
Population and Environmental Psychology Bulletin

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UNDERSTANDING SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

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NEWSLETTER NEWS

PEPB is an unrefereed forum for sharing news, ideas and opinions in population and environmental psychology. Opinions are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy of Division 34 unless explicitly stated.

Call for Submissions

Spring 2002

APA Convention Abstracts

Understanding September 11th, 2001

Deadline: May 1, 2002

As this "Call for Submissions" suggests, *Understanding September 11, 2001* will be a continuing theme in PEPB, though we will accommodate submissions related to other themes as well. Much of the space in the Spring issue will be devoted to APA Convention abstracts, but please consider sending submissions of all kinds (brief articles, announcements, author/researcher inquiries, etc.) to Russ Parsons: rparsons@uiuc.edu.

Sad News

John-Paul Mulilis, Div. 34 Treasurer, passed away over the semester break after developing an infection following heart surgery in December. A brief profile of Dr. Mulilis can be found on the web site for the Penn State Honors Program: <http://www.br.psu.edu/academic/honors/faculty.html>.

FEATURE ARTICLES

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Understanding September 11, 2001: An Illustrative List of Some Psychological Principles

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I feel that since 9/11 I have been exposed to a propaganda barrage—psychological warfare--of mammoth proportions and great sophistication. Further, I have felt disoriented and disengaged. I have missed connection to colleagues who wish to help to overcome propaganda. Here, I try half-seriously, to examine in a semi-parody whether I can understand what has happened and what is happening to me. I close in perhaps a more serious, though still slightly parodying fashion.

1. The principle of lack of interest in detail or background. Illustrative List:

- Airplane crash in New York. Engines fall off. Tail falls off. No one seems to investigate causes or circumstances. Tail falling off tentatively assigned to "pilot error."
- Videotape of Saudi cleric with "Bin Laden". No one investigates background of Saudi cleric. Who is he anyway? What does he recall of the details of this conversation? Who was videotaping. No one is interested.
- Goofy Ceylonese-West Indian-Englishman(?) boards plane in Paris with explosive sneakers. Who is this guy? Where did he live? Where does he buy groceries? Do his family members miss him? Why does his dad blame himself for having a goofy son? No one seems interested.
- A number of identifiable "terrorists" board planes that later are intentionally crashed. Who are these guys? Where did they live? Where did they buy groceries?

- Do their family members mourn them? No one seems interested.
- Bin Laden's relatives who were former U.S. residents and who left for Saudi Arabia without interference shortly after 9/11. Who are these people? Where did they live? Where did they buy groceries? Do their former neighbors miss them? No one seems interested.
 - Bush family connections to Saudi dissidents, Saudi businesses, Saudi corporations. Anyone interested?
 - Any connections between Northern Alliance leaders and the opium trade? Anyone interested?
 - Is there evidence linking the people being bombed in Afghanistan to the events of 9/11? Is anyone interested or curious? How about the people being transported to Gitmo both chained and doped—any evidence linking them to 9/11?
2. The principle of lack of interest in causes of events. Illustrative List:
- Why does this country, solely among developed countries, have a nonredundant mass transportation system? Why is it allowed to continue? Why is no one interested in this?
 - Why does this country have a nonredundant mass communication system? Why is there no interest in creating a redundant system?
 - Why does this country have a nonredundant energy generation and distribution system? Why is there no interest in creating a redundant system?
3. The principle of compounding problems with non-solutions. Illustrative List:
- Possible "shortage" of aerial tankers. "Solve" "problem" by leasing, at tax payer expense, from Boeing, a fleet of aircraft for use as aerial tankers, convert to tanker, reconvert at end of lease—all at taxpayer expense.
 - People feel unsafe at airports. "Solve" problem by placing soldiers in camouflage outfits and carrying machine guns at airports to make people feel "safe". (Whom are these soldiers camouflaged from?)
 - Postal workers possibly exposed to anthrax. "Solve" problem by offering to inoculate postal workers with serum that is not certified to be effective against anthrax.
4. The principle of the victory of rhetoric over reason. Illustrative List:
- "Nothing will ever be the same again." You make sense of this sentence! Is there a new beginning to history? Are people now going to walk on their heads? The fact that this sentence is allowed to go unquestioned is worth a couple of dozen dissertations in its own right.
 - Uses of the word "terrorist," "civilized," "war," and other rhetorical terms since 9/11. I defy you to make sense of these.
- Appeal to an atrocity as a "justification" for atrocities "in response." As if one atrocity would justify another.
 - Use of term "hero" for victims of 9/11 attack.
5. The principle of focusing on selected numbers. Illustrative list:
- ± 3000 people die in air crashes and collapsing buildings on 9/11. (The number is still undetermined and a list of the dead has still not been produced. See principles above & below.)
 - ± 40000 people die in automobile crashes in the U.S./year.
 - How many people die with untreated AIDS each year in Africa?
 - How many children die of malnutrition each year?
 - How many people die of cigarette smoking each year?
 - How many people get cancer from herbicides, pesticides, household chemicals, residues, etc.?
 - How many Afghani casualties since 9/11? Is there a casualty list? A body count of the dead? Anyone miss these people?
 - Are these other dead worthy of mention and memorialization? What makes one undeserved death more important than another?
6. The principle of selected attention to Palestine. Illustrative list:
- Children on way to school intentionally killed by booby trap. Either justified as response to another atrocity or ignored. (See principles above & below.)
 - Legalized torture of prisoners. Either justified as response to another atrocity or ignored. (See principles above & below.)
 - Illegal occupation. Either justified as response to another atrocity or ignored. (See principles above & below.)
 - Ignoring United Nations resolutions or vetoing them. Either justified as response to another atrocity or ignored. (See principles above & below.)
 - People in refugee camps since 1948. Either justified as response to another atrocity or ignored. (See principles above & below.)
7. The principle of lack of accountability. Illustrative list:
- Who is responsible for the biggest intelligence goof since Pearl Harbor?
 - Who is responsible for continuing chaos and lack of security at U.S. airports? Three months + after 9/11 still a 45 minute + wait to go through "security."
 - Who is responsible for lack of air defenses for NYC and DC on 9/11?
 - Who is responsible total goof-up of information regarding anthrax?
8. The principle of using selected "personal-interest" narratives in the service of the above principles. Illustrative List:

- Children of stockbroker broken-hearted at Christmas missing father who died 9/11.
 - Funerals to which NYC police drum-and-bugle-corps members go to play for dead police from 9/11.
 - Family of chef killed 9/11 having psychological problems as a result of dead dad. Lengthy interview of personal problems with mother, kids, & licensed psychologist, on network TV.
9. The principle of invisible psychologists. Psychologists largely invisible except as occasional cheerleaders for unreason and jingoism in trying to help society cope with traumatic event and irrational responses in the face of calamity.
 10. The principles of psychological warfare as applied to domestic populations. How to use psy-ops effectively against a domestic population in a technologically advanced country by declaring an "emergency" or "war."
 11. The principle of using the techniques of psychological warfare to get people in "war fever" to be willing to trade traditions of freedom for an illusion of "security." How to terrorize people into a state of unreasonable fear and apprehension and thus get them to tolerate the loss of liberties in an "emergency" that has no identified end point or conclusion. How to make people believe that "security" can be won through revenge?

New York, New York: The Impacts of 11 September on Place Meaning, Architectural Symbolism, and Environmental Psychological Understanding in a Post-postmodern World

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The events of 11 September have become indelibly imprinted in the consciousness of the world. The images of these events not only reverberate in individual imagination and collective representations and sense making, but have been accorded their own immortality and resonance through an unprecedented and hypnotic media documentation, as well as a literal flood of published photographic testimonials and tributes. Within a week of the event, a number of memorial books had been published in New York City, and almost every major international newspaper and magazine rushed to produce their own commemorative issue, to say nothing of calendars, postcards, talk shows, and shrines (e.g., Kerik, B.B. & Von Essen, T., 2001; Reuters, 2001; The Guardian, 2001; Time, 2001). Another and profoundly important consequence is that the actual and symbolic landscape, cityscape, and skyline of New York City was forever altered, in the space of an hour. The significance of the event, the images, the place, is remarkable, possibly unprecedented - and arguably of particular relevance to environmental psychology. As well, these changes to place meaning, place connection, behavior setting, are far more emotionally confronting and disturbing than one might

think. The words and sentiments of Hall have been echoed by many, "Man's feeling about being properly oriented in space runs deep. Such knowledge is ultimately linked to survival and sanity. To be disoriented in space is to be psychotic." (1966, 105). These insights take on new meaning in the contemporary electronic and global world in which we live, where place, space and environmental transaction are quintessentially virtual, powerfully symbolic, and inherently self-defining and diagnostic.

What is perhaps most notable in the wake of 11 September - apart from the extraordinary physical, psychological, symbolic, and political impacts - is the palpable and brooding absence of what was an integral, monumental, striking feature of the New York City skyline and cityscape, twin towers which literally *towered* over adjacent buildings and horizon. At 1362 feet and 110 stories the World Trade Center was once the tallest building in the world. While it is often difficult to take in such monumental buildings or indeed the skyline in the center of a large city, the articulation of New York City is such that the World Trade Towers were ubiquitously - and experientially - there, whether as backdrop to the Statue of Liberty or the Empire State Building, or as the towering ramparts of the Brooklyn Bridge. When the buildings fell, when the skyline dramatically changed, the collective experience and response was one of shock, disbelief, and disorientation, coupled with immediate fear and profound trepidation (*APA Monitor*, Nov, 2001). Because the absence of the World Trade Towers has so altered the skyline, New Yorkers are reminded of the event whenever they come across the Brooklyn Bridge, look out a window, or attend to the skyline.

And there is hole in the skyline. I can see it from my window. There is a place where two buildings are supposed to be that is now smoke and sirens, sounds and sky. (Roiphe, 2001, 18 eyewitness)

Many geographers, historians and novelists have underscored the profound and poignant experience of loss associated with the realisation that there is no going back to lost places (e.g., Read, 1996).

A deconstruction of the symbolic complex of the World Trade Center is beyond the scope of this essay, but it clearly included the building, the physical and 'neighborhood' context, the encompassing cityscape, the bustling nerve-center nature of this commercial and financial hub, and the shared perceptual and emotional gestalt for New York City residents and the 50,000 people who worked there each day. The true skein of meaning here reflects the complexity and locus of 'place' (Altman & Low, 1992; Childress, 1994). To this must be added the global iconography relating to a structure representing and epitomising capitalism and commerce, achievement and prosperity. Equally important, are the symbolic meanings associated with the change itself, and the nature and manner of what has happened to this physical complex and symbolic constellation. The very potent symbolism here includes threatened disorder, loss of control, and potential chaos, as well as, of course, the questions of who, how and why, and related feelings of injustice, anger, and retribution. The world has experienced a new insecurity,

fragility and vulnerability. A new cycle of targeted aggression and escalating threat and counter threat commenced, the familiar rhetoric and symbolic exchange of international conflict.

The abrupt transition in meaning from monumental permanence and stability to fragility and target was immediately grasped by journalists and public.

A year ago capitalism had never seemed so secure. ... Then, in a day, in hours, the story changed. The fact that the terrorists had attacked the very symbol of successful capitalism escaped nobody. Suddenly, what seemed invulnerable was transformed into all that was fragile and mortal. They, whoever they were, had gone for the skyscraper, the overreacher. Overnight we began to see things differently. We saw that such a hyperbolic structure as the twin towers could not fail to invite attack. ... We are fragile, our buildings and bodies and institutions are fragile, and none of us are or ever have been safe. (Drabble, 2001, 7)

We know well that the state and fate of buildings, neighborhoods, and precincts can be powerfully imbued with connotations of disorder, fear, and mistrust (e.g., Ellin, 1997; Nasar & Jones, 1997; Ross & Jang, 2000). We have indeed thought in design terms about how best to intentionally invest perilous places with such meanings (Brill, 1993). The symbolic connotations of the World Trade Center somersaulted from towering strength to monumental helplessness, to indomitable spirit, as place meaning and events coalesced and consolidated. Clearly one of the residual symbolic meanings of the World Trade Towers, which itself no longer exists, is vulnerability. What is particularly noteworthy here is that so much of the impact and meaning relates to dramatic and consequential change, and the potent meaning of these objective and subjective alterations of what, monumentally, was.

Buildings of course are imbued with and embody multileveled and multipurpose meanings and messages. They provide not only structure and form, but text, context and meaning to social and cultural life (e.g., Gumpert & Drucker, 1996; Oliver, 1997). They also constitute powerful expressive and symbolic vehicles in their own right, with monumental buildings being more noteworthy in their statements and style than in their functional provision and delivery. The metaphoric and anthropomorphic qualities of buildings have been extensively documented, but remain largely outside of reflective public consciousness. One of the most provocative responses to the events of 11 September was that which George Lakoff, a sociologist and semiotician, circulated to friends and colleagues.

There are a number of metaphors for buildings. A common visual metaphor is Buildings Are Heads, where windows and doors are openings in the head, like eyes, nose, and mouth. For many people this metaphor interacted with the image of the plane going into South Tower of the World Trade Center, producing via visual metaphor the unconscious but powerful image of a bullet going through someone's head, the flame pouring from the other side blood spurting out. Tall buildings can, via visual metaphor,

be people standing erect. For many the falling of the towers activated this metaphor. Each tower falling was a body falling. (Lakoff, 2001)

These intertwined metaphoric and symbolic meanings became very evident as people wrote about this event, and were certainly not the exclusive province of cultural theorists and semioticians.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, the city of New York and the United States of America were changed forever. Two hijacked airliners, loaded with innocent passengers, thundered toward the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. At 8:48 A.M. the first plane hit, piercing the side of a one-hundred-ten-story building and the innocence of a nation, virtually unblemished by the wars of history. ... And when the final semblance of one of the world's most visible symbols of power and strength toppled into powder and smoke (Bernard Kerik, 40th Police Commissioner, New York City, in Kerik & Von Essen, 2001, 8)

There is of course a striking and elemental quality about any structure the size of the World Trade Center, which necessarily limns the sky and dwarfs perception. There is also a peculiar inarticulateness about our language and disciplinary sensibilities when talking about the demise of buildings or dramatic alterations to people-setting transactions and understandings. Metaphors and images eloquently bridge this gap, and allow for immediate and convincing apperceptions, acknowledgements, and feelings. We rely on them more than we know, and, in concert with cultural meaning systems, they play multiple and important roles in the adjustments and constructions of sense making and place meaning (e.g., Douglas, 1970; Lakoff, 1987; Shore, 1996).

The metaphor of 'time stopping' which was repeatedly used in media reporting is particularly revealing with respect to our subjective experience of virtual place and event.

It was 8:48 am Eastern Standard Time, and the world seemed to stop. Time froze for anyone in sight of a television screen anywhere in the world. One, two, three, four planes ... one tower; two towers. The indomitable symbols of American capitalism crumbled into dust. The most famous city skyline in the world disappeared in a choking, all-swallowing sprawl of smoke. And while we blinked at these strangely beautiful images – it was a sparkling, blue-skied, autumn morning – there came the news that they had hit the nerve centre of the most powerful military force the world has ever seen.... America – its president, its citizens, its self-confidence - was poleaxed. (Rusbridger, 2001, 24)

The metaphor suggests the 'flashbulb memory' nature of emotionally charged and extraordinary events for which our recollections are remarkably detailed. There is an emotional consolidation, a freezing of the frame, which gives particular salience and meaning to setting and scene. There are, of course, many plausible psychological and neurobiochemical reasons why such an emotionally powerful event is registered in this way (e.g., Pillemer, 1990), but it is intriguing to speculate about

the death of a monumental building, or a dramatic change in landscape feature or topography. We don't often see such events. Their time frame is far more extensive, the nature and process of changes imperceptible. Hence the fascination of cataclysmic events such as a volcanic eruption or a hurricane, or the demolition of a well-known and imposing building. When the phenomenon is the dramatic, intentional destruction of a powerful cultural icon and symbol as well as a living, working institution, multiple sense making and protective mechanisms as well as cultural scripts ensure that attribution-based social perceptions quickly subjugate attentional arrest and elicit self-serving and coherence-conferring cognitive responses (e.g., Flick, 1998; Montada & Lerner, 1998).

What is clear from the media coverage and myriad other social representations of the event, is that the text and narrative is in the images, and the sense people are seeking is less cognitive than 'psychospacial' and emotive. Perhaps what happens with such dramatic and instantaneous alterations to place is that we need to fit the pieces together in a more literal way. We need to spend some time with our representations of the place which was - and the absence, 'to get our head around it,' to orient ourselves, to refashion a coherent representation of our now-altered world and embodied self.

Our minds play tricks on us. The image of the Manhattan skyline is now unbalanced. We are used to seeing it with the towers there. Our mind imposes our old image of the towers, and the sight of them gone gives one the illusion of imbalance, as if Manhattan were sinking. Given the symbolism of Manhattan as standing for the promise of America, it appears metaphorically as if that promise were sinking. (Lakoff, 2001)

It is interesting that the World Trade Center Memorial Calendar produced by Browntrout publishers, a noteworthy phenomenon in itself, includes only 'before' photographic images, with the publishers perhaps appreciating that Americans needed to be able to look at and spend time with a place and time that was no longer there.

There is another provocative, perhaps prophetic perspective on this event and reconstruction site. History, culture and collective memory conspire to invest noteworthy settings of man's inhumanity to man and human tragedy with 'heritage site' status (e.g., Uzzell and Ballantyne, 1998). Emotions and experiences are integral to meaning and interpretation, and that there is a fascination, a respect, a very necessary acknowledgement and witnessing character to visiting sites such as Port Arthur or a holocaust memorial. Such a 'setting apart' is happening with respect to 'ground zero', with considerable discussion about whether the world and New York city needs a reassuring and defiant replacement skyscraper - or a less monumental but more apposite 'memorial.' Indeed as of week 16 post 11 September the nature and status of the site appears to be moving very rapidly from cathartic memorial to tourist 'hot spot' and circus.

But in America, even tragedy becomes professionalized, and ground zero is now as distinct - and as commercial - a New York region as the theatre district or the garment district. It's a throbbing 6.5-hectare region populated by

construction workers, itinerant volunteers, movie stars, religious proselytizers, uniformed officers, National Guard members, souvenir hawkers and more tourists than anywhere in the city. (Ratnesar & Stein, 2002, 68)

Americans can now, sadly, truly touch base with such a place and event - on their own soil, less distant than Pearl Harbor, as confronting and problematic as Hiroshima or Vietnam (e.g., Sturken, 1998). It is instructive that when the city and society no longer had a place name that made sense, 'ground zero' materialised. This 'selection' was perhaps apposite on many levels in its apocalyptic, loss of innocence and swath of destruction connotations, but it carries its own very worrying symbolic and metaphoric baggage.

Local television cameramen meticulously recorded the direct hits by two hijacked passenger airplanes in New York, the meltdown that followed and the direct hit on the Pentagon. (Aronowitz, 2001, 14)

One is left with an overriding impression that the 'language' being used to communicate and comprehend the events of 11 September and the impacts on the setting in which they occurred is primarily visual, inherently 'representational', and media mediated and dominated (e.g., Gerahty, 1996; Barthes, 1977, 1996). The photographic images of the World Trade Towers, the people who worked there, New York's finest, the witnesses we identified with, and the blow by blow stages of the building's collapse and clearing have been used to tell the story, to impose sense and coherence, to construct new meanings. But in this case the building and the landscape are always, somehow, centerstage, embodying, encompassing, communicating this tragedy. These photographs of place constitute powerful social and cultural representations (e.g., Farr & Moscovici, 1984; Hall, 1997) of a particular order and kind, orchestrating and *situating* sensemaking at multiple levels, and intersecting a plurality of semantic planes, places and domains. The role that the building itself plays in this visual narrative is particularly interesting with respect to rhetoric of the images and photographs, and the use of the semiotic landscape (Barthes, 1996; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), in this case via media representations in a disaster documentation mode. There has never been such a sifting through of a monumental building's death throws and demise, such a public and media fixation on the parts and the pieces of the building, of the story. Much of this has to do with the intertwined symbolic and metaphoric meanings of the building, the places, the events themselves, and this - itself symbolic - point in time in human history. The emergent fields of cultural representations (e.g., Hall, 1997) and visual culture (e.g. Mirzoeff (1998) underscore the critical role of representations in meaning construction and investment, and the multi-faceted and multi-valenced roles of the media in fashioning and communicating these representations.

In part, we give things meaning by how we represent them - the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and

conceptualise them, the values we place on them. (Hall, 1997, 3)

Opening up the field of vision as an arena in which cultural meanings get constituted also simultaneously anchors to it an entire range of analyses and interpretations of the audio, the spatial, and the psychic dynamics of spectatorship. This visual culture opens up an entire world of intertextuality in which images, sounds and spatial delineations are read on to and through one another, lending ever accruing layers of meaning and of subjective responses to each encounter we might have with film, TV, advertising, art works, buildings or urban environments. (Rogoff, 1998, 15)

As Gumpert and Drucker (1996) persuasively argue and as any cultural theorist knows, we increasingly inhabit virtual landscapes. We genuinely need to consider how such representations constitute, compromise, and complement the 'environments' in which we live and the psychosocial environmental 'impacts' which we experience.

There are many questions of particular relevance to the readers of this Bulletin posed by the events of 11 September, their representations, and impacts. What insights does, can, an environmental psychological perspective provide? What lessons can we learn from this unprecedented event? What things change, and what things remain unaltered when such a dramatic and consequential built environment impact is sustained by a city and its residents? What constitutes the text, subtext, and hypertext of these events, images, and representations as they relate to the World Trade Towers? How does this relate to place meaning, and place attachment and connection in circumstances such as this? What and whose functions and needs are served? Finally, and importantly, where do we locate our object of focus and inquiry? Where do lost places reside?

Note. The author is American citizen, but a long term overseas resident. He grew up in Chicago, and taught in the shadow of the John Hancock Building at Loyola University, prior to moving overseas.

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The events in Sweden differed from each other in a fundamental respect: the number of lives lost. One person dead on a sidewalk would hardly seem comparable to 501 Swedes and hundreds of others entombed in a sunken ship. Why should these seemingly so dissimilar events have similar effects on health? In formulating an account, we departed from an epidemiologic literature that links somatic illness with the "deep and poignant" distress of personal bereavement (e.g., Clayton, 2000). As with other major stressors, personal bereavement appears to increase corticosteroid production and compromise immune function (Irwin, Daniels, & Weiner, 1987; Zisook, Shuchter, Irwin, & Darko, 1994). We proposed that in communal bereavement distress arises not so much from the permanent and possibly irreplaceable loss of tangible and intangible benefits enjoyed from a close personal relationship, but rather more from a sense that institutions essential to the normal functioning of the community had failed.

The loss of a single person who played a highly visible and difficult to fill role in an important institution could distress the community because the institution might not function as needed for an unknown length of time. The circumstances of that person's death might aggravate distress by arousing concerns about the identity of responsible parties and the extent to which they may continue to present a threat. Similar concerns may arise when the death or deaths follow from a catastrophic failure of trusted institutions to perform essential tasks, such as ensuring the secure operation of transportation systems or other components of a society's infrastructure (cf. Baum et al., 1992). Moreover, we thought, mutual aid arrangements would suffer under the circumstances of communal bereavement. The number of persons experiencing distress would be relatively large, implying that unusually many members of social networks would need physical and psychological resources for coping. "Surplus" support would be lacking for the vulnerable. The fraction of distressed persons who become ill would be higher than at other times.

The attack on the WTC was beyond our imagination when we speculated that people who had never met the victim(s) could nonetheless experience deep and poignant distress when facing terrible evidence that institutions essential to the normal functioning of the community had failed. In doing our research, however, we were aware that events like the Palme murder and loss of the *Estonia* could - and probably would - occur again, and that they could have implications for the public's health.

To test our hypothesis, we obtained and analyzed aggregate data for the quarterly incidence of VLBW births in Sweden during the years 1973 to 1995. Why did we use the incidence of VLBW as our outcome? For one, pregnant women adapting to stressors have an elevated risk of delivering very low weight infants (e.g., Hedegaard et al., 1996; Hobel et al., 1999; Lockwood, 1999). Mothers who have such babies - they weigh less than 1500 grams, or 3.5 pounds - almost always deliver them preterm (cf. Crouse & Cassidy, 1994; Solis, Pullum, & Frisbie, 2000). It appears that the timing of delivery is sensitive to elevated corticosteroid levels and compromised immune function, two stress reactions shown to attend personal bereavement, as we mentioned earlier. Beyond the evidence of a plausible biological mechanism, we had other reasons for focusing on VLBW. A VLBW birth often involves significant

Thoughts on Communal Bereavement Following the World Trade Center Tragedy

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Within days of the stunningly effective attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, John Hughes, the editor of the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, contacted us to ask if we wanted to add some text to an article just going into production (Catalano & Hartig, 2001). In the article, we had reported an increased incidence of very low birthweight (VLBW) in the months following the murder of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986. We also found a smaller though still significant increase in the months after the ferry *M/S Estonia* sank during a storm on the Baltic in 1994. The two events marked instances of what we referred to as communal bereavement, "the widespread experience of distress among persons who never met the deceased." Like us, John Hughes had recognized the close parallels between what we had described in the article and what we saw unfolding in the aftermath of the attacks. Would we, he wanted to know, like to add some text to the article to flag the parallels?

and persistent suffering and economic costs, for the child, the family and society, in part because of developmental deficiencies (e.g., Wise, Wampler, & Barfield, 1995). Also, we had previously used the incidence of VLBW to test the communal health effects of unemployment among males (Catalano, Hansen, & Hartig 1999).

In our interrupted time-series analysis of the VLBW data, we compared the incidence of VLBW in the quarters after the Palme murder and the *Estonia* catastrophe to the incidence that we would have expected after removing autocorrelation due to trends, seasonality, and other sources. After applying still other statistical controls, we allowed ourselves a good measure of confidence in the effects that we uncovered: about 35 excess VLBW births in the months following the Palme murder (a 21% increase over the expected value of 166), and about 25 more VLBW births than expected (a 15% increase) in the months following the *Estonia* catastrophe. It appears that, in the aftermath of each of these two events, some Swedish women prematurely concluded their pregnancies, delivering a very low weight baby.

When we have told colleagues what we found, we have sometimes noticed a skeptical raising of eyebrows. All well and good: we have a professional responsibility to regard research results with skepticism. We then must point out to them that rival explanations must fit within the constraints imposed by our statistical controls while at the same time positing an event that could coincide with the assassination of Olof Palme or the sinking of the *Estonia*. We could not think of such an alternative explanation.

Taking up John Hughes' offer, we added some text to our article expressing our view that the September 11 attacks qualified as an instance of communal bereavement. The journal's publisher then promptly sent out a press release, which the major news services just as promptly picked up. Their interest put us in an uncomfortable position. We greatly appreciated the recognition given the work and the interest in the potential practical value of our findings, but the circumstances that called so much attention to it crowded out a sense of satisfaction that we might otherwise have enjoyed.

Further complicating our personal reactions, we were aware that the reporting of our results fed into a media construction of communal bereavement. Toward the end of our paper, we had written the following:

"We have assumed that the media precipitate communal bereavement by alerting the community to events that genuinely induce a feeling of distress in the population. The way the media describe an event, however, may affect how many people are distressed and how distressed they feel. If this were the case, it would suggest that the media may be acting irresponsibly by reporting deaths in sensational ways simply to attract readers or viewers. If additional research replicates findings such as ours, discussions of journalistic ethics might expand to include the health effects of sensational reporting of deaths."

To their credit, the journalists with whom we had contact were aware of this issue, just as they were aware that our findings had possible preventive utility that deserved wider

consideration. Still, we had a sense that the findings had been hijacked by the recent events.

This was not an idle concern. In a November 15 article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers from RAND and UCLA reported on post-attack stress reactions registered in a large telephone survey of adult Americans (Schuster et al., 2001). Their hypothesis resembled ours: "people who are not present at a traumatic event may experience stress reactions" (p. 1507). Of the stress reactions studied, such as difficulty concentrating and intrusive thoughts, 44% of the people surveyed reported that they experienced at least one to a substantial degree (i.e., "quite a bit" or "extremely"). The researchers found few studies of trauma-related stress symptoms in community-based samples of Americans not suffering from a psychiatric disorder, and those that they did find differed methodologically from their own study. Still, they concluded that their study indicated a much higher prevalence of event-related stress symptoms than shown previously. Relevant to our formulation of the phenomenon as one of a community rather than individual impact, the prevalence of substantial reactions varied with distance from the WTC, a variable we might view as a crude proxy for the strength of an individual's identification or emotional involvement with the community affected by the attacks. Of those living within 100 miles of the WTC, 61% reported some substantial stress reaction, in contrast to 36% of respondents living more than 1001 miles away. Relevant to our concern about the media's role in feeding communal bereavement, the researchers described a positive association between the prevalence of substantial stress reactions and the number of hours spent on September 11 watching televised accounts of the attacks. Certainly, we should ask questions about these findings. Did those who watched more TV have a family member or close friend in or near the WTC or Pentagon? What kind of person watches more than 13 hours of television in a day – even a day such as September 11? Although we cannot say with certainty that characteristics of the televised account explain this association, we cannot get away from a basic fact; in such an event, turning to the media for information is for many people one of only a few available coping strategies. They deserve careful treatment.

In the coming months and years we expect to see a substantial amount of attention given to stress-related health outcomes in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. Seeing our results replicated will give us little joy.

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The Reasonable Person Model and Seemingly Unreasonable Behavior

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Humans are exceptionally flexible animals. This flexibility has allowed them to survive in a remarkable variety of environments, each requiring specific knowledge and appropriate social patterns. Culture plays a critical role in the preservation and transmission of this needed specificity.

Culture also speaks to a different aspect of human nature. Despite strong innate social needs, humans have the capacity to be selfish and uncooperative – patterns that can run counter to needs for coordinated group effort. One of humanity's great achievements is to develop patterns that facilitate group living and cooperative effort. During the last several hundred

years, however, a different sort of cultural perspective has emerged. This view tends to focus on freedom rather than restraint. It also tends to favor the tangibles over the intangibles. It is materialistic in orientation, even arguing that selfishness is not only acceptable, but has a positive effect on the common good.

Traditional cultures have tried to coexist with this "modernist" perspective (Ray & Anderson, 2000). Not surprisingly, traditionalists see modernism as a corrosive force undermining all that they hold worthwhile. The widely distributed media-based expressions of modernist culture are particularly seductive to young people of all cultures. Further, by control of a preponderance of technology and resources, modernist governments can impose their will on more traditional countries.

The perspective of the member of a traditional culture may seem difficult to comprehend. The modernist is encouraging actions that claim to bring a higher standard of living for all. But consider the plight of the traditionalist observing the loss of community values, eroding loyalty and respect for others, decline of modesty and restraint, and destruction of other values cultures have long struggled to foster. Can such undermining of cultural patterns lead to terrorist outcomes?

The Reasonable Person Model (RPM) (Kaplan, 2000), an approach that focuses on the impact of different kinds of environments on people's reasonableness, effectiveness and well being, may be useful in examining this link. In briefest terms, RPM hypothesizes that environments are more supportive of people to the extent that they provide opportunities for exploration, understanding and meaningful action. In some contexts identifying such opportunities is reasonably straightforward. One explores what is novel, one attempts to understand what seems mysterious, one acts meaningfully when one secures resources for oneself and one's family. But there are many contexts in which what and how to explore, what is reasonable to try to understand, and what constitutes meaningful action are all complex and challenging questions. It is here that culture has played a central role.

Let us then attempt to assemble the pieces. The reasonableness (as well as the life satisfaction) of an individual is hypothesized to be influenced in a significant way by the opportunities for exploration, understanding and meaningful action. To the extent that these are culturally defined, an attack on one's culture is an attack on what matters, on what makes life worthwhile. Thus people who persistently experience that their cultural values are undermined have little to lose. Indeed the only meaningful action left to them is to fight in any way they can against the forces they see as destroying their culture. Such a "war" can be energizing not only to others who share their beliefs, but also to those whose lives lack exploration, understanding and meaningful action for other reasons.

Newspaper reports suggest that traditionalist terrorists' recruitment is particularly successfully among educated young men whose societies have no place for them, no roles where their education and abilities can be put to good use. Reported interviews suggest that these individuals found the very purpose they were lacking in joining the attack on modernism.

Sketchy as it is, there are nonetheless some broad policy implications arising from this analysis. First, it is in the

best interest of the US to work with less developed countries to correct factors that lead to substantial numbers of people with nothing to lose. The modernist focus on "productivity" emphasizes products with as few hours of human work as possible. Such a focus fails to recognize that meaningful work is a primary source of human satisfaction.

Second, the US policy that all the world's problems can be solved by development (and implicitly, by universal adoption of materialism) requires reconceptualization. This is pertinent for our own citizens every bit as much as for export. The overwhelming evidence indicates that money and material goods do not make people happy (although many think it will). Further, disparity of wealth, ironically one of the primary results of current economic policy, makes people unhappy. Current policies, with the enthusiastic support of the media, extol consumption and greed – quite the opposite of the teachings of major religions as well as of traditional cultures. Our current patterns are clearly not good for the environment; nor do they contribute to human satisfaction. If the foregoing analysis is correct, it also makes it more difficult to achieve safety and peace.

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Let a World Life Center Rise From the Ashes

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Since many trades and professions have their own particular ways of looking at the world, it was not surprising to see evidence of an "edifice complex" in the letters from architects sent to the *Architectural Record* and republished in PEPB. A clinical psychologist might see manifestations of denial in some of their proposals to replace the twin towers with likewise imposing buildings as if to say to the world, "You see, it didn't happen."

But, of course, it did happen, and the "it" is no minor incident but the single most destructive attack on our country in its history, an attack which sent shock waves through the nation and led many to claim that life in the United States would never be the same again.

What the edifice complexers may not realize is that we are dealing psychologically not with a two-stage process (an intact WTC followed its replacement) but a three-stage process. The extra stage is the long months we are now experiencing of a demolished WTC, a symbol of death, destruction, and despair.

What many Americans are seeking, it seems, is an appropriate replacement not for the WTC but for this extra stage which is symbolized by the funeral pyre left by the WTC's demolition. And since the funeral pyre suggests death, destruction and despair, perhaps its sequel should evoke thoughts of life, creativity and joy. In short, what we may need

at the WTC location is a World Life Center (WLC), a new celebratory symbol of life forces and possibilities in a host of human endeavors.

What would a WLC be and what would it do? While these questions are easier to ask than to answer, two things seem clear at this early stage of its conceptualization. First, a WLC should both generate and display the creative products of talented academics and practitioners of the world with many being invited to serve in rotating residences at the center. Second, such a center should be boldly designed to attract and welcome large numbers of daily visitors seeking to experience and appreciate outstanding contributions to the arts, the humanities, the sciences, and the world of practical affairs. To fulfill these two objectives a single large facility (or a complex of smaller facilities) would be needed to support the many on-site researchers and practitioners and to showcase a vast variety of creative works to large audiences from the U.S. and abroad.

Needless to say, such a major operation would require millions, if not billions, to establish and maintain. Government and foundation assistance would be needed as well as a prominent figure, such as former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani, to serve as a driving force in its initiation and direction.

Creating a WLC would be an immense undertaking for New York, for the U.S., and, indeed, for the world. However, it would appear to be a much-needed response to the savage attack of September 11 on our sense of humanity and our feelings of hope for the future.

BOOK REVIEWS

Why the Wild Things Are

Review of: Melson, G. (2000). *Why the Wild Things Are: Animals in the Lives of Children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ISBN: [0674004817]

Reviewed by Joanne Vining, Ph.D., Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Why the Wild Things Are is about relationships between children and animals. Melson reviews a wide range of topics pertaining to the roles played by animals in the lives of human children. She includes what is rapidly becoming traditional material in this topical arena on the therapeutic value of animals, waxes emotional and a little misty-eyed when describing the human-animal bond, hits hard with a chapter on animal cruelty that could merit an R-rating for its graphic descriptions of violence to animals, and concludes with comments on relationships between humans, animals, and nature.

In this book the reader will find an excellent survey of the literature not just on animal-children interactions but animal-human interactions more broadly. Melson is very well read and she presents fascinating historical and literary contexts as well as scientific research on the topic. This volume is very well but unobtrusively referenced, and as a result is satisfying to the scholar while remaining extremely readable. Melson writes

beautifully but what I liked best about this book is how clearly her sense of wonder forms the basis for her scientific inquiries. She uses her own experiences and curiosity as well as the literature to form the basis for a lot of smart questions and then struggles, not always successfully, to find answers to them.

Melson begins her book with a story of a boy comforting his pet at the veterinarian's office, comparing the bond between boy and pet to the mother-child bond. From the beginning we can see the emphasis on the power of the bond between humans and other animals. We also begin to see two biases that pervade the literature on human-animal interactions: the emphasis on positive aspects of these interactions and a view toward animals that may be more characteristic of Western industrialized countries than it is universal.

As is true with most of the literature on human-animal interactions, this book provides a viewpoint that is dominated by that of individuals from industrialized Western cultures where animals are often considered part of the family. Humans are so close to their animals in America that one study found that the grieving processes for deceased human and animal family members were indistinguishable (Gerwolls and Labott, 1994). In part because there is so little empirical work done with attitudes toward animals in developing cultures and in part due to a focus on positive interactions between humans and animals, we don't really know whether attitudes toward animals are universal. However, although it was not the focus of his study, one of my students (Cristancho, 2001) discovered that members of one indigenous Amazonian culture do not revere their domesticated animals at all (though they do have great reverence for some wild species), but consider them as one might un sentimentally consider employees. One way to frame this issue is with reference to a Maslovian hierarchy: in Western cultures many of us have our basic needs met and we can afford the luxury of romanticizing animals and nature (e.g., Cronon, 1991; Nash, 1989). Regardless, it is important for researchers interested in relationships between people and animals to examine the extent to which their assumptions and findings are affected by cultural blinders.

Although Melson writes an entire chapter on human cruelty to animals and includes some material on negative emotional reactions to animals, she is at her most eloquent when describing the more positive effects of human interactions with animals. This is especially true in the introduction and in Chapter Two in which she describes a rather romantic description of the first contact between humans and animals for which she admits evidence is murky. However, this accurately reflects the bias in the literature in this field. It is not uncommon, for example, for authors to write about the *benefits* of human-animal interactions rather than the *effects* of such interactions. This bias pervades the literature from theories and conceptual foundations to measurement instruments.

In Chapter Five Melson discusses the healing aspects of human-animal interactions, and this is perhaps the most poignant material in the book. However, some of the descriptions of the residential programs are suspiciously idyllic. Crack children are transformed by the farm, nature, and animals and there are intriguing stories in which one animal fails to elicit the desired response yet another succeeds. What must be an arduous therapeutic process is not clearly described nor do we discover what happens when these children leave the

therapeutic environment. This chapter is loaded with anecdotal, testimonial, and case study data and the conclusion that biophilia, the innate tendency for humans to affiliate with nature (Wilson, 1984), is dissatisfying.

For my own taste, Melson relies a little too heavily on the biophilia hypothesis, with its heavily positive spin, to explain the effects (or more often, the benefits) of interacting with animals. I have never found biophilia to be a particularly compelling explanatory mechanism for either the human attraction to nature or to animals. To say that we affiliate with nature or animals because we have an innate tendency to affiliate with the natural world is a tautology: one might say that we gaze at stars because we have an innate tendency to stargaze. To me, this recalls the unsatisfying explanatory mechanisms from the psychology of the mid-twentieth century in which behavior, feelings, and thoughts were ascribed to an ever-increasing list of basic urges or motivations. Moreover, the logic and elegance of the biophilia hypothesis degenerates when one confronts the negative aspects of human-animal or human-nature interactions, which Melson seems to recognize.

If biophilia is the answer then it should be universal and it is not (and it is debatable whether that question is even answerable). If biophilia is genetic then it should be strongest in children yet Melson says that "childhood biophilia is often unsophisticated and misguided (p. 98)." Seeming to contradict this statement, she later comments that "children's attunement with animals as nature's gift to our species (p. 199)." Nonetheless she makes a valiant effort to explain some of the phenomena she presents, setting herself apart from much of the literature on human-animal interactions.

Melson concludes by arguing for a stronger connection with nature and the planet via our association with animals. Although she never really answers the title question the debate is more intelligently framed as a result of her work. One of the most powerful issues raised by this book is the fact that our fascination with and aversion to animals and nature is still a bit mysterious and maybe even tinged with a little magic. Several years ago I attended a workshop on dolphin-assisted child psychotherapy in which the therapists went to great extents to emphasize the lack of magic in their work. They performed their work in a strictly behaviorist framework and attributed changes in behavior to a successful reward structure. Although I understand the need not to unduly encourage desperate parents, I think it is ultimately the magic that we need to examine. It may be that science is not yet up to the task in this relatively young field and that is why Melson's book is so compelling with its literary and historical references. But this book is most compelling because Melson asks the questions, using her sense of wonder and her experiences as well as scientific research to frame important issues regarding our place in nature among the other animals.

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Festschrift for Man-Environment Relations

Review of: Nasar, J. L., & Preiser, W. F. E. (Eds.) (1999). *Directions in person-environment research and practice*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate. [379 pp., hc. ISBN: 1 84014 178 6]

Reviewed by Jennifer A. Veitch, Ph.D.

This collection of papers operates at several levels. Meeting at EDRA 26, alumni of the Man-Environment Relations program at Pennsylvania State University noted that it was then 25 years since the creation of the program and they were inspired to collect in one volume the most significant work of its most distinguished graduates. Thus, on one level, the resulting volume stands as a memorial to an influential time in environment-behavior research. Influential, because many MER graduates went on to chair professional organizations, organize conferences, write books, edit journals, and train new generations of environment-behavior researchers; they are leaders today. A memorial, because the program ceased to exist in 1986, a victim of budgetary and institutional forces beyond its control; the introduction by Ray Studer describes the philosophy and history of this experiment in EBR education. On another level, the volume is a fable about environment-behaviour research and practice, about which more below.

The volume is organized in four sections: Theory on the Use of Space; Design and Planning Process; Psychological Factors; Housing and Environmental Planning, each with 3-4 papers. Many of the papers are reprinted from journals or conferences; what is new here is their juxtaposition against other work of MER graduates. (A quibble: it's not always clear where the paper appeared previously, or if it was written for this volume. Perhaps some citations are missing from the author identification footnotes?) The breadth of subject matter reflects the impressive breadth of concerns in environment-behaviour research and practice: Here are articles on privacy, children's environments, POE, transportation policy, wayfinding and dementia, worksite health promotion, and residential

environments in Turkey. For this reason, I would consider making this a supplementary text for a graduate or senior undergraduate course in environment-behavior studies. There are few single-volume collections that so clearly demonstrate the variety of subject matter in the field.

Each paper also includes a commentary by the author, usually describing how the ideas in the paper were influenced by their experiences and relationships in MER. It's rare to have that contextual information about a work, with the benefit of reflection on the part of the author. For students, the evidence of continued development and refinement of ideas after graduation might come as a revelation: The dissertation won't be your best work ever, it's just a starting place. These commentaries were in some respects the most interesting and rewarding part of the volume, showing how the broad perspective of environment-behavior studies connected to a field I had previously thought little about (for instance, cost estimating in facility planning).

The epilogue, by Bob Bechtel, is the only chapter not written by an MER graduate. Bechtel's essay highlights the way in which the collection demonstrates both the tremendous success and institutional failure of EBR. The sobering reality is that the MER program no longer exists. As Bechtel observed, environment-behavior programs have rarely succeeded at becoming fundamental, core academic units, rather they have struggled for institutional recognition and continued existence. It's hard to find in one organization the inspirational, collegial atmosphere of many like-minded people described by almost all the authors in their commentaries as characteristics of their MER years.

The flip side of this failure is success in infiltrating established areas: Some of the authors in this volume are in universities, some in mainstream units (schools of architecture and planning or business; departments of psychology) and some in multidisciplinary units (a department of health promotion and behavior; programs in environmental studies). Some authors made careers in the construction and building industry, and others in government policy departments. This speaks to the success of MER and environment-behavior studies generally: The subject matter covers any setting, and the analytic and research skills fit many career paths. Perhaps our future lies not in becoming institutionalised as a separate unit, but in establishing our perspective as fundamental to many settings and traditional disciplines. Quietly, we are making inroads, albeit perhaps not in the settings originally planned.



RoToArchitects



Frei Otto

Design Matters: Planning Coalition Issues Initial Recommendations for the Rebuilding of Lower Manhattan

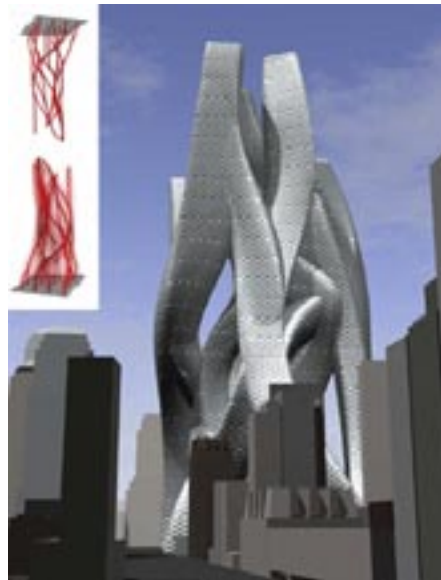
The draft report is the result of a three-month-long pro bono effort by 350 professionals representing 20 organizations. It is intended to provide a foundation for the range of decisions that the public and private sectors will make in the coming months. The working draft contains maps and illustrations that give a visual presence to the broad discussions already underway. The New York New Visions coalition offers the draft report now, as decisions about infrastructure begin to be made, recognizing that speed must be balanced with sensitivity to the many constituencies and issues at hand.

Editor's Note: The organizations represented by this coalition include New York chapters of the American Institute of Architects, the American Planning Association and the American Society of Landscape Architects. Seven general principles from the draft report are reprinted below. The full report is available from the New York New Visions web site: <http://nynv.aiga.org/press.shtml>. The images on pgs. 12 & 13 are courtesy of Max Protetch, and the copyright for each image is held by the architect/firm listed.

Seven General Principles for the Rebuilding of Lower Manhattan

We propose the rebuilding of a vital World Trade Center site and Lower Manhattan in a way that responds to the needs of a wide variety of stakeholders. New York New Visions offers the following seven major recommendations that are presented in more detail in the body of this report.

1 *Establish an Open Memorial Process.* Organize a formal, transparent, and open process to determine the nature and location of memorials. Ultimately, memorials should be integral to the redevelopment of the area. Prepare for a lengthy and comprehensive memorial effort. Establish appropriate temporary memorials during the intervening period.



NOX Architekten



Daniel Libeskind

2 *Encourage a Mixed-use Future for Lower Manhattan.* Intensify and encourage increased diversity of programmatic uses. Capitalize on the cultural, historic, and geographic assets of the district as generators of growth. Develop a true 24-hour community within a pedestrian realm. Promote complementary and productive adjacencies to improve security and develop the regional tax base.

3 *Become a Transportation Crossroads for the City and Region.* Focus on improving accessibility by mass transit; it is the single most important

investment in the future health of Lower Manhattan. Magnify public and economic benefits of investment by linking existing and new transportation centers and integrating them with pedestrian flows and open space.

4 *Enhance the Reciprocal Relationship Between Lower Manhattan and the Region.* Implement a balanced growth strategy that reflects the reciprocal relationship of Lower Manhattan and the region. Coordinate decisions about the restructuring of the World Trade Center site with development in the rest of Manhattan, the other city boroughs, and key communities in Long Island, Westchester and New Jersey.

5 *Become a Center for Design Excellence in New York City.* Demand design excellence with an emphasis on sustainability to create economic and social value. Create the highest quality urban patterns and architecture. Require decreased life-cycle costs and energy use. Promote long-term flexibility.

6 *Develop a Creative and Inclusive Planning Process.* Create a comprehensive and inclusive plan for Lower Manhattan. Balance Urgency with informed decisions. Reorganize the building review process to expedite priority projects. Adopt a model building code to address changes in technology and performance.

7 *Immediate Actions.* Create and implement a plan for temporary memorials, integrated with viewing places that address visitor and resident needs. Address short-term transportation, amenity, and small-business needs of the district. Define the character of a secure and open public realm, and begin its implementation as utilities are put back into place.



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