THE CONTEMPORARY FRAMING OF DEATH IN ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND: "BRIGHTER RATHER THAN BLACK"

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Abstract

In St. John's the decades old narratives of religion, family, and tradition are being replaced by the contemporary funeral industry's choice-based and celebratory framing of death. I focus on the emotional impact of this transition, which can be seen through; the physical transformation of the funeral homes, the consumption of personalized products, the presence of personal objects, the negative interactions between the funeral home and its customers, the high burnout rate of funeral home staff, and the expressed emotional danger of direct cremation and the presence of urns at home. Funeral directors positively described the contemporary framing of death as happier and more focused on the individual, allowing the bereaved to deal with death better. Despite this, they also described their customers as demanding, angry, confused, and scared. I argue that the contemporary framing of death is making death a happier and a more individually focused experience, but in doing so it is also making death a more fragile experience.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

How society interacts with death is not innate or natural. Instead, social structures and institutions present competing frames for how to interact and make meaning of death through funeral rituals. Balancing these frames can be difficult, especially in Newfoundland where the local, and traditionally religious (Emke 2002), framing of death has been dominant until relatively recently.

This is especially true in St. John's, the capital city of Newfoundland, where contemporary funeral homes did not emerge until the mid-1960s and crematoriums did not appear until the mid-1980s, well behind most other regions in Canada. In St. John's, this has resulted in a delayed, and currently on-going, transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death, which has been complicated by the presence and continued influence of contingent religious practices in the city. Consequently, in St. John's, the contemporary reconstruction of "traditional" death rituals represents a unique case, which I examined through the following research questions:

1) ***How does the St. John's funeral industry frame death?***
2) ***From the lens of local funeral directors how has the industry's framing of death shaped contemporary funerals in St. John's?***

During the analysis, which consisted of local newspaper articles, from 1961 to 2013, and interviews with funeral directors, the emotional impact of the on-going transition on both the employees and customers of the funeral homes, which emerged as a product of the conflicting framings of death that exist in the city, became the central theme.

Furthermore, the emotional impact of this transition was largely dichotomous, as both positive and negative emotional reactions are present in almost every aspect of the St. John's funeral industry including: the physical transformation of the funeral homes, the consumption of personalized products, the inclusion of personal objects, the negative interactions between the funeral home and its customers, the high burnout rate of funeral home staff, and the expressed emotional danger of direct cremation and the storage of urns at home.

In the funeral homes of St. Johns, the wide variety of emotions that are experienced are a product of the conflicting framings of death in the city, each of which are presented by a variety of institutions, such as the contemporary funeral industry, the local funeral homes, and the local religious associations. Furthermore, each of these institutions and their varying levels of support and trust within the community, significantly influence the effectiveness of their framing within the community.

For example, the funeral directors that I interviewed described the contemporary framing of death in St. John's as "happier" because of its focus on the individual, which was credited with allowing the bereaved to deal with death "better," but they also described their customers as demanding, angry, confused, and scared; a tension in feeling that is a product of the conflicting framings of death in the city. Consequently, I argue that the contemporary framing of death is making death happier, through its celebratory and choice-based framing, but in doing so it is also making the experience of death more fragile because of the tension that is produced through the competing and often contradictory framings of death that exist in cotemporary societies.

Chapter 2: Literature

Balancing the competing frames of death can be difficult, especially in a context such as St. John's where the local and historically religious (Emke 2002) framing of death has been dominant until recently, which, like many other places, has resulted in the funeral home taking over the role of the church in contemporary death rituals (Dawson, Santos, and Burdick 1990).

Consequently, as the emerging experts in death and death rituals, funeral homes and funeral directors have taken on new roles within contemporary societies, that rely heavily on trust (Giddens 1990, 26). Trust, as argued by Giddens, is fundamental to modernity as its presence acts as a symbol of belief and faith, in either a principle or a system (1990). In order to inspire trust, many funeral homes construct narratives that emphasize their history, professionalism, and a commitment to care.

The construction and display of these narratives, especially historical narratives, appear to be of great importance to the funeral homes of St. John's, which did not flourish until the 1960s (Emke 2002). This commitment, to the development of a rich historical narrative, can be understood through the concept of historicity (Giddens 1990, 50), in which history is used to make history (Giddens 1990, 50), and in doing so the past is used to shape the present, even through the depiction of the past may not always be entirely accurate (Giddens 1990, 50).

Historical narratives are used by local funeral industries to construct contemporary framings of death that are compatible, and therefore effective, with their communities. Despite the usefulness of historical narratives, contemporary framings of death are complicated and consequently their construction is dependent on a wide variety

of narratives, such as funerals, rituals and religion, contemporary death rituals and the body, and consumption and continuing Bonds; all of which will be discussed in the following sections.

Funerals

In contemporary western societies the mortality rate is lower, in comparison to the past, people are dying at older ages, and death is experienced less frequently (Lofland 1985, Walter 1991). Consequently, contemporary individuals have little, if any, experience with death or death rituals (Walter 1991), although this was not always the case. In the not so distant past, mortality rates were high and death was experienced more frequently, generally at home (Emerick 2000; Narvaez 1994). This lack of experience is often accompanied by an increase of secularism, through which traditional funeral rituals lose meaning (Gadberry 2000). Furthermore, the unique social structure of contemporary societies, particularly the influence of individualism, urbanization, and industrialization (Lofland 1985) has significantly shaped how death is experienced and felt (Lofland 1985).

Additionally, the emergence of the contemporary funeral industry has significantly changed how death is experienced in mainstream Canadian societies. No longer are dead bodies cared for at home, nor are the deceased recipients of the same religious funeral or the same coffin as everyone else in the community. Dead bodies today, under the influence of the contemporary funeral industry, are generally outsourced to funeral homes where the possibilities for their care, disposal, and memorialization are endless, restrained only by the identity of the deceased, the tastes of the bereaved, and the amount of money that family of the bereaved is willing or able to spend. Furthermore,

traditional death rituals have been largely abandoned; despite this, contemporary death rituals are marketed through the use of traditional framings.

Poutler (2011) argues that the contemporary funeral industry relies on a traditional framing to successfully market the products and services that they provide. Furthermore, she argues that the essential elements of the traditional funeral have been adopted and adapted, from earlier community-based rituals, in order to construct contemporary rituals in which the funeral profession is central (Poulter 2011).
As a consequence of this, Poutler suggests that "the term 'traditional funeral' has been claimed by the funeral industry" (2011, 136) as both a useful and effective marketing tool, which can be seen in the re-invention of the traditional funeral to include cremation (2011).

In addition to physically changing funeral rituals, the contemporary funeral industry has changed how funerals and bereavement are experienced emotionally. For example, Poutler (2011) suggests that before the emergence of the funeral industry, funerals did not require outside direction or management; instead they were constructed by the values and religion of the community. In comparison, Poutler (2011) argues that today, the bereaved require outside counsel for both the rituals and emotions of death, which has significantly changed the structure and feeling of contemporary funerals.

Furthermore, the funeral industry's construction of the traditional funeral has also produced the image of the typical funeral director, which is both highly stigmatized (Cahil 1999; Thompson 1991) and negatively portrayed, in both popular media and everyday conversations as strange and uncomfortably humorous (Cahil 1999). Ironically, in the same societies in which funeral directors are treated with suspicion, due to an

abhorrence of their profession (Cahil 1999), they are also experienced as caregivers (Bailey 2010; Hyland and Morse 1995; Parsons 2003).

Because of this contradiction in feeling, funeral directors are often faced with the bereaved's anger, which is experienced as tension and conflict (Bailey 2010; Hyland and Morse 1995; Parsons 2003). Furthermore, when facing the bad behaviour of the bereaved, funeral directors are expected to engage in emotion management (Bailey 2010, Hochschild 1983). In doing so, funeral directors are expected to tolerate and placate the difficult behaviour of the bereaved, through the production of sympathy (Bailey 2010) that is rooted in an understanding, and an acceptance, of the "natural" effects of grief.

For example, at the funeral home, the bereaved's difficult behaviour is widely accepted through the framing of death and grief as: emotionally volatile (Parsons 2003) an experience that generates negative thoughts (Parsons 2003), a time of crisis that induces a state of shock (Hyland and Morse 1995, 454), and an event that produces a fragile emotional equilibrium, in the mind of the bereaved, which can easily be destabilized, by the funeral director, in the funeral planning process (Bailey 2010).

Additionally, the bereaved's difficult behaviour is further legitimized as natural by framing the funeral itself, as well as the funeral planning process, as: "a seldom welcome but inevitable service," (Parsons 2003, 70) "a distress purchase," (Parsons 2003, 71) a service that the bereaved are "generally forced to utilize," (Hyland and Morse 1995, 454) a "very disturbing event," (Hyland and Morse 1995, 464), "a most distressing experience," (Hyland and Morse 1995, 473), and the "most difficult public ritual" (Hyland and Morse 1995, 473). Consequently, at contemporary funeral homes, the bereaved are treated with great sensitivity in fear of triggering a negative emotional

reaction; which ultimately contributes to the construction of that negative emotional reaction.

Furthermore, the construction of the bereaved's negative experience of death, grief, and the funeral planning process can be seen in the space of contemporary funeral homes, which are specifically designed to restrain the bereaved's naturally occurring negative emotional reactions. For example, Hyland and Morse (1995) describe, in great detail, the emotional impact of the contemporary funeral home's décor:

> The décor of the foyer is designed to help mourners feel comfortable and relaxed while attending a funeral or while waiting to make arrangements. Any mourner's distress is further muffled by the sounds of soft, semi classical music emanating from speakers recessed in the ceiling. The soft, plush chairs and couches are inviting, and interspersed between chairs and couches are green plants and small table supporting brass lamps. Landscape paintings, depicting stands of trees behind streams and old farmhouses, hang on oak-paneled walls (459-460)

Through their description, Hyland and Morse demonstrate that they experienced the funeral home's space as both light and calming, which is in great contrast to the business itself, which they also described as inherently dark and distressing.

They also described the space of the funeral home's chapel as being specifically designed to psychologically support the bereaved through physical elements such as, "low ceilings, soft carpeting, and warm furnishings" (Hyland and Morse 1995, 460). From these descriptions, it can be argued that contemporary funeral homes, under the influence of the contemporary funeral industry, have and continue to contribute to the construction of an emotionally fragile experience of death, grief, and the funeral planning process.

Rituals and Religion

Rituals are complex social interactions that rely on a combination of bodily cues, sounds, emotions, and symbols to produce emotional energy in certain situations (Collins 2004).

The combined use of these signs inspires different types of emotional energies and emotional responses. In a ritualistic environment even the smallest combination or miscombination of these signs can create emotional energies that are at odds with the framing of the situation.

This is especially true in contemporary societies, where death has been exported from everyday and public space (Mellor 1992). Consequently, a decrease in participation in traditional death rituals has become increasingly common. Giddens (1990) argues that modern life is best understood through the concept of ontological security; a concept that he understands as an emotional phenomenon which he defines "as the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (1990, 92); which explains the focus of personalization which is evident in contemporary death rituals.

Consequentially, the appeal of the contemporary funeral industry's celebratory and choice based framing of death can be understood through the relative comfort of contemporary funeral practices, services, and products. Ultimately, these rituals offer an individual assurance of "safety" for the bereaved because of their ability to bracket out death from life (Mellor 1992) and in doing so maintain ontological security.

Furthermore, death upsets and breaks routines and historically traditional death rituals were able to produce security from this vulnerability as "tradition sustains trust in the continuity of past, present, and future and connects such trust to routinized social practices" (Giddens 1990, 4). Traditional death rituals, however, are historically religious rituals, and because of that they have become increasingly incompatible with contemporary Canadian societies that are becoming increasingly secular (Dawson &

Thiessen 2014). Ultimately, this has resulted in the increasing inability of traditionally religious death rituals to produce ontological security concerning routine in the face of a death (Giddens 1990) in contemporary Canadian societies. Giddens suggests that this highlights the general incompatibility between contemporary life and traditional rituals (1990).

Although traditional death rituals, which are historically religious (Shilling 2012) and therefore highly structured, are less likely to provide security or comfort for individuals living in contemporary societies, this does not mean that there has been a decrease in spirituality within those societies (Dawson & Thiessen 2014). Instead, the increase of secularism more accurately reflects a decrease in church attendance, especially within Christian congregations (Dawson & Thiessen 2014). In consequence of this, an increasing number of Canadians have turned to new and highly individualized activities to "seek spiritual sustenance" (Dawson & Thiessen 2014).

In an increasingly secular context, it is not surprising that contemporary Canadian death rituals have begun to rely on a combination of highly individualized bodily cues, sounds, emotions, and symbols to construct rituals that produce individualized or personalized meaning. Consequently, when faced with death, these rituals allow individuals to operate as though everything was "business-as-usual" (Giddens 1990, 147). In doing so, death is bracketed out from life (Mellor 1992; 13) and the mundane rituals of everyday life are protected.

The transition from the historically religious death rituals of the past to the secular and personalized death rituals of contemporary Canadian societies have lead to the

construction, or more accurately to the reconstruction, of "traditional" death rituals through the creation and inclusion of new rituals, such as cremation.

Cremation represents a relatively new death ritual in the United States (Roberts 2011) and Newfoundland (Emke 2002). Consequently, many people in these societies are participating in cremation for the first time and because of this, they are creating their own rituals (Roberts 2011). Although new, these rituals, as well as their framing, rely on the temporal nature of the past (Maines, Sugrue & Katovich 1983), which as understood by Mead, does not exist by itself, but is instead symbolically reconstructed through the experience of the present (Maines, Sugrue & Katovich 1983).

Furthermore, the continuous reconstruction of the past, and therefore the continuous construction of tradition, can become reliant on mythical pasts (Maines, Sugrue & Katovich 1983) that are "validated through a monopolization of knowledge" (Maines, Sugrue & Katovich 1983; 170) and consequently have the ability to control and shape behaviour (Maines, Sugrue & Katovich 1983), such as the traditional framings of death in local and national funeral industries. Finally, the reconstruction of the traditional funeral, as well as the reconstruction of its framing, significantly change how contemporary individuals interact with and emotionally experience death and dead bodies.

Contemporary Death Rituals and the Body

Contemporary death rituals, such as cremation, are less bodily centered than traditional death rituals, such as wakes. This is a significant difference, as Collins argues the strongest and most intense rituals are "full bodily experiences" (2004, 60). Collins also argues that rituals that incorporate bodily contact, such as visitations, wakes, and burials,

create the “highest emotional energy payoffs” (Collins 2004, 248). Consequently, in contemporary death rituals, the increasing absence of dead bodies has significantly changed the emotional energy, both type and intensity, that these rituals are capable of producing.

Today, the desire for the type of emotional energy that is traditionally produced through contact with dead bodies, during traditional death rituals, still exists, although contemporary death rituals cannot satisfy this desire. Despite this, the contemporary funeral industry has a long history of attempting to artificially produce this type of emotional energy by disciplining dead bodies with technologies (Foucault 1977) such as photography, embalming, cremation, and consumable funeral products, such as products that incorporate or feature cremains.

One of the earliest examples of the contemporary funeral industry’s discipline of dead bodies is photography; a technology that created a standardized or iconic image of dead bodies that was “life-like” but also “natural” (O’Neil 2008; 174). These photographs became popular (Troyer 2007) and eventually widely available with technological advancements in photography. Following photography, the contemporary funeral industry began to discipline dead bodies through embalming, a technology that stopped “human bodies from ‘properly’ dying” (Troyer 2007, 42) instead producing “dead bodies that appeared to be unnaturally alive” (Troyer 2007, 41).

The early technological discipline of dead bodies, through photography and embalming, created a docile dead body (Foucault 1977). This body became extremely useful to the contemporary funeral industry because of its ability to artificially produce

the same type of emotional energy that has been historically produced through contact with dead bodies.

The emergence of new disciplinary technologies, such as cremation, has made the docile dead body even more valuable because of it's increased ability to transfer artificially produced emotional energy to consumable funeral products. This only becomes possible because of the technological process of cremation that produces "a new body" (Prendergast, Hockey & Kellaher 2006; 883) that is tangible, resists rotting, and "bears little resemblance to the flesh" (Prendergast, Hockey & Kellaher 2006; 884).

Consequently, cremains, the cremated body of the deceased, represents an entirely docile body that therefore requires a framing or packaging to become both useful and popular. Consequently, not all personalized funerals products are experienced as useful or popular. This is especially true of the personalized funeral products that feature the "body" of the deceased, such as cremation jewelry, paintings, and tattoos (Hessels, Poots, and Venbrux 2012). These products can be negatively experienced through the emergence of the uncanny, which is defined by Freud as that "hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it" (Freud 1919, 15).

Additionally, any object that appears to have come to life can be understood and experienced as uncanny as it represents "the double" (Freud 1919, 9), which ultimately symbolizes the "dividing and interchanging of the self" (Freud 1919, 9), a phenomenon that can be experienced in cremation or fingerprint jewelry.

Heessels, Potts, and Venbrux (2012) note that funeral products that include cremains, which they refer to as ash objects, are "described [by consumers] as special, personal, and by some mourners even as animate;" (476) they further describe the

animation of these objects as subjectification, a process in which objects become associated with the deceased or attain their characteristics (Hessels, Potts, and Venbrux 2012). In the case of ash objects, Heessels, Potts, and Venbrux (2012) argue that the process of subjectifiaction is enhanced.

Because of this, the potential for the experience of the uncanny is amplified in funeral products that include cremains. This is highlighted in the following example of Heessels, Potts, and Venbrux (2012) that was used to explain the difference in subjectification between objects that were owned by the deceased in comparison to objects that literally embody the deceased through the inclusion of cremains:

> The difference is experienced as follows: "That is grandmother's chair," meaning the chair she used to sit in, as opposed to "That chair *is* grandmother," as her ashes are incorporated into the stuffing. From the moment that an ash object is filled with ashes (by professionals or the bereaved themselves) the borders between object and person blur (476)

As borders blur, or the double emerges (Freud 1919, 9), the feeling of the uncanny is enhanced as the funeral product, which represents the double, is perceived to "take over the full function and significance of the thing it symbolizes" (Freud 1919, 15). As a consequence of this, funeral products that literally embody the deceased, such as pendant filled with cremains, have the ability to produce the feeling of the uncanny and can therefore be experienced as distasteful. Although this is not always the case, as the same funeral products that have the potential to produce the feeling of the uncanny also have the potential to produce comforting bonds (Heessels, Potts, and Venbrux 2012, 474) between the living and the dead.

Consumption and Continuing Bonds

The docile dead body has resulted in the production of a variety of contemporary funeral products that are consumed by the bereaved to memorialize the life and identity of the deceased, a practice which is often criticized "as an empty commercialized show" (O'Neil 2008; 178). Furthermore, the consumption of these products are not only critiqued but also "derided as somehow empty or shallow" (Bradbury 2001; 224). In doing so, the consumers of these products are treated as cultural dupes (Adorno & Horkeimer 1944). Although, as noted by Bradbury, the creation and consumption of funeral products is becoming increasingly popular as well as increasingly meaningful for the bereaved (2001); therefore these practices that should be both acknowledged and accepted as such. Additionally, in a consumer culture, consumable products become a part of our social selves (Csikszentmihalyi & Halton 1981).

In considering the consumption of contemporary funeral products, our willingness to allow for the bereaved's production of "genuine" meaning is severely limited, especially in comparison to the consideration of Victorian funeral products, which except for the absence of personalization are arguably similar products. For example, the Victorians were great producers of mourning objects, transforming almost any mundane object of everyday life, from underwear to dishware (Evans 1986), into consumable objects of mourning. Additionally, the Victorians were also producers of extravagant mourning objects, such as hair jewelry and hair wreaths, (Brown 1997; Zielke 2003) which required the hair of the deceased to be individually braided into intricate designs and patterns.

Furthermore, Victorian funeral products, in comparison to contemporary funeral products, cannot be framed as pure expressions of sentimentality as these products were also consumed as an expression of social class (Brown 1997, Evans 1986); despite this, the consumption of Victorian funeral products are often understood as "genuine" expressions of meaning-making and memorialization. In comparison, the consumption of contemporary funeral products is instead understood with great suspicion. The suspicion that surrounds contemporary funeral products may be a consequence of the absence of universal symbols of mourning, which have been replaced by personal symbols.

Furthermore, the nature of these personalized funeral products are increasingly amusing (Sanders 2009), fun (Gadberry 2000), and I would argue kitschy, which do not contribute to their outward perception as either sincere or serious. Despite this, personalization, which represents the contemporary funeral industry's commitment to the unique interests and identity of each individual (Emke 2002), is becoming increasingly popular. The wide appeal of personalization can be seen in the American funeral industry's increase of profits from "$11.7 billion in 2003 to over $15 billion in 2006" (Sanders 2009, 451), a scale of profit which was produced through the emergence of personalized funeral products such as caskets emblazoned with professional sports logos, gemstones made from cremated ash, and fingerprint jewelry (Sanders 2009).

Furthermore, personalized funerals, which are made complete by the consumption of personalized funeral products, represent an individual's final presentation of self that is to some extent controlled, not by the individual, but by their family. Consequently, personalization is a "relational process" (Belk 1988, 249) that is heavily dependent on the relationships that exist between the deceased and their family (Belk 1988). Therefore,

central to the contemporary practice of personalization is "the continued re-ordering of self-narratives" (Mellor 1992, 413). Furthermore, the constructed and re-ordered self-narratives, which are expressed through personalized funeral products, represent the bereaved's memory of the deceased (Hallam and Hockey 2001).

Additionally, many of the contemporary funeral industry's personalized products, particularly those that include cremains, are designed to be both tangible and transportable (Heessels, Potts, and Venbrux 2012), as it assumed that the bereaved desire frequent physical interactions with these products (Heessels, Potts, and Venbrux 2012). The appeal of these products is rooted in their ability to create and maintain bonds with the deceased, which is understood as the model of grief known as continuing bonds (Klass, Silverman, and Nickman 1996).

As noted by Klass (2006), the theory of continuing bonds was introduced as a response to the dominant theory of grief, which frames the bereaved's continuing relationship with the deceased as pathological. Klass went on to note that the development of the continuing bonds theory of grief illustrated that interaction with the dead could be understood as normal, not dangerous. The socially constructed nature of the bereaved's emotional reaction to death and grief is further supported by Berns (2011) who argues that "closure" is a socially constructed concept that is a part of the "cultural frame for how we should respond to loss" (49).

Berns (2011) also argues that the concept of closure has been adopted by the contemporary funeral industry to construct narratives on the "right" way to grieve. These narratives are then used to sell funeral products and services. Additionally, as the concept of closure is socially constructed it can be used to sell a wide variety of products and

services, depending on the location and social context of the funeral home; this means that embalming and visitation as well as cremation and scattering can both be marketed as the best way to grieve and achieve closure. The concept of closure is a product of the traditional framing of grief that frames the experience of bereavement as a potentially dangerous emotional experience if not done right; it is the same framing in which continuing bonds are framed as pathological (Anderson 2001).

As noted earlier, the funeral industry of St. John's is in the midst of a transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death, as a consequence of this they are also in the midst of a transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of grief, both of which have contributed to an increasingly fragile experience of death in the city.

This study examines the changing funeral practices in St. John's, which are a product of the on-going transition from the traditional to the contemporary framings of death in the city, that are a product of the competing narratives of the contemporary funeral industry and contingent religious practices. Ultimately, I will show that the contemporary framing of death has contributed to the production of an increasingly fragile, emotional experience of death, grief, and funerals in contemporary, North-American societies.

Chapter 3: Context

Newfoundland has a long and enduring history of traditional funeral rituals that have been largely influenced by the traditional Irish wake; many of these rituals, including house wakes, were still occurring, in rural areas, into the mid and even late 20th century (Narvaez 1994). Additionally, funeral homes did not become popular in St. John's, the province's capital city, until the 1960s (Emke).

Today, in St. John's, there are currently three, independent and family-owned, funeral homes: Barrett's, Carnell's, and Caul's, all of which can trace their histories to the 19th and 20th centuries. Consequently, the narratives of local and multi-generational businesses have played an important role in the longevity, identity, and prosperity of the city's funeral industry.

In St. John's, all three of the funeral homes, Barrett's, Carnell's, and Caul's, use the concept of historicity to construct and present the narratives on their websites which frame the work that they do. These narratives are used to gain the community's trust, as well as their business, although not all three of the city's funeral homes rely on their institutional history to the same extent. For example, Caul's appeals to history the least, only mentioning their pride in providing a "Tradition of Trust Since 1890."

In comparison, Barrett's engages with their past by emphasizing the history of the funeral directors under their employment. For example, each funeral director has an online profile that outlines their experience and expertise, such as their status as a fourth or third generation funeral director, the name of the mortuary school that they graduated from, as well as their years of experience in the business. Consequently, the employee

profiles of Barrett's are used to construct a historical narrative that inspires trust and therefore attracts business.

Finally, of the three funeral homes in the city, Carnell's appeals to history the most, by constructing and presenting a narrative as one of the oldest and largest funeral homes in the province. In doing so, Carnell's advertises the business as, "providing leadership in the funeral industry since 1804." In doing so, Carnell's claims a history of "over 200 years" in the city, all of which is displayed on their website proudly and in great detail.

Carnell's, like all of the funeral homes in St. John's, practices historicity to create historical narratives that inspire trust. Although, in doing so, the history of the city's funeral industry, in which funeral homes did not become popular until the 1960s, as well as the historical interaction, meaning making process, and emotional experience of death are not fully portrayed.

Finally, the funeral homes' reliance on their institutional histories is a product of the ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death in St. John's, and the province, as noted by Emke's (2002) study on the impact of secularization.

Barrett's Funeral Home

Barrett's was established in 1929, by Willis J. Barett (The Evening Telegram, 1989, p.29) in Dick's Square, St. John's, (The Telegram, 2008, D7) as a furniture service with a "sideline of casket-building [that] gradually became a funeral service,"(The Telegram, 2008, D7) making it the youngest of the three funeral homes in St. John's. Despite this

lack of history, Barrett's proudly advertises their current status of fourth-generation ownership.

In 1961, Barrett's moved into a new location, which they still occupy today, on Hamilton Avenue, in order to provide an "expanded and more modern service, in keeping with the times," (The Evening Telegram, 1989, 29). In the mid-1980s, Barrett's opened a second location in Mount Pearl (The Evening Telegram, 1989, 31), which is a part of the St. John's Metropolitan area.

Furthermore, in 1993, Barrett's had finished the redesign and expansion of their original location, creating an "appropriately peaceful atmosphere," (The Evening Telegram, 1993, 22) which included a variety of "special touches, such as the large cloakroom, tasteful décor and paintings, and the warm glow of a fireplace [all of which] combine to create a tranquil, family setting." (The Evening Telegram, 1993, 22) Additionally, in 1993, Barrett's advertised the installation of a modern crematorium (The Evening Telegram, 1993, 22).

Finally, in 2008, Barrett's re-located their Mount Pearl location (The Telegram, 2007, A4) following the construction of a new building because "funerals have been seeing considerable change over recent years and we, at Barrett's, are changing with the times" (The Telegram, 2008, B4). Highlights of these changes included, a "spacious and modern design," a "stress alleviating" selection room, both of which were advertised as being "less intimidating" (Newfoundland Herald, 2008).

Carnell's Funeral Home

Carnell's date of establishment is vague. I would argue it is purposefully so, in an attempt claim an "extended" history within the St. John's funeral industry. For example, on their

website and in a variety of newspaper and magazine articles, Carnell's claims an establishment of 1780 (Our History), the date in which "Gilbert Carnell, a wheelwright and carriage builder, opened a carriage factory on the corner of Duckworth and Cochrane Streets" (Our History). Additionally, Carnell's also claims an official establishment of 1805 (Western Star, 1999, 11) through the existence of "documentary evidence" (Canadian Funeral News, 1981, 43) that proves the existence of their business in the city. Despite their contested date of establishment, Carnell's is the oldest funeral home in the city. Additionally, Carnell's proudly advertises their current status of sixth-generation ownership.

In 1966, Carnell's moved to a "new, ultra-modern funeral home at the corner of Freshwater and Crosbie Roads," (The Newfoundland Herald, 2009, 32) which, at the time, represented "the first fully integrated funeral home in the province, consisting of comfortably furnished reposing rooms, lounges, and a beautifully designed chapel to serve all faiths" (The Newfoundland Herald, 2009, 32).

After a shift in ownership in 1987, from Geoffrey Carnell Sr. to Geoffrey Carnell Jr., following the former's death, a variety of "extensive renovations and expansions" (The Evening Telegram, 1995, p.24) were initiated, "with the objective of providing a beautiful 'home like' atmosphere,"(The Evening Telegram, 1995, 24). These renovations included: "the introduction of a crematorium and committal area in 1988, the addition of new office in 1991, the enlargement and enhancement of their visitation room in 1993, the redesign of their casket display room in 1994, as well as interior and exterior renovations in 1995" (The Evening Telegram, 1995, 24). All of these changes, which Carnell explained as an "expansion of operations," occurred over a ten-year period (The

Telegram, 2008, p. A1) and were accredited to "bringing the funeral home up to modern standards "(The Evening Telegram, 1995, 24).

Additionally, in 1997 Carnell's began the "expansion [of] its chapel to accommodate more customers" and the construction of a "special showroom for crematorium products" (The Evening Telegram, 1997, 13). Finally, in 2008, Carnell's opened a second location in in Mount Pearl, which is a part of the St. John's Metropolitan area.

Caul's Funeral Home

Caul's also has a vague date of establishment, which is a product of three ownership changes despite their contemporary catchphrase: "Tradition of Trust Since 1890," which draws upon the company's origins. Caul's was first "J.T. Martin's Undertaker and Furniture Maker at 38 New Gower Street," (The Sunday Express, 1988, 29) a business that was listed in the St. John's business and telephone directors, as both an undertaking and funeral service, from 1870 to 1942[1]. After which, William and Patrick Caul, who were employed at Martin's, purchased the business and changed the name to The Caul Brothers Funeral Home (The Sunday Express, 1988, 29) and later The W.J Caul Funeral Home, (The Sunday Express, 1988, 29) following Patrick's death.

[1] (McAlpine's Maritime Provinces Directory for 1870-71 [Extract Newfoundland McAlpine's Maritime Provinces Directory for 1894-97 [Extract Newfoundland Sections Only], 1894; McAlpine's Maritime Provinces Directory for 1908 [Extract Newfoundland Sections Only], 1908; Newfoundland Directory: containing an alphabetical list of all business firms and private citizens and list of streets in St. John's and St. John's Suburbs, also directories of Bay Roberts, Harbour Grace, Carbonear, and Buirn West, 1928; Who's Who in and from Newfoundland 1930, 1930; St. John's Classified Business and City Directory 1932, 1932; Telephone Directory, 1937: St. John's, 1937; Telephone Directory, 1942: St. John's, 1942)

In 1964, as a consequence of his father's early death, John Anderson "assumed ownership" (The Sunday Express, 1988, 29) of Caul's. Prior to this change of ownership, John Anderson's father had been employed at Caul's and because of this, in the summer of 1958, John, at 17, (The Sunday Express, 1988, 29) also started working at the funeral home and following the urging of his father and Caul, decided to stay on.

The original owners of Caul's, William and Patrick, are John Anderson's great-uncles (The Sunday Express, 1988, 29). Additionally, in respect to Mr. Caul's wishes, John Anderson did not change the name of the funeral home after his acquisition in 1964 (The Sunday Express, 1988, 29). Today, John Anderson still owns and operates Caul's and despite the involvement of his siblings and children, the funeral home, unlike Barrett's and Carnell's, does not advertise their current ownership status (The Evening Telegram, 1994, 9).

In 1964, Caul's moved to their current location on 84 LeMarchant Road, (The Sunday Express, 1988, 29) which by 1988 included "six reposing rooms, an inter-denomination chapel, as well as spacious lounge and kitchen areas" (The Sunday Express, 1988, 29). Additionally, in 1988, Caul's opened a second location in Torbay, a part of the St. John's Metropolitan area (The Sunday Express, 1988, p.28) much to the satisfaction of a local resident who praised the "modern" (The Sunday Express, 1988, 28) nature of the facility, which was attributed to its "warm entrance, bordered carpet aisles, coat rooms, decorative murals, a strip-mirrored wall, air-conditioning, a preparation area, a display room for casket selection, office, garage, lounge area and kitchenette, and three reposing or visitation rooms" (The Sunday Express, 1988, 28).

In 1997, Caul's was in the process of building a new chapel at their LeMarchant Road location (The Evening Telegram, 1997, 13) and by 2005, Caul's was seeking permission from the city to demolish six surrounding homes, which they had purchased "over the past several years", in order to proceed with the funeral home's renovation and expansion (The Telegram, 2005, A3).

Chapter 4: Methods

To study the contemporary framing of death in St. John's I conducted a two-part discourse analysis (Johnston 2008, van den Hoonaard 2012) of the city's funeral industry. The first part of this analysis included the collection of documents that featured local funeral homes and funeral directors, all of which were sourced from The Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS) at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). The second part of this analysis included the collection of semi-structured interviews with funeral directors who were currently employed at one of the three funeral homes in the city.

For this project, I chose to use discourse analysis because I am interested "in how social reality is discursively constructed" (Johnston 2008, 233). Furthermore, discourse analysis is especially useful when working with complicated narratives. Consequently, this method was particularly effective in the analysis of the narratives of the St. John's funeral industry, which is in the midst of a transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death. Finally, throughout this study I use a symbolic interactionist perspective which is informed by three central principles: 1) human action is based on meanings that are held in things, 2) meaning is derived from social interaction, and 3) meaning is handled and changed through interpretive interactions (Blumer 1969).

Documents

The CNS has a "funeral homes" vertical file in which documents that feature funeral homes or funeral directors from across Newfoundland are complied. These include newspaper and magazine articles, as well as advertising materials. Although the St.

John's funeral industry was not the subject of all of these documents, I was able to collect 40 documents that were published between 1961 and 2013, all of which feature the narratives of the city's funeral industry during that time period. Additionally, through the CNS digital collection, I searched for the terms "undertaker," "undertakers," "carriage," and "funeral," to determine the number of companies advertising funeral services in the city, through twelve St. John's business and telephone directories from 1870 to 1963[2]. These documents were extremely helpful in the development of the study's context as they provided me with the history of the local funeral industry, which, beyond this collection of documents, is largely inaccessible.

During this part of the analysis, I choose to maintain the identity of the funeral homes for three reasons: 1) the context of the study, 2) the public nature of the data, and 3) the low potential for the negative consequences to the business of the funeral homes. Firstly, Newfoundland, let alone St. John's, represents a small, unique, and highly identifiable population that becomes even smaller, even more unique, and even more identifiable within the St. John's funeral industry. Secondly, all of the narratives that I have analyzed are publicly available, the majority of which are local newspapers articles.

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[2] (McAlpine's Maritime Provinces Directory for 1870-71 [Extract Newfoundland Sections Only], 1870; Yearbook and Almanac of Newfoundland, 1891; McAlpine's Maritime Provinces Directory for 1894-97 [Extract Newfoundland Sections Only], 1894; McAlpine's Maritime Provinces Directory for 1908 [Extract Newfoundland Sections Only], 1908; Newfoundland Directory: containing an alphabetical list of all business firms and private citizens and list of streets in St. John's and St. John's Suburbs, also directories of Bay Roberts, Harbour Grace, Carbonear, and Buirn West, 1928; Who's Who in and from Newfoundland 1930, 1930; St. John's Classified Business and City Directory 1932, 1932; Telephone Directory, 1937: St. John's, 1937; Telephone Directory, 1942: St. John's, 1942; Telephone Directory, 1953: St. John's, 1953; Telephone Directory, 1957: St. John's, 1957; Telephone Directory, 1963: St. John's, 1963)

Finally, I do not believe that maintaining the identity of the funeral homes, through the use of their names while presenting their history, will jeopardize their social or economic well being (Bryman 2016, 54) as all three of the funeral homes in St. John's use similar narratives, openly and publicly.

Interviews

Although funeral directors represent a population of educated professionals, they also represent a population that works within a taboo (Thompson 1991) and in an often-criticized industry (Poulter 2011; Sanders 2009). Consequently, funeral directors can be a difficult population to access. Despite these potential barriers, both Emke (2002) and Sanders (2009) positively described their experiences interviewing funeral directors.

At the beginning of the study, I anticipated a relatively easy recruitment process, although that did not occur. Despite these difficulties I encountered, all of which will be discussed below, I would also positively describe my experience interviewing funeral directors, as they were patient with my continued attempts at communication, generous with their time, and open about their professional experiences and personal perspectives.

Throughout the analysis process, I maintained the confidentiality of all individual participants. In doing so: the funeral directors were given pseudonyms, the funeral homes that they were associated were not named, the participants were not organized into groups that represent specific funeral homes, and any identifiable characteristics were removed. Additionally, all of the data is presented from the general perspective of a St. John's funeral director. Finally, all notes and transcriptions were transcribed, read, and re-read for themes, attending to "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer 1954).

Recruitment and Data: "Kicking Tires"

In October of 2017, I began the recruitment process by contacting the three funeral homes through their general emails, all of which are publically available on their websites. From the initial invitation to participate, I only received a reply from one of the three funeral homes, which resulted in an initial meeting with one of the owners to further discuss the project. Following this meeting, I was given permission to contact the funeral directors who were employed at this funeral home through their individual emails, from which I received no replies. After a week, I sent out another round of emails to these funeral directors, from which no replies were received.

After another week, I once again contacted the owner to inform them of the lack of replies that I had received and to suggest an initial meeting with the funeral directors in order to introduce myself, further explain the project, and answer any questions. To my surprise, despite the initially warm reception, I received a reply that noted the funeral director's extreme reluctance to participate in the proposed interviews. Additionally, I was given the following parameters of potential participation, should I choose to continue with the project: 1) no recording 2) an interview length of 15 to 20 minutes, and 3) the supply of sample interview questions for prior consideration. In reply, I decided to write a letter that further explained my interest in studying funerals as well as the nature of qualitative interviews.

I felt that it was important to explain my interest in death and funerals based on my previous experience recruiting and interviewing funeral directors. As a part of undergraduate thesis, during which, I felt, my interest was only "validated" after sharing the experience of my mother's death and funeral, which resulted in the literal opening of

doors. Therefore, I made sure to begin every interview, or initial meeting, by sharing my own experience with death; which again, I felt, significantly influenced the outcome of the interviews by "validating" my interest and therefore allowing me to speak on the subject. For example, this feeling of validation, which was only experienced after sharing my own experience with death, was confirmed by Caroline, who commented that most funeral directors get into the industry because, "like yourself, you hear a lot of people say, this person in my family died and that made me want to do it."

Unsurprisingly, following my letter, which included the story of my mother's death, the owner, whom I had previously been in contact with for weeks, suddenly became extremely accommodating. In his reply, he first explained that the funeral director's reluctance to participate was a product of funeral home's "24/365 working environment," in which breaks are highly valued; this explanation was further explained to me by Caroline:

> First we were like, ahh do we have to go and meet here [she laughs]. When we have downtime, we don't want to do anything. It's an exhausting job, it is very tiring, it's physically draining, and mentally, and emotionally, at times. So when we have our breaks, its like no, we are done [she laughs], sorry [she laughs]

Secondly, he suggested that I come to the funeral home in order meet the funeral directors, introduce myself, and answer any questions. Furthermore, Caroline commented that as a consequence of the "weird questions (Field notes)," that she, and the other funeral directors, receive regularly because of their profession, such as "what does a body look like when it's dead? (Field notes)," any inquires about the profession are treated with suspicion. Furthermore, the person inquiring into the profession is also treated with suspicion and because of this Caroline said that she appreciated being able to meet me because it allowed her to confirm that I was not a "weirdo" (Field notes).

Finally, the owner assured me that my story, goals, and objectives would be shared with the funeral directors before I meet them. Additionally, it was suggested that I call to discuss the project further. Consequently, after another phone call with the owner, it was determined that scheduling the initial meeting would be difficult because of the precarious nature of the industry; a reality that I would come to know very well.

Eventually, I was able to schedule appointments, at the funeral home, to meet with the funeral directors, during which the owner encouraged me to, "tell them my story (Field notes)" and "kick the tires (Field notes)." The initial meetings appeared to go well; everyone agreed to an interview and it was determined that I should schedule them through the funeral home's administrator, Jane, who was in charge of the schedules. Jane became a gatekeeper for me, so much so, that I noted: "without her [the interviews] would not be possible (Field notes)."

I would call Jane, at 10 am, at least once a week, to determine the funeral directors availability; during our conversations I was often encouraged to call again because of a recent burst of work, such as: "Taylor, my dear they had four deaths overnight! (Field notes)" and "Not good today. [There are] Only two [funeral directors] in and [we had] a walk-in death, therefore one has to do prep (Field notes)."

In addition to taking my calls and trying to organize appointments, Jane also shared with me that she was "pushing them [the funeral directors] (Field notes)" to participate. According to Jane, despite meeting with me and agreeing to an interview, many of the funeral directors were still "reluctant (Field notes)" to participate, but she thinks that "it is different once [they] sit down and start the conversation (Field notes)."

Even after making it to the funeral home, I still relied on Jane to round up the funeral directors and send them my way. For example, after checking in on me and inquiring after one of the funeral directors, who was supposed to have come to talk with me, but had yet to appear, Jane jokingly commented: "What do I have to do? [laughs] (Field notes)." On another occasion, Jane informed me that a couple of funeral directors had just gone on a pick-up, but once they got back, "she would get on them [laughs] (Field notes)."

By the end of December, I was finally able to finish the interviews at the first funeral home. By this point, I had also made contact with the remaining two funeral homes in the city through phone calls, as my emails received no replies. It was during these conversations that I quickly learned that no one had read my emails. Despite this, I had completed one interview at the remaining funeral homes, although beyond this, the likelihood of future interviews was not promising.

During my last visit to the first funeral home, Jane and the funeral directors were asking me if I was finished with my interviews. After explaining that I was still trying to schedule interviews with the other funeral homes, they proceeded to construct a small list of names for me to ask for, by consulting funeral directors who were both in and out of the office. I wasn't expecting this and I was touched, especially after all of the difficulties that I had encountered. Additionally, their willingness to help me secure more interviews re-assured me that despite their reluctance they did not regret participating.

After receiving the list of names and because of my newly acquired knowledge of the funeral home's precarious workload, I decided to focus on one funeral home at a time. By mid-December, after numerous phone-calls with individual funeral directors, to

confirm availability, I was able to schedule and conduct interviews with funeral directors at both of the remaining funeral homes.

Ultimately, from October to December of 2017, I collected 10 in-depth and semi-structured interviews (Bryman & Bell 2016, May 2011, van den Hoonaard 2012) with funeral directors currently working in St. John's. Furthermore, the sample included a wide variety of experiences and perspectives of the St. John's funeral industry, due to the participants: range of professional experience (3 to 30 years), gender (5 women and 5 men), and employee status (Barrett's, Carnell's, or Caul's).

Throughout the analysis process, the confidentiality of the participants has been maintained through the use of pseudonyms. Furthermore, the funeral home with which each participant is associated was not named, nor have the participants been organized into groups that represent specific funeral homes. Additionally, all of the data is presented from the general perspective of a funeral director working in the St. John's funeral industry. Finally, all notes and transcriptions were transcribed, read, and re-read for themes, attending to "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer 1954).

This study examines the changing funeral practices in St. John's, which are a product of the on-going transition from the traditional to the contemporary framings of death in the city, namely the contemporary funeral industry and the church. Ultimately, I aim to highlight the constructed nature of contemporary funerals rituals, which have contributed to the production of an increasingly fragile emotional experience of death and funerals. I will address the emotional impact of the contemporary framing of death in the themes that emerged from my data: history, religion, personalization, cremation, and emotions.

Chapter 5: History

The St. John's funeral industry has a decades-long history that is rooted in family, tradition, and religious association. Despite the decades long dominance of these narratives, their usefulness is eroding because of the on-going transition from the traditional framing of death to the contemporary framing of death.

Today, as a product of this transition, the funeral homes of St. John's are experiencing great change in an attempt to better align themselves with the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death that values individuality over commonality, spirituality over religion, and personal preference over tradition. The impacts of these changes were brought to my attention by local funeral directors. Each funeral director that I interviewed, regardless of their level of experience, which ranged from 3 to 30 years, identified changes in the St. John's industry, suggesting an ongoing and rapid transition. This transition has not only significantly changed their understanding of the industry, but especially their parents' understanding of the industry:

> I've been here for 26 years and it's totally changed. My father, he is 77 years old. He's still old school. He worked in the funeral home for 40 years. If you made him make an arrangement right now, he wouldn't know where to start (Daniel)

These changes have impacted almost every aspect of the St. John's funeral industry, including: the building itself, the requirements of the job, the expectations of the customer, as well as the structure and feeling of funeral rituals, such as the service, visitation, and disposal; all of which have, in turn, significantly impacted the narratives that are used to frame death in St. John's. The impact of these legacies is outlined in the following sections of tradition, family, and religion.

The Legacy of Tradition

The funeral industry of St. John's is informed by a strong sense of tradition that is rooted in the Irish wake, which historically occurred at the home of the deceased:

> The people would get the person ready and put them in the casket and have them waking in the parlor or the coldest part of the house. Often times there would be two kitchen chairs that they would lay the casket on. That's what they would have, that was as fancy as you got in those days (Victor)

Despite their private location, traditional Irish wakes were community events that lasted for three to four days. In St. John's, this type of wake was practiced up until the 1950s and 1960s, at which point a desire for a change of location emerged:

> People decided, okay well it is a bit of an inconvenience to have dad down in the parlor you know all day, you get no peace, and there is people always coming and going in the house and some of those times, the old Irish wakes, [visitors] were there for 24 hours, they were there in the morning when you got up. So after a while people got fed up with it and said surely god there is a place that we can have dad or mom and then you can get a break, go home and come back (Victor)

Consequently, wakes in St. John's transitioned from the home to the funeral home in the 1960s. Despite the change of location many aspects of the wake remained the same, such as the desire for long periods of visitation:

> When I started here, everybody had a visitation from 10 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock in the night, for two days, and a funeral on the third day (Robert)

Today, visitation is still very popular in St. John's although this ritual has significantly changed due to the ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death. For example, the most popular hours of visitation are now 2-4 and 7-9, a significant change from the previous norm of 10am to 10pm. Funerals in St. John's, although still heavily influenced by tradition, look and feel very differently than they did historically:

> One time, it was very basic; it was someone to bury my mother but not anymore. It is a different ball game all together (Robert)

The Legacy of Family

Despite these changes, and possibly because of them, a well-respected and multi-generational business, with a recognizable family name, became invaluable. Consequently, the funeral homes of St. John's embrace and emphasize their history by making it publically accessible on their websites, including it in their branding, displaying it in their buildings, and celebrating it in local newspaper articles.

In St. John's, the absence of an institutional history in the industry can be fatal, as seen in the case of the Mount Carson Funeral Home and Crematorium, which opened in January of 1987 (The Evening Telegram, 1988, p.3) and was forced into receivership in June of 1988 (The Evening Telegram, 1988, p.3). Despite being the first funeral home in the city, and the province, to offer cremation, this was not enough to sustain the business at that time.

Mount Carson was unassociated with the three established funeral homes of the city and consequently had no history with the community and was forced to advertise. The advertising campaign of the Mount Carson funeral home was unsuccessful and according to Henry, a funeral director at one of the established funeral homes in the city, revealed the owner's inexperience and lack of knowledge with the industry as the failure of Mount Carson's advertising campaign and ultimately the business itself:

> He wasn't in the funeral profession. He wasn't a funeral director. He didn't know what he was doing. He was going door to door, handing out brochures and that kind of stuff (Henry)

To Henry, an advertising campaign that included the door-to-door delivery of brochures was completely inappropriate. The "ridiculousness" of the brochure is not rooted in the need to advertise, as all three of the established funeral homes in city have advertised, throughout the years, but the form of the advertisement itself: the door-to-door brochure. The danger, and ultimately the unsuccessful outcome, of a door-to-door advertising campaign is in its overt association with selling and being profit-oriented, an extremely sensitive aspect of the funeral business (Thompson, 1991).

The family-run and multi-generational funeral homes of St. John's do not participate in this kind of advertising because they do not have to. Instead, the decades-long histories of the funeral homes transform these businesses into pseudo community members. In doing so the funeral homes are not primarily understood as a profit-driven businesses, which is paradoxically good for business. The existence of this paradox is supported by the numerous reminders that I received from funeral directors that the funeral home is a "business" and at times needed to be treated as one, by both myself and the community.

In comparison, the Mount Carson Funeral Home, as a new business, did not gain from this paradox but instead suffered from it. This was especially true in their advertising campaign, as mentioned by Robert, a funeral director at one of the established funeral homes in the city:

> They advertised cremation, cause they had the only crematorium [in the city and the province]. They advertised it to the point that people thought it was only a crematorium [laughter from both of us] and with 60 cremations in Newfoundland [a year] of course it couldn't survive, so they ended up closing (Robert)

In its advertising campaign, Mount Carson's focus on cremation was especially detrimental because it was largely unknown and little understood. Additionally,

cremation was largely incompatible with the popular funeral rituals of the city, such as visitation and burial, in which the body of the corpse plays a central role.

I found a copy of Mount Carson's door-to-door pamphlet in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS). The pamphlet itself is clearly an attempt educate the community on the process, benefits, and history of cremation, but that is all it does; instead of reading like an advertisement for a fully functional funeral home, it reads like a short, although not entirely accurate, introduction to cremation.

The pamphlet is titled, in enlarged, bold letters: "Cremation Explained." Below the title, in smaller, un-bolded text, is the subtitle: "Answers to Questions Most Frequently Asked" and at the bottom of the page, below the image of a tree, is a message to the community, printed in the smallest text on the page: "This pamphlet is for general information. We sincerely regret should it arrive at your home in a time of serious illness or bereavement." [Figure 1: see appendix]

From the title of the pamphlet alone, the funeral home can be misunderstood as only a crematorium; flipping through the pamphlet cements this potential misunderstanding, as cremation is the only subject discussed. Additionally, the need to preface the pamphlet with an apology, in order to emphasize the informative, not predatory, nature of the advertisement, reveals the complex nature of funeral home marketing. Furthermore, Mount Carson's need to include this type of message, essentially an apology for the production of distaste or offense, is rooted in their status as a new business in the funeral industry.

In comparison, the established funeral homes of the city do not include these types of messages in their advertising, as they are trusted members of the community, not

suspiciously motivated newcomers. Instead, the advertisements of the established funeral homes use care and service oriented messages that further perpetuate the trope of family legacy and that therefore becomes valuable to the client.

These slogans, which rely on their history, family name, and reputation with the community, allow the established funeral homes to brand themselves as trusted members of the community. Consequently, the power and influence of established, respected, and trusted family names, in the funeral industry, are invaluable. This is especially true in St. John's, as explained by Henry:

> You are dealing with three companies that date back into the 1880s, you know 4th generation for Barrett's, 6th generation for Carnell's, and Caul's go back to the 1800s themselves, but not the same owners

In addition to their decades long history in the community, Barrett's, Carnell's, and Caul's, each have decades long associations with specific churches in the city, further contributing to the funeral homes' legitimacy, trust, and customer base. Consequently, the funeral industry of St. John's has been historically divided on religious lines.

The Legacy of Religion

The funeral home's historic associations with specific religious sects continue to impact the industry today, so much so that I was informed of industry's historic religious breakdown in almost every interview:

> When I came here first, the three funeral homes in St. Johns were known or associated with religion. The Protestants came to Barrett's, the Catholics went to Caul's, and the Anglicans went to Carnell's (Robert)

Today, the strict religious divide of the funeral industry of St. John's no longer exists as it once did, although the legacy of this divide still influences the business that the funeral homes are able to attract:

> The majority of our work is still based on tradition and where they come from in the past, when it or they were religious, but that's not why it is anymore, they just come here now because of tradition (Daniel)

The historic association between funeral homes and religion is not unique to Newfoundland; these types of relationships have developed across the country and have created long-lasting and far-reaching legacies, not only in their own cities but also across provinces:

> I can still tell you what religion what funeral home used to be in Toronto. You've got the names, you've got Turner & Porter they were Protestant. You've got the funeral homes in Quebec, exact same way- Magnus Poirier they did French and Butler's they did English (Daniel)

As explained by Daniel, a funeral home's association with a religious or cultural group has the ability to strengthen the influence of the funeral home's family name and therefore reputation. In St. John's, the legacy of the relationships between the funeral homes and the churches of the city was expressed to be especially strong.

Furthermore, the strength of the funeral home's religious legacy was attributed to the St. John's School System, which was also historically divided on religious lines, as explained by Henry:

> We were rolled in it, back then. I mean that's how it all started. There [were] the Catholic schools and the Anglican Schools and being isolated, on an island, we were able to perpetuate that [divide] a little longer than other places

At one time, religion ordered almost every aspect of life in St. John's, from schooling to death. But that began to change, first with the integration of the city's schools and later the funeral homes. Not only did the religious divide exist in St. John's, but its influence continued to be felt until relatively recently, as explained to me by Robert, after inquiring into when the city's strict religious divide began to dissolve:

> About 25 years ago, was the start of it, yah be 25/26 years ago, when they started talking about the school system. Then, 22 years ago, or so, it changed. It is hard to believe, I have a daughter that could only go to a protestant school. All of her friends were in a catholic school and they wouldn't let us put her in so that [the eventual integration of the school system] made a big difference in the funeral homes as well

The decreased role of religion in the funeral industry of St. John's is the by-product of a larger social shift away from institutionalized religion, the effects of which are more prevalent now than ever before:

> It just does not seem to be resonating as it used to, deep down, you know, I guess there may be spirituality vs. religion, there may be still some spirituality, there is still maybe some belief systems, but the, the delivery from a church perspective is just not as profound as it used to be. There are more people non-churched now, they go to the church to be married, they go to the church to be buried, but they are not going to the church for anything else (Henry)

Although the funeral homes of St. John's are no longer strictly divided on religious lines, the legacy of that division still affects how funerals look and feel. The city's religious history has greatly influenced what traditions have been supported, challenged, and modified in the transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death and its associated rituals. I turn now to religious ritual, which not only passively influences the contemporary framing of death in St. John's, through its historic legacy, but which also maintains an active influence through the clergy's presence and largely unchallenged authority over the vast majority of funerals in the city.

Chapter 6: Religious Ritual

Today, with a decrease in religious participation across the province (Emke 2002) the majority of funerals in St. John's have relocated from the churches of the city to the funeral homes. Despite this change in location, almost every funeral in the city is clergy-led and therefore highly structured by the dictates of religious rituals. In consequence, the preceding clergy are given almost complete control of the funeral service, which has resulted in the emergence of tensions between the bereaved, the clergy, and the funeral home staff, all of which are a result of the ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death in St. John's.

Ultimately, the church's highly traditional framing of death is increasingly in conflict with the popularization of the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death. These conflicts have motivated changes in the city's funeral homes, in an attempt to better align themselves with contemporary funeral industry's framing of death, such as the construction of chapels and the installation of sound systems to accommodate the personalized requests of the bereaved.

In comparison, the city's churches have resisted change, but have recently begun to offer compromises, in an attempt to accommodate the bereaved's personalized requests and ultimately maintain the church's involvement in contemporary funerals, through the inclusion of eulogies, contemporary music, and urns into traditional religious rituals. The impact of the funeral home's changes and the church's compromises, on the contemporary funerals of St. John's, will be further discussed in the following sections: the chapel, the clergy, and the service.

The Chapel

Today, the vast majority of funerals in St. John's have re-located to the chapels of the city's funeral homes, a shift that was explained by Daniel, "I'd say, 70% of our funerals are [conducted] from our chapel, so 30% are [conducted] from the church." This was not always the reality of the St. John's funeral industry, as noted by Robert who stated, "when I came here most funerals took place in the church and [today] that has changed a lot."

In St. John's, the shift from churches to funeral homes can be attributed to the community's increasingly limited interaction with religion, meaning that the churches themselves, let alone religious rituals, are no longer being experienced as familiar or comfortable, as explained by Victor:

> How many times have I seen people [during a funeral in a church], where they don't know where to sit, cross-themselves, or what they be doing because they haven't been inside [a] church

Furthermore these feelings, of being uncomfortable and out of place, are amplified when faced with traditional funeral rituals, that are increasingly incompatible with the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death. Consequently, the experiences of death, grief, and the funeral planning process have the potential to be made more or less comfortable through the choice of location: the funeral home or the church.

Today in St. John's, the funeral homes, like the churches, are not known to be especially appealing spaces/locations. Despite this, the funeral homes of St. John's are becoming an increasingly popular funeral location. According to the funeral directors that I spoke with, the appeal of a funeral home, as the location of a contemporary funeral service, in comparison to a church, was attributed to the space being "easier (Victor)" and

"more relaxed (Caroline)," which ultimately was understood to benefit the bereaved. Additionally, the influence of the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death is visible in the above listed qualities, all of which appeal to the personal preference of an individual over the mandates of religious ritual.

Consequently, funeral homes have become an increasingly popular funeral location in St. John's because they offer a space in which it is possible to challenge the traditional framing of death and its accompanying religious rituals. These "easier" and more relaxed spaces allow individuals, families, and entire communities to gradually transition from the church's traditional and highly structured framing of death to the contemporary funeral industry's contemporary framing of death.

Furthermore, the increasing appeal of funeral homes, in comparison to churches, can be understood through their willingness to change and become more compatible with the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death and in doing so, better aligning themselves with the contemporary tastes of the bereaved. An example of this commitment is the morbid to modern physical transformation of the funeral homes of the city. Robert described the, pre-transformation, space of the funeral home as:

> A kind of morbid setting, all of the funeral homes were decorated with red carpets, fancy sheers in the windows, and red curtains. Everything was very dreary [and] there was different lighting.

In comparison, Daniel described the, post-transformation, space of the funeral homes as, "bright [and] colorful, [with] pictures on the walls." Robert added to the descriptions of the funeral homes post-transformation by commenting on the appealing nature of the space, from the perspective of the bereaved, "today, people are looking for modern, just like your home, they want to feel like they are in a home when they come in here."

In St. John's, the shift in funeral home décor occurred between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, signaling not only a physical transformation but also the beginning of an on-going transition from the church's framing of death to the funeral industry's framing of death, as noted by a local funeral director, who noted that, "you don't see heavy drapes and dark colours any more in funeral homes. When I first came here there were red velvet drapes, which were almost like a barrier for the family. Now we make our facilities more comfortable" (The Telegram, 1999, 2).

The contrasting descriptions of the funeral homes' space, in the comparison or pre and post transformation, reveal the fundamental differences between the traditional and contemporary framings of death. Ultimately, contemporary funeral homes, as neutral and therefore transformable spaces, allow for an open interpretation of death and funerals. Whereas traditional funeral homes, as boldly dark spaces, offer a singular and therefore closed interpretation of death and funerals.

Despite these changes, the structure and feeling of funerals in St. John's remain dependent on the clergy:

> Sometimes the chapel can offer a little bit more freedom or personalization but again it depends on the clergy (Anne)

Today, in the funerals of St. John's, the central role of the clergy has endured, regardless of the increased use of non-denominational chapels and the physical transformation of funeral homes; an influence that will be further discussed below.

The Service

Today, despite the decreased participation in organized religion, Victor and Mary estimated that 99% of funerals that are held in the funeral homes of the city are clergy-led; as mentioned earlier by Daniel, this represents approximately 70% of the annual

number of funerals in the city. The remaining 30% of funerals in St. John's are conducted in the churches of the city and therefore would also be clergy-led.

Ultimately, today in St. John's, regardless of location, almost every funeral in the city is structured and controlled by a church and because of this almost every death in the city is framed religiously, as explained by Victor:

> They come in with what I call the sermon for all occasions [we both laugh]. Fill in the blanks. You have a sermon and put the persons name in there and you just go with it. I had one minister who used to do that all of the time, [he] had the same sermon for every funeral and he just put in the persons name

In a religious location, such a church, the traditional framing of death is expected, accepted, and exists unchallenged. As funerals have begun to relocate to new locations, however, such as funeral homes that operate under competing framings of death, challenges begin to emerge. This is true in St. John's, where traditional and therefore religious funeral services have become distasteful under the increasing influence of the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death. This ongoing shift of location, and ultimately framing, has resulted in the comforting rituals of the past becoming unsatisfying in the present.

The root of this discomfort, as earlier explained by Victor, stems from the perceived fill in the blank nature of religious funeral rituals, which do not showcase or acknowledge the individual identity of the deceased. Additionally, the decreased participation in formalized religion, across the province (Emke 2002), heightens the impersonal nature of religious funerals, resulting in a loss of personal connection between the clergy and the community:

> The priests, the majority, they don't know these people anymore, so what are they going to get up and talk about? (Mary)

Without a connection to the clergy, a fill in the blank, religious service becomes even more unappealing. In these types of services, not only are the clergy strangers but also the rituals that they offer are unfamiliar and therefore hollow.

Clergy led services remain the norm, despite the growing distaste with religious funerals. This does not mean that the traditional framing of death is left unchallenged, as the churches of the city are under increasing pressure to compromise with the contemporary tastes of the bereaved through the inclusion of personalized requests into traditional funeral services. These requests often include secular music or eulogies, both of which must be approved by the proceeding clergy:

> For the most part, it is up to the clergy, like what is allowed and what's not allowed, regarding the service (Anne)

Many of these requests are denied because of their incompatibility with the structure of the religious funeral service:

> A lot of times they are asking to have stuff included in their funeral services that the church is not willing to do (Robert)

Consequently, the churches' traditional framing of death is increasingly in conflict with funeral industry's contemporary framing of death.

Today in St. John's, the increasing desire for personalized funeral services has only recently begun. Consequently, the majority of the city's bereaved are content with the limited inclusion of personal requests into traditional services, meaning that the clergy still play a central role in the funeral services of the city.

As discussed, a clergy-led service places restrictions on almost every aspect of the ceremony itself, including the music, the theme, the readings, and the speakers. These restrictions allow for the production of religious ritual, which produces specific feelings,

understandings, and meanings about death that are rooted in religion and the commonality of life and death. Furthermore, traditional funeral rituals, such as religious funeral services, are highly structured, transitional ceremonies of separation that aim to minimize the potentially harmful effects of death, for both the family and community of the deceased (van Gennep 1960).

Contemporary funeral rituals, such as celebrations of life or "non-denominational services (Sarah)," are entirely un-structured rituals that allow for the individual construction of feelings, understandings, and meanings about death. Furthermore, these rituals allow the bereaved to skip uncomfortable or distasteful rituals, such as separation or disposal, leaving the bereaved at a higher risk of experiencing the potentially harmful effects of death.

According to van Gennep (1960), the damage that an individual, a family, and a community is subject to, as consequence of a death, is compared to the breaking of a chain; furthermore this damage can only be repaired through the participation in appropriate rituals, which repair the damage and reconnect the community that has been effected by the death. Consequently, without the full adherence of the rituals of separation, transition, and incorporation, the potentially harmful effects of an individual death, on the family and community of the deceased may never fully "recover".

In St. John's, prior to the introduction of the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death, the traditional, and largely religious, framing of death remained largely unchallenged; consequently, the funerals of St. John's looked and felt the same up until the physical transformations of the city's funeral homes, the popularization of personalization, and the introduction of cremation.

The transformed space of the city's funeral homes has allowed for the inclusion of personalized elements into the traditional and highly structured religious service, such as contemporary music and eulogies, both of which focus on the individual life of the deceased. The majority of these elements would not be allowed in a church and are only included in funeral home services with the permission of the preceding clergy:

> Yah, they [the clergy] will come [to the funeral home] and they still have to have certain things but they are more lenient. [For example], if you wanted to give a personal tribute, they'll let you do that here whereas you have to get permission in the church and a lot of times they will allow you to do it, but you have to do it before the service starts (Caroline)

As a consequence of the clergy's eroding influence over the framing of death in St. John's they have been forced into small compromises, such as the inclusion of a contemporary song before or after the service, so that the requested song is heard but is not officially apart of the religious service, in order to accommodate the personal requests of the bereaved into the highly structured service. For example, many of the funeral directors that I spoke with brought up the increasing popularity of contemporary music in services held at the funeral home:

> We have a sound system through the ceiling in the chapel and people will play music over that. A couple of weeks ago it was 'Spirit in the Sky'. I don't think traditionally you would have seen that at a funeral, but you see that more and more now- [the inclusion of] different songs. [It] might be a song that was important to them or [that] they enjoyed, [or] a song that was played at their wedding (Anne)

The desire to include contemporary music has been facilitated by the city's funeral homes through the installation of sound systems into their chapels. In comparison, a traditional funeral service does not require a sound system as it includes hymns not songs. Additionally, the contemporary funeral industry's commitment and encouragement of personal preference has resulted in a great variety of song requests, all

of which are highly individualized and therefore carry personalized meanings and associations for the family of the deceased.

Despite being more accommodating than ever before, the clergy's allowance of contemporary music is still very limited because it is up to the preceding clergy to decide whether or not the musical requests of the bereaved are compatible with the highly structured, traditional framing of death:

> We always tell the family: you would have to speak to the minister that is performing the service [as] they have a guideline that they have to follow. You may not be allowed to have that [song] played, so it's best to check with them. Again, sometimes, the music may not be the most suitable for a service so [the clergy] would have to give permission (Elizabeth)

Following the decreased participation in formalized religion, the inclusion of music has become increasingly meaningful in contemporary funeral services because of its "quasi-sacred" (DeNora 2012) nature. Consequently, the clergy's denial of musical requests, which are flagged because of their inappropriate content, such as "Drop Kick Me Jesus" (Elizabeth) or the music of "Johnny Cash" (Elizabeth), are strongly felt by the bereaved.

Furthermore, as a product of the clergy's reputation for not approving the musical requests of the bereaved, the funeral homes, in their willingness to better align themselves with the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death, which attempts to accommodate every personalized request of the bereaved, as explained by Elizabeth:

> A lot of times, what we would do, if they are not permitted to play it during the service, we'll say: well we will play [the denied song] 10min before you go into the service, in the visitation [room], so you can hear it. Once [the song] is finished we will move into the chapel

The funeral home's accommodation of the highly personal musical requests of the bereaved, further legitimize the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death in the

city. Finally, these requests further indicate the ongoing transition from the traditional to contemporary framing of death in the city.

The increasing popularity of contemporary funeral rituals represents the bereaved's attempt to create meaning from increasingly meaningless religious rituals, in which "god is at the forefront" (Robert) not the deceased.

The god-centered funeral rituals of the past have become increasingly meaningless in a society in which secularism and religious nones are on the rise. Additionally, when presented with an alternative, such as the highly personalized and self-centered funerals of the contemporary funeral industry, the god-centered rituals of the past have become increasingly meaningless. Furthermore, without acknowledging the identity of the individual, religious funerals are not only become increasingly meaningless but also distasteful, as stated by Caroline: "Why are you going to go to a funeral? It [the funeral] is not about the person who has died."

Today in St. John's, completely secular funeral services, or "celebrations of life" are very rare; Mary commented that she could "probably count on one hand" the number of secular funerals that she has been involved with. Additionally, Daniel estimated that his funeral home "probably did one or two non-religious funerals a year."

Interestingly, the funeral directors referred to these types of services as "humanistic" (Victor) or "non-denominational" (Elizabeth), terminology that further reveals the continued influence of the traditional framing of death in St. John's as these types of funerals are understood and defined through the lens of religion. Furthermore, the individuals who lead secular services were referred to as "non-religious clergy" (Daniel), further revealing the continued influence of the traditional framing of death in

the St. John's funeral industry, despite the community's increasing dissatisfaction and distaste with traditional funeral services.

Furthermore, these secular services were described to include speeches, songs, and poems, all of which are used to highlight the individuality of the deceased. Unlike religious funerals, which produce meaning through highly structured rituals that emphasis God and the commonality of death, contemporary rituals produce meaning through personal symbols that emphasize the individuality of the deceased, such as superheroes, as explained by Sarah:

> [The deceased] was into the superheroes. [The family] came and they all had their superheroes on and that's how they dealt with it, he was only 30 odd years old and had cancer. That's how they dealt with it, that's how they could. I don't think any clergy could have helped them, but getting together and celebrating how *he* would want to be celebrated got them through it

Unlike religious symbolism, the secular symbols of superheroes are satisfying for the bereaved as they not only highlight the individuality of the deceased but also produce a celebratory atmosphere.

Secular funeral services are still rare in St. John's, although the desire for the inclusion of secular elements into religious funeral services, such as contemporary music, reveal the community's increasing desire for the meaning that is produced through the secular spiritual rituals of the contemporary funeral industry's individually focused framing, not the impersonal and highly structured religious rituals of the traditional framing of death.

Today, the vast majority of funerals services in St. John's remain under the traditional framing of religion. Despite this, the influence of the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death can be seen in almost every other aspect of the city's funerals,

from the visitation to the disposal and everything in-between. Ultimately, while still clergy-led, the funerals of St. John's are keeping up, in terms of personalization, with other more secular regions of Canada; all of which will be further discussed in the following sections of personalization and cremation.

Chapter 7: Personalization

The contemporary funeral industry's framing of death is built on the concept of personalization; the notion that every individual is unique and therefore every funeral should be as well. This concept is extremely compatible with contemporary North American society in which an individual's identity and rights are central (Klass et al. 1996 as cited in Anderson 2001).

Consequently, the funeral industry's commitment to personalization is not solely a reflection of their care for the deceased and their families; it is also a profitable business decision. As Sanders has noted, the American funeral industry "generated $11.7 billion in 2003 and over $15 billion in 2006" (2009; 451). This scale of profit was only made possible through the emergence of personalized funeral products, such as caskets emblazoned with professional sports logos, gemstones made from cremated ash, and fingerprint jewelry (Sanders 2009).

Although personalized funeral products are profitable, they are also popular as many people consume these products in an attempt to produce personal meaning from death. As mentioned earlier, the majority of funeral services in St. John's are religious and therefore the clergy controls, and often limits, the inclusion of personalized elements. In comparison, funeral directors, whose work is free from the limitations of religious ritual, encourage the inclusion of personalization in every other aspect of the funeral, from the visitation to the disposal.

Today in St. John's, the increasing popularity of the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death, which is a product of the ongoing transition that is occurring

within the local funeral industry, has resulted in the emergence of a wide variety of funerals, as explained by Caroline:

> It is such extremes. You will get some people who want to do the full on traditional: the open casket, the church service, and the cemetery. Then you will get people who are in and out in like 5min, just cremation that is it, goodbye [she laughs]. So there still is a lot of diversity in St. John's of what people want. It is starting to go more with cremation and you do see a lot of people getting away from the church, but it still is very diverse in what people want to do

The range of funeral tastes in the city is a reflection of the embrace of personalization, which is not only encouraged by the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death but also contemporary North American culture in which the individual is central. For example, Caroline expressed that today, "there are *so* many options for *everything* you do in life, so why not have a hundred options for [she laughs] your funeral." The St. John's funeral industry is in the process of offering such a variety in funeral planning options, as emphasized by Henry, who, while showing me the funeral home's selection binder, compared the number of traditional funeral options of the past to the contemporary funeral options of the present: "instead of having 2 or 3 options, you've got 25 or 30."

Consequently, personalization has become so popular in St. John's that when I asked for the description of the average funeral, Henry replied that "there is no [average], you can't define an average funeral anymore." The demise of the average funeral, which was rooted in religious tradition, is a product of the popularization of the cotemporary funeral industry's framing of death. In the St. John's, the personalization of contemporary funerals can be divided into two categories: products and personal possessions.

Products

The first category, products, represents any object that is produced, marketed, and sold in an attempt to highlight the individuality of the deceased, such as caskets, urns, and prayer

cards, or to literally embody the deceased, such as cremation jewelry and fingerprint jewelry. The majority of these objects rely on personalized images and symbols to portray the identity of the deceased. Interestingly, many of these personalized images and symbols are generic, simplistic, and selected from a corporate catalogue. In addition, many of these images are gendered, such as the selection of knitting needles to represent your grandmother or a fishing pole to represent your grandfather. Despite the often-generic nature of these personalized products, they remain popular.

The oldest personalized products of the contemporary funeral industry are caskets, for which many personal choices can be made to reflect the identity, interest, and status of the deceased, including: the colour and material, the lining, personalized inserts, and thematic corners. Although older, the demand for both burial and rental caskets remain because of the continued popularity of visitation, the late introduction of cremation, and the ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death in St. John's.

Personalized products, such as a casket, represent an opportunity for the bereaved to display the individuality and personality of the deceased, as well as their memory of the deceased (Hallam and Hockey 2001) as the majority of these objects are chosen and consumed by the living, for the benefit of the living. Consequently, personalization, which is marketed as an opportunity to highlight the identity of the deceased, may more accurately be understood as an attempt to construct a memory of the deceased (Hallam & Hockey 2001).

This is especially relevant in contemporary Canadian societies, such as St. John's, where participation in formalized religion has decreased but the comfort of spirituality is

still desired. Therefore the personalization of funeral products, through the revival and re-creation of memories, becomes a way for the bereaved to mark the life of the dead that is not god-centered, but self-centered.

For example, when Victor explained to me the appeal of personalized products he stated that, "they [the bereaved] like it because it relates to what mom or dad was in their minds." He used an example, the last supper casket insert, to explain the appeal of these products:

> If mom was religious, [they would select] the last supper, they probably saw it in their house, the wall hangings that had the last supper [voice change to a customer voice] oh yah that reminds me of grandmother because she used to have that up on her wall [voice change to normal voice] right, so they put that in [the last supper as a casket insert]

The image in question, a mass-produced print, of an internationally recognized painting, the last supper, is a generic and often kitschy image that is a reflection of the bereaved's memory of the deceased rather than a reflection of the deceased individual's identity or personality. Furthermore, the generic nature of this image is highlighted when Victor asks if I have ever seen a last supper wall hanging, which I have, ironically in my Grandmother's basement.

Furthermore, the meaning that is produced in personalized funeral products is rooted in the beliefs of the living. An example of this is the wide variety of caskets, urns, and vaults that are made available for purchase. The selection of disposal products represents another opportunity to personalize the funeral, although once again it is the living, not the dead that make the majority of these selections as the majority of the funeral homes' clients do not make funeral arrangements prior to death, despite the efforts of funeral directors who strongly advocate pre-need planning. Therefore

personalized funeral products are not a direct reflection of the deceased's identity, personality, and beliefs, but instead an interpretation of the deceased's identity that is constructed from the bereaved's memory of the deceased as well as the bereaved's beliefs.

For example, when Henry explained the different types of caskets, urns, and vaults, he listed not only the materials of these products but also their association with decomposition in the minds of the bereaved:

> If people want a steel casket, they are looking for protection; they want the grave to stand up so they'll have a steel casket vs. a wooden casket, which generally will break down over time. Or if they don't want any part of that at all, then cremation steps in. You've got a wide variety of urns: from wooden urns to brass, bronze, you name it. Obviously the metal urns [and] the plastic urns will last a lifetime. The wooden urns will break down overtime. You can get concrete vaults, steel vaults, and polyethylene vaults. The vault will protect the casket and the casket will be maintained; it's essentially what your mindset will allow you to have. I mean, if you know about the decomposition process and you don't have any problems with that then you will have a wooden casket, a wooden urn, and everything will just go back to the earth

Henry understands the selection of disposal products to be influenced, not by the identity of the deceased, but by the family's understandings, beliefs, and feelings about decomposition. For example, keeping the dead body protected only benefits the living by protecting the physical memory of the deceased. Furthermore, suggesting that these products will last a lifetime contributes to the notion that the dead will remain protected throughout the lifetime of the purchaser, contributing to the maintenance of the identity and memory of the dead. Finally, Henry's statement, that the only inhibitor to a family's selection of personalized products is their mindset, suggests that the feelings, beliefs, and memories of the living are central to the funeral planning process, not the identity of the deceased.

Furthermore, personalized funeral products have the potential to extend or maintain the relationship between the deceased and their family through the fulfillment of specific requests, such as the selection of a specific casket, despite the impracticality or the cost:

> We've had families where mom really wants to go in a white casket or a blue casket, but she wants to be cremated. So because of [the colour request] the rental is not available, they would use this [a burial casket of the desired colour] (Anne)

Simple symbols, such as the colour of a casket become so meaningful that the object itself, let alone its price or practicality, become inconsequential. Today, personalization can be incorporated into almost any funeral product that is supplied at the funeral home, which in addition to caskets includes prayer cards and urns. In comparison to caskets, where the selection is limited to the number of models in the showroom or the number of insert-designs in the catalogue, the personalization of prayer cards is seemingly limitless. For example, when flipping through one of the selection books, that is used in the creation of personalized prayer cards, Anne explained:

> This is one of the [selection] books [a binder full of images]. We've often had hockey teams on these [the prayer cards] or a car that they liked or a picture of a cabin or whatever the thing may be [she flips through some pages] that's another way to personalize

Although numerous, the images that are made available to the bereaved in the funeral home's selection book are not as limitless as they seem, as they are constrained by both the taste of the individual funeral home, as well as the influence of the contemporary funeral industry.

Additionally, the examples that have been given, such as images of hockey teams, cars, and cabins, reflect the activities or things that the deceased are remembered to have enjoyed rather than the identity of the deceased. In doing so personalized funeral objects, such as prayer cards, rely on generic images of individualism that align with the

bereaved's memory of the deceased. In St. John's the popularization of these symbols is increasing, as explained by Anne:

> I would say there are more options [for urns]. It is always changing, all different styles, like we have one now that is all camouflage, we probably wouldn't have seen that 10 or 15 years ago

Today, the variety of personal symbols and images that are used to personalize funeral products are so diverse that I even saw a breast cancer themed urn in one of the showrooms. When I expressed my surprise at seeing an urn with a pink ribbon, the funeral director also expressed surprise, not about the urn, but my negative reaction to it.

Additionally, I was quickly informed that not only was there a keepsake version of the pink ribbon urn but also a full size version, which I was informed may be out of stock, suggesting its popularity. Like the logos of professional sports teams, the pink ribbon is a widely recognized and highly visible symbol that represents an active movement that is both associated with the deceased, but that also contributes to the maintenance of the memory of the deceased through an immortal, although highly ironic, symbol.

The endless introduction of personalized funeral products reveals the bereaved's desire for these products but also the insatiable nature of these products because of their reliance on hollow symbols of generic individualism. Consequently there is always a need for new products, as the bereaved are searching for the product that best, or most accurately, highlight the identity of the deceased.

Today, many funeral homes cannot keep up and because of this, some families turn to the Internet to source personalized products. Other families have forgone the

personalized products of the contemporary industry altogether and have instead supplied their own personalized products, such as urns, as explained by Caroline:

> We've had people here in teapots [we both laugh] we've had clocks. People will go to Winners and buy a fancy looking vase [I laugh] and bring it in and that's the urn [she laughs]

When the bereaved supply their own funeral products, such as urns, they are providing themselves with an opportunity to create an extremely personal product that highlights a very specific aspect of deceased's identity, as explained by Sarah:

> We let them [the bereaved] personalize themselves. So here you have the option to bring your own urn. So [laughter from her] one guy brought in a pickle jar [she laughs again] with burlap on it. It looked really nice, you wouldn't even say it was an [urn] [laughter from both of us- instead of saying the word urn] It was nice. The guy who brought in a pickle jar, apparently he loved pickles [laughter from both of us]. The big Costco bucket of pickles [laughter again]

Unlike the generic and mass-produced personalized funeral products of the contemporary funeral industry, which must be broadly appealing in order to be profitable, the products that the bereaved source themselves are more likely to highlight very individual aspects of the deceased's identity, such as a love for pickles.

As mentioned earlier, not all personalized funeral products rely on generic images and symbols of individuality to portray the identity of the deceased. Instead, some products literally embody the deceased, through the incorporation of the deceased's body into funeral products, such as cremation and fingerprint jewelry. Additionally, whether a funeral product expresses the individuality of the deceased through generic symbol of individualism or through the incorporation of a portion of the deceased's body, the tangible and portable nature of these funeral products is key to their appeal. Both of these qualities can be seen in cremation jewelry, an increasingly popular funeral product in St. John's, as reported by Daniel:

> In the last 2 or 3 years [the jewelry] has become *really, really* popular. I'd say we've had jewelry for about 10 years. In the first 5 years we sold 20 to 30 pieces a year [he clears his throat] now we're selling, I mean, it could be 20 to 30 pieces a week. We can't keep it in stock

The introduction and popularization of cremation jewelry is relatively recent, once again signaling the ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death in St. John's. Furthermore, Daniel explains that the appeal of cremation jewelry is rooted in its portable nature, which is emphasized in comparison to keepsake urns and cremation jewelry:

> Keepsake [urns] was popular before [cremation] jewelry was popular because you could take them home. Now the jewelry is popular because it is more wearable. You can take an urn home [but] what are you going to do with it? Put it on a shelf and that's it. But now, but now you've got it on your neck

As explained by H, the ability to literally carry a piece of piece of the deceased's body around your neck can be extremely appealing, especially in comparison to passive products, such as keepsake urns, that do nothing. Furthermore, cremation jewelry represents an active product through which the bonds between the living and the dead can be maintained (Hessels, Poots, & Venbrux 2012). Although popular, the appeal of cremation jewelry and the type of bonds that these products produce are not universally appealing:

> A lot of people know about the jewelry. [It] seems to be a popular thing [as] a lot of people will ask for [it]. I find that it is either one way or the other, people really want the jewelry or they will say –oh my god no! I would never wear so and so's ashes on my neck. I don't want that; don't mention that [she laughs]. So you either want it [and] love it or [you are] like don't even bring it up [she laughs]. There is really no in-between, [people don't say] oh maybe I will have that [or] I will have to think about it. It is [either]: I want it or no [she laughs] (Caroline)

The polarizing emotional reactions that cremation jewelry produces in the bereaved, of either comfort or disgust, can be understood through the role that the body plays during interaction rituals.

Collins argues that the strongest and most intense rituals are those that include "full bodily experiences" (2004, 60). Consequently, funeral rituals, or funeral products, that incorporate bodily contact with the deceased, such as cremation jewelry, have the potential to produce the "highest emotional energy payoffs" (Collins 2004, 248). Therefore the bereaved's reaction to this type of emotional energy payoff is relevant in the consumption of cremation jewelry, which essentially offers an intimate connection between the body of the deceased and the body of the bereaved.

In St. John's, despite the popularity of cremation jewelry, fingerprint jewelry has not enjoyed the same success. As explained by Daniel, this may be a result of the product's incompatibility with the St. John's funeral industry's framing of death or the product's uncanny (Freud 1919) and therefore uncomfortable resemblance to the body of the deceased:

> [Fingerprint jewelry is] not as popular. I don't know why. On the mainland it is probably more popular because I have a friend who owns a company who sells fingerprint jewelry and they are really busy, but for some reason in Newfoundland it is not as popular. I don't know why, maybe we are not promoting it as much or we don't find the need of it. We did one the other day for a lady- people like it. But maybe the fact that the fingerprint is there, it is in their face, and maybe it is too much. I don't know

The unpopularity of fingerprint jewelry highlights the impact and influence of the local funeral industry's framing of death as well as the emotional energy payoff that is produced during bodily interactions, such as the bereaved wearing the fingerprint of the

deceased. Consequently, fingerprint jewelry can be experienced as distasteful when it is understood to be too similar to the body.

In comparison, cremation jewelry is less likely to be experienced as too similar to the body and therefore less likely to be perceived as distasteful because cremains, unlike fingerprints, are safely concealed. Additionally, the cremains have already been processed in order to make them more "tasteful", meaning that blended ash bears little resemblance to bone, let alone the body; therefore even if the bereaved were exposed to the cremains that reside inside their jewelry, this encounter, in comparison to an encounter with a fingerprint, is less likely to produce a negative emotional reaction.

Ultimately, the contemporary funeral industry has produced a variety of personalized products that have become increasingly popular because of their portable nature, which according to Daniel, allow the bereaved to happily walk away from the funeral home:

> [People are] walking away with [funeral products], they want [them], they are happy to have [them]- they get a keepsake. Whether I like it or don't, [whether I] think its great or bad, people are walking away with something that is tangible. They have [something] rather than just walking away from a cemetery [where] you go back and it is just a headstone

The desire to walk away with something that is tangible once again suggests a desire to maintain the bonds between the living and the dead (Hessels, Poots, & Venbrux 2012). As a consequence of this desire, the personalized funeral products that can be taken home and incorporated into the everyday life of the bereaved have become especially appealing. This is true of cremation jewelry, but also jewelry box and picture frame urns, both of which were explained by Victor:

> We have [urns] that are like jewelry boxes- you can open up the lid and the plastic urn goes inside with the cremated remains. [Or] you can take the plastic urn, bury

> [it]and take the [jewelry box] urn home with you, if you want to, and put pictures and jewelry and anything that is pertinent to your mother or father [into it], so that is one option. And we've got another [urn] that's got a picture frame and it disconnects, it magnetizes on the front, and you can take that, the picture frame, home with you, and the wood [of the picture frame] matches the [wood of] urn that goes in the ground, so these different options will work

Finally, personalized funeral products, because of their portable and tangible nature, act as souvenirs, by creating a physical memory of the deceased that can be used to create and maintain the bonds between the living and the dead. Furthermore, in an increasingly secular and consumer society, the comfort of consumption (Sanders 2009) is increasingly relied upon in all aspects of life, resulting in a comfort that can be found in not walking away from the funeral home empty handed.

Personal Possessions

Despite the increasing popularity of personalized funeral products, most of these objects act as souvenirs, meaning that they are produced and consumed in an attempt to maintain the memory of the deceased after the bereaved has left the funeral home. Consequently, personalized funeral products are not used to personalize the funeral itself.

Furthermore, as the St. John's funeral industry is in the midst of a transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death, many aspects of the city's funerals remain traditional, such as the service itself whereas other aspects have fully incorporated the contemporary ritual of personalization, such as the visitation room. In this context, the enthusiastic embrace of personalization may be understood as an attempt to fill the personalization void that is experienced during the highly structured funeral service.

In the filling of this void, a wide variety of objects that were either owned by the deceased, feature the accomplishments of the deceased, or reflect the interests of the deceased have been increasingly brought into the visitation rooms of the city. The

inclusion of these objects represents the bereaved's acceptance and use of personalization to make meaning of death.

Furthermore, as many of these objects are former possessions of the dead they are inherently personal, unlike the generic and mass-produced personalized funeral products that are manufactured, marketed, and sold by the contemporary funeral industry that act as souvenirs. Comparatively, the personal possessions of the dead, which are displayed during a visitation, act as artifacts, representing and extending the life, image, and memory of the deceased, from the perspective and memory of the bereaved.

Traditionally, the visitation room, like the service itself, was very sparse, as explained by Anne, who's description of a traditional visitation included: "the casket or the urn, flowers, and maybe a few pictures." Interestingly, Anne's definition of a traditional visitation included either a casket or an urn, which again reveals the transitional nature of St. John's funeral industry. She went on to say, that today, visitations have "become a lot more personalized then what [they] used to be."

In comparison, Elizabeth's definition of a traditional visitation draws from a time before the contemporary funeral industry's influence was felt in St. John's, as seen through his description of a traditional visitation "before, [when] you walked into the waking room and all you would see was basically the casket and the person laying in the casket." These descriptions of traditional visitations include little, if any, elements of personalization. In comparison, Elizabeth went on to explain that "now [the visitation room] is memorabilia." Anne echoed this, explaining how the bereaved, through the inclusion of personal possessions, "make [the visitation room] their own for a couple of days."

From these descriptions, it can be concluded that during the traditional visitation rooms of the past, the body of the deceased was central, whereas today, in contemporary visitation rooms, the personal possessions of the dead have become central. In doing so, "traditional" funeral rituals are in the midst of a transition as they are being re-constructed to fit contemporary needs, tastes, and desires. An indication of this transition can be seen in Sarah's description of the role that the personal possessions of the dead have begun to play in traditional rituals, such as visitation:

> It has gone away from your traditional. You get families now that don't even want to purchase flowers. I had one guy; he was into motorcycles and that so what we set up on the casket, instead of his flowers, [was] his motorcycle jacket with his helmet and his boots and his gloves that was the display

The replacement of a traditional floral display with the personal possessions of the deceased is a reflection of the contemporary funeral industry's influence on the re-construction of funeral rituals in St. John's, especially through the industry's philosophy of personalization.

Not only are traditional rituals being re-structured in order to incorporate personalization through the inclusion of the possessions of the dead, such as casket displays and visitation rooms but contemporary rituals, such as cremation, are also being incorporated into the reconstruction of the traditional funeral in the city.

For example, Victor, Sarah, and Caroline commented that the families whose visitations included an urn, instead of a body, were more likely to bring in a greater number of personal possessions. Caroline attributed this phenomenon to the bereaved's desire to be engaged with either someone, the body of the deceased, or something, the personal possessions of the deceased:

> "When [the visitation] is for an urn, [the family] tend to bring [in] more pictures and more of [the deceased's] things [in comparison to a visitation with] a casket- I guess you have something to look at [when a casket is present] [she laughs]."

Without the presence of the corpse, the bereaved and their visitors experience a lower emotional energy payoff (Collins). In an attempt to fill this void, the deceased's possessions, which are used to replicate their presence of the deceased's body, are displayed throughout the room.

In St. John's, a city with a strong history of traditional funeral rituals, the re-construction of those rituals, through the inclusion of personalization, has been embraced with great enthusiasm. So much so, that Daniel commented that the visitation rooms of the city now include "everything you could think of." He then went on to list some of the items that he had seen:

> People bring their pets in. We have had motorcycles in our visitation rooms, we have had knitting needles, sewing machines, hunting equipment, fishing equipment. I mean you name it- we have had it. As long as it is not illegal or causing a problem- we will let them do it

Like Daniel, all of the funeral directors that I spoke with listed a wide variety of personal objects that they had seen in contemporary visitation rooms. Furthermore, in the funeral home, the inclusion of personal objects is only limited by the legality or disturbance factor of those objects, none of which were mentioned to me. Anne expanded on Daniel's list of personal objects, as seen below:

> Nowadays, we see families coming in hanging up hockey jerseys or sports jerseys, bringing in golf clubs or hockey sticks, bringing in flags for memberships or groups that the individual might have been involved in. If the person was into model cars they will bring those in and put those around the room, [they] bring in quilts that they may have made or that they enjoyed. All of these sorts of things are brought into the room and hung about for people to see and look at. They more or less make [the visitation room] their own little space. It all depends, if the person was in any articles for example, maybe they were an athlete when they were younger, and they

> will bring in the newspaper clippings and post those around. People bring in more and more pictures all [of] the time too

Every object that is brought into the visitation rooms is highly preformative, as they have been intentionally selected by the bereaved to portray specific aspects of the deceased's life and identity. In doing so, these objects are meant to portray the individuality of the deceased through their hobbies, achievements, and memberships, although as mentioned earlier, the display of these objects should be understood as interpretations of the deceased's identity as, in most cases, they are highly dependent on the memory and taste of the bereaved. As explained by Anne "people try to bring in things that represent the person."

Furthermore, the preformative nature of these objects is revealed through their intentional "display" (Caroline and Mary). For example, these items are "hung" (Anne) on the walls, placed on "pedestals" (Elizabeth), perched on "tripods"(Victor), and "laid around the room" (Caroline). From Caroline's perspective, these displays are constructed as a "conversation piece," as they allow for the easy initiation of conversation for the visitors of the bereaved. Additionally, the display of personal objects is also constructed for comfort of the bereaved:

> [With] some people you go into [the visitation room] and it is like you are walking into a living room. They will have a bowl of candy on a table, they'll have pictures around, they'll have different things hung around, [and] albums out on tables for you to go through (Anne)

The bereaved's transformation of visitation rooms into their own, personal, spaces and the funeral home's allowance of this, to the extent that these spaces have the potential to look and feel like residential spaces, reveals the local industry's acceptance of personalization.

An acceptance, and arguably a commitment to personalization, that is seen through Caroline's comments on the importance of the bereaved constructing their own space in the visitation room:

> I feel like we try and be really accommodating to people. We have had people move our furniture around, take the pictures off the wall, like [they] put up their own family pictures on the walls. We do not care, we will just move it back when they leave, if that is going to make them feel better, or you know give them a little bit of comfort, or whatever, for the days that they are here, why not?

The acceptance of the bereaved's need to produce personalized meaning, even through a physical re-construction of the space, was highly respected by all three of the city's funeral homes. Furthermore, the accommodation of this need appears to have become a responsibility of the funeral home and its staff, especially with the decreasing role of religion in the contemporary funerals of the city.

Additionally, because of the central role that the personal possessions of the dead have come to play in the contemporary funerals of St. John's, the individual identity of the deceased has also become central. Consequently, the lives of the deceased, instead of their deaths, have been emphasized. This can be seen in the emergence and popularity of celebratory rhetoric, as explained by Caroline:

> They are definitely getting to be more about the person. Like I have been saying, it is more personalized, it is more of a celebration type of thing. I think it is gaining more meaning whereas you know your [traditional] funeral [where] you had this, this, and this, and that's it-- what does that mean to anybody? [She laughs] I guess to some people it means something, but when you can have it more about the person- I feel like that is better for everyone involved. It is, paying honour and tribute to the deceased [by] having something that is meaningful to them, and you know in their honour and then the family feels better about doing it that way

Individualized meaning, although not universally desired or embraced, has become increasingly appealing in St. John's under the influence of the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death. Furthermore, like Caroline, all of the funeral directors

supported the increasing popularity of personalization, often citing it's emotional benefit for the bereaved:

> I think it helps the families too [the display of personal objects] because it makes it more personal for *them*, sometimes, [visitation] rooms can be a bit sterile and cold feeling, so I think when they bring [personal objects] in, it helps them a little bit, knowing that they could come in and see this stuff, so the moving on process is not so hard because they [the family of the deceased] can take in who this person was, especially from the outside perspective of other people coming in as well. And once that starts [brining personal objects in], it doesn't seem to end- a lot of times it keeps on going. So that's probably one of the new traditions that has started, more so, than anything else (Elizabeth)

The description of traditional visitation rooms, which lack the personal possessions of the dead, as sterile and cold is yet another indicator of the ongoing transition from the traditional to contemporary framing of death in the city, as well as its acceptance, by both funeral professionals and the bereaved.

Chapter 8: Cremation

Poutler (2011) has argued that the contemporary funeral industry uses a traditional framing to market the services that they provide. She goes so far as to suggest that "the term 'traditional funeral' has been claimed by the funeral industry" (2011,136) as its largest and most effective marketing tool. Today, however, because of the increasing popularity of cremation, the usefulness and therefore the profitability of the concept of the traditional funeral is at risk. Consequently, the contemporary funeral industry has been forced to re-construct the traditional funeral to mitigate the incorporation of cremation.

In Canada, the acceptance of cremation into the re-constructed framing of the traditional funeral varies greatly by region, due to the range of time that cremation was introduced across the country. For example, Canada's first crematory opened in Quebec in 1903 (Poutler 2011), after which crematories opened for the first time in British Columbia in 1912 and Ontario in 1933 (Poutler 2011). The first crematory in Atlantic Canada opened in New Brunswick in 1939 and was followed much later by the opening of the first crematories in Nova Scotia in 1974 (Poutler 2011) and Newfoundland in 1987 (The Evening Telegram, 1988, 36).

In Newfoundland, prior to 1986, bodies to be cremated were shipped to Nova Scotia, resulting in an annual rate of cremation of less than 1% in the province (Emke 2002). Comparatively, in 1986, the Canadian rate of cremation was 27% (CANA 2011). The attempted re-construction of the traditional funeral to include cremation represents the power of the frame; this is especially in St. John's where cremation represents a relatively new technology, especially in comparison to other Canadian provinces.

The Introduction and Popularization of Cremation

In 1987, Newfoundland's first crematory opened in St. John's (The Evening Telegram, 1988, p.36). In its first year of business, the Mount Carson Funeral Home conducted around 50 cremations (The Evening Telegram, 1988, 36). By 1988, Mount Carson's was expecting to conduct around 100 cremations (The Evening Telegram, 1988, 36). Despite anticipating a doubling of business, in one year, the owner of Mount Carson predicted slow long-term growth, insisting that one crematorium would be enough to meet the city's demand for the next 10 years (The Evening Telegram, 1988, 36).

Despite the continued increase in cremation, in 1988 Mount Carson went into receivership after one and a half years of operation (The Evening Telegram, 1988, 3). The owner cited a decrease in full funerals, negatively impacting the bottom line, and mortgage refinancing as the reasoning behind the closure (The Evening Telegram, 1988, 3). In 1988, a couple of months after the closure of Mount Carson, it was announced that Carnell's was opening a new crematorium in the city (The Evening Telegram, 1988, 3).

The local newspaper reported on the opening with little enthusiasm, as seen in the following headline: "Little use expected of new crematorium" (The Evening Telegram, 1988, 3). The owner did little to challenge this, stating, "the demand for cremation [in St. John's] will likely be low for five to 10 years yet" (The Evening Telegram, 1988, 3).

In 1998, eleven years after the opening of the first crematorium in the province, Newfoundland's rate of cremation had grown to 4-6%, representing 150 to 200 cremations (Emke 2002). In comparison, in 1998 the Canadian rate of cremation was 42% (CANA 2011).

By 2002, it was estimated that the cremation rate of the St. John's Metro area had grown to 33%, representing 400 cremations (The Express, 2003, 21). In comparison, the cremation rate of the rest of the province was estimated to be much lower, approximately 10% (The Express, 2003, 21). Additionally, in 2002 the national rate of cremation had grown to 51% (CANA 2011). In 2006, it was reported that Newfoundland's cremation rate was approximately 30 to 40% (The Telegram, 2006, 1), whereas the national rate had grown to 57% (CANA 2011).

After 2006, I was unable to find any documents in the CNS collection that stated the cremation rate of Newfoundland or St. John's. Furthermore, after 2006 the number of documents on local funeral homes and funeral directors had significantly decreased. Consequently, prior to conducting my interviews I was completely unaware of the contemporary rate of cremation in St. John's. I did anticipate some growth in the city's rate of cremation as the national rate had experienced growth since 2006, although the extent of that growth was entirely unexpected.

In the fall of 2017, the funeral directors that I interviewed estimated the St. John's rate of cremation to be between 75% (Sarah and Daniel), 80% (Robert), and 85% (Victor). These estimations were shocking, not only because they represent such a steep increase from the province's estimated 2006 rate of cremation at 30 to 40%, but also because these estimates exceeds Canada's projected national rate of cremation of 63% in 2016 (CANA 2011). Not all of the funeral directors that I interviewed mentioned an estimated rate of cremation, however they all expressed the increasing popularity of cremation in St. John's.

For example, Henry described the introduction and popularization of cremation into the city as a "sea change," impacting almost every aspect of the business, from the selection room to the prep room. For example, Anne commented on the impact of cremation during her twelve-year career, reflecting that:

> When I first started [in St. John's] there was more involvement in the prep room, [there were] more calls where you knew it was more likely to be a preparation. Nowadays, you have to wait, cause you don't know if people are going with cremation. Even families that pre-arranged for a rental [casket] or a traditional funeral will sometimes change to cremation, it is becoming much more popular

Although more prevalent than ever before, the impact of cremation on the St. John's funeral industry is still unknown, as the transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death, and therefore the transition from burial to cremation, is ongoing.

This transition has resulted in the creation of a variety of cremation crises for both the staff and the customers of the city's funeral homes, all of which are products of the abrupt emergence and popularization of contemporary cremation and its associated products and rituals of disposal, such as direct cremation, scattering, cremation jewelry, and the home storage of urns.

The Crisis of Cremation

After my conversations with funeral directors in St. John's, I was left with the impression that cremation was a sensitive subject. As mentioned earlier, the city is in the midst of a transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death, which has led to the increasing popularity of cremation in the city, so much so that today, according to Elizabeth, "cremation is always in [funerals] somewhere."

In St. John's, as a consequence of cremation's increasing popularity, a number of "cremation packages" (Anne) have emerged in an attempt to meet the changing tastes of the bereaved. Because of this, cremation was explained to me in sales-centered language. For example, Victor spoke of a cremation "menu" that was created for customers, following an increase of inquires into the monetary breakdown of the funeral home's incorporated service fees. Victor went on to explain that the cremation menu lists the contemporary services and disposal rituals that the funeral home's customers have expressed an interest in, such as, "direct cremation, visitation, direct cremation with scattering, direct cremation with [a] memorial service, and so forth."

In addition to cremation menus, Anne mentioned the existence of "cremation packages [with different] steps and stairs." In this sales-centered framing of funeral services, traditional funerals, which include a casket, preparation, visitation, and a funeral, were described as "the full meal deal" (Anne), suggesting the St. John's funeral industry's preference for traditional rituals.

Furthermore, the use of sales-centered language to frame the impact of cremation in the St. John's funeral industry was surprising to me, as the stigma associated with selling (Thompson 1991) is usually avoided in the funeral industry. Although in this context, an industry in the midst of a transition, the use of sales-centered language, to describe the impact of cremation, may reveal the funeral home's negative opinion of cremation as an inferior option to preparation, which itself is considered an art form (Robert) as well as a highly respected skill.

Furthermore, cremation also decreases the likelihood of an open-casket visitation, during which the family of the deceased can appreciate the hard work of the embalmer,

who are ultimately understood to benefit from the final goodbye with a "presentable" (Victor) corpse. Consequently, the framing of cremation in distasteful, sales-centered language implicitly reveals the funeral industry's low valuing of cremation. Regardless of the industry's arguably negative framing of cremation, it has become increasingly popular throughout Canada, including, very recently, in St. John's.

Despite the increase of cremation in the city, the menus and packages which have been created to accommodate the changing tastes of the bereaved are also at risk of becoming obsolete because of the emergence of direct cremation, which unlike "traditional" cremation does not include preparation, visitation, a funeral service, or a burial and that therefore requires little to no interaction with the funeral home or its staff.

For example, Victor explained that in St. John's, a direct cremation can be organized, over-the-phone, from the mainland: "if [the bereaved] are living on the mainland, they might not be able to get off work to come home, so they have to be content with getting their mother or father cremated and dealing with it afterwards." Unsurprisingly, the funeral directors that I interviewed did not speak warmly of direct cremation; instead they were openly critical and at times even hostile towards it. The funeral director's open suspicion of direct cremation is understandable, as it represents a direct threat, not only to their industry and therefore individual livelihood but also their work in the preparation room, which was repeatedly noted as their preferred and most rewarding part of the job.

Despite the funeral director's vested interest in the maintenance of traditional funeral rituals in which the prepared body of the deceased plays a central role, such as visitation, preparation, and burial, their hostility towards the emergence of direct

cremation appear to be rooted in a genuine belief, and a respect for, traditional funeral rituals. Consequently a decrease in these rituals has created a feeling of loss, not only for themselves but also the bereaved.

This sense of loss, through the lens of local funeral directors, is rooted in a respect for the rites of passage (van Gennep 1960) that are understood to be present in traditional funeral rituals, such as a service, visitation, and burial, but that appear to be missing in contemporary funeral rituals, such as direct cremation. For example, Henry explained his distaste for contemporary rituals, such as direct cremation, to be rooted in "the cutting of corners," that occur, which make "it too easy to cut [traditional rituals] off, [to] not have [them], [and] to avoid [them]." Ultimately, Henry believes that the cutting of corners is detrimental to the grieving process and therefore the overall health the bereaved.

Because of the funeral director's distaste for rituals that cut corners, it is not surprising that the products, services, and technologies that received the most criticism were those that did not obviously include the rites of passage of transition and separation, such as direct cremation, scattering, and the storage of urns at home. Although it is also true that the ongoing transition, from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death, has produced a variety of contradictions, including those in regards to the feeling of loss for traditional funeral rituals.

For example, many of the funeral directors who were openly suspicious of direct cremation and the storage of urns at home also embraced personalization and accepted cremation jewelry as a popular and consequently lucrative product, both of which indicate an ongoing transition of the framing of death in the city, as well as a reconstruction of the traditional funeral. Shortly, I will further discuss the emergence and

impact of the most critiqued cremation trends in the St. John's funeral industry, both of which are heavily associated with direct cremation: 1) the scattering of cremains and 2) the home storage of urns.

But first, because of their association with direct cremation, it is important to acknowledge the extremely negative framing that direct cremation was subject to, which, reveals the depth of suspicion and hostility that exists in the St. John's funeral industry. For example, Robert compared direct cremation to pet cremation:

> The odd time you will get someone who will say, I want mom cremated—straight up— and [they] will pick up the ashes—just like you would your dog —and [they] will take them and scatter them. There is no more to it than that, no services whatsoever

Henry took the negative framing of direct cremation one-step further by comparing it to the weekly disposal of unwanted and burdensome garbage:

> I don't mean this in a derogatory way, but you know we have Robin Hood Bay, that is where we throw our garbage. That's not what we want

Both of these comparisons are extreme and not all of the funeral directors that I spoke with used such controversial comparisons to indicate their dis-comfort with direct cremation.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the suspicion and therefore the hostility that was directed towards direct cremation, and therefore scattering and home storage, is not a reflection of the reality of St. John's funeral industry today, as none of these trends are currently popular; despite this, it reflects a fear for the industry's inevitable future. The funeral directors fear of direct cremation and its impact on the St. John's funeral industry is well founded, as it is rooted in an acknowledged reality; as explained by Mary, "you can see [direct cremation] creeping in."

The Scattering of Cremains

In addition to being fearful of direct cremation's potential impact on the St. John's funeral industry, the funeral directors that I spoke with appeared to be genuinely concerned about the final destination of cremains. This is especially true in the context of "direct cremation and release" (Henry), where the family's interaction with the funeral home, and the deceased, is limited to the pick up of the cremains; after which, the final destination of the deceased is unknown, as stated by Henry, "where she [the cremated remains of the deceased] goes from there—who knows?" Following the increased popularity of cremation, the disposal of cremains has become an increasingly common concern, especially with today's wide variety of disposal options, that include burial, scattering, storage at the funeral home, and home storage.

Many of the funeral directors advocated for the burial of cremains because of its compatibility with traditional disposal. This preference was made clear through their discussions on the potentially detrimental effects of contemporary disposal methods, such as scattering and home storage, during which the loss of rites of passage (van Gennep 1960), such as transition and separation, were highlighted. Essentially, the funeral directors were concerned with 1) the absence of a final resting place and 2) the emotional implications of such an absence.

For example, the burial of cremains, in comparison to the scattering of cremains, was valued for its ritualistic benefits, especially if that burial were to occur within a family plot in a cemetery, as explained by Robert:

> The natural way to do things is to have a resting place, you know, a place that you can go and visit. We are loosing that part of things—where people can go to a cemetery and say: this is where my family is buried

Interestingly, burial in a cemetery, especially within a family plot, is valued for its creation and maintenance of bonds between the living and the dead. Therefore, as a consequence of the increasing popularity of contemporary disposal rituals, such as scattering, the loss of these bonds has become a concern:

> Here [in St. John's] there is no law yet [for the scattering of cremains]— that will definitely come. But if there is a burial, everything is numbered. You have the burial permit and that is registered with the government. Then [in comparison] you have these urns that are being released and if they are scattering… [gesturing to imply- who knows?] (Mary)

As explained by Mary, the potential social and emotional impact of scattering in St, John's is still unknown, which is another indication of the transitional nature of the St. John's funeral industry. Like Robert, Mary also values burial because of its production of burial records that contribute to the creation and maintenance of bonds between the living and the dead.

In comparison, the scattering of cremains is un-regulated and therefore requires no permission or official documentation. Consequently, this type of disposal is not officially documented. Furthermore, in the spirit of personalization, the cremains of the deceased can be scattered in any space that is highly meaningful to the bereaved (Pendergast, Hockey, & Kellaher 2006; Vaczi 2014), much to the dismay of funeral directors, such as Robert, who value the ritualistic benefits of traditional burial:

> The only thing I don't like is the way that people are dealing with cremated remains—spreading them and taking them home. I feel that it is very unhealthy… a lot of the times they are thrown in the ocean and they are scattered on a field or a golf course. I don't know if that is a good thing or not. I kind of feel that it is not [he laughs]

From Robert's perspective, the scattering of cremains in a field, a golf course, or even the ocean is understood as the disposal of human remains in a profane space, which in

comparison to the sacred space of a consecrated cemetery lacks both the respect and dignity that should be afforded the body of the deceased. Furthermore, Robert does not account for the possibility that the bereaved understand, construct, and interact with scattering locations as sacred spaces (Pendergast. Hockey, & Kellaher 2006; Vaczi 2014).

Finally, many of the funeral directors expressed a preference for burial over scattering because of its construction of a final resting place which initiates the rites of passage, namely transition and separation, and allows for the creation and maintenance of "healthy" bonds between the living and the dead, both of which are understood to emotionally benefit the bereaved by counteracting the potentially "harmful" effects of death. In comparison, the home storage of cremains is not understood to counteract any of the potentially harmful effects of death on the bereaved; instead it is understood to enhance them.

The Home Storage of Cremains

Because of the perceived absence of rites of passage during the home storage of cremains many of the funeral directors that I interviewed were genuinely concerned with the emotional consequences of this disposal method. Once again, their concern was rooted in an absence of a final resting place. Although unlike scattering, in which the severance of family bonds was the central concern, the creation of unnatural bonds was the main concern of home storage:

> People are taking remains home and putting them on their mantle. I don't know, personally, I don't know if that is such a great thing. I think a lot of times they are not finished with the grieving process, which is not healthy (Robert)

The storage and display of cremains, in the homes of the bereaved, are not only framed as unnatural but also pathological. For example, Henry warned of an early death for people

who become too attached to cremains, explaining that the home storage of cremains was "a death wish" that could result in the bereaved dying "of a broken heart." The fear of becoming too attached to cremains, through the creation of unnatural bonds, is understood by Henry as a product of cutting of corners, in which the bereaved can choose to not participate in uncomfortable rites of passage. As noted by Anderson (2001), Henry's perspective and language is a product of contemporary bereavement counseling, in which it is common for "abnormal" grief to be understood as undesirable and dangerous.

Furthermore, the funeral director's unnatural and pathological framing of the home storage of cremains is expressed to customers. For example, Robert explained how customers who have decided to store the cremains at home are warned of the dangers of this disposal method:

> We always tell them, if for any reason you are finding yourself, you know, just fixated on these cremated remains- it is probably not good and you might want to consider a final resting place to give yourself some peace and mind. I would say that [of] the 10% that take them home, 90% of them bring them [the cremains] back [to the funeral home] and finally bury the ashes and do something

In addition to being warned of the dangers of home storage, the bereaved are also taught to recognize the signs of a negative emotional reaction to this disposal ritual, such as a "fixation" (Robert) with the cremains or the creation of a "shrine" (Robert). Additionally, the funeral director's emotionally dangerous framing, of the home storage of cremains, teaches the bereaved how to recognize the symptoms of a negative emotional reaction, self diagnose, and seek treatment through the removal of the cremains from their home, whether that be through burial, scattering, or a return to the funeral home.

Furthermore, in St. John's the emotionally dangerous framing of home storage appears to has been effective:

> A lot of times, within months, they [the customers] will take them [the cremains] home and come back and say *uuuhhh* you were right, this is not right, I am not letting go, you know. They realize that it's not healthy for them (Robert)

Once again, the funeral directors of St. John's have not accounted for the possibility that it may be possible for the bereaved to construct emotionally beneficial and ritualistic meaning the home storage of cremains; an oversight that further indicates the ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death in St. John's. As although the bereaved's initial unease and un-comfort with cremains has been documented by Bradbury (2001), I have not found any literature in which the scattering or home storage of cremains has been framed as emotionally dangerous. Instead, Prendergast Hockey, and Kellaher (2006) and Vaczi (2014) frame the scattering and home storage of cremains as individually meaningful and therefore emotionally beneficial.

Ultimately, the contradictions between how cremains are understood and interacted with in the literature and how they are understood and interacted with in St. John's reveals the influence and impact of the St. John's funeral industry's framing of death. For example, the funeral director's dangerous framing of home storage has been so successful that Robert revealed that 90% of the families that take an urn home bring it back to the funeral home.

Furthermore, like direct cremation, the scattering and home storage of cremains is not yet popular in St. John's. Therefore the fear of scattering and home storage is once again a fear for the industry's future:

> I'd say 80% of people bury the urns, still, or put them in the columbarium. Very few take them home, a lot of leave people them [the cremains] here and we store them. We have about 200 urns downstairs that we are storing for people (Daniel)
>
> Ah probably 90% of the people actually bury the cremated remains (Robert)
>
> Most people do [bury]. Very rarely do they take them home. Sometimes we hold [urns] for families. We have some that we call companion urns- they've got mom in one side and when dad dies he is going on the other side. Then we will bury the urn all in one shot (Victor)

As explained by Daniel, Robert, and Victor, very few people in St. John's scatter or store cremains at home. Despite this, the funeral homes of the city have constructed and deployed narratives that frame the contemporary rituals of disposal as emotionally dangerous in an attempt to deter their popularization in the city.

The ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death in St. John's has resulted in the emergence of a variety of contradictions, producing largely dichotomous emotional reactions to death, grief, and funerals that effect not only the bereaved but also the funeral home staff. Ultimately, the simultaneous existence of positive and negative emotional reactions reveals the existence of competing and often contradictory narratives that significantly impact how death is experienced and felt.

Furthermore, I recognize that a tension emerges in the role that funeral directors play in the framing of contemporary funeral rituals, namely: are funeral directors shaping contemporary practices or are they responding to the changing tastes of their clients? This is especially relevant in my discussion about the increasing popularity of cremation and unconventional disposal rituals in St. John's despite the local industry's distaste for such practices. Without accounting for the context of the study, I acknowledge that this example can be understood as a contradiction to my larger argument that the funeral industry, not the bereaved, shape contemporary funeral practices.

Although, when the context of the study is acknowledged as a largely rural, traditional, and isolated industry, that operates under the influence of a predominantly urban, secular, and globalized Canadian funeral industry, the contradiction becomes less apparent. Instead it highlights the ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death in St. John's, which further acknowledges that contemporary funeral rituals are shaped by the funeral industry on micro and macro levels.

Finally, the essentially dichotomous emotional reactions that are currently experienced in the St. John's funeral industry, which are a product of the contemporary framing of death in the city, will be further discussed in the following sections, which will ultimately highlight the increasingly fragile nature of the emotional experience of death and funerals in contemporary, North American societies.

Chapter 9: Emotions

Today, the St. John's funeral industry is a combination of contradictions as a product of the on-going transition from traditional to contemporary funeral rituals. Many of these contradictions were previously discussed in the sections of history, religion, personalization, and cremation, but the culmination of these contradictions exists in the emergence of a largely dichotomous emotional reaction to the contemporary framing of death, which can be seen in the everyday interactions between the funeral home's customers and staff.

The first of these emotional reactions is largely positive, which is expressed through an increase of happiness and meaning. According to Robert, this has resulted in people "handling death better than they did years ago," feelings which were accredited to the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death. The second of these reactions is negative and is expressed through the emergence of sensitivity, stress, and fear.

The presence of both positive and negative emotional reactions to death, grief, and the funeral planning process reveals the presence, as well as the impact, of the transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death, affecting both the customers and staff of the funeral home. Ultimately, this transition is making death a happier and more individually focused experience, but in doing so it also appears to be making death a more fragile experience.

"Uplifting"

In St. John's, the transition towards the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death began with city's funeral homes physical transformations from an "older, traditional [place] to a modern place" (Robert). Furthermore, the funeral homes dependence on

physical space, to produce and portray specific emotional reactions, to both death and funerals, was revealed through the emotionally dependent descriptions of the funeral home's space. In these descriptions, the funeral homes, pre-transformation, were described as: "very dreary" (Robert and Mary), "dull" (Mary), "kind of dark" (Mary), and "morbid" (Robert and Mary). In comparison, the funeral homes, post-transformation, were described as: "home-y" (Robert), "bright" (Daniel), "colorful" (Daniel), "welcoming" (Mary), and "happier" (Mary).

Additionally, no negative associations were used to explain the space of the funeral homes after their physical transformation. Nor did I sense any feeling of loss or nostalgia in discussions about the funeral home's physical past. Instead the physical transformation of the funeral homes, from morbid to modern, was portrayed as a progressive, if not overdue step.

Additionally, the funeral home's physical transformation was associated with the community's desire and adoption of contemporary funeral rituals, as explained by Robert:

> Today, people are looking for modern; they want to feel like they are in a home when they come here. We [were] probably one of the first [in St. John's] to change the setting of the funeral home and it really took. People like [it]- [because] as opposed to years ago, people are more into celebrating the life as opposed to the three days of mourning. When I first started it was always very dreary. There would be a casket and a body and very little else. Today when someone dies, we could have all of their favourite things set up in the room. Now there are monitors in the room with slideshows and their favorite music. It is all about celebrating the life. It is different; people are actually handling death differently

This transformation represents the city's funeral homes attempt to expel the sadness and heaviness of death and funerals from the building itself, in an attempt to better align

themselves with the life-focused framing of death, in which the sadness of death has been replaced by the "happiness" of life.

Consequently, funeral rituals in St. John's have also begun to embrace the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death, which were positively described by funeral directors as: "upbeat" (Caroline and Anne), "uplifting" (Caroline), "more touching" (Anne), "more special"(Anne), "more happiness" (Daniel), "more remember-ability" (Daniel), and "brighter rather than black" (Daniel). These descriptions are in sharp contrast to traditional funeral rituals, which were described by Caroline as, " sad [and] depressing."

Interestingly, like funeral homes, funeral rituals, such as visitation, are also dependent on physical markers of emotion, such as the personal possessions of the dead, in order to portray and produce specific emotional reactions to death and funerals, such as happiness. The physical transformation of the funeral home and the inclusion of personal objects in funeral rituals have resulted in, as Robert has said, people handling death differently.

"More of a Celebration"

To many of the funeral directors that I spoke with, handling death differently was synonymous to handling death "better," which was associated with the adoption of the contemporary funeral industry's celebratory, choice-based, and secular funeral rituals:

> People are looking at funerals as a celebration of life, as opposed to you know the way it used to be. I think, that people are handling death better then they did years ago, people are more educated now. We all have to die and so, I think, that the way we handle it, makes all the difference in the world. The loss is still just as hard, but when your head is in the right place, and you are in celebration mode- [to] celebrate whatever they lived- that is what we are here to do (Robert)

Furthermore, by handling death better, through the adoption of contemporary funeral rituals, not only are the bereaved more likely to enjoy the experience by celebrating life, instead of mourning death, but they are also portrayed to benefit emotionally by having their "head in the right place." Robert was not alone in his portrayal of contemporary rituals as being "better" for the mental health of the bereaved. Many of the funeral directors implied the emotional benefits of celebratory funerals, especially when combined with the additional benefits of personalization:

> They are definitely getting to be more about the person. Like I have been saying, it is more personalized, it is more of a celebration type of thing. I think it is gaining more meaning whereas you know your [traditional] funeral you had this, this, and this, and that's it-- what does that mean to anybody? [She laughs] I guess to some people it means something, but when you can have it more about the person I feel like that's better for everyone involved. It is, paying honour and tribute to the deceased, having something that is meaningful to them in their honour and then the family feels better about doing it that way, so its gained that part [she laughs]. (Caroline)

As explained by Caroline, personalization provides the bereaved an opportunity to produce highly individualized meaning, which can be understood as secular-spiritual meaning. This is especially relevant in the context of contemporary societies in Canada (Dawson & Thiessen 2014) and Newfoundland (Emke 2002), in which religious nones and secularism are respectively on the rise. For example, in St. Johns, the elements of traditional funeral rituals, which were explained by Caroline as, "this, this, and this," are increasingly losing their meaning.

Consequently, the trend towards secularism, in the city and the province (Emke 2002), has contributed to the popularization of celebratory funeral rituals that reject the traditionally religious and emotionally heavy rituals of the past in favour of the lighter and personalized rituals of today. Furthermore, the emotional appeal that is rooted in the

absence or decreased prominence of religion in contemporary funeral rituals, is further explained by Anne:

> Personally I think it is good, I am sure more traditional people, some older people, might say no, it should stick to the old way, this is foolishness but I think that it is good… often at a religious funeral, god is at the fore front, what god has done for the individual, what god now promises, and so on, with the Christian faiths here. But with a more personalized service, there is not so much of that. Instead it is about what the individual did, what they've given to their family, what that meant to them, and the legacy that they have left. I think that that's a positive

The ability to shift the focus of funeral rituals from god-centered events to self-centered events is incredibly appealing as it allows the bereaved to focus on the life and therefore the individuality of the deceased instead of their death and the commonality that is inherent to mortality:

> [The bereaved] want it to mean something. They don't want to have a standard funeral and hear the same songs and the same readings that everybody else has played at every funeral. They want to really, customize it and have it for their loved one (Caroline)

The bereaved's desire to customize the funeral, in order to showcase the life of the deceased, is a reflection of the importance of individualism in contemporary North American society; a pre-occupation that is almost spiritual. Furthermore this shift of focus, from god to the individual, allows the bereaved to focus on the happy memories of the past, instead of the sadness of the present:

> I have had a lot of people come in and say: we want to celebrate mom or dad's life and you know, we don't want to be mourning like the old fashioned type of way. They want to do a celebration. They want to do things to remember their life, not their sickness or their death; so definitely, more towards the memorial [or] celebration type [of funeral rituals] (Caroline)

As explained by Caroline, contemporary funeral rituals are used to expel the sadness that is inherent to the traditional funeral rituals of the past. Contemporary rituals are also used to expel the memory of the deceased's sickness and death. Consequently, all of the un-

comfortable emotions that are associated with traditional funeral rituals are replaced with the light and familiar emotions and associations of life, happiness, and health.

Finally, as mentioned early, many of the funeral directors implied that the re-focusing of funeral rituals, from god to the individual, has not only allowed the bereaved to create and participate in happy and celebratory funerals rituals but in doing so it has also allowed the bereaved to lay the foundation for a "healthy" grieving process:

> When people are allowed to choose and allowed to make it their own and [when] they feel it represents the individual, I think it better serves them in their process of grieving and being satisfied with what they did (Caroline)

Finally, the contemporary funeral industry's life-focused framing of death was widely applauded by the funeral directors that I spoke with because of the construction of happier funeral rituals. Although happiness is not the only feeling that is produced in celebratory funeral rituals. These feelings co-exist with sensitivity, stress, and fear, all of which were described in the contemporary funerals of St. John's.

"Upsetting"

Despite the city's funeral homes attempt to re-brand themselves, through their physical transformation from morbid to modern, the space of the funeral home, as well as the business itself, has maintained an uncomfortable and undesirable status within the community. Consequently, the interactions between the staff and customers of the funeral homes are negatively impacted through the emergence of sensitivity, stress, and fear.

As a visitor to the funeral home, I was subject to the extremely sensitive framing of the space. For example, during an early visit to one of the funeral homes, a very sincere administrator came to check-in on me. She wanted to see if I was feeling okay. I tried to assure her that I was feeling fine, but I do not think she believed me as she also

attempted to comfort me by sharing that she only became comfortable in the space of the funeral home after her first year of employment.

This check-in occurred in the lobby of the funeral home; a bright, open, and welcoming space, in which no "signs" of death were visible. Despite this, the administrator was concerned about my potentially negative reaction to the space. Initially, I was confused by this treatment because the administrator knew who I was and what I was doing, but most importantly she knew, due to my many emails and phone calls, that I genuinely wanted to be at the funeral home.

I later realized that although I had entered the funeral home willingly, most visitors do not. Consequently, I was being treated like any other visitor to the funeral home: with great sensitivity and concern over a potential, if not expected, negative emotional reaction.

Unsurprisingly, because of the framing of the funeral home as an emotionally volatile space, I was continually treated with great sensitivity during my visits. This treatment was especially clear when Anne invited into the showroom to demonstrate the difference between rental and burial caskets; an invitation that was accompanied by the following warning, "do you want to see it [a rental casket]? I can show you? You don't have to, now the showroom has multiple caskets." After assuring Anne that I wanted to see the rental casket and that the idea of going into the showroom did not concern me, she took me for a tour.

During the tour, Anne explained to me the differences between rental caskets and burial caskets. She also showed me the different cremation containers, as well as the variety of burial caskets and urns. Near the end of my tour of the showroom, another

funeral director joined us, after which we continued to talk about popular funeral products.

After our conversation about funeral products had finished, I suggested that we go back to the selection room because I wanted to consult my interview guide. Immediately after expressing my desire to re-locate, Anne checked-in, with me, during which she simultaneously approved my request and questioned if I was emotionally stable: "okay, are you okay?"

After assuring her that I was feeling good, we made our way back to the selection room. Like my experience in the funeral home lobby, I was initially surprised that I was being treated with such sensitivity. Because, once again, the funeral directors knew who I was, what I was doing, and that I genuinely wanted to be at the funeral home and yet I was being treated as though the funeral home might scare or upset me. Interestingly, as the interview progressed and Anne became more comfortable with me, she shared that negative emotional reactions to the funeral home's space, especially the showroom, was not an uncommon experience:

> People come in and *hate* to see the caskets, *hate* to select one, some people cry, some people don't want to go in there, but still they'll do it and then they go in the room, they are really upset and emotional

Because of the potentially negative emotional reactions, that the sight of caskets have been known to trigger in the "fragile" minds of the bereaved, Anne went onto explain how she introduces the idea of entering the showroom and selecting a casket is framed for the family of the bereaved:

> If I was meeting with [a] family up here [in the selection room], I would say, okay, so now all that is left is for you to select the casket, [the] showroom is just out here, there are multiple caskets in there and there are urns and things, are you okay with going in there? Many will hesitate, or say, oh I hate this, I can't, I dread this, I don't

> want to pick one, I don't want to go in there- that is not uncommon, and that is why I cautioned you, when I said, there are caskets, other caskets in there, because for some people, that is very upsetting to have to go in there and select one

Before taking anyone into the showroom, Anne takes care to prepare her families for the potentially uncomfortable presence of caskets. Consequently the showroom has gained a reputation that it requires a warning before entrance. Anne also explained that this is why she felt the need to warn me, about the presences of caskets, in her offer to take me into the showroom.

The sensitivity of the showroom was also a topic of discussion with Henry. During our conversation about popular products, Henry reminisced on the funeral home's showroom following its transformation from morbid to modern, which has resulted in the construction of a "state of the art" (Henry) showroom that he credits as improving the bereaved's experience:

> [The showroom] speaks for itself, it is absolutely fabulous. You go down, everything is signed, you know exactly what the prices are, everything is in front of you, you see it, you don't have to ask any questions- unless you say show me the steels or show me the bronzes. It speaks for itself; it says we care, that much, that we put something like this in our building

The enhancement of the bereaved's experience has been achieved through the construction of a more emotionally stable shopping experience, in which the nature of the casket display was central. For example, in Henry's explanation of the benefits of the state of the art showroom, he compared it to the bereaved's emotional experience within the original showroom, which he himself, a funeral director, found to be very uncomfortable:

> It [the current showroom] is not just a sea of caskets. That's my memory when I first walked in [to the old showroom]. I saw a sea of caskets and I said, 'gentle Jesus- what in the hell is this all about!' There is no way you can know what is what, it just did not make any sense

Although I was not given a tour of this showroom, I was able to discern, through our conversation about the showroom's layout, my knowledge of the industry, as well as Henry's distaste for the presence of full caskets in the showroom, that the current showroom featured a casket display, in which cross sections of caskets are featured. This was affirmed in an interview with a local newspaper, in which the casket room was described to include a "modular casket and urn display system with a computerized information kiosk" (The Newfoundland Herald, 2009, 33), which supplies the bereaved with a tasteful example of the product without the distressing presence of a full casket.

In the St. John's funeral industry, caskets were not the only funeral products in which sensitivity was required. The funeral director's also indicated that cremation as well as the selection of urns also required sensitivity; a reality that was revealed through the language that was used, by the funeral directors, to explain the selection of urns available, as well as the community's perception and interaction with that selection. It was this use of language that ultimately exposed the community's unfamiliarity and arguably their un-comfort with cremation and urns.

For example, in my discussion with Sarah, about the integration of cremation into religious funeral rituals, she referred to cremation as being "burnt," after which she appeared to be immediately concerned that she used that language with me, "you couldn't be burnt, *burnt* [catching herself, like she can't believe she said- followed by laughter from both of us]." The sensitivity with Sarah's language during our conversation about cremation could also be seen my discussions with funeral directors about urns.

Central to our discussions about urns was the wide variety of urn types. For example, Victor explained that the urn selection at his funeral home included, "metal

ones, urn shaped ones, and box shaped ones." Much to my surprise, urn-shape was a re-occurring topic of discussion, as it appeared to be a common customer concern. Furthermore, to Sarah, the customer's pre-occupation with urn shape appeared to be frustratingly endearing because of its contradictory nature:

> Some people say, I don't want the urn. They think the urn is the metal *urn* and they don't realize that the boxes are called urns too. So they will be like, I don't want your traditional *urn* so they don't even look at that and you just chuckle because they are all *urns*. So then [they look at] the wooden ones and [they say] [voice change- customer voice] I didn't want your traditional, wooden little thing, I want the *urn* [voice change- normal voice] right, so some people say the traditional [urns] are the wood [urns]

The customer's desire to consume urns that do not look like "urns" as well as their un-comfort in the presence of caskets are triggered by the products visual reminder of the dead body. The apparent sensitivity towards the visual reminder of the corpse can also be seen in the emerging popularity of personalized urns.

In the selection of a personalized urn, the bereaved are rejecting the traditional urn shape, as occurred earlier in the shift from coffins to caskets, and in doing so they are embracing a more emotionally stable product, which also conveniently portrays the individuality of the deceased:

> I did have one family; the guy was a musician so they were looking [for urns], online- different, musical type urns. They found one that was a shape of a guitar, [it] looked just like a miniature guitar and you would never tell that it was actually an urn (Caroline)

Today, the selection of an untraditional or whimsically shaped urn, such as a guitar, represents one of the many opportunities for the bereaved to personalize the funeral, resulting in a happier, personalized, and more celebratory experience.

Despite the contemporary funeral industry's promise of a lighter and more enjoyable funeral experience through the personalization of contemporary funeral rituals, this

process has also resulted in a variety of tensions between the funeral home's staff and customers, the majority of which are rooted in the family of the deceased who have become increasingly demanding, violent, and volatile.

"Intense"

In St. John's, the popularization of personalization has led to an increasing number of funeral options, all of which have resulted an increase of customer expectation, as explained by Daniel, "the things that people are expecting, now a days, I mean, like any business, it's greatly elevated." This change was highlighted in Daniel's reminiscence on the traditional funerals and customers of the past:

> Years ago it was different cause [when] someone died, at the hospital, you picked them up, you embalmed them, you put them in a casket, brought them to the church, *that's it*. Families didn't want nothing, families didn't care about what they had to have, they didn't care about bulletins, they didn't care about jewelry, they didn't care about all of this other stuff that goes on with it. You know, it was so simple back then

Like Daniel, Mary also noted the simplicity of traditional funerals, stating that today, "people definitely do expect a lot more." This increase in expectation, especially through the inclusion of personalized elements, which has resulted in customer surprise when services, such as slideshow creation, are not offered at a funeral home:

> We don't do the slideshows here. The families have to do it on their own. They are like- you don't do it? No. That is something else altogether. For me, we are a funeral home. We are here to help your loved one. We are not specialized in that area. That is a different thing altogether (Mary)

Today, the importance of personalization has not only raised the bereaved's expectations, in regards to the funeral home's physical services, but also the funeral home's emotional services, as explained by Caroline:

> You have families in here, they are relying on you to have this final thing for their loved one, its kind of, its a lot of, I guess responsibility, but then you also have to

> deal with like their emotions, their needs—and they can get pretty needy and demanding [she laughs]

Today, as the funeral home's customers become increasingly demanding they also require more managing. This is especially true in the face of increasingly complicated family dynamics, such as divorce and migration, which can result in verbal and at times even physical violence between the family members of the bereaved. For example, Victor, Caroline, and Mary each recalled instances in which they had to leave the selection room, in order for the family to work out their differences so that the funeral planning process could continue:

> It can get kind of intense. The hardest is [when] there is a couple of people here and none of them agree on what we want to do [she laughs] so then you kind of get bickering across the table. Or this one is upset because that one said something to upset them, it can get a little bit intense. I've had to leave the room and kind of give families a moment to get themselves together [she laughs] that has happened a few times before, but most people come in and you know, besides obviously being upset, they are okay. [I] have not had any fights or anything [she laughs] yet [she laughs again] (Caroline)

As alluded to by Caroline, the bickering that can emerge in the selection room can also evolve into physical fights. Both Victor and Robert shared stories of some of the physical fights that they had witnessed throughout their career, revealing that sometimes families become so upset that they physically lash out at one another. Although the emergence of physical fights is not a normal occurrence within St. John's funeral homes, it does appear to be accepted as a behaviour that is not outside the realm of possibilities for a funeral director to encounter, and to be forced to deal with, during their career.

Today in St. John's, even in the absence of verbal or physical violence, the bereaved's emotional reaction to the death of the deceased, as well as the funeral planning process itself, was already a stressful experience for many of the funeral

directors that I interviewed. Consequently, many of the funeral directors implied, if not directly stated that dealing with the bereaved can be the most stressful aspect of the profession:

> I don't want to come off as negative or mean or anything, but families can be the most difficult part of this job sometimes because people are angry that the death has occurred and it almost seems like they blame us- even though we are trying to help. Now here we are, I'm going to say selling them, right, we are providing a service yes, but we are selling them products they don't want. They don't want to be here. They don't want to have to choose a casket. They don't want to pay the price, right!? (Anne)

Interestingly, when talking about the difficult behaviour of their customers, many of the funeral directors, like Anne, made their comments very cautiously. Furthermore, their comments were often accompanied with statements of understanding and empathy; in doing so the funeral directors seemed to absolve the bereaved of any responsibility or accountability for their behaviour. In doing so, the funeral directors critiqued the behaviour of the bereaved although they did not challenge it.

Ultimately, the funeral directors appeared to accept the difficult behaviour of the bereaved as normal:

> Ohhh [the bereaved] are always taking it out on the funeral director, yah, for sure. Well [the bereaved] don't want to be here, the last person in the world that you want to see is a funeral director. We'll have families here, they give us a *really, really* rough time and we just deal with it. They'll come back afterwards, after a couple of weeks, and pay their bill and probably bring you in some kind of a gift and a big apology for their behaviour [he laughs- a lot, quite heartily] and we always say, well we understand, it brings the worst of people out, yah so, its amazing (Robert)

Robert makes it very clear that the behaviour of the bereaved can be very hard for funeral directors to deal with. Although, the emergence of this type of behaviour is not surprising, especially when funeral directors are self- admittedly framed as the "last person in the world that you want to see." Furthermore, the difficult behaviour of the

bereaved is accepted as a by-product of death and grief, both of which were commonly framed as bringing out the worst in people during my conversations with local funeral directors.

For example, when talking about the bereaved's difficult behaviour during the funeral planning process, Anne commented that:

> [The bereaved] are sharing personal details and entrusting their loved one to you, but they don't want to. Someone has died and they are not happy about it and often they will take it out on us

The description of the bereaved's bad behaviour, as a natural evolution from their un-happiness about death into negative emotions which are described as being taken out on the funeral director. Once again, this comment represents a critique, but ultimately an acceptance of the bereaved's behaviour as a natural reaction to death and grief.

Elizabeth takes the acceptance of the bereaved's difficult behaviour one step further by absolving the bereaved of all responsibility for the emergence and expression of this behaviour:

> Sometimes anger can be directed at us. I know it is not personal, whether it was a sudden tragedy or a pending death… [a deep breath/ sigh] people get angry cause that loved one has gone, so sometimes they take it out on us. They don't mean to, and we know they don't mean to, sometimes it can be hard on us

By stating that the bereaved, in the face of death, cannot help their bad behaviour, further contributes to the acceptance of this emotional reaction as normal.

Additionally, the bereaved's difficult behaviour does not only affect the bereaved and their family but also the funeral directors who, as the primary recipients and managers of these emotions, are themselves affected:

> I empathize with those people, so I try to let them know that I understand that you are angry at this time, but I am here to help you. So sometimes they calm down a little bit and are like oh- sorry, if I was being rough or speaking roughly. We

> understand that, so we sort of, go with the flow when it comes to that. Some families can come in and we could be laughing all throughout the arrangement so, like I said, different circumstances. It depends on how people react, so sometimes it can be very emotional on us

Sometimes the management of the bereaved's emotional reactions, to death, grief, and the funeral planning process, can become overwhelming, especially when combined with the sometimes-traumatic situations that funeral directors have to deal with during the backstage work of their profession, such as the pickup and preparation of dead bodies. The combination of these front and back stage stresses can lead to burnout.

Prior to my conversations with funeral directors, I was unaware of the profession's high burnout rate. This phenomenon, as described to me by Caroline, "is a big thing" in the industry because:

> You deal with a lot of stuff and there comes a point where you can either get over it quickly or you are just done. So there are a lot of people who get into it for a few years and then leave the industry

Like me, Caroline was also unaware of the profession's high burnout rate until mortuary school, where the phenomenon was apart of the curriculum and where the importance of work-life balance was emphasized to combat its development.

Additionally, after being made aware of the funeral industry's high burnout rate, I realized that in the documents from the CNS the names and faces of the city's funeral directors were constantly changing; with the exception of owners and a couple of long-term employees, I did not recognize the majority of the funeral directors who were being featured, affirming the high burnout rate in the city's industry.

In comparison to Caroline, for whom life in the industry was relatively new, Robert had a much more hardened perspective on the experience of burnout in the funeral profession:

> When [people] start out, I always tell them, straight up: do you realize what you are getting yourself into? This is a *very* difficult career. You are dealing with death, and grief, and your time is not yours. It is not easy. So you really have to be devoted to it. Most funeral directors will start out and within 5 to 6 years they are gone to another career. It is very unusual to find someone as long as I am

Daniel echoed Caroline's estimation of an average burnout rate of five to six years. As a consequence of this, Daniel also mentioned the importance, or more accurately the reliance, on the employment of family at the funeral home:

> [If] you are a family, like I am, my brother is, my father is, and my son is, there is pretty much a guaranteed chance you are going to be here for the long haul. Then you get one or two employees who are here for the long haul as well, but [for everyone else] if you can get 5 years out of someone you are doing well. There is very few that go over that 5 year period, whether they move to a different part of the country or a different area of the province, but usually they get out of it all together, not everyone, but usually

Daniel's statement implies that unless you are deeply invested in the funeral home, such as a member of the family that owns the business, your likelihood of burning out and leaving the profession are almost inevitable. This burnout rate is due to the demanding and unpredictable nature of the job as well as the everyday emotional impact, which was discussed earlier but is further explained in the following comment, by Daniel:

> The job is not easy, it is stressful. You are dealing with death all of the time, people at there worst time, so you are getting crap from people all of the time, not because they are necessarily bad people, but they're, they're just at a bad place

Once again, the behaviour of the bereaved is critiqued but accepted as an emotional reaction that is out of their control; a philosophy that, I argue, contributes to the industry's high burnout rate as nothing can be done to change an emotional reaction that is understood and accepted as not only normal but natural. Consequently, even the strictest adherence to work-life balance cannot decrease the amount of emotional

management, and therefore stress, that a funeral director is expected to deal with on a daily basis.

In addition to the already discussed stresses of the funeral profession, the responsibilities of the role are currently expanding, due to the ongoing transition from traditional to contemporary rituals in the St. John's funeral industry:

> What you did before [the beginning of the transition], you just picked the body up, embalmed it, put it in a casket and that's it. Now we are grief counselors, now we are trying to help people through the grief, we are filling out paperwork for them, we are telling them where to go, what to do. Our role has increased so much, its not even funny (Daniel)

The increasing responsibilities of contemporary funeral directors can be largely attributed to the decreasing role of religion. Consequently, the contemporary framing of death, which is controlled by the city's funeral directors, is replacing the traditional framing of death, which is controlled by the clergy, a process that was has been on-going in Newfoundland since the late 1990's (Emke 2002).

"Very Negative"

Further complicating the expansion of the funeral director's role is the bereaved's decreased knowledge of death, grief, and funeral rituals, all of which contributes to the tension that already exists between the funeral directors and the bereaved.

For example, Sarah expressed that "most people don't even think of their funeral [because] people are not going to die." She went onto to comment that, "I don't think people want to think about it." Not only are the customers of the funeral home mentally unprepared when they arrive at the funeral home, as a consequence of this, they may also be financially unprepared, as explained by Henry, "people don't get it, they are going to live forever, they are going to spend like there is no tomorrow, and they don't know

where the money is coming from." For funeral home staff, conversations around money are especially awkward because of the stigma that exists around financially benefiting from death (Thompson 1991).

Conversations about price become even more awkward when the bereaved are unaware of the cost of a funeral. To explain the scale of funeral expenses and the financial consequences of being unprepared for such an expense, Henry compared the purchase of a funeral to the purchase of a car: "imagine going in and buying a vehicle and nobody realizes that you are going to spend ten or fifteen thousand dollars. On the funeral everybody needs to know that." In addition to be financially unaware, many customers are also unaware about the types of work that are engaged in at the funeral home, creating curiosity, un-comfort, and at times even suspicion.

Anne spoke of the bereaved's lack of knowledge, but she prefaced these comments, in an attempt to deflect blame from the bereaved, by stating that "a lot of our work goes on behind the scenes." Following this, she gave an example of the type of questions that she receives from curious customers:

> I had a friend once, or a family friend, who said, [customer voice] oh, do you have to dress them? [normal voice]… we do a heck of a lot more then dress them, right? But people don't get [it], people don't understand because it is not talked about. You don't talk about what goes on behind the scenes

As seen in Caroline's example, the community's lack of knowledge can result in curiosity, although its expression create awkward situation for funeral directors, as further explained by Caroline:

> You do get really strange questions sometimes, like, if people don't know much about death and you know, they are afraid to ask certain tings, but you will always get like weird questions about, [voice change- customer voice] well what do you do during embalming? [She laughs- back to normal voice] I don't want to tell you…

> [We both laugh]. Not that I don't want to tell them, but like, I am talking about your mother here, you don't want to know, in detail

Many of the questions that funeral directors receive are sincere and well meaning, although some are rooted in suspicion and fear. This is true of inquiries into cremation, such as "you only put one person in [at] a time right?" (Mary).

The existence of the bereaved's lack of knowledge and therefore their questions were attributed to the behind the scenes nature of the funeral profession, but also the bereaved's lack of desire to understand the work that is associated with death, as commented on by Anne:

> [There] is such a lack of knowledge, but then there are lots of things that I don't know about, behind the scenes. I get that but I think that death is another level because people don't want to talk about it; they don't want to know

Ultimately, the bereaved's lack of knowledge about death, grief, and the funeral planning process is attributed to the Western cultural unease towards the subject, which leads to the general avoidance of the subject, as explained by Elizabeth, "it is very negative [death, grief, and the funeral planning process] and if people at least talked about death maybe it wouldn't be such a negative thing when people actually passed" (Elizabeth).

Furthermore, after asking if funerals have gained anything, Daniel responded that "funerals were always black" but today they are "brighter rather than black," which he further explained as being "more memorable, more of a celebration." As a consequence of this shift in feeling, Daniel also commented that, "most people don't remember their loved one's funeral and say, 'oh my god that was terrible.' It was sad but it has gained, its brighter rather than black." In St. John's, the increasing popularity of personalization has allowed for funerals to become brighter and therefore happier, a trend that is only expected to grow in the city.

In St. John's, the potential of even brighter rituals was suggested by Daniel, who predicted the future popularity of receptions in the city, based on their success on the mainland as well as their emotional appeal, which he explains to be rooted in their embrace of a truly celebratory atmosphere:

> What do people like to do? Eat and drink. That's what people want to do: eat, drink, and talk. So, why go to a visitation- where there is an urn or a casket and it is all awkward and weird. Or you can go somewhere [else]. The person is still in everyone's head, the person is still there, and they [the bereaved] are talking about all of the good times and they are drinking a glass of wine or a glass of beer, you know people love a party *and* funerals were parties. Irish wakes, I mean they were parties. That's how it has evolved and it will come back to that, more [of a] party, happy, you know, not sad, [a] celebration. Years ago you, you were expected to cry, wives and husbands cried for days, wore black. Now, I mean people still cry and obviously they are sad but it is more about the personal memories and all of that kind of stuff. I don't know if we are trying to numb ourselves from it, I don't know, I mean is it a bad thing? Probably not

In praising the celebratory nature of receptions, Daniel also revealed the uncomfortable and even distasteful nature of traditional rituals, such as the awkward and weird presence of a casket or an urn, which he reveals are purposefully avoided through the adoption of contemporary rituals. Furthermore, Daniel justifies celebratory receptions by comparing them to Irish wakes, which he claims share a similar party atmosphere. Although this comparison is not accurate as the corpse played a central role in Irish wakes and was often included in the fun (Narvaez 1994). Furthermore, these wakes also included a variety of rituals (Narvaez 1994), meaning that they cannot be simplified as a party.

Finally, Daniel reveals that the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death is emotionally complex as the bereaved are both sad, but focused on the happy memories of life. Daniel also comments that through the embrace of choice-based and celebratory funerals, we might be "trying to numb ourselves from it." The "it" being death, in which the numbing is understood to be beneficial. Ultimately, Daniel's comments on the future

of the St. John's funeral industry reveal the fragility of the contemporary funeral industry's framing of death.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Today in St. John's, the local framing of death is dependent on a variety of competing and often contradictory narratives that draw upon history, religious ritual, personalization, and cremation.

Specifically, history is used to draw on the legacies of tradition, family, and religion to legitimize the impact and influence of local funeral homes on contemporary practices. Religious ritual accounts for the persistence of historically contingent practices, such as the continued presence and authority of the clergy, despite the ongoing re-construction of contemporary rituals in order to accommodate the shift towards secularism in Canadian societies.

Personalization identifies the increasing popularity of contemporary rituals that highlight the identity of the deceased, such as the consumption of personalized products and the inclusion of personal possessions. Finally, cremation represents the tensions that emerge from the introduction of incompatible funeral rituals, such as direct cremation, scattering, and home storage within a particular social context, such as St. John's, that challenges and therefore reveals the pre-existing framings of death.

Each of these narratives contributes to the production of a variety of emotional experiences during contemporary funeral rituals in St. John's, these include feelings such as: "uplifting", "more of a celebration", "upsetting", "intense", and "very negative". The combination of these experiences has resulted in an increasingly fragile emotional experience of death in contemporary North American societies; all of which was revealed through the exploration of the following research questions:

1) ***How does the St. John's funeral industry frame death?***

2) ***From the lens of local funeral directors how has the industry's framing of death shaped contemporary funerals in St. John's?***

Unlike the existing literature, I did not frame the contemporary experience of funeral rituals and bereavement as inherently negative or volatile (Parsons 2003; Hyland and Morse 1995). Instead, I sought to understand the construction of these framings and their impact on the experience of death and bereavement today, such as the emergence and popularity of the celebratory rhetoric of the contemporary funeral industry (Sanders 2009) that has resulted in the production of increasingly amusing (Sanders 2009), fun (Gadberry 2000), and I would argue kitschy practices; many of which are dependent on the consumption of funeral products.

Furthermore the popularity of celebratory funeral rituals and their corresponding products, services, and practices suggests a contemporary desire to maintain the routine and order of everyday life even, or especially, when faced with death. This is supported by Giddens' argument that modern life is best understood through the concept of ontological security, which is defined "as the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (1990, 92).

Consequentially, the appeal of the contemporary funeral industry's celebratory and choice based framing of death can be understood through the relative comfort of contemporary funeral practices, services, and products. Ultimately, these rituals offer an individual assurance of "safety" for the bereaved because of their ability to bracket out death from life (Mellor 1992) and in doing so maintain ontological security.

The emotional implications of the contemporary framing of death are not an isolated phenomenon but are instead comparable to changes seen across many aspects of contemporary societies and are therefore representative of the values of those societies. For example, the unique social structures of contemporary societies, particularly the influence of individualism, urbanization, and industrialization (Lofland 1985) have significantly shaped almost every aspect of daily life, especially how those events are experienced and felt (Lofland 1985).

Furthermore, these changes have also resulted in the increased dependence on experts to successfully manage emotional events, including death and bereavement (Poulter 2011). This kind of management can include disciplinary technologies (Foucaualt 1977), such as the contemporary funeral industry's celebratory rhetoric, that frame death and bereavement in manner that is complimentary to the social structures and values that are dominant in North American societies today. Finally, the structural changes that have occurred in contemporary societies have contributed to the construction of increasingly fragile emotional experiences across all aspects of life in those societies.

In St. John's, the ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death has resulted in the emergence of a variety of contradictions, producing largely dichotomous emotional reactions to death, grief, and funerals that effect not only the bereaved but also the funeral home staff. Ultimately, the simultaneous existence of positive and negative emotional reactions reveals the existence of competing and often contradictory narratives that significantly impact how death is experienced and felt.

Despite this, a limitation of this study includes a lack of knowledge on the feelings, desires, and needs of the funeral homes' clients; an understanding of the contemporary framing of death and it's emotional consequences is completely unachievable without speaking to clients directly or observing their interactions with funeral directors. Without this type of engagement I have had to rely upon the perceptions and understandings of funeral directors on the needs and feelings of their clients.

Furthermore, I recognize that another limitation of this study includes the tension that emerges in the role that funeral directors play in the framing of contemporary funeral rituals, namely: are funeral directors shaping contemporary practices or are they responding to the changing tastes of their clients? This is especially relevant in my discussion about the increasing popularity of cremation and unconventional disposal rituals in St. John's despite the local industry's distaste for such practices.

Without accounting for the context of the study, I acknowledge that this example can be understood as a contradiction to my larger argument that the funeral industry, not the bereaved, shape contemporary funeral practices. Although, when St. John's, the context of the study, is acknowledged as a largely rural, traditional, and isolated industry, that operates under the influence of a predominantly urban, secular, and globalized Canadian funeral industry, the contradiction becomes less apparent.

Instead, this tension highlights the ongoing transition from the traditional to the contemporary framing of death in St. John's, which further acknowledges that contemporary funeral rituals are shaped by the funeral industry on micro and macro levels. Consequently, future work would benefit from the perspective and insights of not

only funeral directors but also the bereaved. This could be achieved through an ethnography conducted within contemporary funeral homes to observe how the exchanges between funeral directors and the bereaved are structured and managed.

In conclusion, I argue that the contemporary framing of death is making death happier, through its celebratory and choice-based framing, but in doing so it is also making the experience of death more fragile because of the tension that is produced through the competing and often contradictory framings of death that exist in cotemporary North American societies.

Appendix

1. Interview Guide

1) How long have you worked at (Barrett's, Carnell's, or Caul's)?
2) How would you describe the funeral home when you started working?
3) How would you describe the St. John's funeral industry when you started working?
4) How would you describe the average funeral when you started working?
5) How would you describe the funeral home today?
6) How would you describe the St. John's funeral industry today?
7) How would you describe the average funeral today?
8) What impact does history and tradition have on funerals today in St. John's?
9) What impact do contemporary trends, such as cremation and personalization, have on funerals today in St. John's?
10) Do any funerals stick out to you as especially memorable?
11) What are the most popular products today?
12) In comparison to the past, have funerals in St. John's lost anything?
13) In comparison to the past, have funerals in St. John's gained anything?
14) What do you see as the future of funerals and the funeral industry in St. John's?
15) Is there anything that I missed? Or that you would like to add?

2. Cremation Explained

V.F. : Funeral Homes

Mt. Carson
Funeral Home
and Crematorium

7 Mt. Carson Ave.,
Mount Pearl, Nfld.
Tel: (709) 364-6525 A1N 3K3

CREMATION EXPLAINED

Centre for Nfld Studies

Answers to Questions
Most Frequently Asked

Michael & Pearl Higdon,
Owners

Desmond Fewer,
Manager

Invites you to visit our funeral home and discuss our services. We will welcome your comments.

24 Hour Service.

This pamphlet is for general information. We sincerely regret should it arrive at your home in a time of serious illness or bereavement.

The management and staff of Mount Carson Funeral Home and Crematorium pledge to further the high standards of the funeral service and assure families the remains of their loved ones are afforded the utmost respect and dignity whether they choose the traditional funeral with interment or with cremation.

1. Is cremation accepted by all Christian denominations?

Yes. Most Christian denominations today accept cremation. (Anglican, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, United Church, etc. However, some clergy may have their own personal view on cremation.

2. Is embalming necessary? Is a casket required?

If there is a wake with a viewing, then both embalming and a casket are required for sanitary and health reasons. Most Christian denominations prefer to have the remains brought to the church for services before cremation; it is then necessary to have a casket. If the request is for cremation followed by a memorial service in church with cremated remains, then neither a casket nor embalming are necessary. A casket and embalming depend on family and clergy decisions. If a casket is not required, the remains will be placed in a rigid container, safe for handling and health requirements. This container provides proper coverage for the body and meets reasonable standards of respect and dignity.

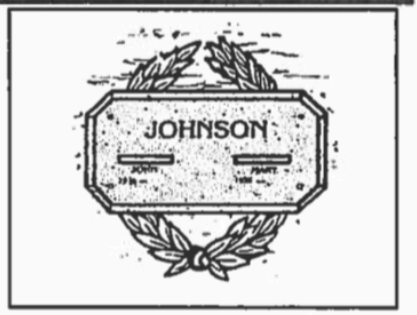
3. Is a cremation service different from a traditional funeral service?

It doesn't necessarily have to be different. It is entirely subject to the wishes of the family as to the extent and content of the cremation service. The service can be as formal or as personal as they want. Cremation does, however, allow more options. Sometimes a memorial service is held after cremation while other families prefer to meet at a convenient time for the final commital of the cremated remains.

4. How is cremation accomplished?

The enclosed body is placed in the cremation chamber where through heat and evaporation the body is reduced to its basic elements which are referred to as "cremated remains". Cremated remains have neither the appearance nor chemical properties of ashes - but are, in fact, bone fragments. After preparation, these are placed in a permanent or temporary urn or container suitable for transport and final disposition.

5. Cremation is not the end?



Direct disposal of cremated remains without a funeral or memorialization of some kind may cause serious traumatic problems for survivors. Most families feel that the cremated remains of a loved one should be given a final resting place, identified by names and dates. This can be done in several different ways. If burial in a cemetery is the choice, then one could use a memorial monument or marker. Since interment of cremated remains requires less space than the traditional interment, the basic human need to remember and to be remembered can be more easily accomplished by family plots or units. These units may be expanded by future generations. The memorial may be with or without the remains if one wishes the remains scattered.

6. How does the cost of cremation compare with burial?

The basic charge for cremation only is somewhat less than the traditional burial. However, with so many items in service available to the family regarding the funeral service itself and the mode of disposition after, it is not possible to make an accurate comparison. Thus the charge to the family will depend on the type of services requested.

7. Why is the percentage of people choosing cremation over traditional interment rising steadily in Canada?

(a) For most it is a personal choice.

(b) Cremation offers many options in service and the final resting place. Cemeteries are taking up too much land unnecessarily. This creates high prices in the purchase and in the perpetual care and maintenance afterwards.

(c) Most people prefer to be buried next to other family members. With cremation, the remains from several generations can be buried in family units, offering a much longer memorial for present and future generations.

(d) Cremation is healthier and much more sanitary for future generations. Worms, insects and in some cases rodents are known to inhabit cemeteries making traditional interment both repulsive and unsanitary. Contagious micro-organisms can live and multiply after death and can remain in the ground for years waiting for the ecological system to return them to life's cycle. Today because of the increase in population, large numbers of burials take place in a small area, which is often close to residential areas. New diseases are being discovered today and interment in the past is known to have spread diseases.

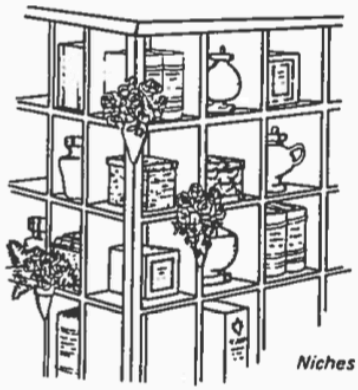
(e) Cremation for some, gives the feeling of freedom.

(f) Some people do not want to be buried even if they are cremated.

(g) Many people prefer their memorial to be the planting of a tree, rose bush or other plant using their cremains in such places as their homes, summer cabin, or cemetery.

(g) With traditional interment there are no options, but with cremation, there are many.

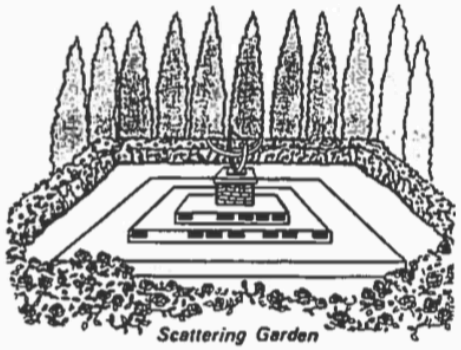
(i) Interment doesn't have any advantages over cremation.



Niches

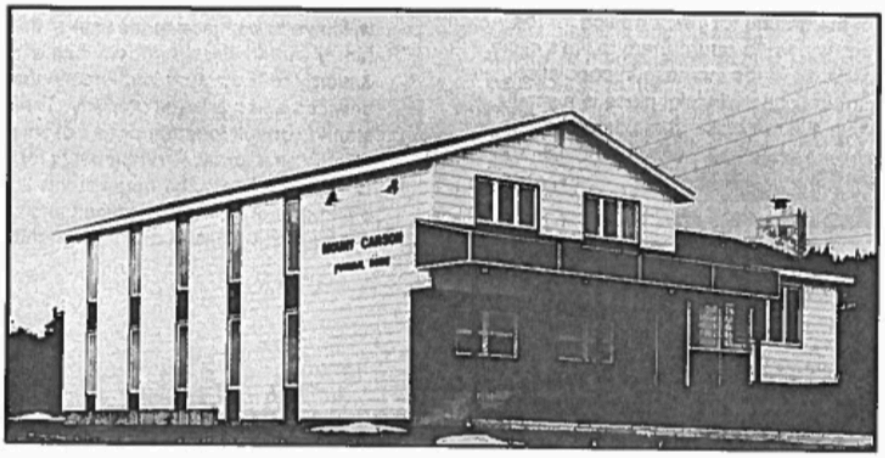
8. Is it advisable to arrange for funerals in advance?

Yes. The subject should be certainly resolved among family members since that determination will have to be made at the time of death. The family should visit the funeral home, crematorium & clergy to learn what is offered in the way of services and memorial property. The family should consult together ahead of time to decide what is best for all. Arrangements for memorialization should also be made at this time. This, being one of life's most difficult decisions, need not be made alone at a time of grief and confusion.



Scattering Garden

Cremation is not new. Urns with cremated remains have been discovered dating back to before the birth of Christ. After the birth of Christ, cities began to expand rapidly in Europe. Around this time cremation was banned inside the cities because of odor problems. However, diseases began to spread as a result of burials within the cities and cremation returned. With modern technology, cremation is now the most sanitary method for the disposition of human remains.



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