



Culture and grief: Ethnographic perspectives on ritual, relationships and remembering

Gila S. Silverman, Aurélien Baroiller & Susan R. Hemer

To cite this article: Gila S. Silverman, Aurélien Baroiller & Susan R. Hemer (2021) Culture and grief: Ethnographic perspectives on ritual, relationships and remembering, *Death Studies*, 45:1, 1-8, DOI: [10.1080/07481187.2020.1851885](https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1851885)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1851885>



Published online: 04 Dec 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 32234



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 42 View citing articles [↗](#)

INTRODUCTION



Culture and grief: Ethnographic perspectives on ritual, relationships and remembering

Gila S. Silverman^a, Aurélien Baroiller^b, and Susan R. Hemer^c

^aArizona Center for Judaic Studies, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA; ^bLaboratoire d'Anthropologie des Mondes Contemporains, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, Belgium; ^cDepartment of Anthropology and Development Studies, University of Adelaide, Australia

ABSTRACT

This introduction to the special issue on Anthropology and grief explores the contributions of an ethnographic approach to the interdisciplinary study of grief. After a brief overview of previous anthropological research, we identify key themes emerging from this global collection of case studies: the benefits of long-term fieldwork in nuancing the complexity of grief and complicating cultural narratives that surround it; the ways in which emotional aspects of grief are shaped by cultural norms and by the manner of death; and the relationships between the living and dead, including ontologies of the dead and culturally sanctioned forms of remembering and forgetting.

Recent approaches to grief in psychology and the social sciences have clearly indicated that grief is a multidimensional range of experiences following a loss (Bonanno, 2001, pp. 494–495) and that these experiences are predicated upon and shaped by social, cultural, historical, and political factors. From both within and beyond anthropology, there have been calls for research that incorporates this complexity (for example, Breen & O'Connor, 2007; Rosenblatt, 2008). This Special Issue on Anthropology and Grief aims to address this call, and provide complexity and nuance to the study of grief. It emerged out of a workshop held in March 2017, in Brussels, Belgium, convened by Aurélien Baroiller, a doctoral candidate at Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Mondes Contemporains, Université Libre de Bruxelles. The workshop sought to explore the contributions of anthropology to the multidisciplinary study of bereavement, particularly in terms of ethnotheories of grief at a societal level, and varied experiences of grief within societies.

The group included anthropologists based in Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States, who had conducted fieldwork in their home countries, as well as in Botswana, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Tanzania, Guatemala, Papua New Guinea, and New Caledonia. Some had been involved

in anthropological research on this topic for decades, while for others, grief emerged as salient during field work dedicated to other concerns. Their work examined grief as part of the normal life-cycle, as well as in response to unexpected and/or traumatic deaths. Much of their research focused on settings, populations, and rituals that had not previously been included in grief research. Through a wide range of ethnographic case studies, participants in the workshop explored the theoretical and methodological contributions of an anthropological approach to the study of grief, as well as the epistemological, ethical, and practical challenges raised by such an approach.

Seven of those ethnographic explorations are included in this Special Issue.¹ These essays illustrate the diversity of grief experiences, both between and within socio-cultural groups, and highlight the importance of long-term immersion in a community in making this complexity visible. The articles collected here ask: how is mourning both a personal and a social process? How is it shaped by socio-cultural context, yet also innovated by individual actors? Grief emerges as a process with both individual and collective aspects, which follows socio-cultural norms and ritual processes of “proper” or “appropriate” emotional experience and expression, and yet demonstrates great originality.

Many of the scholars represented here draw on concepts from psychological studies (e.g., maternal bonding, “good” and “bad” deaths, grief work, continuing bonds, trauma), yet find that their ethnographic observations complicate these frameworks—challenging some concepts and adding nuanced complexity to others. All too often, the structures of academic (and clinical) life lead to data collection, analysis, and theory development occurring within disciplinary silos. Our intention with this collection is to move beyond these divisions, and to contribute to a growing conversation between scholars from diverse fields who are studying the grief experience. As these articles demonstrate, we have much work to do together—both intellectually, and to enable greater support of those who are grieving. We begin with a brief overview of anthropological contributions to the study of grief, before moving on to highlight key themes in the collection and the ways in which anthropology can contribute to the interdisciplinary study of grief.

The anthropology of grief

In many ways, the essays gathered here continue a conversation begun in the 2018 special issue of *Death Studies* that focused on ethnographic studies at life’s end. In their introduction to that collection, Bryonny Goodwin-Hawkins and Andrew Dawson note that the study of death has been used by anthropologists to learn about larger social, economic, and political processes. They suggest that end-of-life and post-death rituals and processes represent “social control of what is, an apparently biological event” (p. 270). Complementing this, the present collection explores the ways in which mourning practices represent the social and communal construction of what has been seen primarily as an individual, psychological process.

Current psychological understandings of grief highlight processes of meaning-making, changing biopsychosocial needs, and the transformation of relationships between the living and the dead (Klass et al., 1996; Klass & Steffen, 2018; Neimeyer et al., 2014; Rubin et al., 2012). An anthropological approach to grief recognizes that these individual processes take place within, and are shaped by, social, cultural, religious, economic, political, and historical contexts. Anthropologists use everyday life as a window into these larger themes, as well as the ways in which they relate to questions of power and meaning-making. Their focus is typically on the communal elements—the social norms, rituals, institutions, discourses, roles,

and relationships—that frame and construct the mourning experience. Such an approach also recognizes that mourning takes place within communities, meaning that the collective can also grieve, and that memory can be both individual and communal.

Early work in the anthropology of death tended to focus on documenting the culturally diverse rituals and institutional processes of managing the dead and reorienting social relationships, such as classical analyses by Hertz (1960), Durkheim (1915), Block and Parry (1982) and Huntington and Metcalf (1991). Such an approach divided the work of analyzing death between psychologists, who focused on emotional aspects, and anthropology, with its emphasis on ritual. Anthropological studies attended primarily to the social functions of ritual, and individual actors and their grief were largely invisible. Many contemporary analyses of death continue this interest in the socio-cultural management of dying through ritual processes (see Kaufman & Morgan, 2005 for an excellent overview of recent work in this area). Yet with the rise of interest in cross-cultural studies of emotion in the 1980s and 1990s, grief also was placed firmly on the anthropological agenda. Key studies included those by Conklin (2001) about the relationship between cannibalism, grief and forgetting among the Wari of Amazonia; Hollan and Wellencamp (1994) on emotions and sentiments of loss and suffering among the Toraja of Indonesia; Maschio (1994) on the poetic laments, nostalgia, and rituals of remembering the deceased of the Rauto in Papua New Guinea; Scheper-Hughes (1993) on the impact of poverty and malnutrition on maternal grief in Brazil; and Wikan (1990) on the highly restrained expression of grief in Bali. These works, and those that have followed them, are critical of anthropology’s early focus on ritual (cf Rosaldo, 1984), and its tendency to view rituals as fixed in form and slavishly followed. Instead, newer research has emphasized the ability of individuals to appropriate culture or ritual and adapt it for themselves (Brison & Leavitt, 1995; Moran, 2017; Robarchek & Robarchek, 2005).

Recent works in anthropology critique early psychological models of grief, such as grief work or grief stages, as universalizing and discounting context (Arnason, 2007; Brison & Leavitt, 1995; Field et al., 1997; Hemer, 2010). Anthropologists have demonstrated the ways in which grief reflects and is shaped by world view or understandings of the self as more or less autonomous (Arnason, 2007; Breen & O’Connor, 2007; Robarchek & Robarchek, 2005). Likewise, models that separate grief into normal and

pathological forms have received significant criticism (Bandini, 2015; Breen & O'Connor, 2007; Walter, 2006). Instead, anthropological work has highlighted the range of emotional reactions to death which are seen as normal in cultural context. Moreover, scholars have explored the ways in which grief is frequently policed by family members and cultural institutions, which enforce norms of expression and containment, or even silence, in response to death (Arnason, 2007; Nations et al., 2015; Shepard, 2002; Small & Hockey, 2001; Walter, 2000, 2006). They note that when an individual's grief does not meet culturally sanctioned models of grief, then it may be seen as problematic, thus demonstrating that concepts of pathological forms of grief are cultural rather than universal.

At times in the anthropological literature, there has been debate about whether research findings reflect differing norms of expression of grief or differences in the experiences of grief. A prime example of this debate centered around Scheper-Hughes (1993) use of ethnography to challenge psychological theories of grief, maternal attachment, and neglect (Bowlby, 1980). Scheper-Hughes understood the lack of affective response among grieving mothers in the Alto region of Brazil as a cultural response to extreme poverty and high infant mortality. In contrast, Einarsdottir (2004), one of the more prominent critics of this analysis, argued that maternal grief, in other cultural contexts, was seen as natural but unfortunate—an analysis she revisits in her contribution to this collection. Other authors have argued that Scheper-Hughes misunderstood the cultural norms in this part of Brazil. They note that the behaviors she saw were not evidence of lack of grief, but rather reflected local norms that expect silence in the face of grief and prescribe appropriate ritual behavior by mothers and fathers (Nations et al., 2015; also Smørholm, 2016 for a different cultural context).

Case studies in the special issue

The articles in this special issue engage with the literature in anthropology and psychology, and describe grief experiences in diverse geographic and cultural settings, as well as in response to very different types of losses. Below we detail the key themes arising from these articles, after first introducing each briefly.

As part of a larger ethnography of verbal art in everyday life, **Alfonso Otaegui** explores mourning songs and wailing among the Ayoreo from the Paraguayan Chaco. He describes how improvised mourning songs allow the bereaved to express their

pain in a socially appropriate way, thus preventing a buildup of emotions that is seen as potentially dangerous. The importance of this emotional release becomes clear only within the larger context of Ayoreo ideas about health and the social order. **Gila Silverman** incorporates both auto-ethnography and participant-observation in her essay about grief rituals among American Jews. She explores the diverse ways that traditional Jewish mourning practices manifest in the lived experiences of non-Orthodox American Jews, and demonstrates how ritual can provide an organized framework for adjusting to changing social identities, constructing continuing bonds, and establishing the memory of the deceased within the community. **Gregory Simon**, a clinical psychologist working with the Kanaké of the Païcî-Camuki country, of New Caledonia, complicates questions of meaning-making and continuing bonds, through a case study of a cultural disorder resembling persistent complex grief or prolonged grief. He describes an innovative adaptation of traditional rituals that allowed a young woman to both retain and transform her relationship to her deceased brother, in a culturally and psychologically appropriate manner.

Susan Hemer tells how an unexpected death brought her back to her field site in Lihir, Papua New Guinea. The mourning that followed challenged her previous analysis of Lihirian grief and led her to a new understanding of the impact of a “good” or “bad” death on the community's emotional and ritual responses. In another example based in multiple field visits to a community, **Liv Haram** explores two conflicting sets of expectations for how women should express their grief among the Meru of Tanzania. She describes the complex encounter between the traditional practices of loud wailing and dramatic embodied expression and the more restrained, interior, and emotionally disciplined expectations of missionary Christianity. Utilizing extensive ethnographic research from both Guinea-Bissau and her native Iceland, **Jonina Einarsdottir** provides a cross-cultural comparison, revisiting her earlier work on infant death and maternal bonding. Challenging the work of other cultural and bio-evolutionary scholars, her ethnographic research indicates that notions of replaceable infants, fatalism, appreciation of infant vitality, and lifesaving names are examples of human responses to adverse circumstances, rather than inherent to “poor” or “low-resource” communities.

While most of the articles here describe individual loss, **Clara Duterme's** research calls our attention to collective losses, within a context of political violence,

civil war, and trauma. Her essay on exhumations in Guatemala examines the ways that funeral and burial rituals become a site of tension between individual memory and social memory. Using multi-sited ethnography, she documents the differing perspectives of forensic workers and families, showing how rituals of honoring and remembering the dead can be mobilized in service of political agendas and social purposes, that may be at odds with the needs of the individual.

Key themes in the anthropology of grief

In both the symposium on grief, and in these articles, several key themes emerged for which anthropology is uniquely placed to contribute to the interdisciplinary study of grief: the benefits of long-term fieldwork in nuancing the complexity of grief and complicating the cultural narratives that surround it; the emotional aspects of grief in cultural context, and the ways in which these are shaped by cultural norms and by the manner of death; and the relationships between the living and dead, including ontologies of the dead and the ways in which remembering and forgetting are culturally practiced and sanctioned.

Benefits of long-term fieldwork

At the core of the anthropological endeavor is ethnographic fieldwork, and particularly long-term participant-observation, in which researchers immerse themselves in the daily life of the community being studied. The goal is to be both an outsider and an insider, “learning, as far as possible, to think, see, feel, and sometimes act as a member of its culture and at the same time as a trained anthropologist from another culture” (Sluka & Robben, 2007, p. 1). The discipline takes a holistic approach, recognizing that every aspect of culture is connected to many others, which define their social functions and meanings. Ethnographers seek to analyze the norms, institutions, practices, and local histories that come together to determine what is “at stake” at different times and in different situations (Geertz, 1973). When studying grief, obtaining this broader view of the context in which death takes place, and in which it is mourned, allows the researcher to understand the cultural stakes as they are experienced by the bereaved, and to shed light on the intertwined social factors that structure the grieving process.

Long-term immersion in a community, as well as repeated engagement with that community, also allows ethnographers to observe behavior as it evolves

over time. (For more about the importance of multi-temporal fieldwork in order to understand continuity and change, see Howell & Talle, 2012.) This may include the ways in which the bereaved act (Otaegui, Simon), the meanings they find in particular rituals (Duterme, Silverman), community practices that change over time (Einarsdottir, Haram), and unusual situations that differ from what the researcher has previously experienced and documented in the community (Hemer, Otaegui, Simon). Participating in the daily life of a household, during regular activities and at times of mourning, allows the researcher to hear stories and witness experiences that people may be reluctant to share at first, particularly those that defy social norms. Moments of synergy, conflict, and contradiction can rarely be predicted, but sharing lives and mutual trust built over time may reveal aspects of grief that would otherwise be invisible. As Goodwin-Hawkins and Dawson (2018) note, ethnography creates a shared, and unusual, intimacy that—when studying the end-of-life and the mourning that follows—can be both emotionally uncomfortable and intellectually productive. The articles here thus contribute to the existing literature on the anthropology of grief, which has highlighted the value of reflexive practice and the ways in which this intimacy is challenging and yet revealing (Henry, 2012; High, 2011; Rosaldo, 1984; Shepard, 2002).

Complicating the cultural narrative

Grief researchers have long recognized the important role of culture in framing the mourning experience, as processes of meaning reconstruction and relationship transformation are inherently situated in interpretive communities and social relationships (Neimeyer et al., 2014; Rosenblatt, 2008). Rather than a solely individual process, extensive research has shown that the response to loss is always intersubjective. As Klass and Steffen (2018, p. 9) note, grief is now best understood as:

an interaction between interior, interpersonal, communal, and cultural narratives by which individuals and communities construct the meaning of the deceased’s life and death, as well as the post-death status of the bereaved within the broader community.

The articles in this volume provide further documentation of these processes; they analyze in detail the ways in which mourning is a communal and relational process, and the ways in which social gatherings, food, song, ritual, storytelling, use of space,

burial procedures, and material objects, are all used to facilitate meaning- and relationship-making, at both the individual and collective level.

Yet these essays also complicate this understanding, demonstrating the multilayered complexity of those intersubjective and cultural narratives. Rather than a simple description of each culture's mourning traditions—as was common in earlier anthropological research on death and mourning—these essays demonstrate the ways in which mourning is part of iterative processes of cultural production. Processes of meaning-making, social narratives, and cultural norms are mutually constituted; rituals of mourning and remembering are not only shaped by cultural discourses but also, in turn, shape communal narratives.

These essays document the ongoing transformation of rituals, traditions, and emotions, as well as of the verbal, embodied, and material expressions of loss. They show how the response to death becomes a site of negotiation, not only between personal identity and social and familial relationships but also reflecting and refracting larger issues of globalization and colonialization (Haram, Hemer); gender and personhood (Einarsdottir, Haram, Silverman); conceptions of the body and the spirit (Duterme, Einarsdottir, Hemer, Silverman, Simon); political and economic power (Duterme, Einarsdottir); the rise of evangelical Christianity (Duterme, Haram, Hemer, Simon); and secularization (Silverman). Several (Duterme, Einarsdottir, Silverman) also highlight how medical and psychological discourses are synthesized with cultural ones, further challenging the notion that these categories can be analyzed separately.

Taken as a whole, these articles also make clear that previous distinctions between “Western” and “non-Western” cultures, or between the “developing” and “developed” world, are no longer meaningful, as these cultural syntheses defy borders and regional classifications. Rather, we see here an active engagement with diverse traditions and discourses in an increasingly globalized society, as cultural and religious rituals are being continually re-created and re-interpreted in new ways and for new purposes.

Emotional aspects of grief

The essays here demonstrate the wide range of emotional processes inherent in grief, including anger (Hemer), pain (Einarsdottir, Haram), sadness (Silverman), sorrow (Otaegui), shock (Hemer), and trauma (Duterme). These articles reflect the range of emotions often cited in the literature, and provide

further evidence that grief is not restricted to a singular emotion, often assumed to be sadness (Jakoby, 2012).

Many different frameworks allow these emotions to emerge (e.g., verbal art, wailing, ritual, physical actions), to be recognized by the community, and to determine the amount of expression that is considered to be healthy, sometimes even necessary, reflecting concerns in the literature about the policing of grief and notions of what is “normal.” Duterme's article, in particular, examines the emotional repercussions of not being allowed to grieve, and of being prevented from expressing any emotion after the death. Other authors in this Special Issue also point to the ways that some emotional responses may be questioned as not appropriate (Otaegui, Simon), taken for granted and not openly expressed (Einarsdottir), or contested as part of broader cultural or political conflicts (Duterme, Haram).

Throughout these articles, we see that the manner of dying, and the meaning given to it, also has great implications for the grieving process. Anthropological studies have shown that in all societies, some ways of dying are deemed better, while others are considered bad, tragic, or ugly. Likewise, there are also certain times where dying is seen to be more or less appropriate, depending on the context (Kellehear, 2007; Willerslev & Christensen, 2016). The meaning that is assigned to death through shared conceptions and values predates the event, yet individuals often actively seek to shape and define deaths in particular ways, that in turn shape the emotional response to that death. Among the many emic categories which characterize a death, the opposition between “bad” and “good” death is the best documented (cf Counts & Counts, 2004), and is also taken up in this collection (Duterme, Hemer).

The cultural construction of emotions is a multi-directional process, with the community structuring (which may include allowing, encouraging, or preventing) the individual's emotional expressions and behaviors, but also with the individual using those behaviors to communicate what they need from those around them. These personal and communal needs do not always synchronize with each other; at times, the individual's need to express and recognize their loss may conflict with restoring the social fabric and collective identities, according to the expected communal norms. The studies described here explore who gets to define what constitutes healing, the ways in which rituals reflect particular understandings of the nature of mourning, and the role of the collective in managing

the emotions that go with it. Anthropologists do not seek to assess these emotions, or to determine which are normal and which potentially harmful, nor are their methodologies conducive to such goals. Rather, we seek to situate them in the context in which they are lived and expressed, in order to more fully understand the range of grief responses and the diverse ways in which these are responded to.

Relationships between the living and the dead

All of these articles in some way touch upon the relationships between the living and the dead, and the ways these are situated in, and informed by, social context. Death is everywhere understood as changing the form of existence of the deceased, but the nature of this transformation, and its impact on the grieving that follows, differs widely across cultures and traditions. Ontologies of the dead—the identification of the dead as particular types of beings—may also vary within a community. In some of the case studies included here (Einarsdottir, Haram, Silverman), the cultural transitions and syntheses described above lead to the coexistence of diverse, sometimes competing, understandings of death and what comes after it. In others (Hemer, Simon), the type of death, or the rituals performed (or avoided) influence the *postmortem* transformations thought to be possible.

These diverse ontologies of the dead create a variety of relational possibilities. They determine whether the dead have agency and how it is experienced, the ways in which their possible presence manifests and is interpreted, the responsibilities of the bereaved toward the dead, and the ways in which ongoing relationships with them are encouraged, discouraged, and created. Two of the articles here specifically address the role of cultural norms and rituals in the formation of continuing bonds (Silverman, Simon). Others explore the ways in which cultural norms and discourses—traditional and new—can be mobilized to construct and reconstruct the story and the meaning of the deceased's life and death (Duterme, Hemer, Otaegui), as well as to reconstruct the social fabric when an individual—and their set of relationships—has been removed from it by death (Otaegui, Simon).

Underlying much of this is the sometimes-tense relationship between remembering and forgetting. The articles in this collection demonstrate that culture constructs memory—both individual and communal—in a wide range of ways (Duterme, Einarsdottir, Hemer, Silverman, Simon). Social norms and cultural discourses determine what is worth remembering,

what is allowed to be remembered or encouraged to be forgotten, how it gets remembered and by whom, what value is attached to particular kinds of memories, and how memory is mobilized in service of social agendas, power, and meaning-making.

Together, the essays in this Special Issue demonstrate the value of long-term immersive fieldwork in providing nuanced analyses of the iterative processes of mourning in sociocultural context. These articles demonstrate the wide range of emotional reactions and responses to death deemed normal, while demonstrating how grief is intimately connected with historical and political changes in societies. They also highlight the creativity and resilience many have mobilized to find meaningful ways to grieve in a changing world. We completed work on this Special Issue in the shadow of the extraordinary circumstances created by the emergence of COVID-19, a situation we could not have envisioned when we first gathered in Brussels several years ago. At a time when so many are losing loved ones, and normal practices of life and death have been disrupted, it became even more clear to us both the importance of the research gathered here, and the vast work still to be done. Grief researchers are being called upon to help individuals and societies to mourn appropriately and well in a world that often feels unrecognizable. We hope that our work here can contribute in some small way to these efforts.

Note

1. Ruth Evans, Natashe Lemos Dekker, Richard Werbner, and Pnina Werbner also participated in the workshop; their work on this topic has been published elsewhere (Evans et al., 2018; Lemos Dekker, 2019a, 2019b; Werbner, 2014, 2018).

References

- Arnason, A. (2007). "Fall apart and pull yourself together again": The anthropology of death and bereavement counselling in Britain. *Mortality*, 12(1), 48–65.
- Bandini, J. (2015). The medicalization of bereavement: (Ab)normal grief in the DSM-5. *Death Studies*, 39(6), 347–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2014.951498>
- Block, M., & Parry, J. (1982). *Death and the regeneration of life*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bonanno, G. (2001). Grief and emotion: Comparing the grief work and social functional perspectives. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, W. Stroebe, & H. Shut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping and care* (pp. 493–516). American Psychological Association Press.

- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss. Volume 3: Loss, sadness and depression*. Basic Books.
- Breen, L. J., & O'Connor, M. (2007). The fundamental paradox in the grief literature: A critical reflection. *Omega*, 55(3), 199–218. <https://doi.org/10.2190/OM.55.3.c>
- Brisson, K. J., & Leavitt, S. C. (1995). Coping with bereavement: Long-term perspectives on grief and mourning. *Ethnos*, 23(4), 395–400.
- Conklin, B. A. (2001). *Consuming grief: Compassionate cannibalism in an Amazonian society*. University of Texas Press.
- Counts, D. A., & Counts, D. R. (2004). The good, the bad, and the unresolved death in Kaliai. *Social Science & Medicine*, 58(5), 887–897. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2003.10.040>
- Durkheim, E. (1915). *The elementary forms of the religious life, a study in religious sociology*. G. Allen & Unwin.
- Einarsdottir, J. (2004). *Tired of weeping: Mother love, child death, and poverty in Guinea-Bissau* (2nd ed.). University of Wisconsin Press.
- Evans, R., Bowlby, S., Ribbens McCarthy, J., Wouango, J., & Kebe, F. (2018). “It’s God’s will”: Consolation and religious meaning making after a family death in urban Senegal. In C. Jedan, A. Maddrell, & E. Venbrux (Eds.), *Consolationscapes in the face of loss: Grief and consolation in space and time*. Routledge Studies in Human Geography. Routledge.
- Field, D., Hockey, J., & Small, N. (1997). Making sense of difference: Death, gender and ethnicity in modern Britain. In D. Field, J. Hockey, & N. Small (Eds.), *Death, gender and ethnicity*. Routledge.
- Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In C. Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (pp. 3–30). Basic Books.
- Goodwin-Hawkins, B., & Dawson, A. (2018). Life’s end: Ethnographic perspectives. *Death Studies*, 42(5), 269–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2017.1396394>
- Hemer, S. R. (2010). Grief as social experience: Death and bereavement in Lihir, Papua New Guinea. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 21(3), 281–297. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1757-6547.2010.00097.x>
- Henry, R. (2012). Gifts of grief: Performative ethnography and the revelatory potential of emotion. *Qualitative Research*, 12(5), 528–539. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112442767>
- Hertz, R. (1960). *Death & the right hand*. Free Press.
- High, H. (2011). Melancholia and anthropology. *American Ethnologist*, 38(2), 217–233. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2011.01302.x>
- Hollan, D. W., & Wellencamp, J. C. (1994). *Contentment and suffering: Culture and experience in Toraja*. Columbia University Press.
- Howell, S., & Talle, A. (2012). *Returns to the field: Multitemporal research and contemporary anthropology*. Indiana University Press.
- Huntington, R., & Metcalf, P. (1991). *Celebrations of death: The anthropology of mortuary ritual*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jakoby, N. R. (2012). Grief as a social emotion: Theoretical perspectives. *Death Studies*, 36(8), 679–711. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2011.584013>
- Kaufman, L. M., & Morgan, S. R. (2005). The anthropology of the beginnings and ends of life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34(1), 317–341. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.34.081804.120452>
- Kellehear, A. (2007). *A social history of dying*. Cambridge University Press.
- Klass, D., Silverman, P. R., & Nickman, S. L. (Eds.). (1996). *Continuing bonds: New understandings of grief*. Taylor & Francis.
- Klass, D., & Steffen, E. M. (2018). *Continuing bonds in bereavement: New directions for research and practice*. Routledge.
- Lemos Dekker, N. (2019a). Competing goods and fallacies of care: Moral deliberations at the end of life in the nursing home. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 51, 100798. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2019.100798>
- Lemos Dekker, N. (2019b). Standing at the doorstep: Affective Encounters in Research on Death and Dying. In T. Stodulka, S. Dinkelaker, & F. Thajib (Eds.), *Affective dimensions of fieldwork and ethnography* (pp. 201–211). Springer.
- Maschio, T. (1994). *To remember the faces of the dead: The plenitude of memory in southwestern New Britain*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Moran, M. H. (2017). Missing bodies and secret funerals: The production of “safe and dignified burials” in the Liberian Ebola crisis. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 90(2), 399–422. <https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2017.0024>
- Nations, M., Corlis, J., & Feitosa, J. I. D. (2015). Cumbered cries: Contextual constraints on maternal grief in Northeast Brazil. *Current Anthropology*, 56(5), 613–637. <https://doi.org/10.1086/683171>
- Neimeyer, R. A., Klass, D., & Dennis, M. R. (2014). A social constructionist account of grief: Loss and the narration of meaning. *Death Studies*, 38(6–10), 485–498. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2014.913454>
- Robarchek, C., & Robarchek, C. (2005). Worani grief and the witch killer’s rage: Worldview, emotion, and anthropological explanation. *Ethos*, 33(2), 206–230. <https://doi.org/10.1525/eth.2005.33.2.206>
- Rosaldo, R. (1984). Grief and a headhunter’s rage: On the cultural force of emotions. In E. M. Bruner (Ed.), *Text, play and story: The construction and reconstruction of self and society* (pp. 178–195). American Ethnological Society.
- Rosenblatt, P. C. (2008). Grief across cultures: A review and research agenda. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, H. Shut, & W. Stroebe (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research and practice: Advances in theory and intervention* (pp. 207–222). American Psychological Association Press.
- Rubin, S. S., Malkinson, R., & Witztum, E. (2012). *Working with the bereaved: Multiple lenses on loss and mourning*. Routledge.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (1993). *Death without weeping: The violence of everyday life in Brazil*. University of California Press.
- Shepard, G. H. (2002). Three days for weeping: Dreams, emotions, and death in the Peruvian Amazon. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 16(2), 200–229. <https://doi.org/10.1525/maq.2002.16.2.200>
- Sluka, J. A., & Robben, A. C. G. M. (2007). Fieldwork in cultural anthropology: An introduction. In A. C. G. M. Robben & J. A. Sluka (Eds.), *Ethnographic fieldwork: An anthropological reader* (pp. 1–28). Blackwell Publishing.

- Small, N., & Hockey, J. (2001). Discourse into practice: The production of bereavement care. In J. Hockey, J. Katz, & N. Small (Eds.), *Grief, mourning and death ritual*. Open University Press.
- Smørholm, S. (2016). Suffering peacefully: Experiences of infancy death in contemporary Zambia. *Ethos*, 44(3), 333–351. <https://doi.org/10.1111/etho.12126>
- Walter, T. (2000). Grief narratives: The role of medicine in the policing of grief. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 7(1), 97–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/136484700109377>
- Walter, T. (2006). What is complicated grief? A social constructionist perspective. *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying*, 52(1), 71–79. <https://doi.org/10.2190/3LX7-C0CL-MNWR-JKKQ>
- Werbner, R. (Director). (2014). *Burying Hallelujah* [Film]. Royal Anthropological Institute.
- Werbner, R. (2018). Botswana's ecumenical funerals in the making. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 44(2), 315–315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2018.1418369>
- Wikan, U. (1990). *Managing turbulent hearts: A Balinese formula for living*. University of Chicago Press.
- Willerslev, R., & Christensen, D. R. (2016). *Taming time, timing death: Social technologies and ritual*. Routledge.