OVER MY DEAD MODEM: DEATH MEMORIALIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY IN 21ST CENTURY UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

THESIS: Over My Dead Modem: Death Memorialization and Technology in 21st Century United States.

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This research studies the respect for the dead in relation to technological aspects of memorialization. The focus is on the attitudes prevalent in southern Michigan, using data from interviews and surveys of funeral directors and memorial webpage participants. This data helps determine how some aspects of respect for the dead have changed in 21st century Midwestern America. Consideration is given to the attitudes of funeral industry representatives in terms of both physical and virtual memorialization of the dead as well as the opinions of members of memorial webpages contained on the social networking site, Facebook. How respect has changed is evaluated using individual opinions and their attitudes toward memorialization technology. New memorial technology has created new rules and perspectives towards the dead, which are shared by both funeral directors and memorial participants. The newly transitioned perceptions of respect are supported by a variety of platforms encouraging deeper public thinking and engagement towards the treatment of the deceased.
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the ghosts of cyberspace. May each of your memories be remembered, beloved and never forgotten.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In all human cultures the experience of loss through death is surrounded by beliefs and rituals (Robben 2004). How humans experience, express, and perform grief is mediated by culture and society. Numerous classical works in anthropology have highlighted important aspects of death and memorialization. For instance, Polish anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski, discussed attitudes towards death cross-culturally. Malinowski also builds upon the importance of distinct mortuary rituals within differing cultures (Malinowski 1925). Other anthropological works such as those by E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1937), introduce the view of death in relation to witchcraft and murder within the Azande culture. Alfred Radcliffe Brown (1922) takes a different approach in classical anthropology and explores the expression of grief through funerary ceremony. Emile Durkheim, a sociologist, also published on the subject of death and rituals in his work on rites of passage. Durkheim focuses on the social ties within the death rituals, where the funerary celebrations reinforce social bonds between the living kin (Metcalf and Huntington 1991). These publications are just a few of the major discussions of death and mortuary thought in anthropology and are also the basis on which this research is based. The passage of time has led to an array of mortuary technologies that affect how the practices of death and disposal are handled and how the human population perceives life’s end. Memorialization, in turn, deals with a very fundamental human value - the idea of respect for the deceased. In the 21st century, the North American funeral business industry, and the cultural significance of respect for the dead, have been transformed through the introduction of new technology within mortuary practices, which in turn has given way to contested views on memorialization of the dead.
The research is focused on how virtual technology in the American funeral industry is, as is the case for virtual technologies in other cultural domains, transforming more quickly than the ethics of such technology have yet to sufficiently evolve. However, virtual forms of grief are not unlike physical grief memorials that are erected to honor the deceased. In this regard, the site acts as a static monument, just as crosses memorializing automobile accident deaths do on the roadside. Both the virtual world and these physical monuments create a public space for mourners to express their grief. There is a general lack of literature available for review on this topic, with the exception of a small body of literature on virtual grief and Internet memorialization.

Thomas Lynch (2004) has written on the transformation of the family owned funeral business into a mega mortuary industry, and the idea of the “digital legacy,” or Internet memorials (Drescher 2012). Yet, the bulk of the literature on this subject is more likely to be found on non-scholarly websites and often includes the discussion of drive-through viewings, transformation and disposal of human cremains and memorial technology in cemeteries. Although there is a small amount of research on this topic, there is still much more to be examined in the realm of technology and respect for the dead. With this in mind, this research will play a part in building knowledge of this industry.

The research proposed here will utilize ethnographic methods to look critically at the technology involved in the modern funeral industry and more specifically, how individuals are memorialized through the use of technology. To do this, a sample population of ten funeral professionals, each affiliated with a separate business, have been chosen through reverse snowball sampling, a qualitative method that enables the researcher to identity and recruit research subjects from among acquaintances. These individuals were interviewed on their
opinions and beliefs about the use of various aspects of memorialization technologies and how these systems conflict or are in accord with current mortuary standards. In this case, I will utilize the phrase “memorialization technology” when discussing Internet memorials (such as Facebook, Twitter, and online memorial groups), quick response codes (QR codes) on gravestones, drive up viewings, and web streaming of funerals. Through analysis of interviews, I consider the opinions of funeral industry representatives in terms of both physical and virtual memorialization of the dead. These opinions will provide a glimpse into the sometimes under-acknowledged perspective on the culture of death in a quickly changing American society. The ideas and practices of funeral professionals are important in understanding topics such as memorialization in the funeral industry because they have a constant engagement with managing death for the living and therefore have a more differing perspective than anyone else in Western society.

The embrace of 21st century technology is also related to respect for the dead. Respect is just one variable among many when looking at technology and the mortuary community, and is also seen as an important cultural value. In this light, the Values in Design theory, established by Helen Nissenbaum (2011), can be applied in this context. This theory involves looking at the values in the creation and use of technology. Each new technology brings forth a corresponding value such as privacy, trust, security, safety, freedom, and in this case, respect. Taking these values into the consideration of design and use of these technological materials is an important aspect to contemplate while reviewing these variables in death.

Although anthropology has contributed greatly to the topic of culture and death, comparatively little has been written pertaining to the topic of death and its role within virtual memorials. Henceforth, this work will provide new insight into the knowledge base of past and
present scholars. Preliminary research reveals that individuals, families, and the funeral industry recognize the changes that technology has brought forth. Therefore, understanding these changes can have a direct impact and contribution to the reasoning behind the transformation of beliefs and cultural ideology of the funeral industry today.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The continuation of bereavement after the viewing and funeral, has become a dominant idea throughout history for the Western cultures of the United States even before modern technology played a significant role (Walter 1999). In the midst of mortuary practices and grieving in 21st century North America, the application of new funeral technologies stands out as an important aspect of the cultural shift in death ideology. Each century has brought a vast array of new aspects to the funeral industry. For example, in early 18th century Britain, with the repeal of public censorship, grief had the ability to take on a new form and death therefore was examined more closely in the public realm. This started with the death of the monarchs. The council did not want the throne to appear empty, so would publicize the funeral announcement along with the commemoration to a new ruler. Because other parties wanted to show their loyalty and support for the new monarch, they would often times publish their condolences before the death even occurred. This led to massive commemorative accounts that were written for the deceased but were used to gain political favor (Oberlin 2014). This example demonstrates the use of technology through the Victorian era and prior, where printed publications and then newspapers were the “Internet” of the prior centuries.

From a more reserved and private ritualistic atmosphere in the 19th century, to the dynamic and flexible range of practices that are observed in present day United States, this change is likely the combined result of an ever-growing diversity in our county and the new mediums and technologies through which death rituals have been presented. Although funeral practices form a part of the literature of anthropology and culture, the emergence of digital technologies in scholarly studies in relation to these fields is somewhat new. Numerous works concentrating on online memorialization have been published, but have been limited in their
attention to funeral services, respect, and technology as a whole. In this section, I will review the material pertaining to the technology of death culture and how it has influenced the respect for the dead over time in the United States.

While the knowledge base pertaining to Internet legacy and memorialization in the modern era is wanting, one such author, Elizabeth Drescher (2012), contributes through her discussion of how social media and other Internet resources have helped to transform the way that death is perceived. Drescher argues that nearly 60 percent of adults in the United States belong to at least one social network and that this changes perceptions of death because of the experience of living in a world where digital media is commonplace. She argues that modern society is now involved in a new age where viewing births, graduations, and weddings on blogs and social networking sites is commonplace, turning the private sector public (Drescher 2012). Now that some funerals and deaths are streamed online as well, the public, whether having a relation to the deceased or not, have a chance to comment, grieve or share this event without ever having personally known the individual or family. This has the ability to take the grief of the private sector away from the individual person and thrust it into the hands of the public, transforming the dead into a social constructed media idea, with digital words and writings that follow the subject wherever the content is found (Drescher 2012). With this departure from traditional funerals of the past, virtual memorials thus have the power to “immortalize” the dead, as digitally constructed memorials may not have any planned termination or cessation in sight.

Such examples in contemporary media include the televised funerals of Princess Diana in 1997 and Michael Jackson in 2009. The first, a funeral that was one of the most watched television events in history, occurred after a fatal car accident that ended the life of the Princess. In the United States alone, 55 million viewers (along with 2.6 billion people around the world)
tuned in to the broadcast to say their goodbyes to the beloved princess (O’Donnell et al. 2001). The big three American television networks at the time provided full coverage of the event, starting in the early hours of the morning. With much of the world watching, Princess Diana’s last moments were scrutinized, along with many aspects of her life, and eventually, her funeral (O’Donnell et al. 2001). Celebrity deaths encourage public scrutiny. It only takes a moment to search the Internet to see that thousands of critiques and comments regarding not just the funerals themselves but even an evaluation of the way in which the family members reacted, debating if they were “sad enough” or “responded appropriately” to the death. The comments have lived on years after the events themselves, positioning the grief of the families as not their own, but as broadcasted spheres of media and Internet events.

Many web-based memorial sites, referred to by Roberts (2014) as “web cemeteries” have come up as a part of specific web rings. Once such site, “Virtual Memorial Garden,” created in 2004, helped to start an online world where, sometimes for a fee, families can have their own page on a web cemetery site (Roberts 2014). This idea of a web cemetery can also occur in many different forms of social networking sites, even ones that aren’t even originally intended for memorial use. Roberts (2014) also discusses how more memorials are written for parents and that older adults are frequently memorialized. This view contradicts that of contemporary United States, where elder deaths tend to be overlooked by the mourning public and may not be memorialized as much as deaths that occur in the younger age ranges. (Roberts 2014). Roberts examined these memorials that focus on the deaths of individuals over the age of ninety. She found that most of these pages appear to be “heartfelt” and to be “positively portraying the deceased” and notes the author’s grief at the individual’s death (Roberts 2014). Roberts does not specify her scaling indices of how she found these pages sincere and positive and so the question
is brought up of how a “heartfelt” aspect could be analyzed and identified. This study is useful because it allows us to think about who gets memorialized and how the term “heartfelt” is being conceptualized in western culture.

In turn, social networking sites have influenced the way people think about death and sometimes it continues years after the event. This continual grieving makes an appearance in many psychological discussions and anthropological texts that deal with the consequences of long bereavement periods. In psychology, the argument has been made that an extra long grieving process hurts the surviving kin, while others have pointed out that it is actually better to be able to grieve freely and openly for as long as needed (Morehouse and Crandall 2014). In Digital Grief, Morehouse and Crandall comment, “Ceremonies such as funerals were divined to help provide closure, but with social media, the grief appears to be endless and shared” (Morehouse and Crandall 2014:27). Their text also gives an example of the case of infant death. After ten years, the mother is still grieving, discussing her child’s death online and is actively engaged in child loss groups on Facebook. Morehouse and Crandall argue that this individual has not distanced herself and social media sites lack conditions for objectivity, suggesting that this may not be a healthy behavior after a certain period of time.

When looking cross-culturally, specific traditions need to be taken into account when considering the time constraints of what is considered to be an appropriate mourning period. For example, Korean culture separates itself fully from traditional Western death beliefs, as death in Korea is not viewed as a problem, but rather a mystery of life. Death is not seen as a final farewell, but more so a rite of passage for the spirit to continue its journey (Giorgio 2014). Because of this, the acceptable grieving time may be much shorter than in Western traditions because the sorrow is not endless. There would also be a tremendous difference in grieving
length in Native American and Latino cultures, among others that vary cross culturally. Further studies need to be addressed regarding how these resources and technology can help individuals of these cultures cope with their grief. It would also be of great value to study the use of this technology with respect to the past, and examine how it could have helped previous generations handle their grief. On the one hand, social networking might have changed the outlook for some individuals who took a childhood death or death of a spouse particularly hard and were socially isolated. Had social networking been available, these grieving individuals could have turned to the group in order to help them heal, but on the other hand, consideration needs to be made if prolonged discussion would have harmed them further.

Another, sometimes negative, aspect, is the public nature of the sites. As long as the profile is somewhat public, almost anyone can be a part of someone’s grieving and memorial process, even if they don’t know the individual. This is another example of the private realm making its way into a very public sphere, as discussed previously, and can be taken in either a positive or negative light (Morehouse and Crandall 2014). Postings by friends, family, and sometimes strangers can not only bring forth comfort and assistance but they can also be responsible for bringing out expressions of depression, guilt and anger (Morehouse and Crandall 2014). A face-to-face encounter may discourage candid comments among some individuals; they might feel more inclined to say these sometimes hurtful and unnecessary comments, on social networking sites. This can lead to arguments, disrespect, and division of community - all of which are likely not helpful for the individuals who have just suffered a loss. Grammar and spelling are other details that can be overlooked and thought of negatively when considering these sites. In some instances, certain people may be appalled if shortcut words, slangs, phrases, or incorrect spelling are present when appearing on a memorial social network site (Morehouse...
and Crandall 2014). They may view such writings on the memorial page as a sign of disrespect to either the deceased or the surviving family members and could serve to further separate or antagonize the grieving persons (Morehouse and Crandall 2014).

Another example, in which a web platform serves as a basis of memorial, in which technology exacerbates grief, is contained in Julie Buntin’s discussion of social network memorial pages. Buntin (2014) uses the circumstances of her childhood friend’s death to bring in her own viewpoint, in which the death of her friend occurs in an infinite loop, never changing, and too public for her to take part in. Buntin argues that her friend’s story “is like a hologram” (Buntin 2014:4). The very presence of this webpage is heartache for the author because she physically blames herself for actions leading up to her friend’s death, reminding her of unkept promises and unfinished memories (Buntin 2014). In this regard, the memorial page itself is viewed in a negative light because it creates a stage where the grieving is continuous and the death is psychologically relived time and time again.

Even in cemeteries, technology is ubiquitous. On some modern gravestones, there are even QR codes (quick response codes) that, when scanned with a telephone or other device, can link the viewer directly with the web page of the deceased. This allows history to continue to live on even after the death of the individual. It also provides an outlet for family legacy and genealogy to continue. The web page is helpful because it preserves family knowledge, making the history available to many people and providing an additional opportunity to obtain important genealogical materials. Gone are the days when relatives are at a loss for tracking information about their ancestors and they have been replaced by living memory in virtual video and photographs. As this technology takes hold and becomes available to more and more people, an expanded database of information will be saved through the Internet and therefore more readily
accessible. QR codes as well as photographs and engravings of the deceased’s signature are alternate ways in which technology has provided successful new ways to remember loved ones who have passed.

Moving from the realm of digital media and Internet memorials, the efforts and works of the funeral homes in making funerals and visitations more technologically advanced is a topic that is also worthy of consideration. New ideas and technology are coming forth that lead the way for innovative opportunities to help make grieving, arguably, easier. The first example comes from a handful of funeral homes across the United States and involves drive-up viewings (Felton 2014). This fast-food-like method allows people to drive their car up to the funeral home, where they enter a portico much like that of a banking facility or prescription pickup location. They then sign the guest book, drop off their card or condolences, if they have them, and pull forward to view the deceased. When the car pulls up, the curtains behind the glass window open to reveal the casket with body inside (Felton 2014). Although few funeral homes have installed this new drive-through visitation option, many are voicing concern. Some individuals are of the opinion that the drive-through does not provide enough privacy (Nicholson 2012) or that it fails to show respect for the deceased (Felton 2014).

These definitions of “respect,” therefore, conflict with the use of drive-through viewings at funeral homes. Because of the way the window is set up, for the allotted time, anyone who is curious could drive-up and see the individual laid out (Felton 2014). These curiosity seekers do not have to know the deceased, nor do they have to have any acquaintance with the family and this can leave people with a strong reason to dislike the technology. However, on a more positive note it allows people who cannot get out of their cars or do not have time to attend the service, an opportunity for closure. It is essential to note that this viewing method does not necessarily take
away from the traditional American viewing. This service is normally offered after hours and would most likely be beneficial for people who cannot physically make it to the other hours because of time constraints like work or school but still want to pay their respects (Felton 2014). Another benefit of this viewing method is that it allows the elderly or the disabled, who are not physically or mentally able to leave their vehicles, a way to be involved with the funeral proceedings (Felton 2014). This option has generated mixed feelings, some people arguing that this method of viewing is not respectful to the deceased (Felton 2014). The funeral director of Paradise Funeral Chapel, Ivan Phillips, acknowledged that, “Most people, what they need to do is experience, before they actually put the negativity out there” (Felton 2014:1). This statement was made in an effort to speak against the negativity surrounding this viewing method and therefore encourage families to think about and experience the technology before making their judgments.

The concept of drive-through viewing came into popularity in the 1980s in response to shootouts at funerals, more specifically gang funerals. Even now, the glass on one drive-up funeral parlor in California, Robert L. Adams Funeral Home, is made with bulletproof glass, so that no shots can be fired into the funeral home while viewing the deceased (Greenburg 2012). Other funeral homes have also had the option of drive-up viewings, some as early as the 1970s, although the reasoning behind many of these are not gang related, just convenience, tailoring to individuals who might not want to face the mourners, dress appropriately for the occasion, or are facing time constraints (Smith 2014).

In order to understand the impact of technology on the grieving process, this study must also consider why Americans grieve in the manner they do. Douglas Davies briefly explains one such reasoning in his account, *A Brief History of Death* in 2005:
Human well-being is related to the fact that human beings are social creatures dependent upon the support and succour of a social group, whether of the family, clan, club, church or society at large. Grief takes its toll upon the bodily life of people not only because of the psychology of attachment…but also because it is through partners, kin and friends, etc., that the moral nature of society is partly mediated. [Davies 2005:43]

Davies’ extends the ideas of the logic of love and kinship in the United States, as discussed by Herve Varenne (1977). Here, Varenne touches on the subject of love in America, stressing that the creation of groups and communities in the human population is a natural occurrence. He continues, “a person is a natural unit because he is a biological one, but he does not exist as a human cultural unit until he has entered into relations with other individuals” (Varenne 1977:206). Varenne is describing the very nature of personhood and the relations that individuals have to each other. This acknowledgement of a natural occurrence of community groups gives a structure to comprehend the meaning of loss within a group or collection of individuals.

Since personhood and relations are such an important aspect in a community, it makes sense that death is also a significant aspect of communal relations. Philippe Aries and his work, *The Hour of Our Death* (2004) argues that a relationship exists between death and the awareness of personhood. He discusses five systems of analysis that are used to synthesize this relation: The Tame Death, The Death of the Self, Remote and Imminent Death, The Death of the Other and The Invisible Death (Aries 2004). Out of these, The Tame Death is the theme that sticks out when discussing community. Philippe acknowledges that death is not an individual, secular act, but is a celebrated milestone. The cultural purpose of memorialization of death in a community is to exhibit the relationship of the deceased to the family and social group members (Aries 2004). He continues, saying that the death rites that happen at the end of life and that the memorialization process are some of the oldest processes which are a sign that man is not just an individual, “but a link of an unbroken chain, the biological continuation of a family or a line that
begins with Adam and includes the whole human race” (Aries 2004:41). This helps to put into perspective why individuals grieve and to place the emotion of grief and memorialization into context.

Emilie Durkheim’s perspective on rites of passage is another important anthropological idea to consider when reviewing theoretical contributions. One of Durkheim’s suggestions focuses on the importance of social bonds within a ritual. Death is one of these passages where the public celebrations and memorials reinforce the social bonds of all involved (Metcalf and Huntington 1991). Durkheim looked closely at the way the social group at a wake expressed emotions in comparison with the extremely bereaved. The importance in the social expression, Durkheim discovered, reveals that members of society tend to feel pressure to place their behavior or feelings similar to that of the grieving individuals (Metcalf and Huntington 1991).

There are many aspects of the funeral service and mortuary practices today that are filled with technology. Some of these aspects are helpful in keeping the memory of the deceased alive, like the gravesite QR codes or the online memorials, while others, having many useful aspects can also have other impacts, like the loss of family involvement in death. Whether or not this technology is well embraced by the public, it is now a substantial part of life and will be from now into the well distant future.

The memorialization technology that we face in today’s industry wasn’t always the case. Therefore, it is valuable to look back on a brief history of what the attitudes were like surrounding the funeral industry right before this transformation to witness the construction of the mortuary industry we have today. In her book, The American Way of Death Revisited (1998), Jessica Mitford, caused quite the scandal in the industry when first published. She wrote what was penned as the “truth” about the funeral industry and what might also be thought of as an
attack on the industry. For this thesis, I am not so concerned with the meat and potatoes of the scandal of the mid-century funeral homes as I am on focusing on the keys that assist in the transition of the memorialization aspect of the industry.

As technology became more commonplace in the late part of the 20th and early 21st century, the items that individuals and families inherit have also expanded to technology. Digital possessions of the deceased can be just as valuable as physical objects to grieving family members. Even Facebook pages of the deceased can be fought over and can be seen as something to be possessed (Massimi and Baecker 2010). Social networking pages, personal computers, phones, tablets, digital photographs and hard drives are all forms of digital technology that will now be passed down when someone dies. Inheriting these items can bring up questions of electronic assets. Such questions bring up issues like private versus public data and the legal issues surrounding these forms of inheritance. Massimi and Baecker stress that “technology can inform, comfort, confront and connect the bereaved in the years following a death” (2010: 1821). This statement rings true not just in the private sphere of the inheriting of digital artifacts but it can also comfort the public and/or distinct members of the family that want to generate and keep memories.

One of the major social networking sites, Facebook has a set of guidelines that spell out the ways in which you can “die” on your online community page. In preparation, individuals can choose what is called a “legacy contact,” in case of their death. A legacy contact is very similar to the emergency contacts on your cell phone and is someone you choose to look after your account after it has been memorialized (Facebook 2017). There are regulations as to the extent of what a legacy contact can do on the memorial page and usually is just limited to posting status updates, changing of a profile picture and accepting new friend requests. Once the page is a
switched to a memorial account, the word “remembering” appears next to the deceased’s name. Memorial pages without a specified legacy contact cannot be changed, nor can one be added. This means that if an unexpected death occurs, the page might not be able to be turned into a memorial. This created many memorial Facebook pages that are in a sense, “ghosts.” They don’t technically fit into the remembrance profiles, yet the active member of the account is now deceased. Online memorials can bring up many technological aspects that sometimes bring about difficult questions when dealing with the memorialization of the deceased.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

CONTRIBUTIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

This research provides contributions to mortuary anthropology and to death studies. By doing this research, I hope to contribute to anthropological understandings of funeral studies in the United States. This information is primarily directed towards academia, but will also prove useful for the funeral industry, giving a fresh perspective on how technology is integrated into the funeral sector.

My research may likewise be of help to the general public. By starting a public discussion and getting people to think more about mindful respect of the dead and the use of technology, it may allow room for a broader amalgamation of understanding between modernity, grief and the meaning of respect. In this specific field of mortuary anthropology it is important to look at cultural change over time. Examining the transition of respect as digital technology takes the stage in the modern day funeral industry encourages deeper public thinking and engagement with treatment of the deceased even after the final disposition. From the funeral industry to academia to the public sector, research that envelops respect for the dead has an importance that escapes no one, as death eventually touches us all.

BACKGROUND AND CREATION OF METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers the methods used in establishing how technological aspects in memorialization are measured. First, I introduce the framework behind the research, the steps I took to prepare my methods and how this specific study was structured. Second, I review how a reliable sample population was chosen and my methods for deciding each. From there, I describe
In the process of studying memorial technology, I used several related works on which to base my research. The methodology established in those studies greatly influenced my own, and are covered in greater detail within the literature review section of this thesis. However, they are worth briefly mentioning a second time to provide a substantial base for understanding this particular methodology. Drescher (2012) used a single blog and social media account to trace the life and afterlife of one individual. The method that Drescher employed was observation as she recorded the transformation of an online blog, comparing the content before and after the author’s battle with cancer along with the events and milestones taking place within them. This approach helped to grow my own methods process in that it encouraged me to build on the thoughts of the individuals that post messages on sites such as this. I wanted to delve into the thoughts of the individuals that were active participants on those sites and memorial pages.

Morehouse and Crandall (2014) employed a similar technique in their work, but instead of basing their research around a single online sphere, their investigation began with questions regarding a single topic, moved on to “second orality,” and then turned to social media for examples. In this instance, the study of orality is commonplace in philosophy, and can be described as a thought process or an oral expression in a society that is not yet familiar with technologies such as writing or print (Ong 1979). More specifically, second orality is a term developed by Walter Ong (1979) who defines the term as follows: “This is the orality induced by radio and television and it is by no means independent of writing and print but totally dependent on them” (Ong 1979:3). Morehouse and Crandall (2014) use Ong’s thoughts in their work on digital grieving to consider if social media is moving grief into a third digital space that is in
between orality and physical literacy. This research takes a different role than what I propose as it adds a philosophical dimension to the writing. However, some aspects of their work are similar to what I wanted to accomplish and also held examples of multiple social media accounts.

Morehouse and Crandall’s (2014) methods, like Drescher (2012), were observational and did not include firsthand narratives or opinions from the individuals who projected their thoughts virtually. I took this into consideration and so added this aspect of thought to my own work in order to allow an individualistic view on the topic of memorial technologies to come through. My perspective is unique because although I may consider similar questions, I am doing so from an ethnographic context. Drescher (2012), along with Morehouse and Crandall (2014) provide an efficient baseline in introducing the question of online grief, but their work only takes the material so far. My research builds upon these previous works, but with the help of ethnography, takes the topic further, covering the many dimensions of memorialization technology.

During the period of initial research regarding thoughts and opinions on mourning and the funeral industry, I also researched different types of materials on death and the transformation of the mortuary industry through time. Not only did I read historical accounts of death and disposal but I also read memoirs of individuals who have spent their lives working within the funeral sector. This literature, both scholarly and casual, allowed me to be able to root myself in the current information available on mortuary studies, which further served to help me in the understanding of my developing research.

A large part of the framework for this research was developed during my per diem work in various funeral homes from 2013 to 2016. I was able to experience many technologies such as funeral videography, photography, cellular devices as memorial tools, and the beginnings of online memorials first hand. One example that I came across during my fieldwork was the
presence of videography for the purpose of sharing the memorial service transnationally. This case occurred during the service of a Rwandan funeral. Throughout the entire funeral and burial, one of the family members acted as a cameraman. He used an iPhone and a handheld video camera to record the reactions of the mourners. I noticed that he refrained from recording the preacher directly, but focused the camera on the family’s actions: reaching for a tissue, hushing children, singing, nodding along with the service. I later learned that the video was not for an individual purpose but to send back to family in Rwanda, who weren’t able to attend. This example illustrates how technology has been able to impact transnational groups who are separated by great distances and allow them to be a part of and witness an event that they could not otherwise attend. It shows just how important digital technology has become among the funeral industry and to the families that are involved within it.

Another case that I want to present from within my work is the use of television in which to stream memorial videos or photographs at a viewing. I have witnessed these television screens at most of the funeral homes in which I have observed and have noticed their ability to connect people and memories. Instead of having one family member create picture boards to present at the service, the virtual slides of photographs allow for various family groups to partake in the creation of the memorials without having to physically leave their homes. Just by sending their collection of photographs into the funeral home, it can be added to the memorial slideshow. This, much like the videography mentioned above, is helpful in cases where distance and travel make the gathering difficult.

These episodes in my fieldwork are just a few examples of the many cases in which I have witnessed the impact that memorial technology has at the funeral services themselves. However, this occurrence has not just been within the expanse of funerals. My experiences have
also led me to the knowledge and observation that much of what is written, photographed and filmed during the formal services are brought back to a memorial webpage and posted virtually, saving the event and memories indefinitely. I have witnessed numerous individuals who ask specifically for a digital copy of the obituary or song choice from the funeral home so that they can create an online memorial around these artifacts.

The experiences that came out of my per diem work inspired my work for this project and allowed me to be aware of comparable perspectives within the industry. The differing viewpoints that I witnessed developed not just between funeral directors but also between the clients themselves who have the knowledge of these systems but are not associated with the mortuary profession. Many of the aforementioned technologies can supplement a vast array of opinions in regard to respect for the dead. Numerous observations that I made during my experiences in those three years led to many of the methods for my own data collection. I knew that I needed to communicate with the individuals who use these technologies outside of the funeral home setting. However, I wanted to be sure that the population I would be collecting data from stayed within these boundaries and so sought individuals who use this technology regularly. I wanted individuals that are familiar with digital technologies and similar memorial platforms that could answer my inquiries honestly and without much direction.

INTERVIEW POPULATIONS

The research location within Southern Michigan was chosen primarily because of its accessibility and ease of access to the data collection site. As a researcher, my own experience, history, and funeral background was already set in and around the Southern Michigan area. It was therefore easier for me to continue in this location than to migrate to other parts of Michigan.
(or other states) where new connections to funeral informants would have to be made. To collect data itself, I chose to make use of ten semi-structured interviews and fifty internet-based surveys (Bernard 2011). I will first discuss the use of interviews and then move on to explain my approach to survey collection.

To document experiences of how memorial technology is used, I needed to create a reliable sampling within these interviews (and surveys). The results revealed what online networkers, whom have experience with memorials, and individuals with a more concrete mortuary background, funeral directors, feel about memorial technology. All the individuals involved in this study had the restriction of being at least 18 years of age and were not eligible if they had suffered a loss of a family member within the past six months. These restrictions are important because they allowed me to survey only the adult population and helped to keep my interlocutors from discussing what might have still been a sensitive topic (Bernard 2011).

The ten interviews were with professional funeral directors, and were chosen because of their daily connection to their profession as well as their awareness of memorial technology. I networked through the funeral home with which I had previous connections, to find the other nine funeral homes to interview. Using reverse snowball sampling, I gained direct communication with remaining funeral directors around Southern Michigan (Bernard 2011). Reverse snowball sampling allows for the interlocutors to be contacted by one another in order to communicate the logistics of a possible interview, and extends neither pressure nor personal liability to my future interviewees, allowing them to reach out when or if they would like to participate. I chose this over snowball sampling because it would allow for the funeral directors to feel more comfortable in their decisions to interview and therefore might not feel pressured to give their opinion or feel like their personal information was compromised in compared to being
To gather the interview data from memorial pages, I used my personal Facebook account to reach out to different memorial groups. Before I began, I made sure to verify Facebook’s security and research policies. After acknowledging these protocols, I started with groups to which I already belonged, and then used those to branch off to different regions in Southern Michigan. Members of these groups were contacted through private messaging within the social network with a brief introduction of the topic and recruitment note, a sample of which is provided below:

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about memorial technology in the 21st century. You're eligible to be in this study because you are a member of a memorial network page on Facebook. If you decide to participate in this study, you may be asked to complete a 20-minute online survey. By doing so, you may gain a better understanding of memorial technologies present in the funeral industry today.

For the funeral director interviews, semi-structured interviews were selected over structured or formal interviews because I wanted the interviewee to be able to expand on his or her opinions without the constraint of time or rigid questioning (Bernard 2011). The interviews themselves last approximately 60 minutes each. I completed ten, which comprised approximately six hundred minutes of interviewing time. Some of the funeral directors were interviewed in person at their respective funeral homes while others were met at public locations where the interview then took place. I used an Olympic voice recorder to assist in the transcription. This allowed me to take my time reviewing the raw material and helped in my transcriptions.

**WEB-BASED SURVEYS**

The next method I employed was the use of web-based surveys. These surveys were another crucial part of my methods as they provided details about the opinions of the individuals...
who use social networking daily. Surveys were also a relatively easy method to obtain a wide amount of data in a small amount of time. By using these two methods - surveys and interviews - I was able to create a stronger overall data set (Bernard 2011). (Note: An example of both survey and interview questions are provided in the appendix at the end of this section).

The forty-four-question survey was designed to collect the opinions of Facebook users - individuals that, by virtue of the fact that they are using social media, are familiar with virtual technologies and Internet usage. Qualtrics, an online survey platform, was used to generate the survey digitally and was also the base website with which the fifty individuals visited to complete the survey. This form of survey was completely Internet-based. Creating this type of digital study within my research made it easier to administer. The Internet also allowed the survey to reach respondents easier, more affordably, and took less time than a face-to-face interview. However, there were also downfalls to this method. Some that I needed to keep in mind during my research process were: the difficulty in getting individuals to take my survey, biases towards the questions, and respondent error - since I did not know for sure who was taking the surveys. Within the survey itself, I employed the use of a Likert-type scale because it is a straightforward layout that measures the internal states of people in a multidimensional format. I also applied a semantic differential scale to this part of my research so that I could rate an individual’s feelings and therefore past experiences based on a single target concept (Bernard 2011).

The surveys were important and, as previously mentioned, added a much-needed depth to the research by adding another dimension to the data itself. They provided the opinions of individuals who were further separated from death than the funeral director and were particularly helpful because a broader spectrum of respondents were able to be reached (Bernard 2011).
Additionally, these surveys allow for a viewpoint that is not affected by a certain variable. For example, these viewpoints could be individual involvement in the death business or the creation of their own online memorial page. Although the respondents are involved in the social network, and may be an active part of the page, they are more likely to have differing opinions about funeral technologies than their counterparts who have a deeper involvement with death. This may be due to the cause that the survey respondents have a more personnel connection to a certain death, and so may think of just a few instances or examples when answering survey questions. This would differ from funeral directors, who may consider a multitude of cases because they are exposed to death and dying on a daily basis and might feel immune to the sting of death. These survey respondents are also unique because they may not have been the ones to create the memorial pages. For this reason, I did not expect them to have a strong connection because their experience of memorial technology might only be through other family’s deaths and memorial pages.

Participant observation was a third technique used along with interviews and surveys. For this I employed the use of past and present fieldwork. I used experiences from per-diem mortuary work to ground my research and provide a starting point for my knowledge. These observations include over five hundred field hours of research within the realm of removal services, viewings, funerals and burials. I gained this information by participating in fifteen different funerals spanning a wide variety of age groups and cultures. Much of this work, while participatory, was unobtrusive observation, a type of field observation where I was part of a group (as a funeral associate) but many of the funeral gathering members were not informed that I was performing research. My reactivity was lowered when I used this method to observe, that is, the people I studied were not reacting to my presence. I did not interfere with their grieving
process ethically - no invasion of privacy occurred and their behavior stayed neutral in my presence (Bernard 2011).
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The interview process was more time consuming but came out as the easier task to complete because of my connection within the industry. Working at a funeral home made it easier for me to build up contacts and initiate my method of reverse snowball sampling. It seemed that the people I interviewed were more likely to respond and assist me when they knew I worked for a funeral home. This allowed me to not only land interviews but assisted me in relating to the topics that the funeral directors spoke about. I wasn’t just interviewing on items that I wanted to learn about, I knew quite a bit already about each funeral home and their methods of memorialization. Going into the interviews with a knowledge base assisted me tremendously but it also hindered me because I felt that I came in with a pre-conceived notion of my expectations and the interviewee’s answers. This was a double-edged sword because while the industry helped to develop my interest and contacts in mortuary anthropology, it also accepted me as one of its own and therefore instilled ideas and prejudices that I would not have been likely to come across had I just been an anthropologist outside of the funeral industry.

For this research, it’s important to understand the perspectives of the individuals working within the funeral industry as well as the family and friends of the deceased that use memorial networking systems. In this case, the interviews that I completed gave me an in-depth perspective on the inner culture of the funeral industry and opinions on memorial technology.

Through the ten interviews conducted, I found that many of the funeral directors’ views were similar, with a slight trend towards a more open shift in the generation thirty years old and younger. I was able to control my sample population and interviewed five male funeral directors and five female funeral directors, each working out of a different funeral home. The youngest of the group was 27 years old while the oldest, 63. The mean age of the sample age group was 37.8.
I also found that different funeral homes have different views on the industry. This is revealed in the services they offer and the technology they use. I then explored a pattern in the data that showed the more technology the stated funeral home (funeral home interviewee) used, the more accepting they were of technology in general, regardless of age.

For instance, Funeral Director A, 27 years old, from a funeral home dating back to the 1800s, was mild to neutral in her attitudes regarding new technology and respect for the dead. I found, by research and experience, that the stated funeral home incorporates technology through online obituaries, memorial DVDs and the use of a social networking site. I have provided a table showing all the technological uses by each funeral home (see Appendix: Table 1). By looking at this table, you can see that interviewee A or Funeral Home A, only made use of three out of the ten possible technological uses mentioned by the ten funeral homes. The response to change by Funeral Home A, noted that a positive technological shift within the facility for the use of ordering and completing tasks should be installed but nothing along the lines of a change in memorialization itself. The opposite example of this was present in the interview of Director H, or Funeral Home H, 35 years old. This funeral home is respected as a specific religious business, catered to a certain religious group. This end of the spectrum is shown in Table 1. Funeral Home H uses a social networking page, live web streaming, digital newspapers, memorial DVD’s, online obituaries, and video recordings all as part of their memorial technology, for a total count of six out of the ten available offerings. When asked about their attitude toward technology and the future of this kind of memorialization, Funeral Director H, responded, “not as much as it should be” as it gives an “opportunity for uniqueness.” When asked about the role that technology will be playing in the future, interviewee H answered that technology will keep evolving and that the funeral home will keep finding a new way to utilize it.
to their (and their customers’) advantage. Overall, the view of technology and the use of it in the future were very positive and Director H spoke of the increased use of technology and the utilization of new resources such as database websites.

Funeral Home I or Director I, 63 years old, was another supporter of memorial technology and its uses and exhibited the incorporation of memorial DVDs, a social networking page, a digital guestbook, online obituaries, and video recording services. This funeral home had an overall positive outlook on the use of this type of technology and spoke of it as an “opportunity for advertising” and a “way to bring people back to the funeral home.” Director I spoke of the memorial DVDs as a performance, a way to create something special for the family to hold on to. Although he mentioned that the funeral home has room for growth on the technological front, Director I supported the statement that technology will only evolve and become more prevalent within not just Funeral Home I but the industry as well (Funeral Director I, 2016).

These three examples support the pattern in the data that acknowledge the findings that show the more a funeral firm uses technology, the more likely they are to incorporate even more technology in the future and have a positive image surrounding more of these uses. Another example of a high rate of memorial technology use is Funeral Director F, 33 years old. This funeral home uses five out of the ten technologies, like Director I: web streaming, memorial DVDs, a social network page, online obituaries, and video recording. Although this counts for 50 percent of the available technological offerings, having five out of ten technologies places it at the top four in this category. This funeral home, however, had a slightly different opinion than Funeral Home H, but still fit the data pattern. Director F made use of technology, but at the same time felt that there were issues that could be addressed in relation to memorial technology and
while for it, had concerns about moving forward into an even broader world of technological use. Privacy concerns were an issue for this interviewee, along with the quality of web streaming and the quality of the technology. He gave the perspective of making use of technology but also shared that “every perspective is unique” and it has affected the funeral industry by allowing everyone to participate in memorial services but also weakened the system because it allows some people to feel that they don’t have to actually attend these events (Funeral Director F, 2016).

Another funeral home also supported this pattern of technological use. Director E or Funeral Home E, 44 years old, is a case in which only one of the ten available technologies were used for memorialization, the online obituary. In this instance, this funeral home’s only use of memorial technology comes from its website and its virtual obituaries. This business had no social networking page, DVD tributes, video recording of any kind or any other special uses of technology. Once again, as fitting the pattern described, Interviewee E described his firm as “very traditional.” When asked how memorial technology has affected the funeral industry, he responded that it “hasn’t.” Funeral Director E called technology a “buffer of impersonality” and stated that Funeral Home E has not catered to the demands of technology but also wasn’t in favor of the new technologies either.

When starting this project, one of my hypotheses was that age would be a factor in the use of technology. I hypothesized that as the funeral directors aged, I would see a shift in their attitudes towards technology. What I found, however, was no distinct correlation between age and the acceptance of digital memorial technologies. This was a surprise, as I had believed that because younger generations may have had more of a direct access to digital technology for a longer period, they would see more of a positive role in its incorporation within the funeral
homes. As the five examples provided above show, no conclusive pattern could be seen with the ages: 27, 35, 63, 33, & 44. This was the same with the other five examples. Age did not appear to be a factor in technology ideologies in this sample population.

Respect for the dead was another strong idea that was covered within the interviews. The question was asked not directly in response to the use of technology. Instead, a broader scope of the question was asked as to not limit the respondent’s answers. The answers I received to this question varied. Such responses to this question are as follows: “respect for the dead is respect for the living” and “respect for feelings and expectations of survivors” (Funeral Director E 2016) as well as “treating the deceased as if they were family” (Funeral Director F 2016), “not being selfish,” “staying true” (Funeral Director G, 2016), “making sure I’m upholding my own morals and ethics” (Funeral Director A, 2016), “treating someone like they are still here (alive)” (Funeral Director C, 2016), as well as “it (just) means being treated like an absolute human being, even though in my personal opinion, the absence of being a human being is no longer there” (Funeral Director B, 2016). When confronted with the question, most of the respondents didn’t mention technology at all. The most common interpretation was that respect for the dead was in the treatment of the survivors and the essence of the deceased’s memory along with the idea that their human remains are treated kindly and humanly (Funeral Director Interviews 2016).

Removing the aspect of human remains from the topic, the categorical defining of respect for the dead can be combined to include such aspects of technology as social networking, drive up viewings, and digital videography recordings. In these, the survivors play a key role in the success of these examples. For instance, in social networking, the funeral directors’ term of respect for the dead as “respect for the survivors” can most definitely be seen in any viewpoint.
When an individual (non-family) writes on a decedent’s Facebook wall page, they are essentially creating a publication for an audience. This audience oftentimes ends up being the family members of the deceased. When memorializing someone, this individual would share their grief directly for the deceased but with the knowledge that others will be reading the post. Therefore, many times, albeit not always, the real nature of the eulogy doesn’t reveal itself because the writer understands the stage at which the text is written, as an item acting as a witness to the survivors of the deceased.

Funeral Director B took the position that with all of these new technologies, the respect for the dead and the idea behind funeral services is being lost. In her words, “I think respect for the dead is feeling it and we’re about to not feel it anymore” (Funeral Director B, 2016). Director B described to me how, with the usage of social networking sites, individuals can opt out of real time support. They can hide behind their computers and their smartphones and send condolences without having to really feel the pain or awkwardness the family feels by going to a service or calling them on the phone. Director B stated that although this technology is helpful in reaching people, it can also have a damaging effect on the way we grieve and how the surviving family members are respected (2016).

Another instance in which respect for the dead comes into play is the factor of drive up viewings. This technique was brought up in the interviews and always seemed to tie itself back to the issue of respect. The answers received on this were all unanimously against this type of memorialization. Some interviewees believed that the funeral homes doing this had good intentions, that in doing so would make the service more accessible to many kinds of people but the overarching agreement was that this act “diminished the human factor” (Funeral Director C, 2016). One director thought the act went “too far” but suggested that maybe they are thinking
wrong. Since people are there to see the living, maybe there should be a drive-up chapel, where the family is greeted from the vehicles instead of the body. Others stated similar beliefs, stating that it “takes the respect out of it” (Funeral Director G, 2016) and “100 percent against.” If you don’t have enough respect, don’t bother” (Funeral Director F, 2016). The interviewees responded that this was not the future of the industry and that it was disrespectful to the deceased as well as the families. The guests should be there to for the experience of seeing the family members not just the remains of the deceased (Funeral Director Interviews 2016). Funeral Director B clearly stated: “This is a human life. This isn’t a piece of art, which you could argue about—that’s important too. But this is a human life. And you’re just going to be like: eh, I can’t get out of the car for that?!“ (Funeral Director B, 2016). The directors agreed that the service is powerful and impactful. Creating the possibility for physical touch and physical presence in this context can be healing and important. From the answers I received from this part of the research, drive up viewings do not look to be an idea that many directors will support going forward. While some who make it their business to create them may praise their value, many other directors in the area do not and do not seem inclined to have them as part of the future of the funeral industry.

From these interviews, I was also looking to gain insight into where the industry of western funeral practice is heading in response to technological memorial advances. With this question, I received multiple answers. Many of the director’s thought that while some change is inevitable, funeral services can only change so much, and so many practices should stay just as they are. Others however, were very responsive to change in the form of technology and were ready to embrace it to help support the families they serve. A few had a total opposing view of their own, even though they work in funeral homes that support technological advances, they personally saw that digital technology would hurt the industry and memorialization in the long
run. One director mentioned the idea of instant gratification and that this idea combined with some of the new technology we consume will affect us negatively. “I think it’s an instant gratification thing and I think it’s gonna hurt…People don’t care already and now they’re gonna be able to not care from the comfort of their home” (Funeral Director B, 2016). Instant gratification was brought up many times in the interviews when it came to the response of technology and the public. The idea that technology has allowed many people to get what they want quickly and without having to lift a finger, has shaped the thought process of what a funeral service today actually means. With cremation on the rise, full funeral services are becoming less common in the expanding cremation marketplace. In 2015, 48.6 percent of all dispositions ended in cremation with an annual growth rate of 1.57 percent from 2010-2015. By 2020, the Cremation Association of North America predicts the rate to be at 54.3 percent (Cremation Association of North American, 2017). These figures support the lack of burial. With this comes the question of funeral services. Many still have memorial gatherings held in honor of the deceased, but some are opting to skip the ritual altogether (Funeral Director B, 2016).

The funeral services play a large part in memorializing the dead, the technology that goes into it plays a role, but the memorial ceremony is a valued aspect that depends on human interaction. Technology, even memorial technology can be seen as negative because it gives individuals an excuse; “people are so lazy,” one interviewee commented (Funeral Director D, 2016). Another interview supported this view by saying, “when you have people that can’t come in to make funeral arrangements, whatever the case may be, we can fax that (paperwork). We can fax this. I’ll email you this, oh, I’ll email you that. Oh, does that get them cremated and sent to me in the mail and I don’t have to do anything? Fantastic!” (Funeral Director B, 2016). New cremation technologies will make it easier for family members of the deceased to select what can
be referred to as simple or basic cremation, and is a process that often times requires less human interaction. Many of these simple cremation packages allow the buyer to complete the paperwork online and even have the remains mailed to them or inurned at a cemetery of their choosing, without the individual having to leave their home. Although this new technology is helpful in terms of mobility, Funeral Director B argued, “Why can’t we?” she put forth the idea that we should be making the effort to memorialize even when we have the option not to (2016). One funeral director mentioned that technology will be refined over the years, and possibly holograms will be added to the funeral services, while another suggested digital prayer cards or funeral stationary. Another director suggested that the future of memorial technology will be complete online funeral services and that the only people that will be physically present are the immediate family members (Funeral Director D, 2016). This can be argued as very accessible to multitudes of people, but is once again eliminating the human factor of connection. The fact is that human beings need connection in times of grief and this connection helps support the deceased’s family and respects the memory of the dead.

Therefore, the future of memorial technology can be seen with mixed reviews. Some of these directors say that the funeral homes haven’t catered to what the public wants but the managers of the funeral homes are pushing the public to create a belief about what they should want (Funeral Director D). Others are not sure what the future of memorial technology entails. They say not enough time has passed to really put a perspective on the emergence of technology (Funeral Director G). Most directors, however, did explain that “memorialization makes people feel valued” (Funeral Director A, 2016), and that memorialization within the industry will not fade anytime soon, but will be making a transformation into a different kind of platform. A point should also be suggested that these industry transformations move largely with the objective to
stay competitive within the market. These digital technologies allow the funeral homes to appear current and informed in what might be considered a dated and unchanging industry. Therefore, the more modern and conforming these businesses become in relation to other industries and the digital world, perhaps the less stagnant and more attractive they become.

Discussions of different memorial platforms also acknowledged QR codes. Many of the directors weren’t as familiar with this type of technology but showed a positive interest in the success of its undertaking. Many believed these codes to be beneficial, like “living museums” (Funeral Director B, 2016) that would help the future generations know and understand their ancestors. It would allow people to want to visit cemeteries more as they could connect with people - even the deceased whom with they might share a connection with.

This new memorialization comes in many forms in relation to the funeral industry, but the one that dominates the others is memorialization in correspondence with social networking systems. The example being used in this research is the social networking site, Facebook. As mentioned previously, when someone dies who has a Facebook profile, his or her profile could be turned into a memorial. This profile page is usually created by the legacy contact$, who will keep the profile “alive” for the deceased. Friends, relatives, and virtually anyone with access to the profile can come to pay their respects digitally. This topic was another interesting point in the interviews. One director acknowledged that “having a place to go” for everyone to grieve was important (Funeral Director G, 2016), meaning that the people with no other place to mourn have a spot to turn to for comfort. With cremation on the rise, mourners no longer always have a gravesite at which to mourn, and if they are not close members of the family they don’t always have people to connect with regarding the death. Social networking and memorial Facebook pages allow for mourners to belong somewhere. They allow these people to be a part of a larger
group and to make sure that no one is mourning alone. In between the living, a virtual cemetery is created, where unlike a graveyard, that might sit empty and alone, contain profiles that are visited, tagged, and celebrated day after day, month after month, and year after year, with “happy birthdays,” “I miss you” and “wish you were here.” Mourning is a need and Facebook helps to fill this need by connecting people and providing a virtual space in which to pause and remember the dead.

However, as one director noted, Facebook “is like a double-edged sword” (Funeral Director B, 2016). Facebook creates a spot where people can connect. The families win because they see all the support flooding in from the friends, relatives, and public, all to honor their loved one who passed. It can be so special for the family to see those who loved the person sharing memories. However, after a while, people move on and nothing lasts forever. As the years go by, the posts may get fewer and fewer, and eventually stop altogether. This director gave her own example from someone that she knew that passed away and whose mother was still an avid poster on his Facebook memorial page. “All of his friends are moving on and she’s the only one left posting. So now, she hasn’t just experienced his death like, as (a) sudden and unexpected death like, as a human…but now she has to watch his friends go away, and stop thinking about him” (Funeral Director B, 2016). This director talks about death of not just the physical body but the online death where the family has to watch the “second death” of his digital self where all of his friends leave the profile or slow their interaction. Sometimes the shell of digital selves can be just as hard to let go of, especially when for many, the digital shell is what is shown to the public eye.

Other interviewed directors also acknowledge that social networking takes away the acceptance of death. As a researcher, I responded to this on a more personal level. While
researching for this work, I experienced a death. Not a family death, but a death of a close mentor. The death happened to be my (equine) trainer, the person who I looked up to and guided me as I trained and showed up the levels in the horse sport, eventing. The accident happened unexpectedly on a breezy May afternoon at an event out of state. My trainer and her mount, fell while jumping a sturdy cross-country fence and she died almost instantly. I found out about the news six hours after it happened—via Facebook. Many of the funeral directors whom I interviewed over the course of this research spoke about “shock value,” in their terms, this meant the things that technology or the funeral industry create to produce a “shock” or to stir up the atmosphere. Although, not intentional, Facebook gave this feeling to me.

I’m not the only one with a story like this, however. Funeral Director B also recounted a time in which an acquaintance found out about a close death via Facebook. With the use of Facebook, or other social networking sites, the acceptance of death can be difficult to navigate when grieving (Funeral Director B). I felt the same way as I witnessed, weeks and months after the event, people posting on my trainer’s profile, and it felt like she was still there. Her page has not been switched over to an official memorial page, although it acts as one. She is tagged and spoken to multiple times a day as if nothing has happened. Another interesting point relating to this is the actual act of posting and grieving when a person has passed. Funeral Director B as well as Director D spoke about the “performance” of a public post on a memorial page. The idea of posting for others to read also created an interesting aspect to memorial technology. I also felt this way in my own grieving process. Seeing all the other students write and post pictures pressured me into writing a personal memorial on her Facebook wall as well. I thought of what to say and took time to edit and choose just the right picture that would express my feelings, all before posting publically on her Facebook page, right next to the people who hadn’t even met
her. I felt like my post was being judged. Like many others, the ideology of “living in cyberspace” and mourning at an online gravesite may create a virtual world where pressure is exerted to see who can grieve the most. This act can be likened to the public act of sending flowers or a memorial display to set besides the casket, where perhaps a similar ideology is used in striving to send the largest or most extravagant display.

Almost every director had an opinion on social networking and virtual memorialization. Some worried about inappropriate posts, since many posts are made public for all to view and comment on. Others insisted that people very rarely post inappropriately and that online memorials are positive aspects of participation (Funeral Director J, 2016). One director used the word “insincere” and suggested that social networking was an efficient way of notifying distant friends but that it was not a reliable way of sending true condolences. Facebook pages and other memorial websites might also have other uses outside the realm of digital memorial groups. As long as the websites stay active, these groups make it easier for families to access ancestry and genealogy information (Funeral Director A). The websites record photos and records of who a person was, and to family that has never met the person, these memorials can be priceless.

The interviews were successful in collecting a baseline attitude of memorial technology within the funeral industry. These directors spend their lives working with the deceased and their clients’ families. This view is an important one because it shows us an inside look into the daily perspective of someone who understands memorial technology from an emic point of view. I will now review the results of the collected surveys and will then be integrating other further interview results from the funeral directors to present a more complete view of respect for the dead in regard to memorial technology.

To collect the fifty surveys, I ended up reaching out to 106 people through my social
networking profile on Facebook. This left with me a 46 percent completion rate, and enough data to sufficiently compound adequate results. My findings of the survey in accordance with statistical data are as follows: 79.55 percent of survey participants were female, 18.18 percent male and 2.27 percent transgender. Age groups 18-65 took the survey with the median age group being 24-29 years. Another demographic question covered the education range of the participant. The most common terminal education was a bachelor’s degree at 31.91 percent of participants. The second highest form was some college but no degree at 21.28 percent with the third ranking as 19.15 percent for an associate’s degree. The range of education, age and gender can be viewed in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

Some of the aspects that I focused on during the data processing of the surveys were variables such as how people are using memorial webpages, how often they are using them, how long have they been members of these pages, why they are in use, and how the individuals feel about their grief in using this technology. These aspects allowed me to process the information with better attention to understanding the use of social networking in the frame of memorial technology within the 21st century. It is important to keep in mind the transition of technology and focus the attention on the way that technology is used in today’s society as the change of technology seems to cycle quickly throughout even a five-year period. When looking at these results, one must understand the time frame in which the results are set as pieces of technology can change and ebb rather quickly in an online environment.

My results revealed that of the valid responses, the largest groups to answer had either been a part of a memorial group for a period of seven to ten years or had only been a member of a group for a year or less. Both categories comprised of 37 percent of my total valid responses. The remaining 26 percent of responses came from individuals who had been with a group for a
middle range of three to six years. With this data set in mind, I explored this category further by searching for a correlation between the attitudes in regard to memorial pages and the length of time an individual had been a member of one of these groups. Through doing this, I found that of those who had been a member of a page for a year or less, four responders out of ten (three recorded no response) believed that memorial pages helped them to more efficiently process their grief, with a score of six to ten, indicating a positive grief processing score. At the other end of the scale, the group of individuals that had been a member of the group for a period of seven to ten years had a stronger feeling in regard to how the pages had helped them and generally felt overall that memorial technology has helped them with the grief process, with eight respondents scoring a six or higher on grief response. Figure 4 and Figure 5 in the appendix show the feelings and attitudes of these groups in response to the attitudes and feeling toward the grief process.

When asked about the ideal length of time for a social networking group to be active, the majority of respondents, 78 percent, answered that they believe there should be no set amount of time for the existence of that memorial webpage. These respondents believed that the page should be able to continue indefinitely. Ten percent of the respondents answered that memorial pages should exist for up to five years after a death; six percent responded that the appropriate amount should be up to a year, with the minority of the sample population weighing in at ten years with two percent of the population respondents (four percent responded with the classification “other”). These responses reveal the polarity in this answer. Since the results were found to be very high to one end of the scale, with a handful of informants responding with an answer at the opposite end, there were very few responses happening on the middle ground. This polarity reveals that many of the survey participants feel strongly about this question one way or
the other. Unlike other answers in this survey, this question could be more contested than others, where the answers tended to be more middle or neutral responses. Another version of this question was asked later in the survey, and the responses were similar and fit with the pattern of the first question, revealing that this data set was positive in its answers.

As discussed in the interviews with the funeral directors, respect for the dead was an important part of the polarity of feelings towards memorial technology. The survey participants, much like the funeral directors, were tasked with the question of how they define respect for the dead. The following are examples of the answers of the survey respondents. One such respondent replied that respect for the dead is defined “by not doing anything that would take away from the positive memory of that individual” (survey participant, 2017). Another responded, “retracting the negative energy put forth regarding the individual (thoughts, actions, words, etc.)” (survey participant, 2017) and, “holding their memory to a high standard (social media included) of friends and family members regardless of your relationship with the deceased” (survey participant, 2017). From these three examples, it is worth mentioning that many respondents believed that having respect for the dead should include not speaking ill of the deceased and remembering them in a positive manner, even if the respondents did have a negative memory. The last respondent who spoke about “holding their memory to a high standard” regardless of relationships reminds us of the “performance” that the funeral directors mentioned when speaking of the memorial users posts. This takes into consideration the feelings of the family members and the idea that having respect for the dead is respecting the deceased’s family. Other survey participants responded differently, answering that respect for the dead is “speaking honestly of them, whether positive of negative” (survey participant, 2017) and “not taking selfies with them at their funeral” (survey participant, 2017), along with “keeping them alive in our
memories” (survey participant, 2017). These examples show a wide variety of definition and key words and terms such as “honoring”, “memories,” “treating the body respectfully” and “visiting a grave.” The take away point from this question is that these definitions fit with the responses from the other questions administered as many of the same terms and values are brought up in the participant’s definitions, as you can see in the Figure 6, the word cloud, provided at the end of the text.

When asked if the respect for the dead has changed using memorialization technology, 50 percent of the respondents answered that it has indeed changed, 2.61 percent of the respondents responded with a neutral “maybe” and 17.39 percent of respondents believed that respect for the dead had not changed through technology. Opinions on drive up viewings were also added to the questions of respecting the dead. With this, the viewpoint came out very similar to that of the funeral directors, with 61.22 percent of respondents opposing the use of drive up viewings. However, there was still 6.12 percent in favor of the viewings and 32.65 percent that were unsure. This last percentage could possibly be higher because survey participants might not have been familiar with what a drive-up viewing was before the survey explained it. The participants might need more explanation or a real-life example for them to efficiently be able to answer the question of whether they are for these types of viewings. It made sense that it would be easier for the funeral directors to answer in the interviews because being a part of the industry allows them to be more familiar with new and upcoming technologies, the drive-up viewings be a contentious one.

To further determine what actions or items survey participants might deem disrespectful to the deceased, I asked them if they ever observed a comment or note on the social networking memorial profiles that they thought was disrespectful. Three quarters of all participants
responded that they had never witnessed a disrespectful comment towards the deceased, while 24.49 percent of the individuals acknowledged that they did in fact witness such. Disrespectful actions encompassed things such as “pointing out drug use and other criminal activities” (survey participant, 2017), “talking about the mistake someone made in an accidental death” (survey participant, 2017), “ways a friend has referred to the deceased that I think would be hurtful to their parents” (survey participant, 2017) and “putting personal information that was asked to stay secret on social media” (survey participant, 2017). These examples reinforce themes reflected by funeral directors, such as respecting the living (in this case, the parents), and not speaking negatively of the deceased.

Another aspect of respect that was brought to light in the surveys was the idea of consent for the usage of photos and media on social networking pages. As predicted, 82 percent of respondents either somewhat disagreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that “online memorials disrespect the dead because consent for digitizing of photos and memories has not been granted.” With the use of social media, it is understood by users that their photos, writings, or videos that are posted on a page can be taken or recreated by anyone who has access to the content. From the results, it can be deduced that most of the respondents understand this and don’t believe that the sharing of this digital content disrespects the deceased.

Overall, 59 percent of respondents strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement, “I am glad that I joined a memorial group.” Thirty-five percent of respondents responded neutrally with no agreeable or disagreeable opinion either way. Only six percent of the sample population answered that they disagreed in any way, and were therefore not glad to join a memorial group. When tasked with the question if the survey participants would want a memorial page created for themselves after they had passed, the answers were not as segmented.
The top percentages of individuals were neutral on the subject with outliers on both ends of the scale (This is shown in Figure 7 in the appendix). Another interesting data set to study is the question of who should get a memorial page. Many of the funeral directors believed that it was more helpful to have a Facebook memorial page for someone who died tragically than for someone who did not (for example, a 95-year-old grandmother versus a 20-year-old car accident victim). The reasoning behind this was due to the ability and the need for mourners to have another place to process their grief (Funeral Director B, 2016). However, the information recorded from the survey participants did not share this trend. Seventy-eight percent of respondents believed that memorial pages don’t just have to be for a person who died a tragic and young death, but can be used for anyone who has passed.

The funeral directors also showed the dislike of using personal based technology, such as cellular phones and tablets, during memorial services and viewings when using them to take photos or video (Funeral Director A, B, C, D and G, 2016). The survey results showed that many of the memorial networking users agreed with this. Twelve percent of the survey population believed it was acceptable to take photos and videos during the services. Sixteen percent of individuals were neutral in their feelings, and 72 percent believed that it was not acceptable. Of the 12 percent who believed this practice to be acceptable, only eight percent of these people agreed that it was acceptable to share the photos on social networking sites.

The survey participants were also asked their opinions on the following statement: “the digital world makes it easier to grieve.” This was another aspect that did not have an outcome that showed a large polarity. Twenty six percent of people felt that they somewhat agreed with the statement. Respondents who disagreed with the statement also showed this same 26 percent percentage. This category of response puts this inquiry as one in which the responders may not
be completely sure of. It may be, like one of the funeral directors mentioned (Funeral Director C, 2016), that while users have a grasp on this type of technology, they are still just simply in the early stages of experience with memorial networking. Another interesting aspect is the memorial networking site and grief processing. Seventy three percent of all the individuals believed that the memorial networking pages were unsuccessful in processing their grief and scored either a one through four out of ten (one being the least helpful and ten being the most helpful in processing grief). Only ten percent of the reported surveys answered positively, or scored six through ten, that the network page did indeed assist in grief processing. Seventeen percent responded neutrally on the subject. This is an interesting pattern and will be discussed later in the text.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This data brings up to the discussion of how the memorial pages are being used by the memorial page networkers themselves. The surveys reveal that a majority of the respondents post on the memorial page at least once a year. Special occasions are a big event for these networking pages. These special occasions can be days like: the anniversary of the death, a holiday, the decedent’s birthday, an anniversary or a monumental moment like the birth of a child, marriage, etc. It is also worth noting that 82 percent of the respondents believe that sharing photos of the deceased helps aid in the grieving process. Only four individuals disagreed with the statement and believed that sharing photographs did not help. The results show that a clear majority of the memorial page users are incorporating other technology into their posts. This technology can be photos, video, links, or televising the funeral service. The respondents also have an opinion regarding this type of technology and the uses of technology that is “inappropriate” for a networking memorial page. Some examples of these are “any photos of family members in grief,” “that death can be broadcasted and pictures released before family and loved ones know,” “photos and videos at a funeral,” and “when things are over shared” (survey participants, 2017). When asked about “inappropriate” technologies, the opinion was split. The results showed that 51.02 percent of respondents did not think there were technologies that would be deemed “inappropriate” and disrespectful for the deceased, while a slightly lower percentage of 48.98 percent believed that there can be technological uses respectful to the dead. This attitude might exhibit overall opinions of technological use on a larger scale if compared under a different category and not just technological use for memorial pages. More research would need to be conducted on this subject.

When considering the results in regards to age and the influence of virtual technology, I
was surprised to find my results ebbing towards a pattern that showed that age was not as large of an influencing factor as I originally had believed. One particular interview with a director in his sixties, redirected my thought process on age groups and digital technology, as this director fully supported the emergence of digital technology more so than others half his age. This differed from my original hypotheses because as a Digital Immigrant, he was not born into the digital world but has adopted many of these new technologies, and therefore may not fully adapt to supporting digital advances (Prensky 2001). The Digital Immigrant can be compared with the term, Digital Native, who in correlation, is the native of digital technology who grew up using this technology and knows no life apart from it (Prensky 2001). Part of the reason why these two terms are coined has to do with the environment and the way in which both of these groups process information. Different experiences lead to different ways of thinking, and so a divergence of opinion might be seen between these two groups (Prensky 2001). Although this concept is an interesting one and holds unique ideas in the future research of digital anthropology, my research revealed less discrepancies of opinions between the age groups. Specific further study is needed to more adequately define if or how there is a patterning in grief age groups and how these play a factor in the study of Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives.

Overall, the opinions on respect for the dead within the surveys and the interviews both have key words that find common denominators in each other. Words such as “memory,” “positive,” and “family” were commonly used. Projecting the deceased in a positive image was a common response with both the funeral directors and the memorial website participants. While similar ideologies regarding respect for the dead are acknowledged, the memorial network users showed a more varied opinion on how technology should be used on memorial websites. It is clear, however, that many individuals believe that technology can be problematic for families as
death announcements and unauthorized stories and photos can be publicized before the family is contacted. It can also be problematic because individuals can post freely and writing usually has not been approved, which can be another issue as a “negative” post can be unneeded in a time of grief. It is also important to acknowledge what Funeral Director C provided, “technology does more good than bad.” This statement seems to be true as three quarters of the participants acknowledged that they were glad to join a memorial group. Browsing through examples of these memorial pages reveal to me multitudes of posts over just days and weeks. These pages seem useful in their interactions with the participants in seeming like they are creating a space to mourn. However, looking back at the data that shows the question as to whether these networking pages are helpful in aiding grief, the positive response was lower than expected. There are several possible reasons for this.

The first possibility is that part of missing a person in the 21st century requires the acknowledgement that a person has mourned publicly, and that the more they post, the more they miss that person. Another possibility for this could be that because the webpage is not a physical landmark, these individuals don’t feel a close connection and therefore don’t receive satisfaction from the post. A third possibility could be because the memorial network pages are being substituted for attending the actual funeral services. Because a memorial page has been created, or a place mark is acknowledged in the virtual world, maybe some mourners don’t attend the actual funeral services, and therefore forfeit an actual time to say goodbye. Yet another reason to be explored is that these memorial pages are being used well after the actual grieving has taken place. These pages, then, act as a buffer, but may have no real impact on the grieving process at all.

Another idea that arises during the study of the virtual memorial page is its comparison to
the physical landmark of an actual grave and it’s worth noting the differences between the two in order to achieve a better understanding of what occurs within virtual memorials. One of the possible drawbacks of an online cemetery or memorial page is that after a time, the witnessing of the fading away of many of the virtual mourners could be considered a second death to the family of the deceased. The physical body is gone and now a second death occurs – that of the memorial profiles. This can be compared to how the number of visitations at actual cemeteries can dwindle over the years. However, one of the largest differences between the two is the ability of online memorials to be watched and monitored, seen through movement of individual’s through posts and comments. Physical cemeteries are not as able to track the activities of mourners and therefore it may not be as witnessed by the family.

Notions such as the need to witness and be involved in the grief of a social network can be related to larger issues that link to the anthropology of death and mortuary customs. For instance, the need to take something away from the deceased can be embraced in many cultures. Whether this is a photo, as is the case in the Victorian era after death photographs, a physical heirloom, or a memory that is shown to others via digital social grieving, the importance of belonging is ever present. The mourner is taking something away from the death, whether physically or mentally and doing so in the presence of a community. This sense of community, to the surviving, is a way of belonging, a way to show to the group that they were touched by the life of the deceased individual. The act of demonstrating these social ties perhaps not only reinforces social ties between the grieving communities but also allows the mourners to take away that memory, or that piece of the deceased that is so important. The presence of social belonging within death rituals can be linked back to Emilie Durkheim’s concentration of rites of passage and ritual. It can also be imbedded back in the reasoning of why we grieve and that as
social creatures humans depend on the support of a social grouping and attachment of kin and friends to mediate grief as well as belonging (Davies 2005). Social support such as the sharing of grief and condolences start at the level of the funeral services and the funeral home, therefore, usually plays a significant role in community involvement.

The funeral industry’s impact on memorials and grieving begins with the funeral home website, where the obituary and digital guestbook are placed. Funeral directors revealed in interviews that every funeral home offers an online obituary page for decedents. Funeral home memorial pages allow the public to share information readily between their friends and family, many times through social networking, and may also assist in starting a public grieving period. This grieving period usually lasting until after the funeral services end, where respects are paid to a family member’s social networking page. Oftentimes, the directors are seen as the curators of bereavement. They are one of the first people that families come in contact with after the death has occurred and this first meeting underscores many roles that the funeral director plays: counselor, confidant, manager and salesman (Hyland 1995).

In Western culture, throughout the history of the funeral industry, the stigma of the director as salesman and instigator has been abundantly prevalent. However, with modern funeral technologies, it seems the industry is feeding off of what the public deems most popular. This means that the public is influencing the funeral industry more than perhaps occurred over a decade ago. The funeral directors provided an insight into this compelling shift, acknowledging the new direction the industry has taken to meet customer demands. This new direction includes an increase in digitally enhanced services with a more customer driven structure. This new path was met with mixed reviews. Many of the more established firms feel hesitant to meet with demand and are slow in fully accepting this shift to new digital technologies and a customer
based approach. Culturally, this is interesting because it reveals that the values of the public and the Western funeral industry are shifting. The social networking phenomenon is not the only variable in which a change can be seen. The memorial technologies are in place, the resources are here, but it’s the families, friends, and funeral associates that may not know how to move forward navigating future memorialization. With a variety of different messages when it comes to the definition of respect for the dead between funeral directors and the grieving families, it is clear that the new memorialization is here to stay and will only get stronger. In turn, however, this memorialization may be held back by cultural limitations and the ability to accept change within the industry.

Some of the problems I encountered while collecting data had to do with the Internet and the survey responses. As mentioned earlier, finding memorial groups and sending out surveys was a straightforward task, but getting the Facebook users to actually respond and take the survey proved difficult. This was partly because, as I found out near the start, Facebook users of which I was not linked to or friends with had to look in a hidden mailbox to find the survey requests. This constricted my ability to ask anyone to take the survey, as it was most beneficial if I was a Facebook friend first before sending the survey request. If they never saw the request, they would never have a chance to take the survey.

However, it wasn’t just the individuals that were unknown to me at the start of the data collection. Reaching out to my own connections through social networking, I still had a difficult time convincing people to take the survey. Some of my connections would read my request, never respond and never take the survey. While others would read my request, respond positively but would end up never completing the survey. Other issues that I ran into were no data control of how the individuals interpret the questions, and slight sampling biases of the respondents.
Some individuals that answered the surveys were often connected to me in some way, and therefore many of them were around my age group. I struggled getting individuals with whom I had no connection, either on or offline, to take the survey, but these individuals were often in a wide variety of age groups. Part of this could also be because maybe some of the older age groups don’t get on social networking often, even though they have an account. Most of these problems have been seen before when surveys are distributed and while not surprising, still added complications and length to my data collection process.
CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In recreating this study, I would try to control my sample survey population more. The tools I used to complete my surveys were overall successful, but I feel that some of the results were not as thought through as I would have hoped. I would also strive to expand by surveying to a larger population to identify any weak or unresponsive answers in the first test. Giving myself more time and expanding the research to a larger population or perhaps even a different cultural sample would also be helpful.

This research was successful in identifying the new technologies available for the use in memorializing of the dead. It was able to acknowledge the differences in opinions that individuals classify as respect for the dead. Even the funeral directors, whom I believed would have more common ideologies, also had different ways of processing the term, respect. This research assisted in the cultural acknowledgement of technology within the funeral industry and possibly where this technology is headed in the future. I have also uncovered some problems that might occur within these social networking memorial pages and perhaps ideas as to why they might be happening in the industry and within the public sector. Since there are varying degrees of understanding the terminology, respect for the dead, there are many different views on memorial technologies. How these technologies are used and how they are valued depends more on the individual person than can be said about the collective whole. All memorial technology users, funeral directors, memorial page users and the public alike, may want to keep in mind their own ideals when using this type of technology. Different people are likely to have different viewpoints regarding the technologies, especially when it comes to their loved ones. Research of this subject in the future might find value in looking towards an even more emic view of this subject and breaking down the digital technologies and definitions even further.
i Human cremains refer to the ashes of a human body that have already been cremated.

ii A web ring refers to a collection of websites linked together that have been organized around a specific topic or theme.

iii http://www.virtualmemorialgarden.net

iv A simple cremation is a low cost and low action, direct cremation where a company removes the remains, collected the death certificate and permits and cremates the deceased, eventually returning the cremated remains back to the buyer. Usually, there is no service held with these types of cremations, although the buyer may opt to hold a memorial service on their own.

v Someone you choose to look after your Facebook account after it has been memorialized. In essence, like your emergency contacts on your cell phone, this personal is usually a close friend or relative that keeps the profile “alive.”

vi “Tagging” an individual on Facebook is including their name in a written post. This includes their name in a specific conversation and will also post to their wall or profile.

vii Facebook connects profiles through the use of people and requests. These connections classify the individuals that you accept as your connections to be what is considered a “friend.”
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Funeral Director B
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Funeral Director C
2016 Interview: Female, 34 years old, 1.5 years experience. September 30, 2016.

Funeral Director D
2016 Interview: Female, 35 years, 3.5 years experience. October 7, 2016.

Funeral Director E
2016 Interview: Male, 44 years old, 20 years experience. October 7, 2016.

Funeral Director F

Funeral Director G
2016 Interview: Female, 28 years old, 1.5 years experience. November 4, 2016.

Funeral Director H
2016 Interview: Male, 35 years old, 6 years experience. December 9, 2016.

Funeral Director I
2016 Interview: Male, 63 years old, 40 years experience. December 9, 2016.

Funeral Director J
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Varenne, Herve

Walter, Tony
Figure 1: Education Classification of Survey Respondents

Education Levels

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Figure 2: Age Classification of Survey Respondents

Figure 3: Gender Identification of Survey Respondents
Figure 4: Opinions of Memorial Group Users (7 + Years)

Figure 5: Opinions of Memorial Group Users (1 Year & Under)
Figure 6: Respect for the Dead: Word Cloud
Figure 7: Reactions to Wanting Own Memorial Page

Number of Respondents

Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree

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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Key**

- Web Streaming - 1
- Digital Newspapers - 4
- Digital Guestbook - 7
- Memorial Affirmations - 10
- Memorial DVDs - 2
- Life Story - 5
- Online Obituary - 8
- Social Network Page - 3
- Life Remembered - 6
- Video Recording - 9
### APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funeral Director Interview Worksheet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of Funeral Director</strong> ______________________ <strong>Date</strong> __________ <strong>Time</strong> __________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funeral Home</strong> ______________________ <strong>Age</strong> ___ <strong>Years of Experience</strong> ________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong> ______________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOPIC EXPLANATION**

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Do you know what memorialization technology is? Have you heard about this type of technology and are you familiar with it?

2. How do you define respect for the dead?

3. How do you incorporate technology in your facility?

4. Who does this technology assist? Who is it for?

5. Would you change anything about the way technology is used within the facility?

6. What is the success rate of technological use within funeral homes when deployed by the public?

7. How does technology have an impact on the respect for the deceased?

8. How do you feel about technology as a means for memorialization after the funeral?

9. Does your funeral home have social networking accounts? If so, where?

10. What role do you see technology playing in the future?

11. What is your opinion on drive-up viewings?

12. What new aspects of technological memorialization would you consider using?

13. In your experience, how has memorialization technology affected the funeral industry?

14. How has your business catered to the growing demands of technology?

15. What is the future of the industry in response to memorial technology?
APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL

Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
2000 University Avenue
Muncie, IN 47306-0155
Phone: 765-285-5070

DATE: November 13, 2015
To: Katie Bush, B.S.
FROM: Ball State University IRB
RE: IRB Protocol #821000-1
TITLE: Over My Dead Modem: Death Memorialization in 21st Century United States
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
DECISION DATE: November 13, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: November 12, 2017
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited. This protocol has been determined by the board to meet the definition of minimal risk.

The Institutional Review Board has approved your New Project for the above protocol, effective November 13, 2015 through November 12, 2017. All research under this protocol must be conducted in accordance with the approved submission and in accordance with the principles of the Belmont Report.