I think if you’re going to kill someone you ought to at least listen to what they have to say.

So here is a statistical analysis of the 500 last statements from inmates executed in Texas, based on the recently published NYT article (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/30/us/from-americas-busiest-death-chamber-a-catalog-of-last-rants-pleas-and-apologies.html). I would take these stats with a grain of salt because reading through all 500 statements was just too depressing, so instead I wrote automated scanners. (I realized after completing this analysis that even the raw numbers were somewhat depressing, so please don’t read it if it’ll make you sad.) Let me know if there are other things you think it would be interesting to look at or if you want data/code. Also, do me a favor and don’t reshare this.

Basic demographics:

Mean inmate age: 39, about the same as the general population (40) in Texas
45% of the inmates were white, non-Hispanic, about the same as the general population.
37% of the inmates were black, higher than the general population percentage of 12%.
17% of the inmates were Hispanic, lower than the general population percentage of 38%.
Apparently, no Asians have been executed in Texas.

Analysis of final statements:

79% of inmates made a final statement. Of these,
61% expressed love.
54% were religious.
49% apologized.
41% said thank you.
17% mentioned the legal system/courts
11% mentioned anger and hatred (sometimes to say "Don't hate me")
10% claimed innocence.
9% said goodbye

Presence of all these qualities correlated significantly with longer statements.

71% talked to family: 22% to mothers, 17% to fathers, 30% to children, 4% to wives/husbands/girlfriends/boyfriends*
18% talked to friends
44% addressed someone by name; 28% talked to women, 35% to men.

The average statement length was 110 words; the longest statement was 1268 words.

There were many significant correlations between qualities (ie, presence of quality A in a statement made presence of quality B more likely) which I summarize in the colormap below. The color is the negative log10 p-value (ie, a value of 3 corresponds to $p=10^{-3}$) and I put dots on every correlation with $p$ less than .05. All correlations are positive except the correlation between apologizing and expressing innocence; unsurprisingly, inmates who claimed innocence were less likely to apologize. Hearteningly, the strongest correlation was between mentioning family and expressing love.

![Colormap of correlations](image)

The following observations are of questionable significance:

People who addressed specific people tended to be slightly older (40 years vs 38 years; $p=.01$) and people who expressed love tended to be slightly younger (38 years vs 40 years; $p=.05$).

This is definitely the most depressing dataset I’ve ever analyzed, and it really makes me dislike the death penalty.

*I think it's actually more than that, but you don't usually use the term "wife" to refer to your wife.*