

2017-18 SCUP Fellows Project Proposal

SCUP Fellow Candidate:

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Proposed Project Title:

Institutional Decisions of How to Carry On After a Campus Tragedy: An Examination of Campus-Based Memorials Structures and Commemorative Spaces

Project Description:

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the how institutions remember times of campus and community crisis through physical memorialization and commemoration. Specifically, focus is placed on physical structures that are intentionally designed and constructed to commemorate a campus crisis. The purpose of this project is to learn about the rationale behind the construction and placement of such memorial structures, in an effort to better understand how institutions have used memorialization to help facilitate the crisis recovery process. To achieve this goal, campus planners and architects at institutions that house campus-based memorial structures will be interviewed to gather the history behind each memorial.

There are several examples of institutions that, after a disaster, build memorials and incorporate annual commemoration events into the normal life of the institution. Some of the more well-known examples include Kent State University's annual May 4 Commemoration program to remember the 1970 shootings by Ohio National Guardsmen on their campus and Virginia Tech's annual remembrance events to commemorate the 2007 shootings on their campus. While these two institutions have both physical memorial structures and annuals events to commemorate their respective moments of crisis, there are also countless campus tragedies that go un-commemorated. A campus administrator reflecting on institutional crisis response, once remarked: "There are reasons, after a campus crisis, that institutions do not want to remember what happened" (personal communication, J. Howe, January 31, 2013). This quote was offered during a discussion of letting the one-year anniversary date of a major campus crisis pass without mentioning its occurrence, and subsequently breathing a sigh of relief when local media also neglected to mention the anniversary.

The decision to not relive "what happened" by announcing an anniversary, erecting memorial structures, or implementing commemoration events is a tactic sometimes used to spark the act of organizational forgetting (Bowker, 1997; Martin de Holan, 2011; Martin de Holan & Phillips, 2004), both on the institutional level and among the general public. Thus, organizational forgetting and memorialization exist on separate ends of a post-tragedy continuum. While organizational forgetting of a tragedy can be used strategically to remove attention and spectators from the institution, memorials offer a public invitation to gather and remember by providing open space and invitations to

process and recall tragic events. This contrast calls the question of why an institution would want to remember and what could be gained from that process. This study will use previous research on campus environments to guide the process of answering those questions.

References:

Bowker, G. C. (1997). Lest we remember: Organizational forgetting and the production of knowledge. *Accounting, Management, & Information Technology*, 7(3), 113-138.
Martin de Holan, P. (2011). Agency in voluntary organizational forgetting. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 20(3), 317-322.
Martin de Holan, P. & Phillips, N. (2004) Organizational forgetting as strategy. *Strategic Organization*, 2(4), 423-433.

Project Goal:

Goal 1: Connect to both SCUP resources and the knowledge of SCUP members in order to apply relevant planning concepts to my research on campus crisis management and the use of campus space for long-term/permanent memorialization.

Goal 2: Offer insight into the purposes and intended functions of campus memorials and commemorative structures. The findings of this study are uniquely helpful at institutions that have experienced recent tragedies and are yet attempting to define how to properly acknowledge those events.

Goal 3: Collect and organize the experiences of campus professionals (e.g., planners, facilities managers, architects, emergency managers, etc.) with developing plans for memorialization. I will create case studies of two existing memorials and one that is in the process of being constructed. The variety of stages in the planning and memorialization process will help to build a more robust understanding of the caveats existing in the process of institutional remembrance.

Project Methodology & Rationale:

Descriptive case studies will be built to examine a phenomenon and the real-life setting in which it occurs (Yin, 2009); in this study the phenomenon investigated is university remembrance after crisis in the setting of specific campus communities. To date, I have catalogued 27 such memorials on 23 U.S. college campuses, and have located two institutions with current memorialization plans in progress for recent crises. This project will focus a few of these or other similar memorials.

Participants will be the various campus stakeholders with an interest in the memorial design and erection. The number of participants on each campus will vary based on how many people and offices were involved in decisions surrounding memorialization. I anticipate an average of four participants per memorial studied, totaling twelve overall. Each participant will be asked to interview once. All interviews will be semi-structured and recorded (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2009). The structure of the interviews will focus on understanding:

1. Why did different campus entities support the memorial erection?

2. What types of considerations went into the decision? For instance, writing about a campus memorial, one architect noted the following design questions: “What shape might it have? What scale should it be? What kind of site would be best suited for it? Could the design be functional in some way?” (Keller, 2013, p. 71).
3. What has the institution or campus community gained from remembering in this way?

References:

- Keller, R. (2013). The memorial design and site selection. In J. Johnson (Ed.), *Finding Freedom: Memorializing the Voices of Freedom Summer* (pp. 71-76), Oxford, OH: Miami University Press.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Project Deliverables:

In addition to the required deliverables, I will prepare a full-length article that outlines each case and the lessons to be gleaned across cases. This information can help institutions to strike the delicate balance between allow the campus community the space needed to grieve, heal, and remember after a tragedy and being simultaneously sensitive to the needs and restrictions of the physical campus environment.

Implementation Plan and Preliminary Schedule:

- 1. July - September 2017:**
 - a. attend SCUP annual conference, and network with SCUP members;
 - b. select target cases and locate a campus liaison/key informant at each;
 - c. establish contacts with potential participants
 - d. begin interviews
- 2. October - December 2017:**
 - a. attend Planning Institute 1 in Atlanta, GA
 - b. complete interviews with at least 80% of participants
 - c. begin to code interviews and identify common themes
- 3. January - March 2017**
 - a. complete all interviews and coding
 - b. share conclusions with participants as a method of checking the research process
 - c. begin to develop project summary and SCUP presentation

What do you hope to learn from SCUP?

For a few years now, I have followed the publications of SCUP and have paid close attention to articles and features that discuss trends in emergency planning and campus safety efforts. While my scholarship helps me to remain abreast of current events and trends in campus crisis recovery, and my past professional experiences have taught me much about crisis management planning and response, there is much left for me to learn.

I have noticed that people with primary appointments as faculty members are not represented among the past SCUP Fellows, but hope that my positioning on campus will not discount my application. Tapping into SCUP's strategic planning system and resources, as well as connecting one-on-one with SCUP members, can help me to integrate more effective planning techniques into my research and work on campus crisis management. I can envision several ways that the SCUP Integrated Planning Model might overlap with both my crisis management work, and with how I teach my organizational development and leadership courses to graduate students studying educational leadership.