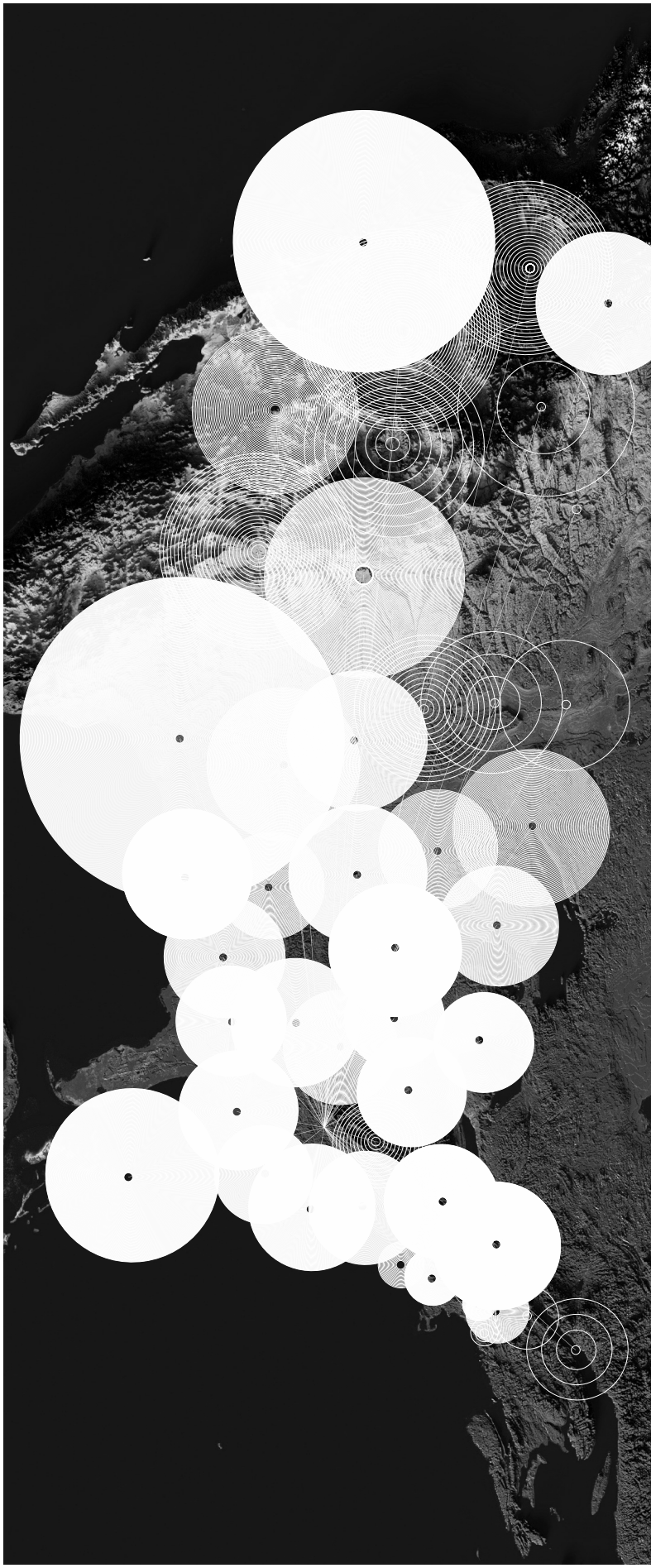
Engaging With Grief In American Landscapes

Developing a community engagement framework tailored to victims of mass shootings



Cameron E. Cooper

To David and James,

You filled your granddaughters' childhoods with joy and laughter. Thank you for teaching us to follow our hearts.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the many individuals who have supported me throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis.

First and foremost, I thank my honors advisor, Case Lindberg, for his guidance and unwavering support. He has been a beacon of reassurance and wisdom—offering valuable insights, mentorship, and consistent encouragement. His support has been instrumental to my growth as a writer, researcher, designer, and student.

I am also deeply grateful to my outside advisor, Kenneth Foote, for sharing his expertise, perspective, and knowledge. His insights into public tragedy encouraged me to explore this topic from multiple angles and uncover deeper nuances within communities and larger geographic contexts. He has inspired me to continue this research beyond the scope of this thesis and to strive to positively impact the lives of those affected by tragedy.

My sincere thanks go to my writing advisor, Nate Jones, and the honors committee for consistently offering constructive feedback on the composition and clarity of my research. Their attention to detail, ability to identify areas for improvement, and diverse perspectives were essential in bringing this project to fruition.

I am sincerely grateful to my interview subjects: Erika Doss, Ben Waldo, Carolyn Bates, Shawhin Roudbari, and Louise Chawla. Their willingness to share their experiences and expertise added invaluable insight and depth to my argument and analysis. In particular, I thank them for their vulnerability and candor in discussing sensitive topics. With their voices, this project reached a deeper exploration of the human condition.

Several influential voices also shaped my understanding of the themes explored in this thesis. I would like to acknowledge my Sociology of Death and Dying professor, Theresa Edwards-Capen, for encouraging me to connect my personal experiences with grief to research that may positively influence others with similar experiences. Her empathy and dedication to her students are both admirable and inspiring. I also owe gratitude to landscape architects Walter

Hood and Ying-Yu Hung, whose work powerfully illustrates the importance of memorializing and honoring those whose lives have been cut short by violence.

I would also like to acknowledge the victims, survivors, families, and communities affected by mass shootings. I extend my admiration for their strength, bravery, and resilience. Their voices and experiences are both important and necessary in raising awareness for grief, violence, and tragedy in America. I am humbled by their courage and hope that my research contributes, in some small way, to honoring their memory and cultivating healing.

Finally, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my family for their enduring love, support, and encouragement throughout my life and this endeavor. Thank you for providing a nurturing and understanding environment that allowed me to dedicate myself to my studies, and for always encouraging me to stay true to myself.

Contents

Abstract

Community engagement is a key aspect to any design process. Many community engagement frameworks share a common focus on positioning the communities as 'co-designers', allowing them greater autonomy and ownership over the final design. However, many of these frameworks are often vague, formulaic, and fail to consider unique circumstances. For my project, I researched community engagement frameworks and existing mass-shooting-related memorials to develop a tailored engagement framework for communities grieving violent public tragedies. I pose the question: *How can community engagement frameworks for design fields be adapted to address communities grieving a mass shooting? How can spontaneous memorials inform future permanent memorials?*

America has unique societal norms regarding death and grief. Due to advanced healthcare and innovative technology, Americans now only expect to die of old age. The ways that Americans cope with death are challenged by a mass shooting; a seemingly preventable and unexpected way to die. In America, society views mass shootings as highly controversial, taboo, and stigmatized public tragedies despite their considerable prevalence in public spaces. Landscape architects must then confront this stigma when engaging with affected communities and designing permanent memorials. Landscape architects often memorialize victims of mass shootings using repetitive formats, most prominently the use of circular forms. If each community is unique, why do the memorials look so similar? This homogeneous manifestation of memorials reveals the vagueness and inadequacy of community engagement efforts for these communities. This challenge highlights the need for a more nuanced community engagement framework.

To inform this new framework, I performed semi-structured interviews with experts in this topic and performed covert naturalistic observations at three permanent mass-shooting-related Colorado memorials and one at a local spontaneous memorial to understand how people grieve in the aftermath of a mass shooting, the manner in which landscape designers have designed the memorials, and how the memorials creates meaning for communities.

A community grieving a mass shooting is often shrouded by stigma, negative attention, and conspiracy, all stemming from America's death-denying societal norms. Landscape architects must then use a unique community engagement framework when collaborating with these stigmatized communities. To address this challenge, I developed a community engagement framework tailored to designing memorials for mass shooting victims. My community engagement framework draws inspiration from community engagement methods for spontaneous memorials, which are often more reflective of a community's values and beliefs than traditional, rigid design processes. This framework works to facilitate permanent memorials that are sensitive, collaborative, and community-specific.

Keywords: community engagement, mass shootings, spontaneous memorials, memorial design, landscape architecture, stigma, grief, public tragedies, death denial

Introduction

Community engagement is a key aspect to any design process. Many community engagement frameworks share a common focus on positioning the communities as 'co-designers', allowing them greater autonomy and ownership over the final design. However, many of these frameworks are often vague, formulaic, and fail to consider unique circumstances. As my thesis, I researched community engagement frameworks and existing mass-shooting-related memorials to develop a tailored community engagement framework for communities grieving violent public tragedies, specifically mass shootings. I pose the question:

How can community engagement frameworks for design fields be adapted to address communities grieving a mass shooting? How can spontaneous memorials inform future permanent memorials?

First, I ask you to imagine your own death. When and where will it happen? Who will you be surrounded by? What do you hope you have accomplished? If you picture yourself old, surrounded by loved ones, dying from natural causes, you are picturing what some sociologists define as a "good death" (Huang and Chiang 2019, 2). As an American, I find that death is interwoven in our society in surreal ways, from the mass production of true crime content to the delegitimizing rhetoric used by politicians when addressing school shootings. The glorification of death, particularly death caused by mass shootings, allows it to be better fictionalized. After all, I assume that I am far more likely to die of certain cancers than I am to die from something played out on a Netflix documentary. The truth is, we can not know the contents of our deaths. Yet we continue to believe that some deaths shouldn't happen because they wouldn't happen to common people like you or me.

In 2022, the United States experienced over 600 mass shootings (Bates 2024, 229-230). The increasing lethality of firearms, combined with extensive media coverage of mass shootings, intensifies the sensational nature of mass shootings and can have long-lasting mental health consequences. What I believe makes mass shootings unique to America is not just their prevalence, but their future impact on affected communities. To determine how

community engagement efforts should be tailored for these communities, I researched four critical components: the denial of death in American culture, the built environment's response to mass shootings, the function of spontaneous memorials, and existing community engagement frameworks in the design field.

America's cultural attitudes on death and grief play a significant role in shaping how memorials to victims of mass shootings are manifested. To better conceptualize how Americans view death and grief, I conducted semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of sociology and psychology. From these interviews, it became clear that Americans tend to deny death – avoiding the reality of mortality at all costs. Many fatal illnesses have become treatable, vehicles are equipped with safety features and alert systems, and even American warfare has transitioned to safer methods, such as the use of air-strikes instead of ground troops (Doss 2006, 307). While these developments are intended to help Americans live longer, they also contribute to their growing detachment from "realistic end-of-life experiences" (Johnson 2004, 435). This denial, which I will elaborate on further in my literature review, is challenged by a mass shooting: a seemingly preventable and unexpected cause of death. As it pertains to community engagement, a landscape architect should be well equipped to confront the controversy, conspiracy, and grief that occurs when that denial is challenged.

Kenneth Foote's book Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy, was instrumental in shaping my understanding of how victims of mass shootings have been memorialized over time. The built environment's response to tragedy can be classified along a spectrum of four distinct categories, including 'obliteration', where the site becomes completely eradicated from the landscape (Foote 2003, 7-8). Historically, mass shootings were obliterated from the landscape due to their shameful associations with the community, but are now increasingly normalized as culturally significant events calling for democratic change. Foote's research and case studies offer historical context to these memorials, which helps landscape architects better conceptualize ways to symbolize grief, tragedy, and mass shootings, while avoiding generic designs often produced by vague community engagement frameworks. I tested this spectrum by performing covert naturalistic observations of mass-shooting-related Colorado memorials, analyzing where they fall on Foote's spectrum, and arguing whether the memorials deny death through obliteration or confront American societal norms by incorporating references to the mass shootings.

Spontaneous memorials, despite their name, are often quite organized events. After a tragedy, communities typically gather and orchestrate a memorial at a meaningful location—usually the site where the tragedy took place—where they hold a small service for mourning and remembrance. However, not all spontaneous memorials follow this structure. At my high school, the sudden death of a cheerleader inspired multiple spontaneous memorials. The most impactful of which being a balloon-release ceremony orchestrated by the cheerleading coach. Red balloons were provided to friends, family, teachers, and staff, then released into the cool February sky. These memorials typically feature mementos, flowers, or other meaningful objects, and stand for a relatively short time. I investigated these memorials because of their community engagement aspects: they are orchestrated by a community, touched, added to, and ultimately disappear (Doss 2006, 300). In contrast, permanent memorials are constructed by professionals and do not become physically rearranged the way spontaneous memorials typically are. The benefit of spontaneous memorials is that they

Literature Review

Four critical components frame my discussion on spontaneous memorials and their potential to inform memorial design for mass shooting incidents. These components are: the denial of death in American culture, the built environment's response to public tragedy, the function of spontaneous memorials, and community engagement frameworks in the design field. Each component can help landscape architects navigate the process of engaging with these communities, by addressing community engagement from both sociological and psychological perspectives, while also considering cultural norms and values that may present challenges and opportunities during the design process.

The Denial of Death in American Culture

A culture that denies death operates in ways to actively avoid death, avoid conversations about death, and hinder grief as an emotion meant to be experienced in private. In America, there are several ways that we deny death. Doss argues that America's advanced medical care, innovative car design, and safer military practices distance people from dying, leading many to believe that death is reserved for later in life (Doss 2006, 307). Johnson describes that death denial in America is partly caused by the media's glorification of death, as well as its mass marketing of anti-aging products (Johnson 2004, 435). Meanwhile, Waldrop describes how the influx of segregated elderly communities (Waldrop 2011, 571), distances younger people from "realistic end-of-life smells, sounds, and physical changes;" denying the inevitability of death (Johnson 2004, 435).

When a mass shooting occurs, people die suddenly and for sometimes unknown reasons. The setting to which these tragedies occur accompanied by their unexpectedness shocks Americans (Doss 2006, 307), as it directly contrasts the normative ways that Americans expect to die. Doerr describes how the Littleton community was shocked by the Columbine shooting because that breed of violence wasn't expected in their 'safe' community (Doerr 2019, 178).

Sudden death often evokes fears and uncertainties pertaining to the 'cosmic' meaning of life and death (Doss 2006, 307). To cope or derive meaning from these existential notions, communities frequently assign archetypal roles to the people involved in the tragedy. These roles provide meaning while simultaneously denying the finality of the victims' deaths, allowing them to live symbolically through the collective memory of the community.

Spontaneous memorial can both serve as acknowledgments and denials of death. On one hand, they provide a platform to grieve publicly by creating spaces to process loss. But, on the other hand, their temporary nature can falsely suggest that grief is temporary. No singular spontaneous memorial can resolve grief, nor can such memorials destigmatize grief or address the complexities of mass shootings entirely. People are transformed by their experiences, and a great deal of that transformation happens by having a non-linear relationship with death and grief (Doss 2006, 302). Confronting the inevitability of death in physical manifestations, like spontaneous memorials, may provide Americans the opportunity to better address the grief and death tied to mass shootings—challenging disenfranchised grief as well as stigma.

The Built Environment's Response to Mass Shootings

In Kenneth Foote's book *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, Foote describes a spectrum on how the built environment responds to violence such as mass shootings. Foote's spectrum categorizes the sites as either being sanctified, designated, rectified, or obliterated (Foote 2003, 7). Sanctified spaces are almost always permanent, durable markers intended to perpetually remind people about someone or something (Foote 2003, 8). Designated spaces are only meant to denote an event and can exist in multi-purpose settings (Foote 2003, 16). Rectified spaces are restored to their pre-existing use (Foote 2003, 16). While obliterated spaces "actively efface all evidence of a tragedy to cover it up or remove it from view" (Foote 2003, 16).

The design of memorials for victims of mass shootings has been fluidly expressed throughout history, but has seen increasing attention from both the public and designers in recent decades. Seeing a shift from simple, engraved stone slabs, to intricately designed landscapes that blend together motifs of loss and life with more peripheral design elements like circulation and plant selection. This shift, as Foote writes, may be America's way of "gradually considering

their past in more realistic and inclusive terms" (Foote 2003, 345). This shift is partially attributed to the substantial efforts designers have made to engage with these communities. However, the homogeneity of current memorials for mass shooting victims suggest that current community engagement frameworks fail to capture the unique characteristics of a community. Spontaneous memorials differ from permanent memorials, as their design publicly recognizes mass shootings in community-specific ways.

The Function of Spontaneous Memorials

Spontaneous memorials are immediate, temporary, and community constructed responses to sudden and tragic events. They are manifested as ephemeral public grieving spaces where a community places specific and meaningful objects. The most recognized example of spontaneous memorials are roadside memorials which commemorate victims of vehicular accidents (Figure 1). Spontaneous memorials are inherently social projects, with their context, scale, and materialization reflecting the value the community has assigned to the tragedy (Grider 2007, 7). That said, their intrinsic differences reveal how each community grieves differently.

Figure 1. Roadside Memorial of Anthony Dean Lucero (Cooper 2024)

Spontaneous memorials are feasible performances of remembrance due to their affordability and public accessibility (Doss 2006, 299). They serve as an important ritual of binding the living to the dead, or as Doss explains, "preserves a material presence in the face of an embodied absence" (Doss 2006, 300). Similarly, Jones highlights their "shared sense of loss and innocence" and their dual purpose as demands to prevent similar tragedies (Jones 2009, 66). Unlike permanent memorials, which are meant to be viewed from a distance, spontaneous memorials invite contributions and can be physically interacted with (Doss 2006, 300). This distinctive quality allows a community to embody their varying feelings about the tragedy in tangible

ways while allowing them to grieve in a group setting (Doss 2006, 300).

Figure 2. Rachel Scott's Abandoned Care (Mauser n.d.)

Spontaneous memorials are not only public expressions of grief, but also outlets for political and social activism. Grider defines them as expressions of "immediate and prevailing public opinions" (Grider 2007, 7). Following the Columbine High School massacre, the Littleton community created a spontaneous memorial near and around the school, consisting of over 200,000 items (Doss 2006, 298), most notably, the abandoned cars of two murdered students quickly became shrines to the grieving community (Figure 2) (Fast 2003, 486). According to Doss, this expression followed the community's desire to showcase the devastation of a mass shooting (Doss 2006, 312). The two abandoned cars stand as tangible evidence of loss, as their respective owners would not be returning home after what should have been an ordinary school day. This further illustrates the profound impact of their memorialization, as visitors to the school following the shooting were confronted with the community's willingness to confront the tragedy rather than bury it.

Figure 3. 15 Crosses on Rebel Hill (Siff 2019)

Spontaneous memorials may also reveal suppressed community values and social dynamics. In addition to the spontaneous memorials of Columbine High School, fifteen crosses were erected for everyone killed in the shooting, including the perpetrators (Figure 3). The two crosses were promptly removed, with one community member stating: "Before knowing who was Christian or not, they put up crosses for the murderers as well, without considering that this might add another level of symbolic violence for some families" (Fast 2003, 487). Despite Littleton being primarily composed of evangelical Christians (Doss 2006, 308), this non-secular approach of spontaneously memorializing brought more conflict than resolve.

In some cases, a spontaneous memorial may hinder the grieving process. After the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre, the surplus of spontaneous memorials (Figure 4) became a hindrance to the public; blocking streets and paths, cluttering public spaces, and serving as a constant reminder of the tragedy (Waldo 2024).

Figure 4. Sandy Hook Spontaneous Memorials (Angelillo 2013)

Spontaneous memorials can empower a community by allowing the community to grieve and mourn in internally constructed, shared spaces. Their intimate nature reveals how impersonal a permanent memorial can feel to a grieving community. When conducted properly, direct engagement with these communities should result in memorials that feel personal; however, many community engagement frameworks, which I will discuss in the next section, fail to account for unique circumstances, or otherwise lack specificity in their approach.

Community Engagement Frameworks in the Design Field

Community engagement is a valuable tool for landscape architects to share knowledge and expertise, as the community often has a more intimate understanding of the site than the designers (Hicks 2023, 23). Community projects are social projects and require patience and understanding, particularly when the community's identity differs significantly from that of the designer. According to Montt-Blanchard, Najmi, and Spinillo, "The role of the designer in community engagement involves proactively seeking to understand community values, concerns, aspirations, and situated experiences" (Montt-Blanchard, Najmi, and Spinillo 2023, 235).

For many communities, establishing dialogue and developing trust are vital components of a successful design. In my project, I develop a community engagement framework that suggests engagement strategies tailored to communities grieving a mass shooting. Designing

for public tragedy requires more than empathy or gathering data—it requires commitment, consistency, synergistic collaboration, and enduring compassion. I believe this, given the ways that death is portrayed in American media, culture, and society. Before I select a movie on a streaming platform, I must pass entire sections dedicated to mass murder and violence. Most Americans die from cardiovascular disease, cancer, or other illnesses, yet we do not see many documentaries that reveal the true horror of chemotherapy. Mass shootings captivate us—fueling countless movies, books, conspiracies, and political campaigns. This is why being committed, consistent, collaborative, and compassionate with these communities is so important. Their grief is often commodified and portrayed as fiction, meanwhile, they face the very real consequences of a mass shooting.

Hicks expresses several recommendations for community engagement, including: tempering your ego, being willing to share authorship of the design, immersing yourself within the community's culture, and avoiding jargon (Hicks 2023, 22-26). Unpredictability, conflicting opinions, and questions of ownership are among the challenges of community engagement (Hicks 2023, 39-42). Montt-Blanchard, Najmi, and Spinillo lay out several different frameworks of community engagement. These frameworks include: The Principles for Community Engagement, The Core Principles of Community Engagement, The 2013-2018 Community Engagement Framework in Newcastle, The Public Participation Spectrum, The Spectrum of Community Engagement in Design Education, and The Me, You, We Framework (Montt-Blanchard, Najmi, and Spinillo 2023, 235-256).

The Principles for Community Engagement defines community engagement as "the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people" (Silberberg et al. 2011, 15). This framework fails to point out the nuance of working alongside communities that may not share similar geographical qualities or interests with the designer. Communities affected by a mass shooting are in a very unique demographic, making this framework particularly exclusive.

The Core Principles of Community Engagement explores non-hierarchical positions, building trust, tackling concerns from a systemic view, and mentorship (Escobar 2018, 24-42). This framework suggests approaching the community with an "open and respectful attitude," avoiding jargon, and appointing liaisons (Escobar 2018, 24-24). This framework could be effective

for these communities; however, its lack of specificity leads to a lack of structure, resulting in greater unpredictability within the engagement process.

The 2013-2018 Community Engagement Framework presents community engagement as a form of capacity building and empowerment by "providing members with the skills, information, authority, and resources to deliberate on projects with" (City of Newcastle 2013). By framing empowerment in these terms, this framework seeks to "understand the relationships between community agency and capacity" (City of Newcastle 2013). What this framework overlooks is the subjectivity of the term 'empowerment'. According to my interview with Roudbari, empowerment is greatly influenced by positionality, as it's core concept relies on social and cultural definitions: what empowers one community may disempower another (Roudbari 2024). Simply providing resources and knowledge can yield varying degrees of empowerment when the community engagement is not specifically adapted for the community.

The Public Participation Spectrum framework suggests five forms of community engagement "based on increasing levels of public participation and impact" which include: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower (Capire Consulting 2022). This spectrum positions designers as educators in the first level and the community as critics in the last. The framework enforces a hierarchy, which may not be conducive to building trust—a critical aspect in working with communities affected by tragedy.

The Spectrum of Community Engagement in Design Education lays out four different aspects of successful community engagement: consultation, involvement, collaboration, and agency (Montt-Blanchard, Najmi, and Spinillo 2023, 247). Each aspect comes with goals and designer commitments (Montt-Blanchard, Najmi, and Spinillo 2023, 247). This framework operates through the lens of design education, aiming to prepare students to do their own community-engaged design work. However, it lacks an aspect of research, which I believe is crucial when preparing to work with these communities. By gathering as much information on the community as possible, the designer can avoid perpetuating stigmas that are often reinforced by conspiracies and insufficient research.

The Me, You, We framework asks the designer to "become aware of lived experiences, histories, and biases" within oneself, within their team, and within the larger context ("Teaching + Learning Yearbook 2019–2020" 2023). This allows the designer to carefully curate a design

team that can best serve the community, while also assessing any implicit biases that may be detrimental to such activities as trust-building. This framework emphasizes reflection, but does not necessarily lay out specific steps in engaging with the community directly. This framework would work best as a preliminary step in the engagement process.

Conclusion

Engaging with a community grieving a mass shooting demands a specific framework that blends research, empathy, structure, and empowerment. In America, a country with unique cultural views on death, understanding how tragedies are expressed in the landscape can guide the construction of a memorial that better reflects community values. Additionally, examining displays of spontaneous memorials may benefit the community engagement process, as they better encompass community characteristics and provide insight into how a community can be involved in designing the permanent memorial. The components I listed above are essential for understanding how to engage with these communities, acknowledge the impacts of mass shootings, construct a reflective and community-engaged design, and respond with memorials in more meaningful ways.

Research Methods

In researching methods for engaging with communities affected by mass shootings, I conducted semi-structured interviews with experts in this topic and performed covert naturalistic observations at three mass-shooting-related Colorado memorials and one local spontaneous memorial.

The semi-structured format of the interviews allowed me to ask follow-up questions and engage in discussions with the subjects, presenting the interview more as a conversation. In preparation, I prepared a list of questions to guide the discussions. During the covert naturalistic observations, my aim was to gain a sense of how permanent and spontaneous memorials impacted overall well being, as well as their effectiveness in communicating community characteristics. I documented site conditions, overall atmosphere, and patterns of human interaction.

For my interview subjects, I identified specific disciplines that were most relevant to my topic: psychology, sociology, geography, landscape architecture, and community engagement. These subjects offered diverse perspectives, including insights into the memorial design process, historical representation of how tragedy has been projected onto the landscape, America's cultural relationship with death and grief, and methods for engaging with these communities. To minimize the risk or re-traumatizing the subject, I intentionally avoided individuals who have been personally affected by a mass shooting. When interviewing landscape architects, I prepared questions focusing on their community engagement efforts, specifically if spontaneous memorials were incorporated into their design or design process.

From sociological and psychological perspectives, I sought to understand how spontaneous memorials differ from permanent memorials in their engagement with grieving communities. My goal was to familiarize myself with how grief is handled in America to evaluate whether or not permanent memorials effectively provide closure for communities impacted by a mass shooting. It was also important to develop an awareness of how non-grieving individuals can offer comfort to those who are grieving. A significant barrier between the designer and a grieving community is the discomfort that often arises in having conversation about grief. Understanding how Americans

grieve and how landscapes can acknowledge that grief is essential for creating a framework that cohesively integrates the design process with supporting the needs of a grieving community.

From a design perspective, interviewing landscape architects and community engagement experts, provides valuable insight into the logistics of engaging with grieving communities. Community engaged design projects often face many challenges, and for these specific communities, among those hurdles include appropriately balancing community desires with economic feasibility, approaching the community with sensitivity for their on-going grief, and providing a design that facilitates rituals of remembrance.

During my site visits, I observed how people interacted with the memorials, noted visual markers, analyzed ways the memorials adhered to or deviated from American societal norms surrounding death, and hypothesized about how the extent of community engagement impacted the final design. Many of the memorials I researched exhibit a sense of homogeneity. I hypothesized that this homogeneity stems from inadequate community engagement frameworks, resulting in a failure to capture the unique characteristics of each community. I argue that permanent memorials often fail to illustrate the individuality of the communities they represent. Therefore, in evaluating these memorials, I documented how victims were represented, identifying their similarities and differences, and assessed whether the memorials acknowledged the tragedy as the basis for building the memorial, or denied it by excluding explicit references.

In addition to visiting permanent memorials, I photographed a local spontaneous memorial for the death of a student at Boulder High School in Boulder, Colorado. Spontaneous memorials are a direct reflection of a community's effort to memorialize someone. These images complimented my research methods, by highlighting the difference between temporary and permanent memorials, revealing the distinction in community representation between the two. These comparisons underscored the importance of involving communities in the design process to ensure they effectively reflect the unique characteristics of the community.

Discussion + Evidence

Community engagement is essential to creating community-reflective memorials. However, some memorials for mass shooting victims have failed to encourage community engagement, resulting in designs that lack community connection or reflect community values. Memorials for mass shooting victims should follow a specific community engagement framework, modeled after spontaneous memorials, to encourage participation, reflect values, and provide meaningful spaces for remembering, grieving, and honoring victims. I visited three mass-shooting-related Colorado memorials to assess how they have evolved over time and examine whether they successfully integrated the community within their design. In addition, I spent time at a non-mass-shooting-related spontaneous memorial, noting how it's manifestation and evolution was shaped by the community. Furthermore, I interviewed experts in relevant fields to examine past community engagement efforts, a mass shooting's psychological impact on well being, and how spontaneous memorials differ from permanent memorials in conveying community truths and values.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Community involvement between these memorials varies significantly. In some cases, the community advocates for memorials as a means of demanding democratic change, while in others, they withdraw from the design process to avoid prolonging their grief. In my interview with Ben Waldo, the designer of the Sandy Hook Memorial (Figure 5), he shared many valuable insights on engaging with grieving communities. For this commissioned memorial, Waldo's team initially prioritized input from the 26 families directly affected by the shooting, as well as police officers and firefighters involved in the response (Waldo 2024). However, community engagement remained sparse with a general lack of trust-building between the design team and the community. To address this, a liaison—a parent of one of the victims—was appointed to advocate and honor the wishes of those who chose not to participate (Waldo 2024).

As a commissioned project, political and economic constraints limited Waldo and his team from performing direct community engagement (Waldo 2024). The decision to build the

Figure 5. The Clearing: Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial (SWA Group n.d.)

memorial was put to a city vote, which resulted in a nearly even split—55% in favor and 45% opposed (Waldo 2024). After the memorial was approved, Waldo, his team, and the community faced significant financial setbacks, reducing their initial design budget from an estimated twelve million dollars to only two million dollars (Waldo 2024). With the community divided and financial constraints impeding progress, Waldo felt that the community engagement—and his obligation to best capture the community's grief—was overshadowed by the need to abide by social, political, and economic pressures (Waldo 2024).

To navigate the constraints within this project, including limited community engagement, Waldo derived the design for the memorial based on motifs of childhood, parenting, refuge, and evolution (Waldo 2024). These themes were embedded throughout the design, from its overall circular form to its plant selection. The circular spatial organization symbolized grief, life, and growth as continuous and ever-evolving processes (Waldo 2024). While the sycamore tree placed within a fountain at the center of the memorial, represents the vulnerability of bringing a child into the world—the tree serves as a metaphor for the challenges of protection and care (Waldo 2024).

Due to the lack of community engagement within this project, the design of the Sandy Hook Memorial had to base itself on accepted narratives about the tragedy, rather than community truths. More accurately, the memorial stands for truths about tragedy on a broader scale. This doesn't necessarily detract from its effectiveness, but it may have failed to capture specific community characteristics—reinforcing stereotypes and preconceived notions about death, grief, and how they should be memorialized in America.

Erika Doss, an expert on spontaneous and permanent memorials, repeatedly expressed the importance of remembrance spaces on the human psyche (Doss 2024). Not only do they

have the power to forge communities, but they also pose an opportunity to raise awareness and consciousness (Doss 2024). Doss also pointed out that permanent memorials in America have consistently failed to convey community values due to inconsistent levels of community engagement (Doss 2024). During our interview, Doss stated that permanence was “overrated”, because it places more value on permanent reminders rather than tragedy itself (Doss 2024). In many cases, the way a tragedy is memorialized is dependent on the narrative, with some communities having more resources to build permanent memorials than others (Doss 2024). Ultimately, the failure for community engagement in memorials is also influenced by decisions about what and whom we choose to memorialize—placing importance on some tragedies while overlooking others.

Additionally, Doss stated that spontaneous memorials are deeply community-driven and serve as a medium to authentically express grief, offering spaces for people to connect with others in their mourning. In contrast, permanent memorials tend to delegate the design for external groups to interpret (Doss 2024). While the Sandy Hook Memorial was evocative, the community was not given the opportunity to physically express their grief, resulting in a disconnect between the community and the physical manifestation of their loss. In some regard, the Sandy Hook Memorial did allow the community an opportunity to manipulate the design, with the many spontaneous memorials being incinerated and placed in a corten steel box outside the permanent memorial, emphasizing their sentimental value (Waldo 2024). However, at the core, the incineration of the spontaneous memorials was a design decision, not a community-driven act.

Figure 6. Curtain of Courage Memorial (Harris 2022)

Bates shared similar views, arguing that permanent memorials aren’t always accurate depictions of a community because American societal views on death and grief prevent the design from openly acknowledging the tragedy (Bates 2024). Though this is not always the case. As I have stated in my literature review, Foote notes that the increase of memorializing

mass shootings could be a shift in realizing tragedy in more realistic terms (Foote 20023, 345). The Curtain of Courage (Figure 6), a memorial for the victims of the 2015 San Bernardino shooting, echo the hexagonal pattern of bullet proof vests (Hood Design Studio 2022). The design, which is a ribbon-like steel wall, acts as both a functional shelter in the event of a tragedy and a symbolic space for reflection—serving as a reminder to the tragedy as well as a call to action to design more protected spaces.

My interviews with community engagement experts highlighted the importance of positionality, consent, empowerment, the risk of perpetuating systemic issues, and including activities for engagement (Chawla 2024; Roudbari 2024). In many cases, consent in its full capacity is not achieved, perpetuating the notion that designers occupy a hierarchical role that prioritizes capital over community (Roudbari 2024). The Grand Candela Memorial for the victims of the 2019 Walmart shooting in El Paso (Figure 7), illustrates this struggle with consent. The 30 foot tall steel structure glimmers in the sunlight and is illuminated at night with programmed lighting (SWA Group. n.d.). The intention was for the structure to be recognizable at all points of the day, with the illumination symbolizing a "healing reminder of the community's oneness" (SWA Group. n.d.). From another perspective, the constant visibility of the structure could serve as a painful acknowledgment of the tragedy—subjecting those not involved in the community engagement process to the same continuous reminders.

Figure 7. Grand Candela Memorial (SWA Group n.d.)

When working with victims of mass shootings, these experts emphasized the need for a deeper level of background research before engagement to reduce insensitivity (Chawla 2024). A designer in this position may strive to leave personal biases behind when working with the community, but without in-depth research, implicit biases could manifest through insensitive actions or colloquial language. Therefore, it is essential to research the tragedy—

the conspiracies, misconceptions, and narratives—to avoid elevating feelings of distress. In developing my framework, I propose a method for trust-building that utilizes social-scientists to better guide discussions and advise designers about grief. This approach is paramount because America's avoidance of death and grief yields unpredictability in participation and may lead to potential mistrust towards designers—ultimately distancing the community from the memorial and the design process.

Permanent Memorial Site Visits

The Columbine Memorial was constructed by involving the community through background research and surveys (Columbine Memorial Foundation n.d.), while the 7/20 memorial was designed by a commissioned designer who drew inspiration from a previous project in the same city (7/20 Memorial Foundation n.d.). During my site visits, community engagement was evident in the Columbine memorial, with names and personal messages from the victims' families and survivors being showcased throughout the design, as well as being located in an accessible, scenic location. The 7/20 Memorial had a similar approach, but due to the considerably less amount of community engagement, its placement felt disjointed and non-specific to the community. The Boulder Remembrance Garden faced similar challenges, as its community engagement was limited to a small portion of the community.

Figure 8.1 Columbine Memorial, Ring of Remembrance (Columbine Memorial n.d.)

Figure 8.2 Columbine Memorial, Wall of Healing (Columbine Memorial n.d.)

Figure 8.3 Columbine Memorial, Epitaph for Steven Curnow (Columbine Memorial n.d.)

What I believe makes the Columbine Memorial most reflective of the community, is its level of both past and ongoing community involvement. Survivors and families of the victims were asked to provide personal reflections on the tragedy, resulting in more personal epitaphs for the deceased (Figure 8.3) (Columbine Memorial Foundation n.d.). These statements were facilitated from a series of surveys, in-depth background research, and the formation of a planning committee, ensuring the community's engagement throughout the design process (Columbine Memorial Foundation n.d.). However, this involvement did not extend to the construction phase, removing physical contributions to the site itself (Columbine Memorial Foundation n.d.).

Figure 9.1 7-20 Memorial (7/20 Memorial Foundation n.d.)

Figure 9.2 7-20 Memorial Message Canister (7/20 Memorial Foundation n.d.)

Currently the memorial is positioned in a space that has evolved to border active locations, including a playground, library, dog park, performance space, and reservoir. Its placement within this lively setting makes it a central landmark as well as a connective node to surrounding areas, embedding its presence within the broader fabric of Clement Park (Figure 8.1 and 8.2). During my visit, I experienced the striking dichotomy between the lively, joyful human activity and the profound loss and mourning of the victims—the echoes of deep sorrow combined with the ongoing rhythm of life. Many passerby lingered around the memorial, highlighting the lasting impact the memorial holds within the community as engagement still continues.

The 7/20 Memorial for the victims of the 2012 Aurora shooting, is situated in a vastly different environment, surrounded by municipal buildings, commercial properties, and apartment complexes. The memorial's construction was overseen by a planning committee, which commissioned a local artist who was inspired by the "1000 Cranes of Aurora," (Figure 9.1) a gesture of condolence sent by a community in O'Fallon, Missouri (7-20 Memorial n.d.).

Involvement within the internal community was minimal beyond commissioning a local artist and partnering with community members for construction, resulting in a sense of displacement in its site selection. However, the 7/20 Memorial allows for direct community interaction—with a canister located on the site which invites personal messages from the community (Figure 9.2) (7-20 Memorial n.d.). My experience at the site was just as poignant as Columbine, yet the positioning of the memorial lacked the same sense of serenity and accessibility.

The Remembrance Garden for the victims of the 2021 Boulder shooting is located on the edge of a parking lot at the grocery store where the tragedy took place (Figure 10.1). Unlike the Grand Candela Memorial, which is situated in a similar commercial environment, the Remembrance Garden is far more modest, occupying minimal real estate both horizontally and vertically. To me, the contrast between these two memorials illustrates how the narratives surrounding a tragedy allows the memorial to take on different forms. The shooting that demanded the Grand Candela Memorial, is recognized as one of the deadliest shootings against the Hispanic community in modern American history, emphasizing the need for democratic change against racism. Meanwhile, the Boulder shooting received less national attention, resulting in less funding and, consequently, less feasibility for a novel design.

Figure 10.1 Boulder Remembrance Garden (Cooper 2024)

Figure 10.2 Boulder Remembrance Garden, “Boulder Strong” Mosaic (Cooper 2024)

In terms of reflectiveness of the community, the Remembrance Garden does little to capture the characteristics of the Boulder community beyond messaging; the words ‘Boulder Strong’ being placed within the mosaic in the memorial (Figure 10.20. Unlike Columbine and 7/20, it lacks specificity for the victims and does not actively encourage community contributions.

That said, the Remembrance Garden is most based on community construction, with the design being constructed locally (City of Boulder n.d.).

There are distinct differences between these memorials due to their differing approaches to community engagement. Memorials with higher levels of community engagement displayed specific characteristics, involved a wide-range of the community, included opportunities to contemplate and contribute, and were tailored specifically to the community. Meanwhile, memorials with lower levels of community engagement tended to represent grief in broader terms, rather than the grief of the individual communities.

Spontaneous Memorial Site Visit

As I walked to class during the early stages of my research, I would pass by a spontaneous memorial dedicated to a Boulder High School student who passed suddenly over the summer. His spontaneous memorial was placed along a fence that bordered the construction site where he had fallen to his death. The memorial was composed of several poster boards covered in written messages from the community. This line written in red Sharpie: “Your smiling eyes were so special. So special” has stuck with me in ways that the countless epitaphs from the permanent memorials have not.

Figure 11.1 Ames O’Neal Spontaneous Memorial (Cooper 2024)

The memorial stayed up for approximately three weeks, accumulating more contributions each day. What I found from this memorial, but struggled to find in the permanent memorials, was a deep sense of intimacy. Though I had never met the student, the community engagement was so powerful that it compelled me to explore how the design field can better address tragedy in future memorials—creating spaces that not only acknowledge loss, but also invite community participation, inspire change,

and allow grief to be expressed openly and honestly.

Figure 11.2 Ames O'Neal Spontaneous Memorial Two Months Later (Cooper 2024)

The words "so special" illustrated the absolute reality of mortality—the countless impacts we imbue upon each other. Like a smoothed over sheet of water disturbed by a small pebble, the ripples of the student's passing impacted my purpose as a designer. To think: if his name were just on a plaque somewhere in space, I might not have grasped the depth of his existence. When designing memorials for those whose lives were cut short by sheer violence, it is important to realize that we must do more than just commemorate or reflect community values—we must design for those who are forced to confront the realities of such violence.

Establishing a Framework

To establish a framework that responds to existing memorial practices and community-based design, I evaluated where the four components—death and grief in America, spontaneous memorials, the built environment's response to mass shootings and community engagement frameworks in the design field—align or contradict each other. These components were mapped using two Venn diagram configurations to explore their interactions.

Intersections Between Components: Configuration A.1

Configuration A.1 (Figure 12.1) illustrates the intersections of all four components, with spontaneous memorial and death and grief in America showing no interactions. This diagram lists each component's key qualities and intersections, with titles describing their overall attributes and relationships. More in-depth connections within these intersections are marked as 1A-4A (see Figure 12.3).

Qualities of Spontaneous Memorials

Drawing from the literature review and research methods, spontaneous memorials are built and maintained by the community, reflecting both local identity and specific events (Doss 2006, 300). While they often effectively foster internal communication within the community, issues of ownership arise. Their anonymous aesthetic, shaped by many contributors, blurs who was most affected. This is not necessarily a poor quality, rather, this underscores how tragedy impacts a community collectively while not always capturing individual grief.

Figure 12.1 Intersections Between Components, Configuration A.1

Spontaneous memorials are also affordable, accessible, versatile, and a widely accepted form of materializing grief (Doss 2024)—making them an effective and inclusive community project. However, their temporary nature may provide a false sense of temporariness, overlooking the long-term effects of loss. In some cases, when they persist beyond their usual lifespan, they amplify attention to the tragedy, which may increase funding and support for a permanent memorial.

Qualities of Community Engagement Frameworks in the Design Field

Current community engagement frameworks in the design field are often vague and adopt a one-size-fits all approach. Many use broad terms like “empowerment” or “co-design” without clarifying how these concepts are applied—making them ineffective when engaging with hyper-specific communities. This lack of specificity leads to varying levels of engagement, resulting in unpredictable results. Community engagement as a practice regularly endures unpredictably (Hicks 2023, 22), and without a unifying framework tailored to community values and needs, this unpredictability only increases.

Practices for current permanent memorials often reinforce a hierarchy where designers act as decision-makers while communities pose as an entirely separate party. Economic and political constraints only widen this gap, when either party is navigating these limitations alone. To create more meaningful, community-reflective memorials, engagement should not only reach an equilibrium between the parties, but also sustain the memorial’s significance through active involvement. As they stand, current community engagement framework risks excluding large portions of the community due to toxic hierarchies, vagueness, and consequently, unpredictability.

Qualities of Death and Grief in America

Throughout this paper, we have come to understand that America has a very unique relationship with death, characterized as avoidant and stigmatized (Waldrop 2011, 575), making conversations about death or grief—particularly prolonged grief—uncomfortable. This discomfort deepens the divide between designers and communities, highlighting the need for designers to avoid perpetuating the same social pressures that expect a community to "move on."

The media often glorifies mass shootings, effectively fictionalizing the tragedy and reinforcing death-avoidant behaviors and perspectives. This glorification makes mass shootings easier to commodify, fostering mistrust between the community and the designer, and amplifying implicit and explicit biases. A particularly avoided narrative is that death and grief are both inevitable and constant. Designers must acknowledge these truths to create memorials that have the possibility to challenge socially-accepted narratives about loss.

Qualities of The Built Environment's Response to Mass Shootings

The built environment's response to mass shootings, like America's cultural norms surrounding death and grief, is heavily influenced by narratives, leading to an evolving expression throughout time. In my interview with Foote, he noted that mass shootings weren't always at the forefront of the news cycle, which explains why mass shooting memorials were often obliterated from the landscape in the 20th century (Foote, 2024-2025). As these tragedies have garnered more recognition, American Culture now places more importance on memorializing the victims in the built environment.

The built environment's response is also influenced by social stratification. Foote's spectrum—obliteration, rectification, designation, and sanctification—reflects this dynamic.

Americans tend to value some deaths more than others (Hasan 2013). For example, mass shootings involving children, particular white high-income children, are more likely to be sanctified in the landscape (Doss 2024), while mass shootings involving people of color or lower-income groups often face exclusion due to entrenched socioeconomic biases. This dynamic results in the risk of excluding some groups from permanent memorialization, or resources to help facilitate permanent memorials.

From my site visits to permanent memorials, those with higher levels of community engagement resulted in more community-reflective spaces,showing clear evidence of community authorship. This demonstrates that the depth of engagement directly impacts the memorial's long-term resonance. Community engagement efforts are a consequence of the designer's decision making, underscoring the need for a framework that acknowledges the reality of a mass shooting. Without a specific approach, memorials risk becoming homogeneous, erasing the unique characteristics of the community, and further reinforcing stigmas about mass shootings and the communities they impact.

Intersections Between Components: Closer Look at Configuration A.1

Community-Driven Design:

Spontaneous Memorials + Community Engagement Frameworks

At the intersection of spontaneous memorials and community engagement frameworks is community-driven design. Both rely on community involvement—being the central theme in many frameworks and being a driving force in spontaneous memorials. Yet both risk exclusion and varying levels of engagement, yielding unpredictability. Current frameworks have the opportunity to learn from spontaneous memorials in how they often reflect community characteristics more intimately than permanent memorials, to develop better strategies for participation. Meanwhile,

spontaneous memorials could benefit from a more structured engagement framework, particularly if there are plans to implement a permanent memorial. Both components ultimately aim to build trust and uphold

Sociology of Death in Design:

Community Engagement Frameworks + Death and Grief in America

Community engagement frameworks intersect with death and grief in America through a shared focus on the sociology of death in design. This relationships, however, may be the most contested, as both are shaped by hierarchies, avoidance, exclusion, and commodification. A more empathetic and sociologically-neutral approach to death could foster inclusivity in grief-centered design. This requires a heightened level of sensitivity to loss, as well as active appreciation for the community's participation—effectively building trust and mutuality.

Materializing Grief:

Death and Grief in America + Built Environment

Materializing grief is a ritual performed by both American cultural norms around death and grief as well as the built environment. Memorials often support the grieving process by providing

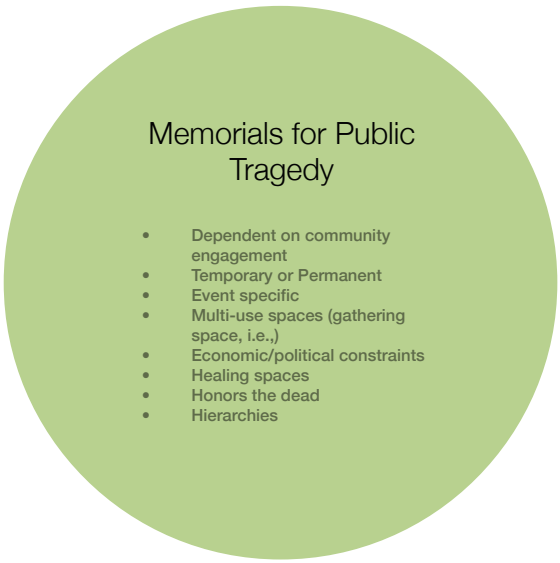
spaces for mourning, while death and grief in America shape consciousness through their physical manifestations (Doss 2025). However, both risk exclusion and commodification—memorials can exploit loss, and grief can continue to be obscured by generic forms and narratives generated by failed community engagement.

Memorials can counter the glorification of mass shootings, if community voices are amplified enough to change the narrative. A framework that helps to uplift community voices, ensures that the memorial reflects an authentic portrayal of grief and resilience—aligning the built environment with how grief is processed within communities.

Memorials for Public Tragedy:

Built Environment + Spontaneous Memorials

Spontaneous memorials and the built environment's response to mass shootings both serve as memorials for public tragedy, honoring victims and providing spaces for grief. Their key difference lies in economic and social pressures. As discussed, American society values some deaths over others (Hasan 2013). For example, the swiftly removed crosses on Rebel Hill reflected the community's prioritization of victims, despite the fact that all deaths were a tragedy in some regard (see Figure 13.2a).



Similarly, economic and political pressures influence which communities have the means to build a memorial. Designers can mitigate these pressures by ensuring clarity early in the community engagement, allowing the community more opportunities to raise funds internally if needed. By alleviating these pressures more focus can be placed on the quality of the engagement rather than the economics of the final memorials—mirroring spontaneous memorials while also producing more community-centered designs.

Intersections Between Components: Closer Look at Configuration B.1

In the first configuration of intersections between components, the qualities of all components, as well as their intersections were described in detail. Configuration B.1 (Figure 12.2) focuses on two key intersections: spontaneous memorials with death and grief in America, and the built environment's response to mass shootings with community engagement frameworks. These intersections are analyzed in detail, with deeper relationships labeled as 1B-4B (Figure 12.4).

Local Grief Rituals:

Death and Grief in America + Spontaneous Memorials

Death and grief in America and spontaneous memorials combine to form local grief rituals. Avoidance of death is a local ritual that can be performed by individuals or communities that do not wish to memorialize a tragedy, as it is performed through an absence of physical manifestations. Spontaneous memorials are the opposite, where efforts to memorialize a tragedy are made by a community in order to provide public grieving spaces that recognize the tragedy (Doss 2025). Both of which are shaped by individual or community narratives.

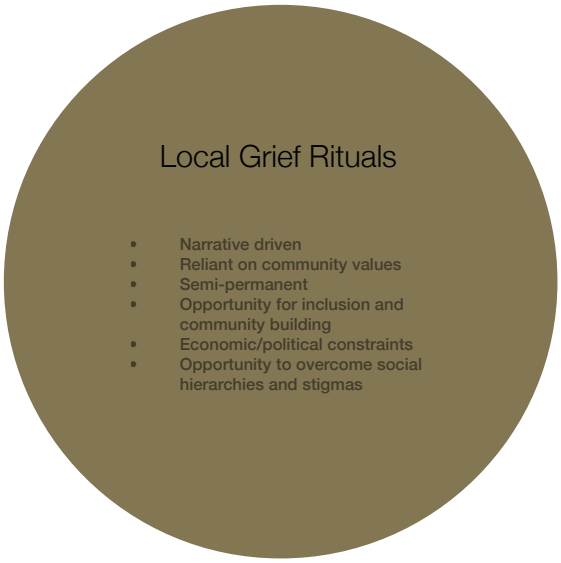


Figure 12.2 Intersections Between Components, Configuration B.1

Community efforts made for spontaneous memorials may aid in the mission for raising awareness for a tragedy (Foote 2024; Erika 2024), effectively moving away from an avoidant narrative. Meanwhile, cultural norms around grief influence how the spontaneous memorials communicate community values. In either case, there is an opportunity to include a wide range of the community with differing beliefs about the tragedy. The framework I developed prioritizes inclusion of a wide range of the community—engaging both supporters and opponents of memorialization. This results in an opportunity for both sides to address the social pressures surrounding the memorial.

Narrative Driven Design:

Built Environment + Community Engagement Frameworks

The built environment and community engagement frameworks are designer-driven, that is, community engagement frameworks are utilized by designers, and the built environment is influenced by designers. This often reinforces hierarchies that risk exclusion and unclear ownership. However, both aim to create community-driven designs. To remediate this hierarchy, the designer may want to shift to more community-narrative driven methods of engagement.

Vague frameworks lead to vague memorials. A framework that prioritizes specific community narratives and involvement throughout all phases, results in a more reflective memorial. By integrating community narratives and allowing for adaptation, the final design better represents the people it serves while reintroducing the community's narrative into the design.

Intersections Between Components: Configuration A.2

Configuration A.2 (Figure 12.3) examines how memorials for public tragedies, community-driven design, the sociology of death in design, and materializing grief intersect, and transform

into designing mass shooting memorials with grieving communities. Key themes include mental health, grief, and co-design, leading to four intersections: co-designed memorials, designing for grieving communities, death acceptance in America, and a memorial's impact on mental health.

Qualities of Co-designed Memorials

Co-designed memorials—merging the built environment, spontaneous memorials, and community engagement—prioritize sensitivity, inclusivity, community building, and shared authorship. In these memorials, designers collaborate closely with communities, particularly in the early phases of the engagement process, thus, creating a stronger sense of ownership. However, the effectiveness depends on the specific approach of engagement

Qualities of Designing for Grieving Communities

Designing for grieving communities—merging spontaneous memorials, community engagement, and death and grief in America—focuses more on the social pressures of designing for communities who have experienced a mass shooting. It requires designers to research grief, improve communication, and better support communities as they navigate their loss.

Memorial's Impacts on Mental Health

- Fluid hierarchy
- Opportunity for inclusion and community building
- Focus on pathos
- Ability to become more affordable/accessible
- Power to raise consciousness/empowerment
- Healing properties
- Acknowledge grief

Co-designed Memorials

- Requires sensitivity + selective design team
- Power to raise consciousness
- Opportunity for inclusion and community building
- Workable economics
- Permanence decided by the community
- Multi-use spaces
- Emphasis on the user/client
- Shared authorship

Death Acceptance in American Society

- Narrative driven
- Requires sensitivity
- Power to raise consciousness/empowerment
- Opportunity for inclusion and community building
- Emphasis on trust building
- Risk of com modification
- Opportunity to overcome stigmas

Design for Grieving Communities

- Dependent on community engagement
- Workable economics
- Opportunity for inclusion
- Permanence decided by the community
- Shared ownership

Figure 12.3 Intersections Between Components, Configuration A.2

Qualities of Death Acceptance in American Society

Death acceptance in American society—merging community engagement, death and grief in America, and the built environment—aims to develop an awareness of loss through deeper engagement, understanding grief, and supportive design. However, it risks commodification. Greater acceptance could be achieved through more realistic depictions of death and grief in memorials, built on the trust fostered between the designer and the community.

Qualities of Memorial's Impacts on Mental Health

A memorial's impact on mental health—merging death and grief in America, spontaneous memorials, and the built environment—relies on the importance of creating a memorial that reflects community values. Designers can support grief and make a positive impact by providing safe outlets like discussions or workshops. By instilling more confidence and collaboration in the community, the memorial should have more healing properties, as the community was supported in their grieving process throughout the engagement process.

Intersections Between Components: Configuration B.2

Configuration B.2 (Figure 12.4) explores the interactions between memorials for public tragedy, narrative-driven design, the sociology of death, and local grief rituals. The result of these intersections transcends into designing informed, consensual, and community based grieving spaces. These interactions emphasize accuracy in the engagement process, ensuring that the final design reflects both community characteristics and engagement efforts. These interactions provided the following intersections: grief informed design, conceptual and critical depictions of death, temporally adaptable design,and community-focused representations of mass shootings.

Qualities of Grief-Informed Design

Grief-informed design—merging spontaneous memorials, the built environment, and community engagement frameworks—emphasizes the importance of specificity in community engagement. Grief-informed designs should respond to the community's grieving process, and make adjustments so that the experience is more comfortable. By focusing on community values, clarifying responsibilities, and ensuring consent, trust can be built, as well as empowerment.

Qualities of Conceptual and Critical Depictions of Death

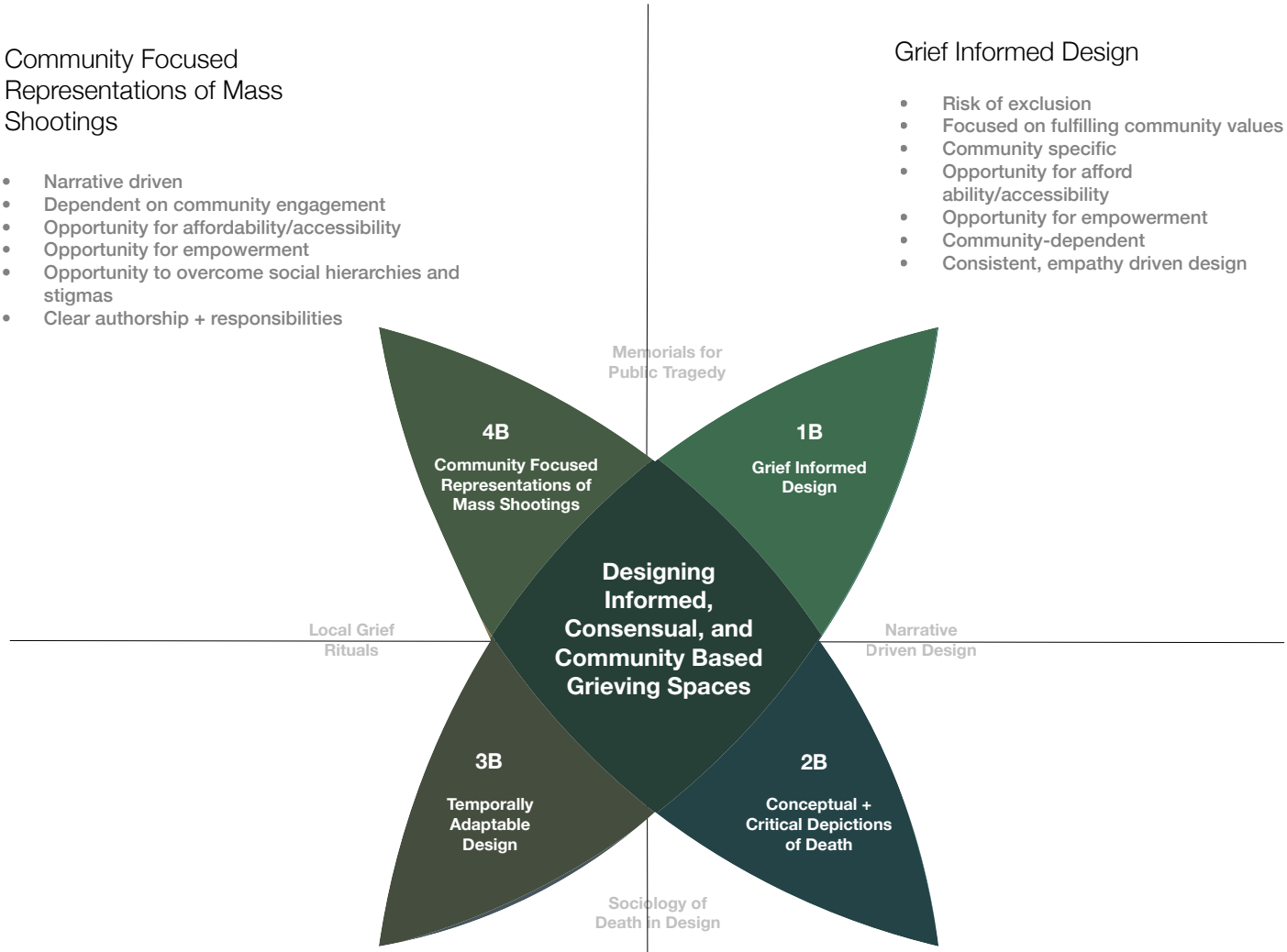
Conceptual and critical depictions of death—merging the built environment, community engagement frameworks, and death and grief in America—focuses both on the community's narrative and the challenges of depicting death in a culture that often denies it. These depictions

Community Focused Representations of Mass Shootings

- Narrative driven
- Dependent on community engagement
- Opportunity for affordability/accessibility
- Opportunity for empowerment
- Opportunity to overcome social hierarchies and stigmas
- Clear authorship + responsibilities

Grief Informed Design

- Risk of exclusion
- Focused on fulfilling community values
- Community specific
- Opportunity for afford ability/accessibility
- Opportunity for empowerment
- Community-dependent
- Consistent, empathy driven design



Temporally Adaptable Design

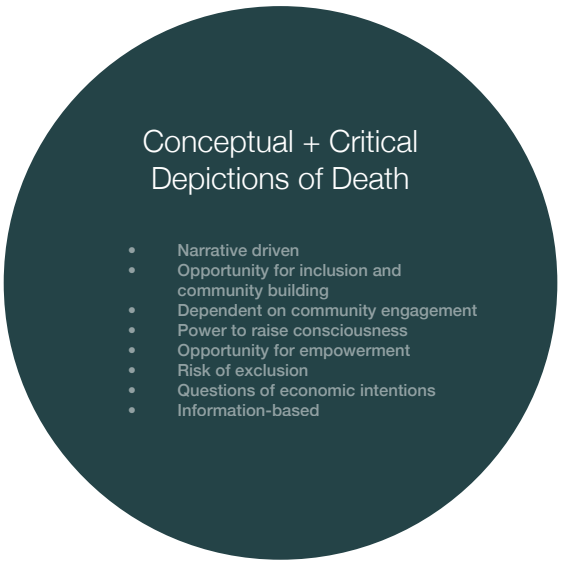
- Opportunity to overcome social hierarchies and stigmas
- Questions of economic intentions
- Narrative driven
- Requires sensitivity
- Dependent on community engagement
- Reflects community values
- Grief-informed, evolving design

Conceptual + Critical Depictions of Death

- Narrative driven
- Opportunity for inclusion and community building
- Dependent on community engagement
- Power to raise consciousness
- Opportunity for empowerment
- Risk of exclusion
- Questions of economic intentions
- Information-based

Figure 12.4 Intersections Between Components, Configuration B.2

rely on community authorship, aiming to meet community needs through varying degrees of mentioning death in the design. The goal is to support grief by providing opportunities to share authentic experiences from the tragedy.



Qualities of Temporally Adaptable Design

Temporally adaptable designs—merging community engagement, death and grief in America, and spontaneous memorials—empower the community by allowing the memorial to evolve over time alongside their grief. This includes elements of grief-informed design, but focuses more on honoring the community's goals and intentions, regardless of the severity of their grief. This can be achieved by providing opportunities for the community to adapt the memorial through physical contributions, decide the permanence of the memorial, or completely redesign the memorial as their grief evolves.

Qualities of Community Focused Representations of Mass Shootings

Community focused representation of mass shootings— merging death and grief in America, spontaneous memorials, and the built environment—is entirely narrative driven and

dependent on community engagement. When engagement fails, the final design often lacks an authentic sense of community representation, resulting in non-resonant memorials. Additionally, media narratives often distort the event or fictionalize the victims. The final memorial should avoid perpetuating negativity, and instead, invite an honest conversation about the impacts of these events.

Intersections Between Components: Comprehensive Configuration

In this comprehensive configuration (Figure 14.5), we look at the qualities of designing mass shooting memorials with grieving communities, the qualities of designing informed, consensual, and community based grieving spaces, and coalesce those qualities into seven sequential steps, forming the Seven Steps for Engaging with Grief in Design framework.

Designing Mass Shooting Memorials with Grieving Communities

The comprehensive qualities for designing mass shooting memorials with grieving communities aim to overcome biases, develop mutual understanding, focus on quality engagement, involve the community in assigning meaning and value, and empower all voices.. It encourages grief as an opportunity, facilitates community building, ensures accessibility, affordability, and shared authorship, while providing opportunities for wide community participation.

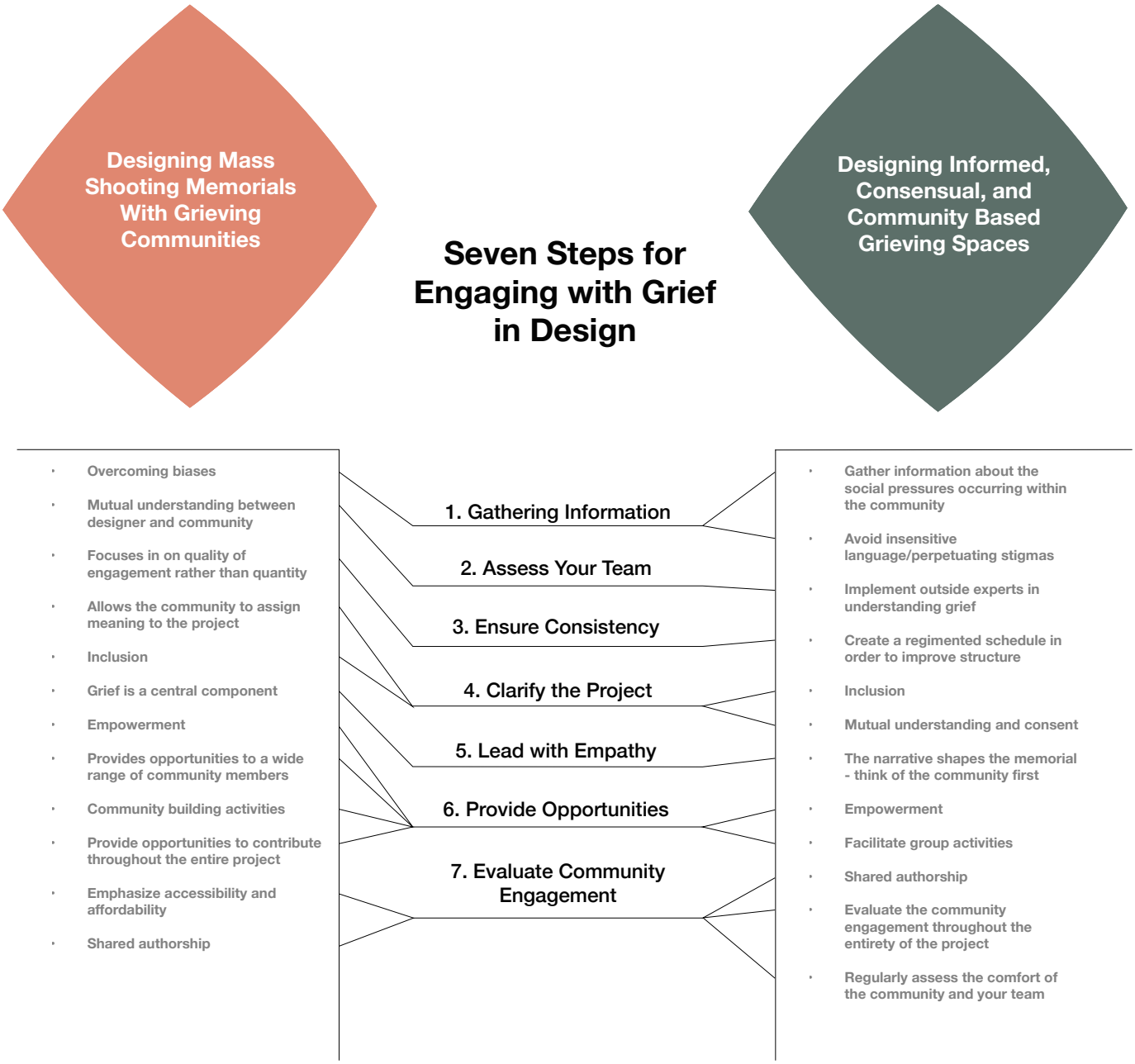


Figure 12.5 Intersections Between Components, Comprehensive Configuration

Designing Informed, Consensual, and Community-Based Grieving Spaces

The comprehensive qualities for designing informed, consensual, and community-based grieving spaces emphasize understanding the community's unique pressures (social, economical, political etc.), avoiding stigmas and insensitive languages, and curating a design team to include experts like grief counselors or psychologists. It encourages wide community participation, empowers all voices, shares authorship, and regularly evaluates engagement and comfort throughout the project.

Comprehensive Combination

These two comprehensive lists combined create the Seven Steps for Engaging with Grief in Design engagement framework. The seven steps are: gathering information, assessing your team, ensuring consistency, clarifying the project, leading with empathy, providing opportunities, and evaluating community engagement. The seven steps are derived from an analytical cross-examination of the four primary components that influence memorials for victims of mass shootings, expert advice across multiple disciplines, and observations at permanent and spontaneous memorials. Most importantly, they highlight the successes and flaws of community engagement in 11 existing mass-shooting memorials (Figures 14.2–14.12). While some memorials meet these steps, none achieve all of them.

This framework will allow the designer to develop a comprehensive understanding of how to conduct community engagement within a community that is often commodified, stigmatized, and fictionalized by the media and in American society. It emphasizes both the fundamentals of trust building, as well a layer of assessment that current community engagement frameworks fail to fully encompass. Through this framework, memorials can become more reflective of the community, encourage change, and equip designers with the tools to collaborate with a community grieving immense tragedy, grief, and loss.

Figure 13.1 The Seven Steps for Engaging with Grief in Design Framework

The Seven Steps for Engaging with Grief in Design

4 Clarify the Project

Maintain consent
Clarify responsibility
Establish major goals and objectives

5 Lead with Empathy

Never lead with assumption
Hold yourself accountable
Maintain healthy boundaries
Acknowledge different experiences with grief

6 Provide Opportunities to: (5 C's)

Communicate, Connect, Collaborate, Contribute, & Construct

7 Evaluate the Community Engagement on: (4 A's)

Accessibility, Adaptability, Authorship, & Actualization

The Seven Steps

Gather Information (Figure 13.2)

In gathering information, the designer is tasked to conduct passive research, soften their language, and prioritize the facts. As a glorified tragedy, mass shootings garner massive attention from the media. This results in the spread of misinformation, negative attention, and conspiracies. Although these accounts do not accurately reflect community characteristics, and often lead to the exploitation of loss, they do depict the conversations that outsiders are having about the tragedy. By gathering information on both factual and misinformed sources, you are actively gathering information on how the social and political pressures are affecting the community.

Additionally, the designer is gathering information on ways to soften their language, by avoiding triggering words or topics often used by misinformed sources (Hicks 2023, 22-26). The goal is to prioritize the facts and avoid perpetuating the conspiracies and negative attention often surrounding the events of a mass shooting and the people closely involved. This step makes the designer more effective in communication, while also securing trust as a building block for the engagement process.

Assess Your Team (Figure 13.3)

In this step, the designer is tasked to assess their team to ensure that they are up for the challenge of designing for a community experiencing tragedy. Mass shootings are conflicting, traumatic, and emotionally taxing. By ensuring that the team is committed and dedicated to serving the community throughout the entire process, the designer is communicating to the community that they are reliable and consistent.

By gathering information, explicit biases should be mitigated, however, implicit biases may still linger. Discussing team perspectives and biases before engaging with the community helps understand internal social dynamics and identify areas where support may be needed (Roudbari, 2024). Additionally, introduce a values mandala (Figure 13.3), in which the designer and the team can orient their values within a larger context. This will aid in understanding how

values compare, contrast, and are influences by larger contexts.

After assessing commitments, mitigating biases, and orienting values within larger value systems ("Teaching + Learning Yearbook 2019–2020" 2023), the team will have a better understanding of their overall strengths and weaknesses, allowing the designer to assign members with appropriate responsibilities, and thus, create synergy.

Ensure Consistency (Figure 13.4)

In this step, the team should begin developing a regimented schedule in order to ensure consistency. For the community, a consistent and clear schedule will allow for more inclusivity, and less unpredictability. In any community engagement process, there is bound to be unpredictability (Hicks 2023, 39-42). By ensuring consistency, some of that unpredictability can be mitigated. Moreover, a consistent schedule allows community members to plan time off or attend meetings they might have missed.

After creating a regimented schedule, the designer should gather community input on what's important and what's missing. Creating activities based on community desires will boost attendance and establish more ownership over the engagement process. Activities can include fundraisers, meetings with social scientists, and design workshops where community members contribute design ideas. The goal is to allow the community to shape the process within a clarified and consistent schedule.

Clarify the Project (Figure 13.5)

By clarifying the project, the designer can maintain consent, clarify responsibilities, and establish major goals and objectives. This step may overlap with step 3 (Ensure Consistency), as creating a schedule with the community requires consent and clear goals. Consent is crucial, as many community members feel a lack of it from the media and the tragedy itself. In order to maintain consent, the designer must clarify all responsibilities, expectations, goals and objectives for the project. This will give the community a full picture of how the project will progress, and when their services are most important. This will help build trust and understanding, leading to more consistent engagement.

Lead with Empathy (Figure 13.6)

Many community engagement frameworks emphasize empathy, but empathy can be interpreted in various ways. To lead with empathy in this framework, asks the designer to never lead with assumptions, hold themselves accountable, maintain healthy boundaries, and acknowledge that everyone experiences grief differently.

Because mass shootings are particularly politicized, glorified, and commodified tragedies, with a root cause that is yet to be understood or addressed, misinformation and speculation can easily hold more power over the facts. The designer should listen to the community's unique experiences, and never assume the contents or cause of the tragedy. The designer should hold themselves accountable for not perpetuating stigmas or stereotypes, whether about mass shootings or grief.

Though the designer may have built trust within the community, they should not underestimate the power of healthy boundaries. By maintaining healthy boundaries, the designer can be sure that they are not interfering with the community engagement by either being too emotionally invested or not invested enough. As the facilitator of an engagement process that allows people to grieve openly, the designer should allow themselves the freedom to grieve too, while assuring that the engagement remains consistent and productive.

Grief is experienced differently by everyone. Acknowledging these differences reinforces that all forms of grief should be accepted. The designer may feel compelled to give advice or relate to a community member's grief, especially if they have experienced grief themselves, but to put it simply, sometimes the best thing you can do for a grieving person is be present and supportive. In Figure 13.6a, I have listed some suggestions of what not to say when discussing grief or loss.

Provide Opportunities to (5 C's): (Figure 13.7)

Providing varying opportunities for the community to be involved is crucial in a community engaged design. In the framework, providing opportunities can look like the 5 C's: *Connect, Collaborate, Communicate, Contribute, and Construct.*

To “Connect” means more than connecting with each other, but also means curating the design team to include professionals equipped to mediate conversations. Although the designer has developed a sense of the social pressures the community is experiencing, mistakes in connecting with the community can lead to catastrophic consequences for trust building. Hiring social scientists can help the designer better understand the community, while providing safe spaces to connect with one another. Greater trust leads to more honesty and a more accurate reflection of the community’s values.

To “Collaborate” means allowing the community to collaborate during all stages of the engagement process. The community should be able to shape the community engagement through a collaborative environment that is facilitated by the designer and the design team. The designer should encourage collaboration in activities, decision-making, and design ideas. Collaboration allows for a diverse set of values, beliefs, and ideas to shine though in the final design.

To “Communicate” means ensuring all voices are heard. Unheard voices lead to loss of ownership over the engagement and design. Community members should have an equitable opportunity to communicate their ideas, desires, concerns, and goals during all points of the community engagement process. Simply communicating their grief also improves trust and understanding.

To “Contribute” means inviting contributions at all phases of the engagement process—ideas, objects, services, and criticisms. This will help personalize the experience and ensure a high level of ownership and authorship for the community. This ties in directly with the Collaborate and Construct opportunities in this step, reinforcing that voices and ideas should be explored and incorporated in the design. Additionally, ensure that the community has the opportunity to contribute to the design after it is complete.

To “Construct” means providing an opportunity for the community to get hands-on experience with the construction of the memorial. Small actions, like creating mementos or messages, or larger contributions, like materials and services, creates harmony with the services provided by the designer. Allowing the community the opportunity to construct the memorial, places an even larger emphasis on ownership. To illustrate this, picture a community member visiting the memorial years down the line, with the knowledge that they placed stones in one

corner and constructed commemoration spaces in another. They will be able to physically showcase their efforts and engagement in the final design.

Evaluate the Community Engagement on (4 A's): (Figure 13.8)

Evaluating the overall community engagement throughout the entire process will allow the designer and the design team to frequently assess the quality of their efforts and address unpredictability accordingly. It will help the designer, the team, and the community achieve their shared, intended goals. I suggest evaluating the community engagement based on the 4 A's: *Accessibility, Adaptability, Authorship, and Actualization.*

Accessibility

Accessibility manifests in many ways. When evaluating accessibility, I recommended asking the following questions: Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community? Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate? Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities? Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience—did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public? In Figure 13.8a, the Sandy Hook Memorial fulfills some of these recommendations by having smooth, clear circulation to accommodate differing abilities. It is also located in a more secluded setting, which fulfills the community's wishes to have a more private location (Waldo 2024).

Adaptability

Drawing from spontaneous memorials, the ability to adapt the memorial over time helps the community redefine their grief as it evolves. Additionally, it invites less-involved community members to contribute their ideas and honor the deceased in meaningful ways. When evaluating for accessibility, I recommended asking the following questions: Was there a successful level of adaptation or iteration throughout the engagement process? Did the community help iterate the design? Were requests for change honored? Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves? In Figure 13.8b, the 7/20 Memorials fulfills some of these recommendations by including a canister outside the memorial that invites contributions from the public, effectively altering the memorial as grief evolves (7/20 Memorial Foundation n.d.).

Authorship

There are two aspects of authorship: the authorship of the community and the authorship of the designer. From the designer's efforts to mitigate hierarchies and empower voices within the Provide Opportunities (5 C's) phase, the design should consist of nearly equal amounts of authorship. When evaluating for authorship, I recommended asking the following questions: Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial? Does your authorship accurately reflect community values? Was the intended message of the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design? In Figure 13.8c, the Columbine Memorial showcases deep community authorship, by including in-depth personal messages from the survivors, those who had witnessed the shooting, and community members who aided in the recovery. This magnifies the community's voice (Columbine Memorial n.d.).

Actualization

The last aspect of this evaluation phase is actualization, where the designer can assess whether the process is effectively actualizing the goals and objectives set by themselves, the design team, and the community. This also extends to the physical manifestation of the memorial. When evaluating for actualization, I recommended asking the following questions: Is the memorial in the community's desired location? Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design? Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community? In figure 13.8d, the Grand Candela Memorial fulfills some of these recommendations by being located in a spot that is visible from across the border, honoring the heritage of the victims and their families from either side (SWA Group n.d.) The memorial uses a candle motif of everlasting light—a common symbol of light, faith, and hope in Mexican culture (SWA Group n.d.)

Conclusion

During my research, site visits to memorials, and the interviews I conducted with experts, I encountered overwhelming grief, but also profound reflection. How can I bring impactful change and solidarity for those lost to mass shootings, in a culture that has historically commodified and sensationalized their deaths? How can designers better facilitate grieving spaces when current community engagement frameworks often separate grief from the community engagement process? If we want to design memorials that are more reflective and meaningful to the communities they serve, I believe we should approach community engagement like a paintbrush that passes through many hands—allowing each community member to place a brushstroke on a canvas shared with the designer.

The Seven Steps for Engaging with Grief in Design offers a comprehensive approach of engagement that acknowledges the tragic reality of mass shootings within a community. Not just the grief, and not just the stigma, but the consequences of unspeakable violence. How it affects trust, community, and our intrinsic ability to hope. Beyond the seven steps, the framework I developed introduces an introspective layer to community engagement that is often missing from other frameworks, where hierarchies, divisions, and a lack of specificity often occur. Current community engagement frameworks become more narrow the more marginalized the community; similarly do our conversations about death and grief. My approach encourages designers to see the memorial as a direct reflection of their community engagement efforts and view grief as an opportunity, not a hindrance.

Appendix

Graphic Handbook of The Seven Steps of Engaging with Grief in Design

Pages 60-66 graphically layout the The Seven Steps for Engaging with Grief in Design framework. They contain information from pages 52-57, as well as supplementary information that may aid in understanding how this frameworks operates in a variety of contexts. Step seven—Evaluate the Community Engagement on (4 A's)—applies to the retrospectives on permanent memorials section on page 67.

Figure 13.2 Gathering Information Extended Details

1 Gather Information

Conduct passive research, soften your language, & prioritize the facts

Case Study: The 15 Crosses on Rebel Hill

Figure 18.2a 15 Crosses on Rebel Hill (Siff 2019)

After Columbine, an evangelical carpenter from Illinois constructed and erected a temporary memorial to honor those who had lost their lives in the shooting. What was known as "The 15 Crosses on Rebel Hill" included large wooden crosses, thirteen for the murdered students and teacher, a two for the perpetrators (Fast 487, 2003). This gesture was met with immediate controversy, with many community members pointing out the 'symbolic' violence of placing the perpetrator's names next to the victim's (Fast 487, 2003). There were community members that did support the gesture, still, little was done to reinstall the memorial

The 15 Crosses on Rebel Hill showcases the importance of gathering information, softening your language, and prioritizing the facts in these communities. Although this project was conceived with good intentions, the lack of research into the community contributed to its overall poor reception.

Gathering information should be the very first step to avoid stereotyping the community, using offensive language or gestures, or ultimately, designing a memorial based off of the designer's preconceived notions about the tragedy, the community, the crime, or grief.

"A lot of people got upset about those last two crosses. One visitor even wrote "Evil Bastard" on one of them. I can understand why people would do a thing like that, but on the other hand, it bothers me. Such anger is a destructive emotion. It eats away at whatever peace you have, and in the end, it causes nothing but greater pain than you began with."

- Misty Bernall, mother of one of the murdered students (Fast 487-490, 2003)

"Before knowing who was Christian or not, and put up crosses for the murderers as well, without a moment's reflection that this might add another level of symbolic violence to some families. The father that came up and ripped them down seemed to me to be the most honest about acting in an angry, human, way."

- Edward Linenthal, interviewed by Jonathan D. Fast (Fast 487, 2003)

Figure 13.3 Assess Your Team Extended Details

2 Assess Your Team

Be sure that you and your team is up for the challenge, assess for commitment and dedication, mitigate explicit and implicit biases, & synergize

Mitigating biases and defining commitment

Our biases will contrast by nature, but it becomes a problem when those biases interrupt the design process, and more importantly, the grieving process. It is important to mitigate both explicit and implicit biases when dealing with a highly contested topic such as mass shootings. Be sure that you and your team are committed to serving the community with neutrality, dedication, and support, by locating biases before they interfere with the community engagement.

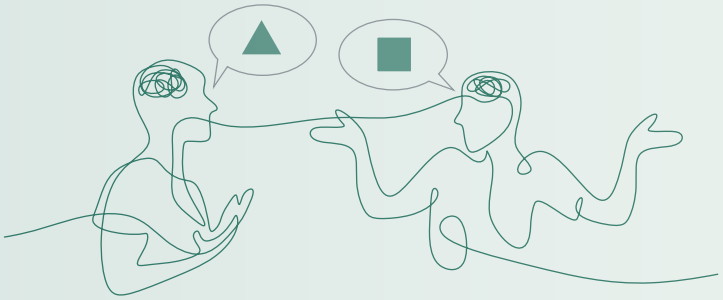


Figure 13.3a Values Mandala

Values Mandala and Synergy

On the right, I have illustrated the importance of orienting your values within a mandala of larger value systems. Locating your values within a larger context can help assess how your values compare, contrast, and are influenced by larger contexts.

After gathering information, you and your team should be assessed on suitability and capacity for the project. By viewing your values in this mandala, you may see where some align or diverge with the project requirements, highlighting suitability. Lastly, being able to synergize the group is paramount to maintaining consistent commitment and capacity. Synergy comes from mediating conflicts, mutual understanding, strong leadership, and unity.

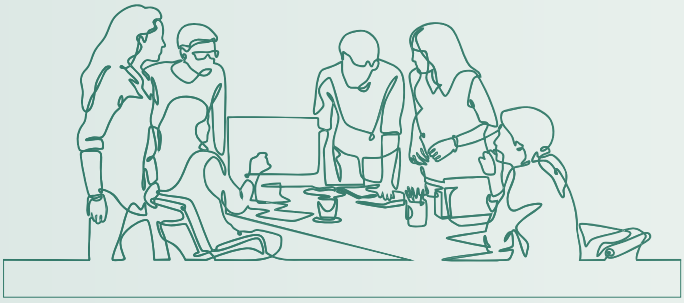


Figure 13.4 Ensure Consistency Extended Details

3

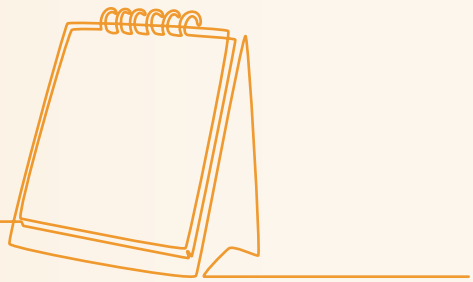
Ensure Consistency

Create a regimented schedule, schedule activities in advance, & maintain consistency and clarity

Consistency leads to clarity

Unpredictability can be assumed from any community engagement project. In grieving communities, it is best to create a consistent engagement environment that is predictable and clear, which in turn mitigates unpredictability on the designer's end.

While making a schedule for engagement consider the schedules of the community members involved in the process. After developing the schedule, ensure that the engagement activities are consistent and reliable. Community members should be assured that if they couldn't make one event, that there will be an opportunity to attend a similar event, ideally, at the same time and day. This will also reduce the risk of attendance slippage or exclusion.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
★ orientation			designer + community ★ meeting		group ★ counseling	
				community requested ★ workshop		
						construction ★ begins

Create a regimented schedule

This schedule should include major deadlines and activities. By ensuring a consistent schedule, the community has a better understanding of the project's timeline and goals.

Schedule community-desired events in advance

Provide the community the opportunity to shape the engagement activities. These requested activities should be scheduled in advance alongside proposed activities, allowing the community to take time away from work or other commitments if necessary.

Figure 13.5 Clarify the Project Extended Details

4 Clarify the Project

Maintain consent, clarify responsibility, & establish major goals and objectives

Clarify and establish responsibilities and goals

At this phase, you, your team, and the community should clarify responsibilities and develop a set of shared goals. Assigning community members with specific responsibilities aids in raising ownership, as well as clarifies the commitments for the project. Goals will also help keep the project schedule consistent, with an explicit end-goal in mind for the final design.

Maintain consent

In 2000, the Sacred Heart of Mary Church in Boulder, Colorado, dedicated a memorial for aborted fetuses, featuring a seven-foot-tall statute of Christ, several gravestones, and thousands of cremated remains belonging to fetuses who were aborted at the Boulder Abortion Clinic (Doss 2006, 305). The ashes were illegally obtained from a local mortuary, who violated a contract with the clinic stating that the remains were not to be used in religious or political ceremonies (Doss 2006, 305).

The design decisions for the Memorial Wall for the Unborn may have come from a good place, but it's execution failed to maintain consent from the community, with the clinic director Warren Hern stating: "(They) have shown that they will stop at nothing to inflict guilt and compound the grief, sadness and sense of loss that these women experience." (Doss 2006, 305).

Throughout the entirety of the engagement process, the community should consent to the commitments, activities, and objectives of the project. The community must also consent to be a part of the engagement process as a whole. Maintain consent with the community not just for their services, but also for the image, use, and expression employed when memorializing those they may have lost. This reduces the chance of inflicting more pain, and increasing a sense of ownership and hierarchical balance between the community and the designer.

Case Study: Memorial Wall for the Unborn

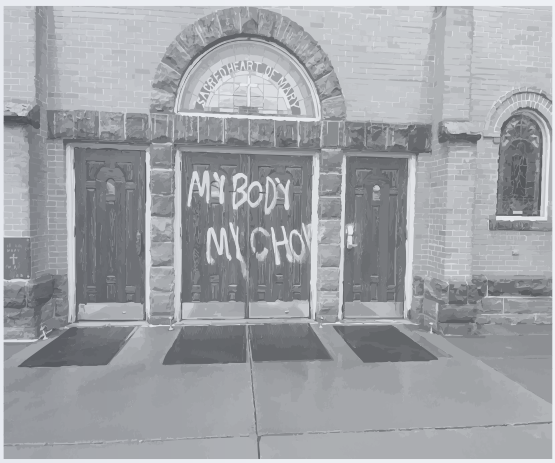


Figure 13.5a Boulder's Sacred Heart of Mary Church Vandalized after Roe v. Wade Protest (Hindawi 2022)

Figure 13.6 Lead with Empathy Extended Details

5

Lead with Empathy

Never lead with assumption, hold yourself accountable, maintain healthy boundaries, & acknowledge different experiences with grief

Never lead with assumptions.

In any project dealing with tragedy, there lies a layer of sensitivity. Mass shootings are particularly politicized, glorified, and commodified tragedies. Unlike other deadly tragedies such as natural disasters, plane crashes, or illness, a mass shooting's root cause has yet to be understood or addressed, often leading to misinformation and speculation holding more power over facts. Listen to the community's unique experiences, and never assume the contents or cause of the tragedy.

Hold yourself accountable.

As a misrepresented tragedy, these communities often carry the burden of stigma, stereotypes, and disenfranchisement. Hold yourself accountable for not perpetuating those issues through the use of empathetic listening.

Maintain healthy boundaries.

Although the goal is to connect with the community, it is important to understand the power of healthy boundaries. Getting too close may lower the lessen the degree of professionality that comes with being a facilitator of activities and direction, while being too distant is detrimental to building trust.

Acknowledge the differences between your grief and the community's.

Mass shootings are uncommon but are made to feel like an epidemic by the media. Thus, you must recognize that the grief of these communities is unique. Grief, however, is a completely natural and universal experience. Empathize with that grief, but acknowledge the differences between your experiences and theirs.

Below are some suggestions of what not to say when discussing grief

"They are in a better place" or "God wanted them to be with him."

These phrases assume the beliefs of the individual and dismisses the physical absence of the deceased. Avoid non-secular language.

"I know how you feel."

Everyone's grief is different---respect those differences, and Lead with Empathy

"Be strong."

Avoid putting pressure on the individual to act a certain way, instead, allow them to feel however they feel. Be the facilitator of open, honest, and safe spaces to grieve.

"There is a reason for everything."

Beliefs about the meaning of death vary between person to person; avoid assigning meaning or motive to someone else's loss.

Figure 13.6a Recommendations for Discussing Grief

Figure 13.7 Provide Opportunities to: (5 C's) Extended Details

6

Provide Opportunities to: (5 C's)

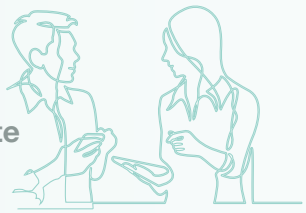
Connect

Curate your design team to include professionals equipped to mediate contentious conversations. Although you have developed a sense of the social pressures they are experiencing, as well as the depth of their loss and grief, mistakes can lead to catastrophic consequences. Hiring social scientists can help you understand the community while providing safe spaces to connect with one another. Enhanced trust will equate to more honesty and, thus, a more accurate reflection of the community's experiences and values.

Collaborate

Allow the community to collaborate during all stages of the engagement process. Collaborate during activities. Collaborate on schedules. Collaborate on design ideas. Collaboration allows for a diverse set of values, beliefs, and ideas to shine through in the final design. The community should be able to shape the community engagement through a collaborative environment facilitated by you and your design team, with the goal of allowing many voices to be heard.

Communicate



Communication is key! When voices go unheard, community members lose ownership of the design. Members should have an equitable opportunity to communicate their desires, concerns, and goals before, during, and after the design process. Talking about grief can promote healing and mutual understanding, as well as foster positive healing spaces.

Contribute

Invite contributions at all phases of the engagement process—ideas, objects, services, and criticisms. This will help personalize the experience as well as ensure a high level of ownership for the community. This ties into both the Collaborate and Construct opportunities in this phase, when voices should be heard and ideas should be incorporated into the design.

Construct

Provide the community with opportunities to construct the memorial. Something small, like creating personal mementos and messages, or something large, like contributing materials and services, creates harmony between the designer's work and the community's contributions. Picture the community visiting the memorial with the knowledge that they placed stones in one corner and constructed memory spaces in another.

Figure 13.8 Evaluate the Community Engagement on: (4 A's) Extended Details

7

Evaluate the Community Engagement on: (4 A's)

The evaluation process for your community engagement should occur throughout the entire project. This allows you and your design team to repeatedly check the quality of your efforts and address unpredictability accordingly. It also helps the you, your design team, and the community achieve intended goals.

Accessibility

Accessibility manifests in many ways. Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community? Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate? Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities? Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience—did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public? The Sandy Hook Memorial provides smooth, clear circulation to accommodate differing abilities and is located in a more secluded setting to accommodate community wishes.

Figure 13.8a Sandy Hook Memorial (SWA Group, n.d.)

Adaptability

Drawing from spontaneous memorials, the ability to adapt the memorial over time helps the community redefine their grief as it evolves. Additionally, it invites less-involved community members to contribute their ideas and honor the deceased in meaningful ways. Was there a successful level of adaptation or iteration throughout the engagement process? Did the community help iterate the design? Were requests for change honored? Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves? The 7/20 Memorial offers a "drop box" that invites thoughtful contributions from the public.

Figure 13.8b 7/20 Memorial Message Canister (7/20 Memorial Foundation, n.d.)

Authorship

There are two aspects of authorship: the authorship of the community and the authorship of the designer. From your efforts to dismantle hierarchies and empower voices in the Provide Opportunities (5 C's) phase, the design should consist of nearly equal amounts of authorship. Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial? Does your authorship accurately reflect community values? Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design? The Columbine memorial includes in-depth personal messages from the survivors, highlighting the communities voice.

Figure 13.8c Columbine Memorial, Epitaph for Corey DePooter (Columbine Memorial, n.d.)

Actualization

The last aspect of this evaluation phase is actualization, where you can assess whether the process is effectively actualizing the goals and objectives set by you, your team, and the community. This also extends to the physical manifestation of the memorial. Is the memorial in the community's desired location? Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design? Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community? The Grand Candela Memorial is located in a spot that is visible from across the border, honoring the heritage of the victims and their families from either side, using a candle motif of everlasting light to symbolize hope.

Figure 13.8d Grand Candela Memorial (SWA Group, n.d.)

Retrospectives of Permanent Memorials

The following assessments are based only on the community engagement efforts employed by the designers. The criteria drawings from step 7 of The Seven Steps for Engaging with Grief in Design framework, which assess accessibility, adaptability, authorship, and actualization at all points in the engagement process. For more resources on the community engagement efforts made for each memorial, please refer to the following sources:

For resources on the Sandy Hook Memorial, refer to:
(Angelillo 2013), (Doerr 2019), (Hanna 2018), (NPR 2022), (O'Kane 2022), (SWA Group. n.d.), (United Press International 2013), and (Waldo 2024)

For resources on the Boulder Remembrance Garden Memorial, refer to:
(City of Boulder. n.d.), and (Ross 2023)

For resources on Columbine Memorial, refer to:
(Christianity Today, 1999), (Columbine Memorial Foundation. n.d.), (DHM Design. n.d.), (Fast 2003), (Grider 2007), (Mauser. n.d.), and (Siff 2019).

For resources on the 7/20 Memorial, refer to:
(Colorado Public Radio 2018) and (7/20 Memorial Foundation. n.d.)

For resources on The April 16th Memorial, refer to:
(April 16 Memorial, n.d.), (Jones 2009), and (The Trace 2017).

For resources on the Grand Candela Memorial, refer to:
(Hunt 2024), (SWA Group n.d.) and (Tinajero, Roberto, et al. 2023)

For resources on December 2: Curtain of Courage Memorial, refer to:
(Hood Design Studio 2022), (Harris 2022), and (Morin 2018)

For resources on The Sutherland Springs Chruch Memorial, refer to:
(Yan, Holly, and Dakin Andone 2017)

For resources on the American Civic Association Memorial Park, refer to:
(Collins 2019) and (Press & Sun-Bulletin 2019)

For resources on The Tree of Life Memorial, refer to:
(Deto 2023) and (Studio Libeskind. n.d.)

For resources on 8/4 Memorial, refer to:
(8/4 Memorial Committee. n.d.)

Figure 14.1 Rubric for Engagement

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	

Figure 14.2 “The Clearing” Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial (SWA Group n.d.)

Figure 14.2a Rubric for Engagement: “The Clearing” Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial, Newtown CT

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	B	B	A	A
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	C	C	B	A
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	C	B	A	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	A	A	A	

Figure 14.3 “Remembrance Garden” Boulder 2021 Memorial (Cooper, 2024)

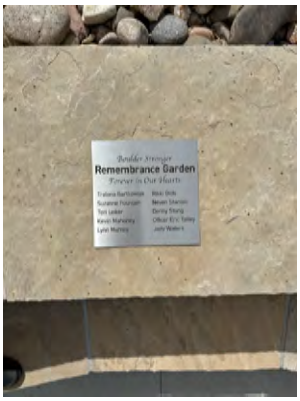


Figure 14.3a “Remembrance Garden” Boulder 2021 Memorial, Boulder CO

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	**Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?**	**Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?**	**Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?**	**Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?**
	B	B	B	A
Adaptability	**Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?**	**Was the community a part of the iteration phase?**	**Were requests for change honored?**	**Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?**
	B	C	C	B
Authorship	**Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?**	**Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?**	**Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?**	
	B	B	B	
Actualization	**Is the memorial in the community's desired location?**	**Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?**	**Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?**	
	B	B	B	

Figure 14.4 The Columbine Memorial (Columbine Memorial, n.d.)

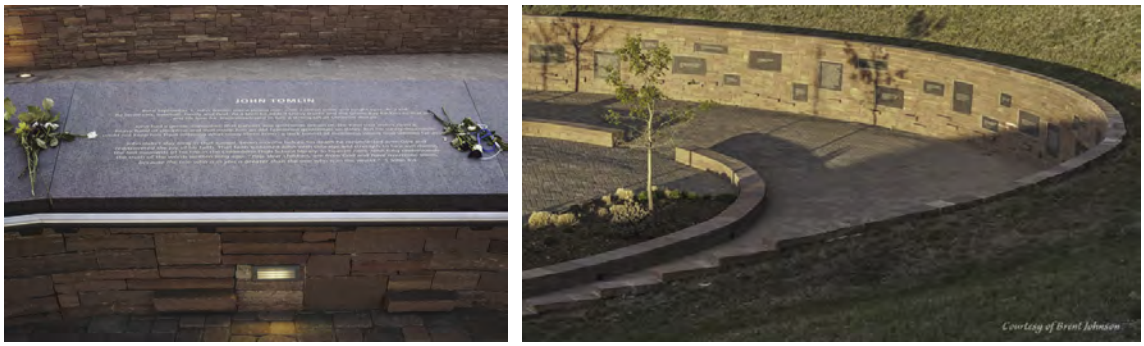


Figure 14.4a Rubric for Engagement: “The Columbine Memorial”, Littleton CO

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	B	B	A	A
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	B	A	B	B
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	A	A	A	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	A	A	A	

Figure 14.5 7/20 Memorial (7/20 Memorial n.d.)

Figure 14.5a Rubric for Engagement: “The 7/20 Memorial”, Aurora CO

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	B	B	B	B
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	C	C	C	A
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	B	B	A	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	B	B	A	

Figure 14.6 The April 16 Memorial (April 16 Memorial n.d.)

Figure 14.6a Rubric for Engagement: “The April 16 Memorial”, Blacksburg VA

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	B	B	B	A
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	B	A	B	B
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	A	A	A	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	A	A	A	

Figure 14.7 Grand Candela Memorial (SWA Group n.d.)

Figure 14.7a Rubric for Engagement: Grand Candela Memorial, El Paso TX

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	B	B	A	A
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	C	C	B	B
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	C	A	A	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	A	A	A	

Figure 14.8 December 2nd: Curtain of Courage Memorial (Hood Design Studio n.d.)

Figure 14.8a Rubric for Engagement: December 2nd: Curtain of Courage Memorial, San Bernardino CA

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	B	B	A	A
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	C	C	B	B
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	B	A	A	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	A	B	A	

Figure 14.9 Sutherland Springs Church Memorial (Yan and Andone 2017; Olsen 2017)



Figure 14.9a Rubric for Engagement: Sutherland Springs Church Memorial, Sutherland Springs TX

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	B	B	A	A
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	B	B	C	C
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	B	A	A	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	B	A	A	

Figure 14.10 American Civic Association Memorial Park (Press & Sun-Bulletin 2019; Collins 2019)

Figure 14.10a Rubric for Engagement: American Civic Association Memorial Park, Binghamton NY

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	C	B	B	A
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	B	A	B	B
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	A	A	A	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	B	A	A	

Figure 14.11 The Tree of Life Memorial (Studio Libeskind n.d.; Deto 2023)



Figure 14.11a Rubric for Engagement: The Tree of Life Memorial, Pittsburgh PA

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	B	A	B	A
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	A	A	B	C
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	B	B	A	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	A	A	B	

Figure 14.12 8/4 Memorial (8/4 Memorial Committee n.d.)

Figure 14.12a Rubric for Engagement: 8/4 Memorial, Dayton OH

Grading Scale on Engagement

A= Adequate
B= Moderate
C= Inadequate

Accessibility	Are your community engagement efforts accessible to a wide range of the community?	Are the activities you facilitate inclusive and accessible to all who participate?	Is the location, orientation, and circulation designed to accommodate people with differing abilities?	Is the memorial accessible to the intended audience; did you fulfill the community's wishes for it to be private or public?
	A	A	A	A
Adaptability	Was there a successful level of community iteration throughout the project?	Was the community a part of the iteration phase?	Were requests for change honored?	Are there opportunities for the community to alter the physical memorial as their grief evolves?
	A	A	B	B
Authorship	Is there apparent authorship from the community in the memorial?	Does the designer's authorship accurately reflect community values?	Was the intended message from the community portrayed in the final use and presentation of the design?	
	B	B	B	
Actualization	Is the memorial in the community's desired location?	Were requested materials, fonts, images, mementos, symbols, or other features incorporated into the design?	Does the design accurately depict, through symbolism, the intentions, characteristics, values, and beliefs of the community?	
	B	A	B	

Bibliography

Angelillo, John. “Sandy Hook Memorial Dismantled.” UPI, February 17, 2013. https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2013/02/17/Sandy-Hook-memorial-dismantled/38161361143348/.

“April 16 Memorial.” n.d. We Remember: April 16 Memorial. Virginia Tech. Accessed August 10, 2024. https://www.weremember.vt.edu/april-16-memorial.html.

Bates, Carolyn. “Interview with Carolyn Bates.” Interviewed by Cameron Cooper, Zoom, October 25, 2024.

Bates, Carolyn M. “There’s Something about Uvalde: American Patriarchy and the Slaughter of Innocent.” Journal of Analytical Psychology 69, no. 2 (April 2024): 227–45. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5922.12995.

Bowling for Columbine. Directed by Michael Moore. Los Angeles: United Artists, 2002. DVD.

Capire Consulting. “Engagement Triangle Relaunch: Understanding the Purpose of Your Engagement.” Recorded June 1, 2022. http://capire.com.au/events/learning-lab-the-engagement-triangle-relaunch/.

Chawla, Louise. “Interview with Louise Chawla.” Interviewed by Cameron Cooper, November 12, 2024

Christianity Today. 1999. “Columbine Shooting: ‘Do You Believe in God?’” Christianity Today, October 4, 1999. https://www.christianitytoday.com/1999/10/columbine-shooting-do-you-believe-in-god/.

City of Newcastle. “Community Engagement Framework: 2013–2018.” Newcastle, Australia: New South Wales Government, 2013. https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/getmedia/d5dae991-ad82-4e60-b284-601ec191cd80/Comm_Engagement_framework_Final_2.aspx.

City of Boulder. n.d. “Boulder Strong.” Accessed July 8, 2024. https://bouldercolorado.gov/boulderstrong.

Collins, Kate. 2019. Photograph(s) in Binghamton Mass Shooting Victims Honored at ACA Memorial Park. Press & Sun-Bulletin, March 25, 2019. https://www.pressconnects.com/picture-gallery/news/local/2019/03/25/binghamton-mass-shooting-victims-honored-aca-memorial-park/3224463002/.

Colorado Public Radio. 2018. “Aurora’s Memorial to the 2012 Theater Shooting Takes Flight.” Colorado Public Radio, July 19, 2018. https://www.cpr.org/2018/07/19/

auroras-memorial-to-the-2012-theater-shooting-takes-flight/. Accessed August 21, 2024.

Columbine Memorial Foundation. n.d. “Overview.” Accessed August 5, 2024. https://www.columbinememorial.org/overview/.

Deto, Ryan. 2023. “Designs Unveiled for Permanent Memorial to Honor Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting Victims.” WESA, December 7, 2023. https://www.wesa.fm/identity-community/2023-12-07/pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting-memorial-design.

DHM Design. n.d. “DHM Design | Portfolio | Columbine Memorial.” DHM Design.https://dhmdesign.com/portfolio/columbine-memorial/#4. Accessed August 21, 2024.

Doerr, K. T. “Never Forget Sandy Hook Elementary: Haunting Memorials to a School Massacre.” Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology 10, no. 2/3 (October 2019): 173–90. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=7c82aca8-e4bd-3c1d-b0d4-f32f4ef9988e.

Doss, Erika. “Interview with Erika Doss.” Interviewed by Cameron Cooper, Zoom, October 17, 2024.

Doss, Erika. “Spontaneous Memorials and Contemporary Modes of Mourning in America.” Material Religion 2, no. 3 (November 2006): 294–318. Accessed October 10, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2006.11423053.

8/4 Memorial Committee. n.d. 8/4 Memorial. Accessed January 6, 2025. https://www.8-4memorial.com.

Elmasry, Mohamad Hamas, and Mohammed el-Nawawy. “Can a Non-Muslim Mass Shooter Be a ‘Terrorist’? A Comparative Content Analysis of the Las Vegas and Orlando Shootings.” Journalism Practice 14, no. 7 (September 2020): 863–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1643766.

Escobar, Arturo. Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Independence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

Fast, Jonathan D. “After Columbine: How People Mourn Sudden Death.” Social Work 48, no. 4 (October 2003): 484. Accessed October 10, 2024. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=f8680bce-b7f6-3cc7-839f-ec5342d29e5f.

Follman, Mark, Gavin Aronsen, and Deanna Pan. “A Guide to Mass Shootings in America.” Mother Jones, July 20, 2012. Accessed February 2025. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mass-shootings-map/.

Foote, Kenneth E. “Interviews with Kenneth E. Foote.” Interviewed by Cameron Cooper, Zoom, September 2024 - February 2025..

Foote, Kenneth E. Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997.

Google. Google Maps. Accessed August 2024–February 2025. https://www.google.com/maps/@40.0111733,-105.2779987,3512m/data=!3m1!1e3?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MDEyOS4xIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D.

Grider, Sylvia. "Public Grief and the Politics of Memorial: Contesting the Memory of 'the Shooters' at Columbine High School." Anthropology Today 23, no. 3 (June 2007): 3–7. Accessed October 10, 2024. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=a48df733-f517-3e35-b20a-6b81a8d8360e.

Hanna, Katrina N. "Framing Public Memory: Developing Moral Vernacular Discourse through Photographs of the New Sandy Hook Elementary School." Ohio Communication Journal 56 (March 2018): 19–32. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=60d15d94-ba18-33e6-a143-1e25557a41da.

Harris, Elizabeth A. 2022. "How Do You Memorialize a Tragedy That Is Still Happening?" New York Times, June 22, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/22/arts/design/mass-shooting-memorials-san-bernardino-pulse-newtown.html.

Hasan, Mehdi. 2013. "Our Shameful Hierarchy: Some Deaths Matter More than Others." The Independent, April 22, 2013. https://www.the-independent.com/voices/comment/our-shameful-hierarchy-some-deaths-matter-more-than-others-8581715.html.

Hicks, T. Community-Engaged Interior Design: An Illustrated Guide. 1st ed. New York: Routledge, 2023. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003366102.

Hollingsworth, J. 2017. "Inside the First Baptist Church: How the Tragedy Unfolded." CNN, November 13, 2017. https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/13/us/inside-first-baptist-church/index.html.

Hofer, Stefanie. "Lockout: Spacing Trauma and Recovery in the Aftermath of the Virginia Tech Shootings." American Imago 72, no. 3 (October 2015): 231–83. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=61bc8803-4037-3e53-934b-d4fb8d63bbe5.

Hood Design Studio. 2022. "December 2: Curtain of Courage Memorial." Hood Design Studio. https://www.hooddesignstudio.com/curtainofcourage.

Huang, Su-Hsin, and Chi-Shiun Chiang. 2019. "Death Awareness and Palliative Care: A Narrative Review." Journal of Palliative Care 34 (4): 256–64. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6786270/.

Hunt, Patrick. 2024. "Grand Candela Memorial." HLB Lighting Design. https://hlblighting.

com/project/grand-candela-memorial/. Accessed August 21, 2024.

Johnson, Kay. “Grief in North America, a Death-Denying Society.” International Journal of Palliative Nursing 10, no. 9 (2004): 435.

Jones, Kathleen W. “The Thirty-Third Victim: Representations of Seung Hui Cho in the Aftermath of the ‘Virginia Tech Massacre.’” Journal of the History of Childhood & Youth 2, no. 1 (January 2009): 64–82. https://doi.org/10.1353/hcy.0.0041.

Jowarder, Mohaimenul Islam. “Aftermath of Uvalde Shooting: An Account of Psychological Trauma of Survivor Children.” Journal of Loss & Trauma 28, no. 7 (October 2023): 588–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2022.2150011.

Killeen Daily Herald. 2022. “30 Years Later: Mass Shooting Trend Lasts Long After Luby’s Massacre.” Killeen Daily Herald, April 7, 2022. https://kdhnews.com/news/local/30-years-later-mass-shooting-trend-lasts-long-after-luby-s-massacre/article_26eb5c54-2ea3-11ec-9c3b-7fb53c36b2a3.html. Accessed August 21, 2024.

Lysiak, Matthew. Newtown: An American Tragedy. New York: Gallery Books, 2013.

Mauser, Tom. n.d. “The Spontaneous Memorial.” Daniel Mauser: Remembering a Columbine Victim. Accessed October 5, 2024. https://danielmauser.com/the-spontaneous-memorial/.

Montt-Blanchard, Denise, Sheba Najmi, and Carla Galvão Spinillo. “Considerations for Community Engagement in Design Education.” She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation 9, no. 2 (Summer 2023): 235–53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2023.05.004.

Morin, Aysel. “Typifying Terror: The Pattern of Storytelling in Terror News and the Case of San Bernardino Shooting.” Global Media Journal: Turkish Edition 9, no. 17 (September 2018): 33–52. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=2b584551-a619-3208-af6d-0c8f5b681643.

NPR. 2022. “A Memorial to the Sandy Hook Victims Opens to the Public.” NPR, November 13, 2022. https://www.npr.org/2022/11/13/1136381053/sandy-hook-memorial. Accessed August 21, 2024.

Olson, Scott. 2017. Photograph(s) in Inside the First Baptist Church: A Scene of Chaos, Horror, and Questions. CNN, November 13, 2017. https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/13/us/inside-first-baptist-church/index.html.

O’Kane, Caitlin. 2022. “Sandy Hook Memorial Unveiled.” Architectural Digest, December 18, 2022. https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/sandy-hook-memorial-unveiled. Accessed August 21, 2024.

Press & Sun-Bulletin. 2019. “Binghamton Mass Shooting Victims Honored at ACA Memorial Park.” Press & Sun-Bulletin, March 25, 2019. https://www.pressconnects.com/picture-gallery/news/local/2019/03/25/binghamton-mass-shooting-victims-honored-aca-memorial-park/3224463002/.

Roudbari, Shawhin. “Interview with Shawhin Roudbari.” Interviewed by Cameron Cooper, October 30, 2024.

Saja Hindawi. 2022. “Boulder’s Sacred Heart of Mary Church Vandalized in Apparent Abortion-Rights Protest.” The Denver Post, May 4, 2022. https://www.denverpost.com/2022/05/04/sacred-heart-of-mary-church-boulder-vandalism-abortion-rights/.

7/20 Memorial Foundation. n.d. “Ascentiate.” Accessed August 12, 2024. https://www.7-20memorial.org/ascentiate.

Siff, Andrew. 2019. “Opinion: 20 Years after Columbine, We’re Losing Ground on Gun Violence.” The Oregonian, April 17, 2019. https://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/2019/04/opinion-20-years-after-columbine-were-losing-ground-on-gun-violence.html.

Silberberg, Mina, et al. Principles of Community Engagement. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.: National Institutes of Health, 2011.

Studio Libeskind. n.d. Tree of Life. Accessed December 7, 2024. https://libeskind.com/work/tree-of-life/.

SWA Group. n.d. “Grand Candela Memorial.” SWA Group. https://www.swagroup.com/projects/grand-candela-memorial/. Accessed August 21, 2024.

SWA Group. n.d. “The Clearing: Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial.” SWA Group.https://www.swagroup.com/projects/the-clearing-sandy-hook-permanent-memorial/. Accessed August 21, 2024.

SWA Group. n.d. “Resonant Memory: One October Memorial.” SWA Group.https://www.swagroup.com/projects/resonant-memory-one-october-memorial/. Accessed August 21, 2024.

Taylor, Ross. “Boulder Strong: A Large-Scale Collaborative Community Portrait Archive in the Wake of a Mass Shooting.” Visual Communication Quarterly 30, no. 3 (July 2023): 168–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/15551393.2023.2232295.

“Teaching + Learning Yearbook 2019–2020.” d.school, Stanford University. Accessed April 22, 2024. https://issuu.com/stanforddschool/docs/stanford_d.school_yearbook_pages_lowres.

Tinajero, Roberto, et al. “Violence in Our Community: Middle Level Students’ Voices on Walmart Shootings in El Paso, Texas.” Middle School Journal 54, no. 3 (January 2023): 6–16. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=23f1bf5d-1c83-349a-bb6c-ce5d20f0b3b1.

The Architect’s Newspaper. 2023. “OLIN, SWA Group Among Shortlisted Firms to Design Memorial for Las Vegas Shooting Victims.” The Architect’s Newspaper, June 27, 2023. https://www.archpaper.com/2023/06/olin-swa-shortlisted-firms-design-memorial-las-vegas-victims-mass-shooting/. Accessed August 21, 2024.

The Architect’s Newspaper. 2023. “The 1 October Memorial Committee Recommends JCJ Architecture’s Design for Las Vegas Mass Shooting Memorial.” The Architect’s Newspaper, August 15, 2023. https://www.archpaper.com/2023/08/the-1-october-memorial-committee-recommends-jcj-architectures-design-las-vegas-mass-shooting-memorial/.

The Trace. 2017. “Virginia Tech Shooting Victims Honored with New Memorial.” The Trace, April 17, 2017. https://www.thetrace.org/2017/04/virginia-tech-shooting-victims-stone-memorial/. Accessed August 21, 2024.

United Press International. 2013. “Sandy Hook Memorial Dismantled.” UPI, February 17, 2013. https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2013/02/17/Sandy-Hook-memorial-dismantled/38161361143348/.

Waldo, Ben. 2024. “Interview with Ben Waldo.” Interviewed by Cameron Cooper, Zoom, October 25, 2024.

Waldrop, Deborah P. “Denying and Defying Death: The Culture of Dying in 21st Century America.” Omega - Journal of Death and Dying 64, no. 4 (2011): 571–76.

We Remember: Virginia Tech Memorials. 2024. “April 16 Memorial.” Virginia Tech.https://www.weremember.vt.edu/april-16-memorial.html. Accessed August 21, 2024.

Yan, Holly, and Dakin Andone. 2017. “Inside the First Baptist Church: A Scene of Chaos, Horror, and Questions.” CNN, November 13, 2017. https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/13/us/inside-first-baptist-church/index.html.