Remembering: Community Commemoration After Disaster

ANNE EYRE

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

——George Santayana (1863–1952)

On August 21 2005, Prince Charles led national commemorations in Britain marking the defeat of Japan in World War II 60 years earlier. A series of events on this day and over the previous months highlighted the value and significance of communities remembering the war, not only for the past, but also for the future. Like other forms of mass fatality incidents, including disasters, these events and their marking have become an important part of the history and identity of past and present communities, not only in Britain, but throughout the world. An indication of the function of commemoration both in relation to war and other events is reflected in a comment made that day by the British Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram, who stated that these events had encouraged veterans to talk about their wartime experience, some for the first time, and pass on their own family's story to younger generations giving them the opportunity to keep these memories alive (BBC News, August 21, 2005).

This chapter explores key issues associated with the nature, meaning, and purpose of community remembrance following disaster. First the historical roots of the study of death rituals within anthropology, sociology, and psychology are reviewed. This is followed by a discussion of traditional and changing expressions of grief and remembering after disaster, from spontaneous to more organized displays. The symbolic and social meaning of activities associated with body recovery, identification, and disposal are briefly examined, along with analyses that suggest that religion and rituals might reflect both community consensus and conflict. The political nature and role of remembrance activities is highlighted in a review of the development of official memorials service and other anniversary events. Finally, the involvement of communities in the establishment of permanent memorials is discussed as an example of a move towards the increasing empowerment of those affected by disaster. It is suggested that in the future, opportunities for individuals and communities to take control of their own recovery might be enhanced through greater control over the organization and ownership of remembrance activities, including through use of the Internet and the work of disaster action groups.

POST-DISASTER RITUALS: ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ROOTS

The study of communal remembering is linked to the studies of the social recognition of death and associated rituals which generally can be traced back to anthropological and sociological roots at the beginning of the twentieth century. Ethnographers such as Arnold Van Gennep (1960) became interested in the general patterns of ritual in societies celebrating changes in social status and position. The rites of passage he discussed included those marking the physical and symbolic transition from being alive to being dead, these states being both biologically and socially defined.

The sociologist Emile Durkheim (1915) developed the study of collective ritual in relation to their integrative effects and the ways in which they bind communities together. For him, and later sociologists such as Parsons (1971) and Bellah (1975), religious rituals were an expression and affirmation of collective ideals; thereby they functioned to reflect, sustain, and legitimize the social and moral order of society. Such Functionalist approaches to ritual are relevant to our study of post-disaster rituals in so far as they reflect and endorse a sense of family and community, expressing and reinforcing a shared sense of meaning and understanding, even if that sense of order and meaning has been temporarily suspended at a time of shock and loss. Following disaster, when a fundamental sense of order and security can feel threatened, the potential value of such rituals in reestablishing feelings of control, belonging, and social solidarity within and beyond one's immediate community is understandable.

These anthropological and sociological approaches to the study of ritual as symbolic actions make an important link for disaster researchers between the physical or biological status of death and the social. They highlight that in considering the nature and meaning of disaster rituals, we need to look at their deeper significance and purpose, and the transition they mark between one state of individual and social being and another. They suggest that disaster rituals might also be as much about social and political identity and change as about individual expressions of loss, change, and status. As we will see, commemorative activities after collective tragedy are indeed often accompanied by social and political commentaries on a broader change of state and status for a family, community, or society, for example, from being "innocent" to tarnished, broken or damaged; from being "safe" and resilient to "unsafe" and vulnerable. They can suggest and echo a sense of things never feeling or being quite the same again.

RITUALS, GRIEF AND MOURNING

The anthropologist Paul Rosenblatt links the social function of death rituals with the psychological importance of grieving when he suggests that proper grieving involves engaging in certain rituals and being able to think, feel and do certain things (1997, p. 43). A further context for the study of post-disaster rituals is thus provided by studies of grief, mourning and bereavement, including those emanating from the fields of psychology, counselling and psychoanalysis. The notion of "grief work" engendered in these disciplines follows from the classic study of mourning and melancholia pursued in 1917 by Sigmund Freud (1984). The notion of mourning as a process has been developed in relation to identified stages or phases of grieving, as reflected in the series of mourning "tasks" outlined by writers such as William Worden (1982). More recently, as our understanding of trauma has increased, researchers in this field have also reinforced the significance of social support for those who are

traumatized, including the value of social responses to death, grief, and mourning embodied in rituals. The significance of social acceptance and support in either helping or hindering psychological recovery is illustrated in the works of writers such as Judith Herman as we shall see later.

By extension, the lack of ritual and collective expression following death has often been regarded as an impediment to successful grieving and recovery. In 1965 Gorer suggested that the apparent lack of ritual in contemporary Western societies made grieving more difficult. In contrast to this, some have suggested more recently that British society has become stricken with "mourning sickness," addicted to showy displays of empathy because it is a lonely and unhappy society (West, 2004, p. 7). What both approaches recognize, however, as reinforced by Rosenblatt, is that grief is fundamentally a social process: "Many Westerners think of grieving as an individual action, and much of grief therapy is individually focussed. Yet the mourning rituals of many societies are complex, elaborate, spread out over months or years, and generally require collective participation" (1997, p. 43).

Building on a range of disciplinary backgrounds, therefore, the study of ritual and re-membrance following disaster can be more fully enhanced by drawing on from both individ-ualistic and collective intellectual perspectives. Indeed within disaster studies the sociologist Kai Erikson has made a valuable connection between psychological, anthropological, and social approaches in his writings on the human experience of modern disaster. From his anal-yses of communities afflicted by collective tragedy, he has highlighted two types of disaster trauma, namely individual trauma ("a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defences so suddenly and with such force that one cannot respond effectively") and community trauma ("a blow to the tissues of social life that damages the bonds linking people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community" [1994, p. 233]). Rob Gordon has developed this analysis of the effects of emergencies on social fabric and the practical implications for recovery strategies (2004).

The study of post-disaster rituals that follows draws on this approach in acknowledging both personal and communal elements of disaster impacts and responses. The meaning of "dis-aster" as applied in this chapter embraces a wide range of events, causes and consequences, from "natural" disasters such as the Asian tsunami (2004), to humanly caused incidents of multiple deaths, including terrorist acts. They include incidents that, according to some defini-tions or agency protocols might not be considered "disasters" as such, but in relation to agency responses and the extent to which they are "major incidents" either operationally or in terms of their extensive communal impact, are relevant to our analysis here. They all share in common the fact that they involve trauma and communal expressions of grief and mourning.

SPONTANEOUS EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF

Despite Gorer's lamentations forty years ago about the decline of ritual, within Western so-cieties such as Britain symbolic expressions of grief following sudden death appear to be increasing rather than diminishing. According to West, "today's three Cs are not, as one minis-ter of education said, "culture, creativity and community," but rather, as Theodore Dalrymple has put it, "compassion, caring and crying in public" (2004, p. 1). Spontaneous expressions of grief are now the rule rather than the exception following sudden, tragic death in, for example, fatal road crashes, acts of murder and disasters.

Today, with advances in technology and the growth in immediate media interest through "twenty-four hour news," disasters become headline stories and publicly owned virtually as

they happen or very soon after. In many instances, following the first news stories, people start to gravitate toward disaster-stricken communities and places to express their shock and grief. Flowers, candles, toys, and other mementoes are often left at such disaster sites and associated focal points as these forms of convergence become management challenges for those tasked with organizing disaster response and recovery. Personalized tributes may take the form of poignant messages left with such memorabilia and, as disaster response becomes more formalized, facilities may be provided for visitors to contribute through organized books of condolence.

An example of such spontaneous outpourings of grief was the response in the first week following the Hillsborough Disaster of 1989. Following the deaths of 96 Liverpool fans at the Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield, England, more than a million people visited Anfield, Liverpool's home ground, to lay flowers and place written tributes. On the day after the disaster the media reported how some visitors had left flowers at Liverpool's famous "Shankly Gates." Soon the club had to open the gates and admit the thousand of visitors who started queuing to leave their own tributes at the ground. This ritual continued during the following week of official morning in the City. Of the first week I wrote:

> By five o'clock the Kop end of the ground, where home supporters always stand, had become a shrine bedecked with flowers. The visitors continued to arrive from all over the country over the next seven days of official mourning, queuing for hours in silent solemnity. The field of flowers gradually grew towards the centre of the pitch, whilst the concrete steps behind the goal were transformed into a carpet of scarves, pictures and personal messages. Scarves were also hung on the metal barriers, many of which became dedicated to the fans that stood behind them week after week. School friends penned the names of their lost classmates on the walls outside the stadium. These messages expressed personal and communal grief as much, if not more, than any of the official ceremonies could have. For many people, visiting Anfield—Liverpool's home ground—brought their grief to the surface. (Eyre, 1989, p. 12)

CONNECTEDNESS IN LIFE AND DEATH

Analyzing the social impact of this community tragedy, Walter makes the point that the communal grief at Anfield seemed different from the fragmented grief following the major train and plane accidents that had happened in Britain in the preceding 12 months, incidents that between them had claimed more than 300 lives. With each of these, Walter states, most of those who had died were strangers to one another. The grief, he suggests, was the same, but how could it be shared? What Anfield showed was that "where there is connectedness in life, there is connectedness in death—even in the late twentieth century" (1990, p. 70). Walter noted that the City of Liverpool has both a uniquely strong sense of communal identity and an identity symbolised by football, so "a footballing tragedy attacks the city's very heart" (1990, p. 69).

The aftermath of Hillsborough was not the first time such large-scale spontaneous grief was witnessed and broadcasted via the media in Britain and in a way that reflected the connectedness within a community's life and death. More than 20 years earlier, in 1966, the disaster in a small village called Aberfan had prompted a similar response. On October 21st, the last day before the half-term holiday, a waste coal tip suddenly slid down the side of a mountain overshadowing the small mining community in South Wales and engulfing the village school and all within the vicinity. 144 people perished, including virtually a generation of its schoolchildren. The sense of national and even international grief was huge, as demonstrated in the convergence of gifts, money and flowers sent to the community and in the continuing media interest in the plight of the village's survivors. Of the initial response Miller wrote,

"Flowers were sent from all over the world and the Director of Parks and Cemeteries laid them out in a giant cross on the hillside, 130 feet high with arms 40 feet across" (1974, p. 29).

At Aberfan, as elsewhere, the extent of tragedy is often symbolically expressed in the number and status of official visitors to the scene within the first few days. In South Wales this included a visit by the Queen and other dignitaries. In 1996 at Dunblane, a small Scottish town where the shooting of 16 children and their teacher in a primary school caused widespread national shock and revulsion, the Prime Minister and leader of the Opposition appeared together in the community within days of the tragedy, a symbolic gesture made all the more meaningful by its proximity to political elections. Sometimes, however, the attendance (or not) of a national dignitary can cause upset in communities where relationships within or with outsiders are already fractious. In Liverpool following Hillsborough, the Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher was not a welcome figure given preexisting tensions between local and national governments in the years prior to the disaster.

Emergency managers responding in the initial days and weeks of an incident often find themselves involved in organizing the itinerary, security and media management of such visitations, including public statements of shock and sympathy as well as visits to the injured in hospital. There can be a feeling that such time and energies might be better used in dealing with the more important tasks associated with dealing with other aspects of the disaster. Yet such symbolic appearances are important because they demonstrate the political dimension of disasters, not least through their being an opportunity to display political leadership, the demonstrative sincerity of pubic officials and their social solidarity and support for the vulnerable and victimized.

SEARCHING AND IDENTIFYING: A PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ACTIVITY

Bereavement writers have identified searching behavior as a characteristic reaction to the feelings of numbness associated with sudden loss. In his classic study of bereavement, Parkes (1972) identified patterns of "yearning and searching" in behavior such as calling out to the dead one or misidentifying someone in the street. Only once the reality of the loss is accepted, it is argued, can the bereaved begin to move gradually through grief to recovery.

In the aftermath of disasters, where there may be large numbers of people missing and there are difficulties in identifying for certain who has been killed, searching behavior is also a physical activity. In these initial days and weeks of shock, disbelief, and denial, searching becomes an understandable activity and one that becomes also the preoccupation of the authorities managing the incident.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, for example, many thousands of tons of rubble were removed in the search initially for survivors and later to recover and remove the dead. In the days after the disaster walls around the city were covered in posters and photographs of those missing. These were expressions initially of hope and ultimately remembrance. Friends and families gathered at these and at help centres set up in New York in the hope of tracing their loved ones. For very many, the search for a surviving loved one increasingly became a search for information, for reassurance that they did not suffer and for a body to prove that they had really gone.

In the days and weeks after the Asian tsunami struck on December 26, 2004, similar scenes were broadcast through the media of survivors and bereaved relatives scanning photographs outside makeshift mortuaries. As with September 11, one of the features of mass fatality events

such as these is the extensive period of time it takes to complete search and recovery tasks as well as the painstakingly slow process of identification. More than 20 international teams have been involved in trying to identify victims and send their body's home. In August, 2005, officials in Thailand stated that it could take 3 years to identify everyone killed in Thailand during the tsunami (BBC News, August 22, 2005). The possibility of identification following mass fatality incidents and the return of bodies or body parts to loved ones is now not only more possible, owing to the development of sophisticated identification techniques such as DNA, but also increasingly expected by those bereaved and those responding to disaster.

BODY RECOVERY AND MANAGEMENT: REPERSONALIZING THE DEAD

The need to find, identify, name, and officially dispose of the dead is in part a symbolic activity, the mark of a civilized society that seeks through great effort to ensure individual treatment of each body. Blanshan and Quarantelli (1981) have discussed this symbolic element in the process of handling victims in terms of "a person-to-object-to-person transformation of the dead" (1981, p. 275). The overall process of body recovery, transportation, clean-up, identification, and disposal goes beyond a purely practical approach to dealing with the dead. The fact that the living wish to treat the dead as persons feeds the expectation that safety, rescue, and relief personnel will at least locate, if not retrieve, dead bodies as quickly as possible. The overall process of body recovery and management thus reflects a process of "personalization," the turning of dead bodies into "respected, although dead persons." Society insists that disaster victims be treated as "persons, not bodies" (1981, p. 275).

Recent guidelines on the management of dead bodies in disaster situations issued by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reinforce this by recognizing and including these sociocultural and psychological considerations into what traditionally have been regarded as predominantly and technical operational activities. They emphasize the significance of body recovery and return for ritual and the proper disposition of bodies, stating that the inability to perform rituals condemns a family to "a second death": the symbolic death of their loved one for "the lack of a tomb that perpetuates his or her name and confers social worth to the deceased and his or her inclusion in the generational continuity of a family" (PAHO, 2004, p. 85).

In line with this, PAHO recommends against the use of common or mass graves. They go so far as to suggest that mass burial or the use of mass cremation is both unnecessary and a violation of the human rights of surviving family members (2004, p. 171). In some circumstances, however, such recommendations are clearly ignored; the response of the authorities following the Asian tsunami of 2004 is but one illustration of this. In this case, differing cultural beliefs and practices about the right approach to death and disposal has caused additional upset to some bereaved families, particularly where they are then also denied the chance for an inquest and repatriation.

RELIGION, RITUAL AND REMEMBRANCE

Initial spontaneous expressions of grief are often accompanied by increased attendance at religious places in the immediate aftermath of communal tragedy. Even in traditionally secular societies and among nonpracticing individuals, latent religious beliefs can become important

and overt at such times. Following the sinking of the Estonia ferry in 1994 with the loss of over 800 lives, mourning prayers were said on Swedish radio. In what was commonly thought of as one of the most secular societies in Europe, the government immediately declared an official mourning period and, by the first evening, more than 500 churches had opened for prayers and for people to enter, sit, and reflect and light candles. The Swedish Archbishop was interviewed on national television, which also broadcast the official mourning service live. Reflecting on this, Pettersson (1996) suggested that at such times, implicit religious sentiments in society became latent and explicit.

In some cases, religious communities can combine their spiritual roles following disaster with practical ones relating to relief efforts. One example of this was a candlelight vigil held in a London church 2 weeks after the tsunami, to which people of all religions and cultures were invited. As well as offering prayers, and the opportunity to light a candle, attendees were invited to drop off donations of money, dried and tinned food, medicines such as paracetamol, and toiletries to be delivered to stricken communities in Sri Lanka. Similarly, donations of aid were coordinated through other places of worship, including one Buddhist temple where piles of donations reached almost to the first floor (BBC News, January 8, 2005).

It also appears that places of worship can become a focus for solace and silent reflection, whether spiritual or not, in communities directly affected by tragedy. Some might regard the quiet solace of such places as a form of sanctuary away from the prying eyes of the media and other convergers that make up the multitude of emergency responders to an area, many of whom will respect the sacred space of a church or cathedral and its symbolic significance as a focal point of community sentiment and grieving. Indeed local churches became such a central reference point after both the tragedies at Dunblane and Soham, England (where two schoolgirls were abducted and murdered; this was declared a major investigation and was regarded as a national event since the girls were missing for a number of weeks and the search became an ongoing national news story throughout this time). The focus on the churches at the center of these two communities helpfully detracted some attention away from the schools involved in both these events.

In terms of a Functionalist analysis, the unifying role of commemorative reflection at religious places of worship is apparent here. Perhaps this is an example of the sort of the "honeymoon" period often referred to post-disaster, when usual communal conflicts are temporarily suspended. An example of putting usual lines of social division aside was the opening of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast (traditionally a religiously divided community) for commemorative activities in memory of those who died in the Asian tsunami 10 days earlier. Describing its purpose, the Presbyterian Moderator Ken Newell stated that it offered "a sacred space where people can stop and think." He added that such a crisis puts the suffering of others high on our agenda by "shifting people two or three centimetres towards holding other parts of the world in our hearts" (BBC News, January 5, 2005).

Social analysts focussing on the more divisive nature of society however, might be more likely to focus on the potentially conflictual role of political and religious ideologies and symbolism, both before and after disaster. In the aftermath of the London bombing incidents in July 2005, the link between terrorism and Muslim extremists led to fears of a backlash against Muslims worshipping at local mosques. Following reports of attacks to mosques in various parts of the country, Church leaders pledged to stand by Muslim colleagues, saying terrorism affects all communities. The political dimension of these incidents and their aftermath was reinforced in a letter to written to mosques by Sir Iqbal Sacranie, head of the Muslim Council of Britain, who said that unscrupulous elements of society, including in the media, were already using the London attacks as a means to undermine the position of Muslims in

British society. At the same time, the ongoing aftermath of the threats from terrorism and the recognition that innocent members of the community might be vulnerable to attack has enhanced cooperation and unity between multifaith leaders. Following the July attacks, the Home Secretary Charles Clarke met Sir Iqbal and other faith leaders to devise a plan to protect Muslims or other minorities in the wake of a bomb attack. The plan involves close liaison between Muslims and other faiths, principally churches and Jewish communities (BBC News, July 11, 2005).

Where religious differences preexist in communities, these can be reflected in disagreements and conflicts focussing on the organization, content, and symbolism associated with post-tragedy rituals and commemoration. In Littleton, Colorado, following a tragedy where two schoolchildren opened fire and killed a number of their peers at Columbine High School in 1999, disagreements about the appropriate ways of commemorating the event reflected denominational divides. Conflict erupted over issues including the question of whether a memorial garden of trees should include trees for the perpetrators themselves. Later the families of the two dead students sued the school for failing to install ceramic tiles, which the families designed as memorials to their murdered children. The families claimed Columbine High School officials asked them to create the tiles, but then refused to install them because of their religious themes (Jones, 1999).

REMEMBERING IN SILENCE

An increasingly popular way of ritually commemorating disaster is through observing periods of planned silence, a tradition which is centuries old. According to West (2004), France lays claim to inaugurating this tradition to honor its fallen heroes in the nineteenth century, but it gained wider cultural currency the following century. Example of ceremonial silence include those throughout the United States to mourn the sinking of the *Titanic* at noon on April 16, 1912. West recounts how soon afterwards, the two-minute silence to remember those who had died in the World War I was introduced in 1919. For most of the twentieth century in Britain, the minute's silence was observed on sporting occasions, normally to remember the death of a national figure or someone connected to the club. Meanwhile the two minute silence was reserved to honor those who had died fighting for their country (2004, p. 19).

West is critical of the apparent increase in both the number and lengths of periods of silence that have become part of the ritual commemoration following collective as well as significant single cases of sudden death. Such episodes are certainly frequent and extensive. On New Year's Eve 2004, two minutes' silence was observed just before midnight as a mark of respect to those who died in the Asian tsunami. Five days later thousands of people across Europe stopped what they were doing again to remember the victims. This included countries such as Sweden which by then was known to have lost 52 of its citizens, with a further 2000 missing. Typical of such periods of silence, in many European cities public transport stopped, flags were flown at half mast, and radio and television stations paused programs for the midday tribute. The three-minute silence was observed in places "ranging from the Monaco palace to Norwegian oil platforms." (BBC News, January 5, 2005). In some societies such as Sri Lanka, additional commemorations and silences were held one month on.

Two months later, a five-minute silence was held in Madrid at midday on March 11, in memory of the train bombings a year earlier in which 191 people were killed. A few days after this, leaders of nations across the continent led people in a further three-minute silence for the

victims. This had been proposed by the Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, president of the European Council, who called on all EU states to show solidarity with Spain. The demonstration took place at a time when there were calls across the continent for greater cooperation between countries in fighting terrorism. In this way the opportunity for commemorative acts to be appropriated for political use is evident.

On July 14, 2005, one week after Europe had again witnessed a series of terrorist attacks, a two-minute silence in memory of those killed and injured was once more held across Europe and other parts of the world. This included British and Australian tourists who joined local people in Bali for a candlelit ceremony at Kuta, scene of the terrorist attacks in 2002, and people in the three U.S. states directly affected by the September 11 attacks who also observed the silence. In Afghanistan too, soldiers from the multinational force paid silent tribute, with British, Afghan, and American flags in Kabul flying at half mast. Following the developing trend, there are likely to be periods of silence again at the official memorial service for "7/7," at the opening of the inquest and at significant anniversaries.

CONSPICUOUS COMPASSION OR COLLECTIVE COMFORT?

West sees this extension in silences as symptomatic of the "conspicuous compassion inflation" he feels all are compelled to participate in, a compassion that is suffering from inflation, with individuals and organizations "seeking to prove how much more they care by elongating the silences" (2004, p. 20). This, he suggests, is a reaction to the minute's silence being practised so frequently: "It is as if by extending these periods, there is competition to prove who is more empathetic" (ibid).

Others, however, see different meanings being conveyed in the language of silence. The day after the London silence, the leader in *The Times* newspaper gave a vivid description of what it described as a "moving display of public unity" and suggested that the bombers had failed in their plans to divide the community and the country: "A nation was united in grief, determination and common humanity." The emphasis was very much on the strength of "collective comfort," of a "shared vision" and of a "common future" (*The Times*, July 15, 2005).

It is not merely the demonstration of compassion that West deplores, but the sense of compulsion to participate in it. Those deviating from the observance are likely to be vilified, to feel the anger of the crowd. Thus West criticizes the cultural phenomenon he sees as feeding on mob mentality and the desire for conformity: "It betrays the hallmarks of a society not 'in touch with its emotions' but one that is intolerant of dissent" (2004, p. 22). While others might not go as far as West in suggesting this is close to being a form of fascism, there have been other critics of such imposed silences. The Conservative Party vice-chairman, Roger Gale, described the European three-minute silence after the tsunami, as "the worst kind of gesture politics," adding that the U.K. public did not need a "state-imposed" silence to express their feelings. (BBC News, January 5, 2005). The Member of Parliament's disdain seemed not just to be about the imposition but also about its timing, it being the wrong initiative at the wrong time: "There will, certainly, come a time when a proper memorial service and silence of an appropriate length might be held but that time is not now." Further, he was quoted as saying that some self-styled world leaders—including the prime minister—had shown very little leadership when it had been needed in the preceding days. Once again, commemoration became linked with political opportunism.

MAKING IT OFFICIAL: FORMAL
MEMORIAL SERVICES

The political role and context for remembrance is perhaps most explicitly illustrated in the organization and conduct of official memorial services, particularly those that are regarded as national events. Formal memorial services often follow some time after the initial aftermath of communal tragedies, allowing for a more extended period of planning and organization. Their location, formality, and content symbolize the sense, scale, and significance of communal loss. In England, for example, official memorial services take place in local cathedrals or parish churches, with events marking disasters of national significance being held in London and attended by key national dignitaries.

In the United Kingdom the government has become increasingly invoked in formally organizing official memorial services. As civil emergency management in Britain generally has become more formally organized, guidelines for dealing with disasters have been developed and refined by the Government (Cabinet Office, 2003) and other organizations. These include references to memorial events and other post-impact services. In part this reflects a broader cultural shift over the last 20 years or so in favor of increased recognition of the needs and rights of the bereaved and survivors and their wish for participation in commemorative acts and rituals.

This is not unique to Britain; in the United States, for example, the Family Assistance Act (1996) has gone so far as to legally require airline companies to complete plans and, in the event of a disaster, to organize memorial services as part of their emergency management function. These additional memorial services in the first few days and weeks after disaster might be more privately focussed opportunities for families than official government-led services; however, they can add to the range of both private and public sets of rituals that follow in the wake of disaster.

In Britain in 2005, a new Disaster Response Unit has been established within the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Though rather inappropriately named, this Department was originally tasked with preparing for Princess Diana's funeral and has since played a role in arranging for commemorative services following the Bali and September 11 terrorist attacks as well as the official memorial service at St. Paul's Cathedral in London after the 2004 tsunami.

Cabinet Office guidelines highlight the purpose of such official memorial services and planning implications, stating that a memorial service provides an opportunity for those affected to share their grief with others. They also emphasize how it often has an important national as well as local role and is likely to receive extensive media coverage. For these reasons they suggest it is important to consider the organization and structure carefully, covering such aspects as "timing, invitations, representation and conduct" (Cabinet Office, 2003, paragraph 4.59).

As well as the list of official invitees, decisions made about issues such as where dignitaries sit in relation to the bereaved and survivors have symbolic meaning and political consequences. The presence or lack of representation by figures such as senior politicians or members of a royal family might potentially cause resentment and further distress given the significance attached to participation. This is especially so given the charged emotional atmosphere of such events. At the same time, where numbers of attendees are restricted, extended family members and survivors can often be left feeling aggrieved and excluded, particularly where the invitation of dignitaries is prioritized over direct victims left to observe on the streets outside or on television. It is understandable that they can be left asking who and what the commemoration is really for.

ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

In the same way as formal memorial services conducted shortly after a tragedy fulfill both psychological and social functions, so do anniversary events. They mark the passage of social and chronological time as well as the impetus and long journey toward community rehabilitation and recovery.

Despite the Latin origins of the term, "anniversary" events have now started to extend to ritual displays marking the first week, the first month, and even 6 months' time lag following disaster. This is partly a media-driven activity, but at times it can also reflect the cultural and religious significance of dates. In line with Buddhist tradition, which says that the dead should be honored 100 days after their passing, ceremonies were held for 3 days along Thailand's west coast to mark 100 days after the tsunami hit that part of the region(BBC News, April 4, 2005).

Tom Forrest suggests disaster anniversaries entail an interactive process in which people share personal experiences. Public officials, he says, make "decorative comments" while the press and electronic media "reconstruct the disaster experience" by recording current thoughts and reflections. Disaster anniversary, he concludes, is a process of "collective remembering" (Forrest 1993, p. 448).

The first anniversary after disaster is often particularly significant, well attended and marked by the mass media and wider community. Indeed, even during the first few days following the Ladbroke Grove rail disaster in London in 1999, a television crew began filming pictures to use in a special coverage to be broadcast on the first anniversary. On that day a series of memorial services took place at key sites, including the car park next to the crash site, at Paddington rail station (close to the accident site) and at Reading Minster (the focal point of a local town which one of the fated trains passed through).

Similarly the first and subsequent anniversaries of the tragedies following the September 11 attacks on the United States received much national and international coverage. In Britain, the loss of U.K. citizens was marked on the first anniversary by an elaborate service at Westminster Abbey attended by a number of senior royals and other national leaders. Families were consulted and included in both the planning and conduct of the service, including the symbolic lighting of candles for the dead. Beyond Westminster, a further array of dedicated services reflected the extensive impact of the disaster on communities such as national sporting teams, the airline industry and financial sectors.

While Spain and other countries united to remember the victims of the bombings on the first anniversary in March, 2005, some survivors boycotted the events, complaining of political interference. The Association of Madrid Bombing Victims protested that that pain of victims and relatives had been used as a political football. According to Graff (2005), Pilar Manjón, president of the Association of 3/11 Victims who lost her son in the bombing, had implored parliament some months before "not to use the pain of the victims for party ends."

Commenting that many of the victims have steered clear of the public ceremonies on the anniversary, Graff stated the reproach was apt, since the parliamentary investigating commission had spent months discussing the dramatic political aftermath of the bombings rather than the police and intelligence failures that allowed them to happen. On March 14, three days after the attacks, the Popular Party had lost a general election it had been expected to win. It subsequently blamed the Socialist victors for exploiting the atrocities, widely seen by Spaniards as the terrorists' retribution for the former government's support of the Iraq war. Graff reports that the Socialists' response was to suggest that the Popular Party undermined its

own credibility by insisting the attacks were the work of the Basque separatist terrorist group ETA (Graff). According to Manjón, the commission "focussed on what happened between 11 March and 14 March. Nothing could be further from the interests of the victims" (BBC News, March 15, 2004).

By way of illustrating the commemoration of significant anniversaries, on September 25, 2004, a memorial service to mark the tenth anniversary of the Estonian ferry disaster was held in Dartford, Kent. This town had been linked with the Estonian capital, Tallinn, since 1992, and originally held a service immediately after the accident, in which 852 people died. The Estonian ambassador joined official representatives from the Foreign Office for the service of remembrance in the town. A candle was lit for each person that died and arranged around a ship's anchor, reflecting the original memorial in Tallinn.

Commenting on the honor felt by the town in hosting the memorial service, Council leader Kenneth Leadbeater said: "It will give us the opportunity to empathise with our friends and offer them our support on this sombre occasion" (BBC News, September 25, 2004).

REMEMBERING FOREVER: PERMANENT MEMORIALS

The importance of remembering the past is illustrated post-disaster in the erection and maintenance of permanent reminders of tragic events. War cemeteries are a classic example of this of course, but in other smaller scale events forms of permanent memorial serve similar functions—personal and collective remembrance as well as social testimony to events of the past. Disaster trust funds are sometimes used to finance permanent memorials. In Britain Charity Law dictates specific use of such money, including its use "for the benefit of the community." While some memorials are dedicated to other social functions, such as the building of a community hall, for example, others are more specifically dedicated in memory of those who perished.

At Aberfan, as elsewhere, the actual site of the disaster has been turned into a garden of remembrance reflecting the original layout of the school's classrooms. In sociological terms, such areas are "sacred" spaces, that is to say they are set apart as being of special significance and regarded as worthy of particular respect. Failure to respect such space and inappropriate use of a disaster site can lead to anger and outrage, as was the case at the site of the gas explosion in Bhopal, India which it was mooted might be the setting for a theme park some years after the factory explosion there which claimed many thousands of lives.

Reflecting sensitivity as well as the need for practical considerations surrounding permanent memorials, the trustee of the Bradford City Fire Disaster Fund wrote the following about his Committee's deliberations in deciding how to mark the mass death of many football fans at a fire in Bradford City's football stadium in 1985. He personally would have liked some kind of a garden which could be used as a place of peace for those who suffered. But the committee realized this had complications and would need to be maintained. The committee concluded that whatever shape their memorial took, it was important that it commemorated the generosity of people contributing to the fund. So in the end they agreed on a memorial plaque to be held in the safety of the cathedral. Suddards describes it as "a thing of beauty" that those affected by the disaster may come and see "in peace, quiet and privacy" (Suddards, Price, & Picarda, 1987).

Advances in technology and increasing use of the Internet have resulted in the development of virtual memorials following disaster in recent years. After tragedies such as the Columbine School shootings (1999) and the murder of two Cambridgeshire schoolgirls in Soham (2002),

much use was made of this vehicle as a tool of commemoration and for the expression of grief. As discussed later, the use of the Internet to carry sites such as "We are Not Afraid" (http://www.werenotafraid.com/), with political messages of defiance to terrorists perpetrating mass atrocities has also evolved. This site also includes a page remembering the victims of the four attacks in London on July 7 with pictures and obituaries for those who died. Similarly, following the tsunami, a number of commemorative sites have been established by those directly affected. This includes Tsunami Stories, a site set up by and for survivors and the bereaved to give them a chance to tell their stories and share their pictures and messages (http://www.tsunamistories.net/).

COMMUNITY CONTROL AND CONSULTATION

These developments in commemoration are significant not only in terms of representing a changing form of remembrance, but also insofar as they also give control over the nature, design, and focus of commemoration to those directly affected by disaster.

It is increasingly recognized that the bereaved and survivors are key stakeholders to be consulted in planning the design and development of permanent memorials commemorating disaster. Of course, the greater the number of consultees, the greater the potential for disagreement and dissent and there are likely to be restrictions on what might be practical and feasible in the design, cost and location of a permanent memorial. Not only this, there can be huge symbolic and political significance attached to actual disaster sites, as illustrated in the long-running battle between architect Daniel Libeskind and leaseholder, Larry Silverstein over plans to rebuild on the foundations of the obliterated twin towers in New York.

A good example of community engagement in the planning of a permanent memorial is the consultation framework established in Canberra following the Australian bushfires in January 2003 which destroyed lives, homes, pets, and possessions. The notion of a permanent memorial was recognized as acknowledging a significant event in the history of the region and marking a milestone in people's lives. Consequently, a Bushfire Consultation Advisory Committee comprising community and government members was established to provide guidance on the project and assist in the consultation process with the broader community. In June 2004 a community consultation discussion paper was circulated and feedback invited as the basis for the development of a design brief for a memorial.

In January 2005, the winning design was announced. It will consist of two sites in Deek's Forest Park, with the opening planned for the third anniversary of the bushfires on January 18, 2006. Site 1 is marked by a gateway made from the community's salvaged bricks and will be framed by a grove of casuarinas. The area also contains red glass inserts to represent glowing embers. The second site, which focuses on the recovery rather than the event, includes an amphitheatre with a bubbling spring and columns containing details of photographs provided by the people of Canberra.

Residents involved in this consultation process had stressed that they wanted the memorial to be simple and natural—a quiet place to reflect and find peace (Gorman, 2005). Reflecting the value placed on community engagement and participation, the winning designers stated: "Contributions by the community will form an integral part of the final memorial which will gain its "heart" from community involvement and from the ongoing use of the setting" (artsACT, 2005).

As with the Bushfire example, permanent memorials may focus on the importance of looking forward as well as back to an event. "Remembering for the future" is a theme, for example, captured at the memorial dedicated to those killed at the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. A National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism is among the activities developed here. Also illustrative of a forward-looking approach, the regeneration and renewal of the centre of the City of Manchester, which was blighted by a terrorist bomb in 1992, was symbolically marked by the reopening of the City Centre on November 24, 1999. A parade of 50 drummers and flame-carriers led a procession before gathering in the square for street theatre and a fireworks display. Commenting on the revamped city and its new facilities, City council leader Richard Leese said the people of Manchester had waited for more than 3 years to regain their city centre, and nothing would keep them away from their city (BBC News, November 24, 1999).

REMEMBERING AS RECOVERY

The sorts of post-disaster ritual and symbolism discussed in this chapter are examples of ways in which individuals and communities may work toward recovery from the traumatic effects of disasters. Of relevance to the themes discussed here is the work of Judith Herman, who writes about the political context of trauma and comments on recovery requiring remembrance and mourning: "Restoring a sense of social community requires a public forum where victims can speak their truth and their suffering can be formally acknowledged" (1997, p. 242).

As Herman's quote suggests, recovery requires a sense of social community in which people feel supported in looking back and looking forward. She refers to events such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, but her writing has implications for other types of post-disaster situations and remembrance. As family reactions to Commissions into the terrorist events on September 11 and March 3 and other post-disaster inquiries illustrate, it is important to stress that moving forward from disaster physically and symbolically is about more than acknowledging suffering and giving survivors an opportunity to tell their story through commemorative rituals. It is also about establishing legal and political processes to address objectively, openly and honestly the causes of events and the accountability of all involved. This is a necessary condition for the learning of lessons and mitigation of future risks. The passing of legislation on corporate responsibility in the United Kingdom in 2005, aimed at enhancing measures for addressing corporate killing, is an encouraging sign but there is more work to be done.

REMEMBERING: THE FUTURE

Despite the predictions of some commentators in the past, post-disaster ritual and remembrance remains vibrant in societies across the world. The forces of globalization are changing both the ways in which people experience disaster and the ways in which they respond to them. The growth in world travel means most disasters have an international dimension such that communities of more than one country are involved in grief and mourning rituals in the aftermath. The development of the media's coverage of disaster, as well as bringing about an increased sense of vulnerability, awareness and exposure to the traumatic impact of disasters, has led to increased participation in acts of remembrance and commemoration. The rise in access to and use of the internet has increased the capacity of people to communicate globally and is

empowering individuals and communities—physical and virtual—to influence post-disaster agendas and activities. Commemorative and campaigning Web sites can be vehicles for this.

The trend in future-focussed commemorative activities is likely to persist. Today bereaved families and disaster action groups use windows of opportunity provided by public interest in inquests, investigations, and anniversaries to attract media interest and government attention to their plight, interests, and causes. Survivors create their own websites to assist them in telling their stories, uniting with others who have been through similar experiences and thereby taking control of their own recovery. More broadly there may be societal implications in terms of the potential for family support and victim-led action groups to use their experiences to campaign for changes to those conditions of society which might generate, prevent or mitigate the effects of disasters.

This chapter has highlighted that although expressions change over time and culture, some common aims and functions can be observed in post disaster rituals and remembrance. They are an important part of grief and mourning, helping to mark the transitions of time and status for individuals and communities. For those who are bereaved and/or survivors, remembering can be a focus for staying stuck or for moving towards a new normal. They can reflect and represent the connectedness between the living and the dead, and symbolize an important continuity between the past, present, and future. Collectively, they can generate social solidarity and unity while at the very same time reflecting and reinforcing political conflict and division.

Remembering is an inherently political activity, which can be manipulated for the purposes of socially constructing a community's past and the design of its future. However, the trend in some areas toward greater consultation and ownership within affected communities of post-disaster rituals and memorials, suggests this will remain a vibrant area for research and activity as disaster management and recovery evolves in the years ahead.

Future studies might focus on the dynamic relationship between the forces of religion secularization and modernity in relation to the changing nature of rituals after disaster and particularly on the impact of political contexts where religious ideologies are seen as playing a part in uniting or dividing communities in disaster and its consequences. There is also scope for comparative analysis of disaster management protocols, rituals, and commemorative processes across different types of societies and in relation to different types of disaster, such as those regarded as "natural" and those that are technological, and humanly caused, including those caused by deliberate acts of violence. Finally, research might explore further the potential or actual impact of human rights agendas on post-disaster ritual and response, including the extent to which victims are being empowered by evolving approaches to emergency management focusing on the right to basic standards of care, before, during, and after disaster strikes.