

Historicising Grief: Public Representations of Loss in
Death Announcements, 1912-2002

Paul Brusser

BRSPAU002

Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town

Supervisor: Prof Johann Louw

Word Count:

Abstract: 178

Main Body: 9994

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NAME: Paul Brusser

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Abstract

This thesis presents a contextualist treatment of loss and grief in Psychology and American society through a historical investigation of public behaviour as observed in death announcements ($N = 1444$) posted in the New York Times between 1912 and 2002. Content-analysis data gathered across 11 genre-related, 22 thematic and 20 emotion-word categories, and parallel thematic data, represent a progressive emotionalisation and psychologisation of the newspaper death announcement. It is argued that the posting of death announcements has become an indirect but public ritual around loss in mainstream American society, partially subverting the trend of 'negative' emotions coming to be the private burden of individuals into the 20th century. This view is discussed and developed in the context of historical psychology, emotions history, and bereavement research. Focus is put on the concepts of grief work, emotional communities, and the esthema, an idea similar to Foucault's episteme. Finally, it is suggested that historical psychology can be of benefit to understand the current position of individuals, cultures, and the discipline of Psychology in Western and Western-periphery countries such as South Africa.

Key words: historical psychology, loss, grief, public ritual, episteme, esthema

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...let this hope banish all sadness from our hearts; let those grieve and be melancholy, who have no hope of heaven...

- Rev. Jeremy Taylor, *Contemplations of the State of Man*, 1684

...if the object [of pleasure] be so totally lost that there is no chance of enjoying it again, a passion arises in the mind, which is called grief.

- Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1757

The past quarter century has seen a burgeoning in the, albeit often marginal, fields of historical psychology and emotions history (Matt, 2011; van Hoorn, 2004). It was Lucien Febvre (1938/1973), figurehead of a group of French historians organised around the *Annales* journal, who first called for a new type of psychology and history. One which made sense for interpreting the actions of peoples past. The *Annales* historiographers accordingly wrote the ‘history of sensibilities’ – foregrounding the changing and changeable nature of human beings (Louw & van Hoorn, 2014; Dixon, 2013). While Psychology has a history, it is less frequently considered how that history is contingent on societies as a whole. Equally so, modern societies, particularly liberal democracies, have both birthed, *and internalised*, the discourses of Psychology as elements of a self (Febvre, 1938/1973; Hacking, 1995b, 2007; Rose, 1988, 1996). Roger Smith (2007b), argues that it is this fact, alongside the often radical transmutations in human self-understanding, which necessitates historical inquiry as a reflective capacity within, not only the human *being*, but more pertinently, the human *sciences*.

Much work in the recent decades has been inspired by another French philosopher and historian, Michel Foucault. Foucault was, if anything, critical of linear views of history – i.e. those which write history as a justificatory story of progress towards the present, such as in textbooks on crime or psychology (Garland, 2014; Louw & van Hoorn, 2014; Rose, 1988). This led him to articulate his first method of analysis, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), as opposed the *genealogy* which followed as he came to investigate both the discontinuities, *and the* continuities (or progressions), in human history. What Foucault sought were histories ‘of the present’. That is inquiries which lead to a better understanding of how present day life has come to be constituted (Garland, 2014; See also Febvre 1941/1973).

Out of these legacies, historical psychology and emotions history have come to overlap in their methods of reconstructing the conditions of possibility (inter-, intra-, and

extra-personally) that made, and continue to make, certain kinds of lived experience possible, or impossible, at different points in time (Garland, 2014; Hacking, 2007; Louw & van Hoorn, 2014; Matt & Stearns, 2013). Psychohistorical inquiries often indicate cross-historical discontinuities in the types of unique personhoods, selves, and opportunities for agency potentiated by certain social and societal fluctuations such as technological, medical, and socio-political progressions and upheavals. Any native or established occupant of a community embodies a vast set, or network, of social constructs which govern how the self is understood, regulated, and performed (Danziger, 1963, 2003; Hacking, 2007; Louw, 2005; Panksepp, Asma, Curran, Gabriel, & Greif, 2012; van Hoorn, 2004). If historical inquiry has revealed any clear transformation in human selfhood, it is that modern human beings in Western and Western-periphery countries understand and experience themselves as unique, mental, inner and outer selves in a way that is not evidenced before the Renaissance and Middle Ages (Jansz, 2004; Louw & van Hoorn, 2014).

In this regard, relevant to the leading topic of this paper, Louw and van Hoorn (2014) conducted a psychohistorical analysis on advice given to bereft, comparing a scene from Homer's *Iliad* (8th Century B.C.E.), a letter from Greek essayist, Plutarch, to his wife, Timoxena, upon their daughter's death (90 C.E.), and grieving-advice from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and The Compassionate Friends (2010 C.E.). While Homer made reference to tears, and Plutarch instructed his wife on her composure, the main argument of Louw and van Hoorn (2014) is that this evidence of biological, affective (emotional), responses to loss does not necessitate the foregrounding of, and elaboration on, those phenomena in knowledge or affective experience. The two examples from Western antiquity afford pertinence to ritual, conduct, and behaviour; although in *hindsight* we can say that these behaviours regulated affect, individually and publicly (Louw & van Hoorn, 2014; Reeves, 2011; Walter, 2008). This is compared to the, almost exclusively, emotion-oriented grief-advice given in the 21st century. The implication of this is equally that the discourses of Psychology, with their concern for emotions and inner life, are contingent upon certain types of human beings which understand and experience themselves as inner emotional-selves (Louw & van Hoorn, 2014). Ian Hacking (1995b, 2007) has termed this reciprocal interaction of discourses, persons, and institutions as the 'looping effect'.

Human subjectivities of course do not only change over millennia, they equally change over time-spans that can be considered centennial, or inter-generational (Danziger, 1963a, 1963b; Jennings, 2002; Louw, 2005; Matt & Stearns, 2013; van Hoorn, 2004). This can be seen, for example, quite rapidly in the fluctuating presentations of dissociative states

(or disorders) across recent history, or across cultures (Hacking, 1995a, 1998, 2007, 2010). Or more inter-generationally, with broader (politically deterministic) worldviews (Danziger, 1963a, 1963b; Jennings, 2002). In other words, taking the concern with interiority as continuous, one can also observe discontinuities in how that interiority is engaged with relationally, ritually, conceptually, privately, and publicly.

This research is comparatively modest in concern. Firstly, this research is exploratory in using death announcements to gain specific insight into relationships to death, loss, and grief. It thus was not conducted in a vacuum of published literature. There is nonetheless pertinence to gaining insight on the topic besides establishing the method. Gaining insight into fluctuations over time can also help place published literature in context: from Freud's (1917), *Mourning and Melancholia*; to Stroebe and Stroebe's (1991), *Does 'grief work' work?* Kurt Danziger (2003) called this the biography of psychological objects. "Although, for the psychologist historian, the choice of objects is likely to be determined by their recent salience within the discipline, the emphasis on their fundamental historicity works against any unjustified narrative of progress" (p. 30).

It is thus the historians task, without being destructive, to be rather descriptive, and definitely not prescriptive. I would again echo Roger Smith (2007a, 2007b), in that it is these facts, which necessitate historical inquiry as a reflective capacity within, not only the human *being*, but more pertinently, the human *sciences*. This research uses the death announcement as an index of change in the mainstream West, as it came into and changed through the 20th century; and also as Psychology became an established science, subsequently spreading into public life (Abma, 2004; Jansz, 2004; Stearns, 1994).

Walter (2008, 2014) argues that bereavement in the modern West has become a matter of self-regulation, or self-supervision. This has been discussed broadly as the *psychologisation* of everyday life (Furedi, 2004; Granek, 2014b; Madsen & Brinkmann, 2011). One has options of seeing counsellors, joining mutual help groups, or, more recently, joining online bereavement forums. Overall though, the message to the bereft is to *expect* the loss of a loved one to change their world and certainly involve, very normal, feelings which are all part of an "emotional reaction" called "grief". Simultaneously though, "There are no rules about how you should feel. There is no right or wrong way to mourn" (NIH, n.d., para. 1; Louw & van Hoorn, 2014).

The modern bereaved frequently report, above all, a sense of being alone in their grief and not authentically understood, especially as friends and colleagues seemingly grow tired of their solemnity and sorrow (Granek & O'Rourke, 2011; Gorer, 1965). There is a cross-

historical contradiction in the human self, which has come to be so concerned with its own interiority in recent centuries, be that in its own unique rationality (Richards, 1992), or depth in soul and connection (Rosenblatt, 1983), coming to be in a society that has a very selective lens on how inner affective states, are handled tastefully in public contexts. Immediately embedded in the archaeology of modern bereavement, and selfhood, is the disjuncture between how the bereaved experience and understand their interiority, and how they represent themselves in outward, social and public, personas. At the same time, individuals' lives are more socially and physically isolated, with traditional communities, rituals, and support for one's sorrows being less at-hand (Walter, 2000, 2007, 2009).

As today we are told to not let anyone tell us how to grieve, and no one that used to will tell us how, save for those who (re)turn to tradition, historical perspective allows for both disciplinary and personal reflection - reflection on how (one's own) innate humanity has intersected with the society into which it has been thrown. This research aims to provide insight into the shifting *esthema*, the structure of affective and aesthetic experience, in modern 'Western culture' over the past century. This is done through a time-series analysis of death announcements posted in, an exemplary historical newspaper at the heart of the American mainstream, the New York Times (NYT), over the past century. Expressed as a research question, I asked of the data corpus, "In what ways, if any, do death announcements across the past century publicly reflect changing relationships to loss and death".

Theoretical Framework and Data

The *esthema* is an etymological and conceptual cousin of Foucault's (1970), *episteme*, proposed by Louw & van Hoorn (2014). The episteme is the epistemological structure, or the field of "*historical a prioris*" (Garland, 2014), of an era. In Foucault's words, an epistemic network "made up of organic structures, that is, of internal relations between elements whose totality performs a function" (1970, p. 208). The elements of the episteme are those by which the discourses of an era are constituted, be those rules of logic or belief systems. In a 1970 interview, Foucault said, "What I am trying to do is grasp the implicit systems which determine our most familiar behaviour without our knowing it" (Simon, 1971, p. 201). "I would like to make the cultural unconscious apparent" (p. 198).

The *esthema* is thus a useful concept, as what guides the mammalian drives of the human being (conscious and unconscious) is more than just an epistemic network, but also a set of relationship patterns and psychic dynamics which are formative to a coherent affective-self (Schoore, 2002). Intersecting with an ethnology means also intersecting with a pattern of appropriate self-regulations and relationships (Foucault, 1970; Hacking, 1995a, 2007; Louw,

2002; Louw & van Hoorn, 2014; Matt, 2011; Stearns, 1994). Consider a similitude to the brain. The evidence is suggesting that it is the right cerebral hemisphere's function of self-orientation in present space which is intimately involved with (mostly unconscious) emotional regulation and perspective-taking; as opposed the verbal, logical, and symbolic functions of the left hemisphere – housing the epistemic structures of the mind (Solms & Turnbull, 2002; Turnbull, Fotopoulou & Solms, 2014).

Ontologically then, the episteme and esthema can be thought of as being materially embodied by individual organisms. However, the concepts designate rather the operation of the sum-total of elements and the relationships between, than as existent in any individual or subset (Foucault, 1970). Van Hoorn (2005) described this as the “mindscape” of an era. To illustrate, consider: there is no mindscape of grief therapy, but rather a mindscape which includes a set of esthematic and epistemic elements by which the epistemic justifications and inter-personal relationships of grief therapy could be constituted, and its discontents (Hacking, 2007).

The epistemological limits of psychohistory are patent as past mindscapes are only available to the historiographer insofar as they were inscribed in primary sources. As mentioned, Louw and van Hoorn (2014) analysed advice to the bereft. Stearns and Stearns (1985) identified this method as it allowed for one to gain insight not necessarily into the subjectivities of a time, but rather the “emotionology”, the set of implicit and explicit rules for the handling of affectively charged states socially and publicly. The question is of course begged as to whether and how advice is internalised (Rosenwein, 2002). Another method is to sample personal diaries to get anecdotal evidence on how death, loss, and mourning are understood and experienced (Rosenblatt, 1983).

The death announcements selected for analysis in this research, however, exist in a space between the articulations of emotionology and the individuals' private experiences. McNeill (2004) phrased this concisely: “Because of [the] focus on ‘good’ or ‘worthy’ subjects, death notices uphold conservative public ideals that dictate who should be mourned and how” (p. 152). The articulating of affect in a death announcement is not necessarily a performance of inner felt-experience, but the public performance of a (respectful) persona. A persona which can reflect the internalisation, or challenging, of emotionology. Thus the framing of the death announcements is not as exemplary of bereavement, but rather as one of many types of performances made possible around death in the modern mindscape. The psychohistorian must have a contextualist framework in this regard. Rather than aligning with ideology, or methodology, the pragmatist, and contextualist, like Foucault, must take all lines

of evidence as mutually complementary angles on the whole (Garland 20014; Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988).

Equally so, while this research was undertaken from South Africa (SA), an American newspaper, the NYT, was selected for analysis. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, most research around bereavement has taken place in either England or the USA. Secondly, America was further selected as its cultural and social exports, and professional Psychology, remain highly consumed by Western periphery-countries like SA (Dolby, 2001; Long, 2013; Louw, 2002; Varis, 1984). As this is also the first research to explore the use of death announcements with specific regard to loss and grief, it was judged that the findings would be more valuable within a context of meaningful literature. This was also to establish whether the method *could* generate meaningful conclusions.

However, as mentioned, to understand a part of American culture, is also to understand something of the cultural imports consumed by persons every day in American periphery-countries like SA. For example, the S.African *Cape Times* is, alongside the NYT, a derivative of the *Times* of England. It will be argued after the primary report that the *Cape Times* printed comparable content to the NYT over the observed timeframe, and that there is motivating reason for cross-national comparison.

The NYT itself is the second most widely circulated newspaper in America (Associated Press, 2013). It is also one of the oldest American newspapers still in print, having been published consistently since 1851. Its exemplary and complete archives are accessible to subscribers through its website (www.nytimes.com; Dickstein, 2003). New York City itself is a cultural hub of America, and the NYT is otherwise an oft referred to historical source, even in the history of Psychology (Dennis, 2011; Jones, 1987; Rutherford, 2000).

After a precursory sampling and reading of death announcements between 1851 and 2015, four date-spans were selected for analysis. The selected date-spans correlate to eras of stability in American culture (between wars and social upheaval), as well as with the emergence of Psychology in America. The final number of announcements captured was 1444, a good number compared to previous comparative death-announcement research, which ranged between 450 and 2500 (e.g. Barth, van Hoof, & Beldad, 2014; Ergin, 2009; Halbur & Vandagriff, 1987; Phillips, 2007).

1910s: At the end of romanticism

1912 to 1917 ($n = 201$). This timeframe was selected to capture the closing of Victorian and romanticist culture, and *precede* modernist, techno-consumerist, American

society, and the rise of American Psychology, insofar as possible (Gergen, 1991; Stearns, 1994). A slightly earlier scope may have been preferable in this regard, however, the date-span was kept short to establish whether data collection was stable. It is also by this timeframe that postings to the “In Memoriam” column became established (between two and four each day). These were favourable to include in the dataset as they contained content authored by bereft persons rather than, as often occurs with death notices, being authored by a funeral home on behalf of a family (Bates, Monroe & Zhuang, 2009; Dodge, 2010). Since the early, pre-20th century, editions of the NYT, death notices remained similar in that they, on face value, consisted in recycled structure and (mostly objective) content. The 1910s data thus serves as a baseline measure.

Regarding romanticist sentiments, consider: American society went through a great shift, coinciding with the technological revolution (1870-1914). By the late 19th century, authors were specifically attacking earlier romanticists’ sorrows as consisting in a wallowing in negative emotion (Stearns, 1994). While the romanticists of the Victorian era were behaviourally restrained, they nonetheless celebrated the value of profound affective states, leading many authors to inversely describe the 20th century as behaviourally liberated but affectively restrained (Matt, 2011). Consider, for example, the 19th century practice of post-mortem photography, posing with deceased loved ones. Photographs of deceased infants tended to depict serenity and reposing, as if the bliss of the departed was corporeally continuous. However:

[It was] less popular to see an adult figure ... presented in such a way as to convince the viewer of their animation. Moreover, while it is not uncommon to see images of ‘sleeping’ adults tucked into bed or lying upon a couch, it is also not rare to see images that blatantly expose death through the display of running bodily fluids or obvious causes of trauma (Iepson, 2014, p. 24-25).

Such photos act as ‘melancholic objects’, symbolic replacements to lost attachments (Gibson, 2004; Reeves, 2011). Perhaps they were also a private *memento mori*, from the Latin: “remember (that you have) to die” (Iepson, 2014). Romanticist sentiments were, nonetheless, still evident in America up until at least 1917. This can be seen, for example, in the types of articles posted in the NYT about the then “new” Psychology. Between 1908 and 1916, the NYT published 26 articles on ‘Psychology and Spiritualism’, 17 of which were feature pieces (Dennis, 2011). Likewise, Gergen (1991) considered Freud’s psychology to be a bridge to a new psychological understanding of the human being from the preceding romanticist sentiments of depth and soul. Freudian interpretive jargon filtered into American

life through various channels, among them popular “glamour” magazines of the early 20th century (Pfister, 1997).

1950s: World Power.

1951 to 1955 ($n = 475$). The great depression, and two world wars, greatly reshaped American society. On the other side of it all, this time frame represents a peak in 20th century America, for its economic success and the flowering of consumer culture. The end of World War II and the rise of medical authority also signified a shift in the common appraisals of death and loss (Phillips, 2007; Stearns, 1994). It is also over this time that therapeutic Psychology burgeoned into the public, thus grief and loss entered into the psychologist’s practicable domain (Jansz, 2004; Granek, 2010). The NYT itself became favourable to behaviourism, speaking well of Thorndike and propelling Skinner to household renown. Meanwhile, parapsychologist William McDougal was effectively alienated through coverage as his views came greater against the grain of the dominant tides (Jones, 1987; Rutherford, 2000).

1970s: In the Wake of Social Justice.

1976 to 1980 ($n = 438$). This time frame immediately follows the end of the Vietnam War (1955-1975), and precedes the first literature directly criticising Psychology’s ‘mechanistic’ treatment grieving (Rosenblatt, 1983; Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen & Stroebe, 1992). Although a slightly later or wider date-span might have been preferable, the NYT’s older archive ends at 1980. Although the archives are, together, continuous, paid-for notices are only retrievable from the recent archive from 1997. The time span does however capture the socially upheaved American society and its generation, following the period of major civil protests and the Vietnam War (1954-1975).

2000s: Our Brave New World.

2000 to 2002 ($n = 330$). Including this most recent time period allowed for comparisons to be drawn across history, towards a ‘history of the present’ (Garland, 2014; Rosenwein, 2010). It is over this time period that Klass, Silverman, and Nickman’s (1996), ‘continuing bonds’, narrative model of grieving has become influential in psychological literature (e.g. Worden, 2009; Bonanno, 2009). This is what Walter (2007) has referred to as the postmodern era of grief. Because the NYT changed its submission process in 2002 to work through Legacy.com, a website which provides online obituaries and guest books, this date span stops there to avoid skewing the data with online-type behaviour (cf. Hume & Bressers, 2009).

Methods of Analysis

Expressed in a single term, this was a time-series parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2013). Content and thematic data were simultaneously collected, analysed, and finally merged in interpretation. Content analysis involved the tallying of coded categories ($N = 43$) as present in each death announcement posted on each randomly selected date. These elements related to the genre of announcement (e.g. condolence or memoriam), emotion words and qualifiers (e.g. "...truly missed"), and thematic codes elaborated on below. Although not all the quantitative results are reported in this paper, they are nonetheless included in Appendix A. The data reported on are rather those that exemplify the conclusions that became apparent across analysis. Thematic data, not necessarily captured by content codes, was recorded in novel quotations alongside individual entries, or in log-books which were equally used to keep track of refinements made to the coding system.

Qualitative content analysis. The essence of qualitative content analysis is the assignment of qualitative categories to a text, to accrue frequencies of those categories, which may be subjected to further statistical analysis (Mayring, 2014). Categories, or units of analysis, can be as simple as key words, or complex themes (Schreier, 2012). This content analysis was operated over three modes, with frequency data stored on three different spreadsheets for each era (along with novel quotations). Categories, or codes, were largely iteratively decided upon, moving from multiple broad categories to refined ones as data collection proceeded. Final codes related to the *genre* of the announcement ($n = 11$; e.g. condolence or memoriam), *emotion words* and qualifiers ($n = 20$; e.g. "...truly missed"), and *thematic codes* ($n = 22$) elaborated on below.

Genre Analysis. Genre analysis is, most basically, concerned with what information is included to make a specific type of text. A death notice, for example, can be seen as consisting of a number of necessary or optional *moves*, such as listing the name of the deceased, their surviving family, and place of funeral (Afful, 2012). Each move may have certain lexico-grammatical features, or be identified in terms of the overall communicative goal or discursive function (Moses & Marelli, 2003). In practice, a genre analysis typically oscillates between examining features and functions, with more or less emphasis on either end of the scale (Bhatia, 2002). Although textual features formed a large part of this analysis, all data was gathered with the primary goal of examining communications and relationships around loss specifically. Each death announcement sets up possible subject positions, for the authors and the perceived audience, that are intimately entwined with perceived norms around death and the wider context (Gale, 2010).

Emote-Words. In doing emotions history, emotion-type words (hereafter ‘emote-words’) should be problematized rather than taken for granted (Rosenwein, 2010). Take for example the move captured in the title of Dixon’s (2003) book, *From Passions to Emotion*. From Augustine of Hippo to Thomas Aquinas, the human being was classically understood in the West as being as divided, driven, and guided by *passions* and higher *sentiments* and *affections*. It was the 19th century description of affective life as *emotional* that brings one to the epistemological present (e.g. William James, 1884). Passions and sentiments themselves were not emotional or cognitive, a mutual exclusion peculiar to the sciences of emotion (Dixon, 2012). Equally so, the meaning of the word “grief” has changed over time.

“Grief” historically referred to bodily harm, or offense. The modern definition which emphasises grief as a *mental* anguish, often directly related to a death, only came about notably in the mid-19th century (Oxford English Dictionary [OED], “Grief,” 2015). Indeed, also to *grieve*, meant to cause bodily harm, or to bring someone to anguish or sorrow, for most of the word’s recorded history (13th to 19th century). Compare to today, where to grieve is so often understood as to mourn (OED, “Grieve,” 2015). The 19th century romantic era is famous for the profound value that was put on the stirrings of the soul – the passions, the affections. One may reread the epithets of Burke and Taylor above in this regard. One must wonder what experience Taylor held in mind when he said that those who have no hope of heaven, *grieve* for it.

Thematic Codes. If an otherwise complex theme is easily recognisable, it too can be coded, and the frequency of its occurrence tallied (Schreier, 2012). Some thematic codes emerged inductively during the analysis. Others were derived from previous research into death announcements and bereavement. These themes focussed on references to the nature of death and the position of the deceased in the communicatory act, and cross-genre elements (e.g. character tributes). Whenever an element was not captured by a code, it was recorded as a quote, or in a logbook, and reiteratively considered later or analysed thematically. This movement from raw data, and open-ended themes, to refined thematic categories and interpretations can be called a ‘constant comparative analysis’ (Boeije, 2002; Fram, 2013).

Constant comparative thematic analysis. Constant comparative analysis (CCA), as articulated by Boeije (2002) and Fram (2013), comes out of the grounded-theory approach in qualitative methodology. While grounded-theory is interested in ground-up theory development, CCA as a standalone method merely retains the elements of constant, and cyclical, data collection, analysis, and recapitulation (Boeije, 2002; Fram, 2013). I make this point to highlight that rather than using a predetermined data corpus, I rather sampled

continually, within and across eras, until no novel data was being generated. The process is described as moving from open-ended to axial codes, constantly comparing all obtained data, moving alternately between and within groups to solidify themes and detect contradictory cases (Boeije, 2002).

A *theme* itself is a recurring and meaningful idea or pattern present in a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is advisable, and often necessary, to supplement content-analysis findings with descriptive, or interpretive, data (Mayring, 2014; Schreier, 2012). As in the example of grief's changing definition, and the tenets of psychohistory: That which appears quantitatively continuous may, however, be discontinuous phenomenally (Danziger, 2003; Hacking, 1995a, 2007; van Hoorn, 2004). Equally so, and especially around often taboo topics of death, themes were sometimes embedded in metaphor, which had to be read in context (Armstrong, Davis, & Paulson, 2011; Fernandez, 2006; Rosenwein, 2010; Ross & Pollio, 1991).

CCA also allowed for uncategorised data to be retrospectively coded for frequency analysis. The method suited this research, as deciding on all categories beforehand would have left much valuable information unrecorded out of ignorance. The challenge it poses to the researcher, however, is not to corrupt or contradict one's earlier coding as research progresses. This did not prove to be a great obstacle in this research though, as once the set of thematic content-analysis codes were formalised after the first wave of sampling across the date-span, most of the data could be recorded without having to keep logs.

Ethical Considerations

Because this research was archival and involved no human participants, no ethical approval was necessary.

Limitations

Firstly, my analysis was limited to the NYT "Deaths" and "In Memoriam" columns. This decision was made to favour depth, over breadth, of analysis (addressed above). Thirdly, my analysis was limited to the types of people that post death announcements. This may be limited to middle- to upper-class persons, as death announcements remain expensive (Bates et al., 2009; Dodge, 2010). At the same time though, much of the advice and psychological publications reviewed in this and other research are marketed to the same income bracket (Cushman, 1990).

Results and Discussion

Four distinct main genres emerged over preliminary and initial data collection, which were revealed to have shifted in proportional presence over time (See Figure 1). They were:

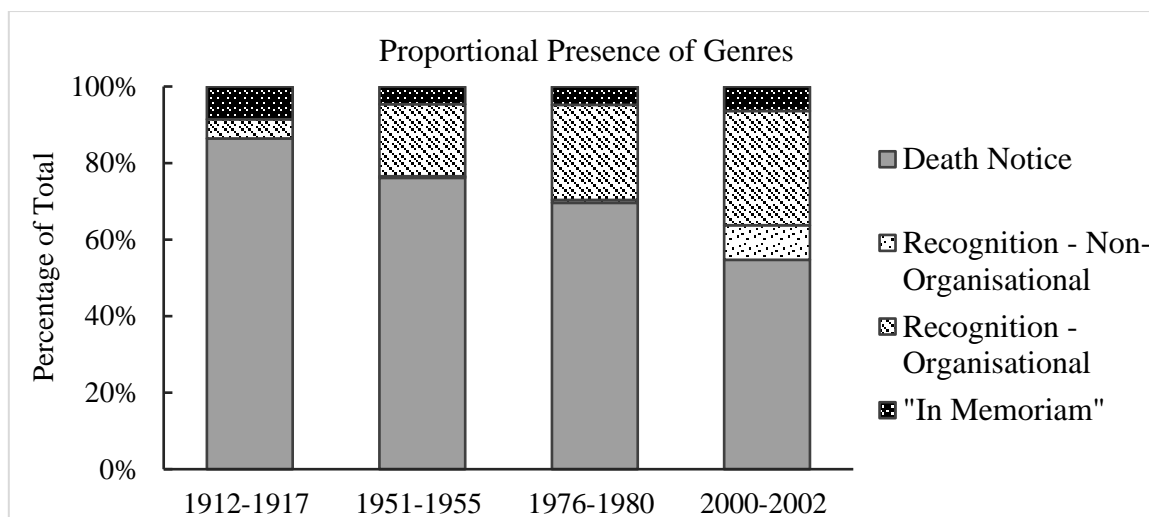


Figure 1. Presence of genres over the four timeframes. Non-organisational recognition postings represent less than 1% of 1950s and 70s announcements, and 0% of the 1910s.

death notices, memorias (from *memoriās*, Latin plural of *memoriam*), recognition postings by organisations (lodges, businesses, etc...), and recognition postings by non-organisational parties (friends and family). All genres showed fluctuations in constituent elements and themes, changing their content and overall functions, in a manner which reflects changing relationships to death and loss. In some cases, these changes were almost absolute, in others they were partial. Even though instances of total functional shift were found, the four genres remained consistent in the subject position of the respective authors.

The Four Genres

Death notices are the oldest genre, comprised most simply of the name of the deceased, date of death, and optional funeral information. They constituted 85.6% of the 1910s announcements, but only 54.9% by the 2000s, displaced as the other genres gained popularity (See Figure 1). While notices were and are often authored by funeral homes, they came be increasingly the domain of the immediately bereft – the family's voice in announcing the death of their loved one. A subtle example of this shift in authorship can be seen in the addition of emotive content at the end of this otherwise traditionally styled notice:

BROMBERG-Stephen N. Died on January 4, 2002. He is survived by wife Judith, [children, etc...]. Memorial services to be held at [location]. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International. *We love you and will always miss you, Granddad* (NYT, 2002-01-08, emphasis added).

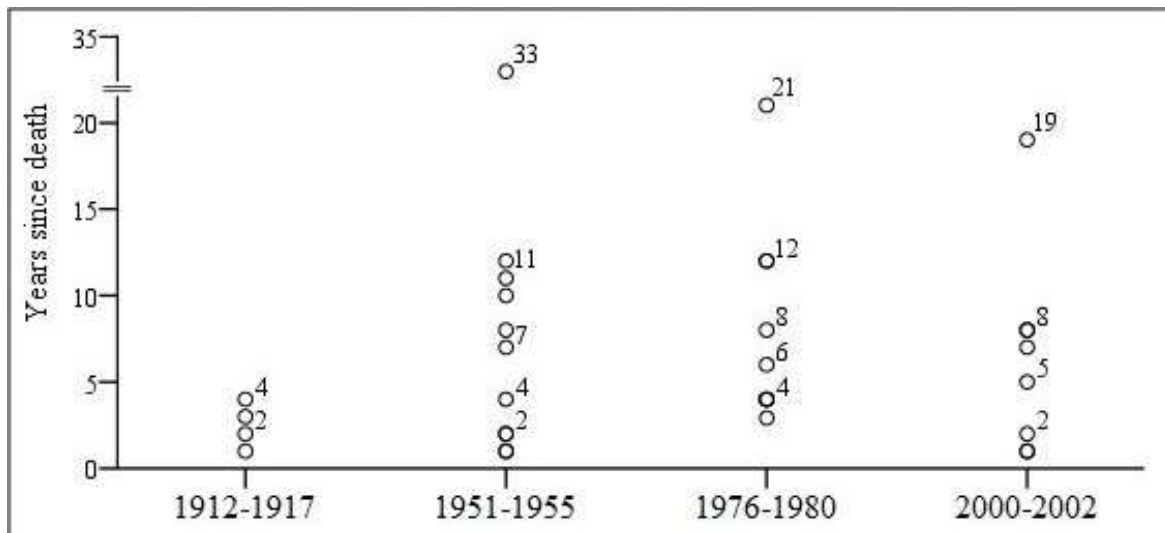


Figure 2. All captured indications of years since death in memorias.

Below the death notices in the NYT is the “In Memoriam” column. Memorias afford for insight from these same subjectivities, years after a loss. Memorias were always listed in a separate column below “Deaths”, which contained the three other genres. Memorias consist necessarily only of the name of the deceased, accompanied by, usually, a message of loving memory, a remark or letter addressed to the dead, or the announcement of a memorial service.

The number of years since passing in memorias ranged from 1 to 33 (See Figure 2). While they were often used to announce memorial services in the 1910s (65%), this proportion dropped to 23% in the 1950s, and 0% in the 1970s, although then again 29% in the 2000s. The date of death, or years since passing, of the deceased was indicated in 24% of the 1910s memorias, 55% of the 1950s, 52% of the 1970s, and 43% of the 2000s. These inverse trends indicate a functional shift, as 95% of memorial-service announcements did not mention time since passing. Between the 1910s and 1950s, the “In Memoriam” column showed a shift from predominantly conveying memorial service information to being mostly used for the offering of short sentiments, typically:

KURIE-Hyman. In fond memory of grandpa who passed away ten years ago. LEON, MANUEL, ROBERT (NYT, 1952-08-08).

This was a clear shift in function, even though authorship remained in the consistent hands of the bereaved.

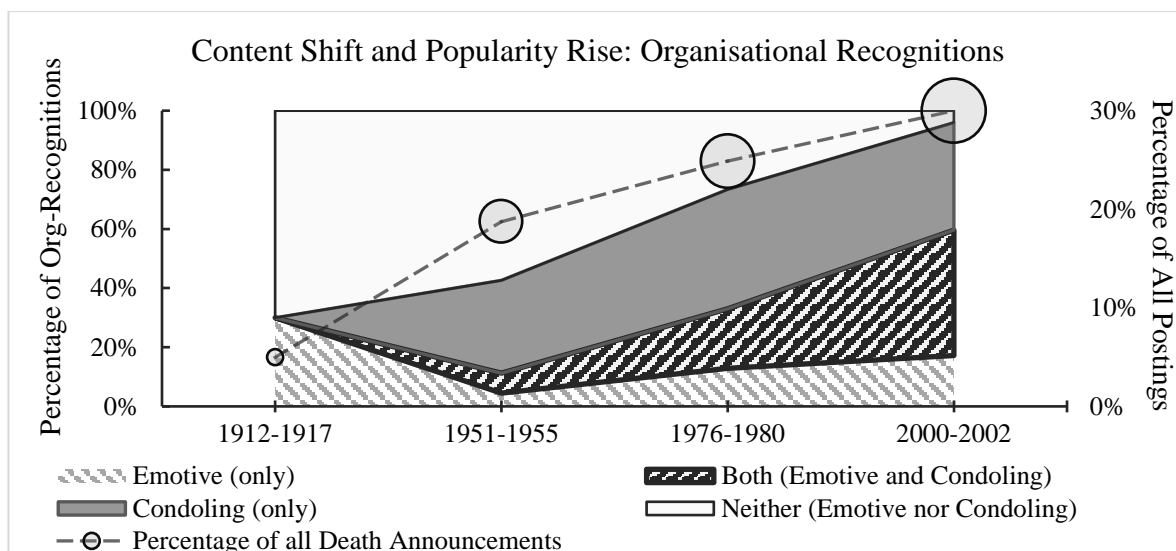


Figure 3. Progressive increase in condoling and emotive organisational recognition postings. The emotive elements in the 1910s were not necessarily extended, having more to do with emote-word presence, but they were nonetheless novel and were coded for that virtue in early analysis.

The third and fourth genres, of recognitional announcements, thus introduced a very different dynamic into the “Deaths” column (renamed from the earlier “Died”), as they represented direct authorship of third party subjectivities. In the 1910s, organisational announcements were primarily submitted by lodges and religious organisations to announce the death and funeral of an affiliate, and request member attendance. They were also often posted in the absence of a death notice for the deceased, constituting 5% of the 1910s announcements.

Thus the term “recognition” is false for the antiquated announcements, which in function complemented the death notices. However, in later decades, organisations used the announcements to almost principally offer condolences, or pay tribute to their recently deceased affiliates, regardless of death notices, while eventually increasing in use to represent 30% of all announcements in the 2000s (See Figure 3 and 4). To ‘recognise’ is to say that they made explicit their acknowledgement of not just a death, but a *loss*; they explicitly acknowledged the bereaved’s subjective state, and sometimes the deceased’s, and expressed positive attitudes in those regards (Mattias, 2013). For example, on the death of well-known real-estate developer:

MENDIK-Bernard. Lincoln Square Synagogue records with sorrow the passing of our benefactor and friend, Mr. Bernard Mendik. May the family be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem. [Signatory]. (NYT, 2001-05-31).

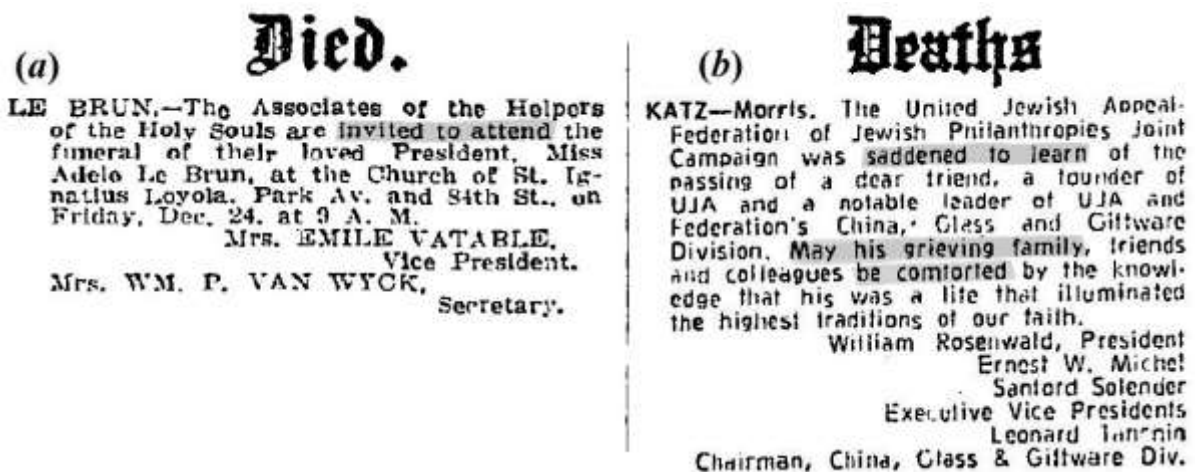


Figure 4. Two organisational announcements from 1915-12-123 (a) and 1976-01-23 (b).

Images reprinted with permission.

While representing 0% of postings in the 1910s sample, and less than 1% in the 1950s and 1970s, *non-organisational* announcements by friends and family, of the deceased and the bereaved, emerged also in the latest decade to represent 9.1% of postings in the 2000s sample. A reliable indicator of difference to the organisational announcements across all time dates was the absence of a titled signatory, or explicit statement on behalf of an organisation. They were used to offer condolences, or for private tributes or messages to the dead. The first example below represents the style of addressing the deceased present in 40% of all non-organisational announcements captured, what was coded as a 'Letter' to the deceased. This code was derived from, and rather foreseen because of, research in the past decade on death announcements in countries outside of the mainstream West (e.g. Iceland and Turkey), and online bereavement behaviour, be that on Legacy.com or Facebook (Arnason, Hafsteinsson, & Gretarsdottir, 2003; Ergin, 2009; Hume & Bressers, 2009).

MENDIK-Bernard H. You inspired so many, but few had the unique privilege of being with you day by day for over 20 years. Your insight, wisdom, dignity and sense of fairness forever will be a part of me. *Our love & warmth for Suzy, Alex, Todd, Kevin, and Laurie.* We all will miss a great man. Laureine and David Greenbaum (NYT, 2001-05-31, emphasis added)

The example above was also peculiar for it was the only one out of 35 non-organisational announcements captured which included a condoling move (italicised) while in full address to the deceased, as if including them in the 'conversation' by saying, "We all will..." to the end. The next example shows more typical tributary and condoling content.

KIAM-Victor. Victor's enthusiasm, enjoyment of life, and positive attitude enriched our lives. We will miss our good friend, Life Master, bridge opponent, and tennis champion buddy. To his wonderful family, we send our love and sympathy. Betty and John (NYT, 2001-05-31).

This recognition is saturated with some of the four most common themes and elements of non-organisational announcements. Proceeding in sequence with the text: Firstly a “Character Tribute” is made (present in 66%); then “Emotive Content” is expressed, that is making explicit an affective subject position in a fully expressed sentiment (present in 86%); the emotive content included, but was not defined by, the emote-word “Miss” (*miss*, *missed*, or, *missing*, were present in 37%); then the condoling move is made (present in 46%).

Functional Shifts

As has been alluded to, each genre showed shift in communicative repertoires. (Although non-organisational announcements didn't so much shift in function as they did rather emerge – seemingly out of the organisational announcement genre.) If all the 1910s announcements could be summed up, under the lens of this analysis, it is that they were public media platforms for broadcasting objective information regarding recent deaths, as well as information regarding mass or services. That is also that, rather than behaving according to the editorial rules of mass media, they reflect some function of social media (van Dijck & Poell, 2013). From the notices of death, and services or mass in the death notice and organisational genres, to the announcement of memorial services and unveilings which dominated the “In Memoriam” section in the 1910s sample: there was little to no evidence of emotional content.

From objective, to subjective and inter-subjective. Contrast this to the rise in the use organisational announcements to offer emotive or condoling sentiments from the 1950s onwards, to the point of overtaking the communicative repertoire of the organisational genre (See Figure 3). It is in alignment with this new *function of recognition*, of the author's or others' loss, that *non-organisational* announcements could emerge in the later decades without contradicting established communicative repertoires of recognition (cf. Figure 1). This supports the notion of discontinuity in Foucault's (1970, 1972) archaeology of the episteme. That is that rather than refining and progressing in function, the emotionalisation of the organisational announcements created a discontinuous platform to provide for the epistemic justifications to author non-organisational announcements which would otherwise have not fit the function of the 1910s, “Died” column, as they did not exist for the purpose of broadcasting death or service information.

Table 1.
Emotion-type words per genre and era

Era	Death notices			Organisational Recognitions			Non-organisational Recognitions			Memoriams		
	e	N	%	e	N	%	e	N	%	e	N	%
'10s	1	172	0.6	5	10	50	--	--	--	1	17	5.9
'50s	1	361	0.3	86	89*	96*	2	2	100	1	22	4.5
'70s	3	305	1	108	109	99	2	3	100	10	21	47*
'00s	39	181	22*	98	99	99	23	30	73	4	21	19

e = instances of emote-words

N = instances of genre

% = of announcements containing emote-words.

* Notable shifts

Note that it was exclusively in the organisational announcements as captured between 1952 and 1955 that emote-words first burgeoned into usage (See Table 1). Out of the 7 recorded emote-words across the 1910s (either *sorrow*, *regret*, *celebrate*, or *mourn*), the only instances of “regret” ($n = 2$), “sorrow” ($n = 2$), or “mourn” ($n = 1$) were captured in organisational announcements. (While “celebrate” was in reference to the celebration of mass in, $n = 2$, death notices.) There was thus an epistemic baseline to further emotionally saturate the genre. Contrast to the death notices and memorias (1910s-1950s, see Table 1), where emote-word use actually went down. Furthermore, zero instances of affective sentiments (not necessarily containing emote-words) were found in the 1910s or 1950s death notices. This time series was not sensitive enough to pick up how emotional saturation might have been linked in the introduction of condoling content to the organisational announcements, although the fact that some included both funeral *and* condoling content may be indicative in this regard. An externally motivating factor is likely to have been shifts in the American workplace and lifestyle. Walter (2009) has argued that separation of work and home, among intra-familial factors, contribute to uniquely isolated subjectivities connected through the deceased person.

What is clear however, is that *inter*-subjective emote-words only begun being evidenced by the 50s (*sympathy*, *condolences*, *console*, and describing relations as *bereaved*).



Figure 5. (a): The entire “In Memoriam” section (NYT, 1914-03-06). Note the appropriation of the poem from the headstone of Mark Twain’s daughter. (b): An extract of the memorias (NYT, 1954-12-20). Images reprinted with permission.

The 1970s contributed to this condoling repertoire with: to be *comforted*, and describing relations as *grieving* or *bereft*. Inter-subjective words were coded as such because, rather than referencing the author’s subjective state, they postulate the subjective state of the person(s) that the sentiment is addressed to. They furthermore offer emotional condolences from those grounds, postulating a reception. I highlight this to indicate once again that there is a shift from broadcasting objective information, to communicating subjective and inter-subjective information. The success of this communication is perhaps seen in this novel and rare example from the 1950s of a column, amended below the “In Memoriam” section, titled “Card of Thanks”.

WEINSTEIN—Dr. Morris. The family of Dr. Morris Weinstein of 23 Ralsey Road, Stamford, Conn., sincerely thank their friends and relatives for their kind expressions of sympathy in their recent bereavement (NYT, 1951-11-08).

Appropriation, Displacement, and Subversion. The phenomenon of the ‘letters to the deceased’, when tracked over time, also demonstrates how elements across genres were appropriated. Zero instances of ‘Letters’ were found in the 1910s ($N = 201$), two were in the 1950s ($N = 475$), seven in the 1970s ($N = 438$), and 24 in the 2000s ($N = 330$). However, they occurred solely in memorias in the 50s and 70s. It was only in the 2000s data that their use was observed across death notices ($n = 3$), organisational ($n = 2$) and non-organisational ($n = 10$) announcements, as well as memorias ($n = 9$). The fact that 42% of the instances were non-organisational suggests that, this traditionally unbound genre, was among the first to adopt this style. Once again, a more detailed time-series would be necessary in this regard.

Table 2.

Distinctively Modern Elements of Death Notices

Type	Element	2000s	1970s	1950s	1910s
Theme	'Memory' ^a	15	2	--	--
Genre element	Emotive sentiment	14	1	--	--
Emote-word	Miss(ed)(ing) ^a	8	--	--	--
Theme	'Living on inside...' ^b	6	--	1	--
Genre element	Remark ^b	5	--	--	--
Theme	Legacy ^a	4	--	--	--
Genre element	Letter	3	--	--	--
Theme	Everlasting memory	2	--	--	--
Theme	Death as: Loss	2	--	--	--
Emote-word	Mourn	2	--	--	--
Theme	'Goodbye' or 'adieu'	1	--	--	--
Theme	Humour	1	--	--	--
Emote-word	Sorrow	1	--	--	--

^a. As in: "His memory will live on in every time worn antique and frayed edge." (NYT, 2015-04-12).

^b. As in, "Beloved husband of Ellen. Father of Beth (Ken), Mathew (Risa), and the late Evan, and grandfather to Ian, Jane, Daniel. You will be forever in our hearts. Thank you for your love, warmth and generosity. We'll miss you" (NYT, 2000-03-28).

Looking at the origins of Letters, within the quantified time period, their original introduction was not radically discontinuous in the memoriam genre. This is because they emerged by the 50s, alongside, and as an alternative to, short sentiments "in memory of..." which were already present as far back as the 1910s. These offerings of sentiment, as discussed earlier, seemingly had increased in number by the 1950s, displacing notifications of memorial services or unveilings which became less popular, and even disappeared, over the 1950s to 70s data (See Figure 5).

It was only once the letter style had been established that it was appropriated across genres. This was discussed above regarding recognitions: the fact that they became emotionalised, meant that letters did not appear radically discontinuous alongside established content. By elaborating on elements within, and appropriating from across genres, to end of changing the function of those genres, it can be said that genres were either subverted or progressively displaced. The only three instances of 'Letters' in death notices were captured in the 2000s. The death notices, oldest of the four genres, also thus appears to have been the last to adopt subjective discourse. Elements that were only found in the 2000s (with minor exception) are listed in order of frequency in Table 2.

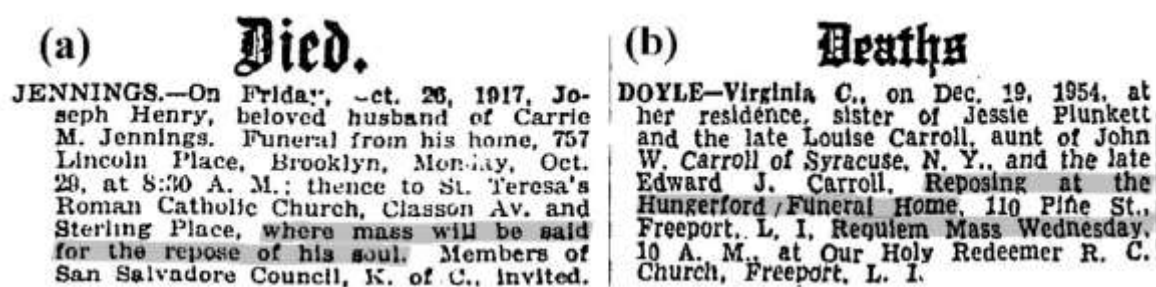


Figure 6. Two death notices posted in the NYT, 1917-10-28 (a), and 1954-12-20 (b).

Images reprinted with permission.

Secularisation. Another point to note is the use of “the Eternal” and “Life Eternal” in the 1950s (as in figure 5). These examples were rare, with only 4 captured in the 50s sample, while only 1 was found in the 1910s. This is not to say that religious themes only entered in the 1950s. 12 instances of elaborate service description were found in the 1910s death notices, these involved references to a ‘Soul’ ($n = 3$), death as a transition into ‘Sleep or Rest’ ($n = 5$), and, in other terms, death as a ‘Reposing’ (...of the soul, $n = 4$), such as in “...where a high requiem mass will be held for the repose of his soul” (NYT, 1917-10-28).

These all but disappeared into the 1950s: only 2 references to ‘Rest’, and only one reference to a ‘Soul’ (in an organisational announcement). I draw attention to these points because, while recognition and memorias have been discussed at length, there was a comparative absence of any emotive or elaborate content in the death notices between 1950 and 1970. The only change observed was that these indications to the nature of death or the dead seemingly disappeared. However, at the same time, much elaborate Catholic discourse was seen being redeployed in the Christian notices. It is curious that in the mid-20th century, after Catholicism had made so many breaks with tradition, that people would make use of, for example “...a solemn pontifical requiem mass” (NYT, 1955-01-27), not found in the 1910s. One can also observe how, a shift was made from describing a service as for the reposing of the soul, to incorporating ‘repose’ purely as denominative, such as in Figure 6. This accounts for the increased use of “repose” from 1% to 8% in all death notices, 1910 to 1950.

While the notices showed no indication of emotionalisation by the 50s, and the recognitions definitely did, what *both* appear to reflect is a secularisation of death. Phillips (2007) recorded, of death announcements and editorial obituaries posted in the NYT, that from 1899 to 1959, less attention was given to the process of dying, and more biomedical terminology was used. The data herein would concur with these findings, besides being observed anecdotally, as rather than using elaborate descriptions about the nature of the dead

and dying (as in their soul moving into rest), the examples from 1950s and 70s rather hold a line between life and death. (Regarding the process of reposing, or dynamic attributions to death and dying, refer back to the poem appropriate from the headstone of Mark Twain's daughter captured in Figure 5.) In other words, while both life and death are states continually referenced throughout, there is less reference to state-change by the 1950s from the 1910s. Even though writing letters to the deceased implies connection to the dead, the line between life and death is, there too, nonetheless held.

Again here the emotionalisation of the recognition announcements complements these findings. Rather than recapitulate, consider the rise of a single demonstrative theme observed only by the 1950s, that is: 'Loss'. While this was not coded by every use of the word (i.e. as an emotive-word), there were no uses of the word "loss" in the 1910s. 'Loss' was coded rather by uses of the word exclusively in the context of referring to the deceased as being *lost to* persons. As in: "...for their and our loss" (NYT, 1954-07-26). 'Loss' was observed principally and originally in organisational announcements (86%), and then later also non-organisational announcements (9%) and death notices (3%). Only a single use was found in the "In Memoriam" column:

WAGNER-Norman William. In loving memory of Dad on this eighth anniversary of our great loss. YOUR FAMILY (NYT, 1976-06-08).

The more typical use in organisational announcements appeared as such, although 65% included a condoling move, and 45% did not contain such extended emotive sentiments:

BRUDNER-Lottie. Grossinger Family Circle expresses its deepest sorrow at the passing of one of its beloved founders. She was a devoted and sincere friend to all who knew her. We mourn our loss (NYT, 1951-11-08).

What 'Loss' exemplified, is that the pertinence of the deceased's passing related not to seeing them into eternity as before (i.e. for their repose), but rather related to the fact that that passing has a profound impact on people's lives. What the above memoriam demonstrates, itself peculiar for it, is that the deceased is both lost to the world, only existent in memory, yet at the same time, available to address (cf. Walter, 2014). That is, *if* by, "YOUR FAMILY," the author meant to address the announcement to the father. (This anomalous example was difficult to code for this reason as either a letter, a remark, or neither).

Nonetheless, if not in the same announcement, the introduction of letters into the "Deaths" and "In Memoriam" columns were contrasted to the other theme around loss, also indicated in the above memoriam – that is memory. The code 'Memory' was very broad, it

encompassed almost any usage of the root *memor-*, or *remember*. It was thus evidenced from the memorial services of the 1910s, to the use in 2000s death notices:

MARTIN-Ilse. Died January 7, 2002. Born Chemnitz, Germany March 1, 1911. Cherished aunt of Gudrun... [...] Ilse lived her life with courage, caring and loving kindness. She earned our unlimited love, respect and devotion. May the memory of her life bring warmth and comfort to those who miss her so much. Contributions in Ilse's memory to Hospice Care Network [...] (NYT, 2002-01-08).

Noted though, be it through genre appropriation of novel introduction, the theme of 'Memory' was recorded twice in the 1970s death notices, 15 times in the 2000s, but not in any prior. From the 1910s to the 70s, 'Memory' was only recorded in organisational announcements (15%) and memorias (85%). As mentioned, the death notice genre was very slow to introduce any novel elements to the traditional genre, thus the inclusion 'Memory' was significant in that it preceded any of the other elements listed in Table 2. These included 'Letters', references to 'Missing' the deceased, or uses of 'Sorrow' or 'Mourn'. More significant here, though, is *how* memory is deployed in relation to loss.

Spontaneous Ritual and Grief Work

As was emphasised by delineating the four genres, each speak from a different subject position. Besides the secularisation indicated by constructions of the deceased's state across the genres, the more principle sensitivity of this content analysis was toward affective expressions. It is through that lens that the organisational announcements stand out so starkly from the rest in the 1950s, as seen in the use of emote-words in Table 1. The principle conclusion was that a discontinuous shift occurred from objective broadcasting, to subjective broadcasting and inter-subjective communication between the 1910s and 50s. Involved with this emotionalisation was the referencing of the dead as 'Lost'.

While the emotional subversion of the recognition genre is interesting regarding Foucault's (1972) notions of discontinuity, and the broader discussion of the psychologisation of everyday life – i.e. as aspects of the world come to be in reference to the inner psychological self (Abma, 2005; Madsen & Brinkmann, 2011) – it is the behaviour of the immediately-bereaved that greater represents a genuine affective information. In other words, when a business posts a non-emotive announcement that nonetheless contains emote-words, those words do not necessarily give confidence in genuine affect. They rather greater reflect emotionology (Stearns & Stearns, 1985). That is they represent a respectful persona in line with what is considered appropriate public behaviour. For example:

BALDINGER-Irving. The Board of Directors of Hampshire House mourns the passing of Irving Baldinger, their colleague, who served the cooperative for many years. Warm sympathy is extended to his beloved family. HERBERT M. SINGER, President.

That is not to say that none of the recognition announcements represented genuine sentiments. Rather, it is that their conservative emotionalisation over time, by utilising existent elements in increased and emotionalised ways created an imagined emotional-community through the “Deaths” and “In Memoriam” columns (cf. Rosenwein, 2010). Why the direct authorship of the bereaved stands out, thus, is that it was only after the condoling, and emotively expressive, content was established that some death notices started to represent, not their traditional function, but almost exclusively emotive function in the 2000s. Take this notice below for example, where no reference is even made to the date of death (usually standard, but was not quantified in this analysis), nor is a funeral or mass mentioned. Rather, a tribute is made to her character, indicating what her death means to her relatives:

LESSER-Anna Charlotte [...] died peacefully in her 95th year. Well loved by her daughters, [...], 6 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren. We will miss her wise and gentle spirit (NYT, 2001-05-31).

Two things to take away from this example are that, firstly, it far greater represents a genuine loss of attachment, rather than the often courtly behaviour observed in recognition announcements. Secondly, it includes the cross-genre element which was coded ‘Character tribute’. If there is any defining characteristic of the 2000s death announcements, across all genres, it is that 45% contained a character tribute. Compared to the 1910s (1%), 1950s (2%), and 1970s (11%). Whether posted by a business, friends, the immediately bereaved, the inclusion of character tributes (positive statements about personality or accomplishments) further exemplifies the distance drawn away from funeral and memorial services to the focus on the subjective content of the announcement itself. Rather than to recruit people to mourn together, death announcements are used as a place to share sentiments and memorialise the dead. Once again, the death announcements became, to a large extent, an (imagined) emotional community (Rosenwein, 2010).

While many still use death announcements as platform to broadcast the facts of death and services, they are equally used as a ‘mourning ritual’. That is that they provide for an *imagined* social encounter. This is important to note, as ‘negative’ emotions became distasteful in everyday public conversation into the 20th century (Stearns, 1994), people

nonetheless form spontaneous rituals to regulate their emotions and create a coherent ‘Memory’ of the lost person (Haney, Leimer, & Lowery, 1997; Walter, 2000, 2007). “Up until the late 19th century, grieving in North America was a public affair, a clearly visible marked process that involved community and a network of public rituals and ceremonies elaborately constructed to support the mourners” (Granek, 2008, p. 173).

By way of summing the discussion, recall the research question: “In what ways, if any, do death announcements published across the past century publicly reflect changing relationships to loss and death?” They appear to reflect, firstly, a secularisation of death, secondly, the displacing and subversion of genres toward subjective and inter-subjective goals, and thirdly, the manner in which the grieved in the 20th to 21st century have spontaneously created and appropriated rituals to engage in grief work. Grief work, from Freud’s (1917), *Mourning and Melancholia*, is the activity engaged in by the individual that restructures the representation of the lost attachment, and redirects the energy exhausted in the search for that attachment. Whether engaging in an imagined community through death announcements or online social media, or connecting interpersonally through mutual support groups (which have multiplied since their emergence in the 1950s), the modern bereaved, wherever they do not grieve in private, consistently find modes of expression in an otherwise emotionally restrained culture. These two memorias, posted in the NYT (1980-07-13), stood out across this research, and exemplify this fact:

SWEIG-Rita. July 15. Four years ago today and nothing helps the pain and loneliness felt today and every day. Nothing will ever be the same without you. Desperately missed & loved. Susan

SWEIG-Rita. Four years have passed and I miss you more than ever. My new son is named after you so every time I look at him, I think of you, mother. Love always, your daughter, Caryn.

Limitations and Significance

While the case that the death announcements have been largely re-appropriated as a grief-work and otherwise inter-subjective and subjective genre is strong, it is also but a narrow slice of the world as it is. As mentioned, it is one of only many types of performances around loss made possible in the modern world, and modern mindscape. Equally, only a certain demographic uses death announcements, such data was not extracted in this analysis but it should be noted that this makes generalisability difficult. It is in context though that these findings exist. For one, they reflect the secularisation and psychologisation of everyday life, found across mainstream Western culture (Furedi, 2004; Jansz, 2004).

As observed by Louw and van Hoorn (2014), it is only in recent centuries that humans could ever have come to meaningfully think of themselves as psychological beings. If anything, the 19th century romanticists, with their rejection of mechanistic industrialism, typified a height of value placed on interiority. That was the world of the soul. As found in this analysis though, that reverence for interiority shifted from concern with depth and the processes of the soul, to a concern with grief and sympathy. Thus just as the subversion of genres reflected the validity of Foucault's (1972) concept of discontinuous *archaeology*. That discontinuity only existed, however, in relation to the longer continuous shift over the past centuries – that is the increased importance placed on individuals, and individuals' inner lives.

Rather than to be vastly generalizable, this analysis was performed to ascertain the validity and reliability of the method. Refer to Figure B1 in to observe that over the four timespans observed, relative proportions of genres remained constant within themselves. This supports the notion that death announcements area conservative genre, sensitive to societal fluctuations (Phillips, 2007; McNeil, 2004). One can, for example, see how between the 70s and 2000s, departures were made from traditional styles. This rejection of tradition is typical of the generation, and moreover also contextualises the resistance to time-limited, adjustment-oriented, views of bereavement in Psychology during the mid-20th century (Jansz, 2004; Jennings, 2002).

Taking the method as reliable, the analysis of announcements in the NYT can be easily replicated on a S.African newspaper, most relatedly, the *Cape Times*. During preliminary research-formulation, a sample of three issues of the *Cape Times* from 2015 showed similar elements of letters to the deceased, condolences, etc. A sample of five issues from 1927, retrieved from the National Library of SA, also showed romanticist sentiments, such as poems of repose. As ever before, Psychology in SA is under critique of relevance (Louw, 2002; Pretorius, 2012). Methods which can index the alignment of S.African society with the mainstream West can thus be useful to understand how Western elements of the modern mindscape are constitutive of S.African reality.

Conclusion

More so than before in human history, individuals feel isolated in particularly those subjective states that appear 'negative' when expressed socially in the modern West (Granek & O'Rourke, 2011; Walter, 1996; Gorer, 1965). While it has been recently observed in research that the bereaved frequently make use of pseudo-public forums for grief-work, such

as online ‘graveyards’ (e.g. de Vries & Rutherford, 2004; Hume & Bressers, 2009), this research suggests that by 1950 there was already evidence of the print-medium of the newspaper acting as a, user-driven, proto social-media platform (van Dijck & Poell, 2013).

Recall the ‘Card of Thanks’ for example, or more evocative:

SWEIG-Rita. [...] Four years ago today and *nothing helps the pain and loneliness felt today and every day...* (NYT, 1980-07-13).

As we all lose those important to us, it is valuable to understand something of one’s historicity, and how the social and ritual drives around loss are what they are, and not something related to some specific emotional- or adjustment-issue. Generations have gone by since the end of romanticism, and thus historical understanding can allow one to step outside of the perspectives given by persons alive today - Even when that perspective is to ‘not let anyone tell you how to mourn’. While traditions have faded, that does not preclude one from (re)turning to tradition, from following ‘rules’. Whether by direct concern, or through ritual behaviour, humans have been variably, but successfully, regulating their affect in profoundly different and often incommensurable ways across our history (Gibson, 2004; Louw & van Hoorn, 2014; Reeves, 2011).

As demonstrated in this analysis, while we often believe ourselves to be engaged in timeless activities, those activities can actually change in subversive ways. We are often bound to a mindscape without understanding how, or how transient the mindscape is. Even though Psychology is today the authority on emotions and adjustment, it is equally informative to note that while the human being has a cross-historical brain, the psychologist should be cautious before prescribing any necessary model for the function of these innate affects (Stroebe et al., 1992).

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Appendix A

All codes used in the three modes of content-analysis.

Mode 1. Genre-Analysis Codes

Name

Date

Notices

Full info

Funeral/Mass/Internment

Beloved/Cherished/Devoted (Relationship qualifiers)

Relationship qualifiers were originally coded as emote-words in the first wave of analysis as they were one of the few indications of emotional content in the 1910s sample. However, as they emerged as being a distinctly textual element of the death notice, they were recoded as a genre-element.

Emotive

Recognition or Announcement

By organisation

By non-organisational party (e.g. family friends)

Emotive

“...determined by the presence of extended affective content – e.g. "We will always be grateful to him and will miss him terribly" (NYT, 2001-10-28).”

Condoling

In Memoriam

Name

DoD/years since passing

Mass/Service

Mode 2. Emote-Words

Emote-Words

Sorrow

Regret

Miss(ed)(ing)

Sad(dened)(ness)

Hearts go out

Sympathy
Condolences
Comforted (condolence)
Console/solace (condolence)
Celebrate (mass)
Mourn
Bereaved (family)
Grieving (family)
Bereft (family)
Lonely
Grief
Pain

Qualifiers

Not all qualifiers were recorded. After initially coding each new token, they were grouped together under thematic types, and new tokens no longer recorded insofar as they could fit the thematic type.

Sincerity

Sincerely
Truly
Warmest
Heartfelt

Magnitude and Intimacy

Desperately
Terribly
Mightily
Inexpressible
Profoundly
Keenly
Deeply
Dearly
Sadly
Sorely

Sustainability

Forever

Always

Devoted

Mode 3. Thematic and Cross-Genre Codes

Genre/Textual elements

Living on inside person

Cont. Felt presence

Legacy

Character tribute

Obituary style

Humour

Memory/Remember

Memory qualifiers

Loving/cherished

Constant

Devoted/touching/blessed/in heart

Everlasting/forever

Addressing the deceased

Poem to deceased

Letter

Remark

Life update (either in letter or Remark)

Death as

Sleep/rest

Afterlife/heaven/eternity

Repose

Soul (afterlife involves...)

Loss

Goodbye/adieu

Euphemism/Metaphor

Appendix B

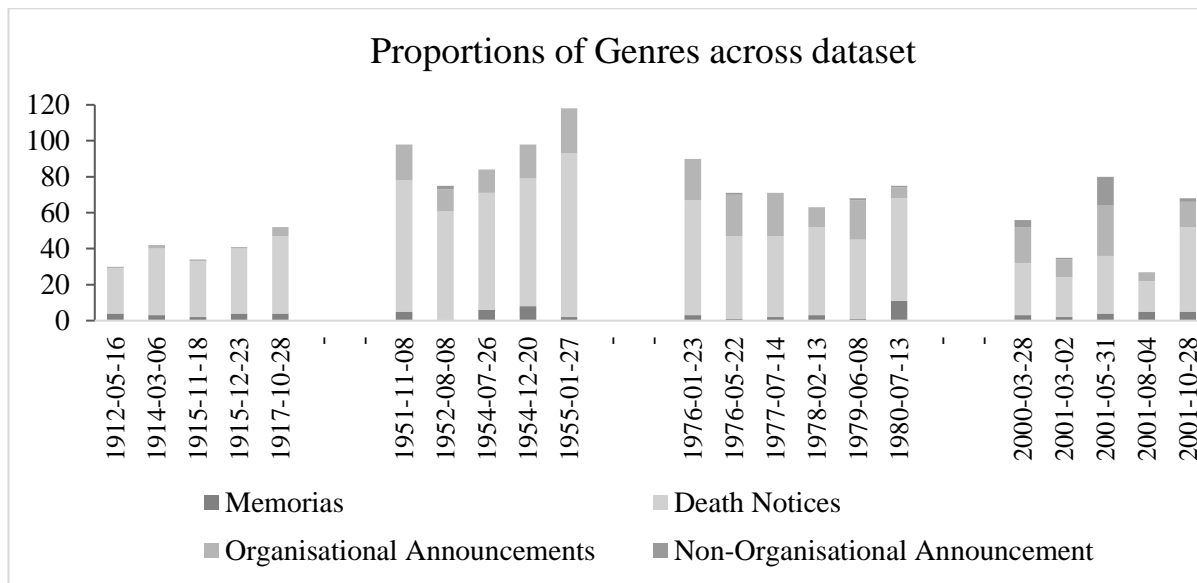


Figure 1. Total genre proportions per day.

It is difficult to explain the large degree of variance in the 2000s sample, as this data had to be obtained via the recent archive which does not allow for frequencies to be checked against original newspaper copies. Nonetheless proportions remain relatively consistent throughout, this would suggest that a far more detailed time series analysis may generate more nuanced findings.