

# **grief-stricken in a crowd**

**THE LANGUAGE OF BEREAVEMENT AND  
DISTRESS IN SOCIAL MEDIA**


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I still cry for you all the time. Everyone says it gets better, but it does not. I miss you more and more[...] I wish they had myspace in heaven so you could respond...

*“We will never forget you [online]”  
Brubaker & Hayes, CSCW ‘11*

## Ashley



We will always love Ashley!!!!

Female  
23 years old  
LOUISVILLE,  
Kentucky  
United States

Last Login:  
1/27/2009

[View My: Pics](#)

### Contacting Ashley



[Send Message](#)



[Forward to Friend](#)



[Add to Friends](#)



[Add to Favorites](#)



[IM / Call](#)



[Block User](#)



[Add to Group](#)



[Rank User](#)

### Ashley's Interests

General

Morgan

You are Morgan!

Which Laguna Beach Cast Member are you?  
brought to you by Quizilla

**You Are a Strawberry Daiquiri**

### Ashley's Friends Comments

Displaying 25 of 309 comments ( [View All](#) | [Add Comment](#) )

aShLeY

Jul 26 2009 3:23 PM



Happy birthday lady! I miss you so much and wish you were here to celebrate our birthdays together. I know your watching out for all of us each and every day. Love yal

jessica lynn

Jul 26 2009 9:53 AM



happy birthday ashley nicole!! i wish you were here.. i can't believe its almost been four years. it still seems so unreal. my life will never be the same; i miss you so much.. i love you!!

Mo money

Jul 25 2009 10:13 PM



Hey girl i miss you! its come around again as u know, I wish u were here so we could celebrate your bday once more. Plus i wanna to let u know im Having a Lil Boy. Im 25weeks on ur bday which is nice to remember. Wish you were here to see him grow up. I miss you and will see you someday. Love You



facebook

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Home



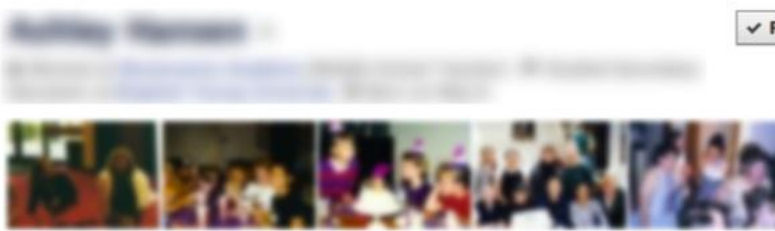
Wall

Info

Photos (146)

Friends

Friends (142)



Write Post Add Photo / Video

Write something...



Still think about you, especially during these holidays. Love you Ashley, miss you a ton

Like · Comment · December 11, 2011 at 1:08am · 1



Ash, celebrating your last day on Earth and so thankful for your love and friendship in my life. Miss you like crazy. Can't wait to see you again one day.

Like · Comment · November 27, 2011 at 2:03pm · 1



Happy Thanksgiving everyone!  
\*Missing this holiday season.\*

View Post · November 24, 2011 at 9:15am · 1



Hey Ash! Remember when we stayed up all night playing Nertz! That was sooooo fun. You and I made the best team ever. We totally WON! I Love you and and look forward to more fun moments to cherish with you!

Like · Comment · November 8, 2011 at 1:10am near Provo, UT · 1



LOVE YOU and miss you so very much.

Like · Comment · June 14, 2011 at 7:30pm · 1

Friends

Subscribed

Message

More

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Nabil Wire, Michael Merchant and Michael Pedersen like Tough Mudder.



Tough Mudder  
Like



Chloe Fan likes Jiro Dreams of Sushi.



Jiro Dreams of Sushi  
Like



Michael Merchant likes ZocDoc.



ZocDoc  
Like



Michael Yeganyan likes Audrey Napoleon.



Audrey Napoleon  
Like

Sponsored

See All

SMU School of Medicine  
stmatthews.edu



High USMLE pass rates, safe beautiful location, small class sizes, dedicated faculty, and US clinicals

NonProfit Online College  
wgu.edu

can we  
describe grief ?

theorizing grief

# theorizing grief

**MOURNING**      the overall process of  
acknowledging and  
accommodating loss

Rando, T. 1993. *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*.



# theorizing grief

## **MOURNING**

the overall process of  
acknowledging and  
accommodating loss

## **ACUTE GRIEF REACTIONS**

reactions to the perception of  
that loss

dataset

2213 post-mortem comments  
1660 unique authors

652 deceased profiles  
Age of death: 27.68 (SD=13.06)  
66.7% male



developing a codebook

# developing a codebook



**Identified extreme comments**



# developing a codebook

- ① Identified extreme comments
- ② Open coding for features

# developing a codebook

- ① Identified extreme comments
- ② Open coding for features
- ③ Developed rules

# developing a codebook

- ① Identified extreme comments
- ② Open coding for features
- ③ Developed rules
- ④ Reliability assessment

# qualitative coding

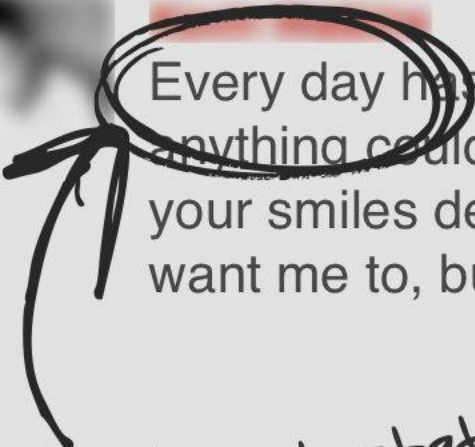


David [redacted]

Every day has been terrible since you've been gone. I feel like anything could just push me over the edge. I hold the memories of your smiles dear and I try to make my own like I know you would want me to, but I still can't think of you without the pain.



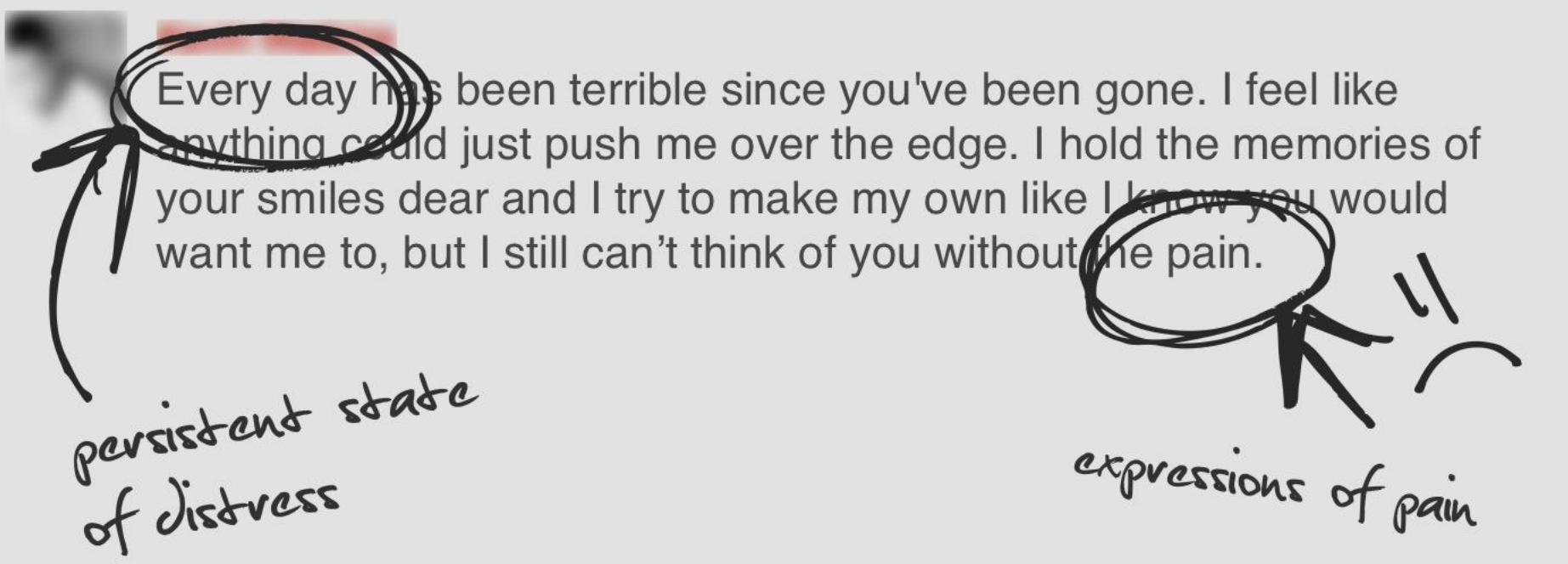
# qualitative coding



Every day has been terrible since you've been gone. I feel like anything could just push me over the edge. I hold the memories of your smiles dear and I try to make my own like I know you would want me to, but I still can't think of you without the pain.

*persistent state  
of distress*

# qualitative coding



Every day has been terrible since you've been gone. I feel like anything could just push me over the edge. I hold the memories of your smiles dear and I try to make my own like I know you would want me to, but I still can't think of you without the pain.

*persistent state  
of distress*

*expressions of pain*

# qualitative coding

Every day has been terrible since you've been gone. I feel like anything could just push me over the edge. I hold the memories of your smiles dear and I try to make my own like I know you would want me to, but I still can't think of you without the pain.

persistent state  
of distress

expressions of pain  
Currently  
experiencing pain.

# qualitative coding



[Redacted Name]

We will never forget you.



[Redacted Name]

We miss you a lot, but I know you are watching over us from heaven. Love you!



[Redacted Name]

It still hurts to think of you, and I know I will always miss you, but I am still glad that I was fortunate enough to be in your life.



# qualitative coding



[Redacted Name]

We will never forget you.

← emotionally  
ambiguous



[Redacted Name]

We miss you a lot, but I know you are watching over us from heaven. Love you!



[Redacted Name]


It still hurts to think of you, and I know I will always miss you, but I am still glad that I was fortunate enough to be in your life.

# qualitative coding




**[REDACTED]**  
We will never forget you.

← emotionally  
ambiguous



**[REDACTED]**  
We miss you a lot, but I know you are watching over us from heaven. Love you!

prosaic  
funerary  
speech





**[REDACTED]**  
It still hurts to think of you, and I know I will always miss you, but I am still glad that I was fortunate enough to be in your life.



# qualitative coding

   
We will never forget you.

← emotionally  
ambiguous

   
We miss you a lot, but I know you are watching over us from heaven. Love you!

prosaic funerary  
speech

   
It still hurts to think of you, and I know I will always miss you,  
but I am still glad that I was fortunate enough to be in your life.

positive reframe

# reliability assessment

100 comments double coded

Agreement: 90%, Kappa: .71

20 comments coded by 8 external coders

Agreement: 84.4%

Rate of emotional distress: 12.5%



can we<sup>↑</sup> computationally  
describe grief ?

# analysis of language use

- ① What are people talking about?
- ② How are people talking about it?

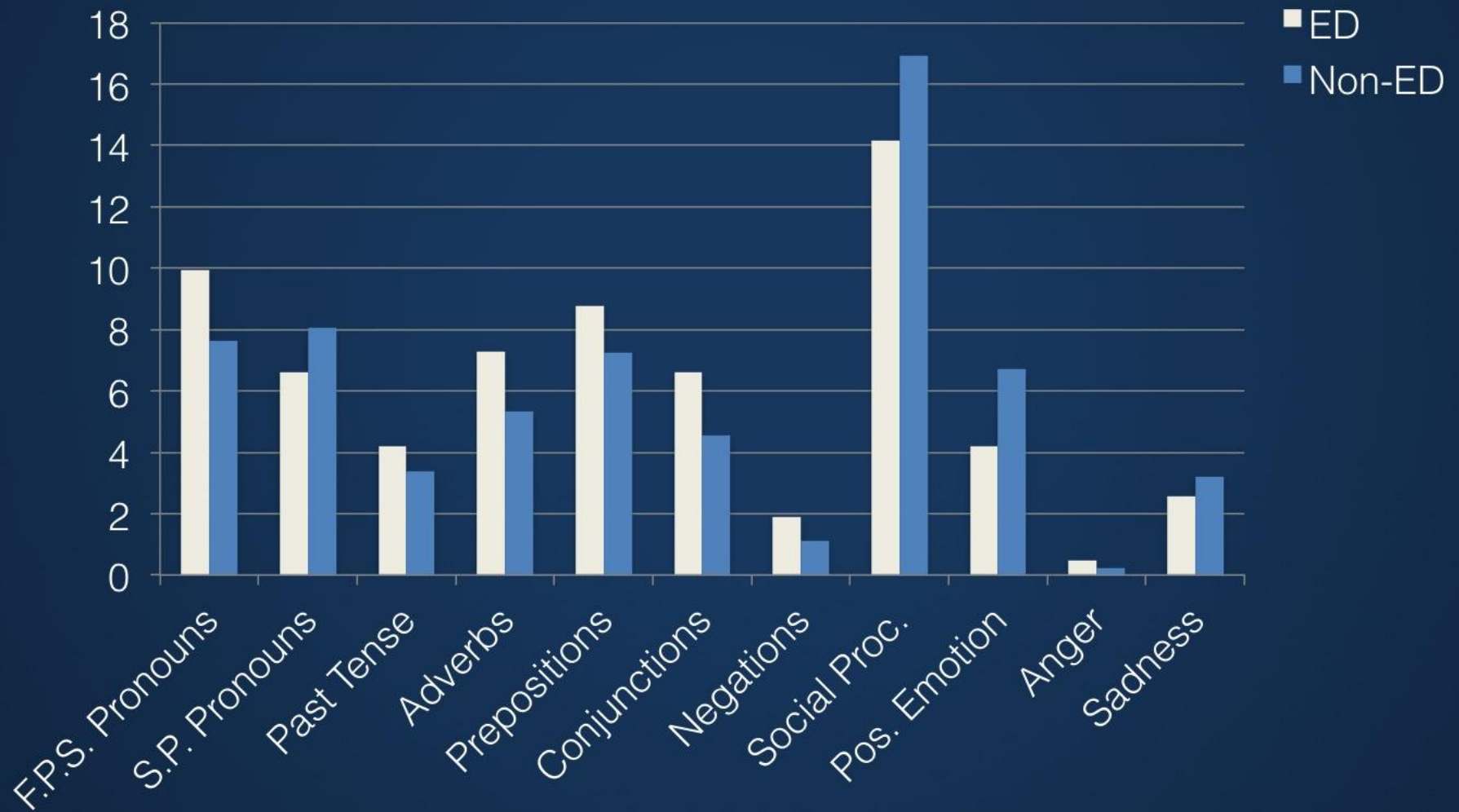
# analysis of language use

- ① What are people talking about?  
positive emotion, sadness,  
anger, social processes
- ② How are people talking about it?  
word count, pronouns, conjunctions,  
negations, adverbs, tense

# language of emotional distress

- ① Independent samples T tests.
- ② Two binary logistic regression models.

# results (T-tests)



# results (models)

## **LINGUISTIC STYLE**

Higher use of word count, FPS, adverbs, conjunctions, negations

Lower use of SP, TPS, TPP, future tense

## **SENTIMENT**

Higher use of anger words

Lower levels of positive emotion, sadness words.



numbers to words

numbers to words



less is less [emotional distress]

# numbers to words

① less is less [emotional distress]

② less you and we, more me

# numbers to words

- ① less is less [emotional distress]
- ② less you and we, more me
- ③ too sad to talk about it, to angry to stop

# numbers to words

- ① less is less [emotional distress]
- ② less you and we, more me
- ③ too sad to talk about it, to angry to stop
- ④ embellishing the past

studying the bereaved

writing in a naturalistic setting

first step towards predictive models



## Facebook Explains 'Report Suicidal Content' Tool



Facebook on Tuesday announced a new suicide prevention tool that has since drawn enormous attention, praise and head-scratching around the Web. "The new service enables Facebook users to report a suicidal comment they see posted by a friend to Facebook using either the Report Suicidal Content link or the report links found throughout the site," wrote U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin in a post on Facebook's Safety Blog on Tuesday afternoon. Now Facebook has explained the tool and the process...



### Thanks for Your Help

Thanks for your feedback. You can [Undo](#) this action or [Report](#) it as abusive.

## Is this post about you or a friend?

Yes, this post is about me or a friend:

- ☐ I don't like this post
- ☐ It's harassing me
- ☐ It's harassing a friend

No, this post is about something else:

- ☐ Spam or scam
- ☐ Hate speech
- ☒ Violence or harmful behavior

- ✓ Choose a type
  - Credible threat of violence
  - Self-harm
  - Suicidal Content**
  - Graphic violence
  - Theft or vandalism
  - Illegal drug use

Continue

Cancel

sensitizing  
technology





sensitizing  
technology  
to the entire  
lifespan



# thanks. questions?

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@whatknows

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funda@eden.rutgers.edu  
@fundinha



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