PLACE CO-CREATION IN DEATH CARE: OPPORTUNITIES TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES TO GREEN BURIAL IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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ABSTRACT

HANNAH CATHERINE PALKO. Place Co-Creation in Death Care: Opportunities to Overcome Obstacles to Green Burial in the United States
(Under the direction of DR. WEI-NING XIANG)

Green burial places are cemeteries and funeral homes that embrace green burial practices by providing green burial funeral services and educating their clients about green burial options. A green burial place within a cemetery may be a part or whole cemetery that is dedicated to following green burial protocol. Green burial involves the use of biodegradable containers rather than steel or hardwood caskets. The decedent is not embalmed and is buried directly in the ground instead of within a burial vault. The grave is typically more shallow than contemporary burials; this encourages natural decomposition of the body. Green burial places within cemeteries are designated areas where green burials can happen and can contribute to the overall ecological well-being of the land.

Although not new in concept, green burial places are not as abundant or accessible as green burial advocates such as the Green Burial Council, International 501(c)(3) non-profit would like. Compared to contemporary burial in the United States, green burial has greater ecological and social benefits, as it reduces resource consumption standard to contemporary burial and supports regulatory and social ecosystem services. However, there are many funeral homes and cemeteries who do not currently provide green burial. Therefore, this dissertation asks and answers the overarching question: What are the opportunities for successful green burial placemaking that address the obstacles faced and anticipated by death care professionals?

This dissertation uses qualitative methods, specifically grounded theory methods, to answer the overarching question. I do this via three lines of inquiry: 1) examining obstacles to

green burial placemaking that are presented by a sample of funeral directors from across the United States (§5.1 - §5.3), 2) Analyzing current death care consumers' awareness of and attitudes towards green burial (§5.3 - §5.4), and 3) Uncovering the opportunities that successful green burial placemakers employed to successful create green burial places (§5.5 - §5.7).

The key methods used in this study are semi-structured interviews and online surveys, which have produced robust qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews were used to ascertain the perspectives and experiences of funeral industry professionals who have successfully started and continue to operate a green cemetery. The purpose of these interviews is to provide an understanding of the local and regional obstacles to green burial provision that death care providers anticipated, faced, and overcame. A total of nine interviews were conducted, and ten people were interviewed. In one case, the semi-structured interview involved two interviewees. The interviewees represented green burial cemeteries across the Mid-Atlantic States of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Two questionnaires were developed to understand obstacles at a national level. The first questionnaire was targeted towards funeral directors; the questions were targeted to understand funeral directors' level of knowledge about green burial, their willingness to provide green burial to their families, and the obstacles that they anticipate or currently face when considering whether to provide green burial. The second questionnaire, informed by both the interviews and the responses from the funeral directors, was directed at death care consumers—adults in the United States, eighteen years or older. The purpose of this survey was to explore one specific obstacle that death care providers have identified: there is not a market for green burial, i.e. no one knows about green burial and therefore no one asks for green burial. The consumer survey in the proposed research asks consumers to explain what they would like to have happen to their

body after death. Consumers are then presented with the definition of green burial and asked if this is something that they would be interested in. Responses are again analyzed using grounded theory methods.

The grounded theory that emerges from the proposed research will make contributions on two fronts. First, the knowledge will directly benefit the Green Burial Council International 501(c)3, a non-profit whose mission is to make green burial more accessible via educational outreach to both death care providers and consumers. As a member of the board of directors, I am committed to making practical use of the knowledge uncovered in this research. Second, this research will contribute to the scholarly pursuit present and legitimized by Palko (2021) to understand the relationships between death care decision-making and ecological and social consciousness.

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"We don't have to do all of it alone. We were never meant to." – Brené Brown

There are so many people who made this dissertation possible. First, thank you to The UNC Charlotte Facilities Information Systems and the Department of Geography and Earth Science for funding my degree through graduate assistantships, teaching assistantships, research stipends, etc. The experience and contribution to my livelihood is invaluable.

Second, I owe the Green Burial Council a huge thanks for inspiring and supporting my research. My fellow board members provided insight and direction beyond my expertise; I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the non-profit alongside of them.

Next, many thanks to my committee, Drs. Gagne, Harden, and Smith, for their expertise and guidance. Thank you to the Center for Graduate Life and Learning at UNC Charlotte for the opportunities to grow professionally and academically throughout my time at UNC Charlotte. And a huge thanks to my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Xiang. He has challenged me to become the independent scholar and professional geographer that I am today.

Finally, thank you to my family, friends, and fiancé. They have each given me the love and support I needed to see this project through to the end. I couldn't have done it without them.

DEDICATION

To my family and fiancé.

And

To Darwin. 🐾

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GBC – Green Burial Council

GTM – Grounded Theory Methods

IRB – Institutional Review Board

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Developing Research from practice

1.1.1 Green Burial Places

Green burial places are cemeteries and funeral homes that embrace green burial practices by providing green burial funeral services and educating their clients about green burial options. A green burial place within a cemetery may be a part or whole cemetery that is dedicated to following green burial protocol. Green burial involves the use of biodegradable containers rather than steel or hardwood caskets. The decedent is not embalmed and is buried directly in the ground instead of within a burial vault. The grave is typically more shallow than contemporary burials; this encourages natural decomposition of the body. Green burial places within cemeteries are designated areas where green burials can happen and can contribute to the overall ecological well-being of the land.

Green burial, also called natural burial or conservation burial, though not novel in its practice[1], has become increasingly popular since the establishment of Ramsey Creek Preserve in South Carolina in 1998 as the first cemetery established with the purpose of exclusively providing green burial (Harker, 2012 p.158). Since the establishment of Ramsey Creek Preserve, approximately eighty cemeteries and 211 funeral homes in the United States have become Green Burial Council certified by meeting the standards set by the council.

[1] Prior to the American Civil War, the typical American burial was considered "natural;" embalming was not commonly practiced until it became necessary during the Civil War (Beard & Burger, 2017; Brenner, 2014). Green burial today harkens back to the simplicity of burial practices prior to the establishment of the modern American death care industry.

1.1.2 What is the Green Burial Council and what is at stake?

The Green Burial Council (GBC) is a nonprofit organization that advocates for green burial and eco-friendly death care. What makes the GBC distinctly effective is their mission to "inspire and advocate for environmentally sustainable, natural death care through education *and* certification" (GBC 2021, italics added by author). They are the standard for green burial certification for funeral homes, cemeteries, and product providers in the United States and Canada. The GBC educates both the public and death care practitioners to further their goal of "universal access to information and environmentally sustainable death care" (GBC 2021).

The contemporary American funeral industry has been analyzed and scrutinized for its lack of consideration of environmental impact (Mitford, 1998). As a response to the environmental concerns posed by contemporary burial and cremation, green burial prohibits chemical embalming and utilizes biodegradable burial containers instead of steel or hardwood caskets that are typical of contemporary American burials. Thus, the body is allowed to naturally decompose. The public is steadily gaining interest in green burial. A 2007 study by AARP revealed that 19% of individuals aged 50 years or older are considering green burial for themselves after death (Choi-Allum, 2007 p.15). Leaders in the funeral industry argue that this number will rise, and it is therefore vital that funeral directors and cemetery operators are prepared to address consumers' requests for environmentally friendly funeral options by having green burial places ready and available for clients that choose that option (Chumsky, 2014). While the GBC continues its efforts to educate the public about the option of green burial, the

council also aims to provide support and continuing education for death care providers so that they can meet their clients' changing needs.

1.1.3 Learning the problems first-hand

The problems inspiring this research were learned first-hand, following the lead of use-inspired practice research conducted by Pasteur and McHarg (Xiang, 2021, p.11).[2] As a member of the board of directors of the GBC, I have attended and participated in monthly board meetings, marketing meetings, and strategic planning sessions. The problems that the GBC faces in achieving their goal became apparent through observation and conversations with board members and providers, including Darrell Hill (Former GBC 501C3 President), Lee Webster (Former GBC 501C3 President), and Susan Greer (GBC board member and Canadian Natural Burial Association Executive Director). Following McHarg's approach for "practice-grounded and knowledge-based research" (Steiner & Fleming, 2019 p.173; Xiang, 2021 p. 13), the following statement of the GBC's needs and subsequent research problem statement was codeveloped from practice with the help of GBC practitioners.

1.2 Problem Statement

Green burial is one disposition option presented by the modern death care industry in America alongside contemporary burial practices, cremation, donation to science, and burial at

[2] Xiang (2021) presents a retrofitted, improved version of the Schön-Stokes model of research in socio-ecological systems (p. 11). This model, called the RWC-Schön-Stokes model, includes several important changes and improvements to its earlier version by Xiang (2017, p.2442).

sea. Not new in concept, green burial harkens back to historical burial practices before the advent of modern funeral directing and embalming (Harker, 2012 p.153). Compared to contemporary burial in the United States, green burial has greater ecological and social benefits, as it reduces resource consumption standard to contemporary burial (Coutts et al., 2018 p.5) and supports regulatory and social ecosystem services (Clayden et al., 2018 p.103; Holden and McDonald-Madden, 2017 p.2). However, there are many funeral homes and cemeteries who do not currently provide green burial; therefore, there are a lack of green burial places in the United States.

The GBC is not satisfied with the current extent of green burial places and it wants to see more death care professionals create places for green burial within their business and practice. Of the 19,136 funeral homes in the US in 2019 (NFDA, 2020), approximately 1% are GBC-certified green burial providers[3] (GBC, 2020b). The GBC Board of Directors lacks knowledge about what obstacles death care providers face and anticipate that hinder green burial placemaking. The GBC needs this knowledge to develop effective educational content such as conferences, webinars, continuing education courses, and forums where professionals can teach and learn from each other. The lack of understanding obstacles to accessibility of diverse sustainable death care options is a documented knowledge gap in sustainable deathscape placemaking and cultural geography (Krupar, 2018, p.276). Achievement of the GBC mission to increase accessibility to green burial places can be facilitated by understanding the obstacles death care providers face and anticipate by in providing green burial and the opportunities to overcome those obstacles.

[3] According to the Green Burial Council, there are currently 211 funeral homes that are GBC certified or are in the process of becoming certified (GBCt,l 2020b).

1.3 Research Question

A tripartite research question is derived from the problem statement. First, what obstacles do contemporary death care providers *face and anticipate* when creating green burial places? Second, what are the characteristics of a successfully established and maintained green burial place and practice? Third, what theories emerge regarding opportunities to overcome obstacles to creating green burial places? In combination, the overarching research question is: "What are the opportunities for successful green burial placemaking that address obstacles faced and anticipated by death care professionals?" To clarify this research question, several ontological questions will be addressed in the following sections.

1.3.1 What are places?

As human geography professor and researcher Tim Cresswell points out, the concept of place is not academically rooted; rather it is a word and concept used daily in the English-speaking world (Cresswell, 2011 p.127). Having both a common sense and academically complicated definition, place has several connotations and characteristics (Cresswell, 2011 p.128). Place could reflect ownership or territory—i.e. "my place" as opposed to "your place" when speaking about living spaces – a point along a social hierarchy, or something as general as a city, town, or location (Cresswell, 2011 p.128). Cresswell uses the analogy of moving into a new dorm room or apartment to delineate the difference between space and place; the empty space of your new college dorm room becomes a place when you move your belongings in and begin spending time building memories and meaning there (Cresswell, 2011 p.128). "We make

locations into places of memory" (Forester, 2021a p.5). In a similar analogy, a landscape becomes a deathscape when a decedent is buried, or ashes are scattered. Prior to being a location of final disposition and memory, the landscape may not have held any other significance that made it a place for a family or individual.

There are specific elements that might give meaning to a place (Sepe and Pitt, 2014 p.216). Environment, history, symbolism, sensory quality, and sociological and psychological values are among the elements that turn places into spaces (Sepe and Pitt, 2014 p.216-220). Although there are many elements that change spaces into places, Forester (2021a) points out that "A 'place' is not a static, once-and-for-all container of hopes but a malleable and vulnerable site of ongoing uses, interactions, and inevitably moral performances, a space where morally significant actions matter, where actions take place" (Forester, 2021a p.4).

Quality places that people want to "live, work, or play in," (Wyckoff, 2014 p.2), or use in a general sense, are "safe, connected, welcoming, allow authentic experiences, are accessible, comfortable, quiet (unless designed to be otherwise), and promote and facilitate civic engagement" (Wyckoff, 2014 p.2-3).

1.3.2 What is placemaking?

Placemaking, according to Wyckoff (2014), is the "process of creating quality places" (Wyckoff, 2014 p. 2). It is an action, but not a one-time action. The definition of place presented by Forester (2021a) as a dynamic, "malleable, and vulnerable site" (Forester, 2021a p. 4) requires a definition of placemaking that is also ongoing and responsive. Therefore, Forester (2021a) posits that placemaking is "creative and responsive to context;" it integrates and is

reflective of the elements that give meaning to a place (Forester, 2021a p. 4). Being an ongoing and reflexive process, deathscape placemaking may change for an individual as they age and develop a different relationship with the decedent that is buried there or their own mortality.

Although there are different types of placemaking that focus on or address certain goals (Wyckoff, 2014 p. 4-7), there are three paths to explore and constantly deliberate during the placemaking process. These paths are: 1) what matters, 2) what is known or can be known, and 3) What we can do now (Forester, 2021a p. 11). Forester argues that the reiterative process of contemplating and answering these three questions prevents three failures: "solving the wrong problems, acting without necessary knowledge and expertise, and studying problems to death without acting on them spatially" (Forester, 2021a p.12). Placemaking, therefore, is a process that is learned and mastered by doing—by acting rather than purely studying (Forester, 2021a p. 10).

1.3.3 What is an obstacle?

Defined as "something that impedes progress or achievement" (Merriam-Webster, 2020), the word obstacle has been used to describe forces that prevent development and innovation within a sustainable business model (Asswad et al., 2016 p.3). Before the nature of an obstacle can be investigated, a predetermined goal, achievement, service, or state of being must be explicitly defined (Asswad et al., 2016 p.2); in this case the service is green burial and the achievement is successful green burial placemaking. According to the GBC, burial can broadly be considered "green" if it involves "caring for the dead with minimal environmental impact that

aids in the conservation of natural resources, reduction of carbon emissions, protection of worker health, and the restoration and/or preservation of habitat" (GBC, 2020a).

1.3.4 Who experiences these obstacles?

This research focuses on the perspective of contemporary death care providers. *Death care* is a phrase used to describe the goods and services related to funeral directing, preparing the body for disposal, memorializing the body, and hosting funeral services (Smith, 1996 p. 5). Several professions make up the death care industry, which includes three phases: 1) pre-death and during the dying process, 2) post-death and pre-funeral and 3) funeral preparation (Figure 1). Funeral directors and cemeterians, people who operate and maintain cemeteries (Smith, 1996 p.5), are the primary death care providers that this research will focus on because they can incorporate green burial into their practice and can create meaningful places. *Contemporary* death care providers are individuals and businesses whose primary services involve embalming, casketing, and/or burial or entombment using some sort of grave liner or vault. Contemporary death care providers may also offer cremation as an alternative, but do not offer green burial as a sustainable alternative.

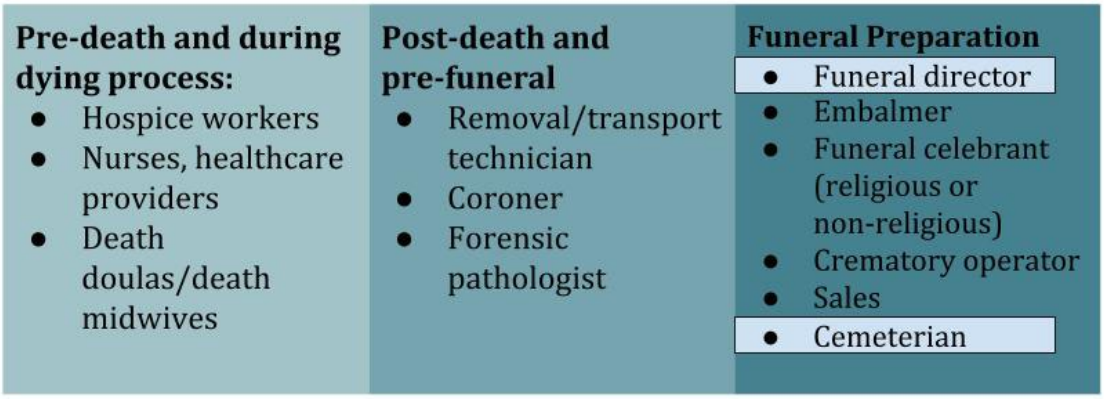

Figure 1*: Professionals in the death care industry. The individuals whose obstacles this research aims to uncover are the funeral directors and cemeterians.*

1.3.5 Where do these obstacles exist?

The funeral industry, as described in the previous section is a complex adaptive system (CAS) that has diverse and individual components that interact with each other[4] (Levin 1998; Holling 2001). Humans and human-created social systems such as political and economic systems exist within the larger context of human-environment interactions, where social systems are influenced by the external factors of the environmental system within which it exists. Complex adaptive systems therefore integrate components of nature, humans, and coupled human-nature interaction, the interactions between those components, and the components' continuous adaptation and evolution (Holling 2001, p.392). Socioecological systems (SES) are CAS with human (social processes) and ecological components (Biggs et al. 2015) (Figure 2).

[4] Simon (1974) described the complexity of such interactions as "Chinese boxes," where the smallest box is nested within a second slightly larger box, which is nested in a slightly larger third box, and so on (Simon 1974, p.5).

The integrity of the complexity of the system is upheld when a holistic CAS approach, rather than a reductionist approach is taken (Bohensky et al. 2015).

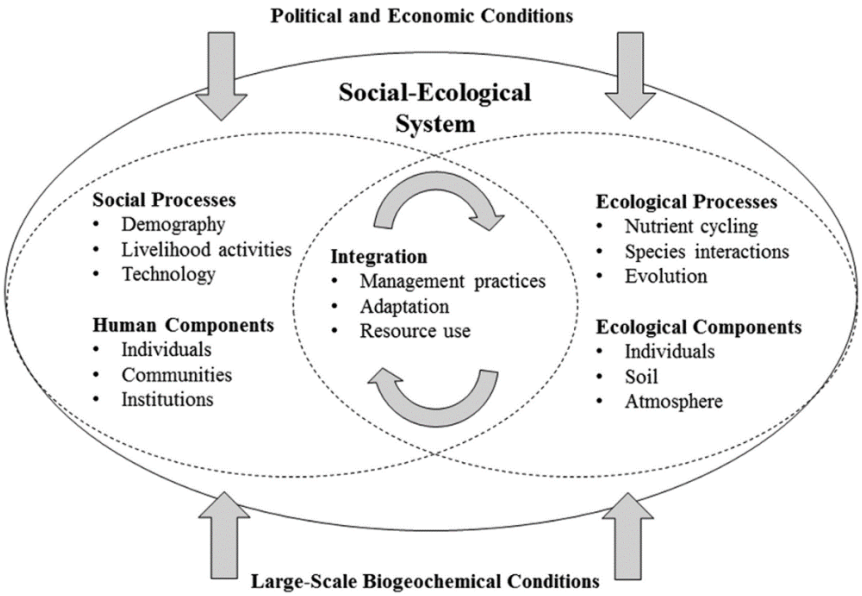

Figure 2*: From Virapongse et al. (2016); components and interactions within a socioecological system.*

Cemeteries are places where social and ecological components are integrated. They are landscapes that contain ecological processes and elements that are cultivated for the sake of social processes such as memorialization, contemplation, and historical preservation (Swensen et al., 2016). Not only are cemetery landscapes the focus of management practices and resource use, they are also affected by the surrounding land use type (rural vs. urban) and cultural patterns (Kjøller, 2012).

Geographically, this research will take place within and between the social and ecological interacting components that comprise the deathscape socioecological system.

1.3.6 What is the difference between face and anticipate?

Finally, the dual nature of the overarching research question requires a differentiation between obstacles that contemporary death care providers *face* versus obstacles that they *anticipate.* Obstacles faced are characterized by an objective examination of the context within which the individual resides that prevent the individual from meeting the necessary requirements for reaching a particular goal (Pyhältö et al. 2012, p.2). Conversely, anticipation of obstacles is based on a person's subjective experience of their context or environment and their reactions (Messing 2014, p.1346). By definition, anticipation is a verb meaning: "to give advanced thought or discussion to; to look forward to as certain" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). The anticipated obstacles are those that are not currently faced by death care professionals, but, by their perception, will certainly be faced if green burial is pursued. The first research question, what obstacles do contemporary death care providers *face and anticipate* when creating green burial places, considers the real obstacles that death care providers face and potentially overcome, and those that are anticipated and subsequently prevent green burial placemaking from happening.

1.4 Conducting research for practice: Socio-ecological practice research

By following Pasteur and McHarg's lead to provide "use-inspired practice research" (Xiang, 2021 p.11), this research takes practice as the object of study (Xiang, 2019a p. 7). Interwoven social and ecological components are associated with cemeteries in general, and green cemeteries specifically (see section 3.3). Green burial is a socio-ecological practice as defined by Xiang (2019a, p.7) that contains interwoven social and ecological components as a

"system of systems" (Xiang, 2019a p. 8). Green burial is a "human action and social process that take place in specific socio-ecological context to bring about a secure, harmonious, and sustainable socio-ecological condition serving human beings' need for survival, development, and flourishing" (Xiang, 2019a p.7). Therefore, socio-ecological practice research, also known as ecopracticology, requires that 1) the practice is taken as the object of study, 2) there is a commitment to generating knowledge about the practice itself, and 4) a pragmatic way of knowing is employed (Xiang, 2019a p.7).

In her recent dissertation, Östlund (2021) explored the concept of placemaking to connect humans, nonhumans, societies, and ecosystems together in a way that fosters regeneration of resources and waste to be repurposed and reused in a sustainable way. In line with the definition of socio-ecological practices presented by Xiang (2019), Östlund argues that "spatial designers primary concern is the formation and understanding of built space for current and future situations, a spatial design perspective can arguably be of help in developing strategies to improve the health of ecosociospatial relationships" (Östlund, 2021 p.3). When ecosociospatial factors are considered in the design process, placemaking can be a socioecological practice that brings about sustainable condition for humans and nonhumans to survive, develop, and flourish (Östlund, 2021 p.3; Xiang, 2019a p.7).

This research aims to understand why socio-ecological practice of green burial placemaking is inhibited by obstacles faced and anticipated by death care providers. Knowledge will be generated via "learning from real-world practitioners and studying what they do in context" (Xiang 2019a, p.10). This involves asking questions about what does not work in death care providers' practice and why. A component of pragmatic research for a constructive outcome includes engaging with practitioners by listening deliberately to acquire insights

(Forester 2020, p. 114-115). This approach will be utilized in this study when engaging with practitioners to encourage reflection and get to the heart of perception.

The overarching research questions were derived from practice through the collaboration with Green Burial Council Board of Director members. Ultimately, the product of this research will be useful for practice, as defined by Xiang (2019b, p.1). The knowledge generated will be directly relevant to the accomplishment of the GBC's goals. The GBC board members will be able to immediately act on this knowledge by planning continuing education programs and tailor their annual conference presentations to address the obstacles that providers face and perceive. And finally, the target knowledge will be foreseeably efficacious. Effective professional development is thoughtfully planned to address the specific struggles that professionals face (Guskey and Yoon, 2009 p.498-499). The results of this study are directly related to the advancement of the practice of green burial by informing organizations such as the GBC on how to better equip death care providers in overcoming the obstacles to green burial provision that they face and perceive.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1 Deathscapes and Necrogeography

Necreogeography was defined by Muzaini (2017) as a subset of human geography that takes deathscapes as the object of study. This includes an inquiry into spaces associated with death, dying, and the dead. Deathscapes, also called necroscapes[5] (Semple et al., 2020 p. 10), are "the places associated with death and for the dead" and the study of deathscapes are an inquiry into "how these [deathscapes] are imbued with meanings and associations" (Maddrell and Sidaway, 2010 p.4). The word deathscapes was initially used to refer to informal memorials for road accidents (Hartig & Dunn, 1998; Kong, 1999), however, deathscapes have since taken on a broader meaning. In the forward to the book *Deathscapes: Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance*, edited by Sidaway and Maddrell (2010), geographer Lily Kong states: "Spaces for the dead and dying are a reflection of the changing conditions of the living, as well as shifting meaning invested by the living, representing of the society within which they are established" (Kong, 2010 p. XV). Deathscapes are indeed a "microcosm of the real world" (Francaviglia, 1971 p. 501) that reflects the spatiality of a host of social and ecological processes.

Other key words in necrogeography, along with *deathscapes*, include *burial, cremation, corpses, cemetery, dying, and memoryscape* (Thornbush, 2018 p. 542). Although necrogeography is firmly embedded in human geography, it could be integrated with physical

[5] The suffix "-scape" being attached to words associated with social processes (including ethnoscape, technoscape, and financescape) is an idea from anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996, p. 33). These are landscapes or configurations that Appadurai that do not "look the same from every angle of vision, but rather they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by historical, linguistic, and political situatedness" (Appadurai, 1996 p. 33) of different types of actors that include international entities, nation-states, subnational groupings, and local groups such as villages, neighborhoods, families, and ultimately, the individual (Appadurai, 1996 p. 33).
The word necrogeography combines the Greek word for corpse (*nekros*) with geography. (Nash, 2018 p. 549).

geography to answer questions about erosion, decay, conservation, and preservation of landscapes. In fact, the first use of the word necrogeography was used by an interdisciplinary geographer.

The word *necrogeography* was initially used by Fred B. Kniffen (1900-1993), Professor of Geography and Anthropology at Louisiana State University, in his 1967 article *Necrogeography in the United States*, which was published in Geographical Review. Kniffen's academic legacy includes emphasizing the importance of blending physical geography, anthropology, and cultural geography. Although the scope of his original understanding of necrogeography only included landscaping, gravestone morphology, and the evolution of land use, Kniffen identified many variables of interest in the field of necrogeography: size, shape, and orientation of cemeteries, topographic attributes such as church, road, and settlement locations, date of establishment and age of cemeteries, active/inactive/abandoned status, number of plots, and layout, including racial, ethnic, and religious denominations that contribute to social and spatial segregation (Thornbush, 2018 p. 542). The following sections explore the diverse spatial components associated with deathscapes that have been to this date studied and reported in literature.

2.1.1 The necrogeography of religion

The ancient Greek roots of geography as a field of study is intricately connected to religion and philosophy (Kong, 1990 p. 356). One of the first Greek geographers and mapmakers, Anaximander, deemed his pursuit of accurate diagrams of the earth and the cosmos to be "more of a 'religious' pursuit than a 'scientific' one" (Kong, 1990 p. 356). Today, common geography

of religion inquiries include the spatial distribution of religious populations, what impact religious groups of people have on the landscape, and the religious ecology and theology regarding environmental practice (Holloway & Valins, 2002 p. 5). Tse (2014) argues that the role of geographers who study religion is to reveal how place-making is "informed by understandings of the transcendent" (Tse, 2014 p. 202). *Religion* is a term that is arguably a social construction; the line between faith and secular spaces is blurred and often illusory since "secular conditions of belief are themselves theological" (Tse, 2014 p. 214).

Because religion is central to the every-day lives of many individuals (Holloway & Valins, 2002 p. 5), geographers of religion can explore how religion and religious spaces construct people's identites, practices, and ethics (Holloway & Valins, 2002 p. 6). Vital events such as births, deaths, marriages and holidays are often celebrated with specific practices in locations where cultural meaning has been drawn and inscribed into the personal and social relations (Cooper, 1992 p.124; Holloway & Valins, 2002 p.6).

Theology is a major factor in determining the protocols within cemeteries or other deathscapes, though cultural and economic values are also imperative (Gade, 2015 p. 623). The establishment of new deathscapes is driven by religious protocols and desire to have a specific religious site dedicated for their particular practice and that fits the needs of the religion (Hunter, 2016) Religion can also drive spatial segregation within cemeteries that are already built (Gade, 2015 p. 626).

Not only do deathscapes hold meaning as religious landscapes where humans individually and collectively engage with rite, ritual, scripture, and experience, but there is a reciprocity of interpretation as well (Cooper, 1992 p. 123-124). Deathscapes such as cemeteries can provide

data on the spatial patterns of religiosity and traditions at a number of scales (Zelinsky, 2007), which can provide insight into the religion or theology itself and the people practicing it.

2.1.2 Racial segregation in the cemetery

Questions of race and racism are slowly being taken up in the field of geography, though research is incomplete and uneven throughout much of the literature (Kobayashi, 2014 p. 1113). Although race is understood and accepted as a social construct (Nayak, 2011 p.554), race does account "for the organization of particular places and human relations, but it is always a partial usually fractured concept" (Kobayashi, 2014 p. 1113). Understanding race, racism, and doing anti-racism work, specifically dismantling white supremacy, is a task for intersectional, interdisciplinary work (Price, 2010 p.166), including social, cultural, and economic geographies. In necrogeography, race does play a role in understanding the landscape and the people who utilize the landscape for death care practices.

Segregation of cemeteries based on race is a historical reflection of entrenched racism and disproportionate allocation of resources. Land for African American cemeteries and slave cemeteries in the Southern United States were "provided in marginal areas that were not ideal for cultivating" (Brooks, 2011 p.179). Such marginal land was thick with trees and underbrush, many times located near swampy areas, and had sandy soil that rendered the area useless for agriculture (Brooks, 2011 p.179). The landscape of African American cemeteries in the south were and are drastically different from the park-like setting of European American cemeteries; no efforts were made to create an artificial landscape (Brooks, 2011 p.180). In fact, the trees in

heavily wooded cemeteries may have been left on purpose because they are seen as spirit guides in some African traditions[6] (Brooks, 2011 p.183; King, 2010 p.127).

Besides the location and landscape features of southern African American and slave cemeteries, material remembrances also reflect the disproportionately sparce allocation of resources to a marginalized group of people. During the colonial and early foundation of the United States when infrastructure and economies were built on the backs of Black people, there were limitations to what African Americans could do to venerate their beloved deceased. Where there are grave markers, wood, metal and concrete monuments were more common in Black cemeteries than in white (Martin, 2010, p. 4). The type and lack of grave markers in many Black cemeteries was a reflection of the socioeconomic status of the Black family (Brooks, 2011 p.180). However, in South Carolina, families did celebrate their deceased and help transition them to the next life by planting yucca and saw palmetto plants, placing shells and glassware on the graves, and places personal belongings of the deceased on the graves (Brooks, 2011 p.181; Martin, 2010 p.115). Cemeteries hold intentionally placed material culture, showcase resistance efforts, and are a landscape of cultural preservation and are therefore ideal landscapes to study and reconstruct and understand the African American past (Brooks, 2011 p.184-185). The landscape, location, and design features of cemeteries have been shown to be predictors of who is buried there. In a study of Louisiana cemeteries, Nakagawa (1987) found that cemetery structure, location, types of trees, and number of unmarked graves are significant cultural traits that differ between white and Black cemtery types (Nakagawa, 1987 p.269-270).

[6] One such tradition that is heavily influential in African American cemeteries is the traditions of the BaKongo people, who comprised a significant proportion of those abducted in the transatlantic slave trade (King, 2010; Washington, 2005 p.153).

Racial segregation within and between cemeteries is also a reflection of dominant community desires and prejudices that predated laws (Kong, 1999 p.5). For example, informal segregation of Black and white sections within cemeteries predated the South African apartheid[7] doctrine of 1948 (Christopher, 1995 p.41). Prior to 1948, segregation informally occurred within cemeteries. However, with the passing of the apartheid legislation, entirely new cemeteries had to be created to establish non-white segregation (Kong, 1999 p.5). The creation of exclusivley white and non-white cemeteries paralleled the development of new segregated suburbs in South Africa (Christopher, 1995 p.41).Therefore, cemeteries not only reflect the laws of specific time periods that alter the fabric of land use, but they also reflect dominant prejudices and community desires that produce spatially segregated spaces despite laws (Kong, 1999, p.5).

Spatial divide of races within and between cemeteries extends to the landscape of memory and preservation. Because enslaved people were often buried in unmarked graves, cemeteries for enslaved people and other people of color are not included on United States Geodetic Stuvey maps or deeds (Lemke, 2020 p.605; Rainville, 2009 p.196). It's unsurprising then that entire sacred burial grounds disappeared from sight and knowledge. One such example is the African Burial Ground in New York City, founded sometime in the early 18th century in lower Manhattan (Frohne, 2015 p.1). The space was continuously desecrated during and after its use. While still in use in the late 1700s, Columbia medical students looted bodies from it to use for dissection (Frohne, 2015 p.19). It wasn't until the looting of graves began to occur at the Trinity Church cemetery, an exclusively white cemetery at this point, was attention called to the disrespect and desecration of the graves (Frohne, 2015 p.21). Such actions against the white

[7] Apartheid, meaning "apartness" in Afrikaans, was legislation that upheld segregationist policies in South Africa. Within the passing of the legislation by the National Party in 1948, non-white citizens were forced to live in separate neighborhoods and use separate public facilities. (History, 2020).

Trinity Church cemetery sparked the Doctors' Riot of April 13-14, 1788, where at least three people were killed in the uprising against doctors and medical students stealing from graves (Frohne, 2015 p.21). This is just one illustration of the power dynamics fueled by race and sacred spaces.

As the city expanded, the African Burial Ground, a 6.7 acre space where an estimated 15,000 people are interred, was obliterated from sight and memory as predominately white spaces, such as federal buildings, were erected directly over the burial ground (Frohne, 2015 p.1). It wasn't until 200 years later, in the midst of a construction project in the 1990s, that the forgotten African Burial Ground was rediscovered (Frohne, 2015 p.4). Since then commemorative memorials, statues, murals, and other pieces of art work have been commissioned to memorialize the sacred space that was so long forgotten (Frohne, 2015 p.228).

Cemeteries of people of color are "lost" all of the time; this is not a concept unique to the African Burial Ground of New York City. In a case study conducted in Texas, cemeteries of minority groups, including Black and Hispanic Americans, have a disporportionately higher rate of being destroyed, vandalized, or altogether disappearing from maps (Lemke, 2020 p.619). This pattern is not suprising or unique to Texas; there are examples of minority cemetery loss, destruction, or vandalism across the United States (Lemke, 2020 p.619). The neglect of cemeteries and other sacred deathscapes, especially the omission of such places on maps, is impacted by and a reflection of structured racism (Lemke, 2020 p.620).

Black Americans are far from the only racial group whose sacred spaces are desecrated and exploited. In the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPR) of 1990, the definition of *burial ground* is "any natural or prepared physical location, whether originally below, on, or above the surface of the earth, into which as part of the death rite or ceremony of a

culture, individual human remains are deposited" (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990). This definition, while seemingly inclusive, does not account for mass grave sites, places of violent murder of entire tribes, or the places where the Indigenous were massacred and left unburied (Pensley, 2005 p.41).

Race and ethnicity are demonstrated here as social constructs that affect the recognition of deathscapes and how people interact with deathscapes. Through the lens of race theory, scholars can study and understand society as a whole, as it is reflected in deathscapes.

2.1.3 Class division of deathscapes

Throughout history, the poor have always received less ostentatious funeral rituals than the rich (Laqueur, 1983 p.109). While the rich used funerals to signify and solidify their place in the hierarchy of society, the poor experienced the same exclusion and marginalization in death as in life. Economic class division is notable in cemetery location, landscaping, and memorialization of the deceased. Just like in urban areas, there are socially constructed "good" and "bad" neighborhoods in many cemeteries that are discerned based on plot size and cost (Francaviglia, 1971 p.506). Such spatial hierarchies exist in the cities within which cemeteries are built (Francaviglia, 1971 p.506). Although the rise of the middle class has soften the disparities between rich and poor sections of cemeteries, there are still locations within cemeteries that are considered prime real estate for burial, including hilltops and sections with beautiful landscaping (Francaviglia, 1971 p.506). Pristine, garden-like landscaping of upscale cemeteries or sections of cemeteries were designed to mirror upper-class suburbs and aristocratic manor gardens.

A case study of a London cemetery explores the initial establishment and practices of the cemetery through the lens of class. The Brookwood Cemetery was established in mid-Century Victorian era in direct response to the metropolitan burial situation (Herman, 2010, p. 4). Overcrowded churchyard cemeteries and the unsanitary conditions lead to the establishment of cemeteries outside of the urban center of London (Herman, 2010, p. 4). Although Brookwood Cemetery was open to all classes of 'tenants,' it maintained class division by having explicit sections that were maintained throughout its use. Spatial segregation was coupled with differential service based on economic class (Herman, 2010, p. 20). To upper class individuals, the cemetery was advertised as an elaborate necropolis, though the cemetery also offered "ordered and utilitarian middle class landscape" and paupers[8]' funerals, each in the section of the cemetery according to class (Herman, 2010, p. 14,21). Compared to the numerous choices of burial sites that upper and middle class had, the lowest class of paupers had the little to no choice as to where they were buried (Herman, 2010, p. 17). The lack of choice and control over paupers' bodies by their family mirrored the alienation that lower class individuals experienced in life in urban London as well. Being the outcast of society in life followed them into death.

The pauper's funeral, also referred to being buried "on the parish" (at the expense of the parish) was a tenable fear that lower class, and even middle class families, experienced between 1750 and 1850 (Laqueur, 1983 p.109). The fear of the humiliation of being buried in an unmarked, unknown grave was enough to prompt families to forgo necessities in life in order to afford a proper funeral (Laqueur, 1983 p.110). Exemplifying the moral panic of the pauper's

[8] A *pauper* is an individual of very little means, often described as destitute, who relies on government relief, welfare, or charity (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Modern day pauper funerals are conducted by the state for individuals who are unknown, unclaimed, or if the family cannot afford a funeral (Moerman & van der Laan, 2021, p. 2)

funeral, some families even paid into burial societies or burial clubs to reduce the economic burden of death (Laqueur, 1983; Moerman & van der Laan, 2021).

The location of pauper's funerals, often called *potter's fields*[9], where mass unmarked graves hold the destitute, unknown, and unclaimed, are often marginalized to the outskirts of society or are on less than suitable land (Bowring, 2011; Koçak, 2016). A notable example is the cemetery on Hart Island in New York City. An island in the Long Island Sound, the cemetery on Hart Island has been described as "a graveyard of last resort" (Hennigan, 2020). There are over 850,000 people buried on Hart Island, and although it is the largest cemetery in the United States, it is closed to the public (Bowring, 2011, p. 256). The cemetery was originally established during the American Civil War (1861-1865), when the island was home to a concentration camp for Confederate soldiers who were captured during the Battle of Gettysburg (Bowring, 2011, p. 257). Hart Island has also been home to a number of institutions used to house marginalized individuals; yellow fever victims were quarantined on Hart Island and a women's insane asylum and boys' reformatory school were built and later abandoned on the island as well (Bowring, 2011, p. 258). Even the burials are conducted by marginalized individuals. Inmates from the nearby Rikers Island jail complex board boats and travel up river to Hart Island to dig mass graves for the unclaimed and unknown bodies in simple wood caskets (Bowring, 2011, p. 257). Hart Island is out of sight and out of mind for many New Yorkers due to its physical inaccessibility and restricted access. However, even those that are granted permission to visit the island have difficulty identifying graves. The mass graves are marked with simple white concrete markers that quickly become overgrown with vegetation without consistent landscaping efforts

[9] The term potter's field used to describe a place where destitute or unknown individuals are buried may have originated in the Bible, in Matthew 27:7, which states "And they took counsel, and brought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in."

(Bowring, 2011, p. 258). The deceased people on Hart Island, and in many other potter's fields, disappear into the deathscape of the destitute.

2.1.4 Gender and sexuality representation in deathscapes

A number of case studies across various geographies have explored the relationship between gender, sexuality, and deathscapes. In some cases, the relationship with a deathscape or the occupation of a deathscape is immediately effected by individuals' gender or sexuality (Koçak, 2016). In other cases, the material representation of gender within deathscapes reflects the historical narratives of gender relations (Schroer & Hine, 2017).

In a case study of gender relations in deathscapes in Turkey, religious and cultural values were found to prevent LBGTQ+ individuals, specifically transwomen, from entering deathscapes (Koçak, 2016). This is done by 1) preventing bodies from entering the deathscape of their own deceased body as the gender with which they identify and 2) preventing individuals from entering formal deathscapes such as mosques and cemeteries to participate in burial rites for their family or friends (Koçak, 2016). Koçak (2016) argues that the dead body is a material expression of death that takes of space, and therefore it should be considered a deathscape (Koçak, 2016 p.38). However, the heteronormative religious and cultural edicts in Turkey reject transgender bodies. Before entering deathscapes such as the mosque or cemetery, the mortitian and imam[10] require that transgender bodies are mutilated to return their appearance to the socially acceptable version of the gender that they were assigned at birth (Koçak, 2016 p.32). Because of this, only heteronormative, gender-conforming bodies are allowed to wholly occupy their deathscape

[10] An *imam* is a leader of worship and prayer in a Muslim community (Zeidan, 2021).

(Koçak, 2016 p.38). Formal deathscapes in Turkey such as cemteries and mosques are also exclusive to heteronormative, gender-conforming individuals, both dead and alive (Koçak, 2016 p.39). The gender policing of formal deathscapes looks like: 1) refusing to care for or provide funeral rites for a transgender person, especially transwomen, 2) not allowing living transgender people into formal deathscapes to mourn or participate in funeral and burial rites, and 3) buring transgender individuals as unclaimed or unidentified bodies because transgender people are ostracized by the only immediate relatives who can claim bodies in Turkey (Koçak, 2016 p.42). Cemeteries for the unclaimed or unidentified bodies are often on the outskirts of town, which reflects the social ostracization that transgender people experience in life as well as death in Turkey.

The material representation of deathscapes have also been studied to understand gender relationships, bias, and social values (Abel, 2009; Schroer & Hine, 2017). Tombstones are very small snapshots that contain the minimum significant information about the person interred (Abel, 2009, p. 150). Because tombstone engraving can be very expensive, the information that is included is purposefully selected and is considered to be a reflection of social values of the time period (Abel, 2009, p. 151). In two separate studies on tombstone epitaphs, gender bias is evident based on the words chosen for the tombstone epigraph. Gender is "a negotiated identity that continues after death. Those that interred loved ones made choices about how to display their feelings" (Schroer & Hine, 2017, p. 5). In a 19th century cemetery in Ohio, 72% of women's tombstones included a master status such as "wife, mother, or daughter" (Schroer & Hine, 2017, p. 3). In comparison, only 28% of men's tombstones had a master status of "husband, father, or son" (Schroer & Hine, 2017, p. 3). The author of this study recognized that this could be an indication of the patriarchial society of the time period. The default citizen at

this time in Ohio was a white male. At this time, white men did not receive recognition for their relationship with women; rather, their recognition came from other achievements (Schroer & Hine, 2017, p. 3). The author also noticed that there were significantly more young women who died during child-bearing years than any other age group. Therefore, the inclusion of the master status of "wife" or "mother" may be an indication of the significance of the loss of within the family (Schroer & Hine, 2017, p. 3).

In an analysis of another cemetery in New York, a similar result was found. Signifcantly more females had relationships indicated on their tombstone, and many were identified using the possive: "His wife" or "wife of…" (Abel, 2009, p. 150). However, this changed over time. Tombstones of more modern women were less likely to be identified as "His wife" or "Wife of…" (Abel, 2009, p. 150). Likewise, the percentage of women's tombstones that included maiden and surnames increased with time in this particular cemetery in New York (Abel, 2009, p. 150).

Gender and sexuality are parts of human identity that do not disappear after death. They continue to influence how we and other people occupy and interact with deathscapes.

2.1.5 Planning cemeteries for the dead and living

Although disposal is primarily guided by religious and cultural institutions, there are a number of gate-keeping entities within the government that determine where and how cemeteries are built (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 306; Capels & Senville, 2006, pp. 6–7). Cemetery regulations are fragmented between cities, states, regions, and the federal government, but local governments typically hold the most power to influence where cemeteries may be established

(Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 308). Cities, towns, and counties differ, but some common regulations are that columbaria and mausoleums typically follow the same zoning laws as cemeteries; where cemeteries can be built, columbaria and mausoleums can exist there also (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 309). In some cities, crematoria (where cremations occur) are likened to funeral homes and may only be permitted in areas zoned for office use (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 309). At the state level, most states have cemetery operation laws and laws that regulate qualifications for operations but do not regulate where cemeteries can be built (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 309). The federal government issues very little regulations on cemeteries, other than national cemeteries for veterans. The primary legislation that regulates deathscapes in the US is the Federal Funeral Industry Practices Trade Regulation Rule of 1984, which requires funeral homes to itemize prize lists and give their customers detailed information about their services in order for customers to compare prices between funeral homes and cemeteries. This law also prohibits funeral service providers from misrepresenting the legal requirements for cremation or burial, including embalming and casketing (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 309).

Planning deathscapes is an important, albeit difficult issue for planners. There are a number of challenges that planners face when making decisions about where to build new cemeteries. First, gauging land use demand is often difficult due to population forecasting inaccuracies (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 307; Capels & Senville, 2006, p. 2). Due to population mobility, the geography of life is not equivalent the geography of death (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 307). Likewise, people from urban areas often buy cemetery plots in rural cemeteries due to the quaint, quiet, charming nature of the cemetery outside of the city (Capels & Senville, 2006, p. 2).

Up-to-date spatial data on the capacity and location of burials within cemeteries is often unavailable, making land demand assessment difficult (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 313).

Expanding current cemeteries is often difficult because old cemeteries that were built on the outskirts of an urban center may be completely land-locked by development (Capels & Senville, 2006, p. 2). Therefore, expansion in some cases is not possible. The establishment of new cemeteries is often met with pushback from residents who feel that a new cemetery will lower property values, become a nuisance, incite crime, and generally make people feel uncomfortable with the constant reminder of one's mortality (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 306; Capels & Senville, 2006, p. 4). A response to the pushback from residents could be to engage community members in the planning process to curate cemeteries as land for the living (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 314; Capels & Senville, 2006, pp. 5-6). Engaging community members in the planning process to make new cemeteries more park-like gives residents a voice and a reason to support the project of building new cemeteries (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 314).

Older cemeteries that have little available space for burial often operate like a charity; the increased upkeep costs sometimes outnumber the revenue when fewer and fewer plots are available (Capels & Senville, 2006, p. 7). Long-term financial planning and establishing secondary recreational use within the cemetery are often ways for older cemeteries to become land for the living (Capels & Senville, 2006, p. 7). In some cities, like Savannah, Georgia, historic cemeteries have become tourist attractions where tours and lectures are hosted for visitors interested in the city's history and culture (Capels & Senville, 2006, p. 5). Basmajian and Coutts (2010, p.313) suggest for planners to include cemeteries within the text of comprehensive city, town, and county plans and within community discussions of land use.

Planners and policy-makers have the ability to transform public opinion and land use standards by taking on the challenge of including deathscapes within the overall context of urban planning. There is little scholarly literature and no standard information to guide planners in planning for new and expanding cemeteries (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 307), but it is a necessary challenge to undertake given the increased mortality and decreased availability of space to accommodate remains (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 306).

2.1.6 Answering the "Big Questions of Geography" within Necrogeography

Cutter et al. (2002) published an essay outlining the "Big Questions of Geography" that are of public interest and warrant research (Cutter et al., 2002). The questions revolve around the interdisciplinary nature of the discipline of geography, though many of the questions presented by Cutter et al. (2002) can be specifically applied to the subdiscipline of necrogeography, with insightful results. Cutter et al. (2002) primarily addresses space: what makes space, particularly places and landscapes, different from one another, how do we delineate space, and is there a human-based need to organize space with boundaries and boarders (Cutter et al., 2002, pp. 307–309). This literature review has explored the diverse spatial components that delineate deathscapes as landscapes set apart as unique places for the dead and the living. Across all of these spatial components, necrogeographers raise interesting questions about how organize, manage, and learn from places where the deceased are buried or cremated.

2.2. Geography and state of the practice of green burial

Research on green burial, also called “natural burial” has primarily focused on its environmental sustainability in response to the critique of the modern funeral paradigm that includes embalming, casketing, and utilizing a burial vault. Some of the critiques of the modern funeral paradigm that have been noted by scholars in death studies include the sanitization of death (Kelly, 2012, p. 38), the over-professionalization and over-medicalization of death care practices (MacMurray & Futrell, 2019, p. 2; Olson, 2016), the cultural desire to distance of ourselves from death (Thompson, 2002, p. 74), and the overall lack of environmental consideration (Chiappelli & Chiappelli, 2008; da Cruz et al., 2017; Kaufman, 1999, p. 37; Keijzer, 2017; Williams et al., 2009).

In response to the critique of the modern funeral paradigm, environmentally sustainable characteristics of green burial have been explored and exposed through recent research. Green burial is a potential tool for land conservation that is versatile in implementation; case studies have revealed successful cases of land conservation via green burial grounds close to metro areas, as an extension of larger conservation plans, and on land adjacent to public land (Coutts et al., 2018, p. 136). Along with conserving the land, green burial has the potential to protect threatened plant and animal species that are disproportionately affected by human development (Clayville, 2016; M. Holden, 2018, p. 46; M. H. Holden & McDonald-Madden, 2018, p. 2). Green burial also contributes to the provision of regulatory ecosystem services by increasing carbon sequestration, reducing nitrous oxide emissions, and reducing flooding (Clayden et al., 2018, p. 103). A number of other ecological benefits may come from wide-spread preference of green burial over contemporary burial, such as the decreased demand for imported stone for headstones and the reduced production and transportation-associated energy and ecological

impacts (Clayden et al., 2018, p. 103), though more research is required to determine significance.

Green burial presents a new way of approaching death that embraces mortality and humanity's place in the greater ecosystem. The green burial movement, starting in the early 1990s, is part of a broader discussion in the academy about what it means to be human. Discussions about sustainable death care involve a conceptualization of how human bodies can and should interact with soil, water, air, and other organisms after death (Barnett, 2017, p. 6). In contrast to the modern funeral paradigm that is predicated on practices and products that prevent human-nature interaction post-mortem (Barnett, 2017, p. 7), green burial in an avenue for embracing the nutrient-rich gift that the human body can give back to the landscape that sustains the human body in life (Barnett, 2018, p. 23; Rumble et al., 2014, p. 247).

The following sections will critically examine the geography of green burial based on the available literature and the critiques of green burial that may present obstacles to green burial provision.

2.2.1 What do we know about the geography of green burial?

Although there is emerging literature on the social and ecological benefits of green burial, the geographic distribution of green burial grounds is not a well-researched topic in the academic literature. Papers addressing questions such as "where are green burial grounds established?" and "why are they established there?" are underrepresented in current research. However, a few studies have used case study and ethnographic methods to understand the establishment, design, and operation of current green burial grounds in the United Kingdom (Clayden et al., 2018; J.

Hockey et al., 2016; Yarwood et al., 2015). The green burial grounds used for the case studies in Yarwood et al. (2015), Hockey et al. (2016), and Clayden et al. (2018) were selected from the green burial grounds located in Great Britain. Yarwood et al. (2015) started by soliciting questionnaire responses from green burial ground managers who were listed by the Natural Death Centre (www.naturaldeath.org.uk) (Yarwood et al., 2015, p. 175). Hockey et al. (2016) compiled all green burial sites into a geographic information system (GIS) database (J. Hockey et al., 2016, p. 30). Clayden et al. (2018) subsequently uses chooses sites as case studies from the database compiled by Hockey et al. (2016).

Currently, there is no equivalent study in the United States that compiles all known green burial sites, though the Green Burial Council has compiled all cemeteries and funeral homes that are certified through the GBC (Figure 3). Coutts et al. (2018) drew data from the Green Burial Council's inventory of certified green burial grounds and the online Natural End Map (https://www.naturalend.com) to compile a list of 162 green burial sites in the United States (Coutts et al., 2018, p. 132).

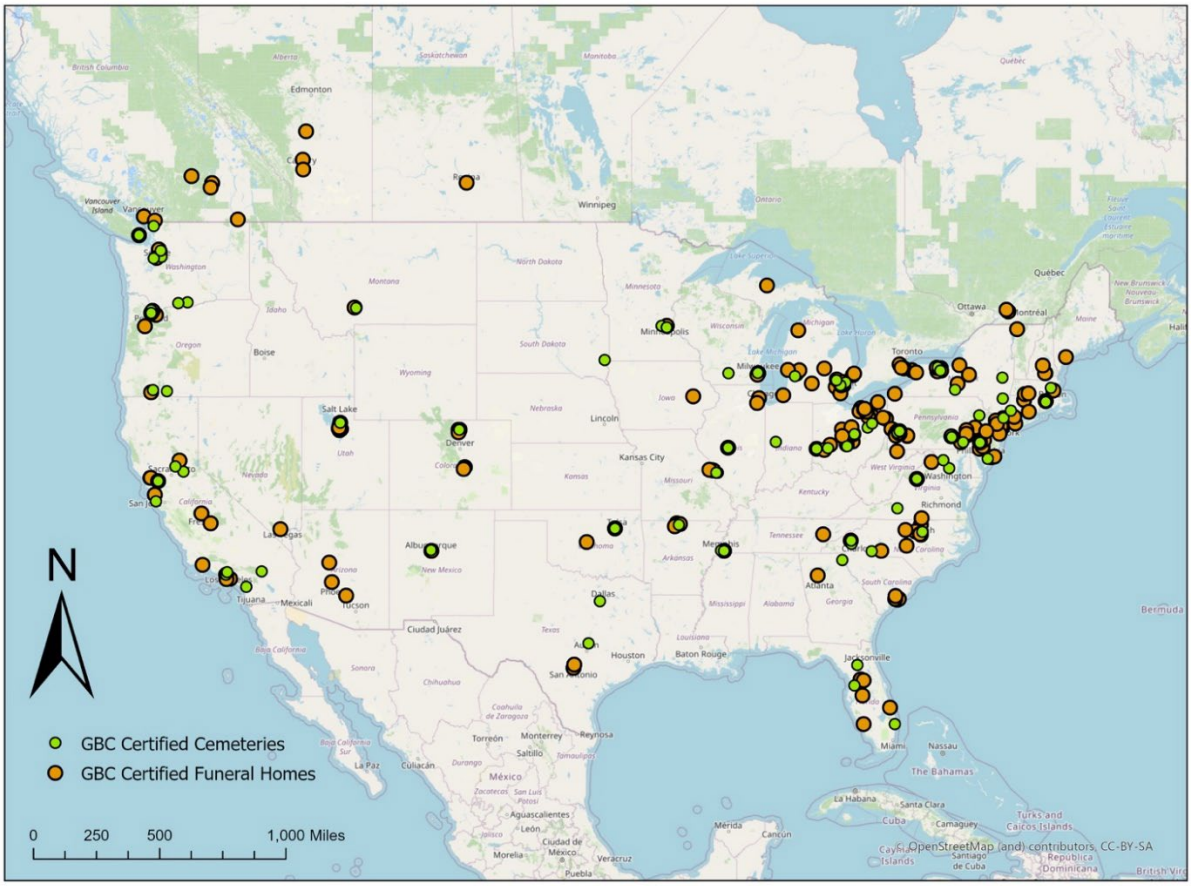

***Figure 3**: A map of GBC certified cemeteries and funeral homes in the United States and Canada. Reproduced from the providers map found on the GBC website (https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/interactive-maps.html)*

Based on the Green Burial Council's classification of green burial grounds into natural burial ground, conservation burial grounds, and hybrid burial grounds, Coutts et al. (2018) chose three conservation burial grounds to conduct in depth case studies into the provision of ecosystem services. The case studies in the United States revealed that conservation burial, which is an extension of green burial where burials are used to conserve and restore the landscape, are established on diverse landscapes such as "restored agricultural land, land on the urban fringe in threat of development, and forested land adjacent to existing conserved public

land" (Coutts et al., 2018, p. 133). Likewise, green burial grounds in the UK have been established within already existing cemeteries that are geographically different and are surrounded by various land use types, such as residential, agriculture, and woodland (Clayden et al., 2018; J. Hockey et al., 2016; Yarwood et al., 2015). Establishing a green burial ground is not a "one-size-fits-all endeavor" (J. Hockey et al., 2016, p. 33). The type and location of landscapes that are adopted as green burial sites are just as varied as the management practices, values, and designs of cemeteries (J. Hockey et al., 2016, p. 34). For example, some green cemeteries use a linear or grid system to delineate plots. Other green burial grounds are more flexible (J. Hockey et al., 2016, pp. 33–34). Some consumers find it attractive when there is less structure when choosing a grave for themselves or a loved one (Balonier et al., 2019, p. 219). In cemeteries that have less structure, individuals can sometimes choose a specific tree to be buried under; as the tree grows over time, the bereaved are reminded on the continuation of life (Balonier et al., 2019, p. 220)

Overall, there are few maintenance obligations and spatial limitations to establishing a green burial ground (Balonier et al., 2019, p. 220); however, this does not mean that there are challenges and critiques to green burial establishment.

2.2.2 Green burial and the absence of material engagement

Although many green burial grounds are established based on high consumer demand and cemetery managers' personal interest in conservation (Yarwood et al., 2015, p. 173), there are several challenges noted in the literature that may deter existing cemetery operators from adding

a green burial section or prevent new cemeteries from being established. The first is the accessibility of material engagement within cemeteries.

A physical, material interaction with the grave or the remains is one key type of behavior that occurs within cemeteries (Francis et al., 2000, p. 35). The cemetery itself, described as a "taskscape" (Jenny Hockey et al., 2012, p. 121) is a material outcome of various cultural practices and responsibilities, which makes it a locus for exploring and understanding the relationship between the living and deceased (Francis et al., 2000, p. 35). Some physical behaviors that are associated with cemeteries include: cleaning memorials or gravestones, tidying the space around graves, lighting lamps, leaving candles, burning incense, planting flowers or shrubs, and leaving small tokens such as stones, flowers, or cards (Francis et al., 2000, p. 43). Material engagement provides an opportunity for an "ongoing emotional involvement" and "the possibility of a continued bond" with the deceased (Francis et al., 2000, pp. 43–44).

Some elements of the practice of green burial, however, make it difficult for material engagement post-burial to occur. Green burial grounds can "evoke both the absence and the presence of the dead person" (Jenny Hockey et al., 2012, p. 117). Without gravestones or markers, the physical location of graves becomes less evident overtime as the vegetation grows. It is difficult for people to see green burial grounds as deathscapes when the dead effectively disappear into the woodland or field (J. Hockey et al., 2016, p. 27). The graves become so invisible that visitors might not even know that they are walking in a green burial ground (Balonier et al., 2019, p. 222). Visibility is also linked to accessibility; as the green burial ground becomes more and more akin to a natural space, accessibility decreases (Balonier et al., 2019, p. 221). The paths through burial grounds are often not paved and graves may only be accessible via walking rather than by car (Balonier et al., 2019, pp. 221–222).

Likewise, there are often restrictions about what visitors can leave at gravesites in green burial grounds. The "proxy for physical contact" that material engagement provides is not possible when green burial grounds prohibit visitors from putting candles or decorations on the gravesites. (Balonier et al., 2019, p. 223). Because burial is an important part of the grieving process, cemetery operators and managers may be hesitant to initiate green burial protocols in their existing cemetery or establish a new green burial cemetery altogether.

2.2.3 Making green burial grounds truly "natural" landscapes

Green burial is also called "natural burial" and is advertised as a death care option that gives the deceased the opportunity to "[pass] away into a wider organic milieu" and "[pass] on one's habitat to future generations" (J. Hockey et al., 2016, p. 31). However, several scholars argue that green cemeteries are actually highly cultivated and managed spaces (Balonier et al., 2019; Kelly, 2012; Stewart, 2018; Yarwood et al., 2015). The blurred lines between a social space and a physical space calls for a new line of thinking that goes beyond the pardigms of human and physical geographies. In Whatmore's 2002 book *Hybrid Geographies*, she criticizes the dichotomy between the fields of human and physical geography (Whatmore, 2002, p. 2). She states that the field of "geography states its identity on attending to 'the interface between social and natural worlds'"(Whatmore, 2002, p. 2). Green burial is an example of a hybrid geography that is established an upheld through both human and non-human agencies in a space that is neither 100% human or 100% natural (Cloke & Jones, 2004; Whatmore, 2002, p. 166; Yarwood et al., 2015, p. 180). In fact, "natural burial grounds are sites on which two sometimes-conflicting sets of interests are negotiated: human alteration of the landscape to commemorate

the dead, and the prevention of such alteration to maximize the aesthetics and habitat of non-human creatures" (Stewart, 2018, p. 296). Not only are green burial grounds locations of integrated human-nature interests, but sometimes those interests are in direct conflict with each other.

Being "culturally institutionalized areas" (Canniford & Shankar, 2013, p. 1053), green burial grounds are purposefully selected, enclosed, and managed to some degree (Balonier et al., 2019, p. 226). Some examples of land management that make the landscape less natural include: using GPS or microchips to record body locations, using machines to dig graves, cutting the grass or vegetation, and planting non-native species of plants (Yarwood et al., 2015, p. 180). One visitor to a green burial ground in the UK noted that there were portable toilets within the burial grounds and trees were marked with colored ribbons based on the price of the grave plot nearby (Balonier et al., 2019, p. 221). Therefore, green burial grounds are not spaces totally separated from human activity, as the culturally-constructed enlightenment idea of nature would suggest (Jenny Hockey et al., 2012, p. 117; Kelly, 2012, p. 38; Stewart, 2018, p. 296). Of course, every green burial ground is subject to having its own standards for memorialization and alteration of the landscape, though management of any type is argued to be unnatural (Stewart, 2018, p. 295).

For many people, the practice of green burial on a natural landscape invokes honest recontextualization of the perceived unnaturalness of death (Stewart, 2018, p. 298). However, the lack of clarity and consistency of what is deserves the title *natural* may be an obstacle that cemetery managers and operators face when considering establishing a green burial ground.

2.2.4 Greenwashing: Is green burial just another green consumer choice?

Without clear and consistent management strategies that balance the conflicting human and environmental interests, green burial runs the risk of becoming another green consumer choice that does not necessarily benefit deeper environmental goals (Stewart, 2018, p. 48). Stewart (2018) writes: “green burial grounds are often marketed in the same vein as hybrid cars, backyard composters and household rain barrels —as just one more ‘green’ option among many Americans now have in the midst of overwhelming environmental problems” (Stewart, 2018, p. 48). Delmas and Burbano (2011) defines greenwashing as “the intersection of two firm behaviors: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance” (Delmas & Burbano, 2011, p. 65). In essence, greenwashing can include misleading consumers about products and services or company-wide behaviors that are claimed to be environmentally-friendly (Delmas & Burbano, 2011, p. 66). The issue here lies in the fact that although there may be “green” options for consumers, that may or may not serve the purpose of combatting local environmental problems, a larger, nation-wide environmental movement is necessary to combat the overwhelming problems with a “wide-reaching ecological purpose” (Kelly, 2012, p. 48). Because human death is primarily understood and handled outside of the ecological cycle, it will take a shift in collective thinking to reengage death care, green burial included, in the larger environmental conversation in the United States (Kelly, 2012, p. 49).

2.2.5 Planning and regulatory obstacles to green burial

As Basmajian and Coutts (2010) points out, there are no standard guide for planners to follow when considering where and how to establish a green burial ground (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 307). In fact, broad regulations for burial “remain fragmented between cities, regions,

states, and the federal government" in the United States (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 308). The newness of the concept of green burial often means that the planning process sets the standards *ad hoc* (Marshall & Rounds, 2011, p. 7). Although there is no research explicitly dedicated to understanding the planning obstacles to green burial establishment in the United States, two case studies have been conducted in the UK and Australia that consider the planning challenges involved in green burial establishment (Marshall & Rounds, 2011; Yarwood et al., 2015).

At the time of writing, Marshall and Rounds (2011) found that there were only seven green burial locations in Australia, and there were no standard practice guidelines for planning, establishing, and operating a green burial ground (Marshall & Rounds, 2011, p. 2). With an increasing elderly population, there is a high demand for burial space, though other land uses such as housing, infrastructure, and essential public facilities take precedence due to their perception of being the "highest and best use" of land (Marshall & Rounds, 2011, p. 5). Cemeteries serve a very specific social purpose, but do not make much of a profit, therefore setting aside large areas of land for cemeteries is cost-prohibitive (Marshall & Rounds, 2011, p. 5). While cemeteries are not an ideal land use in Australia, green burial may assist in reversing the obstacles planners face in establishing contemporary cemeteries such as impact on native vegetation and threatened species (Marshall & Rounds, 2011, p. 6). Planners must therefore weigh the present and future benefits of green burial with the cost implications of establishing and operating a cemetery (Marshall & Rounds, 2011, p. 6).

Planners are also in a unique situation to hear concerns from residents and integrate the community's perspective into the planning process. In the UK, Yarwood et al. (2015) found that community members were put off by the idea of a green burial ground due to their "squeamishness about death and burial" (Yarwood et al., 2015, p. 179). After discussion, the

community members' concerns were dispelled (Yarwood et al., 2015, p. 179). Planners are in a unique position to educate the public, especially since community engagement and investment into the idea of a cemetery, green burial or otherwise, is crucial to the planning process (Marshall & Rounds, 2011, pp. 8–9). Cemetery owners, operators, and planners face the challenge of collaborating, interpreting community standards and desires, and meeting the disjointed regulations to establish green burial grounds.

2.2.6 Consumer perspective and awareness

Public participation is a key way for planners to promote sustainable death care options such as green burial (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010, p. 313). Often, the principle reason for resistance to green burial or other sustainable death care options is the socio-cultural traditions surrounding death care (Zeng et al., 2016, p. 989). For example, burial in China indicates age, cause of death, and social status of the individual and their family (Zeng et al., 2016, p. 989). If green burial lacks any of the "proper funeral rites" of Chinese tradition, family members may fear that the deceased will be angered. This may lead to conflict or ruin of the family (Zeng et al., 2016, p. 989). Funeral practices have been "entrenched in socio-cultural values since time immemorial" (Prajapati, 2020, p. 1). However, it is possible for the sustainable values of green burial to balance and reflect the socio-cultural values of a community (Prajapati, 2020, p. 4; Zeng et al., 2016, p. 990). Along with their strong death care traditions, China also has adopted a strong vision of ecological citizenship that promotes harmony between humans and nature (Zeng et al., 2016, p. 987). Green burial is arguably an expression of the "ecological citizenship theory [that] calls on human beings to reasonably control their desires, and to use technology to return

humanity to a level of existence that establishes and maintains ecological balance" (Zeng et al., 2016, p. 987). Consumers' perspectives and level of awareness vary greatly, so it is imperative that death care providers and planners explore whether or not sustainability is one of the consumers' main concerns (Prajapati, 2020, p. 1). Some socio-cultural groups inherently internalize sustainability because it encapsulates or is incorporated into other social values (Baker & Baker, 2014, p. 403; Prajapati, 2020, p. 6).

Why is it possible for consumers to break away from death care norms by choosing green burial for reasons other than environmental concern? Baker and Baker (2014) found that consumers choose alternative death care due to the impracticality of or aversion towards current death care rituals and the constraints imposed by socio-cultural norms, rules, and regulations (Baker & Baker, 2014, p. 403). New rituals may fit better with individual identity and values and gives families the opportunity for new ritual and symbol adaptation (Baker & Baker, 2014, p. 403). Changes in death care practices reflect the socio-cultural understanding of death care, and the reverse may be possible as well: change in practices or opportunities for practice may create a shift in consumers' perspectives and belief systems (Prajapati, 2020, p. 5).

Although the literature illustrates an important link between socio-cultural norms, consumers' perspectives, and death care practices, there is a major gap in the literature on the relationship between consumer awareness and desire for green burial and the provision of green burial. My proposed research will contribute to filling this knowledge gap by analyzing the role of consumer interest in green burial provision at the regional level in the United States.

CHAPTER 3: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 4) of this research is inspired by the idea of conducting research "from practice, for practice, and beyond practice" (Xiang, 2019a p.10). The overarching research question will be answered by gathering data and analyzing the obstacles faced and perceived across three geographic scales: nationwide across the United States, Southeast Region of the United States, and Cities within North Carolina. The image of an inverted triangle is used in Figure 4 to illustrate the three levels of spatial granularity that will be used to address the overarching research question.

Together, the nature of the obstacles faced and perceived will address the needs of the Green Burial Council. The knowledge that is generated from this research can be used to develop outreach programs for death care providers who wish to provide green burial but are currently unable to do so due to their obstacle faced and perceived.

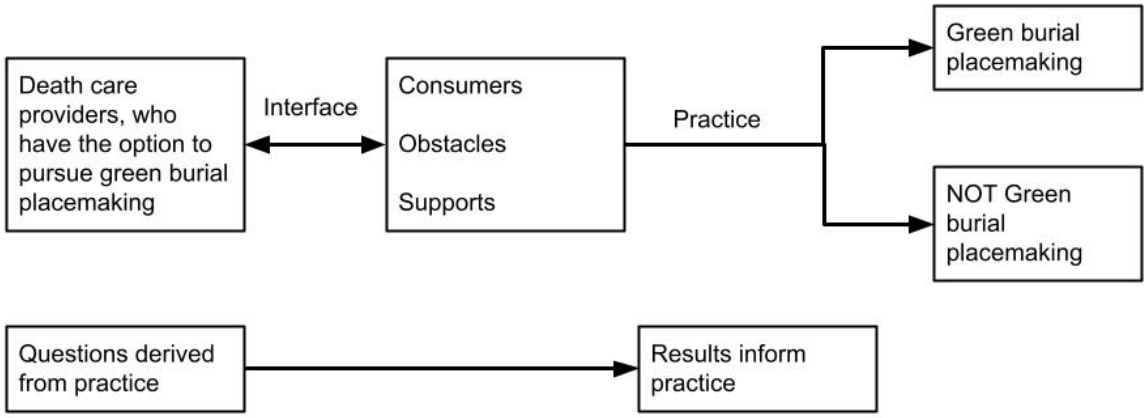

Figure 4: *Research conceptual framework to address the overarching research questions*

3.1 The research questions are supported by four premises

This research is based on four premises[11] that support the research question formulated from the problem statement (Figure 5). These premises are 1) green burial is worth pursing, 2) green burial is possible, 3) the status quo of green burial provision in the United States is unsatisfactory, and 4) the obstacles that prevent green burial provision in the United States are not sufficiently known or understood in scholarly literature. The following sections will expound upon each premise individually and explain its role in supporting and justifying the proposed research.

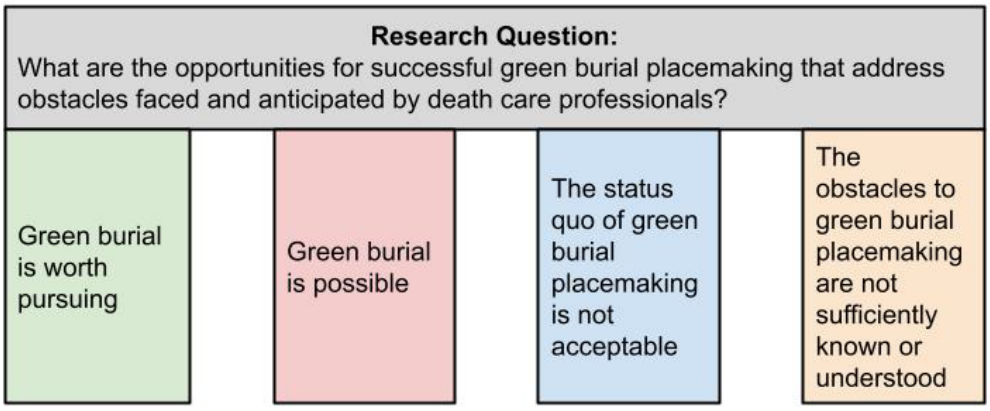

***Figure 5**: The four premises are pillars that support the research questions.*

3.2 Assumption 1: Green burial is worth pursuing

[11] Merriam-Webster defines a premise as "a proposition antecedently supposed or proved as a basis of argument or inference" (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

3.2.1 Ecological sustainability makes green burial worth pursuing

Contemporary death care processes have been documented as hazardous to both the environment and to death care workers. The contaminants that are associated with contemporary burial practices include "poisonous chemicals, such as arsenic and mercury, which were used in past embalming and burial practices; formaldehyde from current embalming practices[12]; varnishes, sealers, and preservatives used on wood coffins; and lead, zinc, copper, and steel from metal coffins" (Spongberg & Becks, 2000 p. 313). According to the Green Burial Council, "827,060 gallons of embalming fluid, 1.6 million tons of reinforced concrete, 20 million feet of wood and thousands of tons of metal" are buried yearly in contemporary American burials (Green Burial Council, quoted in Faegan, 2007).

Cremation has increasingly been the disposition practice of choice for many Americans, as it is seen as a simpler, more environmentally-friendly option. An overall increase in cremation in the US has been noticeable in the last few years, according to studies conducted by the National Funeral Directors Association. The projected burial rate for 2020 is 37.5%, a 7.7% decrease since 2015 (NFDA, 2020). Meanwhile, the projected cremation rate for 2020 is 56%, an 8.1% increase since 2015 (NFDA, 2020). Based on historic rates of cremation and burial, the NFDA predicts that burial rates will continue to fall and cremation rates will continue to rise (NFDA, 2020). However, cremation has its own associated environmental impact, particularly in the form of emissions and fossil fuel consumption.

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[12] According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), formaldehyde (CH20) is a highly toxic and flammable gas that is carcinogenic, but is used in many industries (NIOSH, 2014). Little to no research has been conducted thus far to explore the long-term impacts of formaldehyde embalming fluids that are currently sealed in concrete vaults in many cemeteries.

In contrast to the unsustainable practices of contemporary death care in America, green burial incorporates many elements that make it a sustainable death care choice. In 1998, Ramsey Creek Preserve in South Carolina became the first cemetery in the United States to be established with the specific intention of providing a space for green burial (Harker, 2012 p.153). Hardly new in concept, green burial, also called natural burial or conservation burial, harkens back to death care practices before the dawn of modern funeral directing and embalming (Harker, 2012 p.153). Distinguished from contemporary burial in America, green burial requires strict adherence to environmentally responsible standards and preserves the ecological integrity of the landscape.

Ramsey Creek's founder, Dr. George William "Billy" Campbell, MD, describes the primary function of the preserve as a forest: "We're a woodland burial ground, an actual forest where burials also take place" (Harris 2007, p.160). Dr. Billy Campbell shares his ecological vision of green burial grounds, particularly Ramsey Creek Preserve:

> "But cemeteries… seem to be almost ideal cultural institutions for long-term ecological restoration projects. Part of this has to do with how they can change the way people think about nature… As much as anything, Conservation Burial [sic] is taking the ethos from the rural cemetery movement of 200 years ago, and applying modern conservation science..." (Campbell 2016). "Our Idea is to allow physical bodies to degrade naturally and be incorporated into other living things, the trees and flowers" (Billy Campbell, quoted in Harris, 2007 p.161).

Ramsey Creek Preserve, like many other green burial grounds, belongs to a conservation easement that protects the land in perpetuity for the purpose of conservation (Campbell, 2016; Klein, 2017). Besides setting aside the land for the dual purpose of conservation and burial, green burial has a number of ecological requirements to be upheld by the families, funeral directors, and land managers.

A biodegradable container is required

Replacing contemporary caskets and vaults with biodegradable containers reduces the extraordinary amount of waste associated with contemporary burial. Cotton shrouds, pine boxes, cardboard boxes, or wicker or bamboo baskets are examples of biodegradable containers that can be used in a green burial. These biodegradable containers replace the contemporary burial requirements of a casket made of steel or hardwood and a concrete burial vault (Harker, 2012 p.151) (Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6*: Shrouds are commonly used biodegradable containers. A shrouded body is placed directly in the earth; no concrete liner or casket is used. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Campbell at Ramsey Creek Preserve, used with permission.*

Figure 7*: Woven basket caskets are also biodegradable options suitable for green burial. Organizations such as Passages International create woven basket caskets made out of seagrass, bamboo, and willow (Passages International, 2020). Photo courtesy of Kimberley Campbell at Ramsey Creek Preserve, used with permission.*

Biodegradable containers facilitate decomposition of the bodily remains. Organic nutrients such as nitrogen, carbon, and phosphate are introduced into the ecosystem when

microbes and fungi metabolize and break down the body (McClaugherty and Björn, 2011 p.5). This is a critical part of the nutrient cycle of soil that is barred from occurring in contemporary burials (McClaugherty and Björn, 2011 p.5).

No embalming or chemical treatment of the body

Due to the direct burial of the remains into the earth without the protection of a burial vault, green burial grounds require that remains are not embalmed or chemically treated (GBC, 2020a). Depending on the frequency of burials, leaking of embalming fluids into the groundwater is of particular concern (Van Allemann et al., 2018 p.18-19), especially due to the known carcinogenic effects of formaldehyde (Hauptmann et al., 2009 p.1701-1702; Roberts et al., 2015 p.786).

Green burial grounds support conservation efforts

Green burial grounds are maintained with the goal of preserving or restoring natural habitat that previously held anthropological purposes such as agriculture (Coutts et al., 2018 p.134). “If it’s done right--if we locate the grave in the best place, for instance-- each burial plays a role in restoring the land to the way it used to be” (Billy Campbell, quoted in Harris 2007, p.172).

Ongoing biological monitoring is recommended to ensure that grave digging operations avoid disturbing rare or endangered species (Memorial Ecosystems, 2020). Ramsey Creek

Preserve is home to many species of wildlife including black bears, coyotes, birds, and turtles (Klein, 2017) (Figure 8).

Figure 8**:** *Eastern box turtles are one of many species of wildlife at Ramsey Creek Preserve. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Campbell at Ramsey Creek Preserve, used with permission.*

Ramsey Creek Preserve photo-documents plant and animal species within the woodland burial ground to keep track of what is growing and what type of wildlife relies on the forest (Memorial Ecosystems, 2020) (Figure 9). Fertilizers and pesticides are not used to control plant or animal populations, though land managers remove invasive plants and plant native species.

Figure 9: *Fungi have vital ecosystem functions of decomposing dead organic material and transforming phosphorus and nitrogen into available organic forms (Treseder and Lennon, 2015 p.246-247). These fungi on Ramsey Creek Preserve contribute to the biodiversity of the green cemetery and decompose dead plant, animal, and human tissue. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Campbell at Ramsey Creek Preserve, used with permission.*

Burial sites are carefully selected to minimize the density of burials per acre, thus reducing perturbation of natural habitat (Caplan-Bricker, 2019; Jeong, 2018; Memorial Ecosystems, 2020; Neustein, 2019). In many cases, the large headstones associated with contemporary burial sites are forgone; instead, a simple flat stone, small marker, or a tree or shrub is used (Klein, 2017). Global positioning systems (GPS) are also used in some green burial grounds to keep track of graves (Klein, 2017).

Green cemeteries, especially conservation burial grounds that hold conservation easements, support habitat conservation by increasing the quantity and quality of natural habitat. They do this by increasing the contiguous area of local natural habitat and restoring anthropogenically disturbed parcels of land (Coutts et al., 2018 p.134). With the added protection from conservation easements that some green cemeteries have established, the cemetery will

remain conserved habitat in perpetuity despite any urban sprawl that could occur on surrounding land (Coutts et al., 2018 p.134).

In hybrid cemeteries that have both contemporary burial and green burial, the addition of green burial graves increases the provision of regulatory ecosystem services (Clayden et al., 2018, p.103). When sections of a hybrid cemetery are dedicated to green burial practices, the total area of the cemetery that has to be mowed and treated with pesticides and herbicides is drastically reduced (Clayden et al., 2018 p.103). Allowing for vegetation to grow naturally, without maintenance typical of a lawn park cemetery, more complex habitat for wildlife emerges (Clayden et al., 2018 p.103). Complex and densely vegetated swaths of land potentially increase carbon sequestration, reduce nitrous oxide emissions, and could help alleviate the effects of flooding (Clayden et al., 2018 p.103).

Green cemeteries are also in a great position to partner with land conservancy groups. Green burials typically cost significantly less than contemporary funerals[13] (Holden and McDonald-Madden, 2017 p.1). However, if families who chose green burial for were charged a price comparable to a contemporary burial, the excess revenue could make significant contributions towards habitat protection and management in the United States (Holden and McDonald-Madden, 2017 p.1). Green cemeteries such as Larkspur Conservation in Tennessee partner with conservancy groups to effectively plan, market, publicize, and manage the land (Coutts et al., 2018 p.135).

3.2.2 Social sustainability makes green burial worth pursuing

[13] Green burials typically cost less because there is no body preservation such as embalming and cheaper materials are used to create the biodegradable casket (Holden and McDonald-Madden, 2017 p.1).

Social sustainability was a driving force behind the foundation of the green cemetery Ramsey Creek Preserve. The mission of Ramsey Creek Preserve was born of a personal grief experience that lead to enlightened thinking about what could be done differently in the face devastating loss to sooth the bereavement process. Dr. Campbell's inspiration for the "memorial forest" that became Ramsey Creek Preserve came from deep contemplation of his father's funeral:

> "Billy, who would have 'laid [his] father's body to rest in a wild setting, full of the peace and quiet of nature,' found the whole [contemporary] funeral experience more distressing than soothing" (Harris, 2007 p.162, brackets by author).

After seeing his father embalmed, casketed, and placed in a burial vault, Dr. Campbell was inspired to create the cemetery that he would have wanted his father to be buried in (Harris, 2007 p.162), a cemetery that connects people with nature and each other and facilitates the grieving and healing processes. Ramsey Creek Preserve's co-founder Kimberly Campbell describes how this connection aids in the mourning and healing processes: "It completes their process of care, love, respect. It helps with healing and closure" (Brymer, 2007).

Intimate responsibility of preparing the dead for burial

Families are encouraged to take intimate responsibility in the preparation of the body for green burial. Forgoing embalming gives the family the option to decline the involvement of a funeral home and hold a home funeral or wake instead (Coutts et al., 2018 p. 135; O'Reilly, 2018).

National Home Funeral Alliance Vice President Dani LaVoire speaks about the intimacy of home funerals and green burial:

> "The experience with the body engages the senses and lets people understand what has happened more deeply" (Dani LaVoire, quoted in Manning, 2019).

Families and friends can work together to dig the grave for their loved one and carry the casket by hand to the burial site (figure 10). Pine or cardboard caskets can even be decorated with non-toxic markers; family and friends can write messages of farewell to their deceased loved one before burial (figure 11).

Figure 9*: Family members are encouraged to help open and close the grave. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Campbell at Ramsey Creek Preserve, used with permission.*

Figure 10*: Simple pine boxes are biodegradable and can be personalized by family and friends. This is a way to engage in the burial process and share a message with the loved one you lost. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Campbell at Ramsey Creek Preserve, used with permission.*

These intimate interactions between the living and the dead give family and friends the chance to mourn together and emotionally process their loss (Merchak, 2019).

A peaceful, contemplative place for memorialization

Sharon, a mother who lost her son Chris to cancer, visits her son's grave at Ramsey Creek Preserve regularly. She describes the feeling of visiting her son who is buried in the green cemetery:

> "It's not sad to visit, but sometimes I cry. It's just the raw emotion of being in a place that's so lush and green and living and beautiful, and that's all so representative of Chris" (Harris, 2007 p.177).

Green burial grounds, including Ramsey Creek Preserve, often have hiking trails and benches from which visitors can enjoy the beauty of nature while contemplating the significance of the life that was lost (figure 1.12). Trails and shrubbery create shelter and privacy for families and individuals who are visiting (Clayden et al., 2018 p.104). Being "places of richness, spatial complexity, and shifting identities" (Clayden et al., 2018, p.10), green cemeteries are places with strong cultural ecosystem services that connect people to the environment and their community (Harker, 2012 p. 156; Holden and McDonald-Madden, 2017 p.2). The natural aesthetic of green cemeteries encourages people to visit at other times besides burial (Clayden et al., 2018 p.105), and visitors are motivated to "maintain, restore, and improve [their] community, the landscape, and larger ecosystems" (Hester, 2006 p.364).

Figure 11*: The landscape of Ramsey Creek Preserve includes hardwood forests, riparian areas, and meadows. Trails can be used for hiking, simple camping, and enjoying nature. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Campbell at Ramsey Creek Preserve, used with permission.*

An inspiring example of social and ecological sustainability that should be pursued

Green cemeteries, including hybrid cemeteries that have both contemporary burials and green burials, have been the subject of ecological studies specifically because of their hypothesized potential to be sustainable, biodiversity-supporting, and multi-functional green

spaces. "There is nothing as inspirational as a good example" (Xiang, 2020 p.126), and we therefore have the responsibility as scholars to theorize from good practice to inform and inspire practitioners (Xiang, 2020 p.122).

Green burial, particularly exemplified in Ramsey Creek Preserve, is indeed an example of a "secure, harmonious, and sustainable socio-ecological condition serving human beings' need for survival, development, and flourishing" (Xiang, 2019a p.7). The practice simultaneously restores the ecosystem and society's perception of death to a state of health and serenity. Therefore, the research questions posed in this proposal are validated; it is a worthy endeavor to uncover the nature of the obstacles to green burial.

3.3 Assumption 2: Green burial is possible

3.3.1 How do we know green burial is possible?

Green burial is possible today because its concept was commonplace at one time in American history. The current funeral practices in the United States have not always been the norm. In fact, the truly "traditional" funeral that European colonists conducted in the formative years of our nation's history was much simpler than contemporary funeral (Harris, 2007 p. 41). Instead of dying in hospitals, where most deaths occur today, most people died in their own home surrounded by family (Harris, 2007 p. 41). The family, particularly the women in the family, were responsible for washing and preparing the body for the wake or viewing that typically occurred in the family's home (Harris, 2007 p.41). An inornate wooden coffin would be requested of the town cabinetmaker and the wealthy may have spent more for elaborately carved

wooden caskets (Harris, 2007 p. 42). The coffin was buried directly on the family's property in rural areas, or in a church cemetery if one was nearby (Harris, 2007 p.42). The family was intimately responsible for caring for their deceased, procuring a coffin, and digging the grave. The simplicity and inherent sustainability of natural burials eventually gave way to the modern funeral practices.

3.3.2 The development of modern funeral directing

Modern funeral directing in the United States was shaped in response to historical events and societal changes over time. Notably, the embalming process was rediscovered[14] and became common practice during and after the American Civil War (1861-1865). Being a particularly bloody war, an estimated 620,000 people died (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019; Strochlic et al., 2020). There were limited options for caring for soldiers who died on the battlefield, which meant that many people were buried where they died (Beard & Burger, 2017). However, embalming was a technological innovation that allowed bodies (particularly of soldiers and officers of higher standing) to be preserved and transported back to their families (Beard & Burger, 2017; Trompette & Lemonnier, 2009). At first, embalming was not widely accepted by

[14] There is evidence of embalming across many cultures and timelines, including Ancient Egypt and Middle Age Europe; embalming in the Middle Ages was a process of evisceration and stuffing the body with herbs to preserve the body for transport to the sacred burial site (Brenner, 2014; Trompette & Lemonnier, 2009). When the tradition of viewing royals before their burial became popular, empirical research was conducted by medical professionals of the day to concoct blends of aromatic and antiseptic herbs to preserve the body. Eventually, medical professionals introduced balms, ointments, and powders that dried out the corpse, thus preserving it (Trompette & Lemonnier, 2009). Anatomical and natural science research in the Renaissance made significant breakthroughs in preservation science and paved the way for the modern embalming process (Brenner, 2014; Trompette & Lemonnier, 2009).

Over time, many concoctions of embalming fluids and powders were used, including combinations of oil of turpentine, essential oils, alcohol, acetic acid, hydrochloric acid, nitric acid, mercury, and arsenic, among other things. Arsenic-based embalming fluids were generally accepted, but they have since been replaced with formaldehyde-based embalming fluids (Brenner, 2014; Ezugworie et al., 2008).

Americans, particularly Christian Americans who saw embalming as a pagan/Egyptian practice that desecrated the human body (Harris, 2007 p. 45). However, embalming fell into favor when President Abraham Lincoln died and was embalmed so that his body could make a two-week tour for public viewing (Harris, 2007 p. 45).

As time progressed, class and racial distinction between the British colonial elite, upper middle class, and the rural working class became notable in many areas of life, including death. The gentility and elegance of the white upper class called for more handsome caskets made of hardwood and eventually metal (Harris, 2007 p.42-43). Concerns about grave robbing led to the use of burial vaults to hold the casket, a tradition that has continued to this day (Harris, 2007 p.43). The commercialization of the so-called respectable American funeral continued to evolve from its simple roots and eventually adopted embalming as a common practice.

Today, embalming is not always required but is a standard practice of death care in funeral homes[15]. The role of the modern death care provider emerged from the early 19th century roles of grave digging, coffin making, and embalming (which at the time only performed by medical doctors, specifically surgeons) (Hyland and Morse, 1995 p.455; Trompette and Lemonnier, 2009 p.10). Roles of death care that were historically spread between clergy, family, carpenters, chemists, and doctors (Olson, 2016 p. 75) began to be encapsulated in the single profession of "undertaking" (Beard and Burger, 2017). Undertakers, who became modern

[15] The modern process of arterial embalming is performed by a licensed mortician or funeral director. The process involves exposing a large artery or vein, inserting tubes into the body via the exposed vein, draining blood and blood clots, injecting embalming fluid containing formaldehyde, and closing the injection site (Ezugworie et al., 2008). Cavity embalming is also common and follows a similar process; the embalmer aspirates the contents of the body cavities and injects embalming fluids directly into the cavity. Similarly, hypodermic embalming, or injecting embalming fluid under the skin, can be used as necessary (Ezugworie et al., 2008). Once the chemical embalming is complete, the embalmer is tasked with reconstructing any parts that were injured in death and applying cosmetics to give the appearance of life.

funeral directors, developed a new profession for themselves through innovation and with the help of changing class structures post-Civil War. Whereas funerals historically occurred at home, funeral directors undertook the responsibility of caring for the dead in funeral homes, outsourcing the death care process so that the family could focus on grieving (Beard and Burger, 2017).

Alongside of the evolution of the American death care industry, cemeteries underwent a similar evolution as the population grew and cities expanded.

3.3.3 The history and contemporary use of lawn park cemeteries

In the 19th century, a rural cemetery movement began in the United States. This was "a proto-ecological reform movement [that] was afoot in the cities of antebellum America, encompassing concerns with sanitation, public health, aesthetics, and equal access to green spaces" (environmental historian Aaron Sachs, quoted by Meier, 2019). In urban areas, sanitation concerns were addressed by developing rural cemeteries (Meier, 2019; Yarwood et al., 2015). Urban elites experienced a transformation in their relationship with death with the rise of professional funeral directing as an avenue to outsource death care and the burial of the dead in rural cemeteries instead of on private property (Coutts et al., 2018 p.131). Before the founding of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts as the first rural cemetery in the United States, Americans buried their dead on family property, municipal burial grounds, church graveyards, and common grounds (Eggner, 2010 pg. 9). The two common forms of human burial are earth burial, or underground interment, and entombment, which typically involves an above-ground tomb, vault, or mausoleum. Rural cemeteries were decorated with natural aesthetics such

as weeping willows that represent the “peaceful transition” of death (Meier, 2019). Wealth was also represented in rural cemeteries, as elaborate monuments and memorials were constructed to memorialize the elite (Coutts et al., 2018 p.131; Harris, 2007, Linden-Ward, 1989).

Headstones became ornate and popular in the Victorian Era as a sign of wealth and status; unmarked graves were a sign of poverty and were not necessarily a choice (Herman, 2010 p.306). An expectation grew that the lawn around graves be kept neat and manicured. Therefore, cemeteries have standardized headstone size and make the lawn easier to mow. The conventional methods for maintaining a lawn cemetery involve the employment of fertilizer, pesticides, and natural gas for mowing machinery (Clayden et al., 2018).

3.3.4 A return to green burial is possible

The changes in the death care industry and cemetery management are not permanent. Traditions can evolve in a variety of ways based on the cultural attitudes towards death and resource consumption (Beard & Burger, 2017; Boyd and Richardson, 2005 p.54; Warner 1993, p.1064). Because burials in the United States have not always been accompanied by embalming, burial vaults, and enormous monuments, it is reasonable to assume that a return to the simplicity of green burial is feasible in the modern era of death care.

Green burial is a feasible practice because several religious and cultural groups within the United States today have burial customs that are inherently green in nature, though are not explicitly called green burial per se. In both the Islamic and Jewish religions, embalming or chemical preservation of the body is prohibited, unless absolutely required by law (Getzel 1995; Sakr 1995). In the Islamic tradition, the body is washed, shrouded, and buried as soon as

possible, preferably on the same day as the death (Sakr 1995). Likewise, the Jewish tradition is that the body is buried within twenty-four hours unless it is a Holy Day (Getzel 1995). In a Jewish cemetery, it is customary for the bereaved family to help dig the grave, manually lower the simple pine casket into the grave, and then fill the grave (Getzel 1995).

Native Americans, and all indigenous peoples, have diverse beliefs and customs unique to each nation[16] that also incorporate green burial concepts. Burials are "powerful embodiments of basic religious ideas" (Martin 2000, p.21) of connection to the Earth, to each other, and to a greater cycle of life (Glass & Queen 2018). After death, many Native American cultures believe that the body is integrated into the Earth to feed and nourish plants and animals (Deloria et al. 2003, p. 171). The spirit of the deceased live on in the land, a concept that became heartbreakingly problematic when Native people were forced to give up their homeland to colonists (Deloria et al. 2003, p. 171).

A return to green burial requires a knowledge of the obstacles faced and perceived that prevent universal access to green burial in the modern era. Therefore, the research questions are made valid and necessary to turn a possibility into a reality.

3.4 Assumption 3: The status quo of green burial placemaking is not acceptable

The Green Burial Council's vision is "to ensure universal access to information and environmentally sustainable death care" (GBC, 2020a). Because only a small fraction of the funeral homes and cemeteries in the United States are Green Burial Council Certified and/or

[16] There are over 500 unique cultural groups of Native Americans and approximately 100 distinct Native languages still spoken today (Glass & Queen 2018).

provide green burial services, the Green Burial Council's vision has not yet been realized. According to the GBC and the NFDA, approximately 1% of the funeral homes in the United States are certified as GBC-certified death care providers (Figure 13). This status quo of green burial provision is unsatisfactory for three primary reasons.

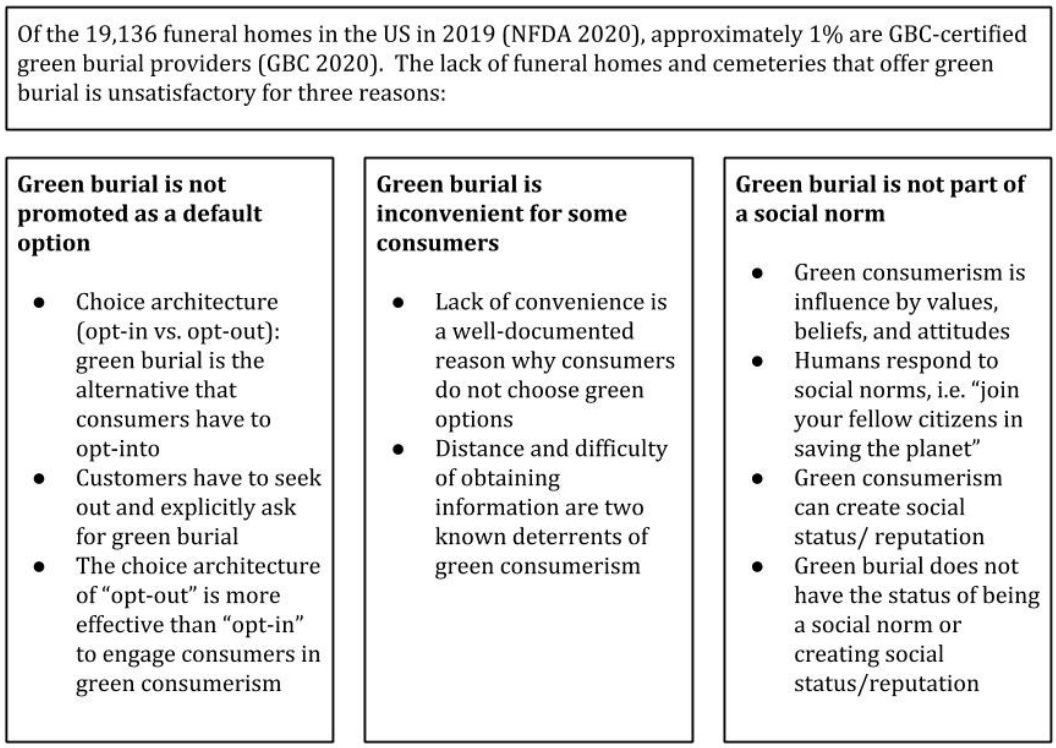

***Figure 12**: Three reasons for the unsatisfactory status quo of green burial provision have been identified.*

3.4.1 Green burial is not promoted as a default option

Like all purchases, death care requires decision-making on the part of the consumer. One such decision that consumers face in all kinds of purchasing scenarios is whether to choose a sustainable option of the good or service that they are purchasing, also known as participating in green consumerism. Choice architecture, or how the choices are presented to consumers, effects

the decision outcomes (Theotokis & Manganari, 2015 p. 432). Two choice architectural frameworks have been identified by green consumerism research: the *opt-in* framework and *opt-out* framework. In the opt-in framework, the sustainable option is not the default; therefore, consumers have to seek out and explicitly ask for the sustainable option (Theotokis & Manganari, 2015 p. 423). Such is the case with sustainable death care options. In the United States, the consumer has to opt-in for a sustainable option such as green burial.

However, the opt-out framework that makes the sustainable option the default is more effective than the opt-in framework to engage consumers in green consumerism (Theotokis & Manganari, 2015 p.432). When the sustainable option is the default, consumers are more likely to use the sustainable option rather than opting out for the less-sustainable option. The status quo of green burial provision will remain unsatisfactory so long as it is an unknown option that consumers have to seek out and explicitly ask for.

3.4.2 Green burial is inconvenient for some consumers

When making decisions, convenience is also highly considered by consumers. Lack of convenience is a well-documented reason why consumers do not choose the sustainable option (Gabler et al., 2013 p.162; Sachdeva et al., 2015 p.62-63). Two prominent inconveniences for consumers are geographic distance (i.e. the consumer would have to travel further for the sustainable option) and lack of information about the sustainable option (Gabler et al., 2013 p.162, 168). These broad inconveniences that consumers face in making decisions regarding sustainable options have been identified in death care decision-making as well (Slominski, 2020).

3.4.3 Green burial is not part of a broad social norm

Although green burial was in essence the historical norm for all funeral practices in the United States (see §4), it is not currently a widely practiced funeral norm. There are religious and cultural groups in the United States whose funeral traditions today are inherently green due to the prohibition of embalming and the use of shrouds or pine boxes instead of hardwood or steel caskets. For example, the Islamic tradition calls for bodies to be promptly washed, shrouded, and buried, preferably on the same day as death (Sakr, 1995). Likewise, the Jewish tradition also calls for the body to be buried within twenty-four hours of death (Getzel, 1995). The body should not be embalmed or cosmetically altered, and the body should be shrouded and placed in a simple wooden box: "The casket is seen as a temporary abode for the body as it gradually becomes part of the earth" (Getzel, 1995 p.25).

However, outside of these religious traditions the components of green burial are not part of the broad social norm of American death care. Like all decision making, the choice to participate in green consumerism is influenced by values, beliefs, attitudes and social norms (Sachdeva et al., 2015 p.60). The desire to follow social norms greatly effects how consumers are swayed in their decision-making (Sachdeva et al., 2015 p. 62). Therefore, some marketing strategies attempt to convince consumers to make decisions similar to their neighbors; advertisements for a sustainable option might say "join your fellow citizens in saving the planet" (Sachdeva et al., 2015 p. 62). The knowledge or appearance of green consumerism being a social norm makes it more likely for others to follow suit (Sachdeva et al., 2015 p. 62).

Green consumerism may also provide conspicuous conservation: “a device for attaining social status or pro-social reputation” (Sachdeva et al., 2015 p. 62), or in other words, people may believe they will be thought highly of if they choose a sustainable option. As of yet, green burial does not have the status of being a social norm or providing conspicuous conservation.

3.4.4 A sub-par status quo can be rectified

The absence of appearing as a social norm, along with the inconvenience of green burial and the lack of being the default option, contributes to the unsatisfactory status quo that the GBC has identified and wishes to rectify. The research questions posed in this proposal are aligned with the GBC’s goal to change the status quo by making green burial a convenient option that providers offer as a default or an option on par with contemporary burial practices. The research questions aim to generate new knowledge to get to the heart of how to achieve a new green burial status quo.

3.5 Assumption 4: The obstacles to green burial provision are not sufficiently known or understood

Although the number of articles and books on green burial have increased recently, few publications have addressed the obstacles to green burial provision. I conducted a literature search within several databases to uncover the breadth and depth of the academy’s understanding of green burial provision and the obstacles that death care providers face. I used the following databases for my literature search: 1) Web of Science, 2) JSTOR, 3) Academic Search Complete,

and 4) Google Scholar. I used the search terms “green burial,” “eco-friendly funeral,” “environmentally-friendly-funeral,” “conservation burial,” and “natural burial.”

3.5.1 Current state of knowledge

The search yielded 49 relevant journal articles and book chapters. The main themes of the publications were identified, and publications were grouped based on the common themes (Appendix 1). Each one of the 49 publication frequently incorporated more than one of the twenty-one themes identified. The most common themes were sustainability (ecological and social) (Barnett, 2018; Basmajian & Coutts, 2010; Andrew Clayden & Dixon, 2007; Andy Clayden et al., 2018; Coutts et al., 2018; da Cruz et al., 2017; Jesmer, 2019; Kaufman, 1999; Keijzer, 2017; Li, 2011; Michel & Lee, 2017; Prajapati, 2020; H. Rumble et al., 2014; Schade, 2011; Uslu et al., 2009; Yarwood et al., 2015) and the critique of current funeral practices in the United States (Bayer, 2018; Carson, 2011; Chiappelli & Chiappelli, 2008; Coutts et al., 2018; da Cruz et al., 2017; Haneman, 2020; Jesmer, 2019; Kaufman, 1999; Keijzer, 2017; Kelly, 2012; MacMurray & Futrell, 2019; Olson, 2016; Thompson, 2002; Williams et al., 2009)**.** Among other themes were social traditions, values, and behaviors (Baker & Baker, 2014; Cantor, 2010; Carson, 2011; Andrew Clayden & Dixon, 2007; Andy Clayden et al., 2010; Kelly, 2012; MacMurray & Futrell, 2019; Olson, 2016; Prajapati, 2020; Rugg, 2018; H. J. Rumble, 2010; Slominski, 2020; Stroud, 2011; Zeng et al., 2016) and cemetery design and management (Balonier et al., 2019; Basmajian & Coutts, 2010; Andrew Clayden & Dixon, 2007; Andy Clayden et al., 2010; Coutts et al., 2018; Hockey et al., 2012; Y. Y. Lau et al., 2020; Li, 2011; Stewart, 2018; Thompson, 2002; Uslu et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2009; Yarwood et al., 2015)**.**

For a full list of the themes represented by this literature search and the corresponding publications, please refer to Appendix 1.

Of the 49 publications that were identified through this literature search to contain information about green burial, only four publications discussed obstacles to green burial provision. Lau et al. (2020) and Zeng et al. (2016) discussed obstacles to green burial provision in Hong Kong and China, respectively. A lack of education and awareness in Hong Kong was identified as a reason why green burial is not currently as popular as other funeral practices (C. S. Y. Lau et al., 2020). Also, Chinese traditions, values, and culture may also hinder the widespread acceptance of green burial (C. S. Y. Lau et al., 2020; Zeng et al., 2016). Conversely, Marshall and Rounds (2011) found that some green burial obstacles revolve around land use planning. They identified land availability and lack of standard practice guidelines to be the primary obstacles to green burial provision in Australia (Marshall & Rounds, 2011).

A thesis by Slominski (2020) was the only publication that addressed potential obstacles to green burial provision in the United States. Lack of consumer education and the need make green burial profitable to funeral homes and cemeteries were identified as the two most probable obstacles to green burial provision, though more empirical data is required to substantiate these claims across the American funeral industry as a whole (Slominski, 2020 p. 112-116). Participatory action research and interviews were conducted by Slominski (2020) to gather anecdotal information.

3.5.2 Filling the knowledge gap and making great contributions

More data collection and analysis are necessary to uncover patterns and trends across many death care practitioners in the United States. My dissertation research will address the knowledge gap of understanding the obstacles experienced by American death care providers. Answering the research questions posed by this proposal will make contributions in three significant areas. First, the research will inform practice on two fronts: the mission of the GBC and the practice of death care providers in the United States. Second, the research will inform and inspire research on cemeteries and other deathscapes as complex socioecological systems. And finally, the research will guide education of new death care practitioners to better prepare them with resources and skills required to provide green burial.

CHAPTER 4: Research Philosophy and Methods

4.1 Research Philosophy

4.1.1 Ways of knowing

This research is positioned within cultural and ecological geography and builds upon two fundamental characteristics of sustainability science: 1) the need to understand the complex nature-society dynamics that create a complex adaptive system, and 2) the need to "address concerns in a problem-solving mode" (Kates, 2012 p.7). These two characteristics are aligned with the dual goals of practice research residing in Pasteur's Quadrant of the Schön-Stokes model of research (Kates, 2012 p.7; Xiang, 2017 p.2243). The study of green burial practices requires a fundamental understanding of the complex adaptive qualities of the socio-ecological system, and a desire to solve the issue of sustainability of death care practices in the United States. This section presents the Schön-Stokes model of research, specifically Pasteur's Quadrant, as the theoretical framework for this research. Subsequently, a basic understanding of the socio-ecological system and the pragmatic way of knowing employed to generate new knowledge and solve sustainability problems within the socio-ecological system are given. Finally, the emerging field of ecopracticology is introduced as an approach integral to generating new knowledge about practice, for practice, and beyond practice (Xiang, 2017 p.2244; Xiang, 2019 p.10; Xiang, 2021 p.13).

4.1.2 Pasteur-McHarg's quadrant of use-inspired basic research for practice

In his 1997 seminal book, Donald E. Stokes presents a model of research that captures the conceptual differences of basic and applied research. He argues that research originates and materializes from choices (Stokes, 1997 p.6). The goals that underpin researchers' choices make basic and applied research fundamentally and conceptually different (Stokes, 1997 p.6). Stokes defines basic and applied research as such: Whereas basic research "seeks to widen the understanding of the phenomena of a scientific field," applied research is "directed toward some individual or group or social need or use" (Stokes, 1997 p.6,8). Therefore the goals of basic and applied research are *understanding* and *use*, respectively. The divide between basic and applied research has been reinforced in the Academy throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but Stokes model of research presents a new paradigm for integrating them (Stokes, 1997 p.9,73). His framework is a two-by-two view of research, where the goals of fundamental understanding and utility are compared within the four resulting "quadrants" (Kates, 2012 p.7; Stokes, 1997 p.73). Pure basic research that focuses solely on contributing the body of knowledge of a specific scientific field is exemplified by Niels Bohr's research on atomic structure (Stokes, 1997 p.73). In contrast, Pure applied research is exemplified by the inventor Thomas Edison, whose research was driven by utility (Stokes, 1997 p.73). At the intersection of the quest for knowledge and the quest for utility is what Stokes deemed "Pasteur's Quadrant" (Stokes, 1997, p.73). Louis Pasteur research on microbial processes was driven by two goals: 1) to understand microorganisms and their relationship to food spoilage, thus initiating microbiology as a field of science, and 2) to develop a process to prevent food spoilage due to microbial processes, a process known today as pasteurization (Kates, 2012 p.7; Stokes, 1997 p.12,13).

Within the context of sustainability and socio-ecological systems, Xiang (2017) reimagines the Stokes model of research and presents the Schön-Stokes model for socio-ecological system research (Figure 14). The review of literature conducted by Xiang (2017) revealed that that much socio-ecological research was positioned within Bohr's quadrant of research (Xiang, 2017 p.2243) and few studies present highly technical solutions to problems and most give general advice for land managers without explicitly involving stakeholders in planning and policy-making (Xiang, 2017 p.2243-2244). To "do real and permanent good" (Xiang, 2014 p.65 ; Carnegie, 1889) by developing sustainable practices, there must be a migration from Bohr's quadrant to Pasteur's quadrant (Kates, 2012 p.7; Xiang, 2017 p.2244-2245).

An exemplary example of use-inspired basic research for practice that resides in Pasteur's quadrant is the career-long quest of planning scholar and practitioner Ian McHarg (Xiang, 2019c). McHarg's exemplary use-inspired basic research is showcased in a number of ways. Notably, he hesitates to purely identify as a scientist; instead, McHarg self-identifies as a "crypto-pseudo-quasi-scientist" (McHarg, 2007 p. 21; Xiang, 2019 p.361). His willingness and motivation to relinquish a pure basic and theoretic goal for research positions him to conduct pragmatic research in which he listens to nature and culture (Xiang, 2019c p.363) to generate knowledge from practice and for practice (Xiang, 2019c p.364). In line with the Pasteur-McHarg quadrant of the Schön-Stokes model of research, this research seeks to understand the socio-ecological system of green burial as well as generate useful knowledge for practical implementation of green burial. Knowledge about the practice will be generated from practitioners: the death care providers that participate in the complex socio-ecological system of death care. Knowledge will also be generated for practice, so that organizations, businesses,

families, and individuals can be well-informed about green burial practices and accessibility. Therefore, a pragmatic way of knowing about the system is required to contribute to the existing body of knowledge while simultaneously informing practitioners.

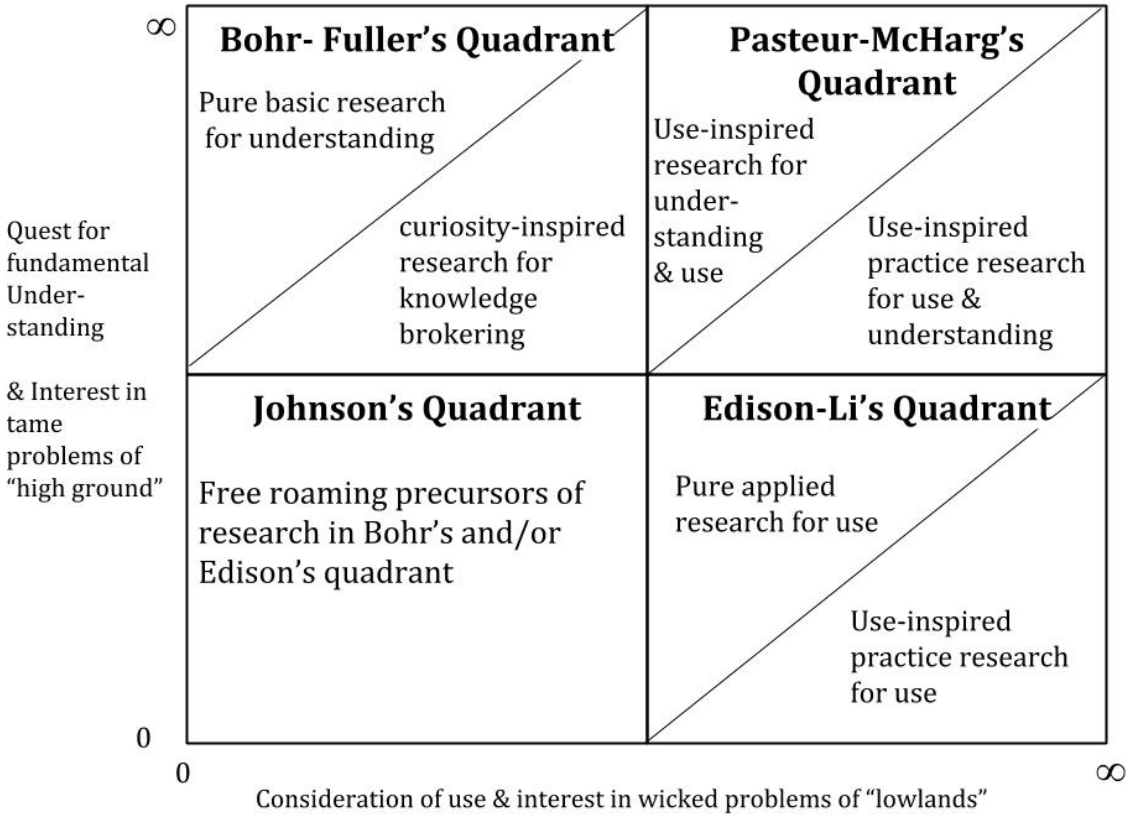

Figure 13*: Adapted from Xiang (2021, p.11), The RWC-Schön-Stokes model of research in socio-ecological systems.*

4.1.3 Pragmatic approach to complex socio-ecological systems

In an editorial of Geoforum dedicated to pragmatism and geography, geography scholars Nichola Wood and Susan Smith state:

> "Perhaps one of the central features of pragmatism is that it is a way of thinking that is grounded in anti-foundationalism. Ideas are not transcendent, fixed truths, rather they are outcomes of embodied experiences and instrumental actions that are dynamic, contingent and continually evolving. Decades before the first post-structuralist utterances, the early pragmatists were turning away from meta-narratives, objective truths, and unifying theories, preferring instead to develop modes of thinking, which they believed had greater utility for helping people to cope with the messiness of everyday life" (Wood and Smith, 2008 p.1).

What is messier than working with death? Getting to the root of obstacles faced and anticipated by death care providers requires a mode of thinking in which knowledge is based on experiences and actions that are "dynamic, contingent, and continually evolving" to keep up with social and ecological changes (Wood and Smith, 2008 p.1).

For many geographers who focus on social or environmental issues, research is more than informing other geographers in the same field. It is about transforming the world for the better using the theories that arise from their research (Aitken and Valentine, 2015 p. 7). Creating new geographic knowledge primarily for the people who study it "neglects the fundamental issues of how problem-solving and utility are constructed and for whom" (Aitken and Valentine, 2015 p.9). Scholars and practitioners reside in "two worlds," though they are both developing theories in their own right (Forester, 2020 p.111). In the early twentieth century, John Dewey produced foundational thought on this topic. Although he respected the work of the great Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, Dewey argued that there is a "bifurcation of reason from experience in the work of the classical philosophers" (Kadlec, 2006 p.530). According to Dewey, theorists believed that there is a transcendent and absolute truth about the world that was separate from experience (Kadlec, 2006 p.530). Theories about the world from such philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle did not consider the "active coping with conditions" that people experience every day (John Dewey, quoted in Kadlec, 2006 p.530). In contrast, Dewey takes an anti-

foundational view that rejects the need to ground in philosophy; he reconstructs individualism and the relationship between experience and reason (Kadlec, 2006 p.533).

Whereas absolutists claim truth is discovered and relativists claim that truth is invented, pragmatists such as John Dewey claim that truth is "constructed as the byproduct of a process of solving problems" within specific social contexts (Harney et al., 2016 p.319; Hickman, 2009 p.14). Within the theoretically informed practice research of critical pragmatism, scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners are brought together in the face of wicked problems[17] that no expert is likely to have the solution to (Forester, 2020 p. 112-113).

4.1.4 Conducting research from practice, for practice, and beyond practice

This research aims to learn from real-world death care practitioners to acquire insight about what does and does not work in the endeavor to propagate the practice of green burial. Therefore, the framework of "from practice, for practice, and beyond practice" (Xiang, 2019a p.10) is adopted here to conceptualize the formation of the research questions, the approach and significance of this study, and the knowledge contributions beyond death care practice that this research will make.

Not only will this research be actionable, but it will inspire new lines of inquiry, including the following:

1. Integrating consumer data with knowledge produced from this research to understand the disconnect between what consumers want and what death care providers actually provide

[17] For more on wicked problems, see Rittel and Webber (1973). They define wicked problems as those in which the problem is unique and not easily defined, a solution is non-definitive, the implementation of a solution is irreversible.

2. Death care decision-making: What factors do people consider when choosing death care for themselves or others? To what degree does environmental impact influence people's decision making?
3. What is the difference in the sense of place between contemporary cemeteries and green cemeteries?

These are just a few examples of beyond practice academic inspiration to accompany the practical benefits for GBC board members and death care providers alike.

4.2 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework for this dissertation is outlined in Figure 15 This framework provides the overarching road map from the research questions to the target knowledge that will ultimately address the problem statement with practical and actionable outcomes. The following section 4.3 Research Design will address each step of the overarching roadmap by providing a justification for the specific method and present sub-steps toward completion.

Three specific sub-questions are presented in the analytical framework, corresponding with the three geographic scales of interest: 1) What are American funeral directors' perceptions of obstacles to green burial? How does funeral director awareness/willingness to provide green burial vary across time, space, and education? 2) What obstacles have green burial providers in the Southern/MidAtlantic US faced and how have they successfully overcome those obstacles? 3) What does consumer characteristics, needs, and desires reveal about the anticipated and faced obstacles to widespread green burial provision in the United States?

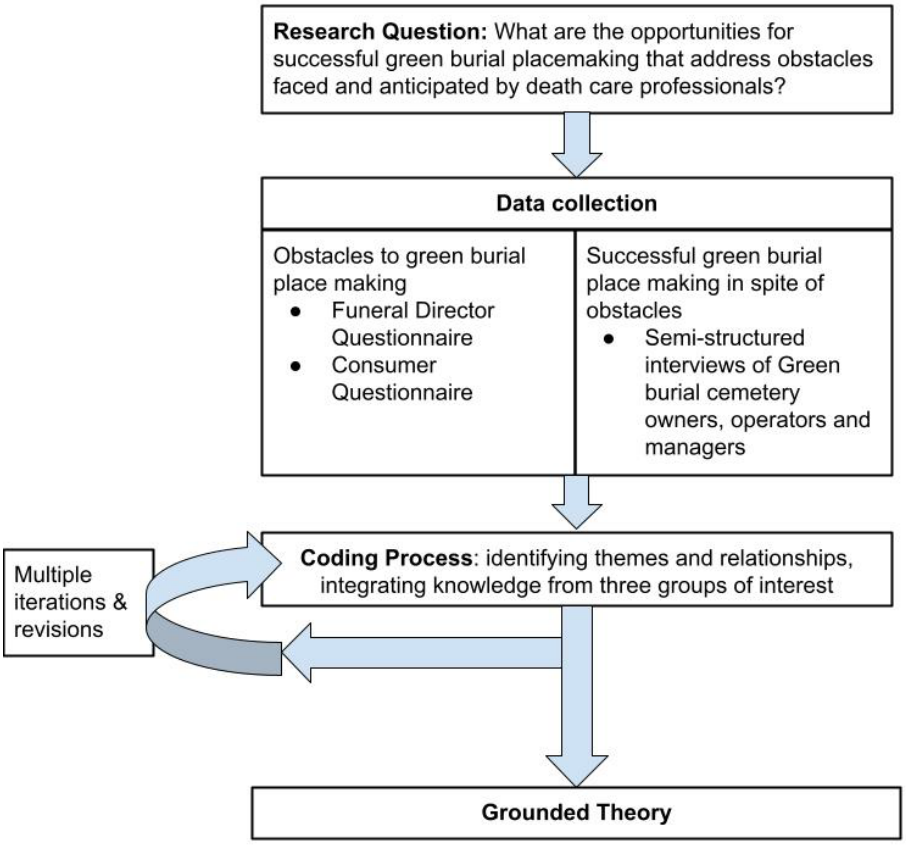

***Figure 14**: Analytical framework for the present study.*

Figure 4.2: Analytical Framework

This research relies on inductive reasoning (Figure 16). Individual case, stories, and pieces of data are collected and observed. From studying and analyzing individual cases, patterns are extrapolated, and conceptual theories are formed (Birks and Mills, 2011 p. 94; Byant and Charmaz, 2007 p.608). Rather than taking a deductive approach of testing hypotheses, this research forms new hypotheses and theories from the ground up, starting with the people and places that are involved.

***Figure 15**: Inductive Reasoning*

4.3 Research Methods

The following subsections outline the methods used for this grounded theory study that includes both qualitative and quantitative components. Rich qualitative data was gathered from a variety of sources, including interviews and surveys. Quantitative data also plays a role in supporting and interpreting the findings of the grounded theory study. The key methods used in this study are semi-structured interviews, online surveys, and content analysis. Together, these methods were used to understand the broad picture of green burial provision and consumption in the United States. The qualitative methods selected for this study were chosen based on their ability to elucidate the meaningful decisions that occur within and between two parties: death care providers and death care consumers. Although some quantitative data was collected and analyzed, relying entirely on quantitative data would not be suitable for capturing the complex decisions that people make about death care for themselves or someone they love. Likewise, predominantly qualitative data supported by quantitative data is suitable for examining the complexities of death care providers' decisions to provide green burial. A detailed description of the methods, participant selection, and data analysis is provided in the following sections.

4.3.1 The Researcher

Abductive reasoning, along with inductive reasoning, plays a key role in grounded theory methods. According to Charmaz (2006, p.188), "abductive inference entrails considering all possible theoretical explanations for the data, forming hypotheses for each possible explanation, checking them empirically by examining data, and pursuing the most plausible explanation." Keeping an open mind to all plausible explanations requires a degree of theoretical sensitivity, which requires two things: "1) abstain from forcing preconceived concepts, and 2) utilize theoretical sensibility in [the GTM] process" (Udo Kelle, quoted in Bryant and Charmaz, 2007, p.17).

In order to maintain theoretical sensitivity (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007, p.17) throughout the grounded theory process, it is necessary to make a statement of my positionality as a researcher. Although GTM calls for preconceived notions to be set aside, it is impossible for researchers to complete divorce themselves from their lived experiences and expectations. To ensure transparency and rigor, I have included this statement of positionality based on the suggestion of Waitt (2016, p. 295). Preconceptions cannot be outright rejected, but "we must show that they do not come about by themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known and the justifications of which must be scrutinized" (Focault, quoted in Waitt, 2016, p. 295-296).

My research on green burial came from a personal interest in sustainable death care options for myself. Cremation never sat right with me and when I learned about green burial, I thought "Yes! This is what I want for my body after death." My initial research into green burial

was purely for personal understanding of my death care options in North Carolina, specifically the Charlotte region. After learning that there are sparse locations throughout North Carolina where green burial is possible, I began looking into the academic literature to understand why. I identified holes in the body of literature that needed to be filled and I began approaching this topic as a potential dissertation topic.

I contacted the Green Burial Council (GBC) in December 2019 out of curiosity about their research and volunteer needs. I began serving on the board of directors in January 2020 and was elected as the secretary in June 2021. Working closely with the GBC has illuminated potential research questions related to helping the non-profit achieve their mission. I also have the privilege of building relationships with funeral industry professionals. It is important to note that I had contact with some, but not all, of the green burial providers prior to this study.

I acknowledge that the personal nature of the genesis of my interest in green burial broadly may intertwine with my academic research. Constant reflection of my positionality as a researcher in this study is vital to separating my personal views of green burial from the data.

4.3.2 Ethical Concerns

Although risks associated with participation in this study are minimal, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted on April 29, 2021. Creating and following the methods outlined in this chapter are integral to maintaining the anonymity and privacy of the participants and ensuring the reliability of the data collected. A consent form was presented to all participants; online survey participants agreed to participate in the study by clicking “I agree” at the bottom of the consent page. If the survey participants clicked “I do not agree,” the survey

ended and no data was collected. Interview participants were emailed a consent form, which they were asked to sign and date. The interview consent form included a section about allowing the researcher to keep the audio recording of the virtual video call for data analysis. The video recording was deleted after each video call. A copy of the consent forms approved by the UNC Charlotte IRB are included in Appendix A.

4.3.3 Qualitative Methods

Answering the overarching question: "What are the obstacles to green burial placemaking?" requires knowledge about the deliberate, reflective, and iterative process of placemaking that people do (Forester, 2021a p.10). Placemakers are the instruments of the placemaking process; they are humans that use their diverse perspectives, experiences, and knowledge to answer the pertinent questions about their placemaking practice (Forester, 2018 p. 13). Because qualitative methods effectively answer questions concerned with social structures and/or individual experiences (Winchester and Rofe, 2016 p.5), qualitative methods are used in this study to uncover the characteristics of death care placemaking practices and practitioners that reflect obstacles to green burial placemaking.

While in-depth case studies are commonly used to explore the effectiveness of placemaking in planning processes (Beza. 2014; Campion, 2018; Ellery and Ellery, 2019), the combination of surveys and interviews has been used to explore creative placemaking practices (Kelkar and Spinelli, 2016 p.57; Zitcer, 2020 p.279). In the context of human geography, an interview is "a data-gathering method in which there is a spoken exchange of information" (Dunn, 2016 p. 149). Dunn (2016) writes that interviews are used to access information about

complex behaviors, motivations, experiences, and opinions (Dunn, 2016 p.150). The use of interviewing in this study is useful because it provides an opportunity for in-depth insight about differences and similarities in death care practitioners' motivations, actions, and perspectives that allow them to face and overcome obstacles to green burial placemaking. Interviewing empowers the interviewee to tell their story and reveal to the researcher what is relevant (Dunn, 2016 p.150-151). To conduct a thorough interview that effectively accomplished the aforementioned goals, the researcher must create an interview schedule or guide that addresses the required questions but also allows for flexibility for the interviewee to reveal what is relevant to their personal story and experience in death care and green burial placemaking (Dunn, 2016 p.152-153).

Questionnaires are also effective tools for exploring individuals' thoughts and experiences surrounding a particular topic, in this case, green burial and green burial placemaking (Kelkar and Spinelli, 2016 p.57). Questionnaires are particularly useful for to "pose standardized, formally structured questions to a group of individuals, often presumed to be a sample of a broader population" (McGuirk and O'Neill, 2016 p. 246). Indeed, this research uses questionnaires to explore samples from two broader populations: US citizens and US funeral directors. Online questionnaires are uniquely beneficial for reaching large or geographically dispersed people, as in this research (McGuirk and O'Neill, 2016 p.247). Questionnaires also provide the unique opportunity to simultaneously collect qualitative and quantitative data about people's behavior, awareness, beliefs, and values (McGuirk and O'Neill, 2016 p. 246). Open ended questions provide a space for respondents to reveal what they believe to be important about the topic at hand, similar in effect to an interview question. Summary statistics from quantitative questions and qualitative themes that emerge from qualitative questions can work in tandem to reveal new knowledge (McGuirk and O'Neill, 2016 p. 246).

4.3.4 Grounded Theory

The grounded theory methods (GTM) for this study are inspired by the seminal work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and its practical interpretation by Birks and Mills (2011). Rather than testing a new hypothesis, grounded theory allows new theories to emerge from the data via inductive reasoning (Birks and Mills, 2011 p. 2,11).

Grounded theory includes several iterative processes that are happening concurrently, including gathering and analyzing data, writing memos, identifying emerging codes and themes, and theoretical sampling. Constant comparative analysis is the primary vehicle through which the induction and abduction of new theory occurs. Each piece of data is constantly compared with other pieces of data. Codes assigned to pieces of data are compared with other codes, memos about data are compared with other memos, categories are compared against codes, and so forth (Birks and Mills, 2011 p.11). Grounded theory is the method and the product: "The final product of a grounded theory study is an integrated and comprehensive grounded theory that explains a process of scheme associated with a phenomenon" (Birks and Mills, 2011 p.12).

4.3.5 Regional Level: Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are used to ascertain the perspectives and experiences of funeral industry professionals who have successfully started and continue to operate a green cemetery. The purpose of these interviews is to provide an understanding of the local and regional obstacles to green burial provision that death care providers anticipated, faced, and

overcame. A total of nine interviews are conducted, and ten people are interviewed. In one case, the semi-structured interview involves two interviewees. The interviewees represent green burial cemeteries across the Mid-Atlantic States of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

I identify participants for the interviews via the Green Burial Council. The GBC has a database of certified green burial providers, including funeral homes and cemeteries. I focused on cemeteries that are GBC certified or advertise on their website to be GBC certified. One of the cemeteries, Larkspur Conservation, is not GBC certified, but is in close communication with the GBC and representatives have even presented at the inaugural GBC virtual conference in October 2020.

Twelve cemetery owners/ operators are contacted via email to inquire about their willingness to participate. The recruitment email is included in Appendix B and is altered slightly to be personalized for the cemetery that I was speaking to. A consent form is attached to the email for prospective participants to read prior to agreeing to participating. All recruitment documents are approved by the IRB before being sent out to prospective participants. When participants respond with their signed consent form, an interview date is scheduled.

The semi-structured interview format is used because of the level of flexibility in adding to or slightly altering the interview schedule that was determined before-hand. Interviews can capture the complexities of individual stories in a way that surveys are not able to. Because I wanted to hear about the honest hardships and successes that cemeteries have experienced, I chose to use interviews as opposed to focus groups. In focus groups, particularly in groups of people whose organizations are offering similar services, people may be less likely to be open about difficulties that their business or organization has experienced. The semi-structured interview schedule is included in Appendix C. The interview schedule questions generally follow

three themes: 1) About the cemetery and the participant's relationship with it, 2) Obstacles or challenges that the cemetery has faced, and 3) Recommendations for other cemeteries that are considering adding green burial. However, I allowed the conversation to flow as naturally as possible, with slight redirection back to outstanding issues as necessary (Dunn, 2016, p. 152-153).

Each interview is conducted over Zoom and was about an hour in length. The interview is recorded, with permission of the participant, so that I can listen intently to the participant and ask appropriate follow up questions when necessary. The video component is immediately deleted and the audio recording of the interview was securely stored on Google Drive until it was transcribed. Interviews are transcribed word-for-word to the best of my ability, though some superfluous words such as "um" and "uh" are removed unless they signified significant hesitation in the participant's voice. I did not use any voice recognition software; rather, I typed the transcript of the interview as I heard it. This allowed be to have a meaningful initial engagement with the data, and it provided a "preliminary form of analysis" (Dunn, 2016, p. 171). Interview notes are also typed up soon after the interview and are included in the analysis.

Data are coded by hand and with the assistance of NVivo coding software. The themes that emerged from the data enlightened and enriched the other data that are collected in this study. Because grounded theory allows new theories to emerge from data, it is important to this research to refrain from developing ideas for codes from the literature prior to analyzing the data. I prioritized developing codes and themes from the data itself rather than applying codes and themes developed from literature.

4.3.6 National level: Online Surveys

Creating the Questionnaire

Survey research is particularly valuable because it can obtain factual or attitudinal data, which can either be qualitative or quantitative (Hart, 1987, p. 26). This is particularly useful for research on death care decision-making, which can be highly personal. Previous research has found that death care decisions are based on 1) location, 2) previous experience, and 3) price (Halpenny, 2013, pp. 24–26). The present research asks similar questions about attitudes and opinions towards green burial and experience with and knowledge about green burial (Glass & Samuel, 2011, p. 376).

Because questionnaires are designed to be ask brief, but specific questions, questionnaires can be administered to a very large group of people over a short period of time. With large swaths of information regarding people's attributes and attitudes, connections with quantitative data can be explored. A targeted group of participants is believed to be a subset of a larger population, and a well-designed questionnaire can tease out concepts and themes that can be explored more in-depth. The target population for this survey is the average death care consumer in the United States, which reflects the overall population of the United States.

Researchers will occasionally run into the issue of respondents reporting answers that they believe that the researcher will want to hear or satisficing behavior, where the respondents will keep reading and ticking answers until they have met the required number of responses and then discontinue reading (McGuirk and O'Neill, 2016, pg. 249). Careful wording of the questions will elicit truthful, unbiased responses. Questionnaires are usually taken by

respondents remotely, or away from the researcher, so it is in many cases impossible for researchers to clarify questions for respondents if there is any confusion. Pre-testing the questionnaire with colleagues, peers, and potential respondents is vital to make sure that all questions are asking exactly what you are intending for the questions to ask. I conducted vigorous pre-testing of both questionnaires; peers and colleagues from UNC Charlotte and the Green Burial Council gave feedback on the questionnaires before the study was formally conducted. The questionnaire instruments for this research were created using Qualtrics.

Demographic information including race, ethnicity, gender, age, state of residence, and marital status was also collected in the questionnaire. Demographic data will be used to compare responses based on spatial distribution of important demographic identifiers in specific regions. The only identifiable datum that was collected was the participant's email address if they wanted to be included in a drawing to win an Amazon gift card. Per the IRB protocol, email addresses were immediately removed from the rest of the data set and were deleted altogether once a participant was randomly selected for the Amazon gift card.

Identifying the Target population

Each of the two questionnaires has a specific target population. The purpose of the funeral director questionnaire is to collect examples of perspectives of the total population of funeral directors in the United States. The purpose of the consumer survey is to collect examples of the perspectives of the average death care consumer in the United States, which in this case is anyone over the age of 18 who consents to being a part of the study. Most, if not all, people in the United States will be faced with making death care decisions about someone that they love.

Everyone also faces their own mortality and will die someday, whether they know what their death care plan is or not.

Developing the Questionnaires

Diverse question formats are used in both questionnaires in this study. Following the guidelines of McGuirk and O'Neill (2016), a simple online format is used, question wording was kept simple and straightforward, and leading questions are avoided (McGuirk and O'Neill, 2016, p. 257). Most of the questions are closed questions, which gathered attribute information and asked participants to rate or scale answer choices (McGuirk and O'Neill, 2016, p. 251). Matrices are also used for scale questions that used the same scaling system. A small number of open questions are also used to allow participants to use their own words to explain their feelings or desires, which are difficult to capture in a closed question.

The consumer question (Appendix D) and the funeral director survey (Appendix E) begin with a series of demographic questions that follow the initial consent. Both questionnaires ask about gender identity, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, level of education, political views, state of residence, and religious affiliation. The consumer questionnaire also asks about household income, number of children, and employment status. Both questionnaires gather the first three digits of the participant's zip code for mapping purposes, while still maintaining a level of anonymity.

The funeral director questionnaire also asks participants to indicate whether they attended a formal mortuary science academic program. If yes, they are prompted to type the name of the mortuary science school they attended. The second part of the funeral director survey asks

questions about the services that the funeral director has on their general price list at the funeral home where they work. The general price list is an itemized list of goods and services that a funeral home sells. Such price list is required by the Federal Trade Commission so that consumers can shop and compare prices between funeral companies (FTC, 2012). The subsequent parts of the funeral director survey ask questions about the participants values, experiences, and perception of their families' desires. Finally, I provide open-ended questions for funeral directors to voice their opinion about green burial provision in the funeral industry and explain why they have chosen to include or not include green burial in their general price list.

The consumer questionnaire also gathers data on personal experience and values. After the demographic section, the participants are asked what specific ideas they have for their funeral or death care. This is an open question that allowed participants to write freely about what they want, prior to being introduced to or asked about specific death care options later in the questionnaire. The participants are then asked whether they heard about or attended a funeral that involved specific death care options such as green burial, cremation, and contemporary casketed burial, among other things. After gauging prior knowledge about death care options, I provide a definition of each death care option ask whether they would consider each option for their body after death. Specific questions about values related to death care decision-making are also included. The consumer questionnaire is specifically designed to gauge what they are aware of prior to taking the questionnaire and what they would choose after being presented with all of the options available. Finally, the consumer questionnaire participants are also provided open questions at the end to use their own words to describe emotions evoked when thinking about death care and general opinions about green burial.

According to the 2010 census, Spanish is most spoken language in the United States after English (US Census Bureau, 2019). Therefore, questionnaires are written in English and translated into Spanish by a colleague, Kendra McMurray. Participants have the option at the beginning of the survey to choose their language of choice.

Distributing the Questionnaires

The funeral director questionnaire was sent to the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA). The NFDA's research manager reviewed and approved the questions in the questionnaire, then sent out the questionnaire to the NFDA members via email and newsletter.

The consumer questionnaire was posted on social media sites such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Posts were shared to various academic and social groups with varying interest and engagement. The researcher's family and friends also helped by sharing the questionnaire on their personal page as well.

4.4 Methods Summary

This study utilizes grounded theory methods to analyze qualitative data collected via interviews, questionnaires, and content analysis. Quantitative data captured in the questionnaires are used to corroborate findings. In combination, these methods provide an understanding of the obstacles to green burial provision in the United States at national, regional, and community scales. This research presents an opportunity to theorize about best practices for establishing and promoting sustainable death care practices in the United States and beyond.

CHAPTER 5: Results and Discussions

5.1 Funeral Director Survey Respondents

The funeral director survey yielded 168 responses from across the United States, some of which say that green burial is on their current general services or price lists, and some do not. The geographic distribution of funeral director respondents, along with their corresponding declaration of whether they offer green burial is presented in Figure 17.

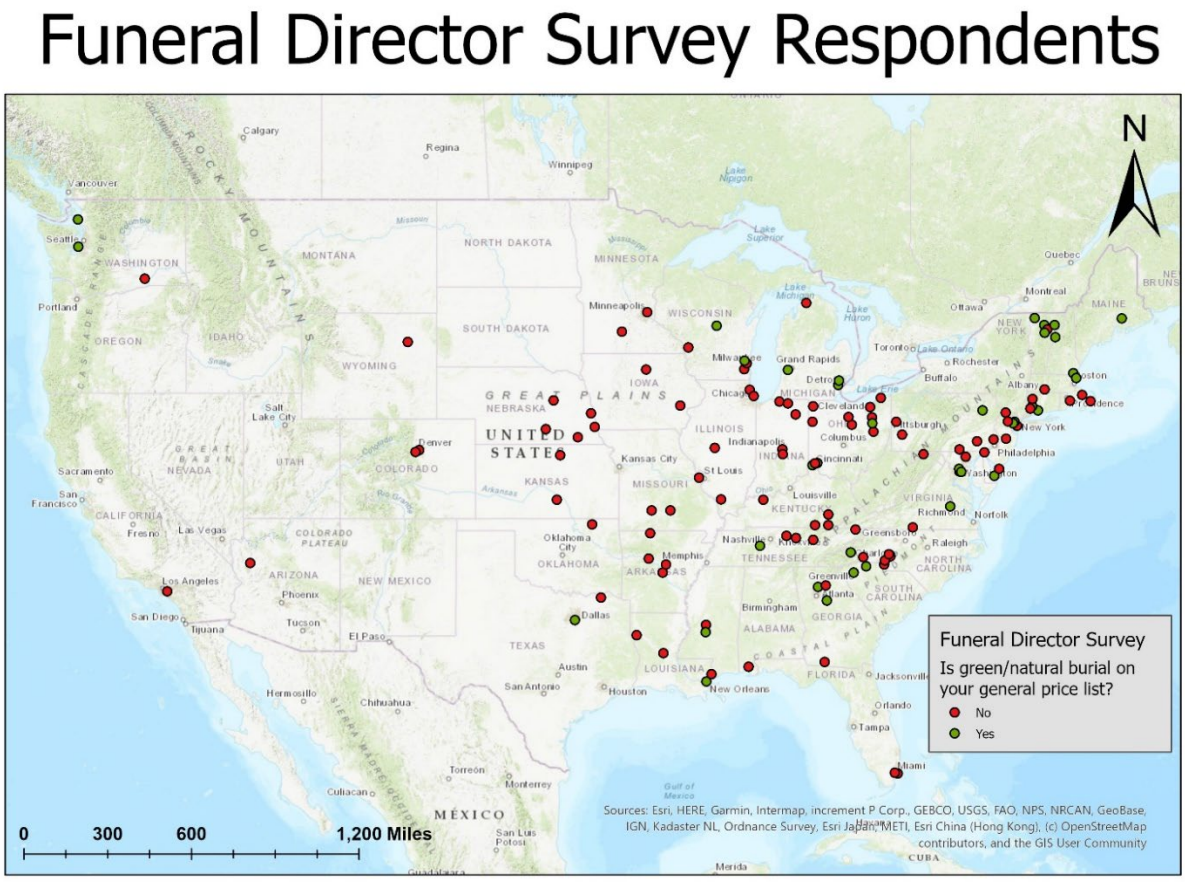

***Figure 16**: Geographic distribution of respondents and whether green burial is offered on their general price list.*

Demographic data was collected to describe the background and perspective of funeral director respondents. Most respondents were over the age of 45; 43% fall into the 46-60 age range and 36.2% of respondents were 61 years or older (Figure 18). Based on industry research conducted by Zippia (2021), the average age of an employed funeral director is 50 years old—consistent with the findings here. Also, according to Zippia (2021), 61.1 % of funeral directors are men and 35.6% are women. This is also consistent with the data gathered here; respondents were mostly male (Figure 19). Respondents of this survey are 91% white and 7% Black (Figure 20) compared to Zippia (2021) findings that 77.3% of funeral directors in the US are white, 10.2 % are Black, and 8.2% are Hispanic/Latinx.

Zippia does not report demographic data on religion/spirituality or personal politics. I found that most respondents identify as Protestant Christian (47%) or Roman Catholic (33%) (Figure 21). Most respondents are conservative (41%) or moderate, leaning conservative (20%) (Figure 22).

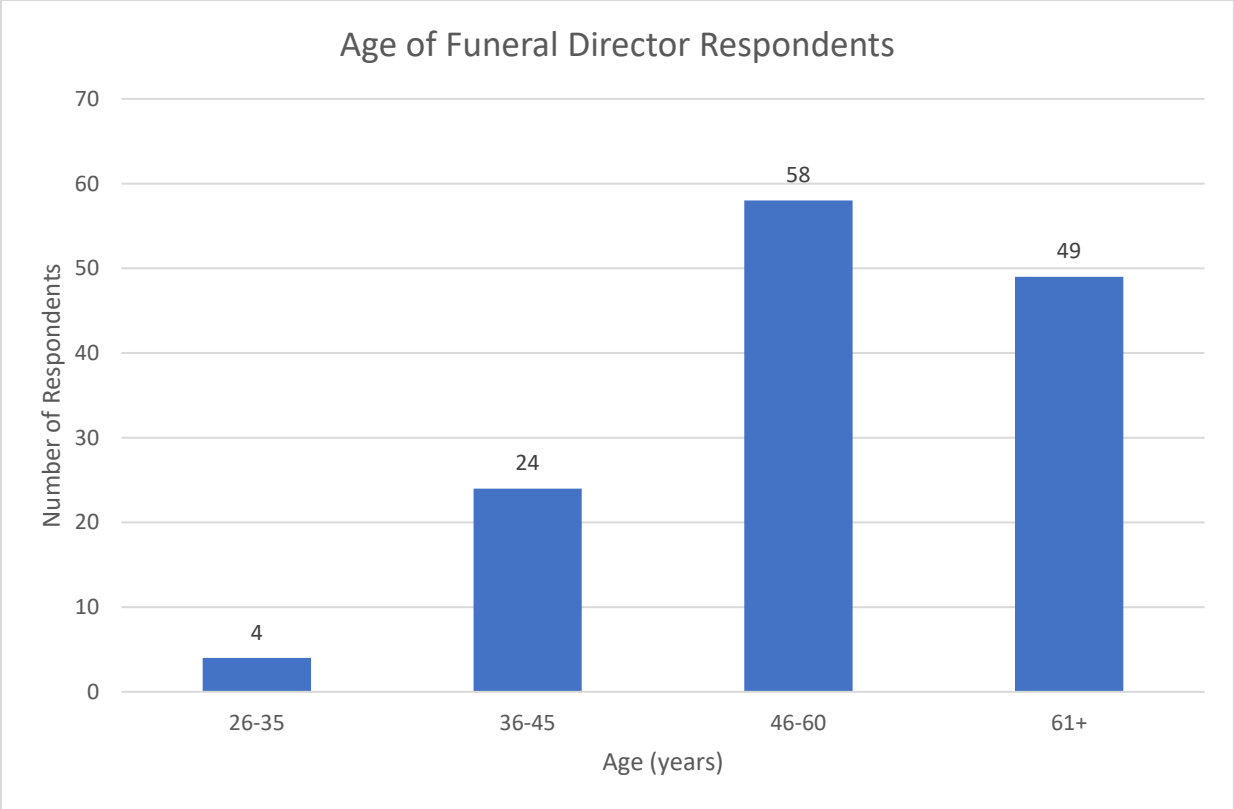

***Figure 17**: Age of funeral director respondents*

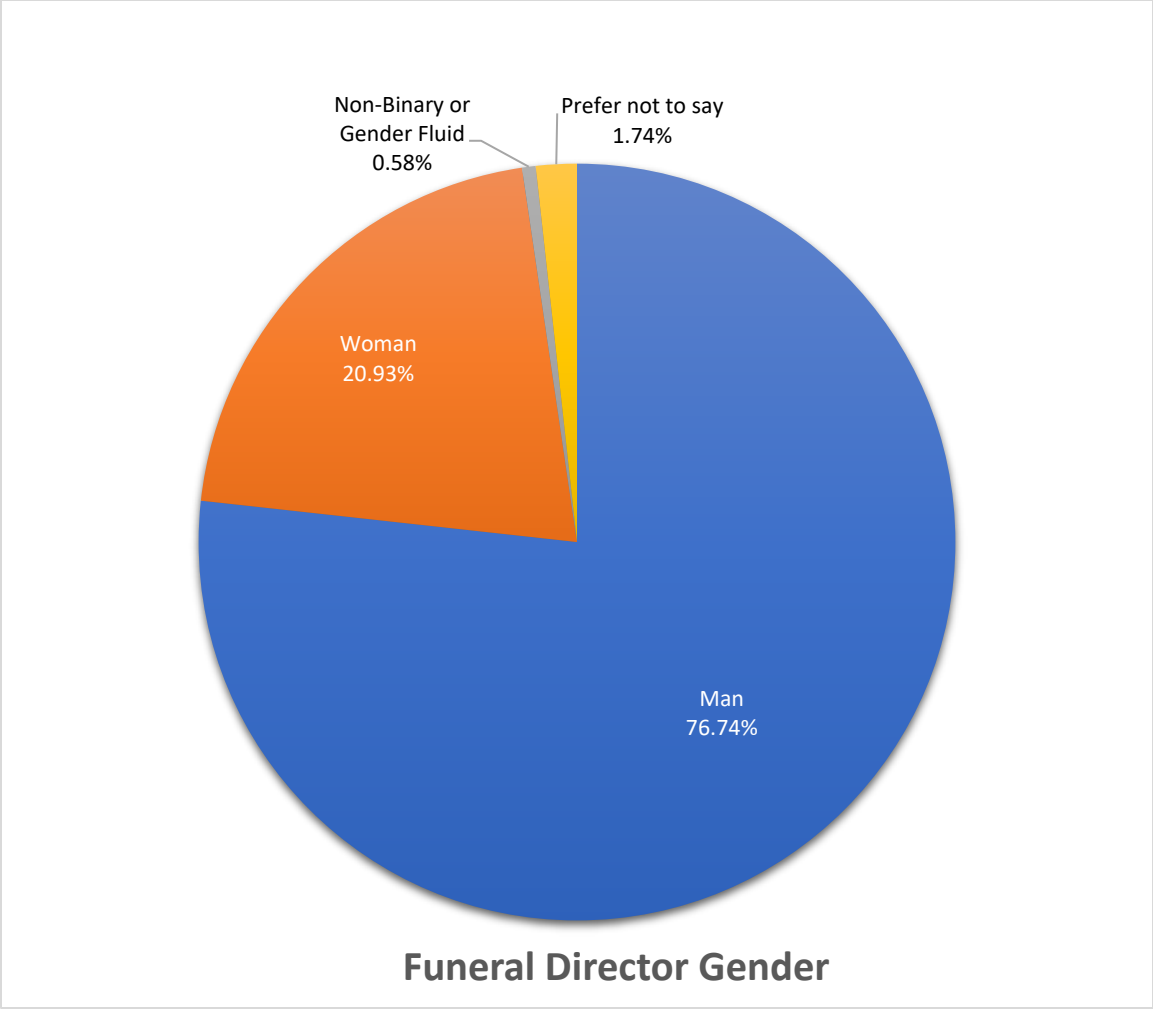

Figure 18: *Funeral director respondents' gender identity*

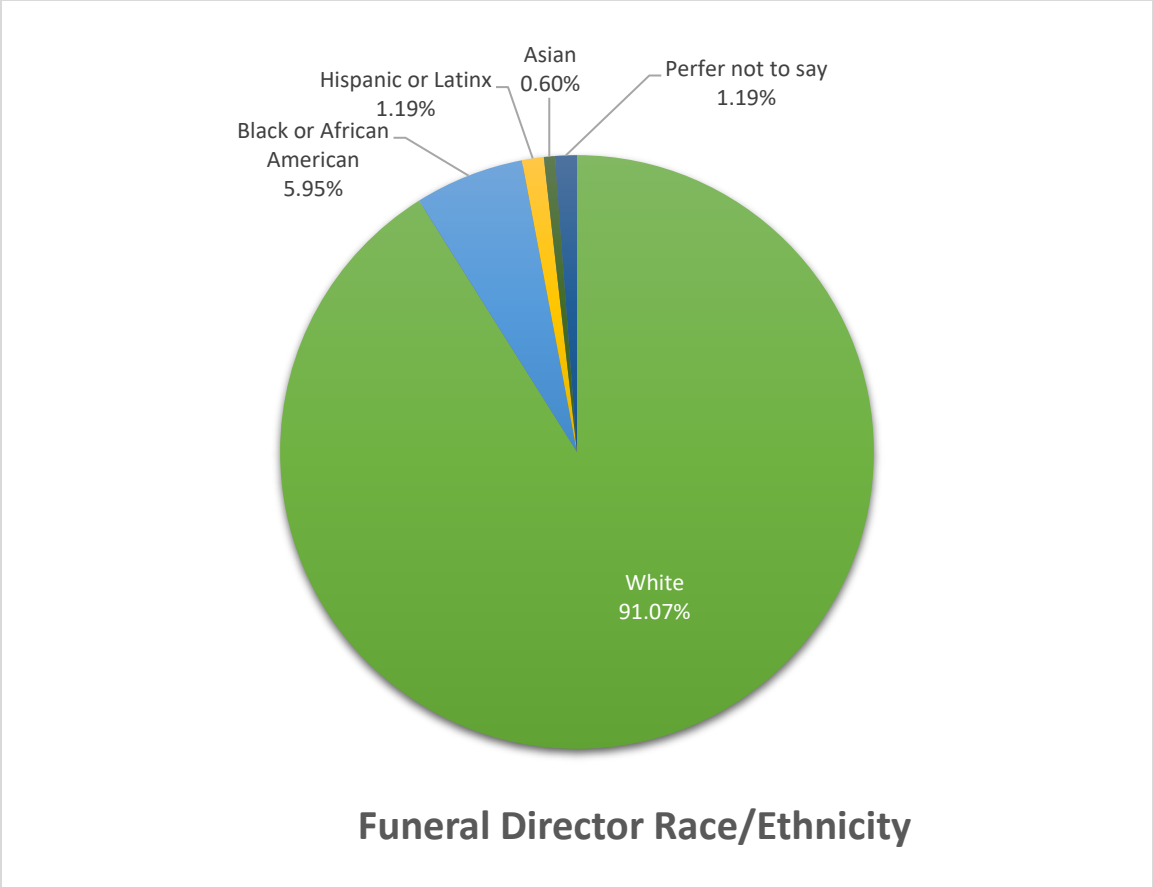

***Figure 19**: Funeral director respondents' race and ethnicity*

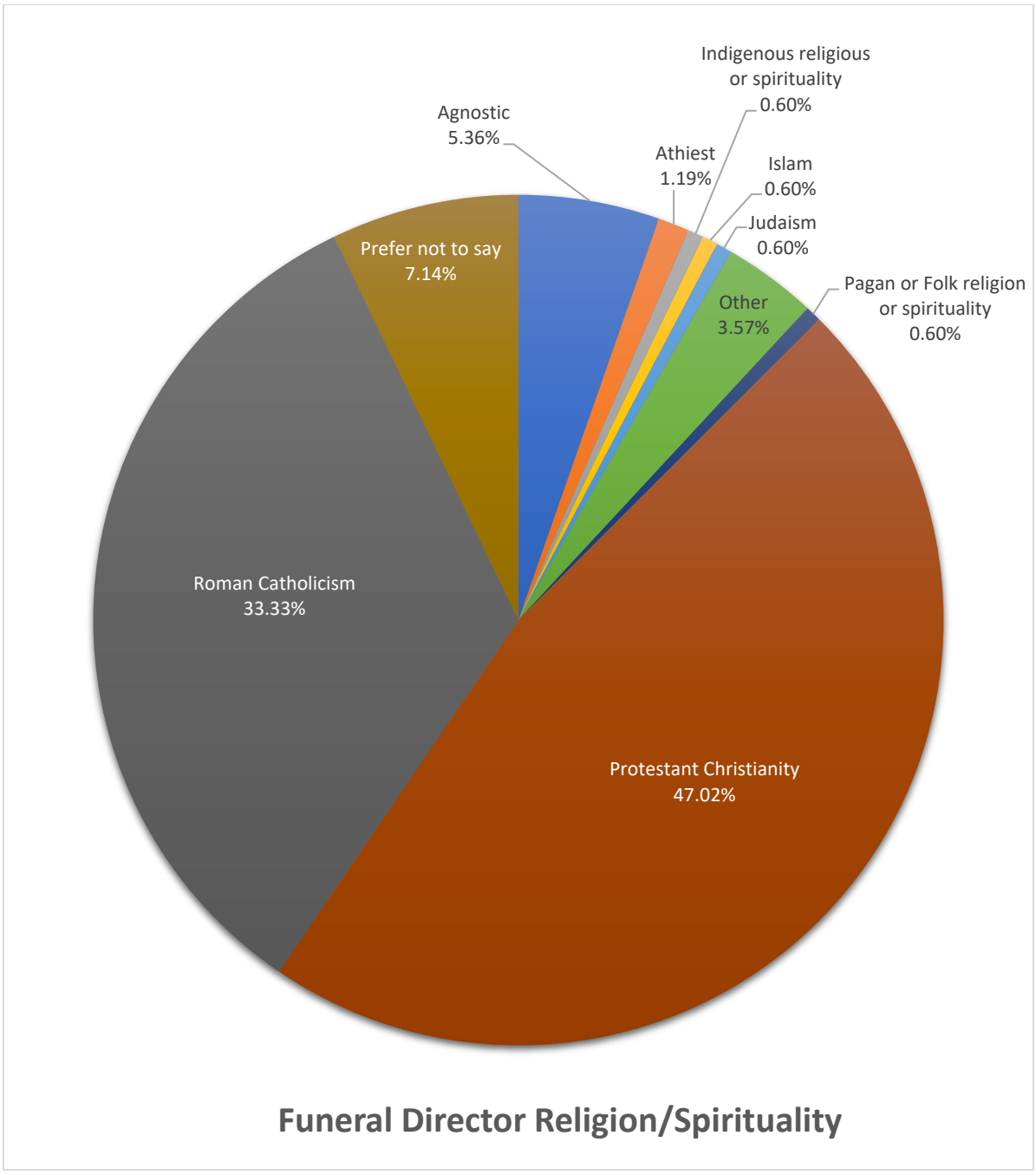

***Figure 20**: Funeral director respondents' religious and/or spiritual beliefs*

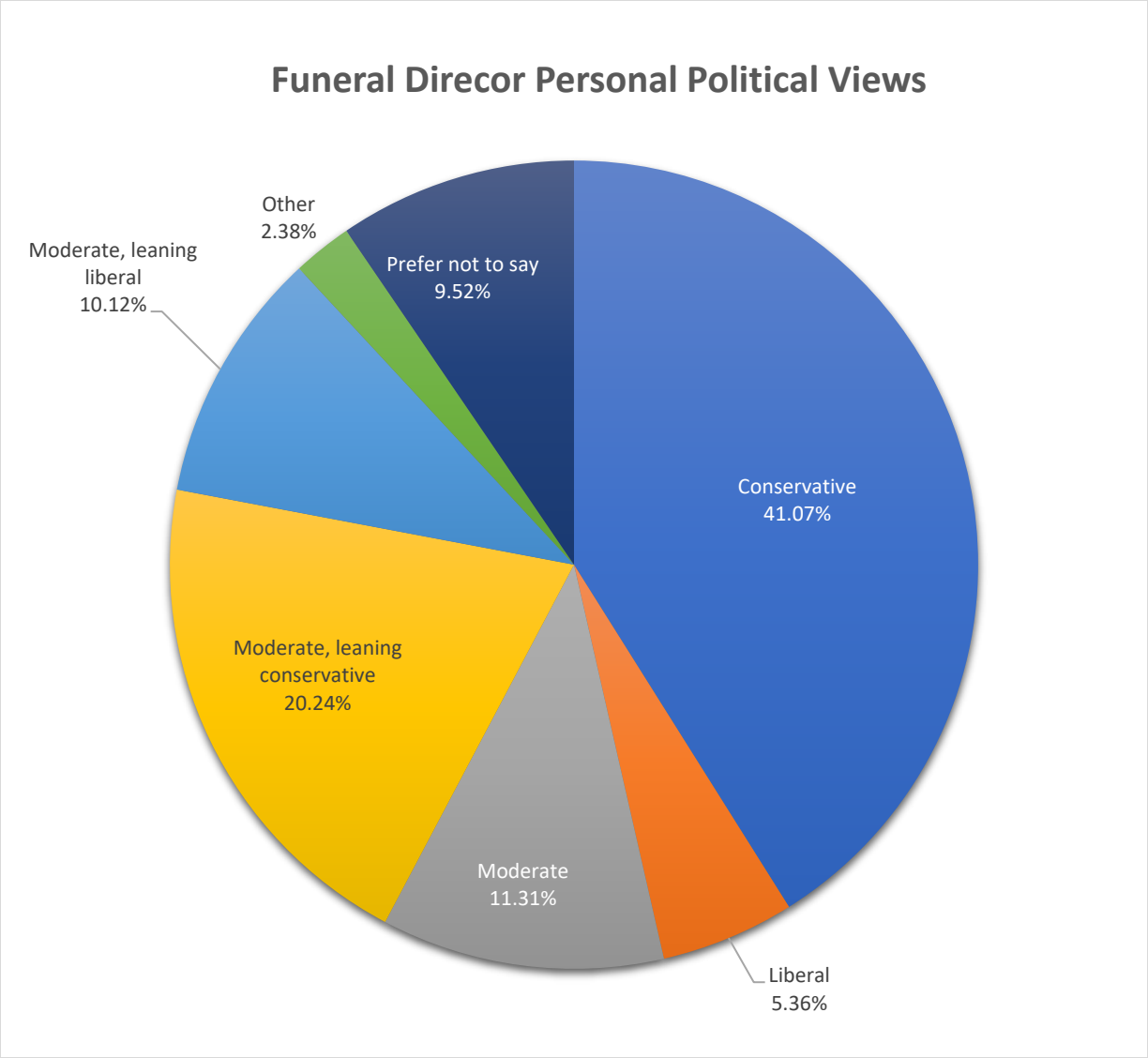

***Figure 21**: Funeral director respondents' personal political views*

I am particularly interested in how education plays a role in funeral directors' prepardness to provide green burial. Therefore, I also collected demographic data on level of education (Figure 23) and whether they attended a formal mortuary science program (Figure 24). According to Zippia, 48% of funeral directors have their Associate's Degree and 35% have their Bachelor's degree (Zippia, 2021). This pattern is consistent with what I found; 35% of

respondents have their Associate's Degree, 5% said they attended Trade/Technical/Vocational School, and 39% have their Bachelor's Degree. Most respondents (90%) reported that they went through a formal mortuary science program.

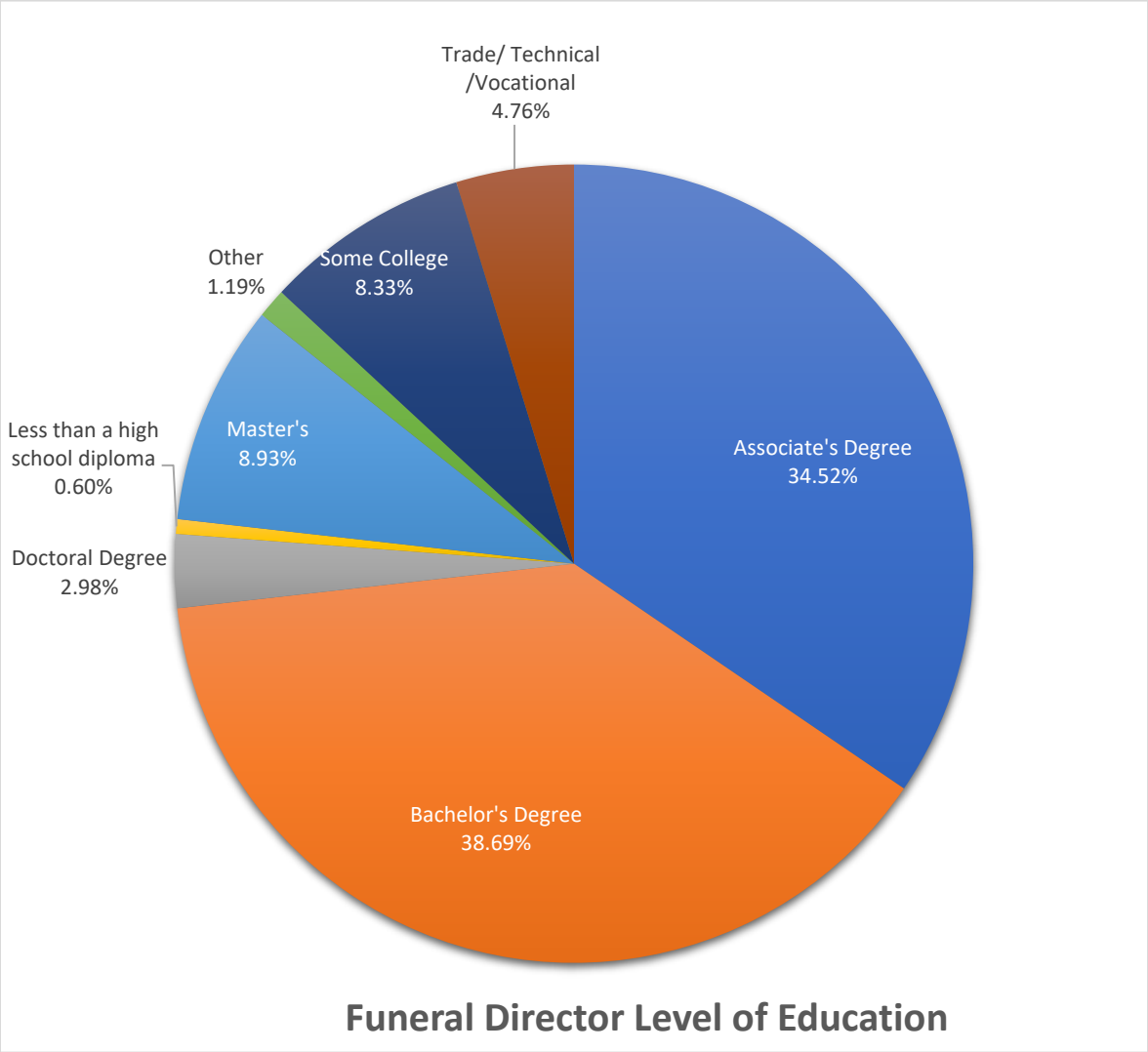

***Figure 22**: Funeral director respondents' level of education*

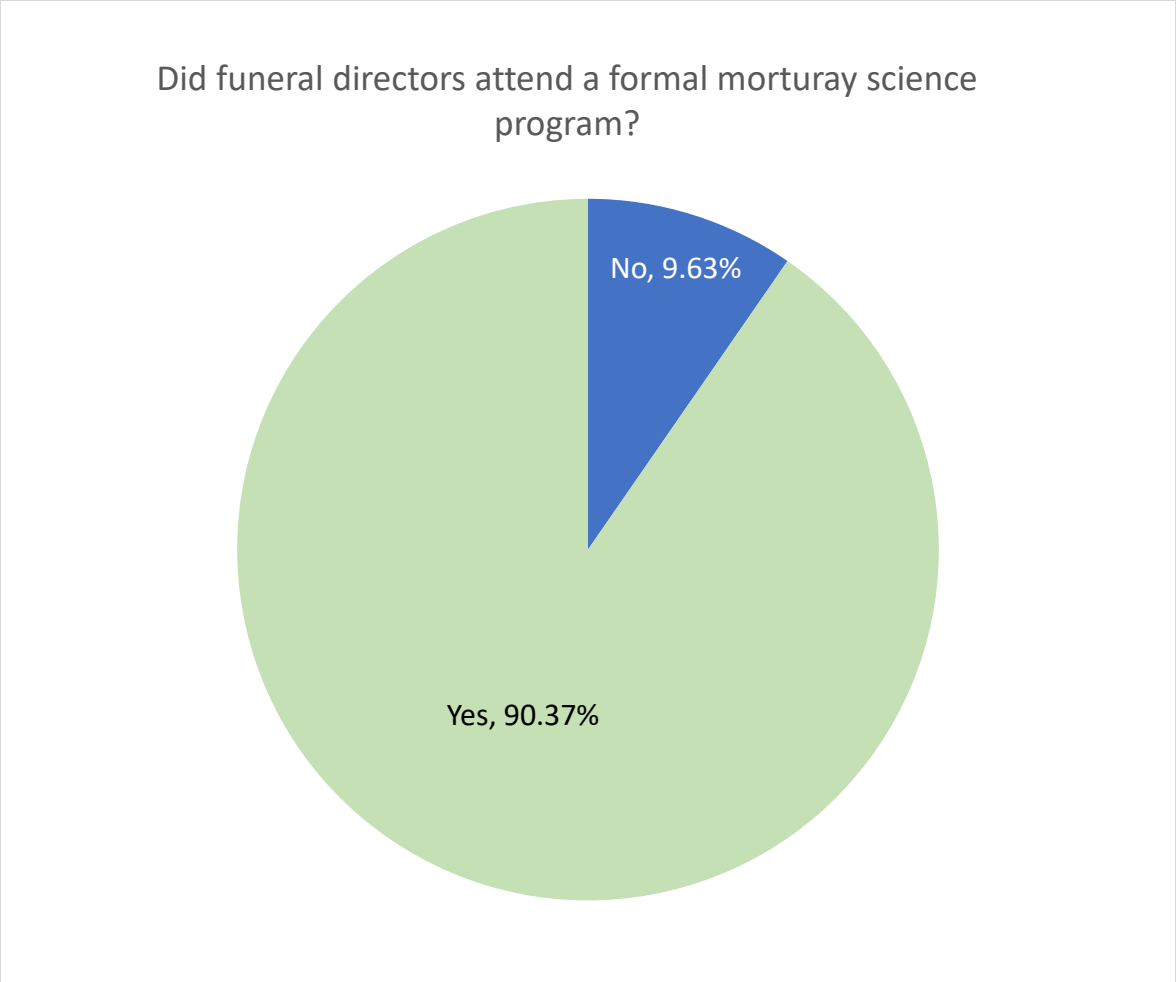

***Figure 23**: Percentage of funeral director respondents who attended a formal, accredited mortuary science program at a college, university, or trade school.*

The demographic data collected by the funeral director questionnaire is reflective of the national statistics reported by Zippia (2021).

5.2 Funeral Director Survey Results and Discussion

5.2.1 Quantitative Results

Likert scale questions were used to gauge funeral directors' agreement with a variety of statements about their education, knowledge about green burial, and beliefs about green burial's marketability in their firm. This question type was used to uncover and understand whether education or business beliefs are obstacles to green burial placemaking. For each statement, Tables 1 and 2 provide the percentage of respondents who strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree, or neither agree nor disagree.

Funeral Director preparedness to provide green burial

Funeral directors were asked if they are prepared to provide green burial if they were asked by a family to do so. The results indicate that most funeral directors would be prepared; 18% said they would probably be prepared and 62% said they would definitely be prepared. Only a combined 8% Said they would probably or definitely not be able to provide green burial if they were asked to do so. However, 12% say that they may or may not be able to provide green burial if asked (Figure 25).

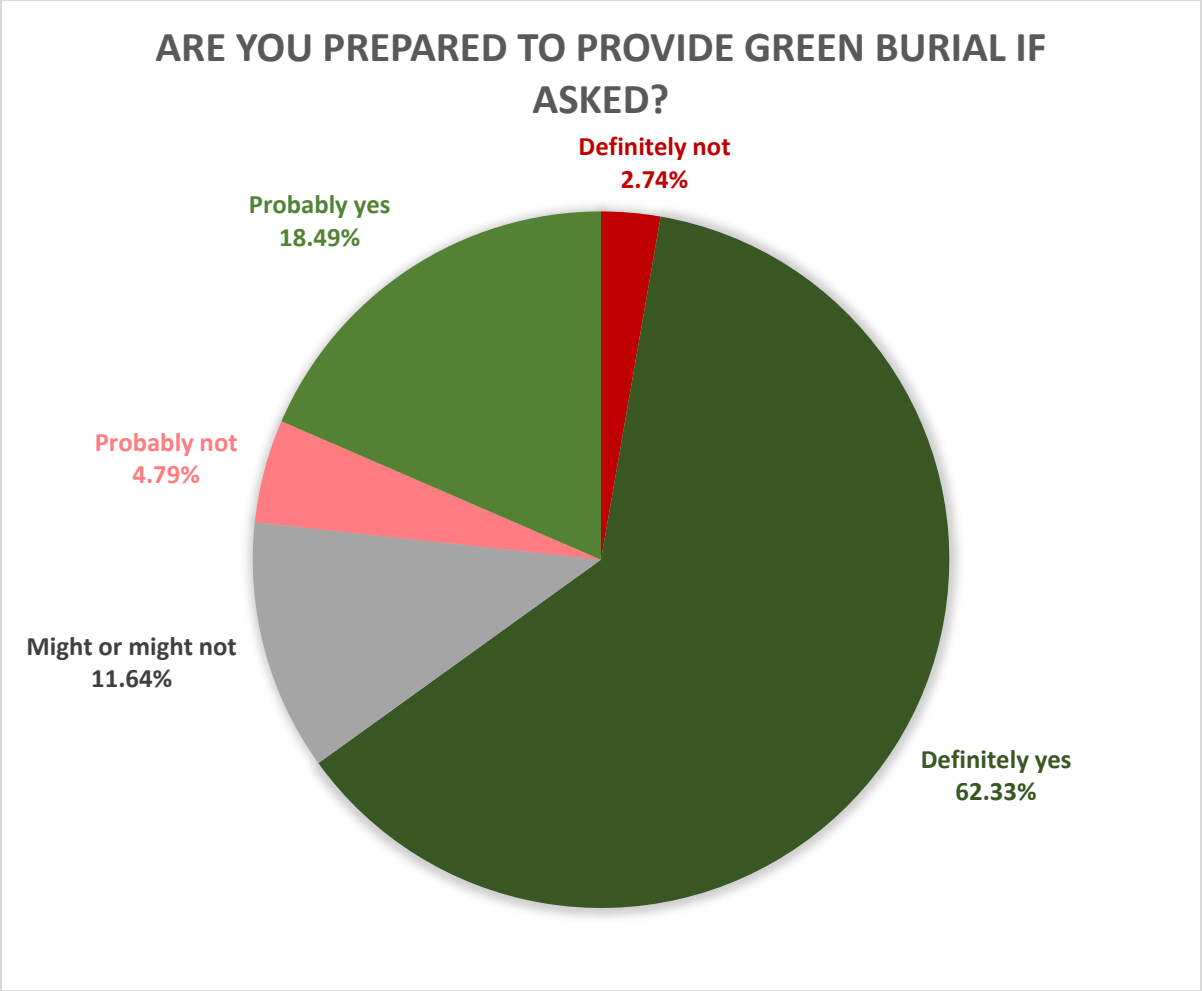

***Figure 24**: Funeral directors' preparedness to provide green burial for family if asked.*

Demographic questions revealed that most funeral directors attended a mortuary science program. Several questions were asked regarding education surrounding green burial, sustainable death care, and focus on embalming and reconstruction. Table 1 shows the percentage of funeral directors and their level of agreement with several statements. These percentages show that only 32.61% of respondents agreed that they learned about green burial to some degree in their mortuary science education. No one strongly disagreed to this statement, but 25% neither agreed nor disagreed and 25% left the question blank entirely. Similarly, only 27.38% agreed that their

mortuary science education prepared them to provide sustainable death care, broadly. Most respondents (66.07%) somewhat or strongly agreed that their mortuary science education was focused on embalming and reconstruction; very few (6.55%) disagreed with this statement to some degree.

After attending their formal mortuary science program at a college, university, or trade, school, more than half (58.34%) of funeral director respondents report having attended some sort of continuing education in order to learn more about green burial. Likewise, more than half (58.33%) say that they learned about sustainable death care on-the-job. Very few respondents (5.96%) disagree that on-the-job learning about sustainable death care is a part of their educational experience. Almost half (47.62%) of respondents say they would be interested in learning more about green burial, to some degree. Many respondents are also ambivalent; 26.19% neither agree nor disagree with the statement regarding interest in learning more about green burial and 14.88% left the question blank.

***Table 1**: Level of agreement about statements regarding sustainable death care, green burial, and formal mortuary science education.*

	Strongly Agree	**Somewhat Agree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Neither Agree nor Disagree**	**Blank**
I learned about green burial in mortuary science school	10.87%	21.74%	17.39%	0%	25.00%	25.00%
Education prepared me to provide sustainable death care	10.12%	17.26%	13.69%	24.40%	20.24%	14.29%

Education focused on embalming and reconstruction	32.74%	33.33%	3.57%	2.98%	12.50%	14.88%
I have attended continuing education to learn about green burial	32.74%	25.60%	4.17%	13.69%	9.52%	14.29%
I have learned about sustainable death care on the job	32.14%	26.19%	4.17%	1.79%	15.48%	20.24%
I am interested in learning more about green burial	21.43%%	26.19%	4.76%	6.55%	26.19%	14.88%

This data indicates that there are indeed funeral directors that have the knowledge and preparation to provide green burial and facilitate in green burial placemaking. However, there is still a question of marketability. Table 5.2 shows the percentage of funeral director respondents that agree with statements regarding the marketability and financial burden of providing green burial at their firm. Very few respondents strongly agree with any of the statements; instead the "neither agree nor disagree" choice received the most responses for every statement. This raises a question about whether funeral directors are uncertain about the marketability of green burial within their death care practice.

***Table 2**: Level of agreement about statements regarding marketability of green burial at their firm.*

	Strongly Agree	**Somewhat Agree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Neither Agree nor Disagree**	**Blank**
Families care about having sustainable death care options	5.36%	14.88%	22.02%	7.74%	31.55%	18.45%
I DO NOT think my families would be interested in green burial	4.76%	16.67%	23.81%	7.74%	27.98%	19.05%
Green burial is an affordable and sustainable option	8.33%	24.40%	13.69%	8.93%	25.60%	19.05%
Providing green burial is a financial burden for my firm	1.79%	6.55%	19.64%	22.62%	32.74%	16.67%

5.2.2 Qualitative results

In addition to the qualitative data that was collected, two open-ended questions were also included: “What are your thoughts on green (natural) burial?” and “Why do you (or don’t you) provide green (natural) burial?” (Appendix E). The following subsections present and discuss the predominant themes that emerged from the qualitative data that was collected and coded.

Funeral Directors are not asked to provide green burial

One of the most cited reasons why funeral directors do not provide green burial is that there is no demand for it; i.e. funeral directors are not asked to provide green burial. Thirty-three respondents (19.64% of total respondents) explicitly stated that there is "no demand for green burial," they have "not been asked to provide" green burial," "it isn't important to many families in my area," or a similar sentiment. However, of those thirty-three responses, thirteen respondents said that they would be willing to provide green burial if they were ever asked—the only problem is that they are never asked.

Having no perceptible market for green burial is an obstacle that funeral directors face and anticipate. According to the consumer survey results (presented fully in the following section 5.3 Consumer Survey Results), 30.27% of people would be somewhat likely to consider green burial for themselves after death and 37.2% would be extremely likely to consider green burial (Figure 26). The location of the respondents who said they would be somewhat likely or extremely likely to consider green burial for their body after death. There are respondents in almost every state, besides Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota that would are interested in green burial to some degree. This is not to say that this is proof of a reliable market for green burial in every state; intensive market research would be required to make further conjectures in that regard. But the data from this exploratory analysis indicates that such market analysis might be warranted before writing off green burial as not marketable.

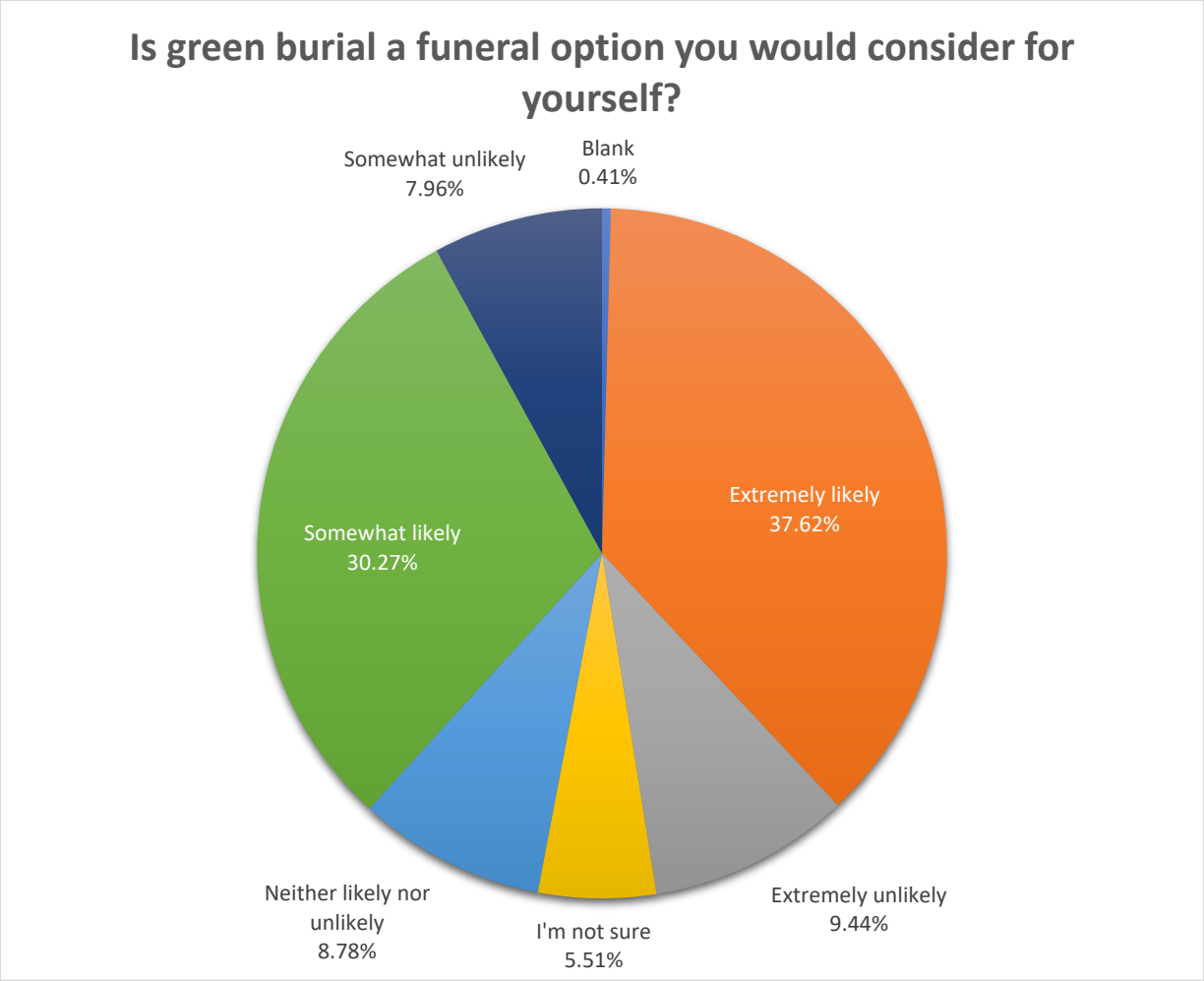

***Figure 25**: Consumer question: Is green burial a funeral option you would consider for yourself?*

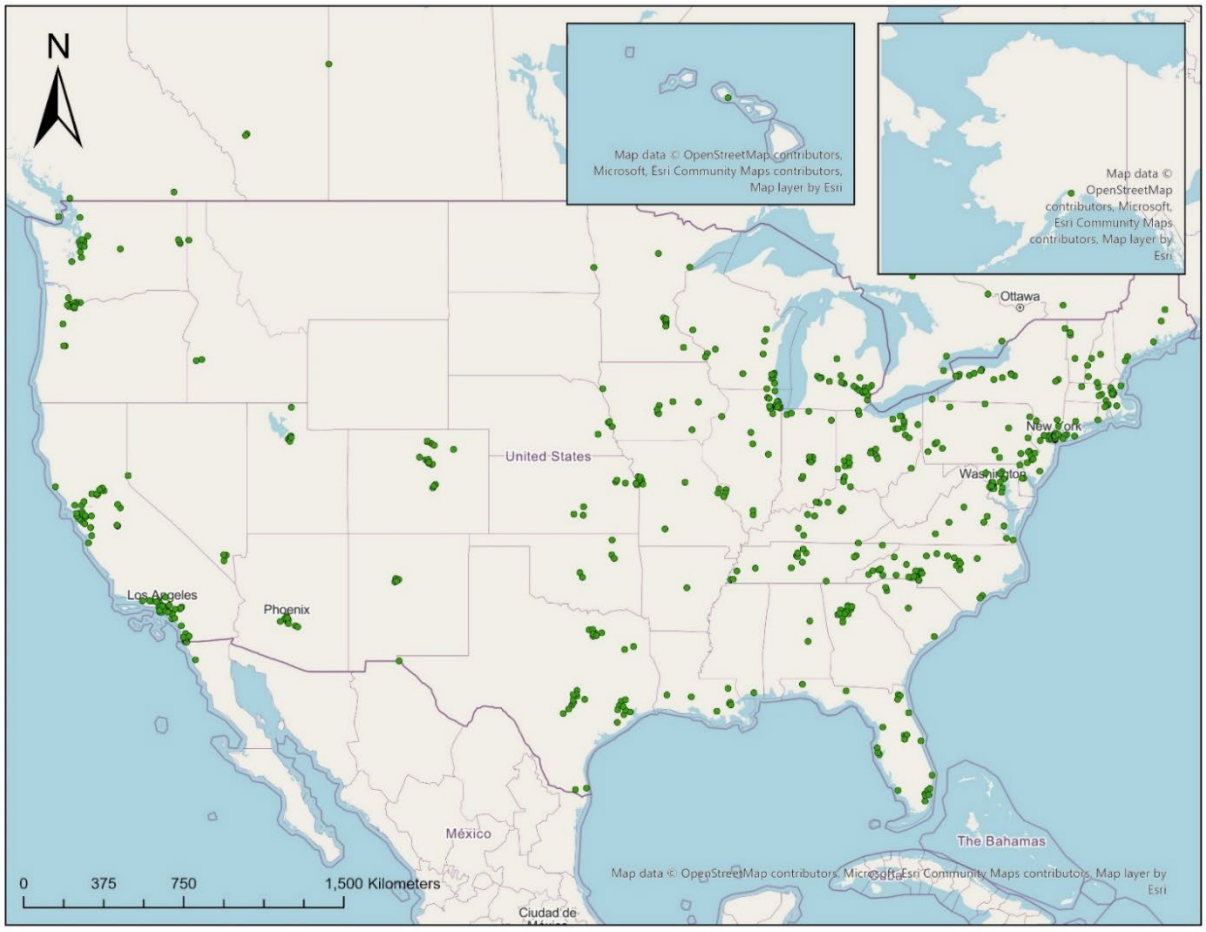

***Figure 26**: Location of consumers who say they would somewhat likely or extremely likely consider green burial for their body after death.*

The marketability of green burial is a different problem altogether from the fact that people simply are not asking funeral directors to provide a green burial. Thirteen respondents said in their free response something to the effect of "would provide them to families that want them, but [it is] not currently a huge demand." A few even said that they "love the idea" or "it's a nice idea," but they just have not been asked to do it. The division of funeral directors that would provide it if asked versus those that simply do not provide green burial because they have never asked inspires a new question about the role of funeral directors as educators. If it is something that they would be willing to provide, would that be enough to include it on their general price

list and mention it to every family that walks through their doors? Or do the families dictate what is included on the general price list by asking or not asking for particular services? Who is setting the standard for what services are offered—the funeral director or the families? What if the families are not totally educated on all of the death care options that are legal and viable? Are they responsible for learning their options before coming to the funeral home, or does the funeral director have the obligation to educate their clients on all their options?

An analogy for this situation is the role of doctors and nurses as educators in their field. Effective communication between doctors and patients is an active field of research, particularly during the era of telehealth visits during the COVID-19 pandemic (Aguirre et al., 2021; Gopichandran and Sakthivel, 2021; Kaul et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2021). Doctor-patient communication is vital for important health care decision making, such as whether to receive the COVID-19 vaccine despite patient preconceived ideas of COVID-19 susceptibility and vaccine side effects (Zheng et al., 2021). We would not expect patients to enter into the health care setting already knowing what type of treatment they want or need. Communication, education, and participation on both sides of the health care setting (patient and doctor) are required for positive outcomes (Mühlbacher and Juhnke, 2013; Smith et al., 2009).

The role of death care professionals as educators has been explored (Bi and Hammonds, 2021) but not as extensively as health care professionals as educators. In a constant comparative analysis, Bi and Hammonds (2021) found that funeral directors, in rural communities in particular, hold four social roles: professional, restorative artist, supporter, and educator (p. 375). The roles of professional and restorative artist refer to the business and craft that the funeral director leads and practices. As business professionals, the funeral director serves as an intermediary between the bereaved and technological innovators that create new funeral products

and services (van Ryn et al., 2019). In a form of gatekeeping, funeral directors are able to take advantage of the predominantly inexperienced funeral consumer. Therefore, "the intermediary power of funeral directors can make it difficult for innovators to reach markets and it is equally challenging for consumers to deploy technology in vernacular ways" (van Ryn et al., 2019 p.253). In this scenario, the funeral director has the power to choose what to educator their clients about, withholding technologies that they have not incorporated into their business model yet.

The role of supporter is described as benevolent; funeral directors are meant to be a source of comfort for grieving families and friends and provide "positive feedback" to the bereaved (Bi and Hammonds, 2021 p. 381-382). The positive feedback is meant to assure bereaved that their emotional response is valid, normal, and expected (Bi and Hammonds, 2021 p. 382). The educator role that funeral directors fill, according to Bi and Hammonds (2021), is focused exclusively on mentorship of funeral director students and apprentices, not the families that they serve. The communication between funeral director and families is, based on Bi and Hammonds' description, focused exclusively on the emotional health and well-being of the family. Without discounting the importance of the social role of comforter, I wonder if the role of educator can evolve to include the education of families on the entirety of legal death care options, regardless of the business outcomes.

Some recent research has been done to explore the diverse roles of death doulas, which may include educating and helping the dying to create advanced directives that spell out the dying's wishes for final care (Rawlings et al., 2018). However, this discussion warrants further research on funeral directors' acceptance of the role of educator for their families that use their services.

There are few to no cemeteries that allow green burial

A second major obstacle to green burial provision, indicated by both multiple choice and free response questionnaire questions, is that there are no cemeteries nearby to the respondents' funeral home that provides or allows green burial (Figure 28). More than 40% of respondents say that yes, there is a green burial cemetery nearby. But nearly 40% say no, there is not a green burial cemetery nearby. A combined 20.49% are either unsure or left the question blank. Table 3 illustrates this obstacle using quotes from respondents who say that there are few to no cemeteries within reasonable distance of their firm that their families could utilize as burial space.

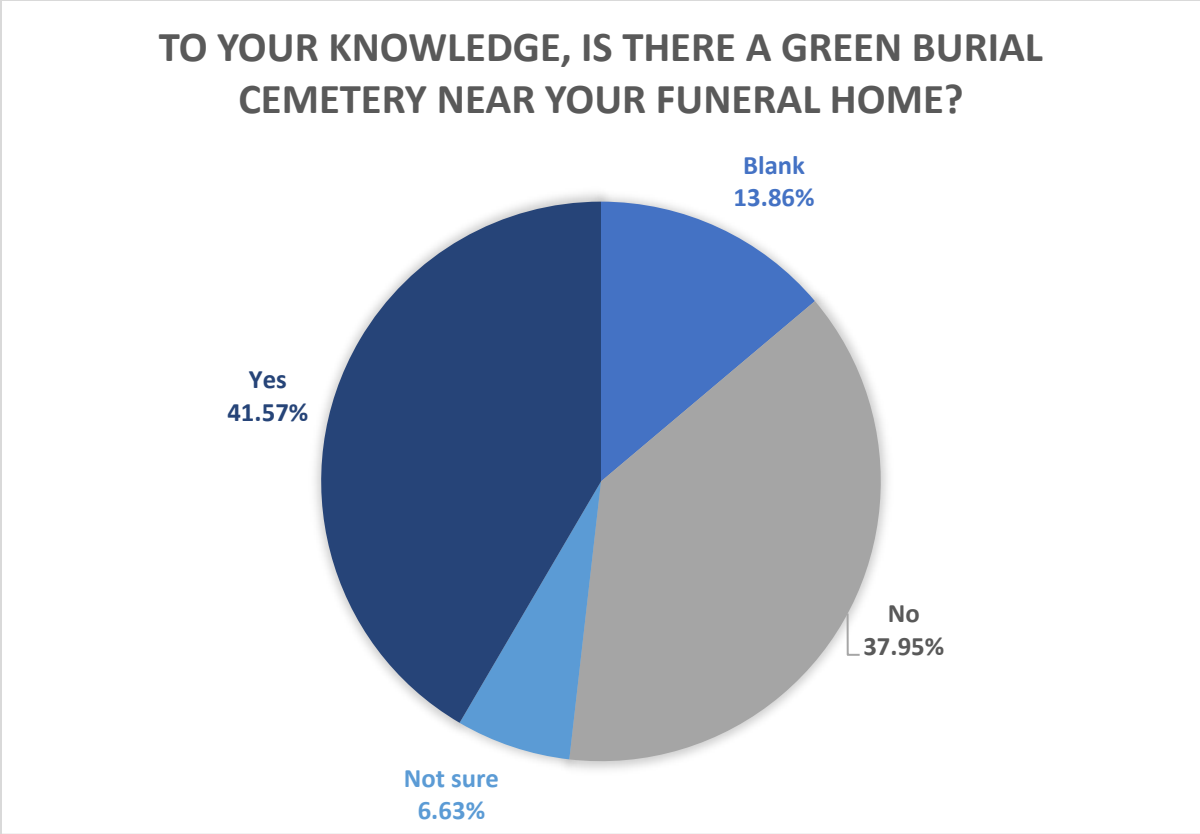

***Figure 27**: Funeral directors' awareness of whether there is a cemetery near their firm that provides green burial.*

***Table 3**: Quotes concerning distance to closest green burial cemetery. Taken from answers to free response questions.*

"It is a growing preference in our state, however there are few options for placement in traditional cemeteries. No actual green burial cemeteries established within our state."
"Very limited burial space options"
"we do offer but no green cemetery available within a 2 hour drive and therefore inconvenient to families we serve"
"Right now, the closest green cemetery is over 3 hours away so a family would only have the option"
"Our nearest cemetery is 90 miles and the next closet is 120 miles"

"I would have no problem offering those services, but the cemeteries (as of now) do not offer those options… We have no cemeteries in the immediate area that we could use for green burials."
"There is not a green burial space anywhere close to me. Most families that request burial prefer to have their loved ones placed near them not hundreds of miles away."
"No cemeteries near my funeral home accept green burial, all require a burial vault."
"I would gladly provide them if there were cemeteries in my area which would allow them. I would be in favor of asking my cemeteries to allow the body to be placed in the grave and then have a concrete liner turned upside down to cover the body. That way, the body would decompose to the earth, yet the cemetery could be maintained in a traditional way."
"We do not have any local cemeteries that offer green burial sites, closest to us is over 30 miles away - not convenient for our families."

To analyze and discuss this problem further, I conducted a network analysis in ArcGIS Pro, using the approximate locations of the respondents who said there are no green burial cemeteries nearby (or they are unsure) and the location of Green Burial Council certified cemeteries (Figure 29). Using the Closest Facility tool in ArcGIS Pro, driving routes were created from funeral director to cemetery location. The average distance between funeral director and green cemetery is 183.53 km and the maximum distance is 627.84 km. The minimum distance is only 7.38 km. This is clear instance of irony; the funeral director reports that no, there is no green burial cemetery nearby, when in fact, there is a GBC-certified cemetery right in the same city of Springfield, Il (Figure 30). What made this instance of irony possible? A lack of communication? A division in death care practice between cemeterians and funeral directors? Or general ignorance? Regardless of how this instance of irony originated, the perception and anticipation of no nearby cemeteries and the actual reality of long distances between funeral homes and green burial cemeteries are both obstacles to green burial place-making.

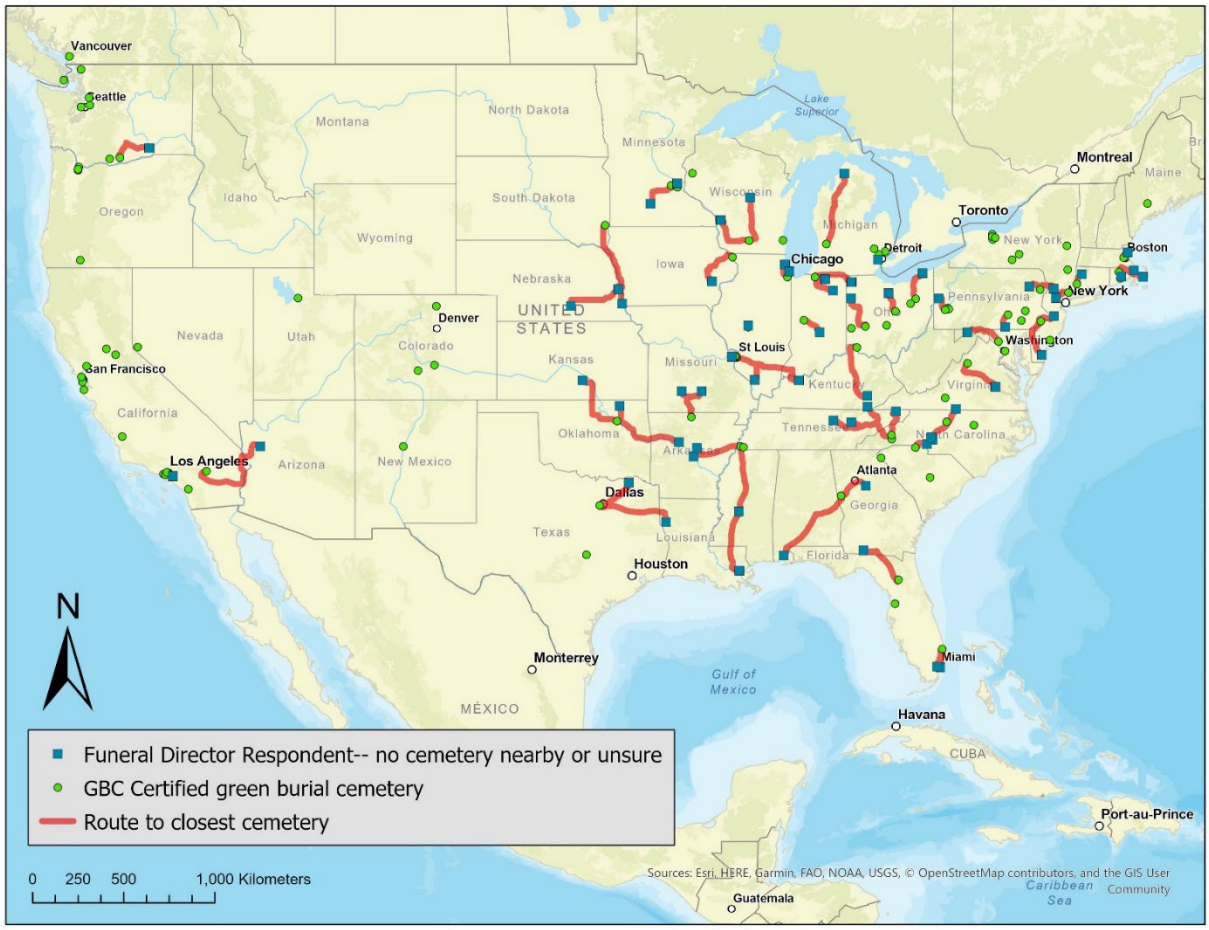

Figure 28: *Closest facility network analysis of funeral directors who say that there are no nearby cemeteries (or they are unsure) and the closest GBC-certified cemetery.*

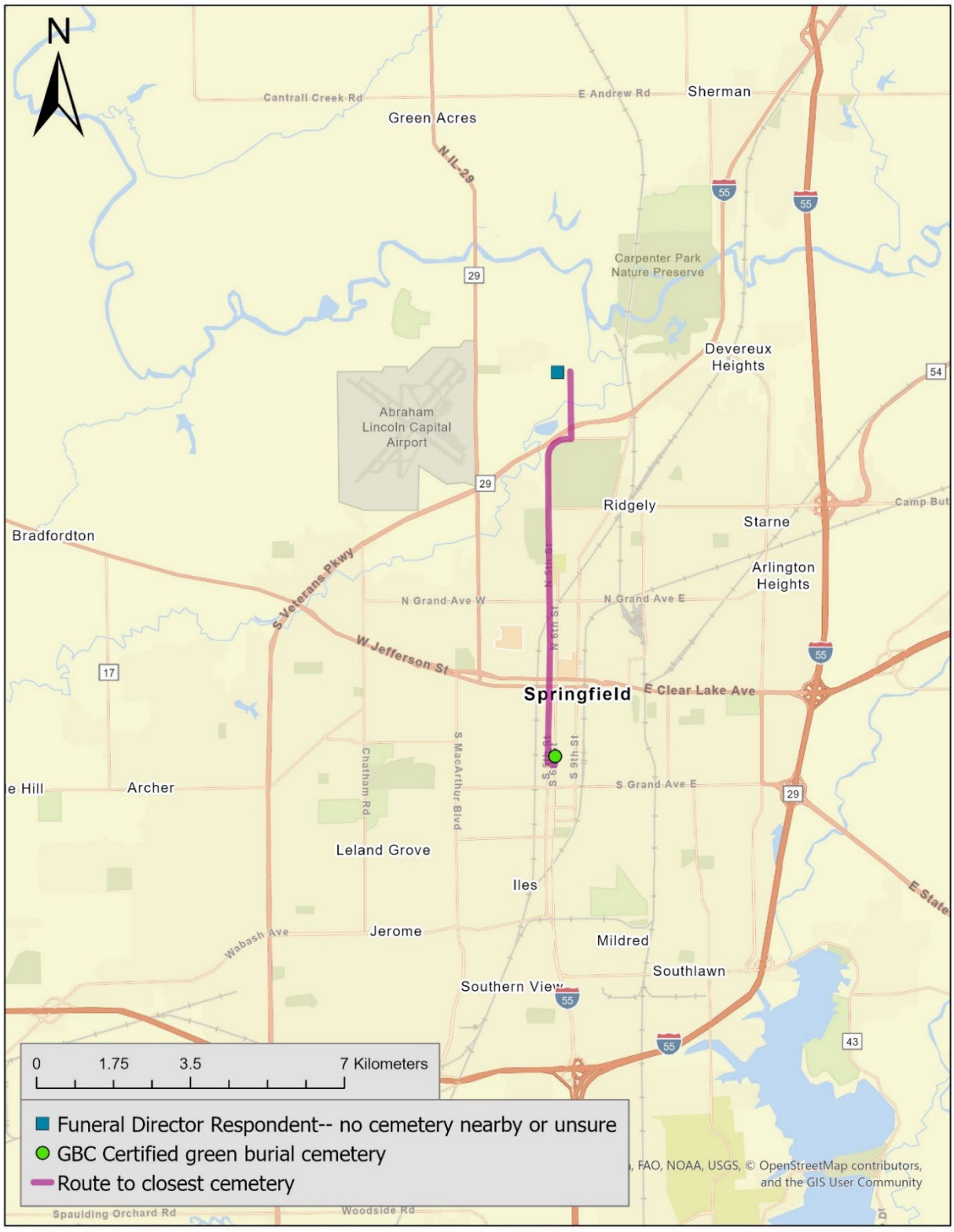

***Figure 29**: An instance of irony in Springfield, Il.*

Green burial is cost prohibitive to clients

The third obstacle that funeral directors experience in green burial placemaking is that, from their perspective, green burial is expensive for families and families that are concerned about cost typically choose cremation instead. Table 4 highlights some of the comments that funeral directors made about cost of green burial. Many of the comments put the blame of the high cost on the green burial cemeteries by making statements such as "green cemeteries are way too expensive to use," "the cost of green cemetery space often exceeds the cost of our funeral services," and "green cemetery spaces are much more expensive than traditional even though a vault isn't used."

***Table 4**: Quotes from funeral directors regarding the cost of green burial.*

"The problem is the new green burial cemeteries are expensive—much more than a traditional cemetery"
"People do not realize that it is the service that costs not the merchandise…the same amount of care and concern goes into green burial as does a traditional. Washing and bathing costs is [sic] very close to the cost of embalming"
"In our area, green burial in a green burial cemetery is more expensive than a traditional casket burial… we do not push green burials because of the expense."
"Green cemeteries in my area are WAY TOO EXPENSIVE to use!... Green cemeteries in my area have made it so expensive that the ultimate cost to the consumer is WAY more expensive."
"Few cemeteries offer "green" burial sites. The expense is higher than a modest traditional earth burial. Cremation is a less costly final disposition and it does not consume land that can never be used again."

“It is often more expensive that regular burial.”
“I think that green burials are a good disposition option for most people but the cost and convenience of cremation is hard to match”
“One costs $2000 for the plot alone.”
“Green burial using a green cemetery is much more green but it is more expensive. One reason is green cemetery grave spaces are much more expensive than traditional even though a vault isn't used. Green burial is a personalized service for those who want to pay for it. Most people are more concerned about cost.”
“The cost of Green cemetery space far exceeds the cost of our funeral services.”
“My reading on the subject reveals it can be expensive once you find a natural burial cemetery.”
“I would be happy to help a family plan a green burial, but it is out of the price range for most whom I serve.”

To understand this phenomenon, I did a cost comparison of contemporary burials, cremations, and green burials. Table 5 presents the average costs of funeral service items, according to the NFDA and Everplans. Three totals are italicized in Table 5: The first total is the median cost of a funeral and viewing, without considering any fees from the cemetery. This average comes out to just under $8,000, which is on par with the $7,000 to $9,000 average funeral cost in 2021 that Martin (2022) reported in Choice Mutual. Including the fees associated with contemporary burials, which of course differ based on location and whether the cemetery is privately owned, the average funeral and contemporary burial cost reaches $15,000. Again, this is estimation based on data from the NFDA and Everplans is confirmed by Martin (2022).

The third total that is presented in Table 5 is the cost of all of the funeral services without any of the contemporary-burial associated fees, highlighted in orange. Only including the body

preparation services (minus embalming), viewing, and funeral ceremony-related fees, the total cost is just approximately $4,223.

Table 5: *A breakdown of contemporary funeral costs; adapted from 2021 NFDA general price list study (NFDA, 2021) and Everplans cemetery price breakdown (Everplans, 2022). Items highlighted in orange are not included in the final total—funeral costs without vault, embalming, metal casket or contemporary cemetery fees.*

Item	**Cost in 2021**
Nondeclinable basic services fee	$2,300
Removal/transfer of remains to funeral home	$350
Embalming	$775
Other preparation of the body	$275
Use of facilities/staff for viewing	$450
Use of facilities/staff for funeral ceremony	$515
Hearse	$350
Service car/van	$150
Printed materials (basic memorial package)	$183
Metal burial casket	$2,500
1) Median Cost of a Funeral with Viewing	***$7,848***
Vault	$1,572

Cemetery plot	$1,000 to $2,000
Opening and closing fees	$1,000 to $1,500
Headstone or gravemarker	$500 to $4,000
Installation of headstone or gravemarker	$450 to $850
2) Total with vault and contemporary burial	***$15,070***
3) Total without vault, embalming, and metal burial casket, and cemetery costs (plot, opening/closing/ headstone)	***$4,223***

Next, because funeral directors claim that cremation is the most convenient for economically-minded families, Table 6 summarizes the average costs of cremation in the US. Table 5.6 was also adapted from the NFDA general price list study, conducted in 2021. The first total, highlighted in the second to last row of the table is the average cost of a funeral and cremation. The total comes out to approximately $6,970, consistent with the average cost reported by Martin (2022). If someone were to want a funeral service without embalming, cremation, or the cremation urn (highlighted in orange in Table 6), the cost would be $5,533. The only difference between this total and total number three in Table 5 is the additional purchase of a cremation casket, which is very similar in cost to biodegradable burial container for green burial—about $1,500 according to the NFDA (NFDA, 2021).

Table 6: *Average cost of service items for a funeral with cremation; adapted from NFDA general price list study (NFDA, 2021). The items highlighted in orange are not included in the final cost of a funeral without the actual cremation.*

Item	**Cost in 2021**
Nondeclinable basic services fee	$2,300
Removal/transfer of remains to funeral home	$350
Embalming	$775
Other preparation of the body	$275
Use of facilities/staff for viewing	$450
Use of facilities/staff for funeral ceremony	$515
Service car/van	$150
Printed materials (basic memorial package)	$183
Cremation fee (if firm uses a third-party)*	$368
Cremation casket	$1,310
Urn	$295
1) Total Cost of a Funeral with Viewing and Cremation	**$6,970**
2) Total cost of cremation without cremation fee and urn	**$5,533**

Finally, Table 7 presents the average costs associated with items necessary for a green burial. Green burial costs are adapted from Wight (2022), the NFDA, and Everplans. Two estimated totals are included here in Table 7. First is the average cost of a funeral and green burial without the help of a funeral home. This cost, approximately $4,250, does not include any funeral home services, highlighted in orange. The second total is the average cost of a green burial and funeral with the help of a funeral home, which comes out to a little over $8,000.

***Table** 7: Average cost of green burial; adapted from NFDA, Everplans, and Wight (2022).*

Item	Cost
Permit	$10 to $40
Plot	$1,000 to $4,000
Biodegradable burial container	$1500
Service (pay for honorarium or minister)	$150 to $300
Non-declinable basic service fee	$2,300
Removal/transfer of remains to funeral home	$350
Use of facilities/staff for viewing	$450
Use of facilities/staff for funeral ceremony	$515

Service car/van	$150
Printed materials (basic memorial package)	$183
Average cost of a green burial WITHOUT using a funeral home	***$4,250***
Average cost of a green burial WITH the help of a funeral home for basic services	***$8,198***

Although there are always exceptions and extra costs associated with personalization of a funeral and burial service, the average cost of a green burial and funeral, with the assistance of a funeral home, is significantly less than a funeral and contemporary burial and marginally more than a cremation. Without the use of a funeral home, the average cost of a green burial is significantly less than both a contemporary burial and a cremation. However, there may be extra associated costs with having a home funeral, such as hiring a death doula to help shroud and prepare the body, and the cost of dry ice to keep the body cool before burial.

Overall, there is little evidence that there are extremely high-cost associations that some funeral directors have pointed out. The consumer may pay slightly more in cemetery fees for a green burial, such as endowment fund contributions or fees to aid with habitat conservation and restoration. But on the side of the funeral home, there are still opportunities to charge for service similar to those charged for cremation. What the funeral home misses out on with green burial is the opportunity to charge for services such as embalming, metal caskets, and burial vaults.

The argument that funeral homes do not provide green burial to their families because it is so expensive came as a surprise to me, based on what academic and journalistic literature says about the tendency of funeral directors to exploit consumers who are "thought to be especially vulnerable in funeral markets" (Harrington, 2007 p.202). Although there is debate about the level of vulnerability that consumers face when making funeral purchases (Harrington, 2007 p.203), funeral homes are currently regulated by the Funeral Industry Rule, created by the US Federal Trade Commission (Kopp and Kemp, 2007 p.4). Generally, the rule prohibits exploitative practices such as charging families for services under the guide that the service is legally required, even when it is not (Kopp and Kemp, 2007 p.4). But the rule also states that consumers "have the right to choose the funeral goods and services they want" (Kopp and Kemp, 2007 p.4). Considering that funeral directors have historically not had a problem selling expensive services to their consumers (Mitford, 1998), why should selling an expensive green burial be any different? Could it be that the expense of a green burial is paid to the cemetery rather than to the funeral home? These questions warrant further investigation in future research, but it is clear that there is a disjointed reality between the anticipated obstacles that the funeral directors are facing and the consumer's expense.

5.3 Consumer Survey Respondents

The consumer survey yielded 1,959 responses from people from diverse backgrounds. The following subsection presents the demographics of the survey respondents to provide a context for further analysis and interpretation of the results in section 5.4: Consumer Survey Results and Discussion.

5.3.1 Demographics

The average respondent falls into the 26-35 year old category, which is also the category with the highest number of respondents (827) (Figure 31). Next is the 18-25 year old category (347), followed closely by the 46-60 year old category (283). Unfortunately, there were only 65 respondents who were over the age of 60. It would be expected that those that are of retirement age may have already thought about their funeral plans or have already established a pre-need at a local funeral home. An AARP study conducted in 2007 found that 23% of their respondents, all over 50, had prepaid any part of their funeral expenses for themselves or others (Choi-Allum, 2007). This was decrease from a previous AARP study in 1998; it could be hypothesized that fewer and fewer adults over 50 are prepaying or setting up a pre-need account with a funeral home (Choi-Allum, 2007).

Most of the respondents were women (70.08%) (Figure 32). Men only accounted for just over a quarter of the respondents, but there were also non-binary, gender fluid, and agender people who responded as well. Although it would be hugely beneficial to a greater number of non-cisgender respondents, the small amount of diversity is appreciated.

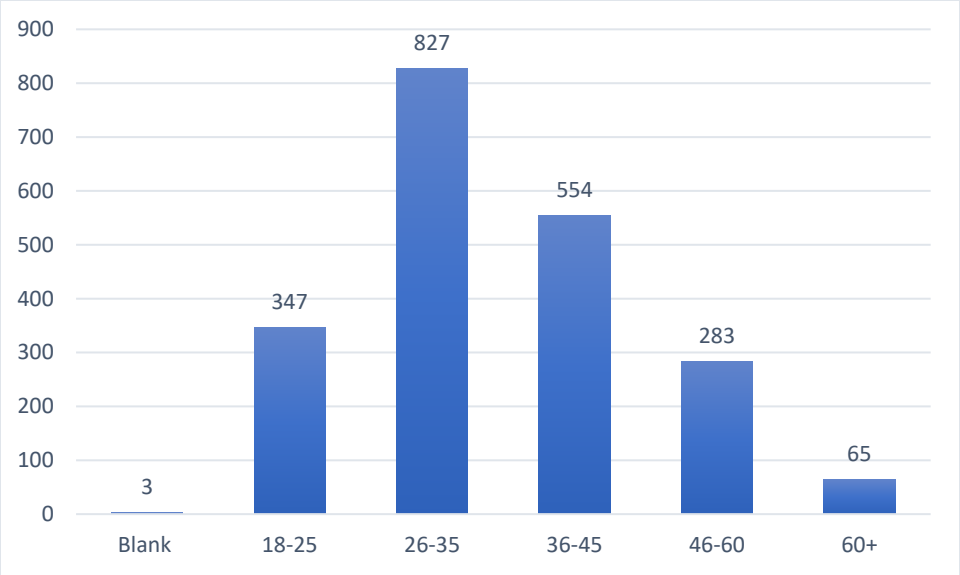

***Figure 30**: Consumer survey respondents' age*

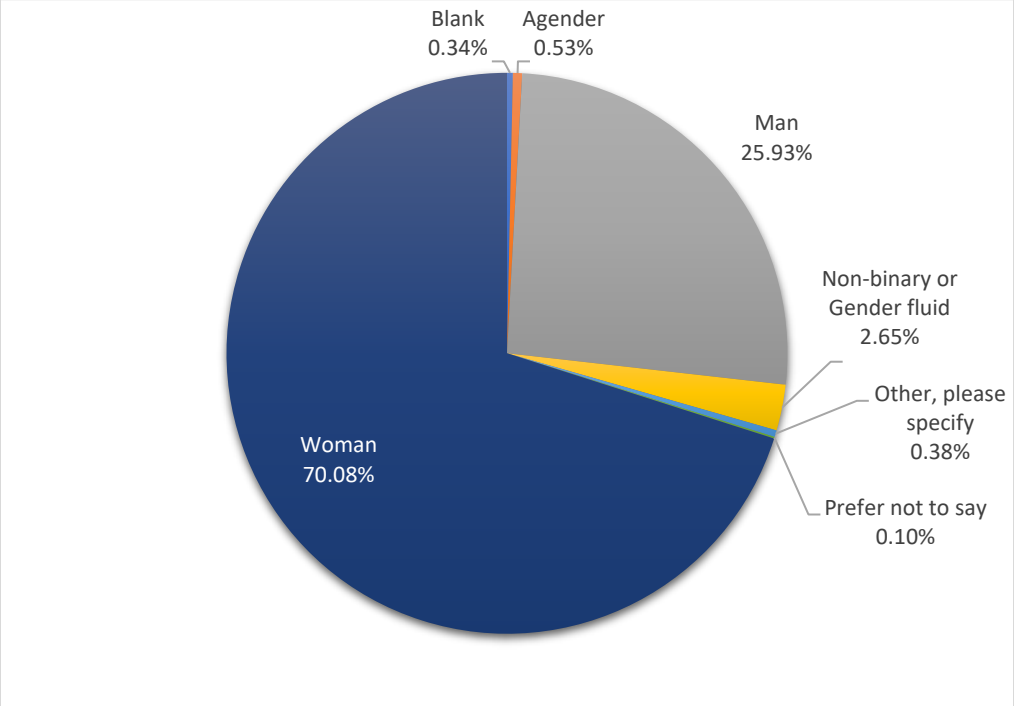

***Figure 31:** Consumer survey respondents' gender*

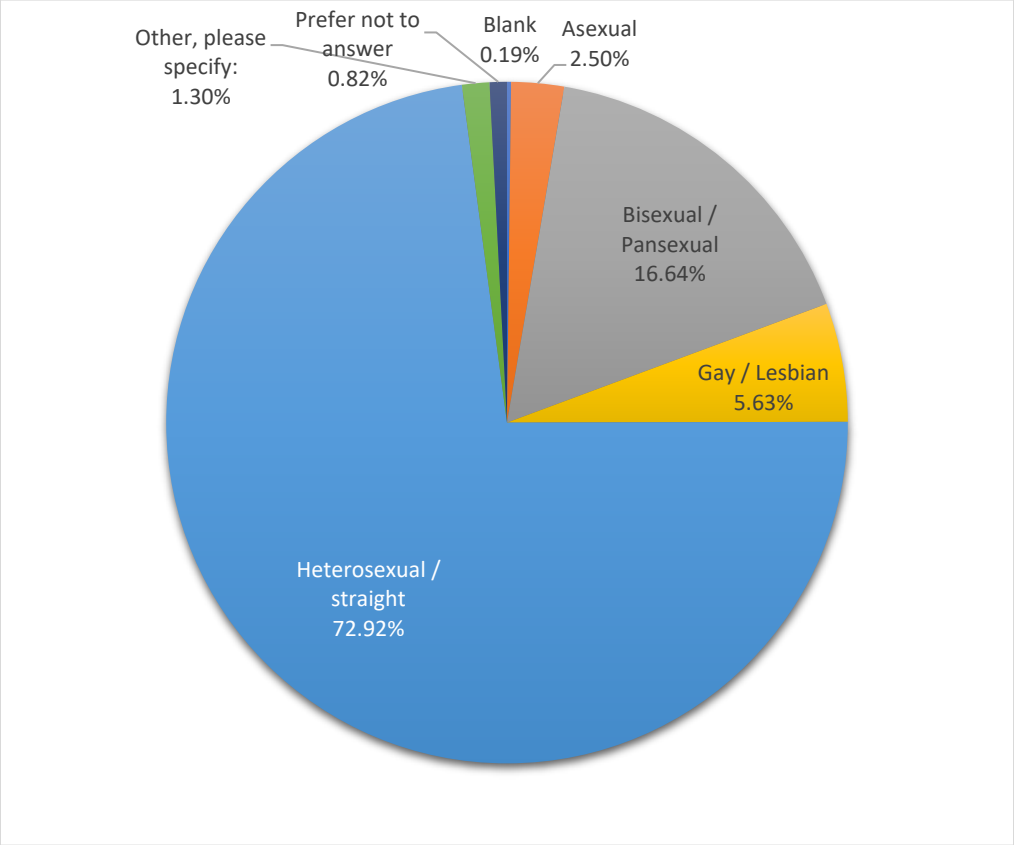

***Figure 32**: Consumer survey respondents' sexual orientation*

Gender and sexuality bias and discrimination is no stranger to health care research; Bali et al. (2020) calls for diverse and gender-inclusive decision-making in the health care field, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bali et al. (2020) found that "existing lack of diversity and gender representation in decision-making means perspectives of some of the most vulnerable communities are left out" (Bali et al., 2020 p.1). Like health care, death care requires sensitivity surrounding both gender and sexuality. More input from non-cisgender or heterosexual individuals could broaden our understanding of how LGBTQIA+ individuals experience death care decision-making and grieving. In a study on aging LBGTQIA+ people,

Greene et al. (2016) found that LBGTQ individuals experience stressors that are unique to the LGBTQ experience as they age, such as body shame and lacking self-compassion (Greene et al., 2016 p.191-193). How these stressors, or general life experiences and perspectives might influence death care decision-making is an important question for further research in an effort to make death care, like health care, more inclusive.

Most respondents either have a bachelor's degree, graduate degree, or some amount of college (Figure 34). Although the influence of education on death care decision-making was not explored in this dissertation research, it would be beneficial to explore the relationship in the future.

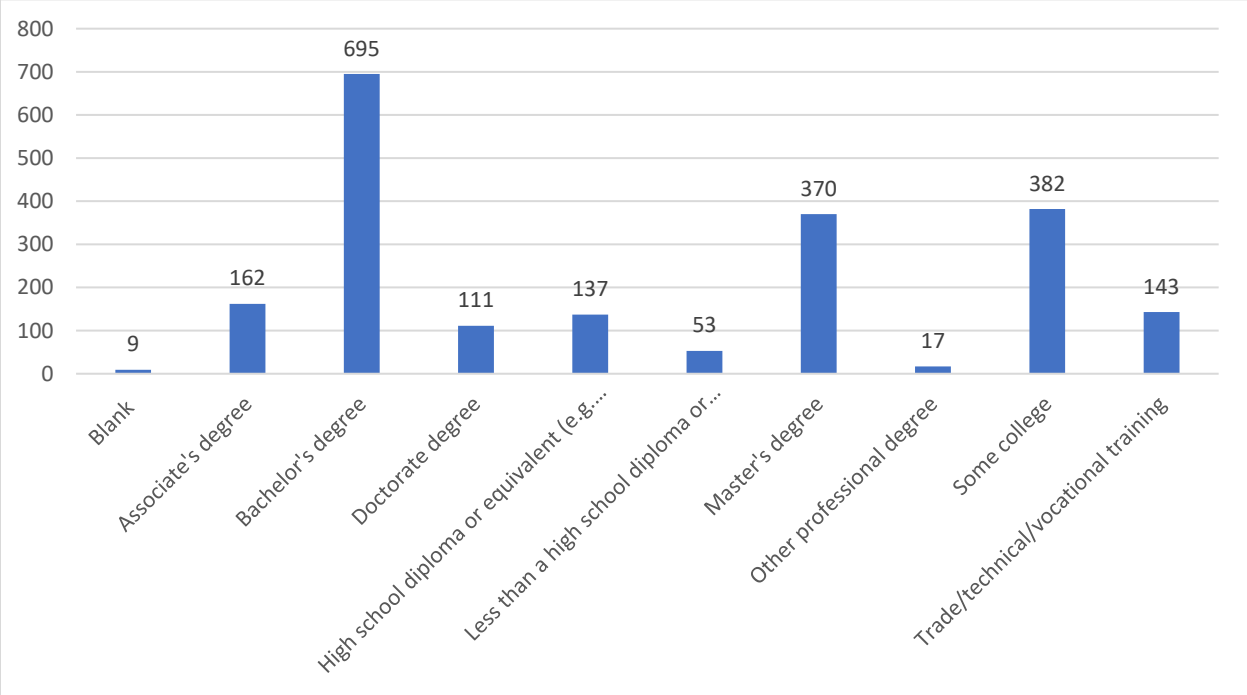

Figure 33: *Consumer survey respondents' level of education*

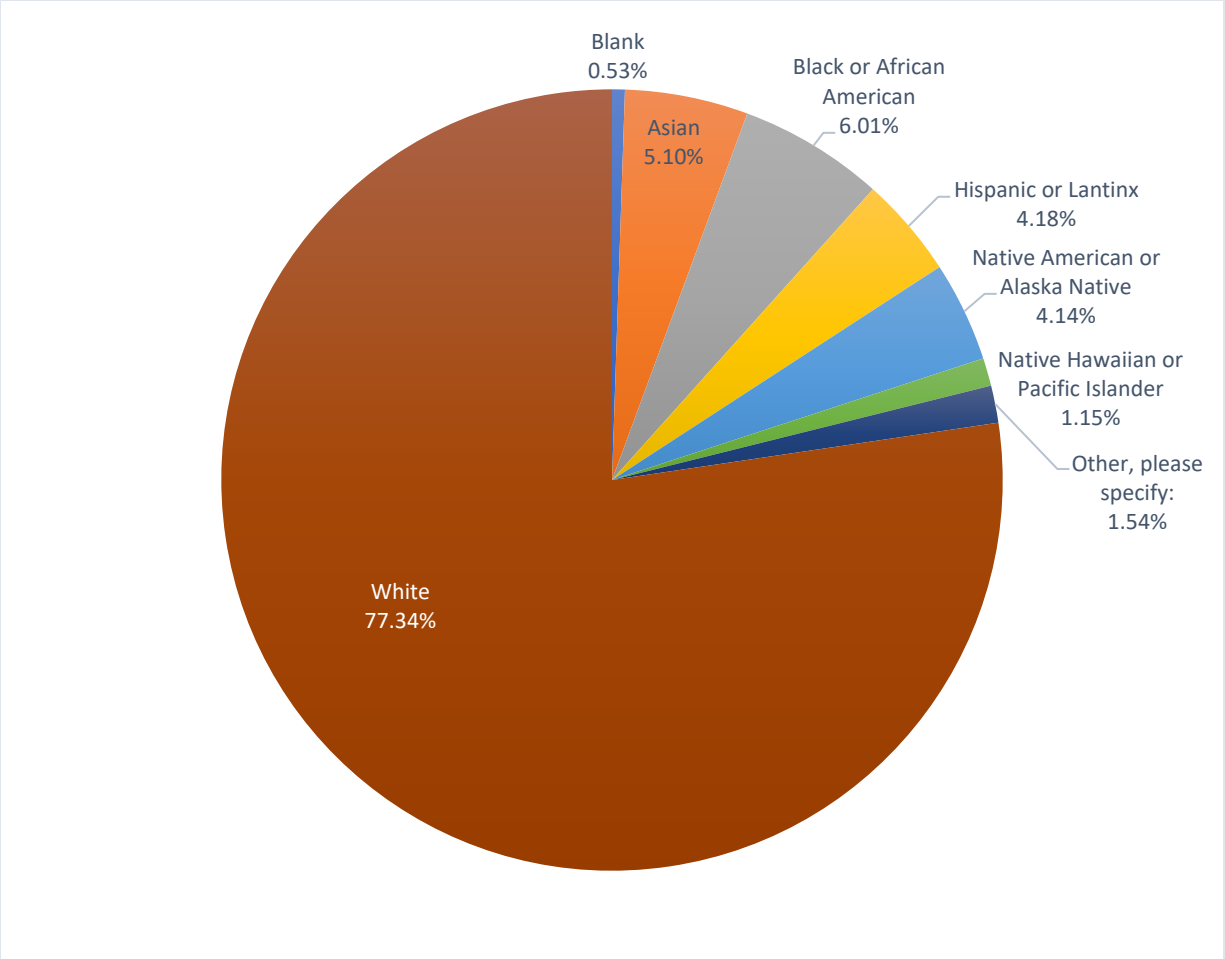

***Figure 34**: Consumer survey respondents' race or ethnicity*

Most of the respondents (77.34%) of respondents identify as white, though there were individuals representing Black (6.01%), Asian (5.10%), Latinx (4.18%), Native American or Alaskan Native (4.14%), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1.15%) (Figure 35). These statistics are comparable with the population estimates reported by the US Census Bureau in 2021. According to those estimates, 76.3% of people in the US identify as white, 13.4% are Black, 5.9% are Asian, 18.5% are Latinx, 1.3% are American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.2% are Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

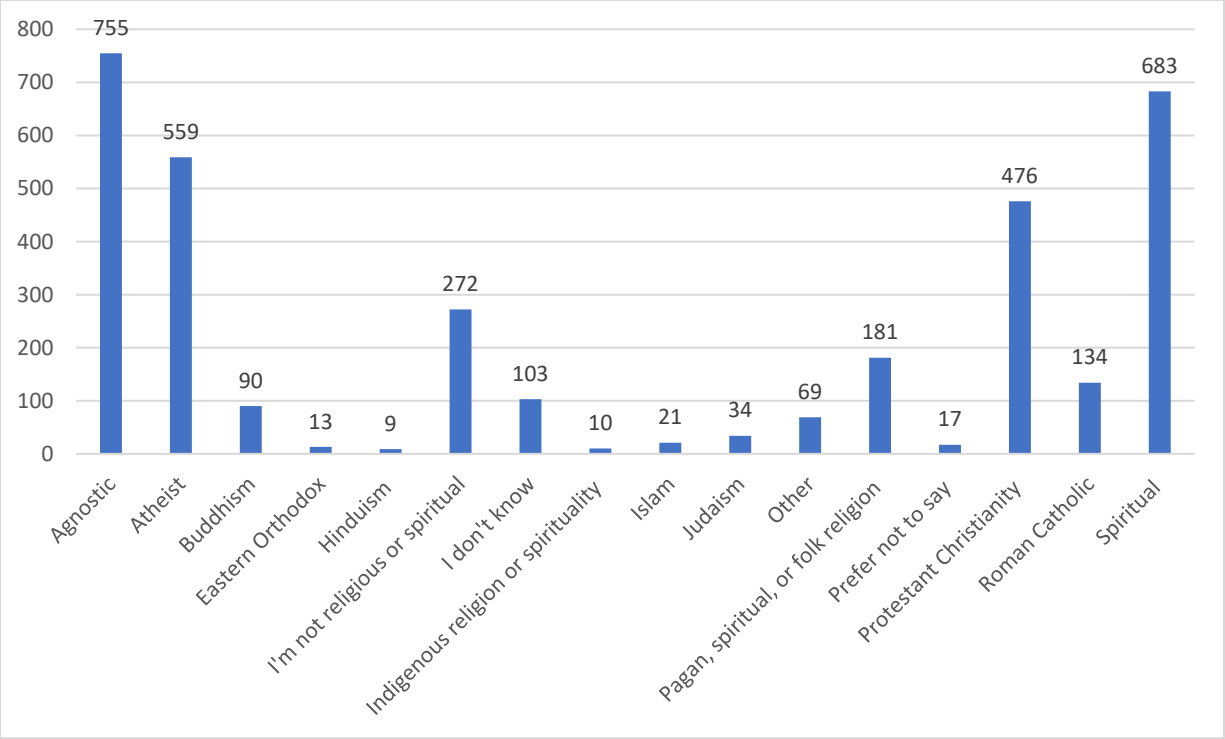

Figure 35: *Consumer survey respondents' religious or spiritual beliefs*

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, both race and religion are tied closely to people's death care decision-making and the connection of people to deathscapes. Respondents were given the option to identity with one or more religions/spiritualities, though most (1,729) only chose one option. There are respondents representing every major religious or spiritual group, but 36.3% identified as agnostic, 26.9% identify as atheist, and 32.8% identify as spiritual in a general sense (Figure 36).

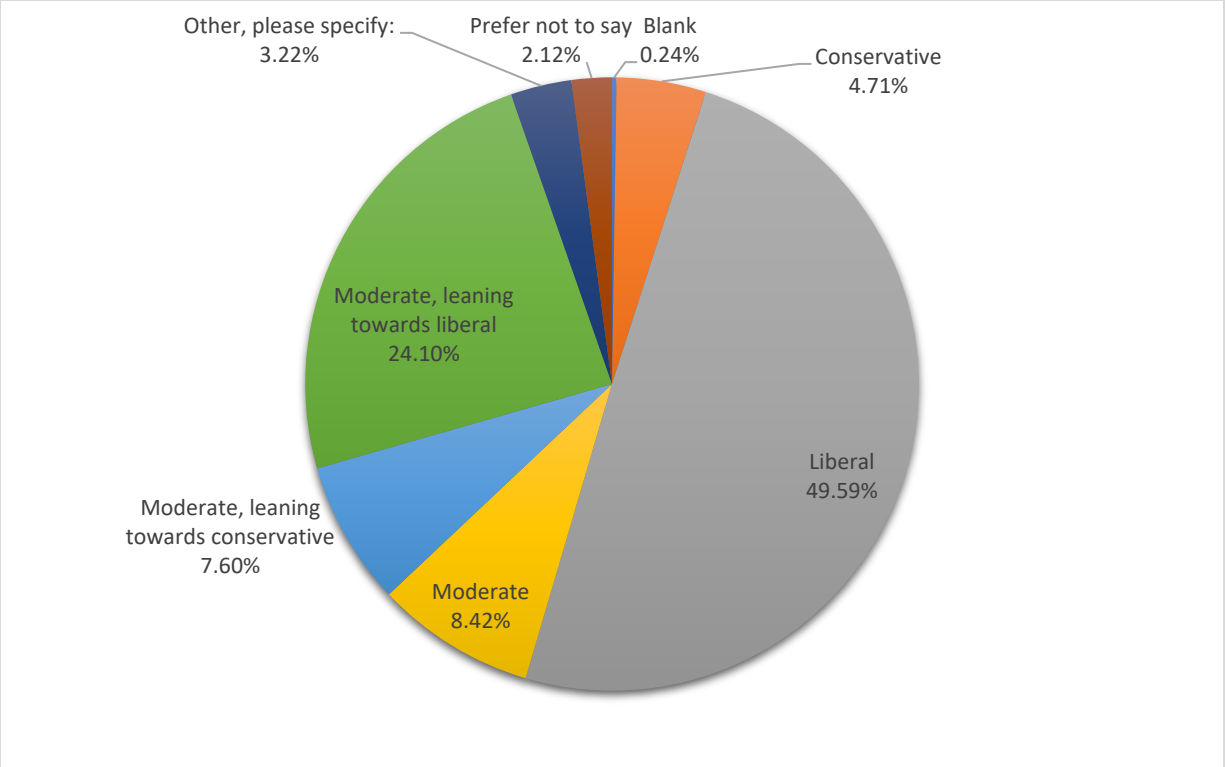

***Figure 36**: Consumer survey respondents' personal political preferences*

Figure 37 shows consumer respondents' personal political preferences. Most respondents are liberal (49.59%) or Moderate, leaning towards liberal (24.10%). This is far from accurately representing the political preference distribution in the US. According to a 2021 Gallup poll, 28% of people identify as Democrat, 28% identify as Republican, 14% identify as Democrat-leaning independent, 19% identify as Republican-leaning independent, and 9% identify as non-leaning independent (Jones, 2022). Attitudes towards environmental regulations and the environmental movement is known to be partisan issue (Dunlap et al., 2001 p.45). Therefore, a clear limitation of this study is that the consumer survey results are heavily biased in the direction of liberal beliefs.

Finally, respondents' household income is represented in Figure 38. The median household income in the United States in 2018 was $62,860 (Guzman, 2020 p.2). Most respondents have a household income of $50,000 or higher; the $50,000 to $100,000 category was selected most often (743 respondents).

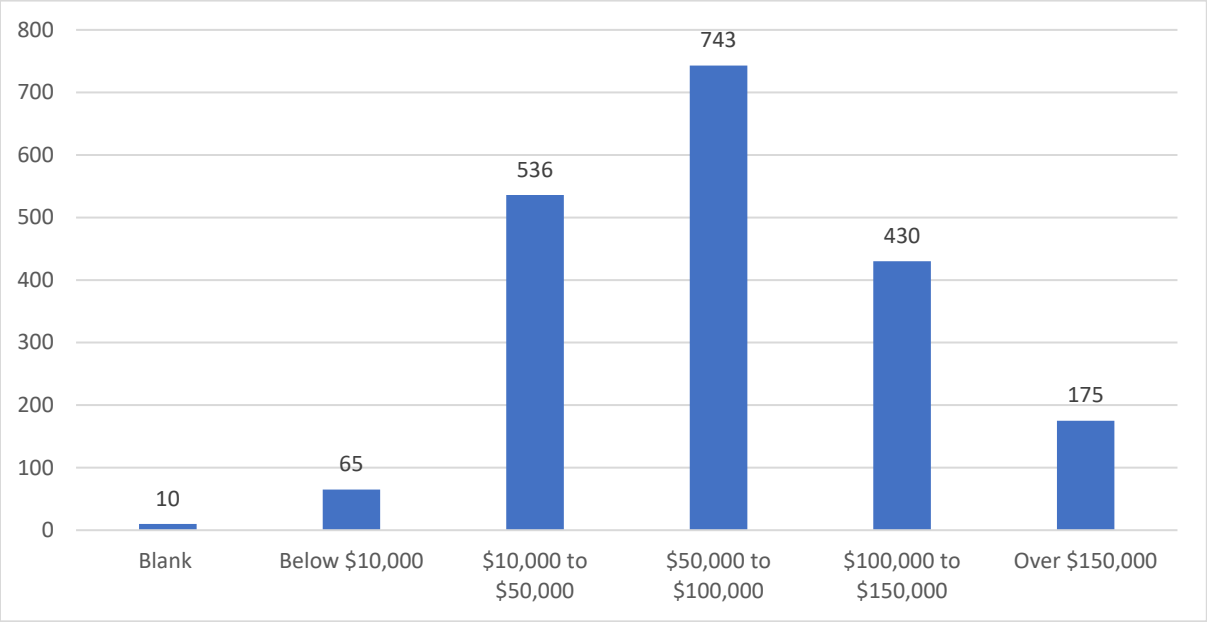

***Figure 37**: Consumer survey respondents' household income*

5.3.2 Awareness and consideration of green burial by demographics

Awareness and consideration of death care choices, specifically cremation and traditional casketed burial, were compared to green burial across race/ethnicity, age, and income (Tables 8, 9, and 10). This initial analysis provides a general picture of awareness and willingness to consider green burial, though further analysis is required to understand the correlation, if any,

between demographics and death care choices. However, we can see that there are some groups that were more aware of green burial prior to taking this survey than others.

***Table 8**: Awareness and consideration of death care options by race/ethnicity*

	Awareness					Would Consider				
Green Burial	69.89%	84.16%	76.32%	64.23%	79.92%	56.99%	76.24%	73.68%	45.24%	69.57%
Cremation	89.25%	94.06%	93.42%	84.52%	96.04%	62.37%	91.09%	75.00%	57.14%	76.34%
Contemporary burial	89.25%	91.09%	92.11%	88.10%	95.33%	64.52%	71.29%	38.16%	61.90%	28.39%
	Native Alaskan, Hawaiian, Indigenous, or Pacific Islander	Asian	Hispanic / Latinx	Black	White	Native Alaskan, Hawaiian, Indigenous, or Pacific Islander	Asian	Hispanic / Latinx	Black	White

***Table 9**: Awareness and consideration of death care options by age*

	Awareness					Would Consider				
Green Burial	74.45%	74.97%	80.11%	75.83	70.31%	71.34%	70.83%	72.16%	78.81%	48.44%
Cremation	92.21%	94.06%	96.78%	97.03%	96.88%	72.02%	72.25%	80.87%	23.42%	78.13%
Contemporary burial	92.52%	93.29%	95.26%	97.03%	100%	37.70%	33.55%	38.26%	57.25%	31.25%
	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-60 years	60+ years	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-60 years	60+ years

***Table 10**: Awareness and consideration of death care options by age*

	Awareness					Would Consider				
Green Burial	60.00%	77.10%	75.77%	81.03%	83.33%	52.31%	68.50%	67.70%	75.29%	68.52%
Cremation	83.10%	93.28%	95.83%	97.13%	100%	58.46%	71.10%	77.80%	84.48%	85.20%
Contemporary burial	84.62%	93.10%	93.95%	97.70%	96.30%	33.85%	29.66%	37.70%	42.53%	29.70%
	Below $10,000	$10,000 to $50,000	$50,000 to $100,000	$100,000 to $150,000	Over $150,000	Below $10,000	$10,000 to $50,000	$50,000 to $100,000	$100,000 to $150,000	Over $150,000

5.3.3 Death care decisions and awareness

The consumer survey respondents were asked several questions about their understanding and awareness of death care options. Figure 39 reveals that most respondents (59.11%) are not sure if embalming is required where they live. More than 20% of respondents say that embalming is required where they live. According to the Federal Trade Commission Funeral Rule, "No state law requires routine embalming for every death. Some states require embalming or refrigeration if the body is not buried or cremated within a certain time; some states don't require it at all" (Federal Trade Commission, 2012). Funeral homes are, however, allowed to make their own policies about requiring embalming for the body to be viewed publicly (Federal Trade Commission, 2012). But these policies are not backed by law and it is against the law for funeral homes to claim that embalming is required by law (Federal Trade Commission, 2012).

For many people who are experiencing loss, there is "etiquette uncertainty" surrounding the knowledge of appropriate questions to ask after someone has passed away (Bern-King, 2004

p. 32). The bereaved may be embarrassed or uncertain about how to ask about the requirement, or lack thereof, of embalming (Bern-King, 2004 p.32). Especially for those who are inexperienced in making funeral decisions, as many people are, the lack of knowledge about embalming can lead people to assume that embalming is necessary to make the body "safe" for viewing (Bern-King, 2004 p. 32; Chiappelli and Chiappelli, 2008 p. 26). A deceased body may still be a health risk if the cause of death is a "communicable disease, such as typhoid, cholera, or the plague" (Chiappelli and Chiappelli, 2008 p. 26; Mitford, 1998). But for most deaths, embalming is not required to prevent disease. Rather, funeral directors may strongly suggest embalming for the "psychological benefit" of allowing the bereaved to view the decedent before they are cremated or buried (Chiappelli and Chiappelli, 2008 p.26).

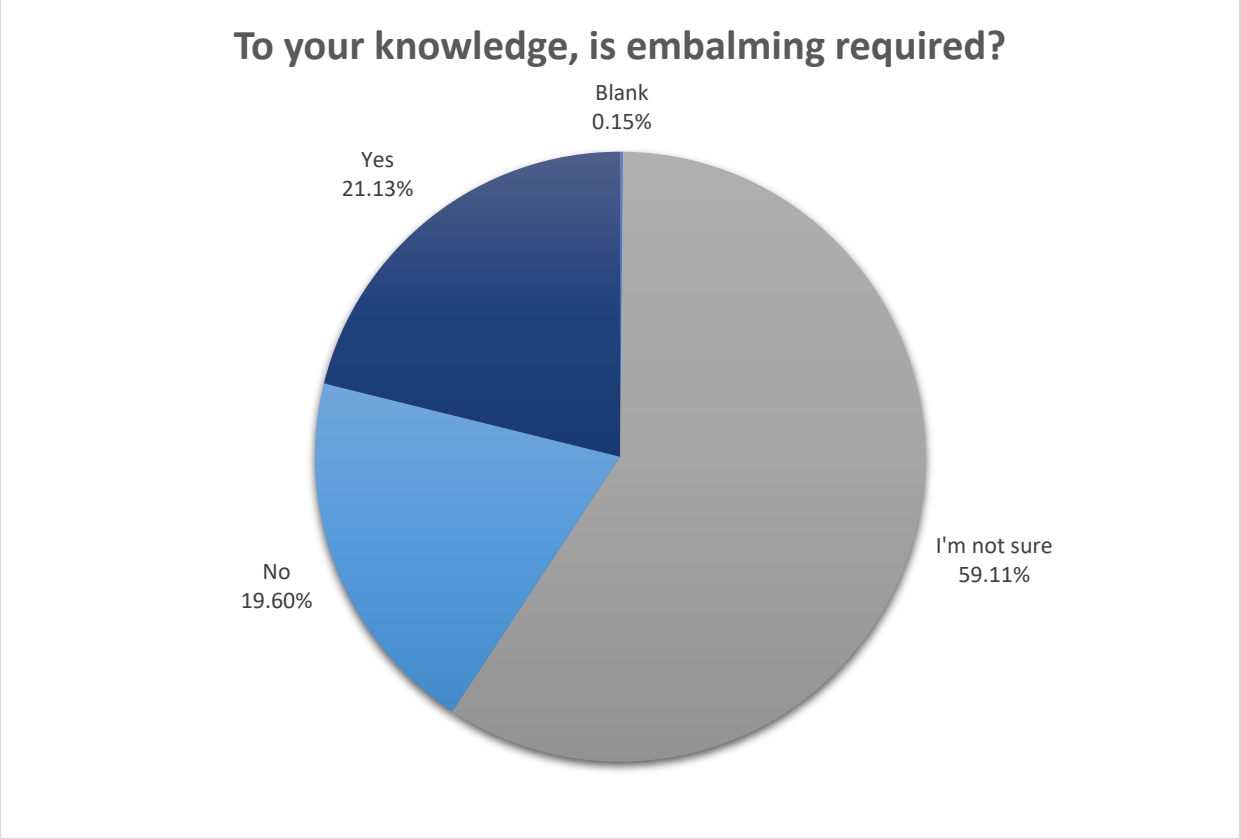

***Figure 38**: Consumer survey respondents' knowledge if embalming is required where they live*

Even though most respondents say that they are unsure if emablming is required, nearly half of the respondents say that it is extremely unlikely that they would want their body to be embalmed post-mortum (Table 11). Asked in another way, 69.07% of respondents say that tey would consider not having their body embalmed (Figure 40). Only 7.4% say that they would not consider fogoing the embalming process for their own body after death. Nearly half of the respondents also say that it's extremely likely that they would want their body to be placed in a casket. It is less clear how respondents feel about having a deceased family member embalmed; 31.09% say that it's neither likely nor unlikely that they would have a family member embalmed.

Table 11: *Likelyhood of embalming and using a casket (N=1959)*

	Extremely Likely	**Somewhat Likely**	**Neither Likely nor Unlikely**	**Somewhat Unlikely**	**Extremely Unlikely**	**Blank**
Do you want your body to be embalmed?	10.41%,	16.90%,	11.28%,	13.32%,	47.93%,	0.15%,
Would you like your deceased family members to be embalmed?	12.40%,	15.47%,	31.09%,	14.09%,	26.65%,	0.31%,
Do you want your body to be placed in a casket?	11.28%,	17.15%,	9.24%,	14.45%,	47.58%,	0.31%,

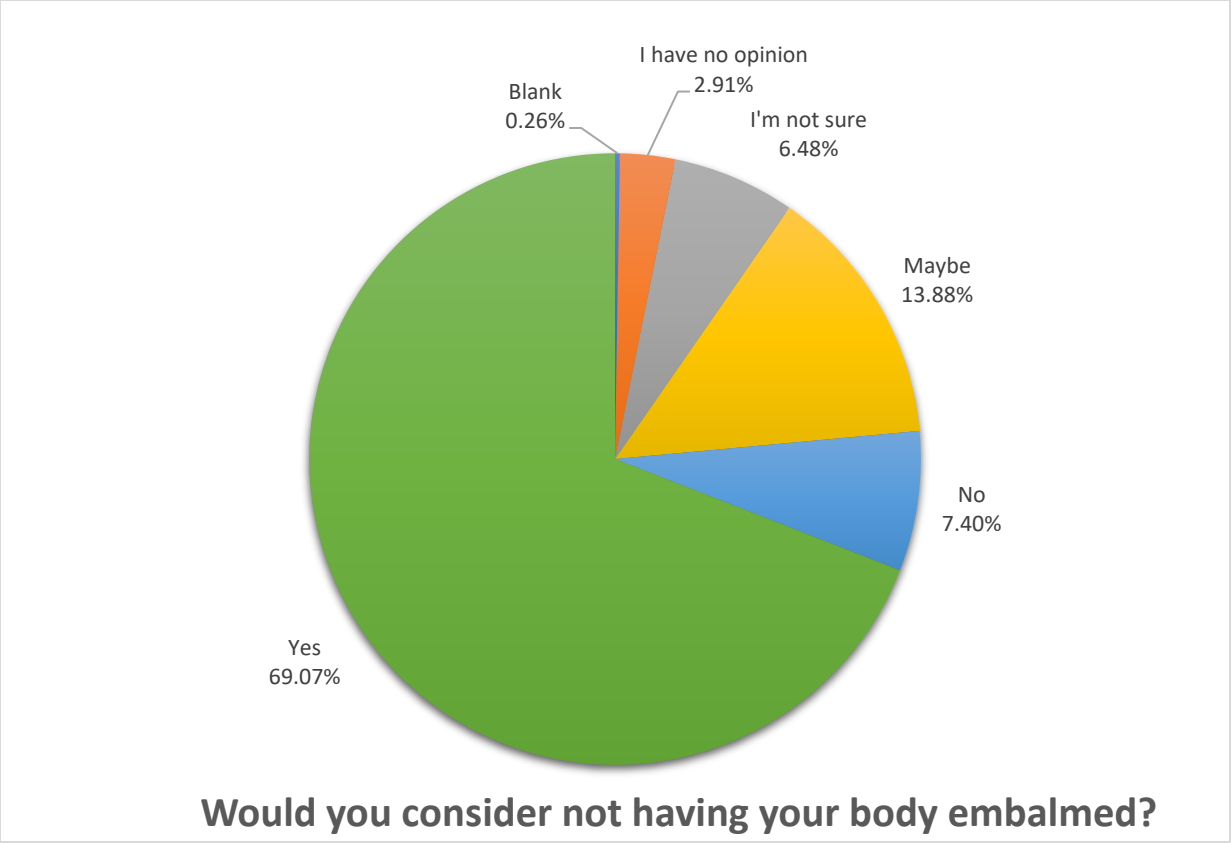

Figure 39: *Consumer survey respondents' answer to the question: "Would you consider not having your body embalmed after death?"*

Respondents were asked whether they heard of death care options (Table 12). More than 90%% of respondents have heard of embalming, cremation, traditional (contemporary) casket burial, burial in a mausoleum, and donation to science. About three quarters of respondents have heard about green burial or burial in a biodegradable container. Lesser known options are the up-and-coming technologies of aquamation and human composting.

Table 12: *Consumer awareness of death care options (N= 1959)*

	Yes, I have heard of this	**No, I have NOT heard of this**	**Blank**
Embalming	92.90%	6.79%	0.31%
Home Funeral	68.71%	30.78%	0.51%

Open Casket Viewing without Embalming	67.43%	32.06%	0.51%
Cremation	94.90%	4.70%	0.41%
Aquamation	38.08%	61.00%	0.92%
Traditional Casket Burial	94.33%	5.36%	0.31%
Burial in Mausoleum	90.76%	8.52%	0.71%
Burial without Vault	69.17%	30.17%	0.66%
Burial in Biodegradable Container	73.56%	26.03%	0.41%
Green Burial	76.16%	23.48%	0.36%
Human Composting	52.32%	47.01%	0.66%
Burial at Sea	83.51%	16.13%	0.36%
Donation to Science	93.26%	6.33%	0.41%

When asked which death care options are available to consumers, most people recognize or believe that embalming, cremation, traditional casket burial, burial in a mausoleum, and donation to science are available (Table 13). Although 76.16% of people have heard about green burial, only 23.84% say that it is available to them where they live.

***Table 12**: Consumer perception of availability of death care options (N= 1959)*

	Available	**Not Available**	**I'm not sure**	**Blank**
Embalming	82.03%	6.07%	11.18%	0.71%

Home Funeral	39.77%	5.77%	53.45%	1.02%
Open Casket Viewing without Embalming	31.6%	10.21%	57.07%	1.12%
Cremation	88.31%	4.49%	6.43%	0.77%
Aquamation	16.59%	14.19%	67.89%	1.33%
Traditional Casket Burial	86.06%	5.00%	8.22%	0.71%
Burial in Mausoleum	70.70%	7.40%	20.98%	0.92%
Burial without Vault	28.18%	11.38%	59.06%	1.38%
Burial in Biodegradable Container	21.54%	12.66%	64.73%	1.07%
Green Burial	23.84%	12.05%	63.25%	0.87%
Human Composting	11.89%	18.43%	68.76%	0.92%
Burial at Sea	19.50%	23.38%	56.25%	0.87%
Donation to Science	72.89%	6.23%	20.06%	0.82%

Finally, respondents were asked which of the death care options they would choose for their body after death (Table 14). Again, more than half (59.11%) say they would not consider embalming. Cremation was the most population option (75.40%), followed by donation to science (72.23%). Green burial also had a lot of support, with 68.61% of individuals saying that they would consider it for their body post-mortem.

Table 13: *Consumer responses to the question "would you consider the following death care options for your body after death?"*

	Yes, I would consider this	No, I would NOT consider this	I'm not sure	Blank
Embalming	28.69%	59.11%	11.23%	0.97%
Home Funeral	44.36%	40.02%	14.50%	1.12%
Open Casket Viewing without Embalming	27.77%	56.00%	15.21%	1.02%
Cremation	75.40%	16.39%	7.15%	1.07%
Aquamation	42.73%	34.71%	21.39%	1.17%
Traditional Casket Burial	34.00%	55.03%	9.80%	1.17%
Burial in Mausoleum	25.78%	64.62%	8.52%	1.07
Burial without Vault	39.05%	43.95%	15.72%	1.28%
Burial in Biodegradable Container	62.17%	27.82%	8.93%	1.07%
Green Burial	68.61%	20.52%	9.60%	1.28%
Human Composting	47.88%	33.89%	17.00%	1.23%
Burial at Sea	31.90%	51.86%	14.96%	1.28%
Donation to Science	72.23%	15.62%	11.28%	0.87%

5.4 Consumer Survey Results and Discussion

The consumer survey yielded a total of 1959 responses; 75.40% of the respondents are interested in choosing cremation for their body after death. The Cremation Association of North America reported that the 2020 cremation rate in the United States was 56.1% (CANA, 2022) and the projected cremation rate in 2030 by Statista is 72.8% (Statista, 2022). Cremation is the most desired body disposition practice in the US and the interviewees (see sections 5.5 and 5.6) indicate that green burial may be following the same trajectory that cremation took in replacing contemporary burial. Therefore, I focused on understanding why respondents choose cremation and what would make them interested in switching to green burial.

From these respondents who indicated that they want cremation, two groups of were identified: 1) steadfast cremators, who mentioned cremation in question twenty-three (Appendix D), an open-ended question "What plans or ideas do you have about your funeral? If you have no plans or ideas, why not?" and 2) possible converts to green burial, who mentioned cremation in their response to question twenty-three, but later indicated in the survey that they may consider green burial after learning more about it.

5.4.1 Steadfast Cremation

In response to question twenty-three in the consumer questionnaire that asks "What plans or ideas do you have about your funeral? If you have no plans or ideas, why not?," 349 respondents stated that they want cremation or are considering cremation for their body post-mortem. Two hundred and forty-four respondents did not complete the open-ended questions,

and many commented on their desires for the funeral ceremony but did not mention their preferred method of disposal for their body.

Of the 349 respondents who identified cremation as a part of their funeral plans, 76 of those were classified as steadfast cremation; they identified their wish to be cremated early in the questionnaire and remained steadfast in that decision at the end of the questionnaire, even after being presented with options such as green burial and human composting. In question thirty-one of the questionnaire, green burial is defined and presented to the participant as a funeral/ death care option. The respondent is then asked to identify their likelihood of choosing green burial for their body after death. To identify the respondents that I classified as steadfast cremation, I identified the respondents who answered question thirty-one as "Extremely unlikely" or "Somewhat unlikely." The respondents were asked to explain their answer to question thirty-one in a open-ended question thirty two. These free responses, along with the free responses gathered at the end of the survey designed to capture any final thoughts that the respondent might have about funeral planning or green burial specifically, were coded and analyzed for common themes to describe the steadfast cremation outlook on death care planning and decision-making.

Important Values

Respondents were asked to label a series of values and factors that might affect their death care decision-making. These include delaying decomposition, helping others, becoming a part of nature, being laid to rest somewhere beautiful or meaningful, and proximity to family, among other things. Figure 41 shows the percentage of respondents who labeled each value as

Very/Extremely Important, Moderately Important, Slightly Important, or Not Important as all (Figure 41).

As will be illustrated in the analysis of the qualitative responses of this group, there are a few values that stand out with most of the respondents answering to one extreme, Very/Extremely important or Not Important at all. First, 92.1% of the respondents in the steadfast cremation group (N=76), said that delaying decomposition is not important at all. The primary method of delaying decomposition, embalming, is usually not utilized in direct cremations (CSA, 2020), which may account for most steadfast cremation respondents stating that this is not an important factor in their decision-making. There is also a majority rule that proximity to family and cultural tradition is not important at all, but simplicity and financial costs are very/extremely important to most people in the steadfast cremation group. The other values do not experience the same dichotomy of the majority responding in one extreme.

As previously mentioned, the qualitative data collected from the free-response questions support and explain this pattern. The following subsections elaborate on the themes presented by the data, illustrated by quotes from respondents of the steadfast cremation group.

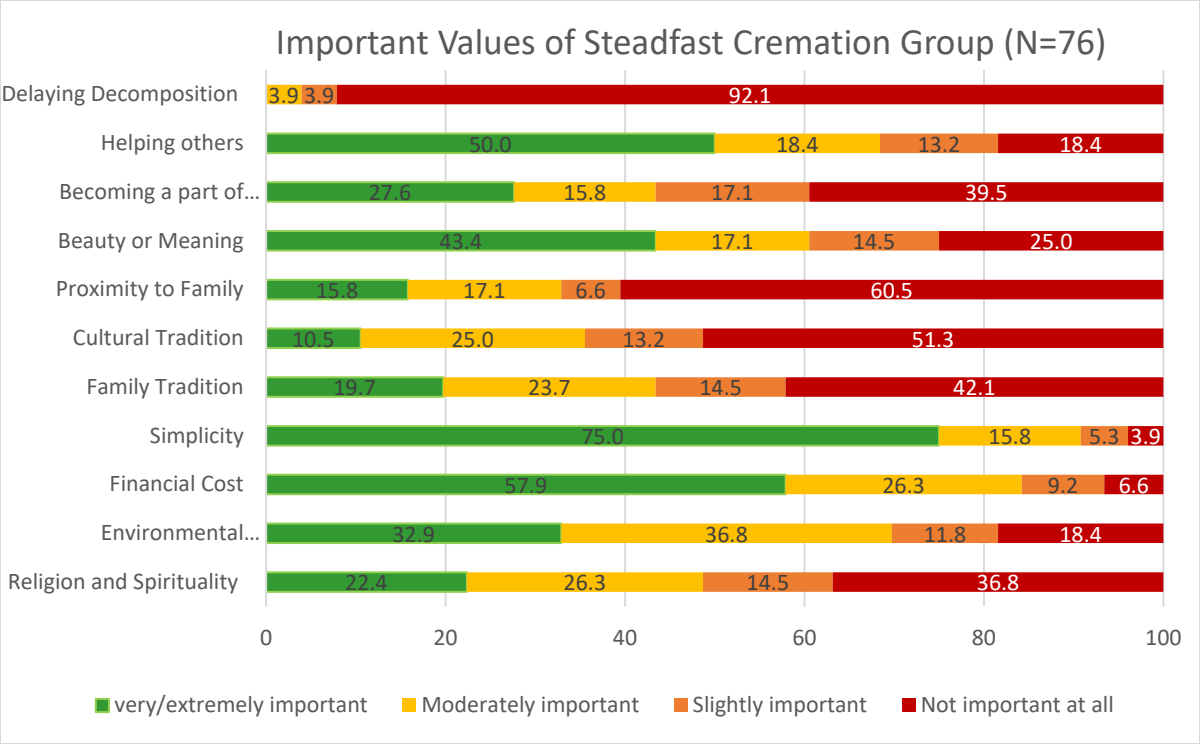

***Figure 40**: Important values of consumer respondents within steadfast cremation group (N=76)*

Cremation seems less expensive and not a "big fuss"

Compared to large funeral services and expensive caskets, cremation is not a "big fuss." For many steadfast cremators, simplicity is touted as extremely important: "keep it simple." The way that steadfast cremation folk aim to achieve simplicity is to reduce financial burdens and not take up space in the ground: "I just don't want my funeral to be super expensive and I don't want to take up much space in the ground. A gravestone would be nice, so people can visit my body to mourn/heal and for family history purposes. I just don't want a bunch of fuss."

Many of the steadfast cremators made a distinction that there is no correlation, in their mind, between the elaborateness of a funeral and the quality and value of the life that was lost: "I

think it's stupid to spend money on a dead person. I do not correlate money with showing someone love or honoring them." The financial and emotional cost of an elaborate funeral is considered a burden: "The cost of dying is ridiculous. Why would my family want to spend 7k on a casket. [sic] I would opt not to be a financial burden and make it easy- burn me or throw me in the sea at little cost to my family."

Several respondents expressed belief that spending money on a funeral is not only a "waste of money," but also a "scam." One respondent went so far as to say that "Funeral sales people [sic] prey upon the grieving."

According to the survey respondents, the "waste of money" associated with a non-cremation funeral also creates a lasting burden on family members in terms of grave upkeep: "It should be easy for family members… nothing to worry about as far as upkeep of a grave or monument." In terms of upkeep and safekeeping of the cremains, one respondent opts for scattering of their ashes because "I don't want [my family] to feel compelled to keep my on a mantel."

When respondents were presented with the option of green burial, several had concerns about the expense and the complexity of such a burial. Several of these comments included: "Sounds expensive," "Why waste $" and "It should not be so expensive or confusing. Why are there so many options for a box that is going into the ground?" Indeed, options and decision-making, particularly by the family, is another concern that many steadfast cremators have: "I do not want to put anyone through a lot of decisions… keep it simple" and "It's important to think ahead so that you can spare your family not knowing what you want and making the decisions for you and extra expense."

The desire to "spare your family" from the distress of funeral decision-making and the accompanying expense is certainly not unwarranted (Banks 1998; McManus and Schafer 2014; Beard and Burger 2017). McManus and Schafer (2014) found that "people find arranging funerals emotionally intense and some do go into personal debt over funerals" (McManus and Schafer, 2014 p. 391). Conflicts over death care decision-making can be very emotive and divisive within families (Conway, 2003, p. 452). Strong emotions, including grief and responsibility, are a part of the complex socio-economic processes that are associated with arranging a funeral in such a way that might beget debt (McManus and Schafer, 2014 p. 393). McManus and Schafer (2014) also point out that there is a spectrum of resources, including money and emotional support, at the hands of people arranging funerals; therefore "achieving responsibility [for arranging a funeral] is uneven and for financially vulnerable groups it can be economically crippling" (McManus and Schafer, 2014 p. 394).

The apparent trend of preferring cremation due to its simplicity and cost effectiveness is evident in previous literature (Banks, 1998; Beard and Burger 2017). In 2017, Beard and Burger reported that the changes that can be seen in the funeral industry are primarily attributed to "consumer related motivation," specifically consumer cost-effective motivation (Beard and Burger, 2017 p. 60-62). Although more research is needed to confirm the motivation behind consumers' choices to have simple, cost-effective funerals, I hypothesize that many consumers want to avoid debt and associated stress of planning an elaborate funeral.

Not making a "big fuss" over a funeral likely does not have a negative impact on survivors' ability to grieve (Birrell et al. 2020, p. 385; Mitima-Verloop et al. 2019, p. 742). In fact, there are few connections between the dimensions of the funeral, such as viewing the body or having cremation ceremonies, and the survivors' ability to adjust to their bereavement (Birrell

et al. 2020, 387). Therefore, simplicity and cost-effectiveness may indeed be the most appropriate choice for the respondents in the steadfast cremators group. We may see, however, that green burial can also provide a funeral that is simple and cost-effective.

Cremation results in a different spatiality of the body

While the simplicity of cremation releases family of financial burden and complex decision-making, some respondents believe that cremation is easier for the survivors because it de-emphasizes the body. One respondent wrote that it is "not about the physical body, [it is] about reunion with God." The lack of a physical body to mourn may be soothing to some: "I want to be cremated because when someone very close to me was cremated it made the healing process easier knowing there was no body holding them here. It made it easier for me to let go."

The subfield of necrogeography relies heavily on both human/cultural geographies as well as physical geography (Nash, 2018, p. 560). But what happens when the deceased body no longer exists in the physical space? After cremation, the body of the deceased is transformed from a whole-body corpse into the non-whole-body cremains of pulverized bone fragments. Sorensen (2009) argues that the rising use of cremation and the associated grave types have created "non-places – places of transience and transfer that are not conceived of as manifest enough to be perceived as places per se" (Sorensen, 2009, p. 112). Whereas contemporary burial involves a specific cemetery plot with a burial vault and headstone that solidifies the body in the earth, cremains are more ethereal. The body is no longer distinguishable, and the cremains can be separated and scattered. The movement from contemporary burial towards cremation is not only

a change in body disposition, but it is a change in how people contextualize the space that the deceased body takes up, whether in a grave or otherwise (Sorensen, 2009, p.112).

Although the physical body of the deceased may change or no longer take up space in the way that a living body does, there may not be a complete absence of the presence of the deceased (Edensor, 2008; Vanolo, 2016). Edensor (2008) writes about how deceased, in the form of ghosts or memories, take up space as "absent-presences" (Edensor, 2008, p.324). Typically used to describe the "asynchronous moments" and memories that are juxtaposed within a landscape of a city (i.e. abandoned buildings that were once teeming with life and purpose), absent-presence has also been used to conceptualize the afterlife (Vanolo, 2016). According to Vanolo (2016), "the geography of the Afterlife is, apparently, disembodied" (Vanolo, 2016, p. 193). Exploring three vignettes of death and conceptualization of the afterlife, Vanolo reports that a diversity of understanding of the spatiality of death exists (Vanolo, 2016, p. 198). For some, the spatiality of the person-hood of the deceased resides in the spirit; the spirit therefore lives on in another place (Vanolo, 2016, p.198). To others, the spatiality of the deceased resides within the physical material of the body that will reintegrate into the earth through decomposition (Vanolo, 2016, p.198). Finally, the concept of the afterlife may be a location within us, not a physical or metaphysical location that the body or spirit is transported to (Vanolo, 2016, p.198).

Regardless, the body, whether cremated or buried, occupies an absent-presence; the physical body will change via decomposition or cremation but the memory and, to some, spirit, of the body transcends physical geography and occupies a new spatiality (Edensor 2008; Vanolo, 2016). The survey respondents point out that, to them, the deceased no longer resides in the body, but is somewhere else entirely.

Cremation is a return to cultural homeland

For some respondents, cremation is the preferred body disposition choice because it is in line with cultural traditions or values. One steadfast cremator expressed their desire to be cremated according to a specific tradition in Japan: “I wish there were more options for traditional Japanese cremation in the US. Hawaii has Japanese cremation options but the mainland US doesn't and all the bones are ground up and powdered.”

Cross-cultural studies of immigrant-American funeral practices have been conducted in the United States (Cowell, 1985; Gonen, 2004; Goren, 1994; Mathias, 1974; Saito, 2014; Walter, 2005). Death care decision-making is, in many cases, driven by a desire to match one’s identity with the final resting place—a “homeland” that represents one’s “true lasting identity” (Gonen, 2004, p. 421).

In some communities, identity-driven traditions have been retained or integrated into contemporary American death care practices (Matias, 1974, p. 35-36). The integration of immigrant customs and traditions into American death care practices have influenced how the body is cared for, what kind of container the body is put in, where the funeral occurs, and how the funeral occurs (Cowell, 1985, p. 76). The acceptance of American death care practices by immigrants may also be attributed to the “evolution over time of the family itself in America” (Cowell, 1985, p.84). Funerals also play a role in providing a space for solidarity among people of the same background, thus becoming a space for immigrants to “create meaning” and “cope with an alien world” (Conzen, quoted in Goren, 1994, p. 300).

In an ethnographic study of Japanese immigrant widows in the San Francisco Bay Area, Saito (2014) found that the loss of their spouses left the women of the study in a “marginalized

place with multiple losses" (Saito, 2014, p. 39). Much of their marginalization came from a feeling of in-betweenness in terms of American or Japanese identity (Saito, 2014, p. 51). This sentiment is evident in variety of ways as the widows grieve and make meaning out of their losses. Funeral practices are one such place in which widows felt the in-between (Saito, 2014, p. 50). Several widows were shocked at the drastic difference in how the dead are treated in America versus in Japan, but there were also widows who find the traditional Japanese cremations to be "weird" because family members use chopsticks to remove the cremains from the oven and place them into the urn (Saito, 2014, p.50). Even though the widow from Saito's study found the practice to be odd, she could not deny that there are possible benefits: "The man she had known until just several hours before had now gone to bones and ashes right in front of her eyes. Such a practice leaves literally no room for fantasizing that the person has not died" (Saito, 2014, p. 50). The survey respondent from the present study is classified as a steadfast cremator with specific desires that might tie them to familial or cultural traditions.

Along the same lines, one respondent chooses cremation because they know that cremains and contemporary caskets can be buried in a Catholic cemetery, and they are unsure if green burial would be accepted: "I am certain I want to be buried in the catholic [sic] cemetery with extended family so I am confident you can bury a casket or cremation but not sure if other options are available." This response is another example of homeland migration as presented by Gonen (2004); in the face of increased mobility in the twenty-first century, many people's death care decisions are motivated by the desire to be reconnected with one's family or spouse, which is considered the "most significant homeland" (Gonen, 2004, p.421). The place of burial creates a sense of belonging that is intergenerational; many people consider the location of their children or other family members when planning where they want their own body to be buried

(Akkaymak and Belkhodja, 2020, p. 382). A whole body or cremains burial also "helps demarcate social and communal boundaries" (Balkan, 2015, p. 120). It's no surprise that some steadfast cremators choose cremation because they know that cremains are permitted in the specific cemetery of their choosing, whether it be a religious choice, a familial choice, or a mixture of both.

Discomfort in being buried

According to the steadfast cremators' responses, there are three primary attitudes about being buried: 1) the fact of being buried, whether green or contemporary, is generally unappealing, 2) the decomposition process specifically is "gross," and 3) the respondent does not want to "take up space" in a cemetery.

Those that find all types of burial generally unappealing responded to survey question thirty two (asking the respondent to explain their answer of why or why not they would consider green burial for their body after death) with a response against burial rather than for cremation. These responses included: "I don't want to be buried," "Being buried creeps me out," "I still don't think burial as a concept is the most appealing to me."

Premature burial, or being buried alive, was a widespread fear and actuality for some unfortunate individuals in the 18th and 19th centuries (Bondeson, 2001, p. 10-13). At that time, the technology that allows medical professionals today to determine with accuracy the death of a human was not available (Wójcicka, 2010, p. 176-177). Instead, doctors relied on the "cardiorespiratory standard of death," which unfortunately led to the misdiagnosis of death for some people (Wójcicka, 2010, p. 176). The fear became widespread enough that an Italian

psychiatrist named Enrico Morselli defined the described and defined the condition of taphophobia as “an extreme condition of claustrophobia due to the fear of being buried alive” (Cascella, 2016, p. 345). Despite the huge technological advances of the twentieth and twenty first centuries, taphophobia is still prevalent. Case studies of older people in Ireland revealed that generational fear of being buried alive lives on (Fanous and O’Keefe, 2015, p.274). The idea of being buried alive is a “fertile topic in scientific literature, anthropology, and narrative” (del Rio Parra, 2011, p. 129). Edgar Allan Poe famously chronicles the woe of being buried alive as “nothing half so hideous in the realms of the nethermost Hell” in his short story *The Premature Burial* (Poe, 1903). Taphophobia is still researched and written about (del Rio Parra, 2011; Bondeson, 2001; Mangham, 2010). It is not unreasonable that some people have an aversion to burial of any kind due to this all-to-real fear.

While burial is generally unappealing to some steadfast cremators, others are especially deterred from green burial because of the natural decomposition process that occurs. Table 15 illustrates this theme with sentiments from the respondents.

***Table 14**: Comments regarding the decomposition process of green burial.*

“… loved ones would feel it was insufficient or disrespectful”
“gross and disrespectful to the body”
“I don’t want my body to degrade naturally”
“The thought of being in the earth with bugs really bothers me”
“Hard to think about your family just being eaten by bugs even through [sic] they are dead”
“I’d rather be cremated than rotting in the earth”

“The decomposition process”
“I don’t want bugs to eat my corpse”
“I would hate for my decomposing body to be dug up and my family to have to suffer through that”

Death anxiety is thought to be a universal phenomenon (Lehto and Stein, 2009, p.26); it has been broadly studied in various contexts including religiosity (Thorson and Powell, 1990), age (Fortner and Neimeyer, 1999), clinical psychology (Dursen et al., 2022), and in the current COVID-19 pandemic (Menzies and Menzies 2020). Thorson and Powell (1988) explored the components of death anxiety and the relationship to gender and age. They found that many people reported anxiety related to the dying process, particularly the pain of death (Thorson and Powell, 1988, p. 696). Twenty one percent of all respondents agreed with the statement: “I am troubled by the thought that my body will decompose in the grave” (Thorson and Powell, 1988, p. 696), although women were more likely to agree to this statement than men (Thorson and Powell, 1988, p. 697). In a follow-up study that compared death anxiety of funeral directors and non-funeral directors, Thorson and Powell (1996) found that funeral directors are more afraid of decomposition and what happens to the body after death than their non-funeral director counterparts (Thorson and Powell, 1996, p.1230).

Fear of decomposition is not just linked to death anxiety, however. Decomposition of human remains in the 18th and 19th centuries in London, and the miasmas that supposedly emanated from such decomposing remains, caused a great deal of controversy and upheaval in scientific and political realms (Rugg, 2013, p. 328). New sanitary guidelines and cemeteries away from the city center were created to protect the health of local people (Rugg, 2013, p.328-

329). Fear of decomposition is far from unusual and has shown to impact decision making at community scales, not just at the personal level (Rugg, 2013).

Finally, steadfast cremators also say that they don't want to "waste" or "take up space" in a cemetery. Table 16 illustrates this theme with sentiments from the respondents.

***Table 15**: Comments regarding taking up space via burial*

"Why not take up less space or do something useful for science?"
"I don't see the need to use up land to dispose of my body, even in a 'green' way"
"I would prefer my remains be used for science or take up less room"
"I think that while regeneration of nutrients back to the earth is desired, for me, I would rather not contribute to takin up the space in the ground"
"I feel that burial is a waste of space"
"It is suggested that everyone be cremated."

These comments point to the beliefs that 1) there is a limited amount or availability of space where people can be buried and that 2) green burial is not a useful scientific pursuit.

The practice of burying the dead has historically been symbolic of the deceased's religious affiliation (Johnson et al. 2018), the respect of the surviving family members (Yick and Gupta, 2002), and the avenue through which survivors grieve and process death (Huggins and Hinkson, 2017). However, with increasing population and subsequent urbanization, a new question arises: "who is more important to be housed, the living or the dead?" (Allam, 2019, p.1). Using a case study of the cemeteries in Queens, New York, Allam (2019) discusses the moral and ethical dilemma surrounding land use for the dead meanwhile land scarcity and

gentrification create housing crises (Allam, 2019, p. 4-6). Property prices are rising, both for plots within the cemeteries in Queens and for residential and retail properties (Allam, 2019, p.4; Kelly, 2019). Allam (2019) likens the uncontrolled expansion of cemeteries to urban sprawl and creates a dichotomy within urban planning: prioritize new allocation of land for cemeteries or prioritize affordable housing for low-income people (Allam, 2019, p. 4). Viewing the ethical and moral dilemma of Queens' cemeteries and urban planning through the lenses of religion and philosophy, Allam concludes that living people have precedence over the dead: "In the urban context, when planning the different aspects and urban fabric, the living should be provided more emphasis, and that beyond the grounds of religious spaces, including graveyards… The idea of extending the cemetery to accommodate more bodies should not supersede that of making affordable and decent housing at the reach of all… Therefore, in relation to urban planning, it is more ethical to provide a liveable [sic] environment and to house people since they live in the present than to be engrossed in a battle about the sacredness of a dead person." (Allam, 2019, p. 5-6).

The ethics cited by Allam (2019) that come to this conclusion are based exclusively on people, both dead and alive, to determine ethical land use. However, our community is composed of more than living and dead people; Aldo Leopold proposes the expansion of the idea of community to "include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (Leopold, 1987, p. 204). In his land ethic, Leopold redefines "the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" (Leopold, 1987, p. 204). Green burial an approach to integrating humans and the environment while simultaneously protecting the land from ecologically deleterious effects of human development (Clayville, 2016, p. 39; Palko, 2021). Palko (2021) discusses how green burial at Ramsey Creek Preserve in Westminster, SC,

"successfully implemented Aldo Leopold's ideas of conservation through the socio-ecological practice of green burial" (Palko, 2021, p.441). Further research on the land ethics of green burial versus cremation is clearly warranted, but the concerns that steadfast cremators present about land use cannot be denied.

5.4.2 Possible Converts

Of the 349 respondents who identified cremation as a part of their funeral plans, 272 of those were classified as possible converts; they identified their wish to be cremated early in the questionnaire, but when presented with the definition of green burial, they indicated that they might consider green burial for their death care, In question thirty-one of the questionnaire, green burial is defined and presented to the participant as a funeral/ death care option. To identify the respondents that I classified as possible converts, I identified the respondents who answered question thirty-one (likelihood of choosing green burial for their body after death) as "Extremely likely," "Somewhat likely," "Neither likely nor unlikely," or "I'm not sure." The respondents were asked to explain their answer to question thirty-one in open-ended question thirty-two. These free responses, along with the free responses gathered at the end of the survey designed to capture any final thoughts that the respondent might have about funeral planning or green burial specifically, were coded and analyzed for common themes to describe possible converts and what values might need to be targeted in education outreach programs by the GBC.

Important Values

The important values analyzed in the previous group, steadfast cremators, were analyzed here for possible converts. Figure 5.26 shows the percentage of respondents who labeled each value as Very/Extremely Important, Moderately Important, Slightly Important, or Not Important as all (Figure 42). There are several values that were answered to one extreme or the other: either as very/extremely important or not important at all. Delaying decomposition was one such value that was deemed not important at all for the majority (92%) of the respondents in the possible converts group. This is consistent with the steadfast cremators group (Figure 41). Compared to the steadfast cremators' 27.6% valuing becoming a part of nature after dying, 69.1% of possible converts say that becoming a part of nature is very/extremely important, and 21% say that becoming part of nature is moderately important. Likewise, environmental sustainability is very/extremely important to 76.5% of possible converts, whereas it's only very/extremely important to 32.9% of steadfast cremators.

Steadfast cremators indicated that simplicity was the most important value. Possible converts, however, indicated that simplicity, financial cost, and environmental sustainability had the three highest percentages (at or above 75%) of respondents indicating high levels of importance. Possible converts also had a slightly higher percentage (65.9%) of respondents indicating that it's very/extremely important to help others, compared to 50% of steadfast cremators indicating that helping others is very/extremely important.

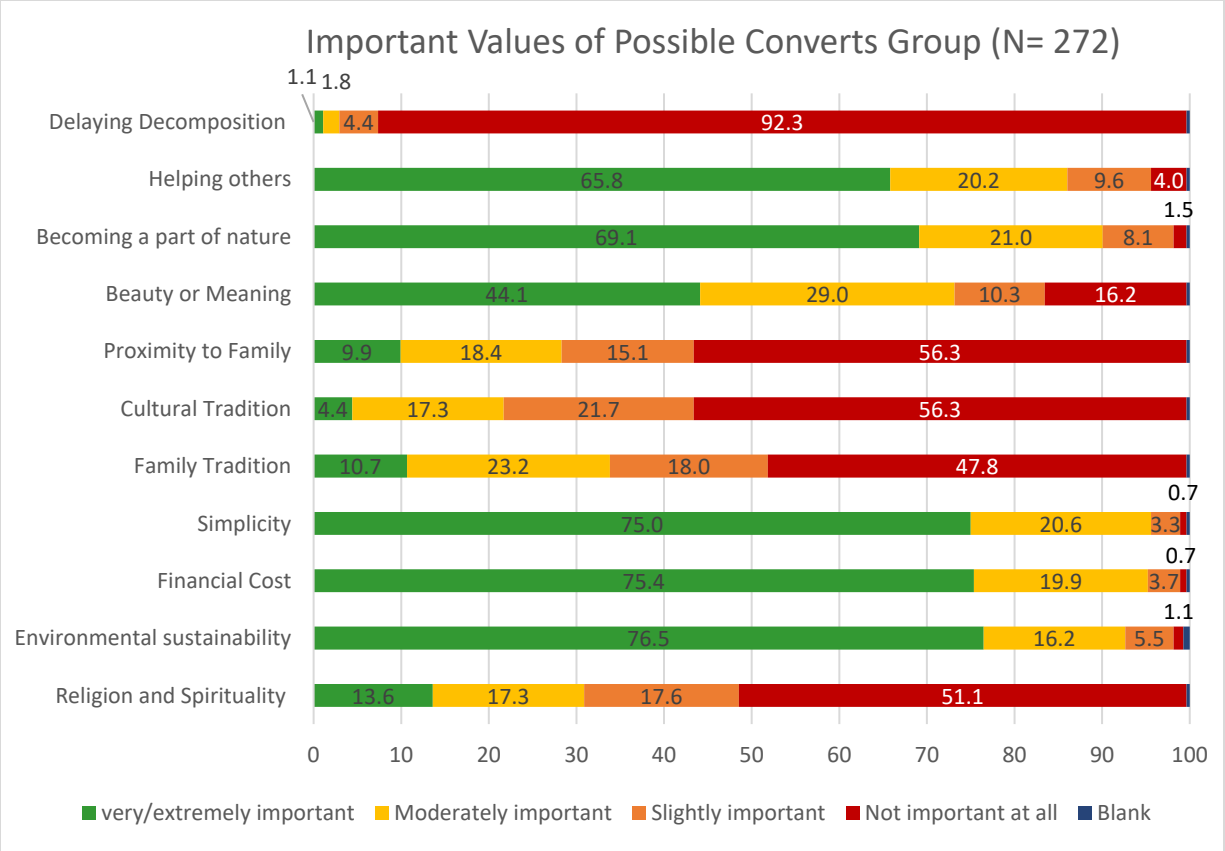

Figure 41: *Important values of consumers in the possible converts group (N=272)*

Emphasis on the Returning to the Earth in a Non-Harming Way

Possible converts indicated that environmental sustainability is highly valued; 76.5% of possible converts say that environmental sustainability is very/extremely important. Table 17 showcase examples of comments from possible convert respondents that reflect the sentiment of "returning to nature" or "returning to earth." One hundred and seventy five of the 272 possible converts (64.33%) made comments regarding the environment, nature, or sustainability. Many of those comments, as shown in Table 17, relate the respondents' understanding of the body being a part of nature and returning the body to nature post-mortem is an inherently good or

sustainable practice. The respondents use words such as “return,” “give back,” “contributing,” “going back,” and “reintegration.”

Table 16: *Consumer comments regarding “returning to the Earth”*

“I want my body returned to nature, after organ donation or potentially donating my body to science.”
“Returning to nature is important to me”
“Just keep it simple. Go back to nature”
“Makes me think that this is a good option to give back to the earth”
“To return to Mother Earth”
“Like the idea of going back to the earth naturally”
“Less money, nicer to return to the earth”
“The option of contributing to the earth is attractive to me”
“I love the idea of being fully reintegrated to nature.”
“It seems like a positive contribution to the earth.”
“I believe that we came from the earth and need to return to the earth in a natural way. “

Humans’ physical and social relationships to and with the environment has been widely studied throughout history. In a seminal paper in 1921, Robert Park and Ernest Burgess defined human ecology has the “spatial and temporal organization and relations of human beings with respect to the ‘selective, distributive and accommodative forces of the environment’” (Park et al.,

1925, quoted in Lawrence, 2003 p.31). Principles of biology and ecology state that "all living organisms (irrespective of their species) impact on their surroundings" and the environment "influence[s] the living conditions of other species" (Lawrence, 2003 p.32). Human ecology provides an interconnected, holistic framework for the integration of biotic, abiotic, cultural, social, and physical components of an ecosystem (Lawrence, 2003 p.33). In their book *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, Kellert and Wilson (1993) posit that there is a "human dependence on nature that extends far beyond the simple issues of material and physical sustenance to encompass as well the human craving for aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive, and even spiritual meaning and satisfaction" (Kellert and Wilson, 1993 p. 20). Beyond providing for humans' physical needs and providing a space within which humans can exist and interact with the environment and other species, nature is a source of satisfaction. Therefore, it is not surprising that a meta-analysis by Capaldi et al. (2014) found that connectedness with nature has a positive correlation with positive emotions and life satisfaction.

It is not clear which variable influences the other; do happy people connect more with the environment, or does connecting with the environment make people happier? These are questions presented by Capaldi et al. (2014 p. 11) that still need to be answered. If there is a sense of satisfaction that comes from connecting with nature in life, a natural extension of this line of thinking would include: Is there a sense of satisfaction in knowing that your body will return to nature upon death?

Even if one does not identify with the connectedness of human ecology, identity as a pro-environmental personal or an environmentally friendly person has shown to influence people's decision to engage in behaviors that are inherently good for the environment and promote connection (Kashima et al., 2014; Whitemarsh and O'Neill, 2010). Possible converts have

simultaneously shown that they have a desire to connect or return to nature and to act, or make death care decisions, in a way that does not cause harm to the environment (Table 18).

***Table 17**: Consumer comments regarding non-harm of the environment*

"I would like a funeral that would be less damaging to the environment such as a green, or composting burial and possibly creamation [sic]."
"I had never heard green burial before but I would consider it especially since it is minimizes environmental impact."
"My main want for a cremation is lack of available space for cemeteries. I want to lesson [sic] my environmental impact."
"No need to further pollute the earth"
"I don't want to leave a lasting mark on the earth when I leave when I have an option to not do that"
"I don't want to negatively impact the environment with my dead body."
"I don't want to hurt the earth more when I'm gone. I (and others) am hurting it enough while alive."
"I want to be good for nature not harmful"
"I love the Earth. Why make more problems?"
"I'd like to help take care of the earth I will leave behind for my children and grandchildren."
"This earth has provided for me, I want to give myself to it in hopes that it continues to provide for generations to come."

Embracing conflicting emotions

Finally, possible converts show mixed and often conflicting emotions regarding green burial and death care. Figure 43 shows a word cloud, generated using NVivo software, of the most common emotions expressed in the free response questions of the questionnaire. Death is a highly emotive event, and often spurs negative emotions such as distress, grief, fear, pain, anxiety, loneliness, and sadness (Marti-Garcia et al. 2017, p.630). Many studies focus on the fear and anxiety (Lester et al., 2006) and a Death Anxiety Scale, developed by Templar (1970), has been used to explore cross-cultural differences in anxiety concerning death and mortality (Lester et al., 2005 p. 255).

Anxiety, fear, and other negative emotions are not the only emotions that were mentioned by potential convert respondents. Some of the positive emotions include comfort, relaxed, strong, empowering, imaginative, fulfilling, satisfaction, freedom, easy, curious, acceptance, and encouraged. Marti-Garcia (2017) also found that feelings of curiosity, hope, and peace were represented in participants of a qualitative, descriptive analysis of emotions "evoked by thinking about one's own death and the situations of dying and of physical death" (Marti-Garcia et al., 2006 p.632). However, fear, pain, anguish, sadness, anxiety, loneliness, and uncertainty were the most frequently described emotions (Marti-Garcia et al., 2006 p.633-634).

***Figure 42**: Word cloud of emotions expressed by possible converts*

Many of the potential converts had the ability to embody bittersweetness, defined by social researcher and storyteller Brene Brown as “a mixed feeling of happiness and sadness” (Brown, 2021 p.74). Written in another way, bittersweet is “a tendency to states of longing, poignancy, and sorrow; an acute awareness of passing time; and a curiously piercing joy at the beauty of the world” (Cain, 2022 p. II). Examples of bittersweet are statements can be found in Table 19. These are answers to Question 40: “What words would you use to describe your feelings about funeral decision-making?”

Understanding the connection between the ability to hold conflicting emotions, especially bittersweet emotions and one’s decisions or desires for their body after death is an important line of research to be explored. This exploratory study found the presence of bittersweet emotions in consumers who would consider green burial, though it is not conclusive about the relationship between such phenomena.

***Table 18**: Examples of bittersweet emotions exhibited by possible convert consumers*

"Empowering yet confusing"
"I think it's almost fun when deciding about myself but it makes me really sad to talk about my family regarding what they want their plans to be."
"Thoughtful, curious, slight anxiety, slight sadness"
"Personal, calming, fulfilling"
"Fraught, sad, empowering"
"Decisive, strong, important"

5.4.3 Summary of Consumer Questionnaire

The consumer survey revealed that most people are interested in cremation for their body after death. Two groups emerged from those that indicated that cremation will be the probably means of body disposition: 1) steadfast cremators and 2) potential converts. Steadfast cremators highly value simplicity and avoiding discomfort for family members and for themselves at the thought of decomposing. Meanwhile, emerging themes from possible converts are valuing returning to the earth in a non-harming way and holding conflicting, bittersweet emotions about death. Although more research is required, there's evidence that possible converts might be open to having hard conversations about purpose, decomposition, and the emotional complexity of death. It is in that space of vulnerability that they become more open to the idea of green burial.

5.5 The Interview Participants

Ten participants from eight cemeteries were interviewed in nine separate interviews. One interview was a joint interview; two employees of the same cemetery were interviewed at the same time. Six of the ten participants are women and four were men. The cemeteries where interviewees work are listed in Table 20. Cemeteries are listed in the order in which the affiliated participants were interviewed. Locations are represented in Figure 44. There was a diverse range of experiences, from novice employees who were new to the funeral industry to seasoned veterans who have worked in the funeral industry for decades. Some interview participants are family counselors at the cemetery, who meet with the families to help arrange and finalize burial body disposition decisions. Other participants are funeral directors who know own and operate the green cemetery where they work. A few participants' careers originated in conservation and now include death care.

Direct quotes from interviews will be credited to the participants, though individual names will not be exposed. Rather, participants will be quoted as "Representative of X cemetery."

***Table 19**: Cemeteries who participated in interviews: city, state, and type of green cemetery*

Cemetery Name	**City**	**State**	**Type**
Forest Lawn Memorial Park	Candler	NC	Hybrid
Historic Oakwood Cemetery	Raleigh	NC	Hybrid

Pine Forest Memorial Gardens	Wake Forest	NC	Hybrid
Carolina Memorial Sanctuary	Mills River	NC	Conservation
Land Matters	Durham	NC	Conservation
Larkspur Conservation	Nashville	TN	Conservation
Duck Run Natural Cemetery	Penn Laird	VA	Natural
Forest Rest Natural Cemetery	Boones Mill	VA	Hybrid

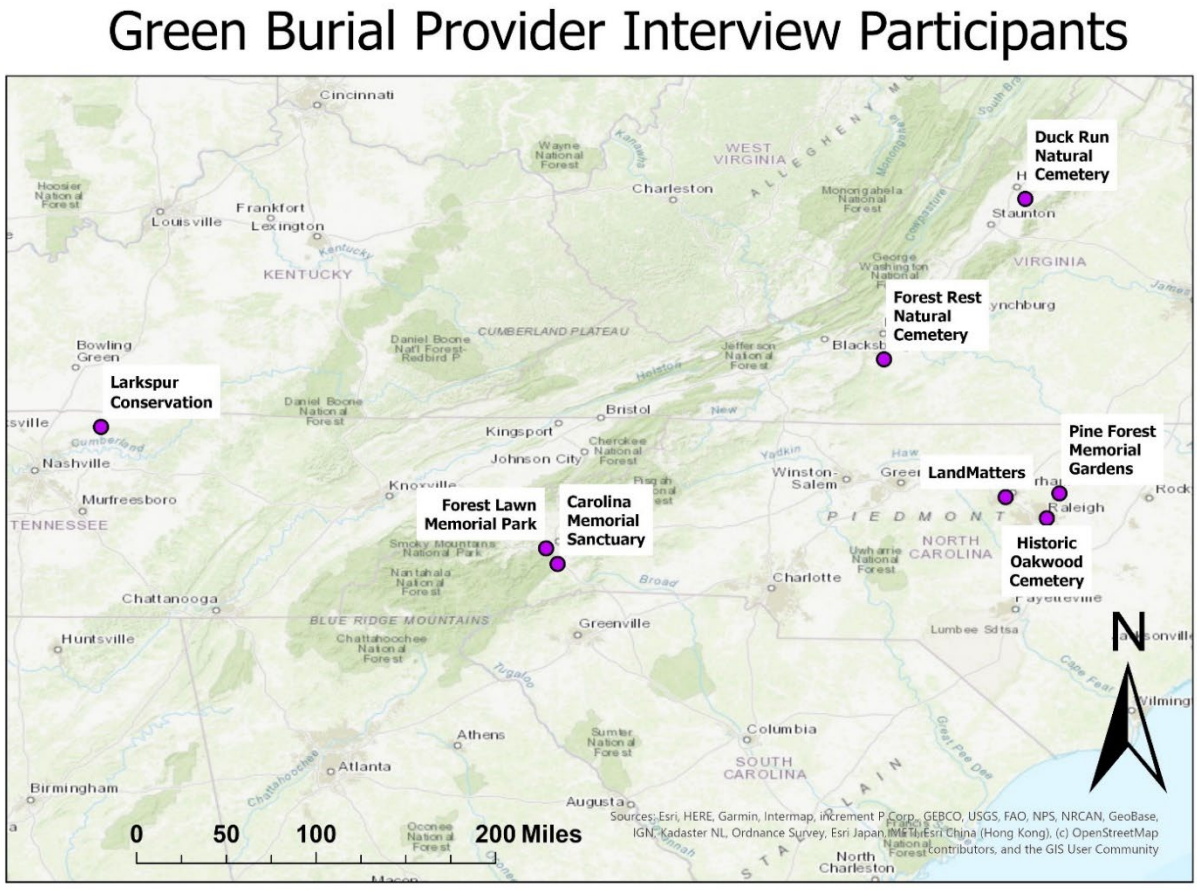

Figure 43: *Location of cemeteries from which green burial providers were interviewed*

5.6 Interviewees: Identifying the Obstacles

Three overarching obstacles were identified through the nine interviews. The following subsections will elucidate the three overarching obstacles with examples and anecdotes from the interviews.

5.6.1 Obtaining the required resources and support

Land Allocation in Hybrid Cemeteries

Although every cemetery that I interviewed experienced some level of difficulty obtaining resources and support, the required resources for hybrid, conservation, and natural cemeteries differs greatly. The hybrid cemeteries (Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Historic Oakwood, Pine Forest Memorial Gardens, and Forest Rest Natural Cemetery) all began as contemporary cemeteries and green burial sections were added later. All participants from hybrid cemeteries reported that finding the land was not a challenge:

> "We already had the area just as, like, an area to potentially use in the future. We have a couple of different sports in the cemetery that are like that… this is nothing right now, but we'll find out what to do with it later" (Forest Lawn Memorial Park Representative).

For cemeteries that had multiple locations, such as Forest Rest Natural Cemetery, identifying a piece of property that attached to the existing cemetery was ideal:

> "We had an undeveloped area that truly was a forest… Being more out in the country instead of the city, we had the property we could develop for it; it was the prime location… If you consider the other locations that we have, [the owner] would have had to go and buy additional property that would not be attached to those cemeteries to be able to develop Forest Rest. Because he had the foresight and the vision, [the owner]

> wanted it to be in a forest. He just didn't want it to be in a field. He wanted people to be able to be down in the trees" (Forest Rest Natural Cemetery Representative).

Forest Rest Natural Cemetery did have to do some development before burials could begin. They had to clear parts of the land with a bulldozer and cut down some trees to make the land more accessible. Some of those trees were able to be turned into lumber to be used for fencing. Although the cost and development of a new section differs between cemeteries and landscape types, a representative of Historic Oakwood Cemetery reported that financing and developing a green burial section was not significantly different than the development of any other type of section in the cemetery:

> "We didn't face any [financial obstacles], just because we were developing a new section. You know, whenever we develop a new section, there are some expenses, obviously…. But that's what would happen in any section that we develop here" (Historic Oakwood Cemetery Representative).

Because hybrid cemeteries are already cemeteries, some of the financial expenses that become burdensome are extra amenities that the families can avail themselves of for the funeral of a loved one. For example, when the green burial section at Pine Forest Memorial Gardens, also called the Garden of Renewal, was developed, the manager wanted to purchase a "caisson to take the bodies into the woods… we now have a beautiful caisson and families can decorate the casket and the cart and then hold onto the caisson" (Pine Forest Memorial Gardens Representative) as they transport the body to the grave site.

Land Acquisition for Non-Hybrid Cemeteries

For green cemeteries that are not hybrid and therefore did not start as a contemporary cemetery, finding land to create a green cemetery is a challenge. Suitable land has to be identified and then purchased by the organization before a green cemetery can be founded.

A representative from Carolina Memorial Sanctuary outlined the sequence of events that led to the establishment of the green cemetery: She first found land in Black Mountain, NC, but the "economy went kaput" and she put the project aside until Unity of the Blue Ridge Church in Mills River, NC asked her if she would want to partner with them to create a conservation burial ground on eleven acres that were adjoining the church's property. Although she had found other pieces of land that might have worked, she ended up agreeing to partner with Unity of the Blue Ridge:

> "I realized how unique Unity was because it already had parking, it already had a frontage on a roadway. And I found a lot of beautiful land but I would have had to go right past someone's private house to get to the land and when you have a burial you've got 60 cars coming in, it wouldn't be fair" (Representative from Carolina Memorial Sanctuary).

Unity of the Blue Ridge Church sold the parcel of land to the Anattasati Magga Buddhist group in Asheville, NC. The money to purchase the land, obtained by making a personal investment, was donated to the Buddhist group by the research participant and representative of Carolina Memorial Sanctuary:

> "So the reason I was able to do this was I had a house in west Asheville that I was tired of owning, so I sold my house to fund the sanctuary. I loaned the money to the Sanga to buy the land and I used the rest of the money I got from my house to set the sanctuary up" (Representative of Carolina Memorial Sanctuary).

The personal nature of this investment is indicative of the difficulties to raise financial resources to purchase land. Likewise, it is also indicative of the values discussed later in this chapter that are required to successfully start and maintain a green burial practice. Representatives from Larkspur Conservation also attested to the difficult nature of obtaining money and land to start a conservation green burial ground:

> "Because we're a non-profit, funding to purchase land, that was an obstacle. Finding land was an obstacle. You know, once you find land, then the land owner has to be into the idea as well. And then you have to persuade the neighbors and then you have to persuade the community. And at any point, if one of those dominos falls, it could take down the whole project" (Representative of Larkspur Conservation).

According to the representative from Carolina Memorial Sanctuary, the neighboring land owners were not opposed to the idea of a conservation green burial ground. Unity of the Blue Ridge Church is the sanctuary's main neighbor, with other neighbors being the North Carolina State University Agriculture Research Center, farmland, and private homes. The representative from Carolina Memorial Sanctuary also discussed the benefits of creating cemetery using land that is owned by a religious organization:

> "In North Carolina, to do a public cemetery, you have to have at least 30 acres, hire a funeral director has to run it, $50,000 bond, and all these things that we didn't have because the land is only 11 acres. So… but we found out that if it's church-owned, you bypass that whole thing. So churches can do what they want with their land and their burial grounds. So with Unity owning it, or our Buddhist group owning it, we were exempt from all of those guidelines. But a lot of the guidelines say that there needs to be paved roads so the folks can get to the graves and things like that. And we weren't going to have paved roads. So we didn't have to worry about that" (Representative of Carolina Memorial Sanctuary).

The land already had some infrastructure, such as the parking lot previously mentioned and an amphitheater and cement pad were there, albeit overgrown with invasive plants:

> "Well the land…. It was overgrown. Unity had stopped using it. They had put in an amphitheater and a cement pad to do picnics on and things like that. But they weren't using it so it had become overgrown with invasive plants. In its history it was a, the whole property was a dairy farm. And so when we purchased it, you couldn't really penetrate the property. We didn't know what the land looked like. So she helped me to get contractors, the first crew to come in and cut… cut down the invasive… to cut it down to the ground. We didn't dig anything up, we didn't disturb the duff really. We took out a lot of tulip poplars and cleared it so we could see what we had" (Representative of Carolina Memorial Sanctuary).

Once land is acquired, much time and resources must be allocated to cleaning up the land to make it usable for burial. This is particularly true if there was a prior use of the land, such as farming. A representative from Duck Run Natural Cemetery attests to this:

> "The farm we bought was an old dairy farm, 113 acres… the farm just ended up falling to disarray. And so the price was right. It was a beautiful piece of land. I mean, just lays out rolling hills, looks at the end of the Massanutten Mountain and you look over this way and see the skyline drive and you can see the West Virginia mountains over there… [we] bought the property and spent a lot of time out there. We demolished 11 buildings and basically for years have been doing nothing but cleaning up the land" (Representative from Duck Run Natural Cemetery).

Land, funding to purchase land, and funding to restore the land are required resources that have proven to be difficult for green burial cemeteries who are not hybrid; i.e. the organization does not already own and operate a contemporary cemetery. However, physical resources like money and land are not the only obstacle that green burial providers have faced.

5.6.2 “People don’t know what they don’t know”

In my interview with a representative from Larkspur Conservation, a very poignant observation was made: “People don’t know what they don’t know.” This points to a discrepancy, not only in knowledge, but in the awareness that there is a lack of knowledge about a particular subject. The two groups of people who consistently and frequently came up in discussion with the interview participants as lacking knowledge and awareness of lacking knowledge were funeral directors and families (or consumers). This has presented unique challenges to green burial providers who 1) rely on support from and partnership with funeral directors in their area and 2) rely on families to make the decision to use their services.

Funeral directors are resistant

A common reaction from funeral directors that many of the interview participants faced was the question “What are you doing?”

When a funeral home first begins to offer green burial, they may encounter their own set of obstacles because of their lack of knowledge. A representative from HOC told a story about the first time a funeral home in her area provided green burial for a family:

> “The very first green burial a funeral home did, they totally did not know how to charge it… I think they lost money… And so, you know, it was a learning curve. We were the first ones in Raleigh to do it, and so it took a learning curve for our funeral homes to want to do it and to be able to prepare to do it and have it as part of their business model” (Representative from HOC).

Fitting it into the business model of the funeral home is certainly a concern for funeral homes. According to a representative from Historic Oakwood Cemetery, funeral directors are often “afraid about their bottom line” (Representative from HOC).

> "But I think they are, or were, uneasy. I mean, they know they make a lot of money from vaults and they personally make money from vaults. Funeral directors make up a commission on the sale of vaults" (Representative from HOC).

Even the legality of not using a vault concerns funeral directors, according to the representative of HOC. She said that "In the beginning, funeral homes [said] 'what do you mean, you're not going to require a vault?' or 'How are you just going to let this person go in the ground? Is this legal?' You know, they didn't understand, even though vaults are a cemetery rule in North Carolina, not a state law" (Representative of HOC). A representative from Pine Forest Memorial Gardens (PFMG) is encouraged, though, because despite the lack of funeral directors' knowledge about green burial in her area, funeral directors are willing to admit that they need help:

> "I'll get a call from a funeral director saying 'A family wants a green burial and I don't even know what it is. What do we do?' And I'm encouraged that at least they called and asked instead of like 'Oh well, we won't do it" (Representative from PFMG).

A representative from CMS concurred. Her experience was that some funeral directors "do not want anything to do with what we were doing" (Representative from CMS). This manifested in a conversation between the funeral home and a family member who wanted to use a biodegradable wooded coffin:

> "One funeral home in particular was trying to scare a family that the wooden coffin that they had had made by a friend was going to leak. And it wasn't" (Representative from CMS).

To the representative at CMS, the lack of support from the funeral directors comes from a lack of knowledge:

> "I think they don't know what [green burial] means. I think that it's ignorance, not that they're stupid, but they are ignorant to what this means and actually what the body will or won't do when it's not embalmed. You know, they're trained that you need to embalm a body and after a certain period of time it's going to start decomposing. Well that's not my experience" (Representative from CMS).

Instead, the representative from CMS says that her Buddhist tradition teaches that a "finer breath" (Representative of CMS) remains in the body after death, thus delaying decomposition. She says that "when the finer breath leaves, the body changes" (Representative of CMS), i.e. decomposition occurs.

But sometimes the resistance to green burial by funeral directors is brought on by the apparent amount of work that is associated with providing green burial. A representative from LC shared that some funeral directors' attitudes towards green burial come across as "Oh that's too much work. I don't want to do that" (Representative from LC). The representative labeled it as "laziness," but it's "laziness due to burn-out…I think mental health is also an issue in the funeral world too. I think all of those different things… are reasons why it's never been done" (Representative from LC).

The pattern of resistance to a new technology or process is not novel in the funeral industry. The representative from Duck Run Natural Cemetery recounted his experience as a long-standing death care provider. He began his career as a funeral director and funeral home owner in 1975. At that time, cremation was a "strange new thing" (Representative of DRNC), but he watched as the percentage of people choosing cremation rose steadily. "[He] started doing some research and applying for permits and the very first part of '80 [he] put in a crematory, 40

years ago" (Representative of DRNC). At that point, he said there were only five crematories in the state and began "cremating bodies within an 80 mile radius. Every funeral home around" (Representative of DRNC). But some funeral directors, particularly the generation older than him, said things like: "I don't know man, I don't see it" or "You don't know what you're doing. Maybe you shouldn't be doing that. You shouldn't be promoting that stuff and that's not good for your business" (Representative of DRNC). He related those negative responses to cremation to what the death care industry is facing right now with green burial:

> "You didn't like cremation, but forty years later, here it is buddy. And you might not like natural burial, but forty years from now that's where… there's going to be a lot of it" (Representative of DRNC).

When talking with his funeral director peers, the representative of DRNC tries to start conversations about the similarities of cremation and green burial, both in terms of the genesis and initial resistance from funeral directors and the actual process of disposing of the body:

> "I'm like, guys, it's the same thing. It's just the end result. You know that if you have a traditional funeral, you meet with the family, you embalm the body, you dress them, you have a family night, you take them out to the church and have a funeral and then you go out to the cemetery and bury them. Well you can do the same thing with cremation… but instead of going to the cemetery for burial, you bring the body back and cremate it… So I've been trying to explain to funeral directors that green burial is no different than cremation" (Representative of DRNC).

A representative from FRNC concurred and has had similar conversations with funeral directors:

> "We keep encouraging them that this is something that they need to embrace because, as opposed to a direct cremation where they have no opportunity to use their facilities or vehicles and staff or even to sell a wicker casket or to do a natural embalming… we keep

> telling funeral directors… this is an option that families want and it also provides revenue to you as opposed to just a direct cremation" (Representative from FRNC).

Getting funeral directors on board with green burial has, according to the interviewees, revolves around addressing the challenges to fitting green burial into the current business models of the funeral home. Resistance and lack of knowledge about the green burial process on the part of the funeral directors is only one facet of the knowledge gap obstacle that green burial providers have faced. Green burial providers also face a learning curve themselves once they decide to make green burial available at their cemetery.

Green burial providers face a steep learning curve

The cemetery owners and operators that I interviewed all attested to the learning curve that they experienced in the beginning. The learning curve was felt most keenly by those at hybrid cemeteries, who are accustomed to offering contemporary burial. For example, the representative from HOC described the challenge of learning how deep to bury the body for green burial. The foreman and other staff were accustomed to digging deep graves, such as those used in contemporary burial:

> "Even my own foreman was like 'I should be digging these like six feet deep!" and I'm like 'No! We're not digging these six feet deep! They should not be that deep for decomposition!' No one's going to dig them up. It was a learning curve for my staff… I did not have that process, I think because we're already an existing cemetery" (Representative of HOC).

Not only did the folks at HOC have to learn how to appropriately dig a green burial grave, they also had to learn how to lower a body into the ground without a lowering device. Prior to

opening the green burial section, HOC always had the "vault company do the lowering device. [They] have their own lowering device, but [they] never use it. So [they] still had to learn how to do this" (Representative of HOC). She recounted a story of having to practice lowering a body into a grave by hand prior to their first green burial; they used the superintendent of the cemetery as the "body" to practice on, though she jokingly doubts that that was allowed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

The representative from PFMG recounted a similar learning experience during her first green burial at her cemetery. She was told by a colleague that some green cemeteries "soften the appearance of the earth by covering it with flowers or greenery" (Representative from PFMG). However, she mistook this as needing to put flowers and greenery on the vertical sides of the grave instead of "the pile of earth next to the grave" (Representative of PFMG). She laughed as she told this story, almost feeling embarrassed by the seemingly honest mistake.

The representative of CMS talked about the huge learning curve that she experienced entering into the death care space, let alone starting a green cemetery:

> "I had no experience. My teacher told me she asked me to do it because I had a comfort with the body and the body's processes. I was a hairdresser for 30 years. And the other capacity she recognized that was when fear arose, I was able to look at it and hold it and then move forward. After I understood the fear and could set it aside and I could move forward. So for a lot of times with the Center for End of Life Transitions and taking care of bodies, I had no experience of it. So I was learning first-hand. And there was nobody to teach me. So there were some situations around what bodies do when they die that might have caused me to gag or something like that [laughing] and so, you know, I think what my mind does, it always says 'what's the worst case scenario here, Caroline? The worst case scenario is you throw up.' Right? So you just move forward. You throw up and just keep going. So [laughing] actually the worst case scenario was I die, and I'm not afraid of that, so the second worse is I throw up."

There's a level of comfort with death and decomposition that green burial providers have to be comfortable with. The raw, organic processes have to be discussed. An area where green burial providers, particularly hybrid providers, have experienced a learning curve is in speaking with families about such rawness associated with the green burial process. Discussing the process of green burial requires some tact and grace that some interviewees have had to learn. A representative from FLMP describes this challenge:

> "Usually people don't come in looking for it. Usually if I bring it up, it's to people that haven't ever hear of it before for one, or two, don't know what they want to do. They don't know if they want to be buried or cremated and I just mention it as an option. Most of the time they have no idea what it is, so then you kind of have to sit and explain… you don't get treated with chemicals, your body isn't embalmed, you're kept cold until you're buried… and they almost always pull that face when you tell the, that you're not embalmed" (Representative from FLMP).

The representative from FLMP said that "that face" and the accompanying disgust usually comes with the "thought of decomposing in the ground, which you do anyways" (Representative of FLMP). She states that if the client "seem[s] grossed out by it, [she] doesn't even mention it" (Representative from FLMP). Figuring out the best way to talk to families about green burial without "talking them out of it" (Representative from HOC) is a challenge that requires skill and practice. This challenge is spurred by the third layer of the knowledge gap: death care consumers are not aware of green burial as an option.

Death care consumers are not aware of green burial

The most consistently-reported obstacle that all interview participants experienced, manifested as a knowledge gap, is that death care consumers are unaware that green burial is an option. Green burial providers are often met with questions about what green burial is:

> "Well people are curious about it, you know, I get when we first open that section, people were like 'what?'" (Representative of HOC)

> "We've been advocating for green burial for 10 years. There are people who don't understand what it is… people don't recognize that this is an option" (Representative of LM)

Not only do they not know what green burial is, but in some cases, they might not even know that a green burial cemetery exists:

> "People have no idea what green burial is. You know, we're getting ready to do a construction project and I was meeting with bankers about preliminary stuff and one of the girls at the bank was like 'What's Duck Run?' And here she is right here. 'I've never even heard of it.' So there is a lot of education that needs to take place" (Representative of DRNC).

A representative from FLMP says that because families often "have no idea what [green burial] is… you kind of have to explain" (Representative from FLMP). When told what green burial is, people sometimes get excited about the idea:

> "I said, by the way, we have a natural burial area… but I get a peak of interest in their eye or they look a little bit shocked and go 'What's that?' Then I'll go into a lot of explanations and explain what it is and they go 'Gosh, I didn't even know you could do that!'" (Representative from FRNC)

Some people, even if they are vaguely aware of what green burial is, are nervous because of preconceived concerns about the body's exposure to the elements of nature and the legality of burying someone directly into the ground:

> "You can tell that people are very nervous when they drive up because they have no idea what to expect. And most people are fearful that animals are going to dig up graves and that kind of thing. So as we were, if we were walking behind the golf cart pulling the trailer with the shrouded body or the casket, I was usually in the back and I could hear people say "I thought this was illegal" (Representative from CMS).

Education is a "challenge," according to a representative of LC. The preconceived concerns require that death care professions, specifically green burial providers, to "re-educate people through a lot of different stuff and validate that their intuition is right" (Representative from LC). Once people hear about green burial or experience it for themselves, they may think "This is what I want. I wish we could have done that for my dad" (Representative from CMS). Although challenging for green burial providers, education provides "an opportunity to bring people into the story that we're telling about how they and their loved ones are part of and contributing to space" (Representative of LC).

Not all people want to be educated, though. Some people "are completely turned off by it [and] don't want to have the idea of it" (Representative of FRNC). However, those that are receptive to the idea of green burial might have a paradigm shift in their understanding of what is best for the environment. For example, a representative of PFMG spoke about people transitioning from wanting cremation to wanting green burial:

> "Educate them when they want to be educated. Sometimes they don't want to be, and that's okay. They do what they're parents did, and that's okay. But ultimately, a lot of times, I would have to say a good portion, over 50% of our burials in our Garden of

> Renewal are people who were going to be cremated and scattered. Who thought that was the most earth-friendly thing that they could do. And they realized no it's not. And now they have an alternative" (Representative from PFMG).

The lack of consumers' knowledge about green burial might be related to the final obstacle that green burial providers experience: death is a taboo topic. Without open discussion about death, consumers lack awareness of all death care options, not just green burial.

5.6.3 Death is a taboo topic

The final obstacle that green burial providers experience, though not explicitly discussed by all interview participants, is best described by a representative of LC:

> "I think initially the biggest obstacle was the fact that in America we have never talked about death or been taught hot to talk about death. So education was the biggest obstacle… It's a shadow work, the people are doing this in the dark and we don't walk about that.. 'oh they do that thing, we don't want to talk about that.' It's kind of got that illusion and that mystery" (Representative of LC).

Death is labeled as a taboo topic; people do not readily discuss death care options. This directly affects the ability of green burial providers to explain green burial to families. A representative from FLMP speaks about the conundrum of death-denial and green burial:

> "I'm surprised more people don't do green burial. [They say] 'well I won't care, I'm dead, so what does it matter?' But then they say "but I don't like the idea od bugs eating me or something.' It's kind of hard to explain to people that it'll probably happen anyway" (Representative of FLMP).

Despite recognizing that they are not physically or psychologically "present" within their dead body, people are still uncomfortable about the natural processes of death, including decomposition and nutrient processing via being consumed by insects. Some green cemeteries even go far as to backfill or mound graves so that people don't "think something's been digging them up… that's upsetting to families" (Representative of HOC).

Green burial confronts the death denial and taboo of death care discussion by creating a space where friends and family become intimate with death. The representative from HOC spoke about this phenomenon:

> "Green burials are the most intimate burials out there… you're kind of exposed in a way that you can see the shape of somebody's nose… there is something very vulnerable about green burial. People tend to, even though there's a body in a shroud or a pine box or whatever, people seem to stand around a lot more at a green burial than when there's the vault lid" (Representative of HOC).

Even though it's a challenge, green burial presents an opportunity to face death in a unique and intimate way. A representative of LC says "the hard truth and the harsh reality of death is something that people need to see. It doesn't need to be glossed over and there doesn't need to be an illusion. This isn't a magic box with mirrors, you know, this thing actually happened" (Representative of LC).

5.7 Interviewees: Overcoming the Obstacles

The interview participants were eager to talk about what their experience was like in combatting the difficulties that they've faced. Six key themes were identified as crucial to the success of green burial placemaking, including overcoming the obstacles discussed in the

previous section (Figure 45). Interviewees gave examples of these themes in action and made recommendations for potential green burial providers to consider as they might face similar obstacles. The order of themes does not reflect importance; incorporation of all themes, or combination of multiple themes, seems to be effective in combatting the obstacles to green burial provision.

***Figure 44**: Themes identified as crucial to the success of green burial placemaking*

5.7.1 Community

Location matters

The first level of community engagement is location of the cemetery within a community that is supportive. A representative of FLMP, which is located close to Asheville NC, spoke

about the contrast of values between Candler, a rural area outside of Asheville, and values stereotypical of Asheville:

> "This is a super, you know, traditional southern area with very Christian people who very much want a traditional Christian… follow their family traditions sort of burial… The city of Asheville is… very liberal and people are trying to be more understanding and different there. And then you get out into the outskirts and it's very much like, traditional country… If we had marketed more towards the Asheville area when we originally started doing [green burial], then it might have had like a bigger reception" (Representative of FLMP).

CMS is another cemetery located close to Asheville, in a rural area called Mills River, NC. The representative that was interviewed sees the proximity of the cemetery to Asheville as a huge benefit:

> "I think for us [location] is key. Because we'll have close who might be closer to Ramsey Creek or another cemetery but they'll [say] 'Oh we always loved to come to Asheville. If I'm going to come visit and it's not by my home, I'd rather go to Asheville.' So they like that idea because Asheville is a beloved place in the history of their family. Or the mountains or somewhere near here. So that was a plus for us" (Representative of CMS).

Likewise, the representative from HOC noted that the location of her cemetery is in a "very free spirit part of the city" (representative of HOC) and families with historic family plots inquired about green burial practices, like not using a vault, even before the green burial section was established. Representatives from FLMP, HOC, and CMS all reported that location within the community mattered; the support from a specific community of people located in an area where like-minded people have congregated, such as the historic Oakwood neighborhood or Asheville, made it possible for their green cemeteries to become established and accepted parts of the community.

Building community within the cemetery

It's evident that the surrounding community is vital to a successful start and continued management of a green cemetery. Community can be built within the cemetery via many avenues. In HOC, which allows for gardening, people can create "gigantic gardens" (Representative of HOC) on the plots of their deceased loved one. Families coming to pick out plots of land to purchase see the gardens in the green burial section say "I want to be near that!" (Representative of HOC). The green burial section "becomes quite the neighborhood" because everyone "seems to know each other" (Representative of HOC).

Not only do the living experience this sense of community, but there is a perception of continued community after death. The representative from HOC already has her and her husband's grave plots picked out. So when she sells green burial plots to other families, she says that she 'kind of get[s] to pick [her] neighbors" (Representative of HOC). The lady that bought a plot right next to her told her "I always have fresh eggs, I love to cook, you can borrow spices…" (Representative of HOC). Her neighborly generosity extends into death; despite the fact that they will both be dead, the woman and the representative of HOC chose to exist as neighbors in perpetuity.

There is also indication that green burial connects people who come to green burial funerals in a unique way. Because the burial process and the body itself are more visible, there are opportunities for hands-on interaction during the funeral process. Representatives from PFMG, CMS, and FRNC all speak about the intimate responsibilities that friends and families take on during the green burial process. While a home funeral is not required for a green burial, a representative from PFMG says that they can go hand-in-hand. The family can take

responsibility for cleaning, dressing, and casketing their loved one. They can keep their loved one at home right up until the burial occurs. This can provide opportunities for friends and relatives to visit the family and the loved one in the home, which can be a much more intimate setting than a funeral home (Representative from PFMG). For example, the representative from PFMG told a story about a young girl who passed away from cancer. Her family kept the little girl's body at home, the mother dressed her daughter in her pajamas, brushed her hair, and laid her in her bed. The little girl's friends were able to say goodbye in a setting that was familiar and non-threatening. Then the little girl was placed in a handmade casket; "the children… could touch the casket, they could write on the casket" (Representative of PFMG).

A representative from FRNC spoke about the "connection" to the location and to the people that attend green burial services. The family and friends are allowed to be completely engaged "to the point of entering their grave, the committal into the grave… We've had singing, we've had poems, we've had scriptures, anything you can think of… And you know, each family's unique and I have them in the rest of the cemetery as well, but down in Forest Rest, there's just a peace. That's the best way I can describe it. And when their loved on is placed in the grave, families love the opportunity to be able to help fill that grave" (Representative from FRNC).

A representative from CMS similarly describes the community atmosphere that a green burial service provides:

> "And then when they start the service or when they arrive, there's a lot of grief. But when they start lowering the casket themselves and they do the memorial service, then when they start to put the earth on, they start opening up because they've moved through their grief. And they're moving through it physically. They're whole being is moving through it. And so by the end there's usually laughter and joy and hugging and sometimes alcohol. You know? And it's just beautiful because they've connected. They were in this raw state of having no idea what was going to happen. And in that place of not knowing,

> you're wide open. You know, you can be wide open. And we try to make it as comfortable as possible so people can relax into that not knowing instead of being fearful about what they are going to experience. So… and being in nature helps people to relax into the not knowing and the openness of it versus the fear and the tightening of it. So I think that's how folks can move through their grief so easily" (Representative from CMS).

In her experience, the representative from CMS has seen people come to a green burial funeral feeling grief and isolation, but the process of the green burial itself and the location in nature allows people to "move through their grief" and connect with one another (Representative from CMS). Even when friends and family are in a "raw state of having no idea what was going to happen" at the funeral, they move through that uncertainty together (Representative from CMS).

Community within and beyond the cemetery not only benefits the friends and family members that are experiencing grief due to the loss of a loved one. Community begins the conversation of awareness. Many people who are initially not aware of green burial realize that it's a viable death care option after attending a green burial service (Representative of CMS).

5.7.2 Collaboration

The cemeteries of HOC, LM, PFMG, DRNC, FRNC and CMS all received help from a death care provider or organization as their green burial grounds were starting up. After receiving help, many of the green burial grounds that were interviewed were willing to return the favor to other cemeteries or organizations that were interested in creating their own green burial ground.

The representative from HOC went to West Lauren Hill in Philadelphia to tour their green burial ground and learn from their experience of having to re-write some of their plans, including what types of markers or headstones they used (Representative from HOC). The representative from HOC also talked to the representative of PFMG and the Green Burial Council to learn how to start a green burial section in an already-existing cemetery (Representative from HOC). Because HOC was the first green burial ground in Raleigh, there was a "learning curve" that collaboration with other organizations helped ease the burden of. Once the green burial ground at HOC became established, the representative of HOC began receiving calls from other people who are interested in starting a green burial ground. The representative from HOC says that she is happy to help other cemeteries:

> "We've been honored to be able to help other cemeteries in the state create [a green burial ground], whether they were their own stand alone green burial ground or added to a cemetery, just from what we have learned. And again, they are not our competitors, we're all in it together. If we believe in green burial, then we believe the more green burial options there are, the better for our community… it's taken a village to get it done here" (Representative from HOC).

After setting the goal of creating a conservation burial ground, the representative of LM also did research by observing other burial grounds:

> "We need to educate ourselves. We need to start by learning from others whove done this by observing and visiting the cemeteries to see what they look like and see what feels right for us… we visited 35 natural burial grounds around the country and one in South Africa… We really like to see how other people create these and what those stories are and what stories are in the land and how people decide that this is the right fit for them" (Representative from LM).

The representative of PFMG began her research into green burial by reading *Grave Matters* by Mark Harris. She then became connected with the Green Burial Council and took a green burial class by Joe Sehee (the Green Burial Council founder) in Las Vegas, where she learned more about how to start a green burial ground. The representative of PFMG kept a close professional relationship with Joe Sehee as she started the green burial grounds at her cemetery; she called Joe Sehee for advice before the first green burial funeral at her cemetery. After she became more confident in providing green burial for her families, the representative of PFMG began receiving calls from other cemeteries as well. The calls she receives are sometimes cemeterians who "just need to have their hand held for a little bit. Because it's different from what we're used to" (Representative from PFMG). In that sense, she doesn't always answer large questions about starting a green burial cemetery from scratch, but might have questions about small matters come in, like where to put flowers (Representative from PFMG). She said she's even gotten questions from funeral homes about green burial; they might have no experience with green burial, but instead of saying "Oh well, we won't do it" (Representative from PFMG), the funeral directors reach out for help. The representative from PFMG finds this very encouraging.

The representative from DRNC also met with Joe Sehee from the Green Burial Council as he began doing his research into green burial. His research included "paying attention to the different organizations that were trying to get things going" (Representative from DRNC). To the representative of DRNC, the Green Burial Council stood out to him as being "logical and realistic;" an organization that he could follow (Representative from DRNC). As a representative of one of the first green burial grounds in Virginia, the representative from DRNC spoke about his desire to set the standard and encourage others to do the same:

> "I'm going to set the standard. I'm going to do it right. And someone's going to come in and outdo me. Great! Let them outdo me! The public will benefit from that" (Representative from DRNC).

The representative of DRNC exemplifies his desire to have other cemeteries "outdo" him by seeking out opportunities to talk to funeral directors and other cemeterians: "The right approach [to increasing green burial awareness] is to work within the system" (Representative from DRNC. He has reached out to all eight of the local and regional funeral director's associations and organizations in the state of Virginia, though only two groups have taken him up on his offer to speak about the business benefits of providing green burial to families (Representative of DRNC). He emphasized that increasing green burial awareness requires "teamwork" (Representative of DRNC).

A representative from FRNC also found mentorship and collaboration with the Green Burial Council to be beneficial. Jeff Hodes, Director of the Green Burial Council, introduced green burial to the representative of FRNC; he had also heard about green burial from industry magazines, trade journals, and from the Campbells, who started the first green burial cemetery in the United States at Ramsey Creek Preserve in South Carolina. Another representative from FRNC, who handles the day-to-day operation of the cemetery, now speaks at various chapters of funeral director organizations to encourage other funeral homes and cemeteries that green burial is an important option for families to have. She sees collaboration and adaptation as an important tool to providing families what they need:

> "Let's work together. This can be productive and profitable for [funeral homes] too. You just have to think differently. And isn't that the way of the world? Everything changes every day and unless we learn to adapt and offer what the census of the community

> wants, then what's the purpose of being there? We're here to serve families" (Representative of FRNC).

Although collaboration is important, it can also be a burden on the resources of a cemetery or organization. A representative from CMS spoke about the importance of compensating mentors for their time:

> "I hired Billy and Kimberley Campbell. I hired them as consultants. It wasn't like a 'hey can you tell me how you did it so I can do it too?' thing. I honored their time and paid them for it" (Representative of CMS).

Paying the Campbells for their time as green burial consultants was important to the representative of CMS because she, too, was receiving many phone calls and emails asking for her to volunteer her time and expertise.

> "We don't have time for it. We're all so busy with starting our own cemeteries that it became a part time job because so many people wanted our help. And so… it was tough, and it sounded arrogant but it's the truth. I mean, for a period of time it was like once a week I had somebody wanting me to tell them how I got started and how to do it. So we had to stop. We just didn't have time. But if they want to do a conservation burial ground they could reach out to Conservation Burial Alliance. We do have a website so they could reach out to the Conservation Burial Alliance" (Representative of CMS).

According to the representative of CMS, mentorship and collaboration should have boundaries and clear avenues for giving and receiving help. Organizations like the Conservation Burial Alliance and Green Burial Council are two groups that all cemeteries at least heard about, if not collaborated with. The representatives from LC started the Conservation Burial Alliance as a way to get information about conservation burial out to citizens in the United States. According to the representative from LC, "[the Conservation Burial Alliance] started because we kind of

always been talking back and forth, supporting each other loosely" and eventually they decided "we should just make this thing where we meet up and talk every month or every two months and have a conversation with everybody" (Representative of LC). Now, the Conservation Burial Alliance is a 501c3 non-profit organization that fields calls from people interested in the work of conservation burial. It's a "working group" where death care professionals can "support one another, learn from one another, share ideas, make clear the language of conservation burial" (Representative of LM). The Conservation Burial Alliance is what the representative from LM calls a "community of practice" that is a "rich space of healthy engagement and sharing of ideas that's really beneficial to us all. Likewise, the Green Burial Council, is a resource that many current green burial providers point prospective providers to with questions (Representative from PFMG). The representative of LM says that she always sends "folks who come to us looking for support and advice" to the Green Burial Council website, specifically to an educational piece called *So You Want to Start a Natural Cemetery?* By Lee Webster.

Collaboration within the death care community also points to a need to specifically collaborate and communicate with funeral directors. The next core value that has facilitated the successful creation and management of green burial grounds is communication.

5.7.3 Communication

The green burial providers communicated early and often with the funeral directors in their area to make sure that they were aware of the new option that they were providing families:

> "I did kind of do a funeral home tour of 'Hey look, I'm going to open this green burial ground. It doesn't mean we're trying to cut you out of the equation. It means that there's different and more opportunities'" (Representative from HOC).

The notion of not being "cut out of the equation' (Representative from HOC) was important to convey, particularly so that the funeral directors know that it is 1) a viable option for families and 2) something they can incorporate into their business models:

> "It was an educational process, number one, so that they understand that we weren't cutting them out of anything, that it's something that they too could, I don't want to say profit from, it could benefit their business model… they could be part of this, they don't want to be left behind" (Rep. from HOC).

The representative from LC mentioned that their initial planning sessions for the green burial ground included discussion about talking to funeral directors about "what [we] need from [funeral directors] and funeral homes, how to talk to them, what to expect from them and also sort of end-of-life planning in general" (Representative from LC)

The representative from LM likens educating funeral directors to educating the public. LM engages with the community by proving information sessions about green burial and about their specific plans for their green burial ground. Similarly, they hold information sessions targeted to funeral director, some of which are happy to hear that this is now an option:

> "We need to constantly be educating funeral homes that this is an option… We're trying to speak with funeral homes ahead of time in the similar way of doing the info sessions. Just to let them know that we are going to be offering a place where people can do this. And we've heard from some of them, actually, that they have clients asking them for this" (Representative from LM).

The representatives from LC have also received positive feedback when giving funeral directors a heads-up about their plans to start a green burial ground:

> "…I'm going to go ahead and tell the local funeral directors. And they were like 'Oh, well this is great! I love this idea. This is exciting. I'll come and support if you go before a public hearing.' You know, so that was great but I was really surprised by that" (Representative from LC).

Although LC received some support from local funeral directors, not all communication was acknowledged or received:

> "When Larkspur started, [representative from LC] wrote letters to a number of local funeral home sand funeral directors that he knows and didn't receive much communication back, right?" (Representative from LC).

Ultimately, the green burial grounds have been successful in part because of their efforts to communicate with the funeral directors and funeral homes in the area. Each of the interview participants emphasized that they want to work with funeral directors, not against them. The representative from DRNC, himself a seasoned funeral director, reaches out to bridge the gap between funeral directors and green burial providers: "Guys, I'm one of you. I'm a funeral director" (Representative from DRNC).

5.7.4 Champion

The theme of having a champion was present in almost all of the interviews, though it was not explicitly defined until I interviewed the representative from LM. She defines the champion based on her experience working as a consultant to help other organizations start green

burial grounds. She listened to the stories of those organizations and recognized it as "critical" to the genesis of green burial projects:

> "The critical element and the theme that runs throughout their stories is that there was one person, or two or three, who saw the values of these projects and the magic of these projects too, and said 'I want to make this happen.' And they stayed dogged to that vision and that desire for as many years as ten years before the project actually got off the ground. So we really think that champions are critical to the project" (Representative of LM).

Once she recognized the importance of champions to the project, she asks every client that comes to her with help establishing a green burial ground: "Who's going to be the champion? Who's going to be the person that sees this, wants it, and will do everything in their hear to ensure that they can find the resources, they can have the relationships, the can build the relationships?" (Representative of LM).

Most of the cemeterians that were interviewed were started, or inspired to start, by a champion, though they did not label it as such. The representative from HOC talked about her personal interest in green burial for her body after death and the legacy of the people in her position being buried within the cemetery:

> "Very selfishly, it was that I wanted to be green buried and everybody, everyone who has ever had my job before me is buried here at Oakwood. And I wanted to be buried here but I did not want to have the vaults and I did not want the mess of all of that…. It started because I wanted it and I wanted to be here and they [the board of directors] listened to me. So I'm very grateful" (Representative of HOC).

The championship came in the form of her desire to continue the legacy of the cemeterians before her, while staying true to her values. The representative from HOC presented

her idea for a green burial section, supported by research, to the board of directors, who listened to her, potentially because of her place of responsibility within the cemetery.

The representative from CMS was also personally invested in the creation of her green burial ground. Her investment was not based on personal interest in having a green burial for her body per se, but a monetary and resource investment. She believed in the community's need for a green burial ground so much that she was willing to make personal sacrifices in order to see the project to fruition:

> "So the reason I was able to do this was I had a house in west Asheville that I was tired of owning, so I sold my house to fund the sanctuary. I loaned the money to the Sanga to buy the land and I used the rest of the money I got from my house to set the sanctuary up. It wasn't a smart move but it made it happen" (Representative of CMS).

While the representatives from HOC and CMS were driven by a personal desires and investments, the representative of PFMG was driven to start a green burial section due to a story of someone in her community who wanted green burial. Clark, the inspiration behind the documentary A Will for the Woods, was diagnosed with a terminal illness. He knew he was dying and needed to make plans for his body when he passed away. The representative of PFMG met Clark, built a friendship with him, and determined to make his final wishes a reality. She describes the inspiration behind green burial at PFMG:

> "It's the story of Clark who was searching for a green burial. It was important to him… he couldn't even control what was going to happen to his body when he died. That's when I really became determined that he was going to be able to have his green burial" (Representative of PFMG).

Planning for the long-term financial stability of a cemetery or funeral home business has also served as a driving factor of championship for green burial. The representative of DRNC, who owns his own funeral home, began championing for a green burial ground as he considered the future of his family business:

> "I need to look at what's my son's future in this business years from now and stuff like that. So I just started watching about green burial… So at one point I just found the right piece of land at the right price and stuff like that. So I thought 'I'm going to take the leap right there.'" (Representative of DRNC).

The owner of FRNC also championed for green burial at his cemetery after hearing about green burial and wanting to make sure that his families have as many options as possible, thus attracting more business and staying up-to-date with funeral trends:

> "Mr. Wilson, who is the owner, has really kept his finger on the pulse and tried to make sure that we have as many options as we can possible have for our families" (Representative of FRNC).

The final driver of championship for green burial is interest in changing the course of the funeral industry. The representative from LC said that he started the project because he wanted "to recreate what a funeral home is and what it could look like" (Representative of LC). The representative from DRNC wanted to "take the lead" and "set the standard" so that other death care providers have some expectations to live up to as green burial gains more speed in the death care industry.

Whatever the driving force behind championship, it's clear that having a champion at the lead of a project is vital to the successful genesis of a green burial ground. The champion is

someone who does the research, convinces board members and cemetery owners, secures research, and sets the standards for future green burial cemeteries.

5.7.5 Compassion

Although death care is an industry and each of the cemeteries that were interviewed are business with financial responsibilities and goals, they all assert that the main purpose of their organization is to serve families. With compassion, the cemeteries recognize that when families come to them, it's a very difficult time in their lives. The role of the cemeterians is to walk with families through this time with patience and compassion:

> "We're the very last thing that, very last place you go is a cemetery, so pretty much this is one of the most difficult things that people go though. You know, losing their parents or their children or even their animals too, we bury animals as well. You know, trying to fulfill wishes and different responsibilities and all that. … make sure we're as giving as we can be and as patient as we can be and as kind and supportive…" (Representative of FL)

The representative from FRNC view her families as part of the larger family within the cemetery, a notion that "gives them a peace that helps with their grieving process" (Representative of FRNC). It's not always an easy task, especially due to the highly emotive nature of death and mourning:

> "It can be challenging at times, you know, when you're dealing with the dynamics of a family. And sometimes those dynamics are good and sometimes those dynamics are not so good. You kind of have to be the mediator. And you're also dealing with grief. And you have to be that person that they can lean on and depend on" (FRNC)

One of the ways that all of the cemeteries are "serving families" (Representative of HOC) is to provide options and educate families about those options.

> "We feel strongly that a person's choice for how they want their body to be disposed of s really a person's choice, an individual's choice. And we really don't want to ever give off the impression that we know better than someone else. We don't. Because it's so personal how you make those decisions. We just want to make sure people are aware that there are other options besides cremation" (Representative of LM).

Regardless of what disposal option (contemporary burial, green burial, cremation, etc.) the family or individual chooses, "ultimately it's about having somewhere that's pretty and serene that people can come to honor the memory of their loved one" (Representative of PFMG). Having compassion during the death care decision-making process means that the cemeterians that were interviewed "don't push preference for one over the other. They each have their place" (Representative of CMS). Instead, the goal is to "offer people assistance, of any race, for anybody, and an opportunity to connect with their heart and be with their loved one in a way that is profound and can help with healing" (Representative of CMS).

A few of the interview participants recognize that compassion should extend beyond the family of the deceased to the deceased person themselves:

> "I wanted to be able to, you know, not only help the people who had lost somebody, but help the person who could no longer help themselves because they were dead. And that stems from just my kind of nature and growing up on a farm and having that kind of respect for nature itself. And we are a part of that" (Representative of LC).

Treating deceased individuals with the utmost respect for their body is a way of upholding their value of compassion. As the representative from DRNC put it: "There's nothing more sacred than what I want done with my body after I'm dead."

5.7.6 Commitment

The final value that has helped green burial providers overcome obstacles that they have faced is commitment. One of the final questions that was asked in the interview was "What recommendations would you give to someone who was interested in starting a green burial cemetery?" Commitment to seeing the project through to completion and maintaining the cemetery in perpetuity are huge undertakings, according to the interview participants. Even conceptualizing what "forever" or "in perpetuity" is difficult for people to wrap their minds around:

> "When people tell me now they want to start a cemetery. I say you need to think long and hard about that. Because you need to understand. You have no idea what perpetual care means. The perpetual nature of this project. You know? It's kind of like "What is that??" People say: Will you guarantee me that this will be here forever? From a Buddhist perspective I say I can't guarantee you that. You know? I don't say that. Buddhism is about impermanence. And so from a director of the sanctuary mind, I say we're doing everything we can to make sure that happens. Because we'll never know. You look at all the church cemeteries that the churches have gone under. You never know, you know? So anyways, I tell people about that. It's not just something you can do today and in five years you're done and you can walk away. It's supposed to be there forever" (Representative of CMS).

The commitment is personal, as one of the representatives of LC explains. It's a project and a calling that you, as the cemetery owner or manager, have to be prepared to commit to the families that you will serve and the land that will become a sacred place:

> "This is a lifetime commitment. Not only to the families that you're planning on serving and helping through end of life, but to this land that you're going to be protecting. This isn't something that goes away after the first burial. You can't decide this isn't what you

> want to do any longer and close up shop and go to the beach, you know? So, I encourage people to soul-search and make sure this is really what they want to do and they are in it for this kind of lifetime experience" (Representative of LC).

For organizations who are interested in adding green burial to already-existing conservation work, the representative from LM suggested that it is important to "be committed to this idea and, in a sense, separate it from your other conservation work to make one of these projects happen" (Representative from LM). It can take up to ten years, according to the representative from LM, to start a green burial cemetery, from conception of the idea to maintaining a steady day-to-day operation. Commitment to the process beings being in it for the "long haul… they have to be committed to it, believe in it, and be prepared to just ride with it for a while. Because it's a slow evolution" (Representative from DRNC).

5.8 Study Limitations and Data Trustworthiness

Limitations to this study were the result of the methods of soliciting responses to the surveys. The funeral director responses were limited to the funeral directors who subscribe to the NFDA newsletters. Also, respondents were limited to the funeral directors who felt comfortable talking about green burial and had the time to respond to the survey. Likewise, the consumer survey results are limited due to the nature of online questionnaires. Only consumers who have access to the internet, have a device to connect to the internet, are on social media, and have the time and interest to respond completed the survey. Therefore, there may be income bias, gender bias, and biases due to values.

There are also limitations to conducting interviews via Zoom instead of in person. While the COVID-19 pandemic made meeting in person anyways, the distance of the interview

participants from Charlotte made Zoom an attractive option. Because the interviews were not in person, there were fewer opportunities to analyze body language and sub-contextual meanings. I was also unable to physically see the green burial places, apart from Carolina Memorial Sanctuary, which I visited on a personal, non-research related trip.

This research followed the insight and guidance provided by Nowell et al. (2017) to create a rigorous process to collect robust, trustworthy data. I spent an enormous amount of time with the data during the initial stages of collection and analysis; much of that time was spent hand-writing notes, organizing the raw data, and keeping record of my thoughts. By conducting some interviews before finalizing the funeral director and consumer surveys, I was able to triangulate key concepts such as awareness and accessibility. The responses from the interviews with green burial placemakers assisted in creating the survey questions. Reflexive journaling and peer debriefing (Nowell et al. 2017, p.4) were used throughout the research to process the data and codes that were emerging. As codes emerged, digital and hand-drawn diagrams were helpful in making connections. Colored highlighters were especially useful in delineating important data in the hard copy, hand-coded interview transcripts. The reflexive journaling, diagraming, and detailed record-keeping of this research leaves behind an audit trail for future researchers to duplicate my processes and safeguard the trustworthiness of the data.

It is particularly challenging to ensure the trustworthiness of the consumer data due to the nature of the topic. Consumers can say that they want their body to be disposed of in a particular way, but the family or next of kin will have the ultimate say in what happens to the decedent's body after death. Future research should address this discrepancy by conducting longitudinal studies on pre-death wishes and post-death death care arrangements by family. The present

research focuses exclusively on consumer's awareness and desires, not the actual death care that they will inevitably receive.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions

6.1 Principles of place co-creation provide opportunities for successful green burial placemaking

While the goal of this exploratory research was to uncover the obstacles to green burial placemaking, the opportunities for success were also revealed. The three primary obstacles to green burial, revealed through funeral director surveys and green burial provider interviews, are 1) obtaining required resources and support, 2) the knowledge gap: "people don't know what they don't know", and 3) death is a taboo topic. The six ways of overcoming these obstacles are community, collaboration, communication, champion, compassion, and commitment. An integral part of the overcoming process is integrating consumers' desires and answering consumers' deep questions. The potential converts from cremation to green burial highly value sustainability, specifically returning to the earth in a non-harming way. They also indicate a tendency to hold complicated, bittersweet emotions and questions regarding the funeral process.

The grounded theory that emerges from these data is that the green burial placemaking is a co-creative process that requires both consumer and death care industry professional input and expertise. The principles of co-creation, as discussed in the following subsection, align with the processes of overcoming that are outlined by interviewed green burial providers and corroborated by the consumer survey responses.

6.2 What are the principles of co-creation of places?

6.2.1 Collective creativity

Sanders and Stappers (2008) define co-design, which they identify as a specific instance of co-creation related to physical creation, as "collective creativity as it is applied across the whole span of the design process" (Sanders and Stappers, 2008 p.6; Teder, 2019 p. 290). In landscape planning, landscape and placemaking design has historically been centered on the user or the subject (Sanders and Stappers, 2008 p. 5). However, a participatory approach emerged in Northern Europe, and it has been adapted and integrated into planning practices in the United States (Sanders and Stappers, 2008 p. 5). Rather than the users of places that are created or designed, citizens should be considered co-creators (Teder, 2019 p.290). Citizens are the ones that make inhabit the space and create memories within spaces that render then meaningful places (Teder, 2019 p. 289). Therefore, on the design end, citizens' input and creativity should be held in esteem.

The co-creators of deathscapes, including green burial grounds, location of scattered remains, or contemporary cemeteries, are death care professionals and the families and friends that assign meaning to the places after a loved one dies. Interviewees who had successfully created green burial places identified the importance of community and collaboration during and after the design process. Having input from co-creators of the space gives the green burial place meaning and fulfills the needs of the people who will ultimately be spending time in the place.

When considering the funeral as a place, not necessarily as a geographic place, but a place of gathering, mourning, and celebration, the bereaved can be co-creators alongside of the death care professionals. Consumer survey responses indicate that understanding the options and

having space to ask uncomfortable questions is important for those who might change their plans from cremation to green burial.

6.2.2 Responsibility of professionals to engage with co-creators

Individuals have varying levels of interest, expertise, and willingness to participate in co-creation of places, especially deathscapes, due to the emotions and trauma associated with death (Sanders and Stappers, 2008 p.8; Teder, 2019 p.292). Although there are discrepancies in expertise and emotional investment between the co-creators of deathscapes, "placemaking is not about who is in control" (Schneekloth and Shibley, 1995 p.xiii). Rather, placemaking requires co-creators to "put trust in joint knowledge and abilities" (Teder, 2019 p. 292). Professionals and non-professionals must work together in a partnership based on trust and communication. Therefore, Teder (2019) outlines several roles that the professional, in this case, death care provider, may take to facilitate the partnership between co-creators. These roles are 1) the curator that oversees the partnership and makes connections, 2) the metadesigner that designs long-term concepts or structures, 3) the facilitator, who engages with stakeholders and engages in social learning, and 4) the negotiator, who addresses conflict (Teder, 2019 p.294-295).

In the context of green burial placemaking, death care professionals who have successfully co-created places did so by embodying these roles. Collaboration and communication were key for green burial placemakers, especially during the planning process. Interviewees relied heavily on knowledge and support from other green burial placemakers, conservationists, scientists, and religious leaders. Some of the outside professionals that were co-creators of the green burial places acted as curators by making connections between individuals or groups that could serve

each other. Some worked as metadesigners to ensure that green burial places were capable of evolving and withstanding time, which is highly important for burial places that require perpetual care. Some co-creators acted as facilitators by teaching other professionals about the requirements and best practices of green burial. And finally, some served as negotiators, who faced challenges and addressed conflicts. These roles are not exclusive; many of the green burial placemakers served in one or more of these roles at any given time.

Professionals who are co-creating green burial deathscapes also have the responsibility of engaging with the citizen co-creators with kindness (Forester, 2021b). Compassion was one of the most-discussed topics by the interviewees. Forester (2021b) discusses the role of kindness in planning and design practices; he argues that while compassion is "awareness of the suffering of others accompanied by a desire to take action to alleviate the suffering" (Lyles et al., 2017, quoted in Forester, 2021b p.64), kindness "brings such compassion into action" (Forester 2021, p.64). Death care professionals who are co-creating spaces with individuals who have experienced death or are in the process of dying have the responsibility to act with kindness to create sensitive engagement and dialogue. Forester (2021b) argues that acting kindly in planning should involve "crafting acts to mitigate vulnerability/suffering" (Forester, 2021b p.63). However, the vulnerability of loss due to death or dying cannot simply be mitigated by co-creation of places, nor should that be the goal. Vulnerability is "the emotion that we experience during times of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure" (Brown, 2021 p.13). Contrary to popular belief, vulnerabilities, like planning death arrangements and co-creating deathscapes, are not weaknesses (Brown, 2021 p. 14). Rather, Brown (2021) describes vulnerability as "our greatest measure of courage;" we cannot be courageous without being vulnerable (p.14). Leaning

into difficult conversations, hard emotions, and being vulnerable is the crux of co-creation, not a target to be kindly extinguished.

6.3 Green burial co-creation is successful, silos yield obstacles

The data support the grounded theory that co-creation provides an opportunity for success in overcoming the obstacles to green burial placemaking. Figure 46 illustrates the co-creation process of green burial placemaking that emerged from the interviewees. Community support and buy-in to the idea of green burial creates a community willing to engage with the process. The community needs a space to ask difficult questions and work through the vulnerabilities of planning death care for themselves or a loved one. These can be complicated emotions that should be acknowledged, but not disregarded or eliminated. With the use of the "6 C's" explained in section 5.7, death care professionals can establish places of vulnerability in which facilitation of co-creation can occur. The co-creation requires both professionals and non-professionals to engage in this process, which creates a "creative commons for ongoing change" (Binder et al., 2009 p.1). It's an iterative, on-going process for change and adaptation.

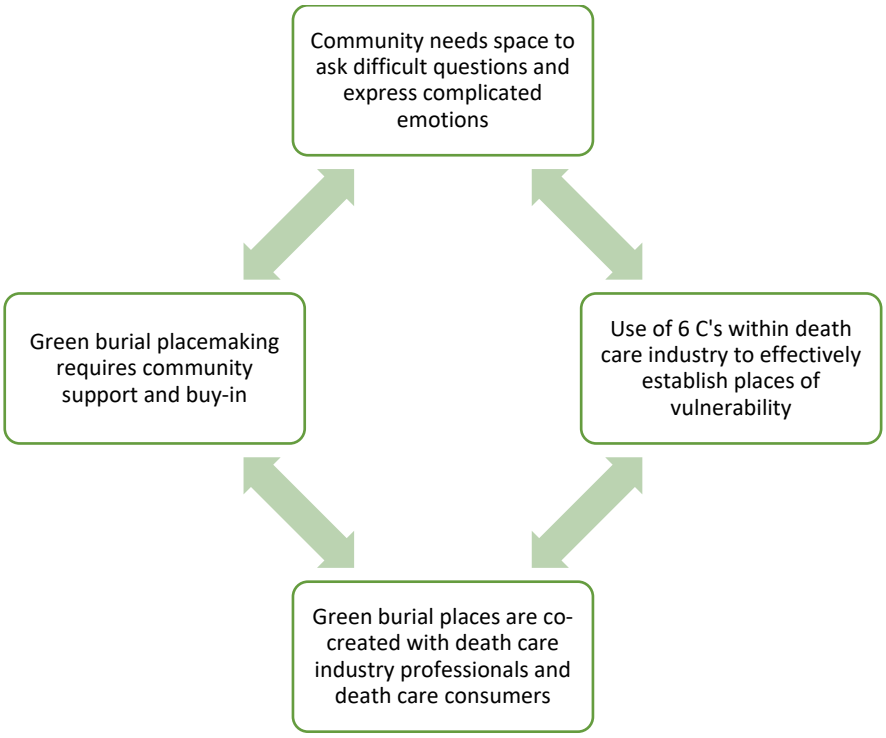

***Figure 45**: Co-creation of green burial placemaking*

Obstacles occur when any of these integrated steps, which are not linear but on-going, become siloed or isolated. For example, many funeral directors indicated that the reason why they do not provide green burial, or engage in the green burial placemaking process, is because they perceive that there is no market for it; nobody wants green burial. This isolates the community support and buy-in component of process illustrated in figure 6.1. However, the reason why there is a perception of no market could be because there is no space to ask vulnerable questions and express complicated emotions surrounding death care. If the possible converts do not have space to express their values and learn what death care options align with those values, it is possible that they would not consider green burial. Likewise, if death care professionals like the idea of green burial, but do not use the 6 C's to engage in the process of

co-creating a green burial place or practice, but instead wait on the market to drive the change, there will be missed opportunities for engagement with people who might want green burial, but are not provided the space to learn about it.

6.4 Practical recommendations and further research

In a 2018 literature review of placemaking research, Strydom et al. concluded that spatial planners should "not focus on the end-product in isolation as the process of placemaking is an important part of placemaking, e.g. where the process empower people. Placemaking may have the power to create positive social change" (Strydom et al. 2018, p. 175). The present research contributes to the field of geography, planning, and placemaking by revealing actions that overcome obstacles in the placemaking process. As a contribution to socio-ecological practice research, this research provides actionable steps that death care practitioners and organizations like the GBC can take to co-create places with families. This subsection addresses those actions that integrate the theory of green burial co-creation of places.

As mentioned in Chapter 4: Research Philosophy and Methods, this research was use-inspired for practical applications. For death care professionals and organizations, like the Green Burial Council, who do the work of providing care and education for people across the United States, I make the following recommendations for successfully co-creating green burial places. First, create and engage in networking designed for and by death care providers. The interviewees in this research emphasized the importance of collaborating with providers who have found success in providing green burial. Second, engage with the community. Although some education is required because many people are still unaware of green burial, there should

be an emphasis on collaboration. Some questions that are taboo, as explored in section 5.6.3, are 1) what is important to you when you die? 2) What lived values do you want to take with you into death? 3) How do you imagine your death place, either physical burial place or place of dying?

Table 21 provides practical examples of ways that cemeterians can implement the 6C's.

Table 20: Practical applications of the 6C's

Community	• Provide learning opportunities for people in the community to learn; this could look like tours through the cemetery, virtual workshops or Q&A sessions via Facebook Live, Instagram Live, or YouTube, and producing an engaging and well-planned website that guides community members as they learn about green burial and its benefits in the community. • Conduct thorough research on the community before establishing a green cemetery; understand what the community values and how a green cemetery might add to the value of the community. • For new cemeteries, consider site options that will reduce segregation and increase accessibility.
Collaboration	• Participate in local and national professional organizations such as the Green Burial Council, the Conservation Burial Alliance, and the Natural Burial Association (Canada). • Create capacity within the cemetery to aid in the start-up of other green burial cemeteries.
Communication	• Talk with funeral directors early and often; let them know that you are starting a green burial cemetery, and explain what that means. Don't assume that funeral directors know or will be prepared to explain the process to their clients. • Create capacity for continued mortuary science education within the cemetery (workshops, tours for funeral directors, etc.)

Champion	• The Green Burial Council and Conservation Burial Alliance are advised to develop a pathway for new cemeterians to seek support, especially for projects that are lead by one or two "champions" that are advocating for green burial to be added to an existing cemetery. Support can come in the form of mini-grants and consultations.
Compassion	• Reassess cemetery values to emphasize compassion that is both client-centered and earth-centered. • Invest in continuing education that focuses on social work, grief, and counseling.
Commitment	• Succession planning is vital to secure the future of green cemeteries, particularly those that are not connected to a contemporary cemetery.

Roggema (2014) and Corcoran et al. (2018) propose charrettes, or intense, collaborative workshops, as useful tools in engaging the community to make planning or placemaking decisions. There are very few spaces in existence that takes the form of a charrette, but address issues of death and dying. Death Cafes have become quite popular with the recent death positive movement, though they are often unstructured and not necessarily focused on end-of-life planning; they can many times take the form of support groups.

Further research might include developing an appropriate methodology and metric for measuring the efficacy of the grounded theory presented by this research and the recommendations made thereafter. The themes of vulnerability, courage, and bittersweet emotions strike me as highly important, not just in the context of green burial, but in death care planning and placemaking in general. This work opens the door for further research in the importance of these themes in the co-creation of other spaces.

To promote equitable access to sustainable death care options, future research will also consider the differences in awareness of death care options by demographics and geography (see

section 5.3.2). For people living in high-density areas, there is limited access to green burial, and extensive travel to a green burial cemetery may be more burdensome than cremation or another death care option. Therefore, green burial places have the potential to only be accessible to those who do not rely on public transportation or do not live in a high-density area where green burial cemeteries do not exist. Careful consideration of the limited access to green burial is required to ensure that green burial cemeteries do not continue historic traditions of segregation and classism.

Based on this research, I propose a vision of the future where the Green Burial Council uses the 6C's to guide their program design and outreach. In my vision, the GBC builds connections between practitioners and communities and redistributes funds in a way that allows cemeteries to build capacity to do their own outreach and education. In this model, the GBC provides foundational knowledge and expertise for both consumers and practitioners but is also focused on building the connection between consumers and practitioners so that green burial places can be co-created.

As a researcher and social justice advocate, I am also interested in how these themes are important in addressing vulnerable issues of climate change, systemic racism, trans rights, and poverty. How can planners co-create spaces with people experiencing vulnerability that simultaneously acknowledges the vulnerability of the environment? Further, who should be doing that work and what do those processes look like? My hope is that, with the information and knowledge from this dissertation, I can continue this work, sit with my own vulnerabilities and bittersweet emotions, and participate in co-creation of meaningful places.

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APPENDIX A: Consent Forms

Department of Geography and Earth Science
9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

Consent to be Part of a Research Study

Title of the Project: The necrogeography of obstacles to green burial provision faced and perceived by death care providers in the United States
Principal Investigator: Hannah Palko, PhD Candidate, UNC Charlotte
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Wei-Ning Xiang, Professor, UNC Charlotte

You are invited to participate in a research study. Participation in this research study is voluntary. The information provided is to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Important Information You Need to Know

- The purpose of this study is to learn what obstacles green burial providers face and how they overcome those obstacles.
- You will be asked to participate in a video interview conducted via Zoom.
- If you choose to participate it will require 1 to 1.5 hours of your time.
- There are no risks or discomforts associated with participating in this research.
- There are no benefits to the participant. Benefits to others may include informing mortuary science educational curriculum to ensure access to sustainable death care options in the United States.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether to participate in this research study.

Why are we doing this study?
This study is part of a larger project to understand the obstacles to green burial provision that death care providers face in the United States. The purpose of this study is to talk with current green burial providers to learn more about the obstacles and challenges that were/are faced in establishing and maintaining a green burial practice. The goal is to uncover avenues to overcome such obstacles so that green burial can become a more widely accepted and practiced death care option.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?
You are being asked to be in this study because you provide green burial services.

What will happen if I take part in this study?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one video interview via Zoom. With permission, your interview will be recorded on Zoom. Video recording files will be

destroyed after the interview is complete. Audio recordings will be retained for transcription purposes. You will be asked a series of questions about establishing a green burial cemetery, the obstacles that you faced and currently face as a green burial ground operator or manager, and how you overcame or currently overcome those obstacles.

Your time commitment will be about 1 to 1.5 hours for the interview.

A follow-up email from the study's principal investigator, Hannah Palko, will be sent upon completion of the interview. If the principal investigator has any follow-up questions, they will be included in the follow-up email. You may respond at your leisure to the follow-up email as your schedule allows.

What are the benefits of this study?

You will not benefit directly from being in this study. However, others might benefit because this data will be used to inform mortuary science programs who are interested in teaching green burial practices to mortuary science students.

What risks might I experience?

There is always a risk of compromising your confidentiality, privacy, and/ or anonymity when participating in online interview research. However, the overall risk to your physical, emotional, social, and professional well-being is less than minimal.

How will my information be protected?

The identifiable data that we will collect includes your name and the name and city or organization with which you are associated. These identifiable data, audio recording, and transcript of the interview will all be stored in separate password-protected files. Identifiable data will be removed from the written transcripts of the interviews. Interviews will be audio/video recorded via Zoom. The video files will be immediately destroyed after completion of the interview and audio files will be retained for transcription purposes.

We plan to publish the results of this study. To protect your privacy we will not include any information that could identify you. We will protect the confidentiality of the research data by storing identifiable data separately.

How will my information be used after the study is over?

After this study is complete, study data may be shared with other researchers for use in other studies without asking for your consent again or as may be needed as part of publishing our results. The data we share will NOT include information that could identify you.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

It is up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Data collected from participants who withdraw from the study will be destroyed.

Who can answer my questions about this study and my rights as a participant?

For questions about this research, you may contact Hannah Palko via email at hpalko@uncc.edu, or via phone at (704)-960-0391 or Dr. Wei-Ning Xiang (wxiang@uncc.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Office of Research Protections and Integrity at uncc-irb@uncc.edu.

Consent to be audio and visually recorded

With your permission, you will have the following done during this research (check all that apply):

___x___ video recording ___x___ audio recording

Audio recordings will be stored in a password-protected file to protect your security and privacy. Video recording files will be destroyed immediately after completion of the interview. Audio recordings will be retained for transcription purposes and will be stored in password-protected files. Participants have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty.
Please select one of the following options:

_____I consent to the use of audio/visual recordings for research purposes.
_____I do not consent to the use audio/visual recordings for research purposes

_____
Signature Date

Consent to Participate

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will receive a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

_____
Name (PRINT)

_____
Signature Date

_____
Name and Signature of person obtaining consent Date

Department of Geography and Earth Science
9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of the Project: The necrogeography of obstacles to green burial provision faced and perceived by death care providers in the United States
Principal Investigator: Hannah Palko, PhD Candidate
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Wei-Ning Xiang, Professor of Geography

You are invited to participate in a research study. Participation in this research study is voluntary. The information provided is to give you key information to help you decide whether or not to participate.

- The purpose of this study is understand the obstacles that funeral directors and other death care practitioners face when providing alternative death care options such as green burial. This survey serves to analyze how consumer awareness and perception might translate to obstacles faced by death care providers.
- You must be age 18 or older to participate in this study.
- You are asked to complete a survey asking a series of questions about funeral option awareness and preference for your own body after death. The survey will also include demographic and personal questions such as race/ethnicity and gender.
- It will take you about 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.
- There is always a risk of compromising your confidentiality, privacy, and/ or anonymity when participating in online survey research. You may experience slight discomfort due to the topic of death and funerals. We understand the sensitivity of this topic and we provide the option to opt out of any question that you feel uncomfortable answering. However, the overall risk to your physical, emotional, social, and professional well-being is less than minimal.
- You will not benefit personally by participating in this study. Benefits to others may include informing mortuary science educational curriculum to ensure access to sustainable death care options in the United States.
- After completing the survey, you will be given the opportunity to enter a drawing to win a $15 Amazon gift card. The drawing will include up to 2000 participants.

Your privacy will be protected and confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. You are being asked to provide your email address if you would like to be entered into the drawing. Your email will be initially linked to your responses, however emails will be removed from the dataset after the conclusion of the survey prior to data analysis. We need your email address in order to send you the e-gift card, but you have the option to not provide your email address and not enter the drawing. The drawing will take place at the conclusion of the study, approximately August 2021. The drawing will occur immediately after the conclusion of the study and email addresses will be destroyed after the drawing is complete. You will be notified via email if you are the winner of the drawing.

Survey responses and email addresses will be stored separately with access to this information controlled and limited only to people who have approval to have access. After we send you the e-gift card, your email address will be deleted. We might use the survey data for future research studies and we might

share the non-identifiable survey data with other researchers for future research studies without additional consent from you.

After this study is complete, study data may be shared with other researchers for use in other studies without asking for your consent again. The data we share will NOT include information that could identify you.
Participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study. You may start participating and change your mind and stop participation at any time.
If you have questions concerning the study, contact the principal investigator, Hannah Palko at (704) 960-0391 or by email at hpalko@uncc.edu. You may also contact Dr. Wei-Ning Xiang (research advisor) at wxiang@uncc.edu with questions. If you have further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, contact the Office of Research Protections and Integrity at (704) 687-1871 or uncc-irb@uncc.edu.

You may download and print the form here: (insert link here)

If you are 18 years of age or older, have read and understand the information provided and freely consent to participate in the study, you may proceed to the survey. Please select "I agree" below and proceed to the survey.

- I agree

APPENDIX B: Recruitment Documents

Email to Green Burial Providers to Recruit Interview Participants

Dear _____,

My name is Hannah Palko and I am PhD student at UNC Charlotte and on the Board of Directors at the Green Burial Council. I am conducting a project under the direction of my research advisor, Dr. Wei-Ning Xiang, to understand the obstacles and challenges that death care providers face that might prevent them from offering green burial. As someone who provides green burial at your (cemetery or funeral home), I am interested in hearing your perspective about establishing your green burial practice. Would you be interested in being interviewed for my PhD research project?

I have attached a consent form with further information about the study. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom and will be audio/video recorded. Video files will be destroyed immediately after the interviews are complete. Audio recordings will be retained for transcription purposes. Interviews will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. More information about this is provided in the consent form attached below. If willing and interested, please sign and return the consent form and we will schedule an interview time.

This research is extremely beneficial to the work that the Green Burial Council does in promoting green burial practice and education. The knowledge generated from this study will inform education and outreach programs designed to help funeral directors and cemeterians overcome obstacles to green burial provision.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Hannah Palko, PhD Candidate
Department of Geography and Earth Science
UNC Charlotte
(704) 960-0391
hpalko@uncc.edu

Dr. Wei-Ning Xiang, Professor and Research Advisor
Department of Geography and Earth Science
UNC Charlotte
wxiang@uncc.edu

APPENDIX C: Interview Schedule

Green Burial Provider Interview Questions

Warm-up

1. Can you give some background information about yourself? Where do you work and what kind of work do you do?
    a. What are your main responsibilities?
    b. How long have you worked at a green cemetery?
    c. Other than working for this particular cemetery, is there any other work that you do?
    d. Did you work at another cemetery before working here?

About the Cemetery

1. What is the mission of your cemetery/ organization?
2. Do you feel like you are accomplishing your mission? How?
3. Who are your clients/ lot owners?
    a. Are you a destination cemetery, where your interments come from 50+ miles away? Or are you a local community cemetery?
    b. How many people are buried here (total and per year)?
        i. How many of those are full body and how many are cremated remains?
4. What are the day-to-day operations of the cemetery?
5. What is your position in the community of death care providers in your area?
    a. Are you involved or on the fringe?
6. How do families and visitors interact with the green and traditional parts of the cemetery?
    a. Are families allowed to plant flowers or tend to the graves in the green part of the cemetery?
    b. Why or why not?
7. What kind of interactions do you have with people as they decide what kind of internment to purchase (pre need or at need)?

Obstacles faced

1. When and why was the cemetery founded?
2. Who founded the cemetery? What was their motivation behind founding the cemetery?
3. How did you secure funding to start your cemetery?
    a. How did your expected funding meet your actual requirements and needs?

4. What was the process of establishing the cemetery like?
5. What legal permissions did you have to obtain before building the cemetery?
    a. Who helped you get permits?
    b. What was that process like?
6. How was the cemetery received by the community?
    a. Was there support or pushback from the community?
    b. What kind of support or pushback?
    c. How did you/ do you cope with pushback from community members?
7. How has the setting of _____ (city) supported or not supported the establishment of a green cemetery?
    a. What kind of values does the city have?
8. What kind of financial obstacles did you/ do you face in establishing and maintaining a green cemetery?
    a. How does the cemetery support itself financially?
    b. Do you have an established Perpetual Care / Endowment Care fund? How is it maintained/ funded?
9. Are you Green Burial Council Certified?
    a. How has the GBC supported your work, especially in the face of the mentioned obstacles?
    b. What else can the GBC do to support your work?
10. Do you have a succession plan? What does that look like?

Recommendations

1. What recommendations would you make to someone who was interested in establishing a green cemetery or adding a green section to an existing cemetery?
    a. Are any of these recommendations specific to your state/county?
2. Is there anything else you would like to share about your cemetery, how it got founded, and how it is maintained?

And any other questions that stem naturally from the flow of the conversation.

APPENDIX D: Consumer Questionnaire

3 **Section 1: Demographics**
In this section, you will be asked some personal questions about your identity.

4 What is your age?

- ○ 18-25
- ○ 26-35
- ○ 36-45
- ○ 46-60
- ○ 60+

5 What is your gender?

- ○ Man
- ○ Woman
- ○ Agender
- ○ Non-binary or Gender fluid
- ○ Other, please specify _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

6 Which of the following best describes you?

- ○ Transgender (I identify with a gender other than the gender ascribed to me at birth)
- ○ Cisgender (I identify with the gender that was ascribed to me at birth)
- ○ Other, please specify: _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

7 What is your sexual orientation?

- ○ Heterosexual / straight
- ○ Bisexual / Pansexual
- ○ Gay / Lesbian
- ○ Asexual
- ○ Other, please specify: _____
- ○ Prefer not to answer

8 What is your highest level of education?

- ○ Less than a high school diploma or equivalent
- ○ High school diploma or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- ○ Some college
- ○ Trade/technical/vocational training
- ○ Associate's degree
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Doctorate degree
- ○ Other professional degree

9 Which of the following best describes you?

- ○ Asian
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Hispanic or Lantinx
- ○ Native American or Alaska Native
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ○ White
- ○ Other, please specify: _____

10 Were you born in the United States or somewhere else?

- ○ I was born in the US
- ○ I am foreign born and NOT a naturalized US citizen
- ○ I am foreign born and I am a naturalized US citizen
- ○ Prefer not to say

11 What is your marital status?

- ○ Single, never married
- ○ Married or in a domestic partnership
- ○ Widowed
- ○ Divorced
- ○ Separated
- ○ Other

12 What state do you live in?
State (1)

▼ Alabama (1) ... Wyoming (51)

13 What are the first three digits of your zip code?

_____

14 What is your household income?

- ○ Below $10,000
- ○ $10,000 to $50,000
- ○ $50,000 to $100,000
- ○ $100,000 to $150,000
- ○ Over $150,000

15 What is your employment status? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Employed full time
- [ ] Employed part-time
- [ ] Unemployed looking for work
- [ ] Unemployed not looking for work
- [ ] Retired
- [ ] Student
- [ ] Stay at home parent or guardian
- [ ] Disabled

16 How many children do you have?

- ○ 0
- ○ 1
- ○ 2-4
- ○ More than 4

17 What religious or spiritual group(s) do you most identify with? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Atheist (14)
- ☐ Agnostic (2)
- ☐ Buddhism (8)
- ☐ Eastern Orthodox (4)
- ☐ Hinduism (9)
- ☐ Indigenous religion or spirituality (10)
- ☐ Islam (7)
- ☐ Judaism (6)
- ☐ Pagan, spiritual, or folk religion (11)
- ☐ Protestant Christianity (5)
- ☐ Roman Catholic (3)
- ☐ Spiritual (16)
- ☐ I don't know (12)
- ☐ I am not religious or spiritual (15)
- ☐ Other, please specify: (13) _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say (17)

18 How would you describe your political views?

- ○ Liberal (1)
- ○ Moderate, leaning towards liberal (2)
- ○ Moderate (3)
- ○ Moderate, leaning towards conservative (4)
- ○ Conservative (5)
- ○ Other, please specify: (6) _____
- ○ Prefer not to say (7)

19 **Section 2: Funeral Option Awareness and Perception**
In this section, you will be asked questions about your awareness of various funeral options and factors that are important to you when thinking about planning a funeral.

20 Are your parents living?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

21 Have you had to plan or help plan a funeral for a family member or friend in the past?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

22 Do you know what you want to have happen to your body after death?

- ○ Yes, I know what I want (1)
- ○ I have thought about it but I'm not sure what I want (2)
- ○ I have not thought about it (3)
- ○ I don't have a preference (4)

23 What plans or ideas do you have about your funeral? If you have no plans or ideas, why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

24 Have you heard of the following funeral options?

	Yes, I have heard of this	No, I have NOT heard of this
Embalming	○	○
Home funeral	○	○
Open casket viewing without embalming	○	○
Cremation	○	○
Aquamation or "water cremation"	○	○
Traditional burial in a casket	○	○
Burial above ground or in a mausoleum	○	○
Burial without using a concrete burial vault	○	○
Burial using a biodegradable container such as a blanket, shroud, or basket instead of a casket	○	○
Green burial or natural burial	○	○
Human composting	○	○
Burial at sea	○	○
Donation to science	○	○

25 Embalming is the chemical preservation and restoration of the body after death to prepare the body for a viewing or funeral. How likely are you to want your body embalmed after death?

- ○ Extremely likely
- ○ Somewhat likely
- ○ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ○ Somewhat unlikely
- ○ Extremely unlikely

26 To your knowledge, is embalming required for burial where you live?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ I'm not sure

27 If you had the option to NOT be embalmed after death, is that something you would consider?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Maybe
- ○ I'm not sure
- ○ I have no opinion

28 How likely are you to want a deceased family member to be embalmed after their death?

- ○ Extremely likely
- ○ Somewhat likely
- ○ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ○ Somewhat unlikely
- ○ Extremely unlikely

29 A casket is a steel, metal, or hardwood container that the body is placed in. The casket is typically buried within an underground concrete burial vault or in an above-ground mausoleum. When considering your own funeral plans, how likely are you to want to be buried in a casket?

- ○ Extremely likely
- ○ Somewhat likely
- ○ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ○ Somewhat unlikely
- ○ Extremely unlikely

30 If there was a funeral option to be buried in the earth in a simple way, without a casket, burial vault, or mausoleum, is this something you would consider for your body?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Maybe
- ○ I'm not sure
- ○ Instead of burial, I want my body to be cremated, donated to science, or something else.

31 Green burial (also called natural burial or conservation burial) is a way of caring for the dead with minimal environmental impact. Green burial uses a biodegradable shroud or casket and the body is not embalmed. The body is placed directly into the earth and allows natural decomposition to occur. Is this a funeral option you would consider for yourself?

- ○ Extremely likely
- ○ Somewhat likely
- ○ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ○ Somewhat unlikely
- ○ Extremely unlikely
- ○ I'm not sure

32 Why did you choose your answer to the previous question?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

33 Based on the above definition of green burial, does the practice of green burial conflict with your religious, spiritual, ethnic, or cultural beliefs or traditions? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Conflicts with my religious beliefs or traditions
- ☐ Conflicts with my spiritual beliefs or traditions
- ☐ Conflicts with my ethnic beliefs or traditions
- ☐ Conflicts with my cultural beliefs or traditions
- ☐ Does not conflict with any of my beliefs or traditions
- ☐ Other, please explain: _____
- ☐ I'm not sure

34 How much would you expect your funeral to cost?

- ○ less than $1,000
- ○ $1,000 to $5,000
- ○ $5,000 to $10,000
- ○ $10,000 to $15,000
- ○ More than $15,000

36 Have you ever attended a funeral or helped plan a funeral that involved any of these funeral options? Hover over the funeral option with your mouse to see a full definition of the funeral option.

	Yes	No	I'm not sure
Embalming	○	○	○
Home Funeral	○	○	○
Open casket viewing without embalming	○	○	○
Cremation	○	○	○
Aquamation or "water cremation"	○	○	○
Traditional burial in a casket	○	○	○
Burial above ground or in a mausoleum	○	○	○
Burial without using a concrete burial vault	○	○	○
Burial using a biodegradable container such as a blanket, shroud, or basket instead of a casket	○	○	○
Green burial or natural burial	○	○	○
Human composting	○	○	○
Burial at sea	○	○	○
Donation to science	○	○	○

37 To your knowledge, are these funeral options available where you live? Hover over the funeral option with your mouse to see a full definition of the funeral option.

	Available	Not available	I'm not sure
Embalming	○	○	○
Home Funeral	○	○	○
Open casket viewing without embalming	○	○	○
Cremation	○	○	○
Aquamation or "water cremation"	○	○	○
Traditional burial in a casket	○	○	○
Burial above ground or in a mausoleum	○	○	○
Burial without using a concrete burial vault	○	○	○
Burial using a biodegradable container such as a blanket, shroud, or basket instead of a casket	○	○	○
Green burial or natural burial	○	○	○
Human composting	○	○	○
Burial at sea	○	○	○
Donation to science	○	○	○

38 Which of the following funeral options would you consider for your body? Hover over the funeral option with your mouse to see a full definition of the funeral option.

	Yes, I would consider this	No, I would NOT consider this	I'm not sure
Embalming	○	○	○
Home Funeral	○	○	○
Open casket viewing without embalming	○	○	○
Cremation	○	○	○
Aquamation or "water cremation"	○	○	○
Traditional burial in a casket	○	○	○
Burial above ground or in a mausoleum	○	○	○
Burial without using a concrete burial vault	○	○	○
Burial using a biodegradable container such as a blanket, shroud, or basket instead of a casket	○	○	○
Green burial or natural burial	○	○	○
Human composting	○	○	○
Burial at sea	○	○	○
Donation to science	○	○	○

39 How important are the following factors when making funeral plans for your body?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Religious or spiritual beliefs	○	○	○	○	○
Environmental sustainability	○	○	○	○	○
Financial cost	○	○	○	○	○
Simplicity	○	○	○	○	○
Family tradition	○	○	○	○	○
Cultural tradition	○	○	○	○	○
Being laid to rest near other family members	○	○	○	○	○
Being laid to rest somewhere beautiful or meaningful	○	○	○	○	○
Allowing my body to become a part of nature	○	○	○	○	○
Helping others, such as through organ donation or whole body donation to science	○	○	○	○	○

Delaying decomposition and keeping the body preserved for as long as possible	○	○	○	○	○

40 What words would you use to describe your feelings about funeral decision-making?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

41 What other thoughts about funeral planning and funeral options do you have?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

42 Would you like to be entered into a drawing for a $15 Amazon gift card?

○ Yes (Please provide email) _____

○ No

APPENDIX E : Funeral Director Questionnaire

Q3 Part 1: Demographics

The questions in this section will ask you about your identity

Q4 What is your age?

- ○ 18-25
- ○ 26-35
- ○ 36-45
- ○ 46-60
- ○ 61+

Q5 What is your gender?

- ○ Man
- ○ Woman
- ○ Non-binary or gender fluid
- ○ Agender
- ○ Other, please specify: _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q6 Which of the following best describes you?

- ○ Asian
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Hispanic or Latinx
- ○ Native American or Indigenous

- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ○ White
- ○ Other, please specify: _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q7 What religious or spiritual groups do you identify with or follow, if any?

- ○ Agnostic
- ○ Atheist
- ○ Buddhism
- ○ Eastern Orthodox
- ○ Hinduism
- ○ Indigenous religion or spirituality
- ○ Islam
- ○ Judaism
- ○ Pagan or folk religion or spirituality
- ○ Protestant Christianity
- ○ Roman Catholicism
- ○ Other, please specify: _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q8 How would you describe your political views?

- ○ Liberal
- ○ Moderate, leaning liberal
- ○ Moderate
- ○ Moderate, leaning conservative
- ○ Conservative
- ○ Other, please specify: _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q9 What is your highest level of education?

- ○ Less than high school diploma
- ○ High school diploma or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- ○ Some college
- ○ Trade / Technical / Vocational training
- ○ Associate's degree
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Doctoral degree
- ○ Other, please specify: _____

Q10 Did you attend a mortuary science school?

- ○ Yes, please specify the school:
_____
- ○ No

Q12 In what state are you currently employed?
State

▼ Alabama ... Wyoming

Q13 Part 2: Your funeral service practice

Q14 What services are listed on your funeral home's general price list? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Cremation
- ☐ Traditional casket burial
- ☐ Green/natural burial
- ☐ Embalming
- ☐ Open casket viewings
- ☐ Open casket viewing without embalming
- ☐ Alkaline Hydrolysis
- ☐ Sale of hardwood, steel, or metal caskets
- ☐ Sale of alternative containers for cremation
- ☐ Sale of biodegradable burial containers such as pine caskets, baskets, or burial shrouds

Q15 Please rank the top 3 revenue-producing services that your funeral home provides. Please rank in order of importance with 1 being most important and 3 being least important.

_____ Cremation
_____ Traditional casket burial
_____ Green/natural burial
_____ Embalming
_____ Open casket viewings
_____ Open casket viewing without embalming
_____ Alkaline Hydrolysis
_____ Sale of hardwood, steel, or metal caskets
_____ Sale of alternative containers for cremation
_____ Sale of biodegradable burial containers such as pine caskets, baskets, and burial shrouds
_____ Other, please specify:

Q16 What factors influence your decision to provide specific services?

	Strongly influences	Somewhat influences	Neutral	Does NOT influence
Personal religious or spiritual beliefs	○	○	○	○
Religious or spiritual affiliation of your funeral home	○	○	○	○
Environmental sustainability	○	○	○	○
Financial sustainability	○	○	○	○
Families' interests	○	○	○	○
State laws and regulations	○	○	○	○
Other, please specify:	○	○	○	○

Q17 What was your 2020 caseload?

_____

Q18 Has a family ever inquired about having a green burial (natural burial)?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'm not sure

Q19 What percentage of your funerals are green (natural) burials?

- ○ 0%
- ○ 1 to 10%
- ○ 10 to 25%
- ○ 25 to 50%
- ○ 50 to 75%
- ○ 75 to 100%

Q20 Why do your families choose green (natural) burial at your funeral home? Select all that apply.

- ☐ I do NOT offer green burial
- ☐ Simplicity
- ☐ Lower cost
- ☐ Religious or spiritual reasons
- ☐ Environmental or ecological reasons
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

Q21 What percentage of your funerals are traditional casketed burials, including above and below ground burials?

- ○ 0%
- ○ 1 to 10%
- ○ 10 to 25%
- ○ 25 to 50%
- ○ 50 to 75%
- ○ 75 to 100%

Q22 What percentage of your funerals are cremations?

- ○ 0%
- ○ 1 to 10%
- ○ 10 to 25%
- ○ 25 to 50%
- ○ 50 to 75%
- ○ 75 to 100%

Q23 Why do your families choose cremation? Select all that apply.

- ☐ I do NOT offer cremation
- ☐ Simplicity
- ☐ Lower cost
- ☐ Religious or spiritual reasons
- ☐ Environmental or ecological reasons
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

Q24 Is your funeral home prepared to provide green (natural) burial if a family asked?

- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Might or might not
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

Q25 Is there a cemetery near your funeral home that provides green (natural) burial?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Q26 Please indicate your level of agreement on the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I understand the requirements for green (natural) burial.	○	○	○	○	○
I learned about green (natural burial) during my formal mortuary science or funeral director education.	○	○	○	○	○
My formal mortuary science education prepared me to provide sustainable death care options for my clients.	○	○	○	○	○
My formal mortuary science education was primarily focused on embalming and reconstruction.	○	○	○	○	○
I have attended continuing education opportunities or conferences to learn more about providing green burial.	○	○	○	○	○
I am interested in learning more about providing green burial.	○	○	○	○	○

I have learned a lot about providing alternative death care options "on the job."	○	○	○	○	○

Q27 Please indicate your level of agreement on the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Providing green burial makes (or would make) my firm competitive.	○	○	○	○	○
Providing green burial is (or would be) a financial burden on my firm.	○	○	○	○	○
Green burial is legal in the state where I work.	○	○	○	○	○
There are obstacles to providing green burial in the state where I work.	○	○	○	○	○
Providing an environmentally sustainable death care option is important to my firm.	○	○	○	○	○
Selling hardwood, steel, or metal caskets is an important part of my firm's revenue.	○	○	○	○	○

Q28 Please indicate your level of agreement on the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
My families care about having an environmentally sustainable death care options.	○	○	○	○	○
I do NOT think my families would be interested in green burial.	○	○	○	○	○
Affordability of services is a major concern for my families.	○	○	○	○	○
I market cremation as an environmentally sustainable option to my families.	○	○	○	○	○
Green burial is (or would be) an affordable and environmentally sustainable option for my families.	○	○	○	○	○
Purchasing a hardwood, steel, or metal casket is important to my families.	○	○	○	○	○
My families would be interested in using a biodegradable casket if they had the option.	○	○	○	○	○

Q29 What are your thoughts on green (natural) burial?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q31 Why do you (or don't you) provide green burial?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q30 Would you like to be entered into a drawing for a $15 Amazon gift card?

- ○ Yes (please provide email): _____
- ○ No