979; Johnson, 2018); and the interplay of individual agency and systemic forces (Forester, 1988; Friedmann, 1987; Innes and Booher, 2010).

## **Arnstein's Emotional Language**

Arnstein's narrative skillfully illuminates common feelings in participatory planning processes. She begins the abstract with "[T]he heated controversy," establishing sensations of tension and

foreboding (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). She reinforces these sensations throughout her introduction, in which she calls attention to the anger of “have-not blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Eskimos, and whites” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216) who are excluded from or tokenized through participation. She channels shared indignation at the power imbalance that “explodes into many shades of outright racial, ethnic, ideological, and political opposition” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). She demands that planners move beyond simply acknowledging the despair and desperation of the powerless to understand “*why* the have-nots have become so offended and embittered” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216; emphasis in the original).

These potent phrases focus attention on the dark side of emotion, evoking an ominous anger among citizens. “Controversy” arises when people care and disagree about an issue. Highlighting participation as generating a “heated” form of controversy emphasizes the existence of friction in public engagement and latent potential for combustion. “Explosions of opposition” evokes urban disarray and violence prominent in the late 1960s and still boiling over today. Citizens’ “embitterment” implies persistent and corrosive emotional frustration. Arnstein’s skilled rhetoric brings to the foreground pervasive and stressful feelings that unfold before, during, and after public engagement processes.<sup>1</sup>

In the remainder of the article, though, Arnstein largely leaves emotional substance and language behind. The rungs on the ladder, especially those that involve citizen power, are described in logical and logistical ways, with passing mention of the emotions that citizens and officials associate with ascending from the lower rungs of the ladder.<sup>2</sup> She notes, “Even the best intentioned [planners] are often unfamiliar with, and even insensitive to, the problems and aspirations of the poor” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 220). Attention to the wide range in emotions that can arise as a result of different personal identities and experiences among the public is missing, however. This dissonance, between the gripping emotions in the introduction and the lack of attention to the influence of emotion in the remainder of the article, leaves key questions unposed. Will embitterment about neglected infrastructure, economic inequity, racism, and other persistent, systemic problems dissipate naturally as participatory approaches move up the ladder? Are the “have-nots” more interested in citizen power or in equitable outcomes? What skills do planners and other public officials need to scale the ladder, if that is indeed the aim?

Arnstein’s most telling emotional insight pertains to the emotions that planners have the most opportunity to influence: their own. Her very first sentence implies a shared view among planners that “participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). The implication, though perhaps not universally resonant, is discernable. All planners should understand the benefits of public engagement as foundations of healthy, successful planning processes. Merely recognizing these benefits, however, is not the same as enjoying them. Certainly many planners’ favorite and most meaningful works come through public participation, infusing them with hope and inspiration. At the other end of the spectrum, some planners approach it with anxiety and ambivalence, perhaps even dread in particularly fraught circumstances.

Arnstein’s insights into the emotions surrounding public engagement expose a quandary for planners. Planners, like fictional Pawnee’s Leslie Knope, anticipate that people will express emotions by “caring loudly” at them, thus triggering their own feelings. Arnstein’s diminished

use of emotional language later in the article, however, reveals a typical response to threatening emotions inherent to planning work: drawing on reason, order, and impersonal processes. Thus, what Arnstein reveals is the *emotional paradox of public engagement*. Emotions often motivate the work of planners driven by a desire to see all people in our communities flourish rather than suffer. Those same planners' education, training, and professional norms often lead to efforts to control or avoid emotions altogether in the actual work *of planning*.

The emotional paradox cuts in at least two directions. On one hand, planners may be wise to seek self-protection through creating emotional distance from their work. Schweitzer (2018), in a recent blog post, laments the emotional suffering of planners whose professional credibility and status are sometimes belittled by engineers, developers, and architects and who are frequently scapegoated by elected officials who want to avoid taking responsibility for unpopular decisions. When coupled with verbal abuse from members of the public, for whom planners often represent the face of government overreach and/or systems of oppression, it seems bizarre that attention to burnout in planning is not more prominent. On the other hand, the emotional paradox may inhibit planners' abilities to acknowledge the full range of feelings that make them human and give meaning to their work. Seeking emotional neutrality may also stifle the public's ability to confront the emotionally charged conflicts and thus wither opportunities to build mutual understanding, enhance trust, and foster partnership and reciprocity. As we show here, major institutions that shape our field provide little guidance for planners on how to navigate the emotional dimensions of their work.

## **Looking for Insights About Our Complex and Changing Brains**

Nothing exempts planners' brains from responding to experiences similarly to the brains of other humans. Focusing almost exclusively on dispassionate, rational analysis is perilous because it assumes otherwise. Before turning attention to our field's education, training, and professional resources, we turn to *key insights* about brains from recent work in neuroscience and psychology. Understanding how the interplay of thought and emotion shapes humans' inner and outer lives is critical for skillful planning. These areas of research are evolving rapidly, with major innovations occurring in the last few decades. Our review primarily relies on popular books by eminent psychology and neuroscience scholars in hopes that readers have a clear and accessible path to additional learning.

*Insight 1: When planners experience the feeling of threat pervading Arnstein's writing, their brains often respond with a natural sense of flight, fight, or freeze, reducing opportunities for productive discussion and collaboration.* Anatomical models of the brain often divide it into basic parts, from the oldest to youngest, evolutionarily speaking (Gilbert, 2010). One simplistic but common and useful model refers to three parts. The brain stem, our so-called reptilian brain, handles our basic bodily functions and helps us respond to environmental stimuli quickly and decisively. It handles very basic survival functions like satisfying hunger, mating, and initiating fight, flight, or freeze in the face of a threat. The limbic system, our so-called mammalian brain, is associated with emotion. Feelings like affection, anger, and sadness help us raise offspring and facilitate basic forms of cooperation. The neocortex, our primate brain, is associated with our rational thought processes and facilitates advanced problem solving and creativity. In many

situations, especially those that feel threatening, our mammalian and reptilian brains take over without our neocortex's permission (or even its awareness sometimes).

*Insight 2: Planners' use of logical, rational thinking is rarer than they like to believe, meaning that planners rely on sloppier thinking at moments when they most need to slow down and engage their more evolved cognitive faculties.* In *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Kahneman and Egan (2011) synthesize decades of psychological research with Tversky into a system 1/system 2 model of our brains. This model highlights how our brains cannot process all of the information available to them at any moment in time. In the face of information overload, our fast brain (system 1) unconsciously identifies patterns, incorporates emotional content, applies a shortcut, and leads us to take quick, decisive action. System 1 often recognizes the patterns correctly and initiates the right reaction, but often it does not. System 1 fails us in predictable ways (e.g., availability bias and anchoring effects), extending Simon's notion of bounded rationality, which has influenced critiques of traditional, rational comprehensive planning (Forester, 1999). Our slow brain (system 2) does conscious, deliberative, logical work that takes more time, more processing power, and more energy. Empirical work shows that system 1 makes dramatically more decisions for us than we would like to believe, often without us even being aware (Kahneman & Egan, 2011).

*Insight 3: Planners can intentionally reinforce experiences that support planners' abilities to work with other people that are also constantly changing. Alternatively, planners may inadvertently reinforce patterns of thought and feeling that inhibit planners' abilities.* A revolutionary discovery in recent decades is that our brains exhibit neuroplasticity (Davidson & Begley, 2012; Feldman Barrett, 2017; Gilbert, 2010; Goleman & Davidson, 2017). Every time one of the billions of neurons in our brain fires—that is, communicates with another neuron through an electrochemical process—the connection between it and the other neurons is reinforced. When groups of neurons fire together, patterns of connections are strengthened, making particular thoughts and feelings easier to recall. Neuroplasticity thus refers to how experiences change the brain, constantly reshaping the wiring and rewiring of connections between neurons, a phenomenon now supported by a “cascade of scientific findings” (Goleman & Davidson, 2017, p. 50). Neuroplasticity challenges us to consider how problematic patterns of thought and emotion are reinforced (e.g., othering stereotypes or rash anger) and reaffirms the importance of continuing education in general. Neuroplasticity means that our innate tendencies to slip into fight, flight, or fright and the heuristics wired into our system 1 can actually be changed over time, even intentionally and wisely.

*Insight 4: Planning's longstanding struggle with the emotional paradox is indicative of even longer-standing intellectual traditions that stigmatize emotions.* Emotions, commonly understood as feelings distinct from thoughts (compare with dictionary.com, 2018) are the subject of the next insight. Dominant narratives conceive of emotion as “a kind of brute reflex, very at odds with our rationality” (Feldman Barrett, 2017, p. xi). Emotions like happiness, surprise, fear, anger, disgust, and sadness serve survival functions like avoiding threat, as well as social functions like affiliation and distancing (DeSteno, Condon, & Dickens, 2016; Fischer & Manstead 2016; Keltner, 2009). Readily observable evidence of emotions shows when we smile, furrow our brows, cross our arms, and otherwise use our facial muscles, posture, and subtle behaviors to communicate without words, whereas internal evidence ranges from a quickening

pulse to tightening in the chest (Keltner, Tracy, Sauter, Cordaro, & McNeil, 2016). The classical view of emotion, long dominant in psychology, takes a hard-wiring view, more or less holding that certain patterns of neurons fire when we feel an emotion (e.g., the happiness circuit; Ekman, Friesen, & Ellsworth, 2013; Feldman Barrett, 2017; Keltner, 2009). In this view, evidence of an emotion is exhibited in consistent ways across individuals, groups, cultures, and time, providing a universal lingua franca. At the same time, though, this line of thinking contains myriad stereotypes about who can experience which emotions when and how, which relate to and reinforce systems of privilege and oppression by gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, age, and more. For example, stereotypes about gender suggest that men should express feelings like anger but not care and fear, whereas women should be the opposite. The roots of the classical view, particularly the view of feelings as fundamentally biased, can be traced throughout Western intellectual traditions (e.g., Plato, Descartes, Freud) and are strong still today (Feldman Barrett, 2017). These observations parallel Baum's (2015) diagnosis that planning's roots in the legacy of the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment help explain our field's skepticism of emotion.

*Insight 5: Planners cannot assume that they, or anyone else, will interpret expressions of emotion by other people consistently or accurately; our perceptions are inherently limited and are colored by myriad emotions in addition to cognitive biases.* In contrast to the classical view of emotion, Feldman Barrett (2017) offers a “constructed view” with additional insights. This view conceives emotion as a constantly evolving product of what is happening in our brains, in our bodies, and in our social and cultural contexts. An example from her book, *How Emotions Are Made* (Feldman Barrett, 2017), illuminates this. A close-up image of a female face with a mouth wide open, eyes scrunched tightly closed, and tongue generating a scream leads us to wonder: Is the woman angry? Perhaps she's terrified? When seen in the context of a larger view later, however, we see Serena Williams watching a winning shot land.<sup>3</sup> People often misread physical demonstrations of emotion (ecstasy of triumph or terror or anger). As planners, we can leave aside whether the classical view or the constructed view of emotion will win the day among psychologists.

Do planners and planning educators have the requisite cognitive and emotional skill sets to engage with diverse publics or train students to do so? For some, the answer is an emphatic “Yes!” But, when overlaid with an understanding of the “three brains,” the interplay of system 1 and system 2, deep cultural biases against emotions as valuable sources of information, and the dynamics of neuroplasticity, the more common answer is probably a hesitant and humble, “Sort of, but I could use some help, please!”

## **Examining the Emotional Paradox of Public Engagement in Planning Practice**

A planner interested in leveraging these insights to overcome the emotional paradox will struggle to identify practical guidance from prominent sources in planning practice or education. As noted earlier, emotion is emerging as a valid topic in planning scholarship, including more communicative and collaborative theoretical models (e.g., Baum, 2015; Forester, 1988; Hoch, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2010; Sandercock, 2003), the wisdom of working with feelings in practice (e.g., Ferreira, 2013; Osborne & Grant-Smith 2015), recognition of the value of conflict

and deeply felt emotions manifested as resistance to development forces (e.g., Inch et al., 2017), the need for cultural competency and humility (Agyeman & Erickson, 2012; Sweet, 2018), and overt calls for cultivating love, care, and compassion in our work (e.g., Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2014; Porter et al., 2012). So far, however, these insights have barely informed current practice-oriented resources, including those available through the APA and the AICP.

The APA website, for example, indexes the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) reports that describe current planning research and best practices. Titles of the 100 PAS reports published since 2000 indicate little to no attention to the emotional dimensions of planning. Just four engage with topics even close to these topics, such as community video (No. 500/501), fair and healthy land use (No. 549/550), working with planning consultants (No. 573), and managing a local planning agency (No. 582). The same lack of attention to emotion is seen among the nearly 90 PAS Memos, which deliver advice from seasoned practicing planners, and 75-plus PAS QuickNotes, which educate public officials and engaged citizens about planning basics. In sum, PAS resources are rich in information, advice, and tools to improve the legal, policy, and technical dimensions of planning practice but devoid of resources related to its emotional aspects.

In January 2019, APA announced new online resources called “APA Learn.” These 378 training sessions provide Certification Maintenance (CM) credit for certified planners. Yet just two sessions engage the emotional paradox. “Public Engagement Gone Wild? Taming Tactics!” and “It’s All Your Fault: You’re the Planner!” include learning objectives such as “manage and mitigate confrontation that is encountered during public involvement exercises constructively,” “coping tools and ways to handle hostile public meetings,” and “how to react to false accusations made against you.” The sessions imply an effort to attend to emotions in planning. The session titles, though, suggest that the role of planners is to *tame or channel* the emotions of an angry public without considering the basis of such feelings or the planner’s own emotions.

The *AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* (AICP, 2016) goes slightly further in calling attention to the emotional elements of planning. Prefacing the Code’s aspirational principles is a statement of “the special responsibility of our profession to serve the public interest with compassion for the welfare of all people and, as professionals, to our obligation to act with high integrity” (AICP Code v. 4-1-16). Planning with compassion requires a worldview recognizing the inherent worth of all beings, mature awareness of the interplay of thoughts and emotion in ourselves and others, extending our awareness into empathy for all people, and sustained motivation to reduce suffering for ourselves and others (Lyles, White, & Lavelle, 2018). Delving further into the Code’s 21 distinct aspirational principles, however, uncovers essentially no guidance on how to grapple with the emotions that arise in planning or how actually to plan with compassion more generally.

Another source of practical guidance for planners is the AICP online catalog of CM events. Among the more than 400 workshops and conference sessions that took place in July and August 2018, for example, less than 10% focused on public engagement topics like participation, facilitation, and communication (AICP, 2018). One of these events does put a central focus on the emotional dimension of planning: the International Association of Public Participation’s (IAP2) Strategies for Dealing with Opposition and Outrage in Public Participation. The event’s



objectives include identifying deep causes of negative emotions in the public, working with internal barriers to manage public anger, and cultivating empathy. Although this training opportunity may well provide an excellent resource for anyone who seeks to address the emotional paradox, it requires a substantial financial and time investment out of reach for many planners (AICP, 2018).

Many planners experience their preprofessional training as students, so we also consider academic resources. Master's degree programs in planning rely on guidance from the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) in structuring their curricula. Among other requirements, PAB expects that accredited planning master's degree programs provide students with "skills necessary to create equitable and inclusive planning processes," "awareness and respect for differing beliefs, values and expectations of populations served by the profession," and "tools for attention, formation, strategic decision-making, team building, and organizational/community motivation" (Curriculum and Instruction section). Similarly, Klosterman's (2011) 30-year review of planning theory education praises the growing diversity of perspectives offered in planning theory courses but urges scholars to "stop writing for other scholars and rather convey new models of professional practice to students and practitioners in a compelling way" (p. 326). Practitioner surveys (e.g., Dawkins, 2016; Greenlee, Edwards, & Anthony, 2015; Guzzetta & Bollens, 2003; Ozawa & Seltzer 1999) underscore the importance of these interpersonal forms of knowledge and relational skills. Their survey results show that planning managers value communication, collaboration, and related "soft" skills when hiring new planners. Oddly, these survey studies, and the PAB standards, stop short of making overt connections to the foundational need for emotional awareness and management.<sup>4</sup> In line with Baum (2015) we fear that planning education typically engages only half a student's brain.

In this review, we suggest that although the emotional aspects of planning are evident, very little guidance exists for planners seeking to resolve the emotional paradox. It is therefore unsurprising that when asked about how they handle emotions in their work, 300-plus participants in a 2018 AICP CM webinar on privilege responded as follows: Only 40% indicated, "I pay attention to when negative emotions take a toll on me," whereas 44% responded, "I just 'suck it up' and remain neutral," 10% said, "I want to run away or freeze up," and 6% said, "I yell." Moreover, when asked how they have learned to deal with the emotions at work, they responded as follows: 70% muddle through this dimension of their work "on the job (trial and error)"; 19% received formal on-the-job training (e.g., facilitation training and self-help resources); 6% learned this "in undergraduate/graduate school"; and 5% indicated "I haven't" (B. Johnson, personal communication, December 6, 2018).

Our analysis reveals the emotional paradox as a discernable phenomenon at the institutional level. However, our analysis does not document the frequency, scope, magnitude, and variation of the emotional paradox at the level of the individual planner or planning organization. We return to this point later.

## **Brains in Action in the Public Sphere**

With this context, we present four additional insights, focusing particularly on what psychology, neuroscience, and related fields can tell us about our brains in action in public spheres.

*Insight 6: Planners can embrace, understand, and use the wisdom of their emotions.* In the early 1990s, psychologist Daniel Goleman popularized the concept of emotional intelligence (EI), first formalized by Salovey and Mayer (Brackett et al., 2013). EI, how we monitor and handle ourselves and our relationships, has transformed understandings of intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). The subtitle of Goleman's (1995) book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, questions traditional assumptions of intelligence as based in verbal and mathematical knowledge and reasoning. Proponents of EI argue that we must understand the deep wisdom in our emotions, how emotions influence our thinking and decision making, and how we can work with our emotions rather than aim to suppress them. Goleman (1995) presents five EI domains: knowing one's emotions, managing one's emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships. Of critical importance is that "each of these domains represent a body of habit and response that, with the right effort, can be improved on," consistent with neuroplasticity (Goleman, 1995, p. 43). EI is a key skill for personal transformation in the context of individual maturation, family relationships, dealing with trauma, and mental and physical health more broadly. It is increasingly recognized as a critical skill for teamwork, collaboration, organizational management, and leadership (Goleman, 1995; Goleman et al., 2013).

*Insight 7: Planners who understand relationships as inherently emotional can be more intelligent and effective in their work.* Goleman (2007) extends his work on emotional intelligence to the concept of social intelligence (SI). Here Goleman challenges traditional individualistic assumptions about how people's brains are wired. Evidence is accumulating that as humans, "we are wired to connect" at a deep biological level, a view receiving attention as social baseline theory (Goleman, 2007, p. 4; Coan & Sbarra, 2015). Social intelligence focuses attention to the ways in which our brains and bodies are always in relationship with other brains and bodies around us. Goleman's (2007) formulation of SI pushes us to be "intelligent not just *about* our relationships but also *in* them" (p. 11). He describes two key dimensions of SI: social awareness, "a spectrum that runs from instantaneously sensing another's inner state, to understanding her feelings and thoughts, to 'getting' complicated social situations," and social facility, a spectrum that "builds on social awareness to allow smooth, effective interactions" (Goleman, 2007, p. 84). Social interactions in planning can involve very difficult emotions because of the deeply entrenched suffering that inequality, racism, sexism, and other systematic failures have created and continue to create in our society.<sup>5</sup>

*Insight 8: Planners can work with emotions to more skillfully and effectively engage with the full spectrum of diversity and difference in our communities, particularly as planners aim to advance social equity and justice.* Ang and colleagues introduce the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ), understood as "capability to function and manage effectively in cultural diverse settings" (Ang et al., 2007, p. 337). Cultural intelligence: Its measurement and effects on cultural judgment and decision making, cultural adaptation and task performance. Like EI and SI, CQ is a multidimensional concept consisting of dimensions that are metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. Although we find little attention to CQ in the planning literature, highly resonant concepts have gained traction in planning scholarship in recent years. Cultural competency and cultural humility in particular offer proactive and inherently relational approaches to advancing social equity and justice. *Cultural competency*, argued for by Agyeman

and Erickson (2012), refers to “the range of awareness, beliefs, knowledge, skills, behaviors, and professional practice that will assist in planning *in, for, and with* ‘multiple publics’” (Sandercock, 1998, as cited in Agyeman & Erickson, p. 359). Emotional intelligence, alongside relationship building, structural analysis, learning another language, professional training, and creating linkages, is one of the six cultural competency skills they highlight (Agyeman & Erickson, 2012). Sweet (2018) argues for increased attention to cultural humility as an extension of cultural competency, based on the belief that self-awareness, self-critique, and actions to reduce oppressive power structures based in a deep sense of humility hold more potential than competency-based efforts focused primarily on increasing knowledge. Sweet (2018) highlights the “Locating Oneself” program aimed at fostering genuine, human-to-human relationships through group processes that link thought, emotions, and the body as one path to fostering cultural humility.<sup>6</sup>

*Insight 9: Power is relational. Planners may feel empowered when fostering public engagement, even as that power generates cautionary feelings of uneasiness.* By building on these insights and their connection to planning’s passionate aspirations, the issue of power emerges. Power has long been a concern of planners, although more so from institutional and systemic perspectives than interpersonal perspectives. Many planners view power skeptically, especially final decision-making authority typically vested in elected officials or public administrators (compare Davidoff, 1965; Forester, 1988; Logan & Molotch, 2007). Jane Jacobs’s (1961) scathing diagnosis of planners as complicit in “the sacking of cities” (p. 4) rightly challenges planners to consider how their willingness to use their power can reinforce systems that undermine the public interest, broadly understood. Despite opportunities to take on roles as advocacy (Davidoff, 1965), equity (Krumholz, 1982), and political planners (Friedmann, 1987), the primary response of planners recently has been to retreat into technical roles (Lauria & Long, 2017), reinforcing the emotional paradox.

In *The Power Paradox: How We Gain and Lose Influence*, psychologist Dacher Keltner (2016). *The power paradox: How we gain and lose influence*. New York, NY: Penguin. ) offers a framework for rethinking power that complements EI, SI, and CQ as well as planning theorists Booher and Innes’s (2002) concept of network power. Keltner (2016) argues that Machiavellian views of power as coercive and ruthless are outdated in a networked view of the world. Power is better understood “as the capacity to make a difference in the world, in particular by stirring others in our social networks” (Keltner, 2016, p. 3). This form of power is given to us by others, not taken by force or violence, and is distinct from status, control, and social class. But that does not mean that wielding power is without risk. Keltner (2016) describes a power paradox in which “we rise in power and make a difference in the world due to what is best about human nature, but we fall from power due to what is worst” (p. 2). This quote may call to mind the career arc of Jane Jacobs’s arch-nemesis, Robert Moses (Caro, 1974).

Efforts to resolve the power paradox faced by many planners—those who wisely fear becoming Moses-like wielders of destructive “meat axes” but also risk irrelevance by avoiding power altogether—may be improved by internalizing the power principles that Keltner (2016) offers. Power is inherent in every human relationship and interaction, whether or not we choose to acknowledge it (Keltner, 2016). Power initially accrues to us through positive emotional actions, such as expressing empathy and gratitude, giving to others, and telling stories that unite us.<sup>7</sup>

Wielding power can lead to empathy deficits, self-serving impulsivity, incivility and disgust, and narratives of exceptionalism, however. Meanwhile, powerlessness damages our mental and physical health, something evident in so many of the marginalized and oppressed populations that planners aim to serve.

Planners who foster emotional, social, and cultural intelligence in themselves and others can intentionally weave stakeholder networks that generate power (e.g., Albrechts & Mandlebaum, 2007; Booher & Innes, 2002; Dempwolf & Lyles, 2012). [Table S1](#) in the Technical Appendix applies the insights to scenarios common in planning practice, illustrating potential pitfalls for planners living out the emotional paradox and alternative results that may arise instead.

**Table 1: Prompts for Self-Reflection to Engage in Planning as Caring**

Planning Leadership	Cultural Humility	Cultivating Compassion
<p><b>Self-Awareness</b></p>	<p><b>Awareness of Others</b></p>	<p><b>Empowering Through Relationships</b></p>
(a, b, c, d, e, f, g)	(a, b, c, d, e)	(a, b, c, d, e)
<p>Am I attuned to my own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, including those I would prefer to not experience?</p>	<p>Do I take responsibility for my own ignorance and respectfully work to learn about others?</p>	<p>Am I aware that power can be a vital force that generates a sense of purpose, for oneself and others?</p>
<p>Am I attuned to how my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors change (or do not change) over time and context?</p>	<p>Am I committed to learning about others as unique individuals?</p>	<p>Do I try and practice what I ask of others, demonstrating reciprocal commitment and responsibility?</p>
<p>Am I attuned to interactions between my feelings, thoughts, needs, and behaviors?</p>	<p>Am I aware of the broader social, cultural, and professional networks that people I work with are embedded?</p>	<p>Do I use my awareness of others to help them be in a position to prosper and succeed?</p>
<p>Am I aware of my own strengths and worth, personally and professionally?</p>	<p>Do I accurately and consistently perceive the feelings of others?</p>	<p>Do I strive to be a catalyst and champion for change, taking risks to share or reallocate power?</p>
<p>Am I aware of my own limits and vulnerabilities, personally and professionally?</p>	<p>Do I strive to listen to the deeper meaning and emotions words often convey?</p>	<p>Am I willing to feel and express vulnerability to foster relationships and empower others?</p>
<p>Am I aware of my own identity(ies) and how it shapes my privileges, relationships, and work?</p>	<p>Am I sensitive to individual and group-level traumas that can surface?</p>	
	<p>Do I ask questions from a place of humility and genuine curiosity?</p>	
	<p>Do I keep in mind that others' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, are rarely fixed over time?</p>	

**Table 1: Prompts for Self-Reflection to Engage in Planning as Caring, continued**

<b>Planning Leadership</b>	<b>Cultural Humility</b>	<b>Cultivating Compassion</b>
<p><b>Self-Management</b> (a, b, d, e, f, g)</p> <p>Am I able to manage my difficult thoughts, feelings, impulses, and behaviors?</p> <p>Am I able to be adapt and be flexible, learning from past experiences, good and bad?</p> <p>Am I invested in my own growth, while being realistic and patient about my innate biases and tendencies?</p> <p>Am I able to build self-confidence in tracking my thoughts and feelings to hone my ability to work with others?</p> <p>When I face a challenge or setback, do I look for opportunities for growth?</p> <p>Can I recognize when I am stressed (or feel threatened) and take steps to reduce my stress so I do not perpetuate or spread my stress?</p> <p>Do I have reliable practices or tools to manage my emotions, like deep breathing, exercise, mindfulness meditation, or creative expression?</p>	<p><b>Working with Difference</b> (a, b, c, d, e)</p> <p>Do I acknowledge the wide differences in individual and group experiences brought to any situation?</p> <p>Do I help establish shared norms for communication and action?</p> <p>Do I help individuals and groups identify and pursue their own sense of purpose?</p> <p>Am I transparent in demonstrating respect for others?</p> <p>Do I authentically and transparently demonstrate my own feelings, beliefs, and actions to foster trust?</p> <p>Am I generous with my time, knowledge, skills, and resources?</p> <p>Am I committed to learning from and working through conflict?</p> <p>Am I willing to acknowledge and focus attention on injustices and systems of oppression?</p> <p>Am I able to tolerate uncomfortable thoughts, feelings and behaviors and hold space as others have similar experiences?</p>	<p><b>Extending Compassion</b> (h, i)</p> <p>Do I recognize that experiencing suffering and wishing for happiness are natural for all people?</p> <p>Do I extend care to others in ways that meet their needs?</p> <p>Do I extend care to myself in ways that meet my needs?</p> <p>Do I receive care from others in ways that meet my needs?</p>

Questions for self-reflection adapted from insights, advice, and practices from the following sources:

a Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013)

b Choudhury (2017)

c Keltner (2016)

d Agyeman and Erickson (2012)

e Sweet (2018)

f Ferreira (2013)

g Lyles, White, Lavelle (2017)

h Porter et al. (2012)

# Reimagining Planning as Caring: Leadership, Cultural Humility, and Cultivating Compassion

We draw on these insights to present a conceptual model reimagining planning as caring. This model can complement conceptions of planning as design, analysis, advocacy, communication, and deliberation. We anticipate that planning as caring will require transforming planners' visions of leadership, humbly engaging with difference, and cultivating compassion. We propose six building blocks for this model, shown in Figure 1: 1) self-awareness, 2) self-regulation, 3) awareness of others, 4) working with difference, 5) empowering through relationships, and 6) extending compassion. These elements are interdependent, each drawing on and pointing to mutually supporting insights, practices, and tools. Deepening one's ability in any one building block can foster growth in others through a process that is inherently nonlinear and particular to one's entry point. At the individual and group levels, planning as caring is a long-term orientation requiring commitment spanning months, years, and even decades, even as it requires moment-to-moment efforts each day.

**Figure 1: Re-imagining Planning as Caring**

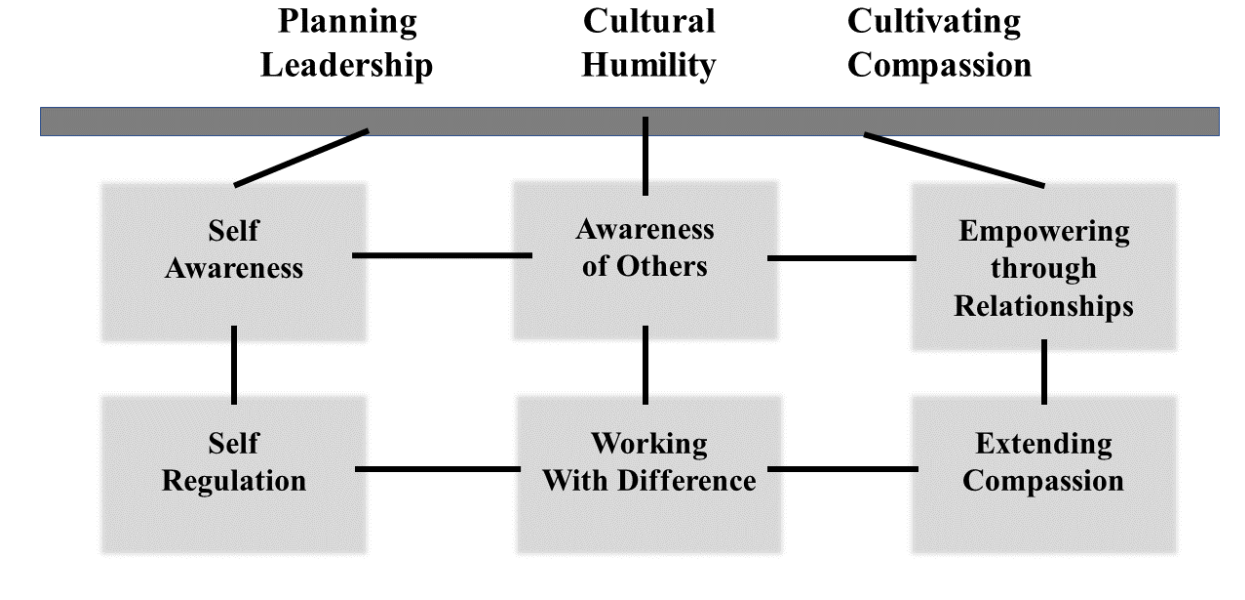


Table 1 presents questions for self-reflection for planners interested in deepening their ability to engage in planning as caring. We opt to use questions, rather than lists of specific practices or skills, in recognition that planners' identities, beliefs, experiences, roles, and contexts vary widely; there is no one starting point or linear path. The questions we pose are adapted from the advice, observations, and skills highlighted in the works referenced above. Because of the complexity that deepening our capacity to infuse caring into planning entails, the prompts are representative, not comprehensive or exhaustive. It is also important to acknowledge the wide array of sources that planners can turn to for more specific practices or tools. Planners with training and experience in facilitation, mediation, and conflict resolution in particular can point to numerous resources with valuable insights (e.g., Bush & Folger 2004; Cogan, 1992, 2018; Stone, Heen, & Patton, 2010), as can the many scholars who focus on storytelling, participant observation, and other forms of engaged scholarship. Some planners may have personal experience with other entry points to this work, including anti-oppression training (e.g., the Locating Oneself program noted by Sweet [2018]), spiritual practices (e.g., meditation, yoga, and prayer), and therapy (e.g., personal counseling). We anticipate if research examines the emotional dimensions of planning more explicitly and more clearly identifies the current state of practice when it comes to experiencing and resolving the emotional paradox, a discrete toolbox of teaching and professional development activities, specific skills and practices to use during public engagement, and myriad support materials can be consolidated and adapted over time. See Table 2 for topics and prompts for future research.



**Table 2: Future Research Directions**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Prompts for Research</b>
Empirical Evidence of Planners' Emotions	<p>How do planners' experiences of the emotions in their work vary? What factors explain variations in planners' emotional experiences? Personal characteristics mainly? Organizational factors? Characteristics of the public with whom they work?</p> <p>What are public perceptions of planners' emotions as they facilitate public engagement? What factors explain variations in public perceptions of planners' emotions? Do perceptions of planners' emotions influence public experiences of engagement?</p>
Empirical Evidence of the Emotional Paradox	<p>How widespread are experiences of the emotional paradox? What factors explain these variations? Personal, organizational, personal characteristics?</p> <p>Does the emotional paradox inhibit effective public engagement? In what situations and how?</p>
Emotional, Social, and Cultural Intelligence	<p>Do planners view emotional, social, and cultural intelligence as key attributes and/or skills to cultivate? How do planners' views vary, including whether they feels these forms of intelligence are important?</p> <p>What training do planners get for deepening their emotional, social, and cultural intelligence? In educational settings? Professional development? Elsewhere? What forms of training are best suited to the needs of planners?</p>
Understanding Planning as Caring	<p>Do planners view their work as a form of caring? Do they want to? What explains variations in planner conceptions of planning as caring?</p> <p>What are the implications for theory, education, and practice if planning as caring becomes more prominent? What are the downsides for planners and the public in a planning as caring framework?</p>

## **Charting a Path for Planning Leadership: Emotional and Social Intelligence**

Johnson (2018) recently charted modes of leadership that planners can choose to adopt (e.g., adaptive, authentic, followership, servant) depending on their comfort and context. Goleman and colleagues (2013) translate the concepts of emotional and social intelligence into practice-oriented advice transferable to each of these forms of leadership. Anticipating skepticism, they acknowledge that “emotions are often seen as too personal or unquantifiable to talk about in a meaningful way” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 4). But they challenge readers to reconceive leadership as more than making the big decisions and instead as harnessing emotions to bring out the best in everyone. Leadership with EI and SI leads to better work outcomes and to greater talent retention, boosted morale, enhanced motivation, and sustained commitment (Goleman et al., 2013). Specific competencies exist in each of the four main areas of EI and SI: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman et al., 2013).

## **Promoting Inclusion Through Cultural Humility**

Momentum toward infusing planning with cultural competence and humility appears to be building, although major challenges are on the horizon. PAS Report No. 593, *Planning With Diverse Communities* (Garcia, Garfinkel-Castro, & Pfeiffer, 2019), draws extensively on cultural competency and cultural humility to provide much-needed and timely practical guidance. (It also features Arnstein’s ladder prominently.) The report’s attention to overcoming barriers to engagement focuses mainly on characteristics of the community members and process dimensions, such as lack of transportation access, inaccessible locations, inconvenient timing of meetings, and exclusionary meeting formats. Walsh (2018) identifies another major obstacle that many planners will need to overcome given planning’s longstanding history as a predominantly middle-class and White profession: White fragility. DiAngelo (2018), a prominent antiracism thinker, assigned the term *White fragility* to the phenomenon wherein a White person can withstand minimal racial stress when confronted with his or her own privileges, ignorance, and biases, often reacting to that stress with defensiveness and/or falling apart. Paying attention to the deep emotional challenges posed by White fragility, as well as the potentially pernicious impacts on people of color who often are expected to sit by when racism is denied or minimized or step in to healing roles at the outflow of “White tears,” extends the scope of the challenge posed by the emotional paradox identified above and complicates the barriers noted in PAS Report 593 (Garcia et al., 2019). Similar but not identical patterns of emotions and relationship dynamics can unfold in work aimed at deconstructing other forms of oppression than racism, whether in the realm of gender, sexuality, ableism, ethnicity, or religion, among others.

## **Reimagining Planning as Caring: Cultivating Compassion**

The *AICP Code of Ethics* (AICP, 2016) centers the role of compassion in its aspirational principles. A robust and growing body of knowledge and practices on what compassion looks like in action is emerging from fields as diverse as feminist theory, psychology, neuroscience, social work, and business. Planning scholars, too, are picking up on these trends, although on a limited basis to date. A compendium of short works by Porter et al. (2012) argues for more

attention to loving-kindness in planning, whereas work by Sandercock and Attili (2014) and Erfan (2017) explores the potential of emotionally attuned therapeutic planning. Ferreira (2013) and Osborne and Grant-Smith (2015) focus attention on mindfulness and its potential for enhancing planning. Lyles et al. (2018) explore the prospect of compassion as an organizing framework for planning practice, identifying training programs aimed at helping people cultivate compassion in themselves and others. Important, though, cultivating and sustaining compassion—using the “soft skills” of EI, SI, and CQ means truly seeing suffering, sitting with pain that comes with empathy, and taking risks to heal and transform our communities—can be extremely hard work.

## Conclusion

The emotional paradox of public engagement arises when planners draw on emotion for motivation in their commitment to the public but also treat emotion as a flaw, obstacle, or irritant to be reduced or eliminated in their work. This paradox has deep intellectual roots in the history of planning. A close reading of Arnstein’s (1969) “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” exposes how planners may approach public engagement with feelings ranging from eagerness to fear and even contempt. Our review of a broad range of contemporary indicators from planning practice, education, and scholarship shows that the emotional paradox remains strong today. We affirm Baum’s (2015) lament that our field’s leading organizations propagate norms of planners working with half their minds.

By internalizing nine recent insights from psychology, neuroscience, and related research, planners can reconceive how they think of themselves and their work and perhaps even the public in whose interest they plan. We endorse the *AICP Code of Ethics* (AICP, 2016) assertion that our work necessitates compassion. Among planners—and our peers in engineering, architecture, public administration, and related fields—some individuals and organizations already effectively foster authentic dialogue and collaboration in their communities by harnessing emotional, social, and cultural intelligence. We need to bring the emotional dimensions of their stories to the forefront of our educational instruction, practical training, and ongoing evolution as a field.

Public engagement matters because it is emotional, and it is emotional because it matters. We must see the essence of humanity as including rational thought characteristic of primates but also emotions that we inherit from our earlier ancestors. We must recognize the wisdom in a critical analysis of the causes of inequities in our communities but also the frustration, anger, and grief in our communities. In doing so, we will honor Arnstein’s indignation at injustice and wisdom in charting a course to more equitable processes and outcomes while also better resolving the emotional paradox that her work mirrors back to us.

In closing, we hearken back to yelling as caring, albeit loudly. During the Trump presidency there has been no lack of caring loudly. How planners navigate this moment and whether we connect our aspirations and our emotions more fully to our thoughts and practices will shape the field for years to come, just as the late 1960s and ideas like Arnstein’s ladder continue to shape our thinking today.

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## Supplemental Material

Supplemental data for this article can be found at <KU ScholarWorks address>

## Notes

1. Arnstein (1969) Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216–224. doi:10.1080/01944366908977225, , ) includes a few minor comments, such as that the therapy rung is “dishonest and arrogant” (p. 218) and that a motivation for consultation by officials is that “[r]esidents are increasingly unhappy” (p. 219).
2. The only overtly emotionally relevant language in the entire document refers to “competent academic advising, progress appraisal, and career guidance, as well as access within the institution to any personal counseling that students might need” (Planning Accreditation Board, 2017 Planning Accreditation Board. (2017). *2017 Accreditation standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.planningaccreditationboard.org> , p. 7), which laudably exhibits care for the mental health of students.
3. One of the authors showed the image of Serena Williams’s face from Feldman Barrett’s (2017) Feldman Barrett, L. (2017). *How emotions are made: The secret life of the brain*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. ) book to a class of 22 graduate students. The students identified four different emotions and, when asked to vote on which seemed most appropriate, ended up splitting nine, seven, four, and one across the emotions.
4. The book *On Killing*, by David Grossman (2014) Grossman, D. (2014). *On killing: The psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society*. New York, NY: Open Road Media. ), offers a very interesting counterexample of the promise of enhancing emotional and social intelligence to enhance compassion by showing how the U.S. military has systematically used similar insights to increase lethality of soldiers.
5. Although beyond the scope of this article, recent work by Martha Nussbaum, particularly *Political Emotions* (Nussbaum, 2013) Nussbaum, M. C. (2013). *Political emotions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ) and *The Monarchy of Fear* (Nussbaum, 2018) Nussbaum, M. C. (2018). *The monarchy of fear: A philosopher looks at our political crisis*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. ), and Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and Us vs. Them* (Greene, 2014) Greene, J. D. (2014). *Moral tribes: Emotion, reason, and the gap between us and them*. New York, NY: Penguin. ), shed important light on emotion, cognition, and political philosophy more generally.

6. One of the authors, Ward Lyles, participated in a similar year-long program in 2018 to 2019 through the organization Courage of Care. The program, Courageous Compassion for Personal Transformation, fosters grace, skill, and fortitude in anti-oppression work by linking contemplative practice, social justice education, and trauma-informed sensitivity.
7. For planners interested in learning more about how they can engage in antiracism work, we recommend DiAngelo's (2018 DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. ) book *White Fragility*, which primarily speaks to a White audience, as well as Menakem's (2017 Menakem, R. (2017). *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*. Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press. ) *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathways to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, which speaks to shared and unique experiences for White people and people of color, as well as public servants (specifically police officers). We also have found Shakil Choudhury's (2015 Choudhury, S. (2015). *Deep diversity: Overcoming us vs. them*. Toronto, Canada: Between the Lines. ) *Deep Diversity: Overcoming Us vs. Them* to be highly accessible for students grappling with the individual (i.e., head and heart) and systemic (e.g., groups and institutions) dimensions of planning for equity and inclusion.

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