2012

Grave Exclamations: An Analysis of Tombstones and Their Use as Narrative of Self

Lacey Jae Ritter
Minnesota State University - Mankato

Grave Exclamations: An Analysis of Tombstones and Their Use as Narrative of Self

By

Lacey J. Ritter

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Sociology: Teaching Emphasis at

Minnesota State University, Mankato

May, 2012

April 3, 2012

This thesis paper has been examined and approved.

Examining Committee:

Dr. Leah Rogne, Chairperson

Dr. Emily Boyd

Dr. Kathryn Elliot

Ritter, Lacey. 2012. Grave Exclamations: An Analysis of Tombstones and their Use as Narrative of Self. Master's Thesis. Minnesota State University, Mankato. PP.69.

We establish our selves through narratives—with others and by ourselves—during life. What happens, however, when a person dies? The following paper looks at the way narratives about the deceased's selves are created by the bereaved after their loved ones have died. The paper focuses on the narratives created on the deceased's tombstones, as these are available to the public and last the longest of all final declarations of the person's identity (i.e., obituaries, funeral programs, eulogies). Because I am interested in the way narratives of the self are constructed postmortem, a symbolic interactionist approach was used. The study focuses on three hundred fifty (350) tombstones in fifteen cemeteries around south central Minnesota. Using a coding system to analyze the messages presented on the stones, I show the various ways individuals are described—and how these ways change depending on the time during which they lived and their religious and cultural affiliations. In addition, because the use of cemeteries is extremely prevalent in American society, discovering what we say about our deceased loved ones can be useful outside of southern Minnesota as well.

Acknowledgments

I am quite surprised this came together as well as it has. I have quite a few individuals to thank for this, especially the groundskeepers at many of the cemeteries I visited for this study. Without them, I would have spent even more countless hours wandering around gravestones trying to find certain dates and interesting epitaphs. Thankfully they were not only willing to help me, but often expressed interest and gratitude regarding my topic, noting how people do not spend as much time thinking about cemeteries as they used to.

I would also like to thank my committee members and other faculty members who expressed interest in my topic and pushed me to work as hard as I did on it. I would especially like to thank Dr. Leah Rogne for helping me to set up such crazy deadlines that ultimately made me both stressed and thankful to be so far ahead at an early date. I feel like my thesis is much more developed with this added time, so thank you! Also, thank you so much to all of you for bearing with me when the going became rough, as I am sure it does for many a thesis. I am extremely grateful for your time and efforts and for your belief in me throughout this project.

Of course, I would like to thank my family and friends who expected to see me all summer, yet were surprisingly understanding when they realized my summer could consist of a tremendous amount of time spent in cemeteries during ungodly heat waves and onslaughts of mosquito attacks. A special thanks to Ms. Tiffany Bullen, who was a true friend and accompanied me during a particularly huge chunk of data gathering and was not afraid to nap in a cemetery with me when the heat overtook us.

Lastly, this thesis is dedicated to my mother and father, who nurtured my obsessions with death and dying at an early age, realizing that knowledge is power, regardless of what knowledge one is yearning for. Large thanks to my mother, who was thoughtful enough to call me during my data gathering to make sure I was drinking enough fluids to keep from passing out during the hundred-degree heat wave we had. Also to my father, whose love and support keeps me going even through the hardest of times. I love you both very much—thank you for all your emotional, financial, and educational support throughout the years.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the ways people create meaning about a person's self post-mortem through tombstones. Although today an increasing proportion of individuals are purchasing tombstones before they die, the vast majority of stones are purchased and designed by the bereaved after the death of their loved ones (Meyer 1992). Although the entire ritual process surrounding death—visitations, funerals, wakes—is a way for the bereaved to face the death of their loved ones, the tombstone itself is a lasting memory and tribute to the deceased.

The way we have interpreted and thought about death and dying has changed dramatically over time (Kellehear 2007). This, in turn, has greatly altered our burial practices and assumptions about the dead and dying. Instead of placing goods and personal items with the dead, we are now more likely to include such references to the persons' lives *on* their stones as opposed to within the caskets. Through an analysis of tombstones, I sought to understand how the pictures, epitaphs, and even size and shape of the stones serve to tell a story about the person buried beneath them.

I use a symbolic interactionist approach to this phenomenon that looks at the way narratives create and establish one's sense of self. One's self is a strictly human component that allows us to distinguish ourselves from other animals (Mead 1934). Our self is the response to our social situations and social environments that is flexible and changing throughout one's life. It is both how others see us—and how we see ourselves. It is this self that is expressed through etchings on tombstones and is, thus, the focus of this research.

Since the individuals usually are not living to add input to the creation of their

grave markers, the narrative produced is often done by the bereaved. The narrative

created is also a semi-permanent fixture, as the stones themselves are made to last

hundreds of years. In addition, with the advent of new technologies that allow for a much

faster and efficient way to engrave stones, what we are able to include on these semi-

permanent fixtures can become much more detailed. This phenomenon is easily

discernable when looking at the transformations in tombstone engravings over time, as is

discussed later in the paper.

Many of the differences evident between tombstones from the last few centuries

and tombstones from recent decades is tied to technological advances in the way

tombstones are etched. Madrigal (2011) discusses this phenomenon, noting how the

invention of the laser in the mid-1900s led to its appropriation as a tool for etching

gravestones in 1989. Madrigal (2011:1) describes the process in the following quotation:

> The laser works almost like a printer, but instead of putting dark ink on
> white paper, the laser blasts away the polished surface of the granite to
> reveal the lighter rock underneath. Then, a worker goes over the lasered
> parts with a razor blade, scraping very lightly to remove any debris. The
> process produces a high-resolution grayscale image on the stone, a far cry
> from the thick line drawings that chiseling and sandblasting had allowed
> before. A name could have a face.

These differences are quite noticeable in more recent stones, which do include

these grayscale images, as is evidenced below.

Madrigal (2011) also notes transformations in the *type* of stone used

throughout the last few centuries. Before the 19th century, whatever rock was

convenient was often used. Marble became popular in the 19th century, followed

by granite, as it is more durable than marble. Tools, like the recently developed

laser, also allowed etchers to no longer have to chisel out information by hand, often taking hours to write just one line. Now, tombstones can contain a myriad of information and can be created to look unique when compared to their early predecessors. It is no wonder there are evident differences in stones over time.

To see how individuals create narratives about their loved ones, I conducted a content analysis of tombstones in 15 cemeteries throughout southern Minnesota: ten larger, urban cemeteries and five smaller, rural cemeteries. Using a grounded coding process, I analyzed a total of 350 grave markers. Not only did I look at stones individually, but I compared them overall according to the time periods in which they were erected. In addition to temporal differences, I also focused on the *types* of information included on the stones and how that changed or stayed the same over time.

By analyzing the stones and finding similarities and differences during the coding, overarching themes developed. Through these findings, I illustrate below how individuals create identities for narratives about the dead postmortem through tombstones. Obviously, the advent of new technology has allowed for more intricate carvings on stones. Pictures, for example, have become much more elaborate, as will be discussed later. Text, however, has not made such a drastic transformation over time, with many older stones including poetry referencing the deceased or even large family monuments serving as large statues of religious figures.

Regardless of the time the stone was erected, however, is the importance of the stone itself. These pieces of granite, marble, or slate not only serve as markers to the final resting place of peoples' loved ones, but they serve to tell a story of the deceased. Technological advances aside, these stones serve to tell a story to those who see them.

They function not only to discuss when that person was born and died, but often include important information about the person's life within the dash between the two always-included dates—their birth and their death—with which we are so familiar.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM: SITUATING THE STUDY

For this research, then, I sought to answer the following overarching research question: "In what ways do people create meaning about a person's identity post-mortem through tombstones?" As mentioned, sociological research is lacking within this area. Although research looking at obituaries and epitaphs has been done, there is little to no connection to the use of these narratives to establish the self of the deceased. Because of this gap in the research, I used a symbolic interactionist approach that understands the self and its construction according to Mead (1934), as well as past research looking at the use of narratives to (re)construct the self. With the aid of previous literature on interpretations of death and dying, I was able to analyze tombstones—and what they say about those buried beneath them—in a sociological way.

In addition, since there are these advances in technology that have dramatically changed the appearance of tombstones, I sought to understand how these advances changed or did not change what information we decide to include on these memorials. With increases in technology, it is interesting to see how tombstones have transformed and, at times, become more ornate, detailed ways of remembering the dead. Even the increasingly-popular method of cremation, which will be discussed later, can still require a marker or tombstone, as was present in two of the fifteen cemeteries analyzed.

Cemeteries and the stones within them are ways of remembering individuals who are no longer living. Not only do we need to remember the individuals buried there, but we need to understand *why* we bury individuals the ways we do and what that says about our societies.

HOW WE HANDLE DEATH: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Transformations in Understanding Death

The way humans have understood life and death has changed dramatically throughout history (Kellehear 2007). Whether death is understood through the death of the biological body or during an otherworld journey, humans realize the distinction between what is living and what is not. Along with this distinction, what is *done* with the bodies of the dead has also changed over time. Burial practices in some cultures have become more and more elaborate, costing the bereaved tens of thousands of dollars to do what other societies achieve with blankets and grave goods.

Tombstones are commonly associated with burials in cemeteries. In the past, individuals were more than likely buried intact inside a casket encased in a vault. Even now, with rates of cremation on the rise, individuals will still purchase cemetery plots or blocks to place their ashes that also use such markers to denote their presence (Mitford 2000). Since the majority of funerals and interments take place in this form, we often take the prevalence of tombstones for granted. By understanding how varied burial practices are, one can see how specific and historically recent—and possibly temporary— the use and promotion of tombstones truly are. In Japan, for example, due to lack of space, the ashes of many dead individuals are now scattered, leaving no particular place to locate their remains and, thus, no tombstone to mark such a place (Rowe 2003). Understanding tombstone markings, then, requires an understanding of how we came to mark the graves of our dead in the first place.

The way we have thought about death has changed over time, as have our burial practices. Many of these changes are tied to the social and economic contexts of certain

periods. The following section looks at these changes, noting how extensive burial

practices have become more common now that death is a drawn-out procedure. We deal

with our dead in different ways than our foraging ancestors did. Burying individuals with

grave goods has transformed into etching material goods onto the stone itself. The

amount of ritual included in funerals has decreased in favor of more personalized

ceremonies (Cook and Walter 2005). The transformations in our beliefs and burial

patterns are outlined in more detail below.

Changes in Beliefs about Life and Death

To understand how death's meaning has been transformed throughout time,

Kellehear (2007) divides human history into four ages: the Stone Age, the Pastoral Age,

the Age of the City, and the Cosmopolitan Age. During the Stone Age, death was often

quick and unexpected, stemming from hunting accidents, warfare and other types of

violence, and malnutrition. These unexpected deaths allowed for foraging groups to

recognize what death *was*, but it did not allow for them to prepare for it. Dying in the

Stone Age period was also thought to take place *after* the physical body was dead in our

current world and our spirits had moved on to the otherworld, where the spirit would

endure battles and hardships in search of a heaven-like end. These journeys required the

dead to be buried with grave goods that were thought to help them in their quests. Many

of the living complied with this idea, lest their loved ones came back to seek vengeance.

The Pastoral Age brought forth sedentism and the ability to maintain plants and

animals for food and protection (Kellehear 2007). With living in one place came living

longer, and individuals were now able to both anticipate *and* prepare for deaths that

usually resulted from warfare, malnutrition, famines, and communicable diseases spread

through poor sanitation and living in close proximity with animals. Death became more predictable and illnesses or situations leading to death were more obvious. Individuals could now prepare for their *own* deaths by requesting certain items to be buried with them and by finalizing social obligations they might hold. Death also became both an otherworld and a this-world journey as individuals could now be *dying* instead of simply living or dead.

The Age of the City began with larger populations accumulating in urban areas. Death continued to result from warfare, violence, and communicable diseases, but unequal distribution of wealth led to the creation of an unequal class structure. The middle and upper class groups were able to live healthier—and longer—lives. As Kellehear (2007:140) notes, "With affluence [of the upper and middle classes] came a rise in coronary heart disease," along with other chronic, long-lasting diseases like cancer. Dying became a longer, more painful process than ever before, and those who suffered from chronic illnesses sought to manage these deaths through the aid of professionals. Priests, lawyers, and doctors became increasingly important as ways for the dying to take control of their situations. The experience of death also moved more fully into this world, with the exception of religious individuals who hoped for salvation and nirvana after death.

Finally, Kellehear (2007) discusses the Cosmopolitan Age, our current globalized, technological age. Two more ways of dying surface at this time: AIDS and dementia. AIDS has become an increasing concern, with "25 million people [dying] worldwide…and currently over 40 million people infected" (p. 204). Dementia, of which Alzheimer's disease is just one type, affects approximately one in four people above the

age of 85 and has been documented in approximately 25 million people in 2000, likely to increase to "114 million people in 2050" (p. 203). Dying now frequently takes place in either hospitals or nursing homes and involves long, drawn out, often-painful trajectories of suffering filled with tubes, IVs, and invasive treatments (Kaufman 2005; Blank 1994).

Kellehear (2007:204) notes the "mixed blessing" long lives bring to the wealthy in the Cosmopolitan Age, in which those living long lives may die deaths that probably would not be considered "good" by anyone. These long lives also allow for individuals—as mentioned—to express their own wishes regarding their dying, burials, and funerals. Morris (2001) describes the various questions one might choose to consider when thinking about one's own death, including how one wishes to be buried, what music is wanted at the funeral service, and whether a wake should be held. In addition to longer lives, the Cosmopolitan Age also brings forth an increase in the "professionalization of dying" (Kellehear 2007:204), with not only the emergence and prevalence of hospice, but also the transformation of understanding death as the *end* of life into understanding death as just another life stage (Simon, Haney, and Buenteo 1993). Although the professionalization of death work, such as funeral direction, is increasing, Cahill (1999) notes that the stigma surrounding those attending school for mortuary science has not decreased.

Although Kellehear (2007) notes cultural distinctions in relation to beliefs about death and dying, the above-mentioned approach emphasizes more of a socio-historical approach to understanding varied views of death. Whalen (2011) looks instead at how religious beliefs can affect one's beliefs about death in various ways. For example, he explains, "Hindus believe that as long as the physical body exists, the essence of the

person will remain nearby; cremation allows the essence, or soul, of the person to continue its journey into another incarnation" (p. 126). Other religious beliefs either allow for or forbid embalming or cremating bodies, and the characteristics of that person's death (i.e., suicide versus natural) play a large role in what happens to their body or spirit. Suicides, for example, are viewed much differently than other types of death in several religions, including Catholicism. Atheists and agnostics—as well as religions and organizations that focus on our current lives as opposed to our post-death existences— frequently do not discuss afterlife in either their beliefs or during services.

Looking at grief cross-culturally, Stroebe and Stroebe (1994) note that grief is a universal experience for all cultures; however, the way grief is expressed and understood varies dramatically. The length of time one is allowed to express grief and sadness varies from days to years, as do what physical or emotional outbursts are allowed and expected by the bereaved. Religious and cultural beliefs hold major influence over these attitudes toward grieving.

Changes in Burial Practices

Bell (1994:1), in his work on the archaeology of cemeteries, emphasizes the importance of burial practices through his definition of mortuary behavior, which includes "the disposal of the dead, the events and rituals that revolve around the disposal of the corpse, and the processes that allow death to be understood or integrated within the social and psychic structures of the survivors." The way in which we deal with the deceased is directly tied to societal beliefs and customs. It also depends on the individual's particular beliefs about death and dying. Looking at past burial practices

allows us to understand either how our beliefs about death and dying have been passed on through generations or have been transformed through time.

As mentioned above, burial practices have changed throughout the ages in accordance with causes of and expectations about death and dying (Kellehear 2007). Initially, grave goods were buried with the dead to aid them in the otherworld journey. In current American burial practices, no such goods are placed with the body, with the possible exception of keepsakes or letters that can be buried with the dead for sentimental value. Cremation as a means for disposing of the dead is also rising, as was noted above. Looking more broadly at the *way* we deal with the dead, the following section focuses on changes in burial practices across time and cultures.

In *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers,* Roach (2003) discusses the various ways with which we deal with dead bodies. In addition to burial and cremation, popular American ways of interring the dead, tissue digestion has surfaced as a new way of interment. This process, commonly used on dead animals, uses a chemical mixture of mainly water and lye to break up and dissolve all non-bone material. In addition, Roach mentions the "modern human compost movement" occurring in Sweden at the time of her research. She describes this process in the following quotation:

> The man's body will be brought to an establishment that has licensed
> Promessa's technology. He will be lowered into a vat of liquid nitrogen
> and frozen. From here he will progress to the second chamber, where
> either ultrasound waves or mechanical vibration will be used to break his
> easily shattered self into small pieces, more or less the size of ground
> chuck. The pieces, still frozen, will then be freeze-dried and used as
> compost for a memorial tree or shrub, either in a churchyard memorial
> park or in the family's yard (261-262).

In America, research is being done on natural composting—not using freezing techniques—as a means for individuals from poverty-ridden areas to deal with corpses when they cannot pay for funeral services or burials. Finally, Roach discusses the use of human cadavers in science, either in medical or experimental fields, through using bodies to test for crash impacts or types of death.

Another recent development in bodily disposal comes in the form of plastination, or "a process that replaces the body's 70 percent water with a resin that hardens not only blood vessels but also any tissue, so that the body, or any combination of body parts, can be displayed in its normal vertical position" (Walter 2004:605). As opposed to donating one's body for dissection, when a body is donated for plastination, it is "expected to remain stable for at least four thousand years" (606). The cost to donate one's body for plastination is similar to that of the popular funeral and people are both accepting of plastination and are offering to donate their bodies. Walter notes, however, that because plastination is so permanent, the demand for bodies to undergo this type of disposal might become less than the demand from the deceased themselves. This could change if plastinate creators allowed private purchase of donors, especially by their loved ones. Currently, the only plastinates are used in exhibits, such as Body World, and are anonymous, often making viewing easier on people who see them as self-less (Hirschauer 2006).

While human composting and plastination may seem like horrifying or strange ways to lay a loved one's body to rest, Harris (2007) notes that our attempts to "protect" our loved ones by spending hundreds on caskets is, ironically, doing the opposite of what one usually hopes. He writes that casket manufacturing plants are always listed as top

producers of hazardous waste in all fifty states, and that the tight-sealing caskets purchased for extra cost to "protect" loved ones "can transform a natural, inevitable decay into a gruesome process and the corpse into what one consumer advocate dubs a 'smelly stew'" (Harris 2007:35).

The importance of giving loved ones a "good" burial is not new to American culture. Even during the Civil War, when casualties outnumbered the places to bury them, fellow soldiers strove to give their comrades the most decent burials they could (Faust 2008). When caskets were not available, Faust writes that soldiers would often bury fallen soldiers in knapsacks or other such items that would keep them from direct contact with the dirt. Even shallow burials in bags were deemed better than simply leaving the dead where they fell. Grant (2005) concurs, noting the importance Americans place on the deaths of fallen soldiers, beginning especially during the Civil War.

Looking specifically at the majority of contemporary American Protestant funerals, Whalen (2011:126) notes:

> …most funerals follow a similar form. Family and friends gather at the funeral home to console one another and pay their last respects. The next day a minister conducts the funeral service at the church or mortuary; typically the service includes hymns, prayers, a eulogy, and readings from the Bible. In 85 percent of cases today, the body is buried after a short grave-side ceremony. Otherwise, the body is cremated or donated to a medical school.

Mitford (2000) looks at American ways of dealing with death more closely, noting that these seemingly simple, prevalent services are more financially costly than one might realize. As with most prices over time, the cost of funerals has increased dramatically in the last fifty years. Mitford (2000:17) states "the total average cost for an adult's funeral

today is $7,800", a marked increase from the $750 services of the 1960's, making

services $2,208.70 more just fifty years ago, adjusting for inflation.

In addition to the rates of financial inflation, the details of funeral procedures have

increased and have brought with this an increase in the costs (Federal Trade Commission

2009). We now have a variety of burial options, including a "full service" funeral, which

includes embalming or cremation, visitation and funeral services, hearse transportation,

and burial. Other, less expensive options include direct burials or cremations, in which

the body is *not* embalmed and is either buried in a casket or simple plywood container or

is cremated and the ashes are placed at the wishes of the family.

Looking particularly at the cost of a "full service" funeral in 2009, the National

Funeral Directors Association (2011) gives an average breakdown of the costs loved ones

can expect when someone dies on their website. See Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: 2009 Funeral Costs

Cost of regular adult funeral including following basic items. Does not include cemetery, monument/marker costs or miscellaneous cash advance charges such as for flowers or obituaries.

Item	Price*
Non-declinable basic services fee	$1,817
Removal/transfer of remains to funeral home	$250
Embalming	$628
Other preparation of the body	$200
Use of facilities/staff for viewing	$395
Use of facilities/staff for funeral ceremony	$450
Use of a hearse	$275
Use of a service car/van	$125
Basic memorial printed package	$125
Subtotal without Casket:	*$4,265*
Metal Casket	$2,295
AVERAGE COST OF A FUNERAL	**$6,560**
Vault	*$1,195*
Total Cost of a Funeral with Vault	*$7,755*

Source
National Funeral Directors' Association (2011)

Although American funerals might seem—from an outsider's perspective—to be extremely expensive, the issues faced by the bereaved in these situations make rational, logical pricing more difficult. Reliance on funeral directors or individuals working in death-care conglomerates is both a way for families to remove some of the pressure and a way to rely on someone else to help them in their decision-making (Laderman 2003; Leming and Dickinson 2011). In addition, because it *is* a service industry career, funeral directors and other death workers are expected to engage in appropriate behavior and

"acting" in ways that make them appear to be what one wants in a funeral director. These dramaturgical behaviors—particularly respect and solemnity in the case of funeral directors—are conducive to positive reviews of their work; it is through recommendations and positive evaluations that death workers, especially funeral directors, receive future clients (Turner and Edgely 1976).

What we consider to be "normal" or "average" ways of dealing with death in U.S. society, i.e., through funerals and church services, differs dramatically from many other cultures. Other means of dealing with the dead include allowing animals to pick bones clean; throwing bones into pits; burning wives with their husbands' bodies; the acceptance or forbiddance of embalming and/or cremation; and the varying amounts and types of goods buried with the body and the position of the burial in relation to the individual's status, age, or gender (Whalen 2011; Kramer 1988; Stoodley 2000). The religious beliefs of a particular group have quite an effect on the burial practices of that group, tied especially to the connection attributed to one's body and soul—or lack thereof (Kramer 1988). Belief in the afterlife or location of the spirit/soul of the deceased also plays a role on burial practices. Chinese Americans engage in very specific funeral practices meant to appease the spirits of those who died (Chung and Wegars 2005).

As mentioned above, the *way* we bury our dead says a lot about our culture. Instead of burying men with bows and arrows or women with jewelry and food, we now symbolically place these items on the tombstones of the deceased. As discussed below, many newer stones reflect the hobbies or interests of the deceased and include references to hunting, fishing, even knitting and baking. Tied to our changing beliefs in the afterlife mentioned by Kellehear (2007), we no longer *need* to take these items with us into the

afterlife as a means for survival. Instead, they can now serve as a reference to our lives

and as ways for the living to remember and memorialize the dead.

Grave Expressions: Cemeteries, Tombstones, and Epitaphs

As seen above, when a loved one dies, the bereaved can inter or dispose of the

body in a variety of ways. In America, a majority of the deceased are buried in

cemeteries. The spot is marked by tombstones, which note the dates of birth and death of

the person buried beneath it. Grave markers have changed greatly over time, from the

pyramids of Ancient Egypt to the mausoleums of today. The death of a loved one no

longer means the end of their life, per se, because funerals, obituaries, funeral programs,

and tombstones allow for the expression and exclamation of the life of those they

describe. Through eulogies and epitaphs, lives and stories of the dead live on

symbolically.

There has been much research on cemetery usage and, as discussed above, the

transformations of burial patterns and assumptions about death that have led to their

prevalence. Because graves are marked with tombstones, what these tombstones say

about the people buried below them is very important. Although there is much literature

on cemetery use and even on specific types of epitaphs, much of the former is based in

archaeology or anthropology and the latter is based in literature or historical studies. A

sociological understanding of how and why tombstones are so important would allow

further analysis of their use.

The following sections look at how cemetery usage has changed throughout

history, beginning as a part of the church, now spreading into privately-owned competing

endeavors (Mitford 2000). Even the stones—and the writing on them—have changed,

with some cemeteries requiring uniform size and shape of stones while others allow for variety. Cemeteries are even becoming more environmentally friendly, with bodies being buried in biodegradable caskets as a means to promote healthy eco-zones (Basler 2011). Regardless of the type of cemetery, the messages portrayed on the stones within them describe those buried beneath. Whether written as riddles, poems, or even praises for martyrdom, epitaphs, obituaries, and eulogies about the dead vary greatly throughout time and place.

Feelings Toward and Prevalence of Cemeteries

Cemeteries of the past have been eclectic, filled with varieties of tombstones— from the ornate and the gaudy to the simple and stern. Meyer (1992) looks at the transformation to more uniform, simplistic stones and lots in the immediate past as a means for easier maintenance. This is also tied to a push toward bestowing death work onto those working within death-industry positions. He does note, however, that a resurgence of the eclecticism of the past is occurring, with grave markers that "manifest a notable degree of verbal and visual imagery, in essence a renaissance of those primary elements, epitaph and icon, which have traditionally proven to be of greatest importance to those interested in sepulchral decoration" (p. 62).

Also looking at the history of cemeteries, Mitford (2000:81) notes that:

The cemetery as a moneymaking proposition is new in this century. The earliest type of burial ground in America was the churchyard. This gave way in the nineteenth century to graveyards at the town limits, largely municipally owned and operated. Whether owned by church or municipality, the burial ground was considered a community facility; charges for graves were nominal, and the burial ground was generally expected not to show a profit.

As the excerpt shows, cemetery transformations have led to financial issues for both landowners and purchasers. Now even the type of grave markers buyers are allowed to choose from have become limited and costly, as have burial plots themselves. Mitford (2000:196) talks about the drastic increase even within a two year span, stating that she knew "the plot was $895 and I bought two apparently […] I bought these plots next to a friend of mine that bought hers less than 2 yrs. ago for $395 ea. (sic)." She also notes how many plots are bought out by large corporations who can then turn around and sell them for much higher costs to gain profit.

Along with the memorials themselves, Woodthorpe (2010) notes the difficulties faced by mourners in placing items alongside stones, such as balloons, toys, or foodstuffs to memorialize and remember the dead. Although many living individuals wish to place items such as wind chimes or stuffed animals at one's gravesite—as either a way to cope with a death or a way to establish still-remaining ties to the deceased—they come into conflict with groundskeepers and other mourners. Issues with deterioration, especially of edible items that also attract vermin, become problematic. Woodthorpe notes, however, that either option—leaving these memorials to the dead—come at a cost, either to the safety and sanitation of the cemeteries or to the memories and wishes of the living.

The size and type of tombstones allowed within cemetery acres is not the only issue present—both Mitford (2000) and Gaziz-Sax (1995) note the ways capitalistic endeavors are being invented as a means for making money in the changing world of death work. Gaziz-Sax (1995) discusses how cemeteries are becoming more like parks, with the ability to add more costs to bereaved family members. Mitford (2000) discusses this consumerism, giving the examples of Forest Lawn Memorial-Park, which is not only

a place to bury loved ones, but also includes museums, film showings, and—of course—a

gift shop.

A new way of burial—much less elaborate and financially draining than those

practiced in Forest Lawn Memorial-Park and other such cemeteries—is practiced by a

doctor in South Carolina (Basler 2011). In a forest cemetery outside of town, the

deceased either are buried in biodegradable caskets or are simply buried without a casket

at all. For Campbell, the doctor in charge of this new project, not only are bodies being

buried in more environmentally friendly ways, but also the land in which the deceased

are interred is being protected from development.

Discussions of the Dead: Obituaries and Epigraphs

As noted previously, what people say about the dead through eulogies and

obituaries is one of the final ways the dead can continue to live. Usually before the final

tombstones are constructed, often obituaries and eulogies are created for the dead both as

a way to acknowledge the death and to remember the deceased. Fowler (2005:61)

discusses the use and meaning of obituaries in the following quotation:

> Struggling against its earlier euphemistic conventions, the national
> newspaper obituary could be seen as a semi-ritualized nexus of ethical,
> political and professional worlds. Like the memorial service, it is a
> secularized *rite de passage*, to help the bereaved; yet it is also a verdict,
> derived from professional peers, about the worth of the dead person's
> contribution. Finally, despite conflicting interpretations vying for
> authority, it aims to provide the last judgement about their personalities.
> (Emphasis in original.)

Fowler also notes the structure of contemporary American obituaries, which focus on the

individual's achievements, tied to societal emphases on meritocracy and capitalism.

Individuals are now able to create and supplement obituaries, memorials, and epitaphs in

a variety of ways, including online memorial websites (Kearl 2011; Williams and Merten 2009).

The way we talk about the dead varies across cultures and contexts, depending in part on the way the individual died. Looking at cross-cultural examples, Al-Ali (2005:6) distinguishes between two main types of Jordinian obituary announcements—those celebrating normal deaths and those celebrating what is called a "martyr's wedding," or the death of a martyr. The ironic and somewhat original importance of noting martyr deaths is tied to social and historical contexts and religious beliefs of the area. Al-Ali notes that, due to emphasis on kinship ties and protecting moral goodness and religious values, many Muslim obituaries emphasize martyrdom while Western and European obituaries do not. For some, obituaries matter less for the dead than as a way for the bereaved to build their own identities through these death announcements (Bonsu 2007). The gender of the deceased also matters, with obituaries differing in content and numerical frequency of obituaries themselves for men and women, even from similar occupational and prestige backgrounds (Bytheway and Johnson 1996; Rodler, Kirchler, and Holzl 2001).

Epitaphs, especially symbols or pictures on tombstones, can express more than just personal attributes of the dead. In addition, some symbols can represent larger, societal beliefs, including religious ones (Ward 1957; Lattimore 1962). The various ways epitaphs are etched is described in the following quotation:

> A simple grave stone becomes the closed door behind which stands eternity […]. It may be a terse statement recording only a name, a date and the simple fact of death […]. Or it may be a long, beautifully expressed eulogy on the passing of a human soul. Again, it may be a cynical, pessimistic panegyric on the futility of life. Whatever its outward

form of expression, the epitaph represents the last eloquent fling of the human mind in the face of inevitable death (Ward 1957:34).

Ward (p. 34) goes on to discuss how epitaphs serve as a "last reminder" of the person buried beneath them. Notable, however, is the occurrence of over-eulogizing the dead. Making them seem like better people than they were was a theme extremely prevalent in ancient Egyptian times. Lattimore (1962) concurs, noting how ancient Greek and Latin epitaphs often contain references to beliefs—or lack thereof—of an afterlife or immortality.

Although some epitaphs may be blunt, serious, and direct, Sárraga and Sárraga (2002) discuss humorous, less grave—no pun intended—epitaphs in Jewish cemeteries. Through their analysis of a Jewish cemetery in Hamburg, Sárraga and Sárraga discovered the extensive prevalence of poetry and riddles within historical Jewish epitaphs dating back to the seventeenth century. Curses are also present within epitaphs, seen especially in instances where grave robbers might desecrate burials (Lattimore 1962).

What is said about the individual also varies in emphasis. Meyer (1990) notes how ancient Roman epitaphs focus more on economic and political positions of power and ownership. Interestingly, the deceased was not the only person named within the epitaph—the name of the commemorator of the stone was also etched into its surface. Meyer also attributes this to the importance of ownership and the inheritance of possessions at this time. Even the construction of tombstones themselves was tied to the status of the dead, as large, costly stones were constructed for the elite and high of status.

Vita (1999) takes this a step further by discussing how epitaphs are published, creating yet another way in which the dead are kept alive through these messages.

Looking specifically at the Victorian era, Vita notes many texts referring to the deceased being created as a way to protect stories and histories from vandalism, while others were created to record only the amusing, lighthearted epitaphs.

Much like the burials described above, even individuals who do *not* have loved ones to bury and mourn for them are allowed this generosity. Castex (2011) states that if a deceased individual is unidentified or unclaimed, they are often buried without ceremony and/or grave markings that denote their identity—due to the custom of family of the deceased paying for their funerals. Social workers often fight against these societal standards for dealing with Jane or John Doe by understanding laws and regulations regarding unknown deaths, appealing to government or organizational funding, keeping current paperwork and identification information about social work patients, and even applying to the generosity of the town or neighborhood.

Looking particularly at iconography on gravestones, Farber (2005) lists several prominent symbols for the 17th through the 19th centuries. Common, well-known symbols include religious ones, such as angels, doves, crosses, heavenly gates, and bibles. Some lesser known, yet popular, gravestone symbols include the following present throughout many 17th and 18th century stones: flowers (symbolizing the cycle of life and death), grapes and grapevines (representing Christ and abundance in one's next life), urns (the symbol of death and sorrow), and wreaths (meaning victory and honor). Some more recently present symbols of the 19th century include—but are not limited to— the following: butterflies (resurrection and the life cycle), ivy (friendship, love, and immortality), and wheat (productivity and bounty).

In addition, the *meaning* of symbols has also changed through the centuries. For example, Farber (2005) notes how the meaning of flowers has changed from one of life and the life cycle to that of love and reward. The *types* of symbols used has also changed over time, with a decrease in the number of stones portraying symbols of death, such as skeletons, coffins, skulls, and mortuary tools (picks, shovels, spades, etc.). On more current stones, there is a higher prevalence of religious symbology, including Greek and Latin terms for Jesus, crosses, scrolls, and bibles. Farber (2005) does not include a list of common symbols found during the 20th century. However, Memorials.com (2010) mentions how such symbols as the Star of David became more popular in recent years. A vast majority of the symbols Farber noted in the previous several hundred years are still present, however.

The use of tombstones allows the narratives that begin in obituaries and epigraphs to live on, even past the lives of those who created the tombstones for the dead. Because some tombstones can outlast even those who would be familiar with the lives and stories of those buried below, it is important to note how these messages portray meaning even outside of an understood context. What epitaphs say or look like denotes something important about the dead—and something even *more* important about the living that often create them.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AND THE CREATION OF SELF THROUGH NARRATIVE

It appears, then, that many contexts influence how we interpret death and dying. As mentioned, for the dead, their last remembrances—for the living—often come in the form of obituaries, eulogies, and epitaphs. Once self-narration is finished, the personhood of an individual often lives on through the memories, words, and exclamations of others. Understanding how symbolic interactionist perspectives understand self-narrative, one can begin to ascertain how narrative can be created *about* the self even in one's absence; these narrations are maintained and exclaimed through the use of tombstones—a quite permanent way of expressing information about the lives of the dead, which is the main focus of this research.

The Self

To understand how narratives can enhance—or detract from—oneself, an understanding of the self is first necessary. According to George Herbert Mead (1934), a person's self is a social creation different from their humanity or biological personhood. In the following excerpt, Mead distinguishes between the physical body and the self, also noting how humans differ from other animals in the creation and maintenance of our selves:

> The self has a character which is different from that of the psychological organism proper. The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process. The intelligence of lower forms of animal life, like a great deal of human intelligence, does not involve a self (p. 135).

Mead continues the discussion of the self, noting how the self is an object—something that we can be both subjective and reflexive about; we can stand outside of our selves to determine how others might see us within a given situation.

Because our selves are reflexive, there are two major components—the "I" and the "me" (Mead: 1934). The "I" is the spontaneous, creative part of the self that is a direct response to our societal positions and situations. This part of our selves occurs in the present. Mead distinguishes this from the "me" part of our selves, which is our ability to reflect on present situations—or memories of present situations—in ways that the "I" both "calls out to the 'me' and responds to it" (p. 178). The "I" and "me", although separate entities, "taken together…constitute a personality as it appears in social experience" (p. 178).

The idea of the self is further developed by Cooley (1902), who—like Mead—emphasizes the social and interactional necessity for the self to develop. In his famous concept of the looking glass self Cooley describes our ability to see ourselves:

> As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it. A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. […] The thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind (p. 152).

The looking glass self shows how our own opinions—and our perception of the opinions of others—shape not only our actions, but also our feelings of ourselves.

Looking particularly at other ways of understanding our selves, Bruner (1994) notes that our interpretations of our selves, especially those located in the past or in our memories, require a myriad of procedures for recollection. Bruner (p. 41) concludes that there are various parts of the self, including a self of agency, or one that focuses on past actions or thoughts about motives, wishes, and desires. Another aspect of our selves includes our selves as victims, or memories of being oppressed or controlled by someone else with agency. Finally, the author describes our selves as consistent, yet ironic, as we wish to maintain agency, yet do not want to be different from people we deem similar to ourselves (p. 42).

Schiffrin (1996) concurs, noting how the linguistic and environmental contexts also affect how individuals' narratives are constructed. This idea is seen more directly in a study on elderly widows by Lund, Caserta, Dimond, and Gray (1986). When survivors lose spouses to whom they have been married for lengthy periods of time—above thirty years—their identity becomes emphasized by their coupling. When they lose their spouse, not only are they losing this social connection, but also often lose connections with other couples, causing an often drastic change in one's self. Troll (2003) also focuses on this phenomenon, showing that simply because the relationship and self-connection between elderly survivors and the deceased are physically ended does not prove harmful to keep one's attachment to the deceased. Along with age, gender also affects narrations and discussions of self, with parents emphasizing past experiences more for their younger daughters than sons (Fivush 1994).

The Use of Narratives to Establish Self

Once a self is created, the ways we maintain and build upon these selves are various. One particular way of establishing our selves is through the use of narratives. Whether these narratives are inter- or intra-personal, the individual becomes recognized, considered, and responded to through these stories and ideas. Previous research has focused both on narrative identity discussions (Mason-Schrock 1996; Hertz 2002; Irvine 2000) and the ability to look back at oneself through memories (Bruner 1994; Fivush 1994; Ross and Buehler 1994). Understanding how narratives of the self are created without the individual's presence, however, is less prevalent in past research. Understanding how narratives are used postmortem seems to be missing entirely.

Looking first at interpersonal discussions of self-narrative, Mason-Schrock (1996) looks at the creation of transsexual identities through self narratives within support groups. Through discussions with others either facing the same situations or engaging in constructive narration support, the individuals within his study were able to talk about— and construct—their selves in ways that they were unable to do so previously, a finding corroborated by Ross and Buehler (1994). By establishing a narrative about their past and present experiences, individuals realized their transsexual identities, but only with both the verbal and non-verbal support cues of other members of the support group (Mason-Schrock 1996). Important to note, however, is that these cues only stood to support certain stories, those perceived by group members to be "believable" rather than other stories perceived to be less likely. The same underlying theme was also present on research focusing on codependents by Leslie Irvine (2000). The same group dynamics

mixed with self narratives allowed individuals to label themselves—and their families or relationships—as dysfunctional and, thus, facilitating their codependent behaviors.

Looking past interpersonal narratives, Ezzy (1998:250) notes that, "while narrative identities are constructed intersubjectively, in interaction with others, they are also produced as part of an internal dialogue, or soliloquy". This idea can also apply to the creation of a self when that self is *not* physically present, as seen in Hertz's (2002) study of single mothers' creations of selves for the sperm donors of their offspring. Even though the biological father was either rarely present or—most often—entirely absent, mothers would create narratives and build selves of the men they either did not know or their children would never know so the children could then create their *own* identities from this information.

A self, then, can be created and understood even outside the particular physical person to whom it refers. Unruh (1983) looks at the ways the dying manage their situation as well as how the living construct identities about the deceased. He discusses how living family and friends face these losses through "reinterpret[ing] past experiences and knowledge of the deceased and imbue[ing] them with personal meaning… [In addition,] the dying supply the survivors with information, requests, and desires regarding how they themselves wish to be remembered" (Unruh 1983:345). Unruh also looks at four ways the living can maintain their connections to the deceased, which includes reinterpreting the mundane and everyday occurrences that remind the living of their loved ones. Second, the survivors can redefine negative aspects about the dead to make them seem more positive, such as seeing jealousy as devotion. Thirdly, continuing bonding activities that loved one engaged in with the deceased and, finally, sanctifying

symbols that hold meaning for or about the deceased are ways to maintain connection between the living and the dead (Unruh 1983).

Grout and Romanoff (2000) concur with these findings, noting how bereaved parents often deal with children's deaths by creating narratives and places for them within the family although they are no longer present. Martin (2010) looks more specifically at the deaths of murdered children, noting how the creation of a child's identity becomes more difficult when opposing identities are created by outsiders, such as law enforcement or the media. Families counteract these challenges through "their identity work of and for the dead…within this process, private or individual stories of the homicide victim may be shared, vicariously experienced, and entered into the collective memory where the identity of the dead can then be sanctified" (Martin 2010:37).

RESEARCH METHODS

Sampling

This study is based on a content analysis of 350 total tombstones—30 stones from 10 larger, urban cemeteries and 10 stones from 5 smaller, rural cemeteries—from across south central Minnesota. The data analyzed on the stones specifically consisted of any text, pictures, or plaques on the stones, as well as any items that were permanently attached to the stones, such as statues. The geographic location of the cemeteries was selected based on geographic proximity to the researcher. In order to choose the cemeteries, I began with a map of southern Minnesota and chose cemeteries in or near towns and townships below the town of origin, Mankato and a nearby town, New Ulm. All other cemeteries were spread out across the state's southern geographic boundary, with the westernmost location being Worthington, MN and the easternmost location being Austin, MN. See Appendix A for list of cemeteries and their geographic locations.

The cemeteries within the state were chosen with the aid of the website Imortuary.com (2011), a site that lists various funeral services and cemeteries according to town within each state as well as a Google search of "cemeteries in (specified town or township)". Cemeteries were then chosen based on descriptions found through supplementary links based on a Google search of each particular cemetery. Some were chosen based on their lack of denominational requirements while others were chosen based on dates of interment or demographics of those buried there to help me obtain as varied a sample as possible and to control for possible religious biases that could result from the prevalence of denominational cemeteries, such as an increase in the number of rosaries or depictions of the Virgin Mary in Catholic cemeteries. By choosing mostly

nondenominational cemeteries, there was much less outside influence on the individuals' choices of what was etched into the stone, thus allowing for a fuller description of self according to that individual.

Within each cemetery, 30 stones and 10 stones were chosen for analysis in the large and small cemeteries, respectively. I purposely selected the oldest and newest stones containing legible epitaphs or etchings possible, which were determined either from physically finding them myself or by obtaining the information from those working in the cemeteries. The other stones were purposely chosen as well, and were spread out across time to capture as much temporal change as possible within the limitations of narrative stones. In addition, within the temporal limitations, stones were purposely chosen in accordance with the amount of information they included—since the analysis looks at narratives, I chose stones that encompassed what I was focusing on. A systematic means of choosing stones would have caused me to miss those that are more elaborate or meaningful in their markings. A purposeful selection thus benefitted this study, making the analysis fuller.

Data Collection

The data in this study consist of text and iconography on 350 tombstones. Photographs of each stone were taken to allow for later coding and analysis. Initially, data was to be gathered from ten cemeteries across southern Minnesota; however, once the gathering process began, I wanted to be sure to gather data from as many different types of cemeteries as possible. Because of this, the five rural cemeteries were added, bringing the total number of tombstones being studied to 350. The larger cemeteries were primarily located either within city limits or just outside each town and included at

least 100 tombstones. No large cemeteries chosen were directly discernable as being tied to a particular religious denomination and several claimed to be serving people of varied faiths. The rural cemeteries were all located in the country and outside of city limits. One of the rural cemeteries was clearly denominational, being located closely to a Lutheran church and containing this denomination in its name. The others, as noted previously, were chosen for their nondenominational nature.

All data were gathered in a three-month period, from May through July, since the study required complete stone visibility, less probable in winter or fall months. Within this time, I choose days and times that allowed optimal sunlight to prevent issues with visibility. In order to collect the data, I photographed each stone, taking at least two shots of each one to ensure as much information is recorded as possible. In addition, stones with multiple pictures or text were photographed several times, with many shots focusing solely on the items shown on the stone for better recollection during coding. A Canon digital camera was used, which allowed me to see the picture immediately after it was taken to ensure all necessary information is visible.

If the pictures taken did not seem clear enough, grave rubbings were done over the less-visible portions of the stones. This did prove problematic, however, as many older stones were so moss-covered or eroded that the text was unable to be discerned and, thus, the stones were removed from analysis. Once all photographs were taken, they were uploaded onto my computer and edited if necessary to make all aspects of the stone clearly visible. At least one picture of each stone was printed as well, to allow for viewing multiple stones at once and to allow for sorting the photographs into similar groups during analysis. The photographs were stored in a file on the computer, on a flash

drive, and as hard copies stored at the researcher's home in case of computer or flash drive problems.

Another difficulty that became present while collecting data was the prevalence of tombstones written in German. Because southern Minnesota is home to many German families and was a common place to settle in the past, a vast majority of the older stones within the analysis were written in German. To translate the stones, I used an internet Google translator as well as double-checking these translations with a couple of individuals fluent in German to make sure the online translator was not omitting or missing slang or the correct intent of the poems and epitaphs on the stones. The English translation was then used for analysis since it held the same meaning as its original German counterpart.

Analysis

To analyze the data, I constructed and used a matrix to determine similarities and differences within the tombstones. The matrix sheets focused on a variety of information included—or absent—on the stones. Coding on a line-by-line basis (Charmaz 2008) included the use of text, pictures, etchings, or anything else that is either part of the stone or is permanently attached to the stone, such as statues or plaques. The *type* of pictures, quality and length of text, and the overall themes of the stone's messages were analyzed. In addition, some of the textual information referred directly to the person, such as "loving mother" or "avid reader," while other information, such as poems or quotations was more indirect. These differences were also noted (see Appendix B). A larger matrix sheet was also used to keep track of the amount of textual and picture references on the

stones for each cemetery to more easily see similarities across cemeteries (see Appendix C).

To aid in the creation of the matrix, I first looked at each stone individually, typing up a list of all pictures and text included with or on the stone. Each picture or piece of text received its own line. This allowed me to have both the picture of the cemetery and a textual representation of the stone to analyze at the same time. In addition, the textual descriptions of the stone also included any translations that were necessary due to the overwhelming number of tombstones etched in German. This textual line-by-line coding allowed me to develop my matrix.

Through the matrix I engaged in grounded theory coding, which allowed me to "shape an analytic frame from which [I was able to] build the analysis" (Charmaz 2008:45). I began by looking at the stones exactly as they were etched, not imposing any theoretical assumptions, and determine themes based on the data alone. By looking directly at what is said and pictured without imposing theoretical assumptions, I was able to infer—to the best of my abilities—what the makers of the stone were trying to imply about the dead. For instance, a picture of the individual in hunting gear and a statue of a sleeping deer would emphasize the role hunting played in the life of the deceased. Although not necessarily related to the wealth or status of the individual, the size of the stone itself will also affect what is being stated. A small etching of an individual on a more modest stone obviously makes a different impression than a large stone depicting the same etching.

From there, I focused on the more abstract, theoretical conclusions I was able to draw from the data, showing how the narrations of the stones represent those buried

beneath. Overarching themes, such as the emphasis placed on the individuals' work or family ties were noted. The use of memos throughout both the data collection and coding process helped me pull ideas and thoughts about individual stones together into inclusive, more developed frameworks. I also wrote memos about both my experiences and my thoughts throughout the entire collection and analysis process to supplement the coding work.

Ethical Issues

Because I did not interview or deal with living subjects and the cemeteries in which I conducted research are public domains, I did not need IRB approval to conduct my research. The stones themselves are purposely placed in these public settings as ways to mark to anyone who cares to read them the lives of those buried there. The stones are created as semi-permanent tributes and memories to the deceased and were, therefore, an unobtrusive way for me to understand how narratives can be created and used postmortem. In addition, because tombstones are public information, I did not need to worry about confidentiality, and thus did not have to remove identifying information from my research.

This study also benefits various groups of people. First, as mentioned, a sociological analysis of epitaphs and tombstones is lacking in studies of obituaries, burial practices, and cemeteries. To see how narratives are created for our selves after we are gone is an important area of knowledge-gaining within symbolic interaction specifically, as well as within sociology as a whole. The bereaved also benefit from seeing how their creations of epitaphs hold meaning not only for themselves, but also for their memories and narratives of the deceased. Finally, all individuals are able to use this information

when determining what they want on their *own* tombstones or on the stones of their loved

ones should they be placed in charge of such decisions.

FINDINGS

Although the stones analyzed varied across time and geographic location, many overarching themes were present. The century in which the stones were created did influence some differences in what information was included on tombstones, but five major themes were present regardless of the era in which the stones were constructed. Social relationships, the emphasis on time of death in relation to the age of the person and expectations of their livelihood, religious emphasis, and the use of poetry was present throughout the entire sample. How these themes were depicted, however, often changed due to the historical constraints of technology and cultural emphases on certain aspects of life, such as religious beliefs.

This chapter breaks the stones analyzed down into five major themes, explaining the presence of each of them within the various cemeteries. Included in each section is also a description of temporal changes if some were present. If there were no differences, this was also noted. Pictures of tombstones used in the analysis were used to facilitate examples. It is seeing these stones that allow the viewer to truly understand their meaning and—hopefully—take away the emphasis the creators of the stones were looking for in the symbols and etchings.

"When I Count My Blessings, I Count You Twice": Social Relationships

A common finding within all of the cemeteries and the vast majority of all tombstones was the proclamation of social relationships. Most of the oldest stones from the 19th century focused exclusively on marital and parental ties rather than other social relationships, often with a large family monument etched with the last name of the family surrounded by much smaller headstones. These small headstones would say the name of

the deceased and—especially true for the small headstones of parents—describe their role in the family.

More recent stones, usually etched within the last two decades, were much more varied in the information they contain. Whether these stones emphasize one's spouse, siblings, parents, or even pets, one does not have to search far to find the deceased person's ties to the living, a significant change within tombstone creations. Stones within the last several decades also use more photographs and visual etchings to denote social relationships than ever before, as will be noted below. The following section looks specifically at the emphasis we place on our relationships to the dead, even when that social relationship can no longer be maintained directly through social contact.

Spousal Symbols and Epitaphs

As mentioned above, tombstones etched during the late 1800's and early 1900's were created in different ways than their newer counterparts are. This is especially the case in understanding the social relationships within these families. The larger family memorial markers of the 1800's and early 1900's seem to come either in this form, with the larger stone simply listing the family's name with little to no ornate pictures or other engravings, or they are large, ornate statues of religious figures, usually either saints or angels (Figure 1). Labeling the wives and mothers of these families as the "Wife of" their husband was much more common during the late 1800's and early 1900's than more recent stones (Figure 2).

In more recent years, extremely popular tombstone writings, photographs, and pictures inform viewers of the deceased's spousal ties. Bibles, connected wedding bands, even doves and roses became a focal point around which the date of marriage was often

written (Figure 3). On occasion, there would be more textual emphasis placed on the marriage or intimate relationship of the couple, including a few engravings of couples dancing, watching a sunset together, or even hiking into the mountains. More recent tombstones included actual photographs of the deceased couple, whether these were their wedding photos—as many were—or anniversary photographs of the couple in more recent years. These serve to signify the importance of the deceased's relationship to their loved one. This proclamation of self emphasizes the intimacy and time spent with the deceased's spouse, whether simply by referring to their names or wedding date or through sketches of them dancing or walking into the sunset together. Our society values the family and the sanctity of marriage, noted overwhelmingly on these various proclamations.

An interesting difference that appeared when noting temporal differences in tombstone creations is that of the textual representation of marriage. In 19th and earlier 20th century stones, many stones declared spousal ties through labeling women as the "wife of" their husbands. The husbands themselves were simply listed, often with many more details than were allowed for their wives. More current stones simply listed both members of the couple equally, usually beside each other on a larger stone. These differences are shown in the Figures 4a and 4b (below). The first stone was erected in the late 1800s, while the stone on the right was erected quite recently, as neither spouse is yet deceased. This emphasis placed on marriage, however, is unchanging over time. Regardless of the wording, stones emphasized marital ties regardless of name placement or textual explanations.

Emphases on Parenthood

In addition to the proclamation of the deceased's marital status, whether or not the dead had been parents is present on numerous stones as well. For stones erected in the 19th century, as noted above, the family had a large, separate monument denoting their surname in addition to smaller, less extravagant headstones listing the individuals' information. "Mother" and "Father" were frequent toppers of stones erected during the 1800s and early 1900s. As seen in Figures 5a and 5b, the roles of the two Fuchs parents are noted predominantly on the top of the smaller headstones, while the memorial for the entire family is a separate, larger stone. If children of these families were dead, their stones would denote their roles as daughters or sons as well (Figure 6).

Often on more recent tombstones, this parental role is symbolized by a list of children's names at the bottom center of the tombstone. This recent development usually lists the names of the children in a smaller text size, approximately the same size as the dates of life and death of the deceased. These social connections are not understated because of the text size, however, but appear to matter as much as all of the other social relationships present on one's tombstone in recent decades. On occasion, however, the naming of one's children became a more extravagant undertaking. One stone in particular had a large etching of the tree of life with the names of the deceased's children forming a circle around the tree (Figure 7). On this stone, the emphasis on the deceased's children is most noticeable.

This says much about our society's emphasis on familial relationships and the emphasis we place on having children. For women especially, we become socialized into the expectation that we will grow up, get married, and start a family. By listing the

names of one's children, we are able to proclaim about our selves that we accomplished this goal. In addition, as Freeman (2005) notes, when an individual dies, we are able to biologically pass on a sense of our selves through our offspring. This is both a way for the dying and the living to deal with the impending death.

Grandchildren are also becoming increasingly noted on tombstones in more recent years, often listed after the children of the deceased, something that never happened in the past. Obviously, this is more likely to be seen on more recent stones, as mortality rates for children have decreased and reproductive rates have increased throughout the last few centuries. Interestingly, if grandchildren *were* mentioned, there was also frequently a description of the deceased as being a grandparent, as seen on the tombstone in Figure 8, which states both the name of the grandchildren at the base of the stone, as well as describes Cynthia Linbo as "Gramma" on the flower holder to the side of her name. In addition to this textual representation, one can see several children playing in the etching, as well as the text "watching over our future" surrounding the picture of the children.

Through these proclamations, we can see much identity work being done. The emphasis on the social relationships of the deceased has been highlighted throughout time, one of the very few phenomena that appear to remain steadily present. Our self is created through our interactions with others, as was noted by Mead (1934) and discussed previously. Without others, then, our self would not exist. In addition, without familial and friendship ties, the living would have no need for an ornate tombstone declaring their relations. It is the living that continues the identity work *for* the dead, including but not limited to the use of tombstones to express these connections.

Sibling of…

Looking particularly at older (19th and early 20th century) tombstones, the emphasis on one's being a sibling is extremely rare. Instead, as mentioned above, one's role as a parent, spouse, or—as will be discussed later—child was a more prevalent finding than one's role as a sibling. Interestingly, however, one stone in particular from the 1800s memorializes the lives of twin sisters, who both died on the same day in 1863 (Figure 9). Aside from this one stone, no other stones analyzed before the 1950's described one's sibling ties.

Although most prevalent on the tombstones of early deaths (early deaths meaning untimely deaths—such as infants, children, or teenagers), many recent epitaphs would include listing one's siblings in addition to the other social relationships one had. In addition to early deaths, when one did not have a spouse or children, their tombstones were most likely to contain statements of their sibling ties. Several tombstones portraying the death of children included the names of their parents as well as their siblings. For example, one particular stone (Figures 10a and 10b) is in memorial of Bryan Peck. On the back of the stone (photo right) Bryan's social relationships are emphasized. After listing his parents, it is noted that he is the "loving brother of Jeremy and Michael".

Interestingly, there was a tombstone that represented a brother and sister pair with no discussion of spouses or children had by either person (Figure 11). The engraving shows a couple standing near a lake and states "siblings for life—friends forever." It appears, however, that the stone is referencing a couple, as it is in the same format as most couples' stones, with the names across from each other with the last name more

prominent on the stone. The picture is also quite similar to those on couples' stones, where the two are shown dancing or walking together. The visual cues of this stone in particular, then, were much harder to discern than most, creating a self-imagery that could be slightly confusing for viewers to interpret.

Beloved Companion: Relationships with Pets and Animals

A very recent—and very interesting—development to tombstone engravings is the presence of animals and their relationships to the dead. An intriguingly large number of recent stones analyzed contained evidence of such ties to one's pets. Several examples are shown (Figures 12a and 12b). On another stone, the name of the pet dog (Molly) was written beneath an etching of her. Beside the tombstone was a smaller grave in which this beloved pet was buried, with her own memorial denotation as well. For the other stones, however, pictures and text emphasizing the love of these pets seemed to suffice. There were also several stones portraying cats and dogs with no text emphasizing their connection to the deceased.

Yet another interesting modern tombstone emphasized one woman's work as a horse trainer (Figure 13). The back of her tombstone contained two large pictures of her working with her horses, the first noting the horse's name, "Stormy," and the second depicting her participation in the "World Championship Quarter Horse Show 1987" with "Masters Cody Gal." Quite intriguing is the recognition of her sons at the far bottom of the stone, below the larger monumental etchings of her horses! This ordering seems to appear almost as an afterthought to those viewing the stone, leading one to interpret her self as being tied more deeply to her hobby than her to her kin. Much of her identity work, then, appears to be done surrounding this pastime.

Previous 19th century and early 20th century stones did not contain such pictures and epitaphs at all within the sample analyzed. Looking more broadly, I would assume it is safe to say, especially given what *is* written on past stones, that this is an exclusively new phenomenon. Past stones did not even contain pictures of animals, let alone textual references to them. Again, this may be strongly tied to increases in technology and the efficiency of carving modern tombstones as well as changing roles and hobbies over time. Regardless of the reasoning, however, it is quite interesting to notice such a stark contrast.

"You will be Missed": Other Social Relationships

One cannot forget to mention the references to the deceased's being good and loving friends, as well as uncles, aunts, cousins, even mentors. Older stones would sometimes contain poetic references to one's dying, describing the deaths as "too soon" or as a way to remove the pain from the deceased but not from the living. Interestingly, poems were written at times to describe both the social roles of the individuals in the early 1900s, and—at times—the way they died or what their dying process was like. These findings will be described in more detail below.

On very recent stones (those being erected within the last few decades), many social relationships were listed together on tombstones, again, more often if the individual did not have children and/or grandchildren. As Figure 10 showed, Bryan Peck was "loved by many, missed by all" and friends as well as family were noted to be missing him and awaiting their future reunions. Exclamations of the deceased as "special" friends and "loving" friends were prevalent, and there was even one stone included in the analysis that appears to have been erected *by* a friend of the deceased

(Figure 14). This says a lot about the person, especially their role within the lives of others. It is possible that they were an exceptional friend to merit the purchase and erection of a tombstone, they possibly did not have a good enough relationship with their family to merit the creation of a stone, or the family was unable to create a stone for the deceased.

"Not Yet…It's Not Time": Time of Death in Relation to Stone Exclamations

Although the amount of information included on tombstones has increased throughout time due to technological advancements in monument construction, the time of death of the individual also plays a role in how much information—and what information—is present on the stones. Some symbols are used particularly for certain groups of individuals, such as lambs or rosaries, and others—such as crosses or flowers—are present regardless of age or gender. Many of these symbols, especially lambs, were prevalent across the last few centuries. More modern stones, however, are becoming increasingly ornate in the use of photographs and sketches on the stones. The following section looks at differences across the time of death (meaning the age of the person when they died), as well as any differences across time of monument construction.

Infant and Child Stones

Often the most heart-wrenching stones are those that memorialize children. Some cemeteries—depending on size—even have a designated section for the graves of infants and young children. Lambs and angels are overwhelmingly present on the stones of the young regardless of the centuries and times in which they died, as seen in Figures 15a, 15b, and 15c. In addition, the parents of the child are usually mentioned. Furthermore, as noted previously, children's stones used to be much smaller than they are now—often

they were placed in groups. This was especially the case for stillborn children or infants

who died.

A stark contrast to this idea within the stones analyzed is the memorial for Allie

Peterson (Figure 16). The large stone (over 7 feet tall) is a statue of a young boy standing

on the base of the stone, which describes Allie and his death. Labeled "Our Darling

Boy", the stone continues to lament on his passing with the following brief poem:

> How sweet it will be in that beautiful land,
> To meet our sweet Allie again.
> With a song on his lips, and a harp in his hand,
> Our Darling has gone to that beautiful land.

None of the other stones analyzed before the 1940s paid such an extensive tribute to the

loss of a child. Ironically, quite a few of the more recent stones did not either. This

could be tied to the family's wealth more so than the intensity of the mourning, but as a

viewer, it is impossible to tell.

Within the last century or so—and especially within the last few decades—babies

and children are either given their own ornate stone, or they are included on the stones of

their parents. In addition, technological advancements that have allowed pictures to be

etched are extremely visible on infant monuments. Trey Willour's pictures in particular

(Figures 17a and 17b) show the extreme detail that can be accomplished with current

laser and computer technology. In addition to the picture being etched into the stone,

actual photographs of the deceased are also used.

Again, pictures are overwhelmingly present on the modern stones of children, but

now these stones also include more etchings of *material* objects, such as sporting

equipment or toys that the deceased might have favored. Baseballs, bats, and gloves

were popular on the stones analyzed, as were footballs and soccer balls for boys' memorials. Girls' stones included butterflies, rainbows, and other more "feminine" stereotyped symbols (for example, see Figure 18). Not surprisingly, none of these items were present on stones erected in the 1800's and early 1900's within this analysis. This could be tied again to changes in technology as well as transformations in what symbols and material objects are considered important in a given social context.

Losing infants and children is extremely difficult, as seen both in the literature review and in these memorials. This is even more so the case during recent centuries when previous medical, sanitation, and nutritional issues lowered mortality rates. Because today we are expected to live much longer than our childhood years, it is no surprise that children's stones bear a much larger and detailed tribute to their short lives. Their deaths were unexpected and this lack of expectation often shows on their stones.

Teenager and Young Adult Stones

Like their younger counterparts, modern teenagers' stones encompass many of the same pictures and symbols as related to the time in which the stone was erected. Religious symbols were present at times, with angels being portrayed on girls' stones more often than boys' stones. Aside from religious symbols, however, other pictorial types (such as material objects) were not present in the sample. As will be discussed later, however, the *exact* length of time someone lived was present on 19th and early 20th century stones and has appeared to be forgone in the more recent decades.

In addition to the modern prevalence of sports and activities, however, come pictures of consumer objects such as cars, hunting, and other hobbies that come about with being a teenager. Many of the tombstones memorializing teenage or young adult

males contained references to or pictures of vehicles. Trucks were quite common, as were fishing and hunting depictions. For teenage girls and young women, more popular depictions included religious symbols, such as angels, hearts, or crosses.

What differentiates teenage and young adult stones from the stones of infants and children, however, are the stones themselves. All of the deceased infants and children within the sample had their own memorial stones and were buried alone. Teenagers and young adults—if they were not married (applicable for young adults)—were then often buried with their parents and were listed between the names of their parents on their parents' memorial stones (see Figure 19).   Many times, the stones depicting deceased teens and young adults with their parents would also not have room for any other children, even though—as is seen in Figure 19—there may be other immediate family members. This shows an early death of the children and, I suggest, is also tied to the expectation that we all will live into old age, thus having our *own* tombstones declaring our place beside our loved ones.

Stones from earlier centuries did not emphasize the lives of teens and young adults nearly as much, often simply just listing their names and dates of birth and death. Occasionally, as was a common practice in previous centuries, the exact amount of time one lived is noted. This is most often present, as mentioned, within the 19th and 20th century tombstones. Most often, the age of the person was broken down into years and months (Figure 20). On a few stones, however, even the number of days a person lived was listed, as was seen on stones dating back into the 1900's (see Figure 21). As mentioned, this extreme detail into the literal "lives" of the deceased is no longer present, or at least was not present among the sampled tombstones that were erected within the

last several decades or so—the trend seems to have disappeared in favor of including more emphasis on social relationships and consumer goods that now comprise more of our self identities.

Adult and Elderly Stones

Stones memorializing adults and the elderly were—at times—no less exquisite than those of their younger counterparts. These deaths, however, were often depicted as less traumatic (fewer references to being taken too early) and were much more similar to one another in their construction and the way the information was arranged on the stones than children's stones were. As mentioned previously, stones from the 1800s and early 1900s used a larger surname monument with smaller, individual headstones. Exceptions to this came in the form of pillar-shaped stones that had the names and descriptions of different family members on each of the sides (see Figure 22). In addition, these stones often have poetry written about the deceased, which will be described in further detail below. Tombstones before the 1930's also did not reference grandchildren, in contrast to the more modern tombstones noted below.

Modern adult stones (stones that were erected for individuals who died between the ages of 21 and 59) were more detailed and extravagant than stones for the elderly (individuals who died at the ages of 60 or above), as many individuals who die as adults do so in what we often consider "untimely" manners. Another marked difference between adult and elderly stones and those of the younger deceased is the emphasis on spousal relationships, which also leads to the sharing of tombstones. Obviously, individuals who are below the age of 18 are unlikely to be married in modern American society, contributing to this difference.

The main layout for modern adult and elderly stones follows the typical pattern one is familiar with when visiting American cemeteries—the stone lists the last name of the couple in a larger, more prominent font at the top of the stone, with each of the couple's names listed below. Often on very recent stones, the man's name is on the left side and might include his nickname or middle initial. The woman's name is often on the right and can include her maiden name, nickname, or middle initial. I suggest the reasoning for this is tied to the emphasis placed on men in our patriarchal society; we read from left to right, so placing the man's name first establishes his dominance within the relationship. The middle of the stone contains reference to marriage and the bottom of the stone lists children of the couple. Pictures included on the stone can range from pictures of the couple to hobbies and interests of each person. Figure 23 depicts one of these more recent stones.

One of the small differences between adult stones and those of the elderly are the inclusion of any grandchildren, though this is definitely not always the case. Differences in stone construction across time are less detailed in these more recent typical couple's stones, with the exception of women being described as individuals rather than as "wives of" their husbands as was noted above during the earlier centuries, tied again to gender stereotypes and our use of males as the "default" sex. In addition, as previously mentioned, pictures and symbols etched onto the tombstones have become more intricate throughout the years.

"A Real Lady [and] a Realist": Describing Personalities and Interests of the Dead

Along with the social relationships of the deceased being emphasized on their stones, a much more recent development is the inclusion of hobbies, interests, and even

simple personality descriptions of the dead. As mentioned, many of them are relational—loving mother, kind friend, and so forth. Some, however, emphasize one's love of hunting, riding motorcycles, even their donations to organizations. The following section looks at these personality declarations, which occur mainly within the last few decades. Previous stones—those made before the 1930's—would describe the deceased on occasion, often in poems or quotations about the individual, but were rarely—if at all—used as descriptors of one's hobbies or material interests.

Ties to Nature and the Homestead

Many tombstones have a variety of engravings related to nature. Whether this comes in the form of a couple walking in a field during sunset, or an etching of a cabin in the middle of the woods by the lake, a vast majority of newer (20th and 21st century) tombstones go beyond just simple text to explain the lives of those buried beneath. Some older stones of the 1800's and the early 1900's would have engravings of doves, lambs, flowers, wheat and/or rays of sunlight, both tied to religious symbolism and nature (Figure 24). Other, more detailed stones would include pictures of horses, particularly for soldiers, as shown in Figure 25. Usually more uncommon, these icons were found four times within the sample studied, making it noteworthy.

An interesting development, however, comes in the form of etchings of individuals' farms and homesteads as a description of their lives. There were tombstones emphasizing these homes—usually country homes that included the house itself, any building (such as sheds, barns, or garages), and some farmland (see Figure 26). Along with showing one's family farm on tombstones, often even just the house of a family would be etched into the stone. Some appeared to be summer cabins that the family

either might have owned or frequented. At times, however, a home would be etched

solely into the marker, as in Figure 27. Because a viewer could potentially be unfamiliar

with the homes of the deceased, one must assume that either that *is* the home of the

deceased and holds special meaning to the family (the home was built by an ancestor and

has remained in the family for generations), or the individual could be a carpenter or an

architect. Whatever the conclusion, a viewer would understand that the particular

engraving holds significance to the makers of the stone.

Ties to Material and Physical Possessions

Some of the more intriguing engravings come in the form of modern material

emphases, visible almost exclusively on tombstones erected in the last few decades. As

mentioned while discussing the tombstones of teenagers, vehicles often appear on

memorials to the dead. Trucks are extremely popular, as are motorcycles and other motor

vehicles—not surprisingly, these show up overwhelmingly on men's stones (Figure 28).

Women's stones contained a variety of engraving associated with possessions, ranging

from knitting needles and balls of yarn to fresh-baked bread (see Figure 29). As

mentioned previously, children's stones show toys they might have played with or

gendered etchings (sports for boys, butterflies for girls). It appears, then, that we "do"

gender—and have gender "done" for us—even after death (West and Zimmerman 1987).

The exceptions to having gendered etchings on tombstones appear to be the prevalence of

religious etchings, which appear on tombstones regardless of gender, age, or date of stone

creation. These exceptions will be discussed below in more detail.

Ties to Social Groups and Organizations

Not extremely popular, but still noteworthy is the emphasis some memorials place on community service and ties to various organizations. The most prevalent ties to social organizations, obviously, come in the form of serving in the armed forces. Acknowledgement of such roles was present for service members across time of stone erection within the sample. For earlier stones erected in the 1800s and the early 1900s, the only social organizational ties present within the sample were ties to armed forces, like the military or the army, and membership in the freemasons. More recent (post-1930) membership in the armed services is denoted by the presence of a plaque placed on the back of the tombstones or as smaller iron stand-alone markers. Previous stones, unless updated by living family members at later dates, would reference their membership textually or in carved pictures (see Figures 30 and 31).

In a modern example, one modern stone described how the deceased was the "manager of Broadway and Rivoli theatres for 17 years" and "endeared himself as sponsor of the children's annual Christmas party." Yet another stone attested to one man's role as senator and other related civic duties during his lifetime. Pastors—and their subsequent importance within the religious institution—are often denoted on their stones regardless of time in which the stone was erected (see Figures 32 and 33). The *way* in which the pastor's social organizational connections were etched into the stone varied over both the time the stone was erected and the religious affiliation with which the pastor was associated.

Perhaps one of the most interesting and unusual stones was that of the "brave Christian chief of the Dacotahs who saved many white women and children during the

Indian War of 1862" (Figures 34a and 34b). Not only does this serve as a monument to

his death, but it also serves as a memorial for the war. The cemetery guide denotes it as

such, as does a marker along the road by the location of the stone. In addition to this

stone for Chief Taopi, stones for men who fought during the Indian War denoted such

actions, as did one stone in particular, which exclaimed how the individual buried below

was "killed by Indians" in the 1860's as well.

Emphasis was also given for those who either were settlers to a certain region, or

had lived in the same town for all of their lives (Figures 35a and 35b). This theme was

present only on older stones and stones that were etched closely to the year(s) in which

certain Minnesota towns were founded and/or incorporated. If an individual was born or

died in a state *other* than Minnesota, that was often noted on stones etched pre-1940 as

well (Figure 36). This appeared especially to be the case for individuals born in Europe

who then immigrated to America (Figures 37, 38a and 38b). No modern stones (etched

post-1940) within the sample contained information like this.

Describing the Personalities of the Deceased

A final way to personalize the stones of the dead almost exclusively within recent

years is to emphasize the *type* of person they were through references to their

personalities. As mentioned, many personality traits—especially those reflecting caring

and kindness—are often associated with social relationships. Other descriptions are tied

to material possessions and social roles, such as calling someone a "hard worker" or an

"avid reader," present on over one-fourth of the sample. One of the older references

present within the sample included labeling women as "loving mothers," which was

present only on two of the 350 stones analyzed. This discovery is tied to gender

stereotypes emphasizing the nurturing role of women within the family over that of the husband or father.

Sometimes, however, the description allotted to the personalities of the deceased is simply descriptions of their behavior. As noted by the title of this section, one stone emphasized the wife as a "real lady" while her husband was seen as a "realist." Other such personality descriptions included calling the deceased "sweet," "inspiring," "proud," and even "wild," making up approximately 15% of the sample. Again, many of these traits, with the exception of "beloved" or "loving" were usually found on newer stones—those erected within the last few decades or so.

If older stones contained any reference to the personality of the deceased, it came in the proclamation of their hard work and perseverance, usually through a description of their immigrating to Minnesota, working, and starting a family. Again, these proclamations were gendered when present, with vocational and economic success being noted for men and personality traits associated with relationships being primary for women. Two instances within the sample, however, included the perseverance of the deceased during their final hours, describing them as "fighting hard" and "not giving up until the end."

"Pray for Me": Emphasis on Religion

One major theme is visible on tombstones regardless of age, gender, and even the years in which the stone was created. Religious portrayals were present on almost all tombstones in some way, even within the non-denominational cemeteries studied. The likelihood of a stone including some religious reference did not differ between these non-denominational cemeteries and the one overtly-religious cemetery analyzed—Lunder

Lutheran Cemetery. The following section looks at the religious pictures and text found on these representations of the dead.

As previously noted, there *are* some differences in what religious information is present on tombstones depending on the date of stone creation and the age and gender of the dead. Stones created in the 1800's and early 1900's have more ornate religious references, including large statues of angels and saints presiding over the smaller headstones of the deceased (Figure 39). "Pray for me" and "rest in peace" were also popular religious quotations on the tombstones of the dead during the 18th and 19th centuries (Figure 40). More current stones have less ornate religious carvings, opting often for pictures of crosses or angels. *Text* has become more detailed, however, with bible verses and hymns taking the place of shorter religious exclamations, as is discussed below.

Religious Pictures and Etchings

Religious depictions on stones have changed over time. As mentioned above, Figure 39 shows a common example of stones from the 1800s that either portray large statues of religious deities or are erected in the shape of cross. In addition, popular religious pictures and etchings etched or carved pre-1940's included carvings of heavenly gates, angels, bibles, and portals—or arches—that signify one's doorway to heaven (Figures 41, 42, and 43).

More recent religious depictions vary more than their predecessors do in terms of variations and themes. Along with the popular symbols of the cross and doors to heaven, pictures became more intricate—and more varied. Tombstones carved into the shape of pulpits with bibles on them (Figure 44) transformed into more current box-shaped stones

with simple pictures of bibles or religious references etched or carved into their surfaces (Figure 45).

Most often, stones are no longer made to be religious symbols in and of themselves as they were in the past. Now, these symbols seem to be placed alongside the hobbies and interests of the dead, perhaps making their religious ties seem almost less than their historic counterparts did (see Figure 46). Stones that are more recent have a greater likelihood of having no religious references included on them than do stones from the 18th through early 20th centuries as well. Again, this could be tied to a lessening of religious importance, or it simply could be the ability to include more detailed non-religious references with technological advancements.

Finally, the religious symbols used on stones vary across the age in which the person died as well. As mentioned previously, the stones of infants and children portray an overwhelming number of angels, lambs, and crosses. This has been the case across time and seems not to vary according to the gender of the deceased. Lambs were often carved into the stone itself in the past, but now are often simply etched into the stone's surface. Angels and crosses were usually etched into the stone from the beginning with a few exceptions. Stones of adults contain the myriad of religious symbols explained above.

Religious Text

Text has become more varied and elaborate over time as well. As mentioned, previous phrases asking the living to pray for the dead or for the dead to rest in peace were usually the extent of religious writings on stones created before the 1930's. Some stones, however, do not follow this pattern. Religious poems written about the deceased

were visible on some stones created during the 1800's and the early 1900's, as shown in Figure 47. These poems often told of how their suffering ended now that they are in Heaven. Other religious text came in the form of bible passages, but at a much smaller rate than was depicted on tombstones that are more modern. Newer stones built within the last century show evidence of the technological changes playing a role in this presence of longer and more varied religious text.

The use of religious bible quotations is a common occurrence when religious text is present on stones. As mentioned, stones from the 19th and early 20th centuries would often ask for the prayers of the living. Now, modern religious quotations that ask for God's help directly are etched into the stones. Bible verses talking about God and heaven are popular, as are references to God taking the best when he decided to take one's particular family member, which was present on 27 out of the 194 total textual references to religion analyzed. Another popular biblical quotation comes in the form of the verse John 14:2, which begins, "In my Father's house, there are many mansions," which was present both on tombstones erected in the 1800's and early 1900's and during modern constructions (Figure 48).

Many of the older (19th and early 20th century) stones did hold religious references and contained some bible verses as previously mentioned, often in German. Some of the more popular versus included variations of, "blessed are the dead which die in the lord," "I know my redeemer lives," and "my spirit rejoices in God, my savior." Other popular bible verses referenced Corinthians, Revelations, and Psalms. One stone in particular had the entire 1st Corinthians 13:4-7, which is popular within wedding ceremonies and discusses how love is patient and kind (Figure 49).

Interestingly, religious songs were also referenced exclusively on some modern stones, and on two stones, the actual musical notes to the songs themselves were etched into the surface of the stone (Figure 50). References to non-religious songs were also present and—at times—included parts of the musical scores as well. Finally, another religious quotation that was present among newer stones is tied to the popular quotation, "if tears could build a stairway, and memories a lane, I'd walk right up to heaven and bring you home again."

"The World is Not a Conclusion": Poetry and the Dead

In addition to text describing the deceased and bible verses discussing their futures in heaven, the dead were often remembered through poetry and literary quotations. Whether these came in the form of poems, stories, quotes, or lyrics of secular songs, many tombstones contained a myriad of interesting messages left for the living to interpret in their own ways. The following section looks first at popular poetry and literary quotations present within the sample, followed by a few original pieces written by family members of the deceased.

Popular Poetry and Quotations

If pre-1930's stones contained poetry or popular quotations, they were usually referencing religious ideals or deities, as previously mentioned. Figure 51 stands as an example. The stone, erected in memorial of Patrick Spellman, contains the following epitaph:

> Dearest Father, thou has left us,
> And thy loss we deeply feel.
> But 'tis God that has bereft us.
> He can all our sorrows heal.

Yet another religious poem was present on a stone memorializing Harrison W. Kaiser. This epitaph focused on Kaiser's connection with God, equating him with "a little flower of lore/ that blossomed by to die." Emphasizing the positive aspects of religion and going to heaven, the epitaph continues, "transplanted now,/ always to bloom with God on high."

There also were some stones erected before the 1930's, however, that included poetic epitaphs that were more secular in nature. On the same stone as Patrick Spellman, noted above, was also a poem for Andrew Spellman, which did not contain religious references:

> Peaceful be thy silent slumber,
> Peaceful be thy grave so low.
> Thou no more will join our number,
> Thou no more our sorrows know.

Another example from a family stone erected in 1877 comes in the following poems carved for Ann and James Jordan, respectively:

> She has fallen asleep,
> She is resting at last.
> Her pulse has grown still
> And her fever has passed.
> She suffers no longer,
> (the rest has eroded into illegibility)
>
> 'Tis hard to break the tender cord,
> When love has bound the heart.
> 'Tis hard, so hard, to speak the words,
> Must we forever part.

One of the most intricate—and thus unique—*modern* memorials analyzed for this study was one for Mark and Sue Hamre (at Lakeside Cemetery in Fairmont). This large mausoleum-type structure contained a number of both religious and secular popular

quotations for viewers to read. The mausoleum itself had two large glass doors that

allowed one to see inside the structure, which housed a bench and more quotations etched

into the walls (see Figure 52). On the left side of the mausoleum was a famous quote by

Robert Frost that stated, "Two roads diverged in a wood and I—I took the road less

traveled by, and that has made all the difference." Inside the mausoleum was a quotation

that said, "A certainty like ours comes once in a lifetime," along with three religious bible

passages.

All other stones in the analysis were less dramatic in their presentation of secular

quotations, but were still descriptive in their exclamations. One stone contained the

poem "High Flight," by John Gillespie Magee Jr., which appeared to be etched into the

stone both as a memorial to the deceased himself and to his interest in flying, as there is

also an engraving of a plane on the stone (Figure 53):

> Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
> And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
> Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
> Of sun-split clouds - and done a hundred things
> You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
> High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there
> I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
> My eager craft through footless halls of air.
> Up, up the long delirious, burning blue,
> I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace
> Where never lark, or even eagle flew -
> And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
> The high untresspassed sanctity of space,
> Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

This poem is often used to as a way to memorialize pilots on their tombstones, especially

those in the air force.

Poems referencing other service members were also present, including one on Harry Wiebe's stone that said, "He left his home in perfect health/he looked so young and brave./We little thought how soon he'd be/laid in a soldier's grave" (Figure 54). One of the more contemplative epitaphs was that of Allan Sirvoy, which contained Edgar Allan Poe's poem "Eldorado" on the back of the stone (Figure 55):

> Gaily bedight,
> A gallant knight,
> In sunshine and in shadow,
> Had journeyed long,
> Singing a song,
> In search of Eldorado.
>
> But he grew old-
> This knight so bold-
> And o'er his heart a shadow
> Fell as he found
> No spot of ground
> That looked like Eldorado.
>
> And, as his strength
> Failed him at length,
> He met a pilgrim shadow-
> "Shadow," said he,
> "Where can it be-
> This land of Eldorado?"
>
> "Over the Mountains
> Of the Moon,
> Down the Valley of the Shadow,
> Ride, boldly ride,"
> The shade replied-
> "If you seek for Eldorado!"

Also frequently present was the following poem, "I'm Free," by Shannon Lee Mosely:

> Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
> I'm following the path God has chosen for me.
> I took His hand when I heard him call;
> I turned my back and left it all.

> I could not stay another day,
> To laugh, to love, to work or play.
> Tasks left undone must stay that way;
> I've now found peace at the end of day.
>
> If my parting has left a void,
> Then fill it with remembered joys.
> A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss;
> Oh yes, these things, I too will miss.
> Be not burdened with times of sorrow
> Look for the sunshine of tomorrow.
>
> My life's been full, I savored much;
> Good friends, good times, a loved ones touch.
> Perhaps my time seems all to brief;
> Don't lengthen your pain with undue grief.
> Lift up your heart and peace to thee,
> God wanted me now-He set me free

This poem was seen on seven of the 350 stones analyzed, whether the full poem or smaller excerpts of it (see Figure 56).

Poetry and Exultations Written by the Family

An exclusively modern phenomenon, for some individuals, family members or friends wrote poems and eulogies that were etched into the memorials. These were much less frequent than more well-known poems and quotations, but seem to make a similar—if not more dramatic—statement about the dead. One poem in particular, written by a deceased baby's grandmother, has such an emotional pull (Figure 57). Called "Johnny's Poem," (2000) it goes as follows:

> Johnny, so full of life, when you were born
> Always smiling, always teasing with bright blue
> eyes.
> We envisioned baseball caps and gloves and bats
> and uniforms you would've worn!
>
> Mom and dad would have cheered you on,

as their eyes, glowed with pride.
Just to see you run and jump and just be a boy,
would've been their only joy!

You are in god's hands now, but don't be
dismayed.
For someday mom and dad will be there with you,
just to play.
To catch up for the times they missed,
while you were away!

I love you precious one with all my heart!
Your sweet little face and loving smile
will always be in my memory and
we'll never be apart!

With all my love! Grandma Vicky

Another poem written for the deceased was created by Garry Lee Berkner for his

father and serves as "A Tribute to Warren Berkner" that he wrote to his father on Father's

Day, before his death (Figure 58):

I wanted to tell you, Father dear,
that you have made me happy again this year.

With all the things you have done for me,
whether on land, the air, or sea.

The greatest sportsman of them all,
a guy with whom I have a ball.

He can shoot a running fox,
or kill a couple of flying ducks.

Pheasants he hath given fear,
and also he takes antelope and deer.

With northerns, walleyes, and panfish,
he brings them all home for our dish.

A snapping turtle he had met

> was scooped up with a fishing net.
>
> Besides a sportsman, he can fly,
> with his Cessna through the sky.
>
> And with a score of forty three,
> he can golf better than me.
>
> Of course I'm talking about my dad,
> who never really makes me sad.
>
> To the greatest father there can be,
> come thanks from son, Gary Lee.

More succinct poems written by the family of the deceased are shown in the following

example of a poem written for Brad Young:

> Your life gave us love,
> Your smile gave us happiness.
> Your strength and determination
> Gave us hope.
> The memories of you will be in our hearts forever.
> We love you, Brad.

Religiously-affiliated poems written by the families of the deceased were also prevalent,

as was seen above in "Johnny's Poem" and in the following poem written for Mark D.

Williams that contains a popular religious quotation at the end (Figure 59):

> From a boy, there grew a man.
> He had big dreams, he had big plans.
> To see the mountains, to see the sights,
> To live amongst the city lights.
> You both were scared and didn't know,
> But in the end you let him go.
> He made it happen, he lived his dream.
> He had it all, so it seemed.
> Then one May morning, God came to call.
> Why is still a mystery to us all.
> We are left to suffer and in such great pain
> With only his memories to remain.
> Though the sun will rise and we must go on,
> We will never forget Mark is now gone.

The sorrow and pain in time will pass,
But our love for him will forever last.
A golden heart is now at rest,
God broke our hearts to prove he only takes the best.

Finally, on one tombstone was a poem written by the deceased herself, apparently while at the end of her life. Titled "To Those I Love", it is a lengthy poem that discusses her time on earth, her future in heaven, and how those she is leaving behind should and can go on without her immediate presence (Figure 60):

To those I love:
Some things I'd like to say,
but first of all to let you know that I arrived okay.
Writing this from Heaven where I dwell with god above.
Where there are no more tears or sadness here.
It's just eternal love.
Please do not be unhappy just because I'm out of sight.
Remember that I'm with you every morning, noon, and night.
That day I had to leave when my life on earth was through,
God picked me up and hugged me. And he said,
I welcome you. It's good to have you back again.
You were missed while you were gone.
As for those you love, they'll be here later on.
I need you here so badly as part of My big plan.
There's so much that we have to do here to help our mortal man. Then god gave me a list of things He wished for me to do.
And foremost on that list of mine is to watch and care for you
and I will be beside you every day and week and year.
And when you're sad I'm standing there to wipe away your tear.
And when you lie in bed at night the day's chores put to flight,
God and I are closest to you in the middle of the night

so when you think of my life on earth and all those
loving years, because you're only human, they are
bound to bring you tears.
But do not be afraid to cry it does relieve the pain.
Remember there would be no flowers unless there
was some rain.
I wish that I could tell you of all that god had
planned.
But if I were to tell you, you just wouldn't
understand.
But one thing for certain, though, my life on earth is
o're,
I am closer to you now than I ever was before.
And to my very many friends: Trust God knows
what is best.
I'm still not far away from you; I'm just beyond the
crest.
There are rocky roads ahead of you and many hills
to climb
but together we can do it, taking one step at a time.
It was always my philosophy and I'd like it to be for
you too
that as you give unto the World, so the World will
give to you.
If you can help somebody who is in sorrow or in
pain,
then you can say to God at night my day was not in
vain
and now I am contented that my life it was
worthwhile.
Knowing as I passed along the way I made
somebody smile today.
So if you meet somebody who is down and feeling
low,
just lend a hand to pick them up as on your way you
go
when you are walking down the street and you've
got me on your mind
I'm walking in your footsteps only half a step
behind.
And when you feel the gentle breeze or the wind
upon your face that's me giving you a great big hug
or just a soft embrace.

And when it's time for you to go from that body to
be free Remember you're not going, you are
coming here to me
And I will always love you from this land way up
above.
We'll be in touch again soon.
P.S., God sends his love.
Love, Eva

GRAVE EXCLAMATIONS: DATA IMAGERY

Figure 1 - Large, Ornate Surname Monument with Smaller Individual Stones

Figure 2 - Labeling Women as the "Wife of"
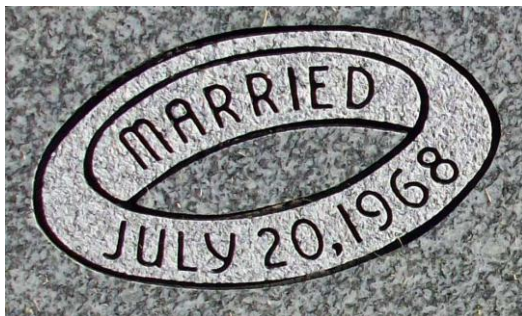
Figure 3 - Modern Ways of Denoting Marital Status
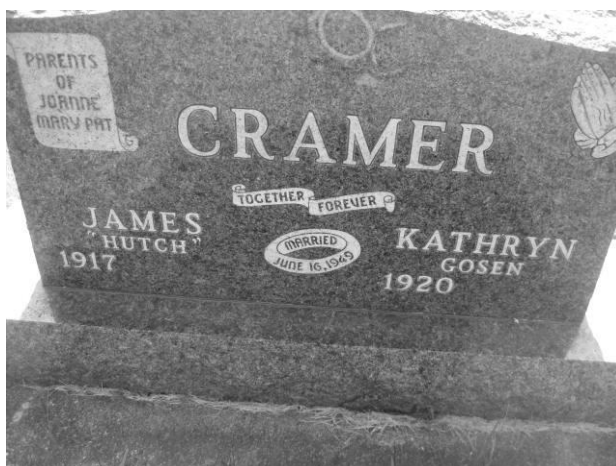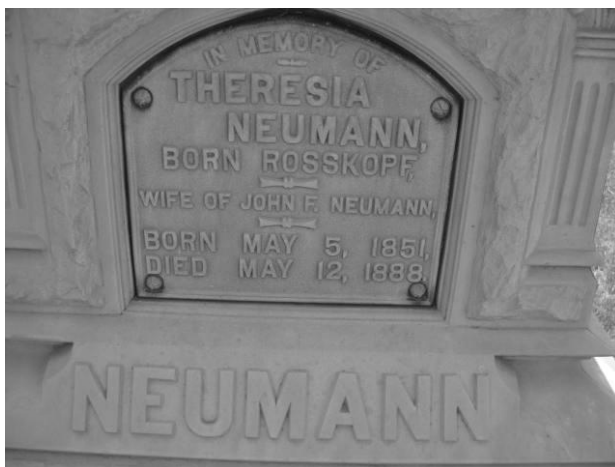
Figures 4a and 4b - Gendered Transformations in Marital Denotation Over Time

Figures 5a and 5b - Emphasis on Parenthood

Figure 6 - Stone Denoting the "Daughter of"

Figure 7 - More Emphasis Placed on Parenthood

Figure 8 - Emphasis on Grandparenthood

Figure 9 - Stone for Twin Sisters

Figure 10a and 10b - Emphasis on Sibling Relationships

Figure 11 - Sole Emphasis on Sibling Relationship

Figure 12 - Emphasis on Pets
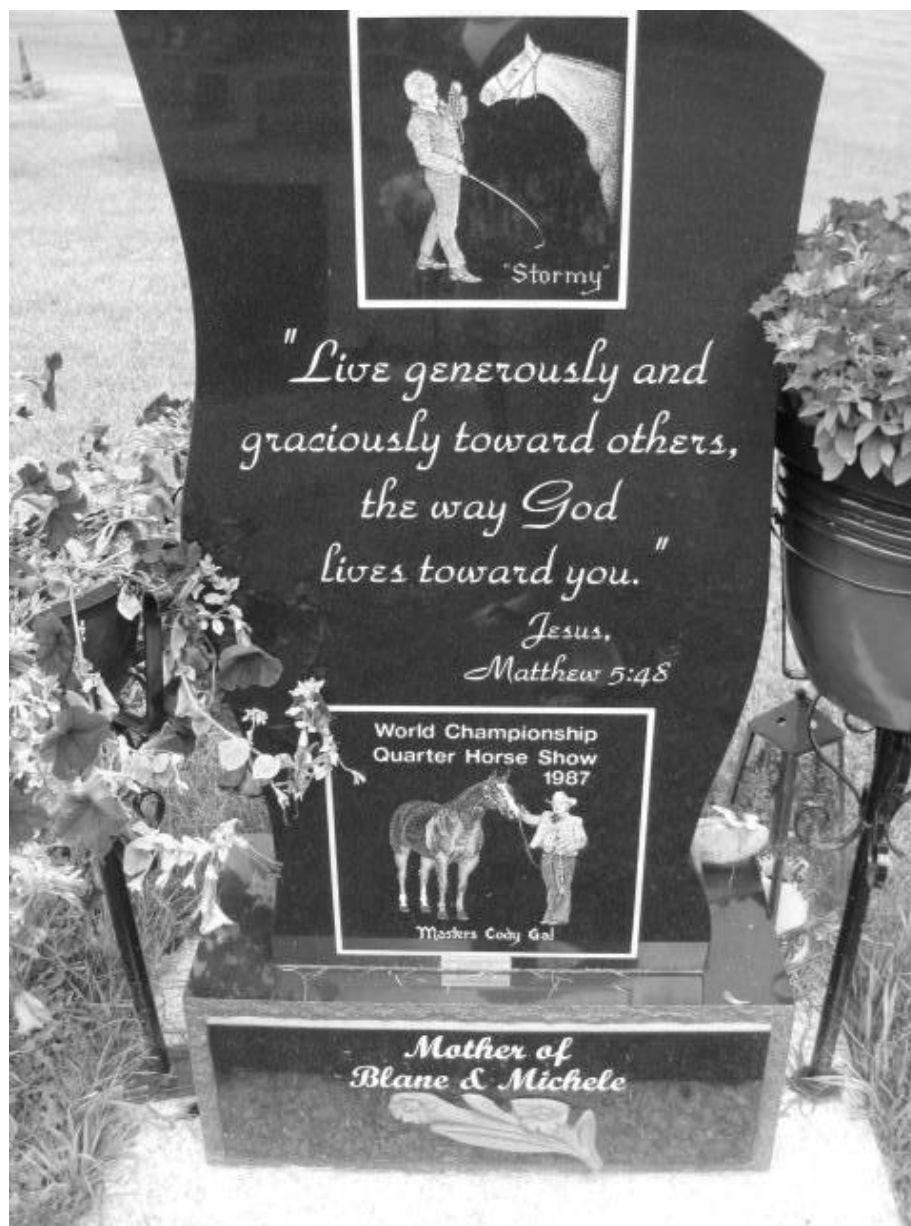
Figure 13 - Large Emphasis on Pets
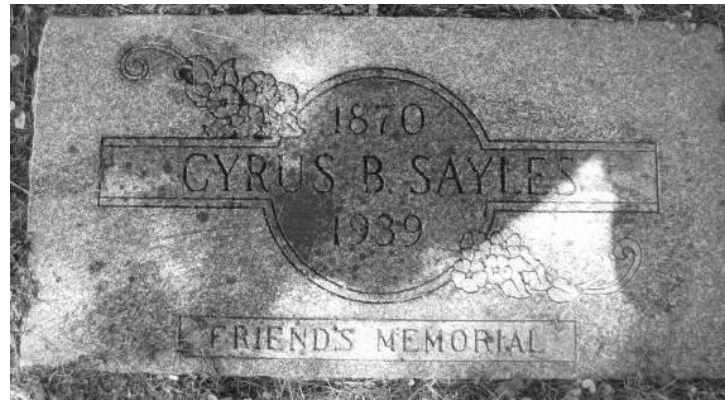
Figure 14 - Memorial for a Friend

Figures 15a, 15b, and 15c - Similar References across Time on Infant Stones

Figure 16 - Ornate Stone for Child's Death
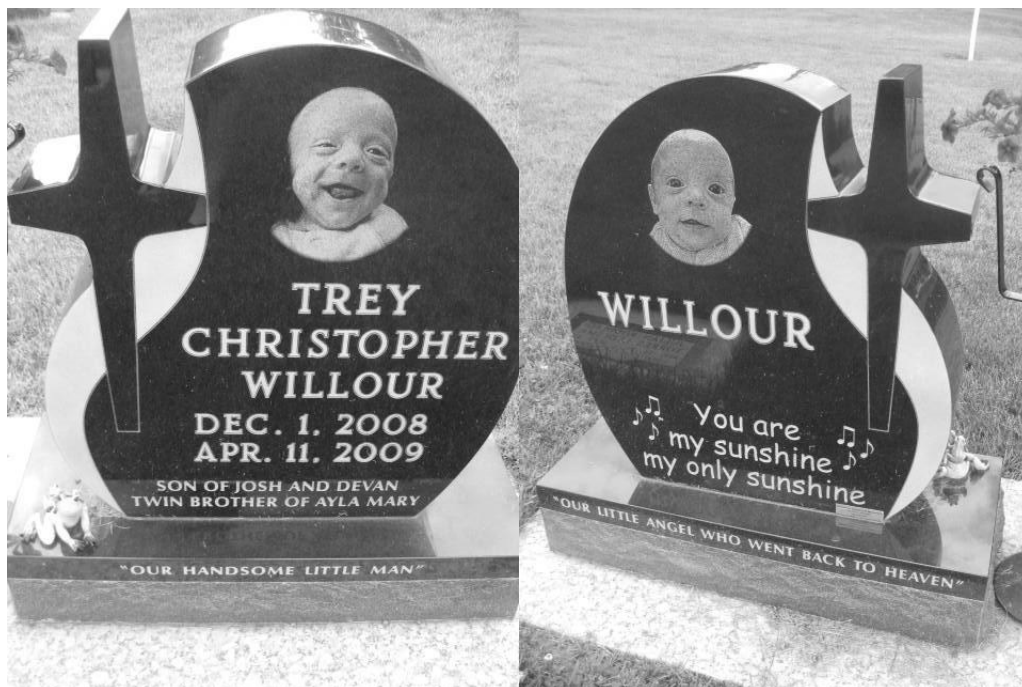
Figure 17a and 17b - Technological Improvements on Pictures
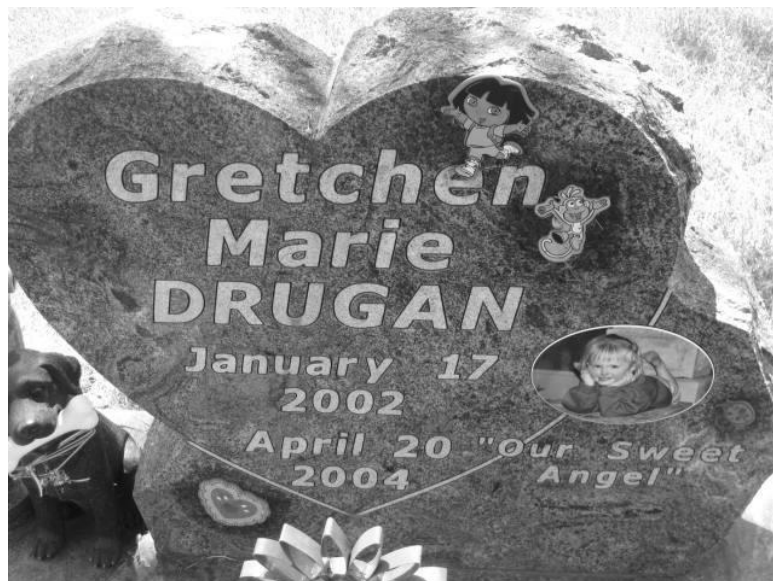
Figure 18 - Gendered Engravings (Dora the Explorer)

Figure 19 - Teenagers on Parents' Stone

Figure 20 - Age of Deceased Broken Down Into Years and Months
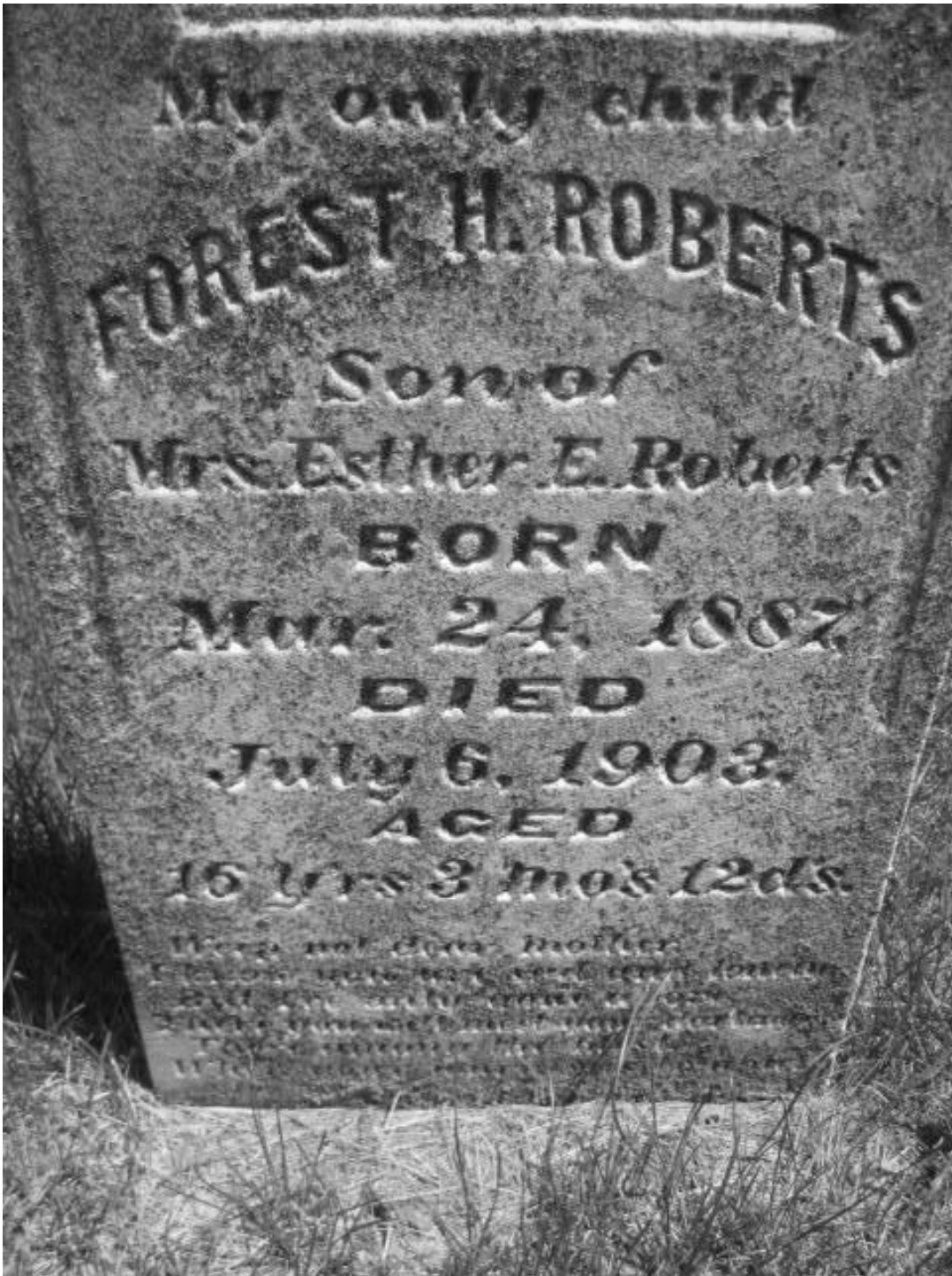
Figure 21 - Age Broken Down Into Years, Months, and Days
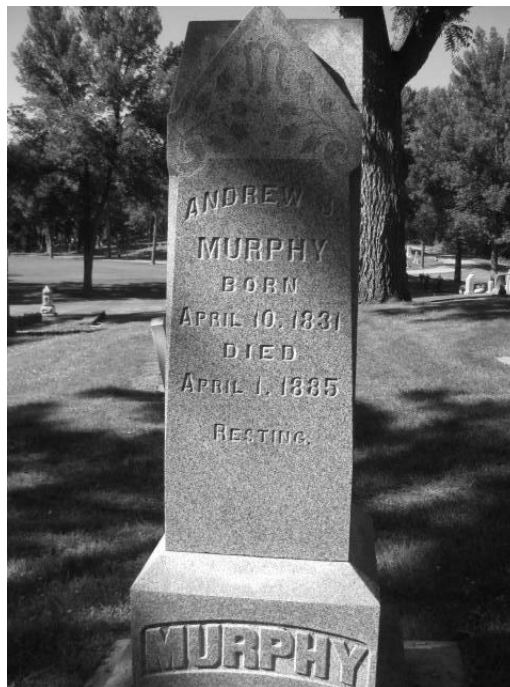
Figure 22 - Pillar Stones with Different Family Members on Each Side

Figure 23 - Popular Structure of Modern Tombstones

Figure 24 - Past Emphasis on Nature
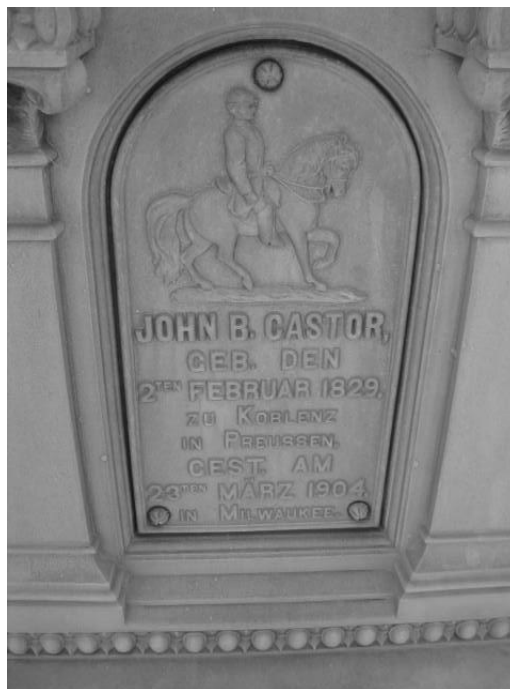
Figure 25 - Past Emphasis on Nature

Figure 26 - Etching of the Family Farm
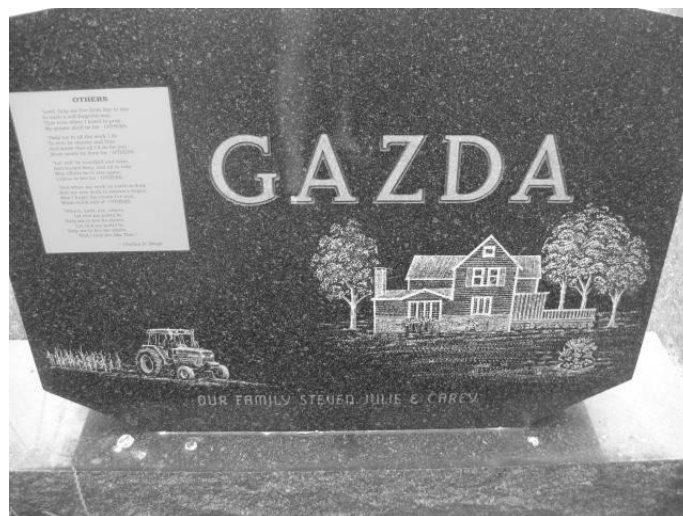
Figure 27 - Etching of the Family Home

Figure 28 - Emphasis on Vehicles
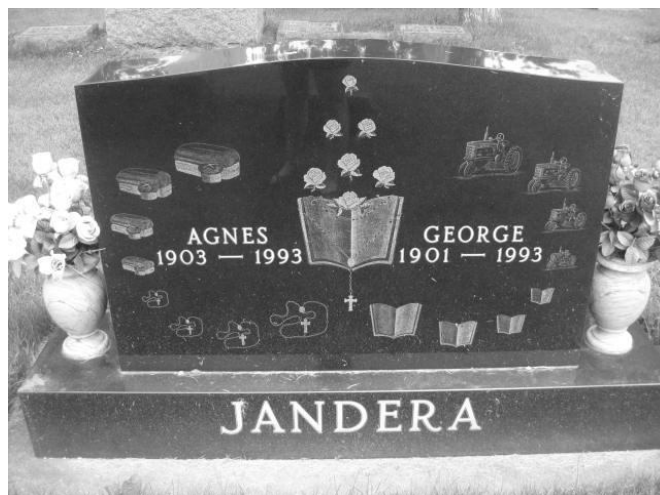
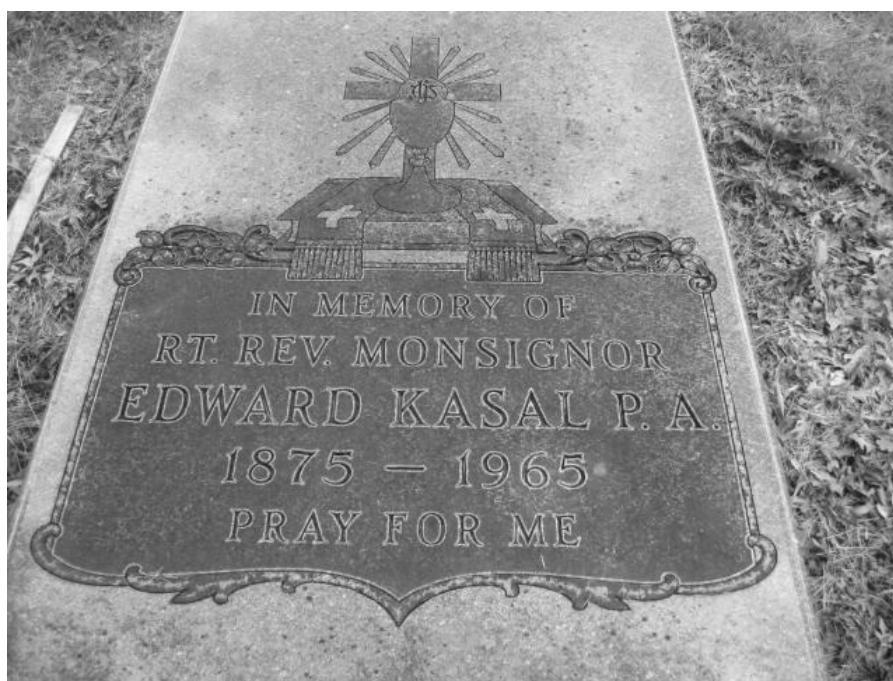**Figure 29 -** Gendered Possessions
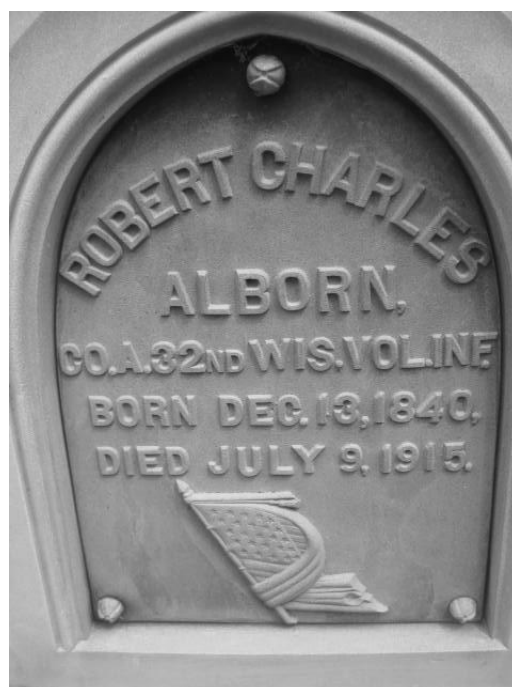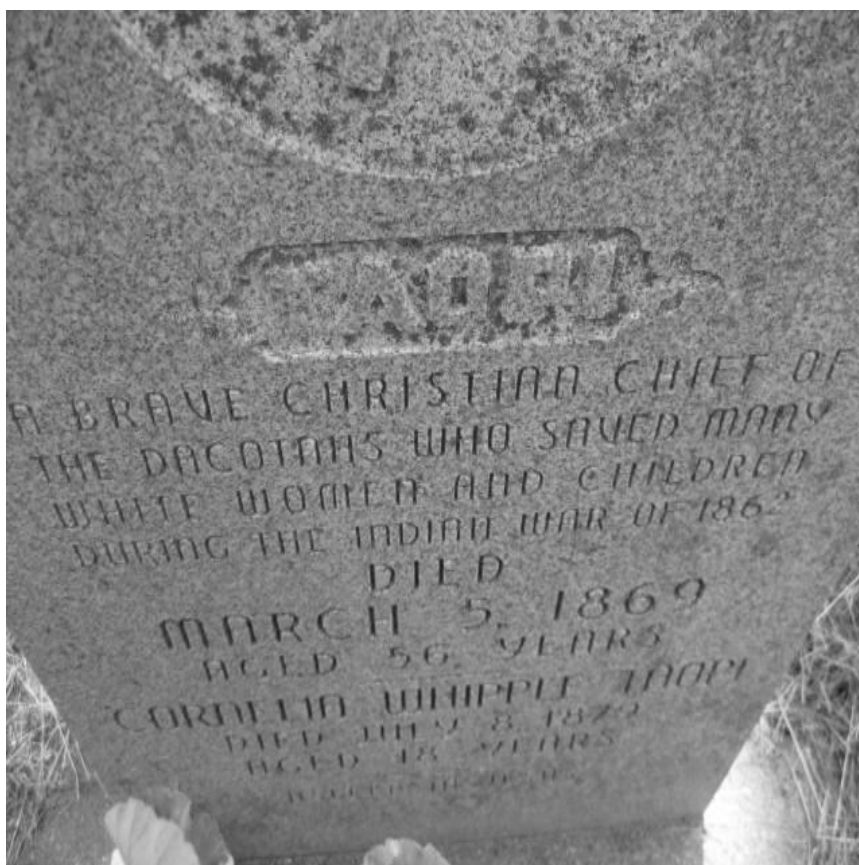

Figure 30 - References to Military Involvement

Figure 31 - Freemason Membership
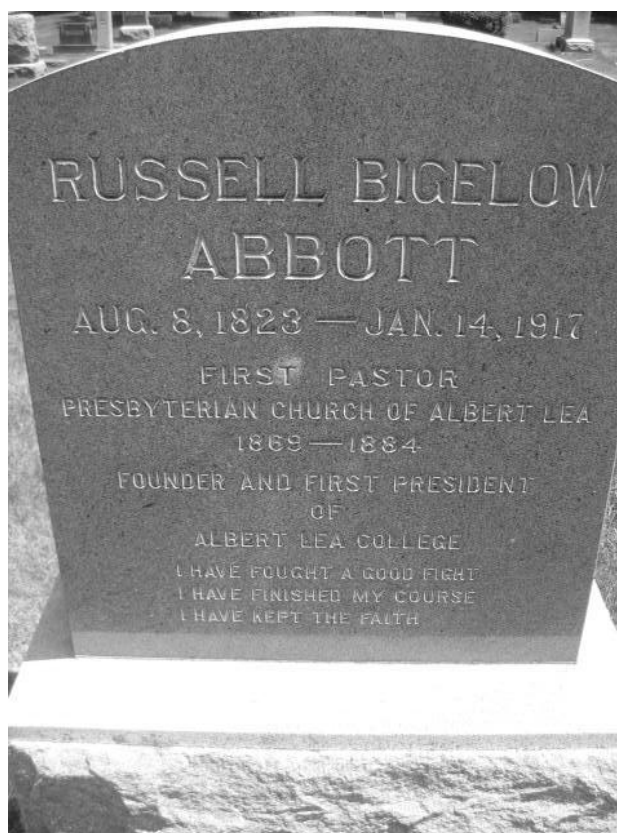
Figure 32 - References to Pastoral Work

Figure 33 - References to Pastoral Work

Figures 34a and 34b - Chief Taopi's Memorial

Figures 35a and 35b - Ties to Community

Figure 36 - Emphasis on Life in Other States: Emma (2nd) and Albert (3rd) both born in Chicago, Ill.

Figure 37 - Ties to Other Nations
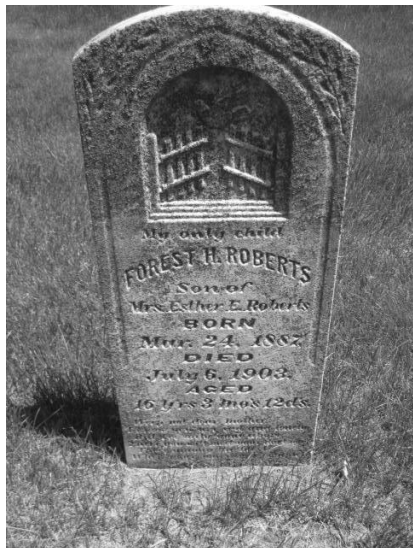
Figures 38a and 38b - Ties to Other Nations

Figure 39 - Ornate Religious Stones from the 1800's

Figure 40 - Common 19th Century Religious Text

Figures 41, 42, and 43- Popular Past Religious Art

Figure 44 - Stones Carved into Religious References

Figure 45 - Less Emphasis on Religion in the Stone Structure Itself

Figure 46 - Less Pronounced Religious Exclamations

Figure 47 - Religious Poems
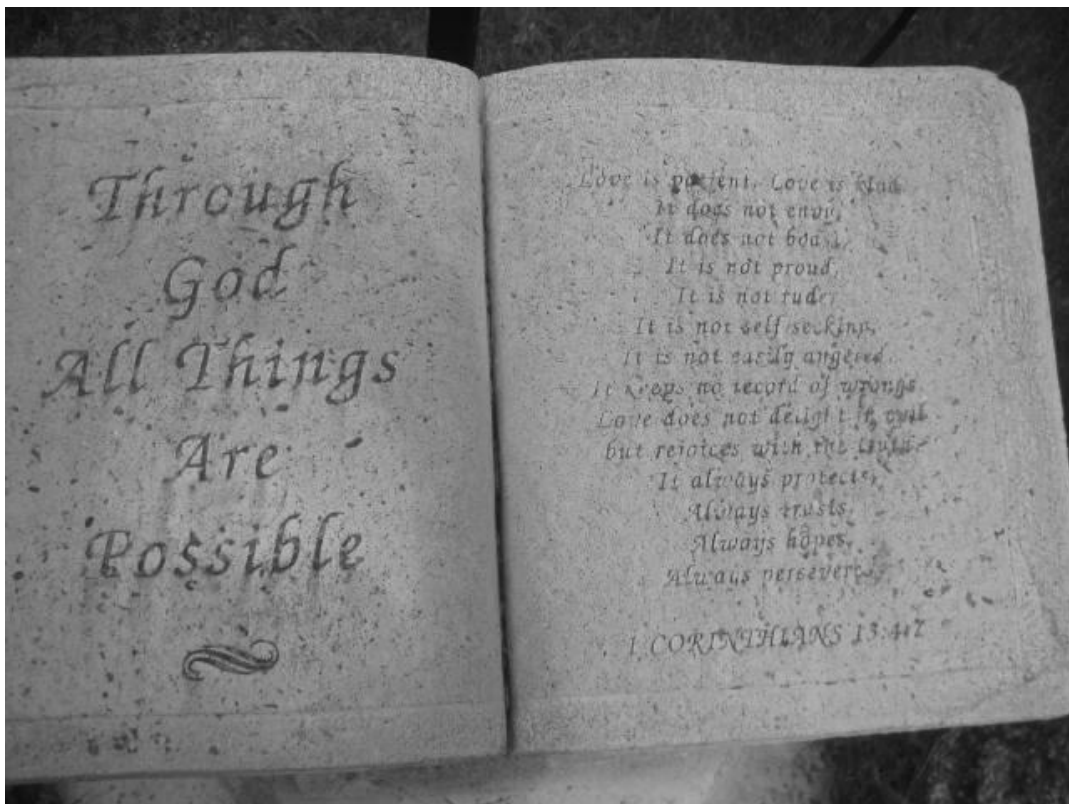
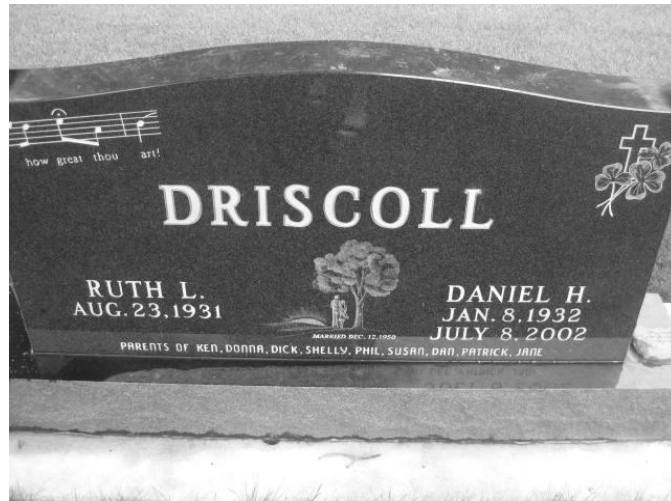**Figure 48 -** Common Religious Quotation

Figure 49 - Entire Bible Verses Etched Into Stone

Figure 50 - Hymnals on Tombstones

Figure 51 – Poetic Religious Reference to Deceased "Dearest Father, thou has left us/ And thy loss we deeply feel./ But 'tis God that has bereft us./ He can all our sorrows heal.

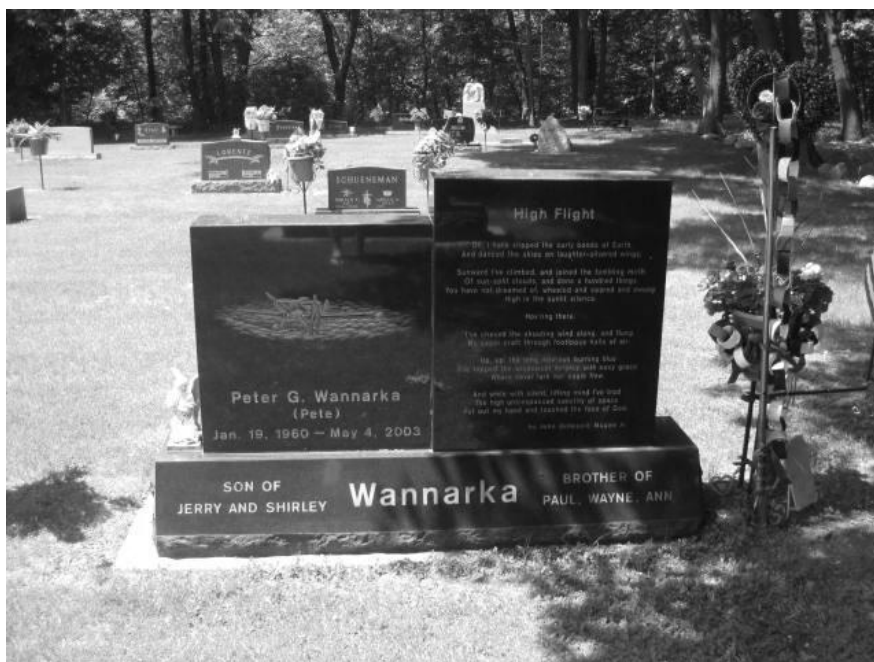**Figure 52 -** Ornate Hamre Mausoleum

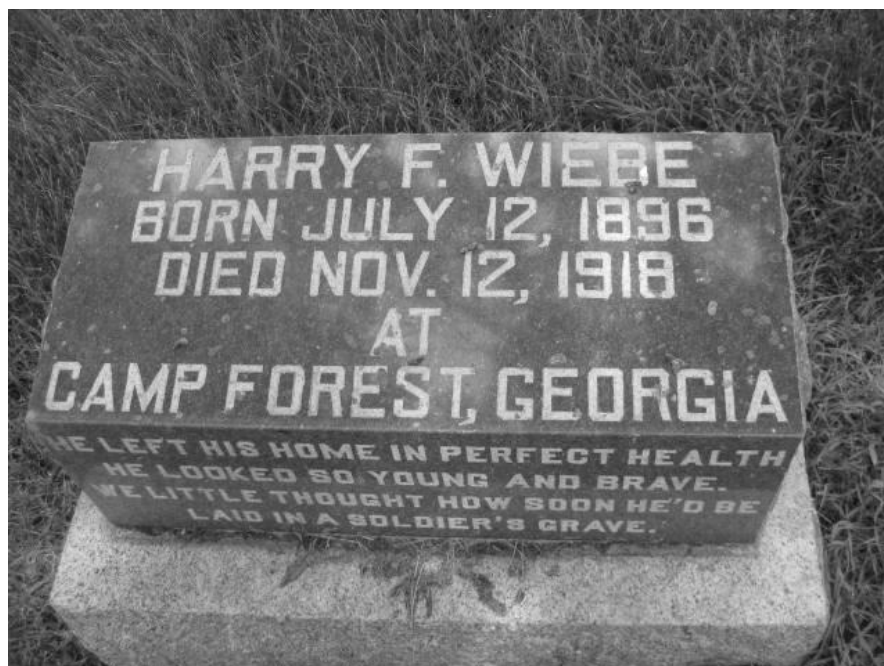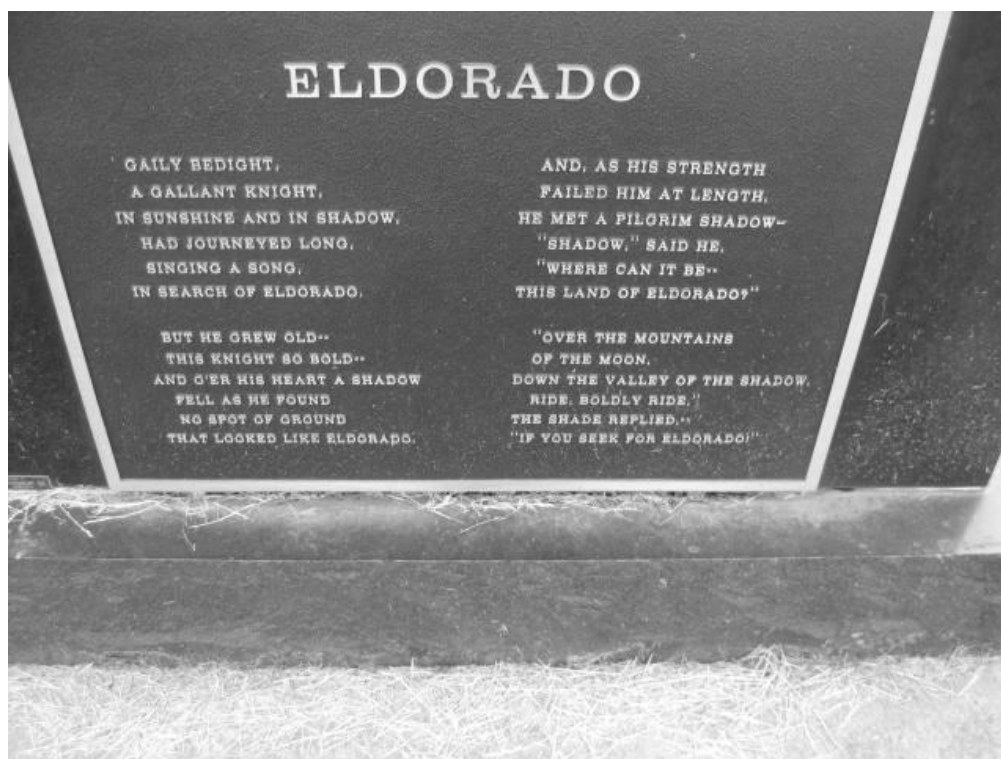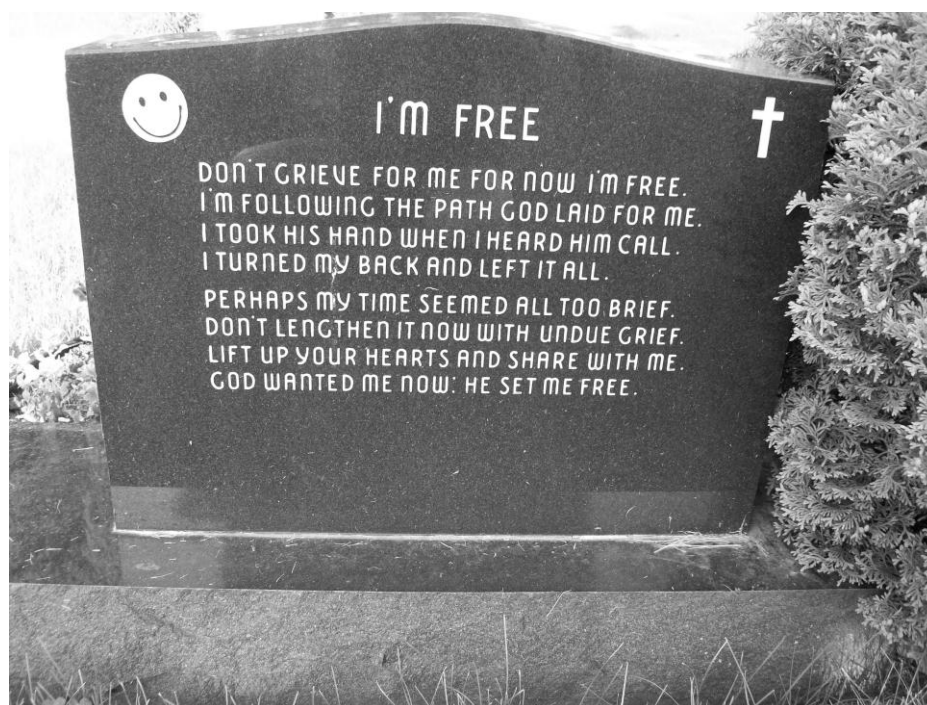**Figure 53 -** "High Flight"

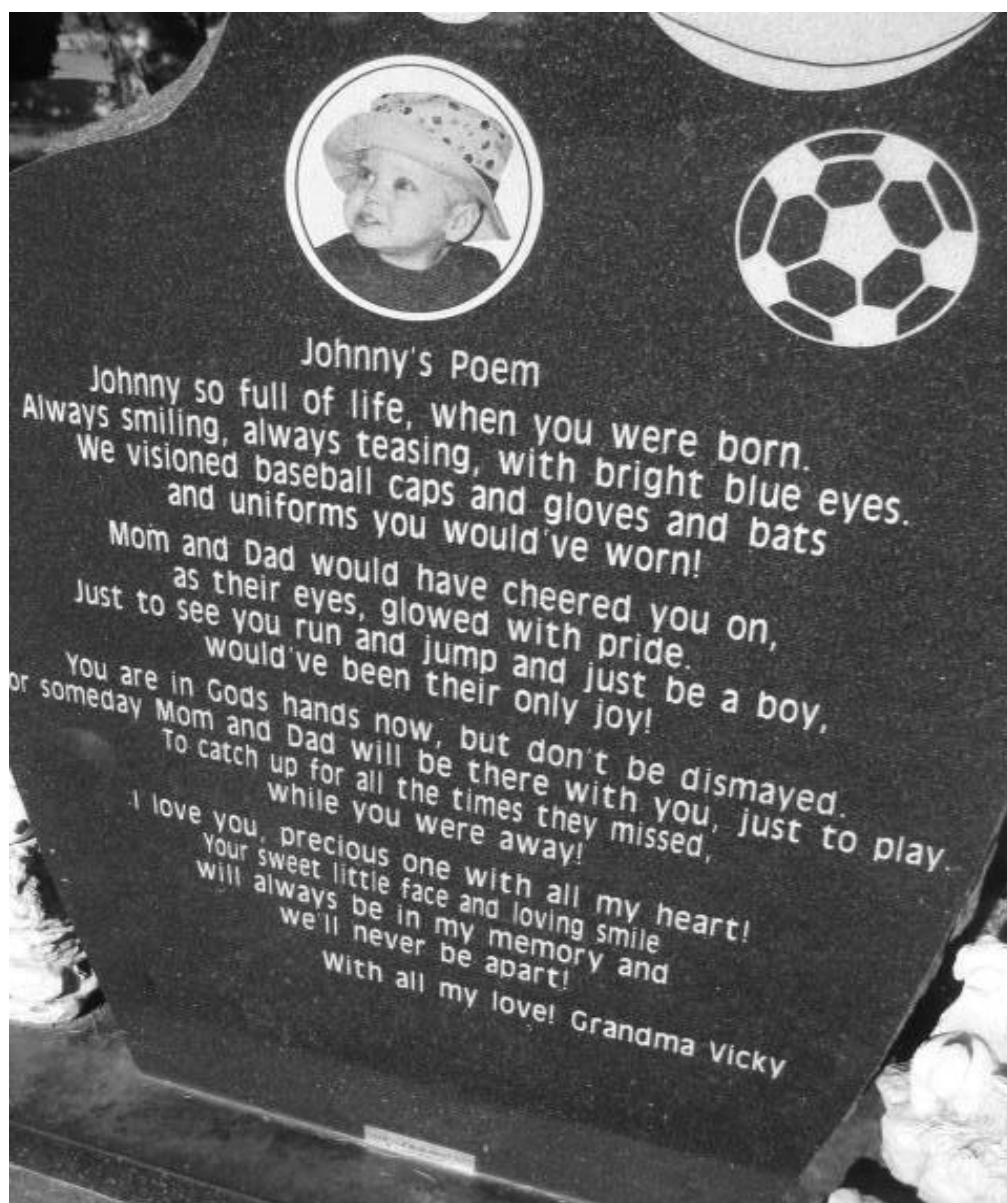**Figure 54 -** Poem Related to Service

Figure 55 - "Eldorado" on Back of Stone

Figure 56 - "I'm Free"

Figure 57 - Poem Written for Infant by Grandmother
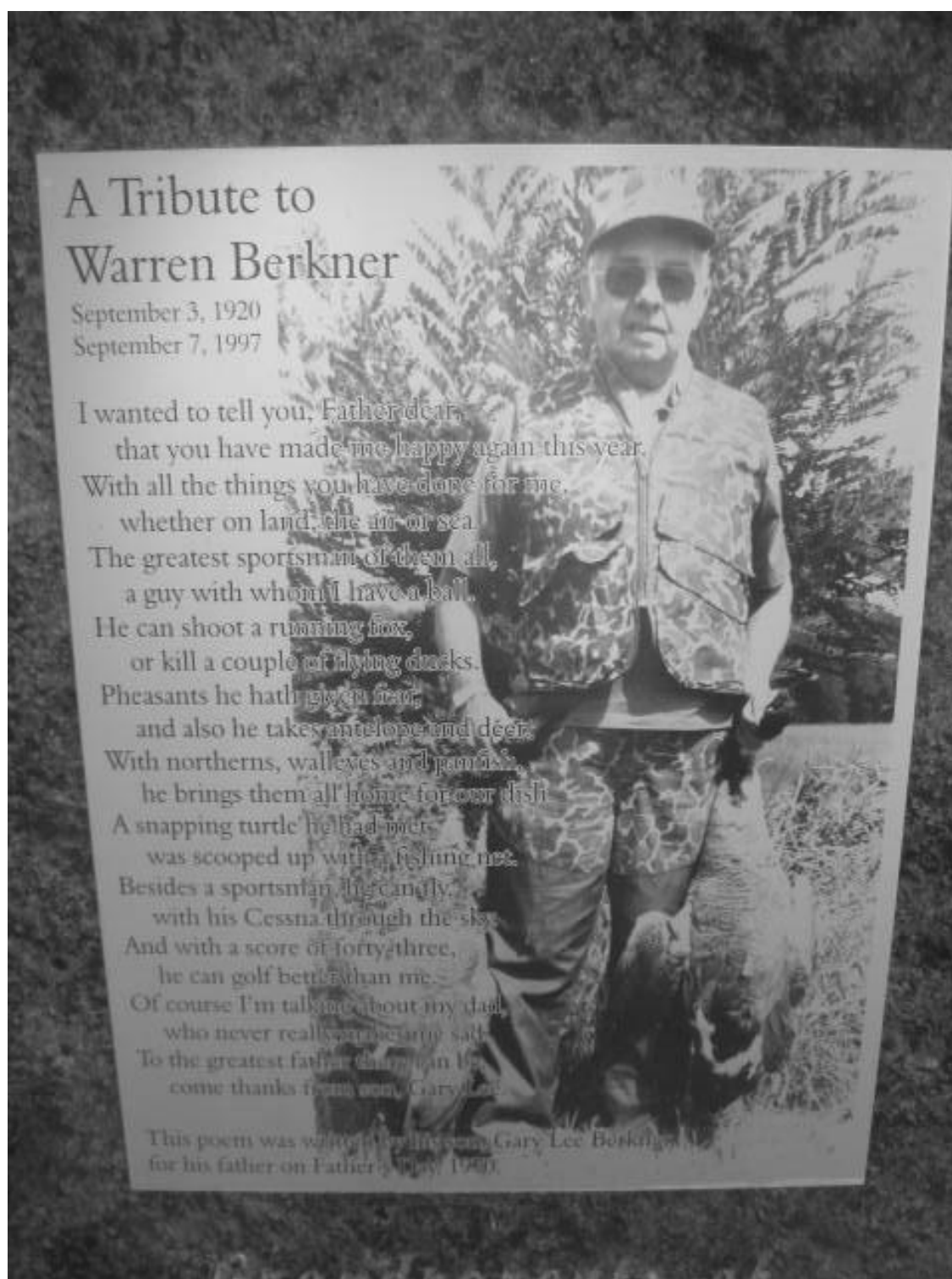
Figure 58 - Poem Written For Father By Son

Mark's Prayer

From a boy there grew a man,
He had big dreams, he had big plans.

To see the mountains, to see the sights,
To live amongst the city lights.

You both were scared and didn't know,
But in the end you let him go.

He made it happen, he lived his dream.
He had it all, so it seemed.

Then one May morning God came to call
Why is still a mystery to us all.

We are left to suffer and in such great pain,
With only his memories to remain.

Though the sun will rise and we must go on,
We will never forget, Mark now is gone.

The sorrow and pain in time will pass,
But our love for him will forever last.

A golden heart is now at rest,
God broke our hearts to prove, he only takes the best.

Figure 59 - Poem Written By Family

Figure 60 - Poem Written by the Deceased

TOMBSTONES AS A NARRATIVE OF SELF

A tombstone is not simply a marker declaring the name of the person occupying the plot beneath; it is an assertion of the life of that individual. Because the deceased no longer occupies a physical and social space in the living world, this monument (and grave) becomes a new "home" for that person. Instead of the home one creates for oneself while living, this new "home" serves to reinforce the physical, economic, and social achievements the deceased made during their lifetime—a different place to lay one's head at the end of the day. Whether a simple stone to mark one's place or an elaborate home-like mausoleum, our self narratives become reconstructed and reasserted within these final memorials for the deceased.

In addition to the creation of new "homes" for the dead (and marking these locations either with house-like mausoleums or stones that are interestingly similar to using a stone depicting family names at a homestead), the way we go about burying and memorializing our dead has become more intricate and permanent throughout history. As mentioned previously, the personalization that can be present on one's stone certainly echoes our ideas of individuality and ownership as well as an emphasis on material culture (Cook and Walter 2005; Kellehear 2007).

What we find etched on tombstones means much more to those who know and love the deceased than just a simple phrase of text or picture. To the individuals who know about their lives and who they were as individuals, these markings serve as a way to narrate the life of the deceased through one last, permanent portrayal. For the individuals who do not intimately know the deceased, yet happen across their stones, the information encountered allows us to make assumptions about the previous lives of these

individuals, as well as what they have left behind, similar to the narratives single mothers create for their children (Hertz 2002). As seen above, these narratives of self, constituted by survivors, help the living both to deal with their loss and to remember and keep alive the deceased through memory (Bonsu 2007; Ross and Buehler 1994). They literally say to the viewers, "this is who I am, what I love, and what I use to identify myself," as noted previously by Schiffrin (1996).

Again, it is important to note that now, more so than ever before, individuals have the ability to make decisions regarding their own deaths due to increased life expectancy in our Cosmopolitan Age (Kellehear 2007). This includes the creation of one's own tombstone. It is hard to determine whether one creates their own stone or loved ones do so for them if the individual is already dead. As seen, however, many stones—and plots—are purchased pre-mortem, making construction of one's stone before death more obvious for cemetery visitors (Mitford 2000).

It is individuals in such a death-fearing culture who are taking death into our own hands (Walter 2008). Although most Americans do not wish to talk about death, purchasing funeral plots, making tombstones, laying out wishes for funerals, even filling out an advance directive are becoming increasingly common (Chapple 2010). In addition, cemeteries are increasingly becoming more extravagant, park-like areas that encompass more activities than simply mourning the dead (Gaziz-Sax 1995). Whether cremated, plastinated, buried, or donated to science, the person's self, who they were pre-mortem, is noted (Roach 2003). Indeed, with the new phenomenon of plastination, the dead are put on display for the living to analyze in a fascinating way (Walter 2004; Hirschauer 2006).

This chapter seeks to align the findings discussed above with past research mentioned within the literature review. Looking at each subset of findings, I use theory and sociological approaches to facilitate an understanding of why we do death in such specific ways. An understanding of self, the key theoretical background for this research, will be emphasized at the end of the chapter, thus solidifying the importance of understanding the use of tombstones to construct and maintain one's sense of self.

Emphasis on Social Relationships

Within this research, the largest way the self of the deceased was narrated was through the written exclamations regarding family members. As noted above, the most common affiliations analyzed were marital ties. If individuals had children—or grandchildren—this was often also mentioned on the most recent tombstones. Throughout human history, the survival of our species depended largely on successful procreation. Kellehear (2007) notes how children often lost brothers and sisters at young ages and how infant mortality rates were quite high in previous ages. This, coupled with the American emphasis on the family as the most important social institution, leads one to see why the listing of the deceased's relatives—or the family role played by the deceased (father, mother, etc.) is so important and prevalent.

For children, their stones served as memorials to their premature deaths, often mentioning such an awful, unexpected loss. Again, this sentiment is tied to the increasing expectation of long life as well as the assumptions that children's deaths are the most untimely (Martin 2010; Kellehear 2007; Grout and Romanoff 2000) A newer occurrence, individuals who died before adulthood are now often buried alongside their parents, being memorialized on the same tombstone. Before, small children—especially

infants—were often buried alone, in groups with other children, or with their own stone beside the stone of their parents. Again, this can be tied to transformations in longevity, as well as an emphasis placed on the nuclear family instead of the extended family (Kellehear 2007).

Looking past the nuclear family, another recent occurrence comes in the denotation of deceased family members' roles as aunts, uncles, cousins, or even friends. This new emphasis is much different from past stones, which either emphasized one's role as a mother or father, or noted one's marital status. Kellehear (2007), as mentioned above, discussed the ways in which family members have more of a role in the dying process now than ever before. Again, this is tied to both our ability to live longer than our historic counterparts did (thus allowing for the creation of larger families—i.e., grandchildren), and our ability to control death via medical intervention (Kaufman 2005; Chapple 2010).

For the living who see these stones, then, the emphasis placed on their role in various social relationships can lead to the establishment of narratives that picture the individual as loving, caring, and social even without these also popular descriptive words for the deceased on the tombstone. After all, an individual's ability to connect socially with others is an important factor in the way we think about that person. For the family members who are missing the deceased, these exclamations emphasize the connections they had with the dead and allow for viewers to recall stories and narratives about the deceased and even the creation of them just as single-parent families did in respect to the unknown parent, or sperm donor (Hertz 2002).

Emphasizing the living on tombstones also enforces the idea of biological modes of thought regarding immortality; this allows the lives of the deceased to be carried on after death through their biological offspring (Freeman 2005). Interestingly, relationships that were portrayed did not seem to foster any negative aspects about the deceased, similar to the way obituaries and memorials to the deceased are written, a form of impression management quite popular when remembering the dead (Bonsu 2007; Bruner 1994). The negative aspects of the deceased are never highlighted, simply the positive, which can lead to a distorted view of the deceased's self (Fowler 2005; Unruh 1983).

Time of Death

Overwhelmingly, the most dramatic tombstones were those of children and teenagers who died at what we consider to be inappropriate ages. Although the death of a loved one is always difficult, certain deaths that occur later in life, often due to chronic illness or age-related diseases, are often easier to handle. Stones of the elderly are less likely to include references to the death occurring too quickly or a lack of life experience. Children's and teenagers' stones, on the other hand, are overwhelmingly filled with such proclamations.

It is deaths stemming from accidents that are the most difficult (Martin 2010). Often these deaths are sudden and do not leave time for anticipatory grief or for accepting and preparing for the loss of a loved one (Freeman 2005). As mentioned, the tombstones of the young most directly relate to this type of dying. Loved ones who create these stones often express the difficulty faced in untimely deaths and how these individuals were full of life—or were unable to live their lives—before their demises (Grout and Romanoff 2000).

Within our Cosmopolitan Age (Kellehear 2007), we have the ability to live longer, more successful lives. Tombstones of those whose lives were cut short, then, emphasize activities in which they had participated, such as sports and other hobbies as well as focus on social relationships. As noted, many children's stones were either alongside or connected to that of their parents, as those are our closest bonds before marriage. The narrative both of what is on the stone itself and where the stone is located in relation to the stones of other family members gives description as to the relationships of the deceased.

Personalities and Interests of the Dead

Along with understanding the self of the deceased through including their relationships with others on the tombstone, a much more direct assertion of self come in the form of quotations or etchings that serve to describe the personalities and interests of the deceased. Again, in our Cosmopolitan Age, we can spend more time engaging in leisure activities or emphasizing our community roles than in previous ages where emphasis on physical survival was more important (Kellehear 2007).

As mentioned above, these can come in a variety of forms: ties to civic organizations, material possessions, hobbies, even descriptions of the individuals' personalities. Whatever the exclamation, however, these are usually fairly straightforward ways of describing the lives of the deceased, much like what is done with obituaries and online memorials denoting the financial and familial successes of the dead (Bonsu 2007; Fowler 2005; Rodler, Kirchler, and Holzl 2001).

Because what is placed on an individuals' tombstone *is* permanent and serves as the basis of understanding the self for observers who might not know the deceased, what

is etched into the stone is extremely important. Noted above, none of the stones analyzed—and probably *very* few stones at all—would describe the *negative* aspects of the individual buried below. Instead, one takes the most positive, central characteristics about that person and promotes them via their tombstones and, as mentioned, their obituaries.

To label one as loving, an avid reader, or a hunter emphasizes to those who observe the stones how important these traits were to the deceased. Many of these traits are not necessarily vital to one's understanding of that person's self—such as avid reader—but serves to give viewers a glimpse into the individuality of the dead; something that can serve to distinguish our self from the selves of others (Bruner 1994). In addition, these traits were probably extremely important to the family members or the deceased themselves, as they are more than likely the ones who determine what is placed on the tombstone, reifying the sociological understanding of "identity preservation" used when a loved one dies (Unruh 1983).

Material possessions themselves follow along this same idea; the material objects depicted on the stones should obviously represent importance to the deceased. One particular stone, as described above, had labeled the deceased as "Our Pickup Man" and contained an etched drawing of a pickup. RVs, campers, tractors, and motorcycles were also observed for many men on more recent stones. Items such as hunting bows and guns were seen, as were knitting needles, balls of yarn, and baked bread. Not only are gender differences dramatically different and visible, especially on newer stones, but this emphasis on financial success and consumption of material goods is a recent, yet popular, phenomenon.

As Kellehear (2007) noted, beginning in foraging societies (and becoming more complex throughout pastoral, agriculture, and high civilization societies), individuals were buried with goods that would help them succeed in the trials of the Afterlife. It appears that we no longer bury these goods with the individuals; instead, we put them on their tombstones as a way to describe their lives pre-death; we emphasize the materials that aided them in their "this world" journey as opposed to what might be needed in their "otherworld" one (Kellehear 2007). The direct reference to the material and financial successes of the deceased also corroborates with Fowler's (2005) research, which notes our increasing emphasis on such things due to our capitalistic and meritocratic societal beliefs.

Ties to Religion

As noted, religion plays a major role in cultural beliefs about dying and death (Kremer 1988). This, then, directly affects both how individuals are buried and what emphases they place on death and its role in society. Tombstones are useful in the expression of one's religious beliefs and often explicitly reference one's religious affiliations, particularly older stones. The way in which religion is portrayed on tombstones has changed throughout time, however, which can be tied to changes in both religious affiliations and attitudes.

In older stones, there appeared to be much more concern for the status of one's soul, or what happened to the self after death. This was evidenced in the prevalence of "pray for me" and "rest in peace" etchings in a vast majority of the stones. This could be tied to transformations in religious beliefs, as noted below. Newer stones may have a

reference to religion, but they are less obvious and straightforward in their sentiments and do not seem to ask religious aid of the viewers of the stone.

For individuals who were religious, both sacred pictures and text project this major aspect of self. Looking at various stones, it was interesting to see how stones emphasized—or completely omitted—religious references. Certain religious depictions or references on their tombstone could lead to the establishment of particular narratives about that person. For example, seeing the Star of David on someone's stone would lead to the understanding that the individual was most likely Jewish and, thus, lived a certain religious lifestyle. Individuals who did *not* have religious references on their tombstones would promote a much different sense of self than someone whose tombstone was a statue of a religious deity and contained religious quotations like "pray for me."

These differences, of course, could result from the samples used within this study, as cemeteries were chosen for their non-denominational nature. Looking at the sample from a sociological standpoint, however, secularization could also be attributed to this discovery. Berger (2009:69) notes that secularization theory was popularized in the 1950s and 1960s when most sociologists believed increasing modernization of our societies would lead to a decline of religious belief. This theory would encompass the variety of tombstones within the study that contained no religious references or emphasized them at much smaller levels than secular objects. Berger (2009:69) also notes, however, that "a consensus now exists that secularization theory can no longer explain the worldwide persistence and spread of modern religious movements," which also encompasses the evidence of tombstones erected with religious references regardless of the economic situations of the period in which they were carved.

Because religious references were more prevalent on the older tombstones, one should be careful how they try to determine the religious narrative about the self of the deceased. Stones including iconography before 1940 usually always had at least one reference to religion, whether it came as a picture, symbol, statue, or quote. Newer stones including iconography have much less emphasis on religion overall, and vary much more in the number of religious references present across the sample. As mentioned, this could be tied to the choice of using non-denominational cemeteries within my analysis, but in a society that is becoming more secular and spiritual versus deeply connected to a religious community, these findings might be more generalizable than one would think (Dillon and Wink 2003).

Poetic Proclamations

The use of poetry on tombstones is a particularly interesting way to establish narrative of self for the deceased. Especially in the case of poems written *for* and *about* the deceased by their loved ones, the viewer can much more easily establish who the individual was, as was seen in the examples given above. This also gives a dramatic portrayal of the grief felt by the living at the loss of their loved ones. Woodthorpe (2010) noted this emphasis on grief-work through our public memorials at cemeteries. Ways families experience grief, handle it, and eventually work through it are noted by Freeman (2005) as well. The cathartic release of writing, in this case poetry about the dead, can help in one's transition from grief to remembrance.

Again, the death of the person is often brought to the forefront—either through describing how the life was cut short or describing that person's leaving and what will happen to them after death. The assertion of self is quite present, as is the role that dying

and death have played on that person. Almost an obituary of permanence, these poems serve to give a much deeper glimpse into the self than standard tombstone text (name, dates, and relationships) seems to do.

Much more peculiar was the poem written *by* the deceased for the living, as was the case for Eva Mutch (deceased memorialized by her self-written poem mentioned above). Not only do we see that she was a brave individual, writing about her impending death, but we see how much she cared for her loved ones. This, more than anything, expresses who she was and allows the stone observers to create a narrative that allows them to understand who she would have been. These poems, particularly written for or about the deceased, give the most detailed insight into the self of the dead than the other previously mentioned exclamations.

Poems written by the deceased, as well as narratives given by the dying, are becoming increasingly popular. Kastenbaum (2007) notes that, instead of analyzing the process of death through a stage, or process, model, understanding dying through the dying of individuals themselves seems to be more instructive. Mutch's poem is an example of this. The experience of dying is quite individualistic, so to see dying through the eyes of someone who is experiencing it gives deep understanding of the transformations of one's self at the time.

Although we like to keep death hidden, usually in private locations such as hospitals (Chapple 2010), we are also fascinated by stories of death and are attracted to areas in which death is either present or is depicted, known as "dark tourism" (Walter 2008:325). The lengthy poem by Ms. Mutch, as well as the emphasis placed on celebrity deaths and stories of the dying show how our society is, as Kellehear (2007) labels it, not

a death-denying place. Instead, death is stigmatized and often treated like sexuality—"exotic yet familiar" (Walter 2008:328).

The Self, Engraved

Through the creation of tombstones used to memorialize the selves of the deceased, one can see how our selves can exist as a separate entity from our physical bodies. This separation, which Mead (1934) considered a requirement of distinguishing the self, cannot be more complete than through one's physical death. Even though the body of the person is gone, the self is able to be preserved and memorialized through tombstones. In connection, as noted above, Mead (1934:135) notes that the "self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity." These activities can both include and continue after death, as relationships created with the living do not necessarily end with physical death.

The self occurring as an object—also important to Mead (1934)—is equally emphasized through the literal placing of the self on stones and memorials for the dead. Because the physical body is no longer present and able to be interacted with, the stone serves as an intermediary to the self that was loved and shared with others. Now, because it has become engraved and/or attached to a semi-permanent stone marking the place of the physical body, the self literally becomes a part of this object; the tombstone literally becomes the nearest embodiment of the deceased's self as proclaimed by the survivors (who usually create the stone).

The "I" and "me" become a little less clear once the physical death has occurred, as the individuals' self no longer can adapt to certain situations (Mead 1934).

Interestingly, however, the *living* often accomplish the work of the "I" and "me" even after death through making guesses as to what the deceased might have done given certain situations in the lives of friends and family. This is often the case during major life changes of the deceased's loved ones, such as weddings, births, or graduations. The ever-present "your (deceased loved one) would be so proud" or "(deceased) is probably rolling in their grave" are common ways the living continue the work of the "I" and "me" even when the individual cannot do so for themselves. This phenomenon can also be tied to Bruner's (1994) emphasis on interpreting the self through recollection and thoughts of past motives and desires. In this case, the recollections would be on the selves of the deceased by the survivors.

For understanding the use of tombstones in relation to the self, perhaps the most direct theoretical ties come from Cooley's (1902) looking glass self. Unlike his main premise, which requires individuals to establish selves based on others' reactions to them, when others create the tombstone *for* the individual, that secondary aspect of the three-part looking glass self is what is emphasized. In addition to using tombstones to reiterate the self that others create related to the deceased, it seems that the self that is portrayed is the ideal one that will be used as a memorial for years to come. This ideal self, emphasized by others, allows the self of the deceased to be completed full circle, reiterating Cooley's ideas, even after death.

This emphasis on the ideal, as mentioned above, also reifies Best's (2011) ideas on achievement culture. We emphasize the things we have accomplished in our lives—successful occupations, having a family, possession of material goods—as a way to denote our success in our increasingly materialized worlds. We give awards even to the

losing teams at children's sports tournaments, so it is no wonder that we emphasize the

"good" we have accomplished before death (Best 2011). The self that is established,

then, emphasizes the socially-accepted self, the ideal self that most of us strive to

become.

On our tombstones, we present this ideal self (or, rather, others present it for us)

that also serves as a means of impression management (Goffman 1959). Again, tied to

the emphasis on the ideal self, or the positive self that we, as individuals, wish to

promote, Goffman (1959:3) says that:

> Regardless of the particular objective which the individual has in mind
> and of his motive for having this objective, it will be in his interests to
> control the conduct of others, especially in their responsive treatment of
> him […] he can influence this definition by expressing himself in such a
> way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act
> voluntarily and in accordance with his own plan.

These motives for being interpreted as a certain self, or having a certain self, are

thus fulfilled through etching these direct, positive references to the self on these

memorials. If one is presented with purely positive aspects of a self, it is much

more difficult for a viewer to concoct ideas about the deceased that place them in

a negative light.

As mentioned previously, much of our self is created through the help of

others (Ross and Buehler 1994; Mason-Schrock 1996; Irvine 2000). With many

tombstones, the self is literally being created (i.e., being etched into the stone) by

others (the family, then the stone maker). The narratives that are emphasized are

those which include others, either within the narratives themselves, or at least

through the telling of these narratives. The recollection of these narratives then

allows the self to be recreated and remembered as well. Tombstones, then, allow

the self to exist without the physical person, and for this self to be narrated

through the stone to the viewers who can then either remember these stories or

imagine them if the deceased is unknown.

CONCLUSION

This study has several limitations. First, as mentioned above, the data gathered for analysis came from cemeteries in Southern Minnesota. Cemeteries in other regions could prove to contain stones with much different findings, which would serve for an interesting comparison. This would especially prove true for older cemeteries in the New England states as opposed to cemeteries in later-settled locations. In addition to the location of the cemeteries chosen, the emphasis on their being non-denominational also plays a role in the gathering and interpretation of the data. Findings in more current years that reflect a trend toward more secular expressions is presumably less pronounced in overtly religious cemeteries (Dillon and Wink 2003). The small number of stones analyzed, as well as the location and type of cemeteries, makes it difficult to generalize these findings to many other cemeteries in various regions. More research is needed in this area.

Through this research, I sought to find how individuals' selves are continued after their deaths by their loved ones. These narratives are quite permanent, being etched into tombstones that often outlast even all the living memories of those buried beneath them. Like Hertz' (2002) article on donor fathers and the creation of their selves by mothers and children who never knew them, looking at the messages engraved into tombstones, one creates images and narratives of a self that is also no longer present. Because the vast majority of Americans are buried in tombs with grave markers denoting their final resting places, what we say on these stones is very important to our society as a whole.

As noted, technological advancements have played a large role in transformations in the appearance of tombstones over time. Laser etching versus carving by hand allows

for larger and more detailed epitaphs and symbols to be included on one's memorial (Gaziz-Sax 1995; Madrigal 2011). Pictures have made the most drastic transformations, as actual photographs themselves are either included on the stones or are etched in with exceptionally delicate detail. This allows for more explanation and understanding about the self of the deceased, allowing observers of the tombstone to create more detailed narratives about the dead than the more simple stones created in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Along with photographs and pictures becoming increasingly prevalent ways to commemorate the dead, biblical references and ties to literature and poetic works are becoming increasingly more extravagant and detailed. Instead of simple biblical etchings begging for the prayers of the living, one can quote entire biblical verses or write their own poems in respect of their dead loved ones, tied to the idea that we are becoming more spiritual than religious and debunking the secularization debate (Dillon and Wink 2003; Berger 2009). Even references to popular culture are appearing on stones, from lyrics of famous classic rock songs to pictures of Dora the Explorer or a Minnesota Vikings helmet. We have also transformed the process of burying goods with the deceased to aid them in death to a more symbolic "burial" of these items into the surface of the tombstones as ways for the living to understand the lives of the dead (Kellehear 2007).

Regardless of technological innovations, however, what is included on tombstones depending on the age of the deceased has remained relatively constant over time. Children's stones often portray angels or lambs and reference the popular children's prayer that begins with, "now I lay me down to sleep." Likewise, stones for

children and teens emphasize their innocence and include more references to their

gendered lives—pictures of sporting equipment for boys and butterflies and rainbows for

girls. Adults' stones portrayed more direct religious references, with crosses or angels, as

well as secular hobbies and interests of the dead. In addition, marital ties and names of

children were common additions. The stones of the elderly were quite similar to those of

younger adults, but also sometimes included names of grandchildren when applicable.

Even though age *did* create differences in what was included on one's tombstone,

what did *not* change over time, age, or gender, was one's relational ties. Almost every

stone analyzed included at least one reference to the deceased's family. This is not

surprising, as it is often the living who create these monuments once their loved ones

have passed on. Also not surprising is that these monuments only portray the *good* about

those buried below, as was noted in much previous research, especially those focusing on

eulogies and obituaries (Ward 1957; Lattimore 1962). Regardless of what the specific

message is, the *way* we create them after the deaths of our loved ones holds meaning

related to our overall assumptions *about* death as well.

Although we do not like to talk about death and often treat death as a contagious,

stigmatic problem (Chapple 2010), the death industry—and death itself—is becoming

increasingly prevalent within our everyday lives. Individuals are buying funeral plots

and creating their own stones now more than ever, as well as taking their dying and

deaths into their own hands through the popularity of advance directives and living wills.

Body displays, ornate mausoleums and stones expressing individuality and achievement,

and multi-purpose park-like cemeteries bring death and dying closer to us than we

previously allowed. Dark tourism and learning about dying from the dying themselves gives us an even deeper glimpse into this previously taboo realm.

As noted through Durkheim's work on the sociology of death, "it is precisely when groups—from families to nations—are depleted by death that they reconstitute themselves, symbolically and practically" (Walter 2008:317). Tombstones and memorials to the deceased are both a symbolic and practical way for the living to reconstitute their lives after the death of a loved one. As seen in this research, however, the lives of the dead go on as well, through the proclamations, narratives, and remembering of the dead.

"Death ends a life, not a relationship." – Jack Lemmon

REFERENCES

Al-Ali, Mohammed N. 2005. "Communicating Messages of Solidarity, Promotion and Pride in Death Announcements Genre in Jordinian Newspapers." *Discourse & Society* 16(1):5-31.

Basler, Barbara. 2011. "Green Graveyards—A Natural Way to Go." Pp. 129-130 in *Annual Editions: Dying, Death, and Bereavement,* edited by G. E. Dickinson and M. R. Leming. New York, NY: McGraw Hill

Bell, Edward L. 1994. *Vestiges of Mortality and Remembrance: A Bibliography on the Historical Archaeology of Cemeteries.* Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Berger, Peter L. 2009. "Faith and Development." *Global Society* 49:69-75.

Best, Joel. 2011. *Everyone's A Winner: Life in Our Congratulatory Circle.* Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Blank, Robert H. 1994. "Death-Related Issues in Biomedicine: Euthanasia and AIDS." Pp. 335-363 in *Death and Identity*, 3rd ed., edited by R. Fulton and R. Bendickson. Philadelphia, PA: The Charles Press.

Bonsu, Samuel K. 2007. "The Presentation of Dead Selves in Everyday Life: Obituaries and Impression Management." *Symbolic Interaction* 30(2):199-219.

Bruner, Jerome. 1994. "The remembered self." Pp. 41-54 in *The Remembering Self: Construction and accuracy in the self-narrative,* edited by U. Neisser and R. Fivush. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bytheway, Bill and Julia Johnson. 1996. "Valuing Lives? Obituaries and the Life Course." *Mortality* 1(2):219-234.

Cahill, Spencer E. 1999. "The Boundaries of Professionalization: The Case of North American Funeral Direction." *Symbolic Interaction* 22(2):105-119.

Castex, Graciela M. 2011. "Social Workers' Final Acts of Service: Respectful Burial Arrangements for Indigent, Unclaimed, and Unidentified People." Pp. 131-137 in *Annual Editions: Dying, Death, and Bereavement,* edited by G. E. Dickinson and M. R. Leming. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Chapple, Helen Stanton. 2010. *No Place For Dying: Hospitals and the Ideology of Rescue.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2008. *Constructing Grounded Theory.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Chung, Sue Fawn and Priscilla Wegars, ed. 2005. *Chinese American Death Rituals: Respecting the Ancestors.* Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Cook, Guy and Tony Walter. 2005. "Rewritten Rites: Language and Social Relations in Traditional and Contemporary Funerals." *Discourse & Society* 16(3):365-391.

Cooley, Charles Horton. 1902. *Human Nature and the Social Order.* New York:Scribner.

Dillon, Michele and Paul Wink. 2003. "Religiousness and Spirituality: Trajectories and Vital Involvement in Late Adulthood." Pp. 179-189 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion,* edited by M. Dillion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ezzy, Douglas. 1998. "Theorizing Narrative Identity: Symbolic Interactionism and Hermeneutics." *The Sociological Quarterly* 39(2):239-252.

Farber, Jesse Lie. 2005. "FAQ: Symbolism on Gravestones." The Association for

Gravestone Studies. Retrieved August 1, 2011. (http://www.gravestonestudies.org/faq.htm #Symbolism on Gravestones).

Faust, Drew Gilpin. 2008. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War.* New York, NY: Random House, Inc.

Federal Trade Commission. 2009. "Facts for Consumers—Funerals: A Consumer Guide." Federal Trade Commision. Retrieved October 24, 2011. (http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu /pubs/consumer/products/pro19.shtm).

Fivush, Robyn. 1994. "Constructing the self in parent-child conversations." Pp. 136-157 in *The Remembering Self: Construction and accuracy in the self-narrative,* edited by U. Neisser and R. Fivush. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fowler, Bridget. 2005. "Collective Memory and Forgetting: Components for a Study of Obituaries." *Theory, Culture & Society* 22(6):53-72.

Freeman, Stephen J. 2005. *Grief & Loss: Understanding the Journey.* Ontario, CAN: Brooks/Cole.

Gaziz-Sax, Joel. 1995. "A Brief History of Cemeteries." City of the Silent. Retrieved February 23, 2011 (http://www.alsirat.com/silence/history.html).

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Grant, Susan-Mary. 2005. "Raising the Dead: War, Memory and American National Identity." *Nations and Nationalism* 11(4):509-529.

Grout, Leslie A. and Bronna D. Romanoff. 2000. "The Myth of the Replacement Child: Parents' Stories and Practices after Perinatal Death." *Death Studies* 24(2):93-113.

Harris, Mark. 2007. *Grave Matters: A Journey Through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial.* New York, NY: Scribner.

Hirschauer, Stefan. 2006. "Animated Corpses: Communicating with Post Mortals in an Anatomical Exhibition." *Body & Society* 12:25-51.

Hertz, Rosanna. 2002. "The Father as an Idea: A Challenge to Kinship Boundaries by Single Mothers." *Symbolic Interaction* 25(1):1-31.

iMortuary.com. 2011. "Minnesota Cemeteries." iMortuary.com. Retrieved February 23, 2011 (http://www.imortuary.com/cemeteries/minnesota/#M).

Irvine, Leslie. 2000. "'Even Better than the Real Thing': Narratives of the Self in Codependency." *Qualitative Sociology* 23(1):9-28.

Kastenbaum, Robert J. 2007. *Death, Society, and Human Experience,* 9 Ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Kaufman, Sharon R. 2005. *...And a Time to Die: How American Hospitals Shape the End of Life.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kearl, Michael. Unknown. "Kearl's Guide to Sociology of Death and Dying." Ring of Death. Retrieved February 23, 2011 (http://www.trinity.edu/~mkearl/death.html#di).

Kellehear, Allan. 2007. *A Social History of Dying.* Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Kramer, Kenneth. 1988. *The Sacred Art of Dying: How World Religions Understand Death.* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

Laderman, Gary. 2003. *Rest In Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral \ Home in Twentieth-Century America.* Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.

Lattimore, Richmond. 1962. *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Leming, Michael R. and George E. Dickinson. 2011. "The Contemporary American Funeral." Pp. 124-125 in *Annual Editions: Dying, Death, and Bereavement,* edited by G. E. Dickinson and M. R. Leming. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Lund, Dale A. Michael S. Caserta, Margaret F. Dimond, Robert M. Gray. 1986. "Impact of Bereavement on the Self-Conceptions of Older Surviving Spouses." *Symbolic Interaction* 9(2):235-244.

Madrigal, Alexis. 2011. "Lasers for the Dead: A Story About Gravestone Technology." The Atlantic. Retrieved August 28, 2011. (http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive /2011/07/lasers-for-the-dead-a-story-about-gravestone-technology/242601/).

Martin, Daniel D. 2010. "Identity Management of the Dead: Contests in the Construction of Murdered Children." *Symbolic Interaction* 33(1):18-40.

Mason-Schrock, Douglas. 1996. "Transsexuals' Narrative Constructions of the 'True Self'." *Social Psychological Quarterly* 59(3):176-192.

Mead, George Herbert. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Memorials.com. 2010. "Headstone Symbolism: Symbols on Headstones Demystified." Memorials.com. Retrieved August 28, 2011. (http://www.memorials.com/Headstones-Symbolism-information.php).

Meyer, Elizabeth A. 1990. "Explaining the Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire: The Evidence of Epitaphs." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 80:74-96.

Meyer, Richard E., ed. 1992. *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture.* Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Mitford, Jessica. 2000. *The American Way of Death Revisisted.* New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Morris, Virginia. 2001. *Talking About Death.* Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

National Funeral Directors Association. 2011. "Statistics." National Funeral Directors Association. Retrieved October 24, 2011. (http://www.nfda.org/about-funeral-service-/trends-and-statistics.html).

Roach, Mary. 2003. *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Rodler, Christa, Erich Kirchler and Erik Holzl. 2001. "Gender Stereotypes of Leaders: An Analysis of the Contents of Obituaries from 1974-1988." *Sex Roles* 45(11-12):827-843.

Ross, Michael and Roger Buehler. 1994. "Creative remembering." Pp. 205-235 in *The Remembering Self: Construction and accuracy in the self-narrative,* edited by Ulric Neisser and Robyn Fivush. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rowe, Mark. 2003. "Grave Changes: Scattering Ashes in Contemporary Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 30(1/2):85-118.

Sárraga, Marian and Ramón F. Sárraga. 2002. "Sephardic Epitaphs in Hamburg's Oldest Jewish Cemetery: Poetry, Riddles, and Eccentric Texts." *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 26(1):53-92.

Schiffrin, Deborah. 1996. "Narrative as Self-Portrait: Sociolinguistic Constructions of Identity." *Language in Society* 25(2):167-203.

Simon, William, C. Allen Haney, and Russel Buenteo. 1993. "The Postmodernization of Death and Dying." *Symbolic Interaction* 16(4): 411-426.

Stoodley, Nick. 2000. "From the Cradle to the Grave: Age Organization and the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite." *World Archaeology* 31(3):456-472.

Stroebe, Wolfgang and Margaret S. Stroebe. 1994. "Is Grief Universal?: Cultural Variations in the Emotional Reaction to Loss." Pp. 117-209 in *Death and Identity*, 3rd ed., edited by R. Fulton and R. Bendickson. Philadelphia, PA: The Charles Press.

Turner, Ronnie and Charles Edgely. 1976. "Death as Theater: A Dramaturgical Analysis of the American Funeral." *Sociology and Social Research* 60(4):377-392.

Unruh, David R. 1983. "Death and Personal History: Strategies of Identity Preservation." *Social Problems* 30(3): 340-351.

Vita, Paul. 1999. "In Keeping with Modern Views: Publishing Epitaphs in the Nineteenth Century." *Victorian Review* 25(1):14-34.

Walter, Tony. 2004. "Plastination for Display: A New Way to Dispose of the Dead." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10(3):603-627.

Walter, Tony. 2008. "The Sociology of Death." *Sociology Compass* 2(1):317-336.

Ward, William A. 1957. "The Philosophy of Death in Coptic Epitaphs." *Journal of Bible and Religion* 25(1):34-40.

West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society* 1(2):125-151.

Whalen, William J. 2011. "How Different Religions Pay Their Final Respects." Pp. 126-128 in *Annual Editions: Dying, Death, and Bereavement,* edited by G. E. Dickinson and M. R. Leming. New York, NY: McGraw Hill

Williams, Amanda L. and Michael J. Merten. 2009. "Adolescents' Online Social Networking Following the Death of a Peer." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 24(1):67-90.

Woodthorpe, Kate. 2010. "Private Grief in Public Spaces: Interpreting Memorialisation in the Contemporary Cemetery." Pp. 117-132 in *The Matter of Death: Space, Place, and Materiality,* edited by J. Hockey, C. Komaromy, and K. Woodthorpe. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

APPENDIX A – List of Cemeteries Chosen for Analysis and Geographical Locations
*Beauford Oak Hill Cemetery Association – Beauford Township, MN
Calvary Cemetery – Mankato, MN
City Cemetery – New Ulm, MN
*Decoria Cemetery – Decoria Township, MN
*Ebenezer Cemetery – Waseca, MN
Graceland Cemetery – Albert Lea, MN
Lake Crystal Cemetery – Lake Crystal, MN
Lakeside Cemetery – Fairmont, MN
*Lunder Lutheran Cemetery – Freeman Township, MN
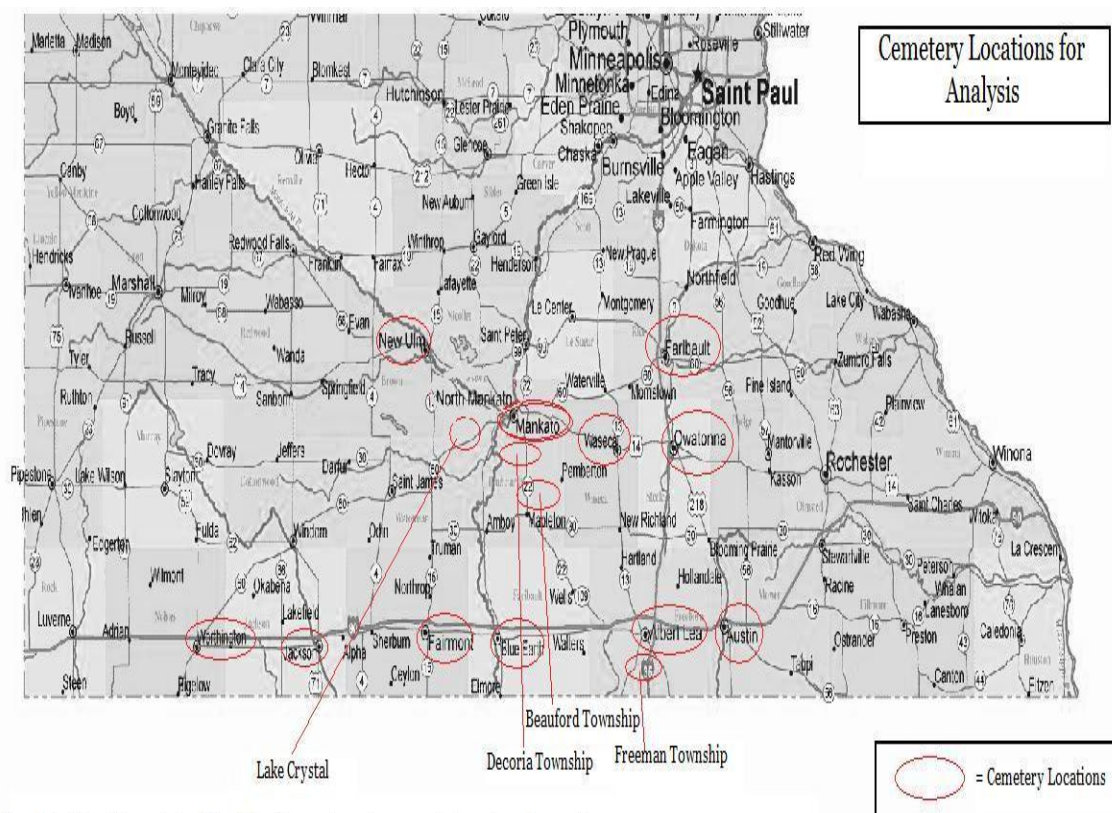Maple Lawn Cemetery – Faribault, MN
Riverside Cemetery – Blue Earth, MN
Riverside Cemetery – Jackson, MN
*Rose Creek Cemetery – Austin, MN
Sacred Heart Cemetery – Owatonna, MN
Worthington Township Cemetery – Worthington, MN
* denotes smaller cemeteries

Map adapted from Minnesota Road Map : http://www.minnesota-map.org/minnesota-road-map.gif

APPENDIX B – Matrix Sheets for Tombstone Analyses

	PRESENT		QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION(S)
TEXT	**YES**	**NO**		
Religious				
Relational/Social				
Poetry/Literary				
Miscellaneous				
PICTURES	**YES**	**NO**		
Religious				
Relational/Social				
Poetry/Literary				
Miscellaneous				

APPENDIX C – Matrix Sheet for Cross-Cemetery Comparisons

*1 – Buford Oak Hill Cemetery
  2 – Calvary Cemetery
  3 – City Cemetery
  4 – Decoria Cemetery
  5 – Ebenezer Cemetery
  6 – Graceland Cemetery
  7 – Lake Crystal Cemetery
  8 – Lakeside Cemetery
  9 – Lunder Lutheran Cemetery
10 – Maple Lawn Cemetery
11 – Riverside Cemetery (Blue Earth)
12 – Riverside Cemetery (Jackson)
13 – Rose Creek Cemetery
14 – Sacred Heart Cemetery
15 – Worthington Cemetery

	CEMETERIES*														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
TEXT															
Religious	3	20	18	4	**7**	17	13	23	7	11	18	14	5	17	17
Relational/ Social	**17**	**27**	**49**	**11**	2	**27**	**39**	**31**	**14**	**40**	**49**	**29**	**17**	**33**	**42**
Poetry/ Literary	2	8	14	2	1	8	5	9	2	4	4	16	5	7	5
Misc.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PICS															
Religious	6	**27**	**19**	4	**6**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**12**	**27**	**26**	**21**	6	**29**	**22**
Relational/ Social	**17**	10	15	**5**	0	2	8	12	2	**27**	4	13	**6**	15	12
Poetry/ Literary	0	0	4	0	1	0	2	0	0	3	0	2	3	3	4
Misc	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Numbers written in **bold** show the highest numbers within that cemetery.