

GRIEF IN ANDREW GARFIELD'S INTERVIEW: A POSITIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: In this study examine how Andrew Garfield uses discursive strategies in the articulation of grief and resilience in dealing with the loss of his Mother and analyze this according to positive discourse analysis. It is how Garfield goes about reframing mourning as an act of love, transformation, and creative expression that the research describes. This study is methodological in nature and uses qualitative methods to analyze Garfield's interview with Anderson Cooper which was sourced from CNN's YouTube and podcast platform.

It is found that Garfield's discourse employs metaphorical framing, linguistic repetition and narrative reconstruction to challenge dominant cultural scripts of grief. He rethinks the metaphors of illness by refusing the combative ones and instead looks at grief as a continuing relationship, which establishes a perspective that makes mourning part of the way we live our lives, the way we think about life. His use of metaphors, such as grief as an ocean, a journey, or an artistic force, reshapes loss as a transformative process rather than a finite state. Moreover, Garfield's reflections criticize social practices of stifling grief and urge for a more open, participative approach as suggested by alternative cultural understandings, including indigenous views.

The results of this study indicate that Positive Discourse Analysis has potential in understanding how people implement grief discourse in order to maintain resilience and positive reframing. Garfield's narrative attests that mourning can be not an adversarial battle but a means of emotional presence, personal growth and life in community. His discourse brings love to the forefront as a model of mourning that is not presented as just agents must overcome initially for the love to return (as in conjunction) in time, but one that also offers affirmation of the alternate model of the mourning of one's grind that embraces our vulnerability and its life affirming potential.

Key words: Grief discourse; Positive Discourse Analysis; metaphor analysis; resilience.

1. Introduction

Grief is universal and highly individualized experience defined through culturally, emotionally and cognitively influenced language. The loss of loved ones is constantly discussed by public figures, for example, actors, in interviews, and constitutes a rich discursive space to explore how individuals invest signification to events in life. And known for his introspective interviews, particularly his candid ones about grief after the loss of his mother. That's Andrew Garfield, of 'The Social Network' and upcoming, and adaptation of 'The Salvation.' His narratives make the case for an affecting study of how grief gets mediated, negotiated, and transformed linguistically.

While grief has been heavily researched within the areas of psychology and sociology, there are only a limited number of studies that utilize discourse analysis to investigate how public figures articulate both loss, as well as resilience and healing. To bridge that gap, this research applies Positive Discourse Analysis of Garfield's interview to explore how language is used as a tool for meaning making.

1.1 The Problem

Public figures often become a channel for collective grief and mourning. Andrew Garfield's candid discussions of loss, particularly in widely circulated interviews, present a compelling case for examining how grief is discursively constructed and transformed into a source of meaning and emotional resilience. Despite existing research on grief discourse and metaphor, there remains a gap in understanding how positive linguistic strategies contribute to resilience in grief narratives. This study bridges this gap by integrating Positive Discourse Analysis, metaphor analysis, thematic analysis, and narrative analysis to examine Garfield's interviews. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What discursive strategies does Andrew Garfield use to reconstruct meaning and express resilience in his grief?
2. What role do metaphors play in articulating grief experiences in Garfield's discourse?
3. How do these metaphors shape emotional engagement with loss?
4. What social, cultural, or ideological influences are evident in Garfield's constructions of grief?
5. How does Positive Discourse Analysis reveal possibilities for resilience and positive reframing in grief discourse?

1.2 The Research Objectives

This paper aims to:

1. Identify the discursive strategies that Andrew Garfield uses to reconstruct meaning and express resilience in his grief.
2. Determine the role that metaphors play in articulating grief experiences in Garfield's discourse.
3. Understand how these metaphors shape emotional engagement with loss.
4. Specify the social, cultural, or ideological influences that are evident in Garfield's constructions of grief.
5. Reveal the means by which Positive Discourse Analysis uncovers possibilities for resilience and positive reframing in grief discourse.

1.3 The Hypotheses

The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

1. Garfield employs metaphor and narrative framing to construct grief as an evolving, transformative experience rather than a static state of suffering.
2. Metaphors have the potential to make Garfield's grief concrete and tangible, as grief is inherently an abstract experience.
3. These metaphors may shape the grief experience as empowering and wisdom-giving for the mourner, providing him with new appreciations of life.
4. Garfield's discourse can demonstrate that the social and cultural impression of grief is negative in most cases. Ideologically, Garfield is against such an impression since he perceives grief as a means of showing love to his mother.
5. Positive Discourse Analysis can reveal empowering linguistic patterns that contribute to resilience, as grief narratives can facilitate psychological and emotional adaptation.

1.1. The Procedures

The study adopts a multi-method discourse analysis:

- 1) Illustrating the field of Positive Discourse Analysis and the concept of grief.

- 2) Collecting the data that contains grief discourse from Garfield's interviews.
- 3) Adopting a methodology to approach grief from the lens of Positive Discourse Analysis.
- 4) Analysing the selected text according to the analysis procedures.
- 5) Arriving at conclusions based on the analysis and discussion.

1.2. The Limits

The present paper is limited to:

- 1) Explain and study grief within the verbal means. That is, no reference is made to non-verbal ways of expressing grief.
- 2) Examining metaphors, themes, and narratives of grief as discursive strategies.
- 3) Analysing selected extracts from Garfield's interview with Anderson Cooper. Moreover, the analysis is limited to Garfield's speech without mentioning the interviewer's utterances.

1.3. The Value

This research advances discourse studies by:

- 1) Providing a linguistic framework for analyzing celebrity grief narratives.
- 2) Demonstrating how metaphors and storytelling mediate emotional processing
- 3) Advocating for Positive Discourse Analysis as a complementary approach to traditional Critical Discourse Analysis, emphasizing agency and transformation in grief discourse.

By systematically analyzing Garfield's interviews, this study illuminates the intersection of language, emotion, and resilience, offering new perspectives on how public figures shape societal understandings of grief.

2. Literature Review

As the paper uses PDA to analyze the concept under study, this section represents CDA and demonstrates the difference between it and PDA. Furthermore, the concept of grief is described and its dimensions are understood from other researcher's view of this concept.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis and Positive Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis has been built around the relationship between discourse, power and ideology (Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault) and the way in which discourse is constructed with the dominant ideology. This framework was further developed by Norman Fairclough, using Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu as his influences, to create his influential approach to CDA. (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

While the traditional CDA approaches (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008) deconstruct the discourse to analyze the power structures, ideological struggle, and social inequality, it focuses on ideological moments to investigate how social power 'moves' in communicative process. The CDA has been extended with great success to domains such as media bias, political rhetoric, and institutional discourse. (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Having a solid ideological footing allows CDA to take a liberal-progressive approach to addressing some of the socio-economic and gender issues, that it minds to make people aware of inequalities and problematize power structures. Although this is often at odds with the scientific ideal of objectivity, which holds that scientific claims and methods are devoid of personal bias and value judgments (Billig, 2002), NF values are central to many social issues. Studies in cogniteness and psychology have illustrated how emotion and bias interfere with judgment and, as such, open question whether true objectivity can be reached (Watson & Spence, 2007). However, this tension gives complexity and significance to analyzing discourse as a neutral act, as the selection of topics and discourses are

already part of the researcher themselves. Nevertheless, the methods and representation of findings should strive for intellectual honesty (Abbamonte, 2018).

While CDA allows for alternative representations of reality and corrective actions, its defining characteristic is its critical stance toward the relationship between power and language. Martin & Rose (2003) noted that CDA primarily focuses on hegemony, exposing how power naturalizes itself through discourse and positioning itself as part of the struggle against such power dynamics. However, they also observed that CDA often neglects success stories within communities, a gap that Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) seeks to address.

The idea itself of linguists affecting societal change, or accounting for intricate socio cultural dynamics, is very intriguing though such results do require interdisciplinary collaboration and direct involvement in social or political action.

Whereas for the most part CDA aims at the deconstructing of language and semiotic structures whose building maintains discrimination, it takes no problematics to make available the alternative frameworks of positive change. Unlike PDA, the importance of discourse is grounded in its power to transform society. Halliday 1990 makes the linguists to see their role in shaping language for either supporting and challenging social norms and that language is a resource through which human construct experience. At key moments he stressed that language has to be fitted to serve new social functions and contexts.

Jan Blommaert (2005) It was argued that discourse analysts should shift from linguistic to broader social science of language in society, and that CDA user biases, e.g., sometimes solely being grounded in systemic functional linguistics and not much concerning social dynamics and consequences of text production, would benefit from realisation and correction.

This call for linguistic change was later echoed by Kress (2000) and Martin (2004), as well as Martin and Rose (2003). Jim Martin, in his article "*Positive Discourse Analysis: Solidarity and Change*," described PDA as a complementary approach to CDA, one that moves beyond critique to promote constructive social action. He argued that PDA offers "*a window on the construction of values ... through a discourse which we can use both to monitor and design change*" (Martin, 2004, pp. 184–197). According to Martin, PDA should analyze narratives of progress, such as the evolution of gender roles and environmental advocacy. He proposed expanding discourse analysis beyond the critique of power structures to include discourse that "*inspires, encourages, heartens.*" His vision for PDA emphasized a perspective on language that actively contributes to improving society (Martin, 2004, p. 179).

PDA is not only about countering dominant discourse but also about appreciating how certain hegemonic narratives function positively within specific geopolitical contexts. For example, Ting Su (2016) analyzed a speech delivered by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the National University of Singapore, where he employed positive expressions of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation to foster emotional connection and dialogue. Through heteroglossia, introducing multiple perspectives, he reinforced cooperative relations, emphasizing "*friendship, respect, cooperation as well as peaceful development*" (Su, 2016, p. 800).

Tom Bartlett (2009) underscored that while CDA aims to expose social injustices by identifying problematic discourse, it does not necessarily empower individuals to reclaim their voices. PDA, on the other hand, "*highlights where discourse works*" (Bartlett, 2009, p. 134). He suggested that PDA should adopt a more ethnographic approach, analyzing effective discourse within specific sociocultural contexts to better understand how it facilitates change. Bartlett noted that successful discourse is not solely a textual matter but is also shaped by the mores and communicative norms of communities.

Building on Martin's contributions to PDA, Bartlett argued that, rather than focusing solely on debunking ideologies, PDA should examine how discourse fosters social cohesion. The concept of intertextuality should not be viewed merely as a means of reinforcing dominant ideologies but also as a channel through which marginalized voices can enter mainstream conversations (Bartlett, 2009). In

essence, PDA and CDA share concerns about agency and power but differ in their approach, while CDA critiques power structures, PDA seeks to leverage language for positive social action.

Bartlett (2012) further pointed out that PDA remains heavily textual in its analysis and tends to rely on trained linguists for interpretation. He argued that for PDA to be truly effective, it must integrate textual and contextual analyses to explore how language functions in real-world settings. The challenge lies in ensuring that PDA does not simply replicate CDA's textual focus but instead broadens its scope to assess the practical impact of discourse (Bartlett, 2012).

Despite criticisms, PDA was a new development which has seen resurgence since 2010, especially in interventionist discourse analysis and participatory research. The advent of digital and social media has reduced the discourse power redistribution to such an extent that individuals can directly influence public narratives more effectively. (Martin, 2012).

As Stibbe (2017: 310) maintains, drawing on Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), we require 'new stories to live by, narratives that promote sustainability and social justice.' According to Stibbe (2017) Ben Okri (1996) was of the view that societies create themselves by telling themselves stories, and in that way, a better future can be built on true story telling. Another example of discourse involved in positive social change, as pointed out by Martin (2012), is an autobiography by Nelson Mandela entitled *Long Walk to Freedom*.

The PDA wants to exploit the power of language in serving equity, sustainability and collective wellbeing. Although the critique applies methodologically to its scope, it offers constructive discourse, a complementary component to CDA's critical perspective. (Stibbe, 2017).

The concurrent existence of PDA and CDA is not contradictory, as they differ. However, many scholars insist that they can carry each other. For example, Martin (2004) points out that there is a 'positive counterpart' to CDA, with PDA supplying such a counterpart, and offering solutions and alternatives to the problems identified through critical analysis. Martin and White (2005) PDA regards the significance of emotions in the creating of discourse and the use of language that encourages resilience and hope. For this reason, it takes into account voice, gestures, and silence (non-verbal aspects of discourse) as well as tone (verbal aspects of discourse) to capture the whole emotional meaning behind communication (Page, 2018). Hence, PDA is indeed relevant to analyze trauma discourse, such as that of the grief, by focusing on its constructive components of the ways people express loss and recovery. (Jaworska & Kinloch, 2018).

Nevertheless, instead of uncovering the ways in which power asymmetries are exposed (Macgilchrist, 2007), PDA provides an alternative perspective in the examination of grief narratives in that individuals use discourse to cope; reconstruct meaning and seek for social support. In this manner, we can displace ourselves from the act of mourning and as a result, embark on a more intricate examination of how a discourse on grief stimulates emotional fortitude and communal cohesion.

2.2. The Notion of Greif

There is a very wide range of emotional, physical and existential responses to any grief, and it is a very individualised process. Firstly, grief is simply taken to be an emotion that arises after someone's loss of a loved one through death. Grief as emphasized by Kübler-Ross (1969) is a natural and frustrating process accompanied by a series of emotions. Although Kubler Ross's (1969) framework has been applied to other forms of loss, she primarily targets the grief relating to loss of life and death.

Sadowsky (2017) The definition of grief is expanded into a 'skill' (rather than a state of emotion). According to him, grief is a process of learning how to adapt and find ways of coping with the loss. This view of grief changes the experience from passive and happens to us, to active and intentional. Sadowsky (2017) expands the concept of grief to include: anticipatory grief that happened before a loss occurs, such as when a loved one is terminally ill; disenfranchised grief that is not socially recognized or validated, such as the loss of a pet or a non-traditional relationship; and collective grief which experienced by communities or societies, such as after a natural disaster or public tragedy.

Symptoms of grief include emotional distress (sadness, anger, guilt), physical symptoms (fatigue, insomnia, appetite changes), and cognitive symptoms (confusion, preoccupation with the loss). One of the primary causes of grief is the loss of a loved one (Kübler-Ross, 1969). Sadowsky (2017) adds that grief can also manifest as existential questioning, identity shifts, and changes in worldview. Causes of grief extend beyond death to include non-death losses, such as divorce, job loss, or health decline.

According to Kübler-Ross (1969), the grief may lead to behavioral changes. Behavioral changes during grief may include withdrawal from social activities, changes in daily routines, and difficulty concentrating or making decisions. Sadowsky (2017) This also points out positive behavioral changes that grief plays a major role in, such as, developing new coping skills, a renewed sense of purpose, or becoming more empathetic. He says that grief is not just sorrow but can lead to a new beginning.

Grief is a rich and multifaceted linguistic expression territory, and territory that effects psychology, linguistics, and cultural studies. By studying how people speak about and experience grief, we can learn much about how grief affects us emotionally, cognitively and socially

Kübler-Ross (1969) Although her work does not explicitly focus on the linguistic expression of grief, her work distinctly hints at that language serves a key component in grieving. Five stages of grief model is introduced by her in the shape of:

- 1) **Denial:** A defense mechanism where the individual refuses to accept the reality of the loss.
- 2) **Anger:** Recognition of the loss leads to frustration and anger, which may be directed toward oneself, others, or the situation.
- 3) **Bargaining:** The individual attempts to negotiate or make deals, often with a higher power, to reverse or lessen the loss.
- 4) **Depression:** Profound sadness and withdrawal as the individual acknowledges the extent of the loss.
- 5) **Acceptance:** Coming to terms with the loss and finding a way to move forward.

Sadowsky (2017) However, it critiques the stage model as being too rigid and thus views grief as a dynamic and individualized process. For him, grief means learning to live with loss and if not, it can encompass periods of growth, resilience, even transformation. According to Sadowsky (2017), there is grieving as a skill that involved the ability to articulate and communicate one's emotion. The linguistic expressions of one embodiment of grief are emphasized as being part of the processing itself and as a building of resilience. Several key features are, thereby, pointed out by the linguistic expression of grief.

- 1) Grieving individuals often use emotionally charged words to describe their feelings (e.g., heartbroken, devastated, lost). The choice of words reflects the intensity and complexity of their emotions.
- 2) Grieving individuals may repeat certain phrases or ideas, reflecting their preoccupation with the loss. Speech may also become fragmented or disjointed, mirroring the emotional turmoil they are experiencing.
- 3) The way grief is expressed linguistically is shaped by cultural norms, religious beliefs, and social expectations. For example, some cultures encourage open expression of grief, while others may value stoicism or restraint.
- 4) Individuals create stories about their loss to make sense of their experiences. This storytelling can be therapeutic and help integrate the loss into their identity (Sadowsky, 2017).

Grief narratives typically unfold in the form of death, the emotion, and the movements to adjust. These may change over time as the individual understands and accepts the loss. Pauses and Silence are used by grieving people to convey emotional depth as well as hesitation in grief narratives (Jaworska & Kinloch, 2018). Repetition emphasizes key emotional themes and highlights how the loss of the body

was impacted (Coupland & Coupland, 2000). Shift in pronouns of *i* to *we* generally indicates a transition from personal grief to collective mourning (De Fina, 2003).

When grieving individuals want to share complex and hard to explain emotions (Sadowsky, 2017), they commonly use metaphors such as ‘I feel like I’m in a dark tunnel.’ We use metaphors to describe our experience of grief (waves of sadness and carrying a heavy burden). The use of these linguistic devices assists in representing the abstract and overpowering nature of grief.

The expression of grief requires use of metaphors because they allow individuals to conceptualize and speak about these feelings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It is found that grief-related discourse often involves metaphors like:

- 1) Journey metaphors (e.g., moving forward, finding a path through grief) to conceptualize grief as a process (Semino, 2011).
- 2) Container metaphors (e.g., drowning in sorrow, carrying grief within) to depict the overwhelming nature of loss (Kövecses, 2000).
- 3) Light and darkness metaphors (e.g., a dark time in my life, finding light again) to frame grief in terms of despair and recovery (Charteris-Black, 2004).

Sadowsky (2017) adds that language is used to seek support, share memories, and maintain connections with others. The representation of grief in public discourse plays a critical role in shaping societal understandings of loss. Studies show that news media coverage of grief often sensationalizes personal loss for public consumption, framing it through dramatic narratives. Televised interviews with bereaved individuals use specific linguistic strategies to elicit emotional engagement from audiences (Page, 2014). Digital mourning takes place in the spaces of social media, changing the way social expressions of grief are practiced with hashtags, online memorials, and the virality of narratives. (Giaxoglou, 2018).

3. Data Collection and Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The aim of this study is to analyze a video in which Andrew Garfield gives an interview in which he mentions loss of his mother. The confirmation that the video comes from CNN’s YouTube platform is dated March 23, 2025. The interview, in which CNN published on October 9, 2024, was part of All There Is with Anderson Cooper. The transcript of the interview can also be taken from CNN’s YouTube channel available at the following link. (CNN Audio, 2024): <https://edition.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/all-there-is-with-anderson-cooper/episodes/e92bef56-387b-11ef-8459-83008f425ae3.pdf>.

3.1. Analytical Procedures

Data analysis is best approached in a qualitative manner, whereby the method contributes to the achievement of an overall revelation of how one language use is utilized by individuals to convey and process grief. To that end, the first step in the analysis is to discuss the discursive strategies made use of in Garfield’s speech. Metaphor analysis, thematic analysis, and narrative analysis are some of these strategies in which the conceptualization of grief, the patterns that recur as the dominant themes, and the ways of telling stories are explored respectively. In addition, investigating these discursive strategies illuminates the mechanisms related to resilience and hope.

4. Data analysis and Discussion

4.1. Andrew Garfield and his Grief

Andrew Garfield is a British-American actor known for his work in film, television, and theatre. He gained widespread recognition for his portrayal of Peter Parker/Spider-Man in *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012) and its sequel, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* (2014). His performance in these films, along

with his roles in critically acclaimed projects such as *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016) and *Tick, Tick... Boom!* (2021), solidified his reputation as a versatile and talented actor (Pappademas, 2022).

Garfield's mother, Lynn Garfield, passed away in 2019 after a battle with pancreatic cancer. Garfield has spoken openly about his grief, particularly in interviews, expressing how her passing profoundly affected him. In various conversations, including an emotional interview episode of *All There Is* on October 8, 2024. Andrew talks with Anderson Cooper about how grief is the only way for him to feel close to his mom again. Garfield described grief as a continuation of love rather than merely an absence. His narratives on loss have resonated with many, highlighting the deep emotional connection he shared with his mother (CNN, 2024).

4.2 Interview Analysis

Andrew Garfield's speeches on grief, as expressed in his conversation with Anderson Cooper, reveal a deeply introspective and metaphorical approach to loss. His language transforms grief from a static state into an evolving journey, weaving together themes of transformation, endurance, and connection.

Garfield frequently employs metaphors to articulate the emotional complexity of grief, emphasizing its transformative potential. He frames grief as a path to personal growth, stating that *"The wound is the only route to the gift"* and *"The grief and the loss is the only route to the vitality of being alive"* (CNN, 2024). These metaphors suggest that suffering and loss, while painful, ultimately deepen one's appreciation for life. Similarly, his depiction of grief as a journey, seen in *"I allowed myself to feel broken... I ran towards it and said, help me"* (CNN, 2024), underscores the necessity of confronting sorrow with vulnerability.

Grief, in Garfield's discourse, is also portrayed as enduring love, challenging cultural tendencies to avoid discussions of mourning. His assertion that *"This is all the unexpressed love... The grief that will remain with us until we pass"* (CNN, 2024) reframes grief as an extension of love rather than its termination. The permanence of grief, in his view, mirrors the lasting nature of love, suggesting that the deceased remain present in the mourner's emotions and memories.

Garfield's metaphor of grief as a vast, ancient force aligns with ecological grief theory, where nature embodies timeless wisdom. He describes grief as an oceanic presence, likening it to a guiding ancestor: *"The ocean had a great answer... it's like a grandfather"* (CNN, 2024). This metaphor conveys the cyclical and omnipresent nature of loss, reinforcing the idea that grief is an intrinsic part of human existence.

Another prominent metaphor, within Garfield's discourse, is that of grief as reconstruction. Referencing a friend's perspective, he likens grief to a transformed landscape: *"It's like where there was once a hill that you knew really well, there's now like a waterfall"* (CNN, 2024). This perspective challenges the conventional *stages of grief* model, instead presenting mourning as a nonlinear process of adaptation. The disorientation that accompanies grief is not framed as an aberration but as an expected and natural response to loss.

Garfield also portrays grief as an artistic medium, highlighting its role in creative expression: *"And I tried art, I tried painting, sculpture, you name it, music. And then I did the last resort, which was join the circus and do it outside of school drama class when I was 15"* (CNN, 2024). This perspective positions grief as a catalyst for creation, suggesting that mourning can be channeled into art as a means of processing and expressing emotion.

Beyond broad conceptual metaphors, Garfield introduces more specific imagery to capture grief's depth. He characterizes it as darkness and absence, stating, *"Only in really inhabiting that absence. Being that little boy at the bottom of the empty cave in vast darkness and just kind of crying out"* (CNN, 2024). Here, grief is not just a feeling but a state of profound isolation, a confrontation with the void left behind by a lost loved one.

His invocation of biblical suffering further underscores grief's existential dimensions. By referencing Job, who is a symbol of patience; endurance; and faith in the face of inexplicable suffering, Garfield

situates mourning within a theological and philosophical framework: *“Yeah, the suffering. As I said before, it’s the suffering where I can become Job on the mountaintop... And because this doesn’t make sense... Again, it’s like it’s a mystery why she had to have that ending”* (CNN, 2024). This metaphor acknowledges the incomprehensibility of loss, framing grief as an unresolved mystery that demands acceptance rather than resolution.

Finally, Garfield illustrates grief’s connection to memory through tangible objects. He describes keeping recordings, photographs, and even a perfume bottle belonging to his mother: *“Yes, I have recordings of her and lots of photographs. And I have a perfume bottle of hers. And she was a craftsperson. She would make things”* (CNN, 2024). These objects serve as emotional anchors, symbolizing presence amidst absence and countering the notion that death severs all connections.

Collectively, Garfield’s metaphors construct a multifaceted understanding of grief. Whether framed as love, transformation, darkness, or artistic expression, Garfield emphasizes that grief is not something to be overcome but something to be carried, shaping the mourner’s ongoing relationship with both life and loss.

Garfield’s discourse on grief encompasses interconnected themes, including love and absence, legacy and memory, resilience versus suffering, and spiritual surrender. His language transforms grief into a journey of connection, resistance, and transcendence.

Garfield ties grief to love’s persistence, emphasizing that *“the only route to feeling her close again”* (CNN, 2024) is through grief itself. This perspective frames mourning as a continuation of love rather than its cessation. Similarly, the themes of legacy and memory emerge as Garfield describes how objects, such as a perfume bottle and a crocheted blanket, and rituals, like reading Mary Oliver’s poetry, sustain his bond with his mother.

The resilience and suffering, in his speech, challenge conventional narratives of illness. Rejecting combative metaphors, Garfield resists the notion of illness as a battle, stating, *“I don’t like the idea of defeating cancer”* and *“I reject the idea that she was defeated in any kind of way”* (CNN, 2024). Instead, he embraces acceptance, portraying grief and illness as existential realities rather than contests of strength.

Ambiguous anger is another theme in Garfield’s discourses. He acknowledges feelings of rage but expresses surprise at their intensity: *“I have... but not as strongly as I expected”* (CNN, 2024). At the same time, he resists theodicies, rejecting the idea that suffering has a clear explanation: *“There is no explanation”* (CNN, 2024). This tension between anger and surrender reflects his struggle to reconcile loss with meaning.

Garfield also integrates spiritual and philosophical perspectives into his understanding of grief. The ocean, indigenous views on death, and a broader sense of interconnectedness shape his reflections. He describes grief as an opening rather than a closure, as expressed in *“The heart breaks and breaks and breaks and lives by breaking in times of great loss”* (CNN, 2024). His approach to mourning aligns with a spiritual surrender, where grief serves as a source of wisdom rather than mere suffering. This is evident in his language of seeking guidance: *“I allowed myself to feel broken. I didn’t run away from it. I ran towards it and said, help me.”* His statement, *“Maybe the pain in my chest was a depth of longing to understand,”* highlights his introspective process, while *“I take no credit for those words. I just had my ears open”* suggests openness to grief’s lessons rather than a resistance to pain (CNN, 2024).

Garfield criticizes dominant cultural narratives surrounding illness, explicitly rejecting the war-like rhetoric often used to describe cancer: *“I was about to say she fought it, but I don’t like that language.”* He further challenges conventional discourse, asserting, *“It doesn’t feel fair that we talk about ‘defeating cancer’”* (CNN, 2024). His perspective reframes illness and grief as profound experiences that demand acknowledgment rather than opposition, reinforcing his overarching theme of surrender and connection.

Garfield integrates themes of love, memory, resilience, and surrender, portraying grief as both a personal and collective experience. This strategy mirrors the fragmented nature of mourning, shifting between his mother's hospice moments, childhood memories, and career milestones, illustrating how grief resists chronological containment.

Garfield frames mourning as a continuation of love rather than its absence, asserting that *"the only route to feeling her close again"* (CNN, 2024) is through grief itself. He reinforces this by describing how objects and rituals, such as reading Mary Oliver's poetry, sustain his connection to his mother. This poetic reference, *"Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine,"* (CNN, 2024) marks a transitional space between life and death, transforming grief into an act of belonging.

His experiences challenge dominant narratives surrounding illness and loss. Rejecting combative metaphors, he states, *"I don't like the idea of defeating cancer"* and *"I reject the idea that she was defeated in any kind of way"* (CNN, 2024). Instead, he redefines grief and illness as existential realities, resisting simplistic portrayals of suffering as a battle. This aligns with his broader rejection of conventional theodicies, as he acknowledges pain while stating, *"There is no explanation."* The tension between anger and surrender surfaces in his admission, *"I have... but not as strongly as I expected"* (CNN, 2024).

Garfield's storytelling incorporates humor as both a coping mechanism and a means of resisting pity narratives. Moments of levity, such as his mother's playful declaration at the Oscars, *"It was me, it was all me!"*, preserve her agency while alleviating emotional weight. Similarly, his remark about acting, *"Not literally join the circus,"* uses humor to navigate heavy topics, making grief more accessible (CNN, 2024).

His use of language reinforces the transformative potential of grief. Repetitive phrasing, as in *"The wound is the only route to the gift... The grief and the loss are the only route to the vitality of being alive,"* (CNN, 2024) ritualizes mourning, lending it a mantra-like quality that affirms emotional depth. Evaluative language further reshapes grief's meaning, shifting it from loss to presence: *"This is all the unexpressed love... The grief that will remain with us until we pass"* (CNN, 2024). By positioning grief as an enduring connection rather than an emotional void, Garfield subverts cultural expectations of mourning.

Garfield's narratives also manipulate tense to blur the boundaries between past and present, reinforcing grief's timeless quality. His assertion, *"I know her smell still. I know her voice,"* (CNN, 2024) conveys an enduring bond, aligning with theories of continuing bonds in bereavement. Similarly, modal verbs, as in *"I want to be lost. It feels healthier than to feel like you know where you're heading,"* (CNN, 2024) introduce a tentative hope, acknowledging grief's uncertainty rather than seeking closure. Ultimately, Garfield's discourse on grief is deeply dialogic, shaped by nonlinear storytelling, poetic allusions, and reflective pauses. His statement, *"Sorry, I'm just caught..."* (CNN, 2024) underscores the real-time emotional processing within his narrative. Through these techniques, he constructs a model of grief that oscillates between sorrow and solace, challenging dominant scripts while offering a framework for meaning-making.

Garfield questions why grief remains a culturally silenced topic, asking, *"Why is it not a supported topic? Why is it a threat? Why have we exiled the conversation?"* and *"It is wild to me that we're not talking about this all the time"* (CNN, 2024). His statements highlight Western societies' tendency to marginalize discussions of death, reinforcing power structures that discourage emotional vulnerability.

He states *"I don't like the idea of defeating cancer"* and *"I reject the idea that she was defeated in any kind of way."* (CNN, 2024) to reject war-like metaphors, he subverts dominant ideologies that frame grief as weakness, further demonstrated in his assertion, *"Death is seen as this weakness, as this shameful thing"* (CNN, 2024).

To integrate alternative perspectives on loss, particularly indigenous worldviews, Garfield recognizes that *"What you just described so poetically is something that all indigenous cultures know and*

practice” and “*We are just playing catch-up here*” (CNN, 2024). These insights contrast Western grief avoidance with cultural frameworks that normalize mourning as an essential, integrated process.

Garfield’s discourse also exposes the emotional labor and gendered expectations surrounding grief. His conversation with Anderson Cooper reveals how men are often conditioned to suppress mourning in favor of productivity, as Cooper reflects, “*I was taught to push forward, not to grieve. And only recently, I realized I had never grieved*” (CNN, 2024). This exchange underscores how grief is often seen as an impediment rather than a necessary emotional experience.

Beyond critique, Garfield’s language also constructs resilience through community and artistic expression. He describes a network of emotional support, stating, “*It was like this net of love and care.*” Similarly, he emphasizes transformation through loss, acknowledging, “*Two-thirds of my ambition died with her,*” (CNN, 2024) yet demonstrating how ambition does not disappear but instead evolves. His engagement with nature also informs his grief discourse, as he describes the ocean as a “*grandfather,*” positioning the natural world as both mentor and source of healing.

Garfield’s grief ultimately offers a counter-narrative to Western grief avoidance. By employing linguistic strategies such as imperative verbs (“*help me*”), present tense (“*I know her smell still. I know her voice*”), and repetition (“*The wound is the only route to the gift... The grief and the loss are the only route to the vitality of being alive*”), (CNN, 2024) he ritualizes grief’s transformative potential. His discourse frames mourning not as passive suffering but as an active, dialogic process, one that fosters connection, emotional depth, and an enduring sense of presence.

5. Conclusion

The qualitative analysis conducted earlier in this paper provides novel insights into the notion of grief. The discursive strategies utilized by Garfield offer a nuanced perspective that helps envisage grief not as a negative experience, but as an empowering and wisdom-giving journey that matures the grieving individual. The following conclusions have been drawn from the analyzed interview of Garfield:

- 1) The speaker utilized metaphors, narrative framings, and storytelling to articulate grief about his late mother. These discursive strategies assign the dynamic and evolving feature to the experience of grief. This conclusion validates the first hypothesis of the paper.
- 2) The second hypothesis is validated since the analysis demonstrates that metaphors do facilitate the concrete realization of grief.
- 3) The metaphorical expressions associated with grief help the speaker to obtain a useful experience of grief instead of merely feeling devastated, heart-broken, or lost.
- 4) Based on Garfield’s speech, the Western societies and cultures stigmatize grief which prevents the mourner from coping with it or having a healthy closure. However, Garfield attempts to enlighten the addressee by sharing his coping mechanisms with the loss of his mother.
- 5) PDA uncovers that grief embeds positivity. That is, PDA sheds the light on the empowering nature of grief as it allows the griever to patiently endure the loss, aiding in the maturation of the individual’s personality. PDA further shows that sharing the one’s experience and struggle can enhance the recovery process because sharing hard times with others makes those moments less painful.

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