Stories of Journalistic Careers: From Serial Killers to the Changing Nature of Journalism

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By Linda Hughes-Kirchubel

Entitled
STORIES OF JOURNALISTIC CAREERS: FROM SERIAL KILLERS TO THE CHANGING NATURE OF JOURNALISM

For the degree of Master of Arts

Is approved by the final examining committee:

Dr. Patrice M. Buzzanell
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Approved by Major Professor(s): Dr. Patrice M. Buzzanell

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Head of the Graduate Program Date
STORIES OF JOURNALISTIC CAREERS:
FROM SERIAL KILLERS TO THE CHANGING NATURE OF JOURNALISM

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty
of
Purdue University
by
Linda Hughes-Kirchubel

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

May 2013
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Indiana
I dedicate this work to the women and men whose lives were cut short in the commission of a violent act, especially those whose cases have gone cold; to the families that they leave behind; and to the families who silently suffer under the stigma of being related to a violent criminal.

I also dedicate this work to my remarkable sons. Erich, your determination and perseverance has inspired me to stay focused as I’ve watched you do the same. Thank you for your sacrifices, and for bringing the beautiful Emma into our family. Mason, your creativity and wit are gifts to those of us touched by your love. Thank you for sharing your enthusiasm; it empowers me through its grace. Marc, you have an innate ability to encourage, and I know firsthand the beauty of being the recipient of your support. Thank you for cheering me on.

Finally, I dedicated this work to my husband, Rob. Thank you for spending more than a year insisting that I should love what I studied until I finally believed you, changed direction, and found a better path. Thank you for shaking me out of the drudgery of considering education as a thing to endure rather than an enterprise to adore. Thank you for the countless snacks, cups of Café Francais and lectures on the value of sleep during those too-late nights. In fact, thank you for everything. 433.
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My mother, Barbara Hughes, spent hours transcribing their thoughts and recollections, and she (almost) never complained. Thanks, Mom. Even after all these years, you are still helping me succeed. Dr. Stacey Connaughton and Professor Jane Natt provided considerable support and guidance to me as I navigated my way through this project, bringing unique perspectives to my analysis and reflections that helped me to find new ways of thinking about these issues.

I owe the most to my advisor, Dr. Patrice Buzzanell, whose intellectual fervor is inspiring and contagious. Her wisdom enabled me to create this thesis out of my life
experiences. Like a magician, she helped me find form and execute in ways that I never thought possible. She introduced me to the idea of autoethnography as a valuable research tool, and showed me how to use it. As my mentor and friend, she enriched my life. For all this, and so much more, I owe her gratitude, chocolate, and quite possibly several bottles of wine.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>vii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 “She Wanted to Go Home”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 “Do You Think I’m Done Up Here?”</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 A measure of dignity</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 “You Know What I’m Capable Of”</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Introduction to Literature Review</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Social Construction of Reality</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Organization and Career</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Journalism as Organization, Journalism as Career</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Narrative</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Summary and Research Questions</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 “You Will Be Back”</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Conversations with a Killer</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3. METHODS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction to Methods</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 The Metanarrative: Changes to Journalistic Career</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Participants</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Procedures</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1 Interview Participants</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Table</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table A.1 Jan's Facebook Posts</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table A.2 Susan's Facebook Posts</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table A.3 Mike's Facebook Posts</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.1. Facebook Image Posted By Jan</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Hughes-Kirchubel, Linda, H. M.A., Purdue University, May 2013. Stories of Journalistic Careers: From Serial Killers to the Changing Nature of Journalism. Major Professor: Dr. Patrice M. Buzzanell.

A career narrative is a story that helps a person define who she is, and how she should act, within the context of career (Meijers & Lengelle, 2012). This thesis is an analysis of three distinct, yet related, career narratives: a metanarrative, a mesonarrative, and a micronarrative. I examine the field of journalism through metanarratives that reflect the sea-change brought about by the advent of the Internet and the production of on-demand news (see 111th Congress, 2009; Rainey & Wellman, 2012; Weldon, 2008). Using the story of two serial killers, I show how the industry has begun to think differently about doing news between the time these men were arrested in 1999, and 2012, when the revelation of abandoned wells that contained the remains of more murdered women and children brought their story once more into the headlines. The mesonarrative has been identified through thematic analysis of interviews conducted with eleven newsroom leaders. Within the context of these leaders, I examine new practices newspapers have taken to remain relevant, and how these changes personally affect the way these newsroom leaders see themselves, their worth, and their futures. Finally, my own career story--and the associated serial murder case--provides the subject matter of this thesis’s micronarrative, affording a narrative of my own transition out of the field
of journalism and into new career opportunities (Inkson, Khapova, & Parker, 2007). This project operates at the nexus of organizational communication and areas of organization, career, and narrative. Its key theoretical contribution explores how organizational narratives can shape and be shaped by career narratives of those who work within these organizations collectively and individually. These interlocking narrative processes can also inform how organizational communication researchers and the people who work in changing occupations think and communicate about organizations, industries, and occupations that are undergoing critical changes. Furthermore, attention to micro-, meso-, and metanarratives of journalism can prompt restorying efforts that meet ongoing socio-technical transformations as well as the human opportunities and costs afforded by such change.

Keywords: Communication, organization, career, narrative, journalism, Facebook™, autoethnography.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 “She Wanted to Go Home”

Candy Enos remembers Robin Armtrout as a fire-haired beauty who loved animals and babies and whose generous spirit touched everyone. This included her family, who lived in a modest, blue-collar neighborhood in California’s East Stockton, the strangers she met at Del Mar Park, and the drunks who populated the city’s infamous Wilson Way.

So when Robin turned up missing September 4, 1985, Enos, her older sister, felt sheer panic. Days later, panic turned to pain when a dove hunter found the 24-year-old woman’s body about 10 miles away, in a Linden-area creek. She had been last seen getting into a red truck with two men in front of her mother's home near Del Mar Park. One was tall and thin. Nearly 14 years later, Linden resident Loren Herzog—known to some as “Slim”—admitted to being one of those men. He told authorities that his childhood friend, Wesley Howard Shermantine, owned that truck, and killed Robin while Herzog stood by and did nothing. She was raped, stabbed 46 times, and disposed of face down.

The elements are not kind to the dead, especially when bodies are left where animals roam, water flows, and consecutive days of 80-degree weather disfigure (Weathersource.com, 1985). So it is not surprising that Robin, whose thin body
bore the marks of a violent death, was a difficult body to identify. Bu her body also told
the story of a troubled life. There were obscenities carved and inked crudely onto her
lower abdomen and wrist. These self-inflicted scars were unmistakable to those who
knew her intimately.

Candy Enos remembers asking her sister why she'd engraved such words upon
herself. "She said, 'I don't know. I was loaded,'" Enos said. "But thank God Robin had
those tattoos because those are what identified her."

Barely a month after Robin’s death, Chevy Wheeler, age 16, received an early-
morning phone call from Linden native Wesley Shermantine. It was a beautiful fall day,
with temperatures in the mid-70s (Weathersource.com, 1985), and Shermantine, 19,
convinced her to play hooky from school. It sounded like fun. Chevy’s mother dropped
her in front of Franklin High School, unaware of Chevy’s plans. The blonde-haired pixie
called “Love you, mom” as she scrambled out of the car. For some reason she urged her
friends to "tell her dad" that she had gone to the hills above Stockton "with Wes" if she
wasn't back by lunch. And then Chevy walked out of class and climbed into his
Corinthian-red Chevy step-side truck. She was never seen again. It was years before her
remains were found and identified.

For authorities, and for Chevy’s parents, Shermantine emerged as a “person of
interest” early on in her case. San Joaquin County Sheriff’s detectives interviewed him,
and he repeatedly told them he knew nothing about her whereabouts. Weeks later,
authorities searched a remote hillside cabin that belonged to Shermantine’s family. There,
they found blood spatters that indicated a struggle had taken place. The blood type there
matched the blood type of a sample taken from Chevy’s shorts, which investigators had
collected from her home. But in 1985, DNA testing was in its infancy; certainly not used in ways it is used today, as the key to unlock evidence in criminal conduct. Yes, the blood type of the blood in the cabin matched Chevy’s. But the district attorney said a mere blood-type match was not enough to convict a suspect of foul play.

Besides, where was the body? Just as authorities had no leads in Robin Armtout’s case, they had nothing concrete in Chevy’s. They believed Shermantine knew more than he was telling. Yet her case, too, fell dormant.

Fast forward thirteen years to November 14, 1998. Cyndi Vanderheiden wandered into the Linden Inn, a country bar in Clements, California, about 15 miles northeast of Stockton. Sweet-natured and fun-loving, Cyndi was a local girl who had just celebrated her 25th birthday. She had told her family that she had given up her casual drug use and wild-girl ways. That night at the bar, she seemed genuinely pleased to encounter Loren Herzog, 32. Herzog was a local man with long blond hair and a plethora of tattoos. Cyndi’s sister, Kim, had had an affair with Loren. Charming, lanky, and good with the ladies, Herzog this night was accompanied by his best friend, Wes Shermantine, now also 32. Shermantine had shaken off the suspicions of the authorities in the disappearance of Chevy Wheeler. He was at the bar that night to hang out with his buddy Loren. The two had grown up across from each other, and loved the same things: drugs, girls, hunting.

Over the years, Shermantine—and by extension, Herzog—had developed dark reputations, that of hard-drinking meth addicts. While Herzog remained the “nice guy” of the pair, Shermantine was known for his braggadocio and his proclivity toward violence. He had been acquitted of a brutal rape barely a year earlier. But nothing seemed amiss in the bright lights of the Linden Inn, where the three chatted and played pool and drank.
Later, witnesses said, the trio sat in whispered conversation before leaving together after two a.m.

On March 17, 1999, Herzog provided the following version of the night’s events during an hours-long interrogation with San Joaquin County sheriff’s deputies (Herzog, 1999a).

After closing down the bar, the three met in the parking lot of a nearby cemetery. The drugs came out. It was party time. But eventually, Shermantine drove out of the cemetery parking lot, with Cyndi in the front seat, Herzog in the back. Soon Shermantine demanded sex from her, and she refused. The refusal drew his ire.

“He was getting wilder and wilder,” Herzog said. “I told him at one point, said, ‘Wes, don’t kill her, man. Take her back to her car.’”

The three sped wildly through the abandoned country roads, with Shermantine alternately hollering and striking out at her. Eventually he stopped on Waverly Road, and dragged Cyndi out of the car, according to Herzog.

"She wanted to go home," Herzog told detectives. "She used to call me Slim, and she'd say, 'Slim, do something.'"

But Herzog did not intervene, and Cyndi did not go home. In the early morning hours of November 15, 1998, Shermantine beat her, raped her, and slashed her throat. If Herzog is to be believed, in the final moments of her life, Shermantine leaned over her and gave her some twisted advice about the best way to die.

“Just let it come natural,” he said (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2001d).
1.2 Introduction

The preceding narrative must seem a bizarre and horrifying way to begin a scholarly thesis. But this story, and others like it in this thesis, provided me with the emotional impetus for my graduate work because of its relationship to my life and my career. I formerly covered legal affairs at The Record, in Stockton, California. During my tenure in the position, I covered the investigation and trials of Wesley Shermantine and Loren Herzog, two men whose violent crimes occurred in tandem over the course of more than a decade. They are still considered suspects in dozens of murders, but in 2001 they were separately convicted--Shermantine on four counts of murder, Herzog on three. After a long legal battle that ended with a high court ruling that his confession was illegally obtained, Herzog’s convictions were thrown out, and he pleaded guilty to one count of manslaughter and a number of accessory charges.

Between 1999 and 2004, I sat through hundreds of sessions of pre-trial hearings and trial testimony, and then I wrote about them. I talked to the witnesses, argued with attorneys, researched histories, absorbed 18-plus hours of Herzog confession videos, and lay awake at night wondering how to get the next big story. With each day of reporting, I wrote a corresponding 12- to 16-inch story by a typical 5 p.m. deadline. Periodically, breaking news pushed my deadlines later. My deadlines were pushed back on the day that Shermantine called to ask to make a statement, the day that I learned he offered to reveal key information in exchange for money, and the day that I listened to a woman tell the jury she had a “physical confrontation” with Shermantine, constrained from using the words such as “rape” or “assault.” I understood the legal reasons why she was linguistically constrained in this way: Having been acquitted of these charges,
Shermantine was legally not guilty; she could not claim she was raped (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2001d). I did not understand why that jury acquitted him. My deadlines were pushed back on any number of other days for reasons now forgotten.

As the case progressed, it began to consume me. Over the years, it became part of my career narrative. I often thought about the women these men were accused of killing, and the differences among them. I often sought out new information about their lives. Chevy and Cyndi came from working class families. Each had a sister, and two parents who remain married to this day. Yes, they dabbled in drugs. Each knew her killer, which is typical: A Violence Policy Center study found that “for homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 93 percent of female victims were murdered by a male they knew” (Violence Policy Center, 2011). Chevy considered Shermantine a friend, but spurned his romantic advances. Cyndi knew and trusted Herzog because of a previously-existing relationship he had had with her sister, Kim. When the young women disappeared, authorities paid attention, and court documents, law enforcement authorities, family, friends--and the media--helped to bring both of them alive to the wider public.

But there were others who went missing, like Robin Armtot, a young woman who had been married and divorced by the time she was 20, and who earned her living as a sex worker on East Stockton’s Wilson Way. Police disclosed very little personal information about her. And there was Joann Hobson, aged 16 years, a friend of Robin’s. "They were just drug buddies, tweakers," said Michelle Loftis, her sister (Hughes-Kirchubel, 1999a). JoAnn was reported missing on September 10, 1985, just days after Robin disappeared. I remember this date because it happened to be my 25th birthday. While her family had been searching for her, I had been mildly depressed because my
birthday celebration fell midweek, and thus felt mundane. JoAnn remained missing on March 18, 1999, when the San Joaquin County Sheriff’s Office arrested Shermantine. She had been labeled a runaway by police, and authorities could link her to the pair only through the flimsiest of threads. Prosecutors did not add her to the growing list of the suspects’ victims. But her family and friends were convinced the two men knew more than they were telling. It turned out they were right.

I first began working at *The Record* in August 1999, seven days before Shermantine and Herzog’s preliminary hearing began. During this hearing, Deputy District Attorney Thomas Testa presented the evidence against the two, so that Judge Michael Garrigan could decide whether there was enough to put them on trial. I spent the early weeks of the job learning about Chevy and Cyndi from family and friends who would talk to me. And then, I began to feel guilty and irresponsible for ignoring Robin Armtrout as well as the three men whom authorities said were killed by Shermantine and Herzog. I understood, in a very vague way, that Robin may have been marginalized by authorities because of her status as a sex worker (see Armstrong, 2011; Ditmore, 2010; Gaffney & Beverly, 2001; Kuo, 2005; Meininger, 2010; Mistress, 2001). Howard King and Paul Cavanaugh, shot to death in the early morning hours of November 27, 1984, may have been marginalized by authorities who believed they were homosexuals (see Anderson, 1993; Clark, 1987; Cogan, Gillis, Glunt, & Herek, 1997; McCready, 2010). They were, after all, killed while parked in a remote road off the highway that prosecutors claimed was used for such brief sexual encounters. No one seemed to care much about Henry Howell, whose murder occurred on August 31, 1984. Though he struggled with alcohol dependency, Howell managed to keep a job in the tool-and-die
field, had a 7-year-old son, and was a member of the Lummi Indian Tribe of northern Washington state (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2001e). His future, too, was extinguished.

I concentrated my efforts on learning more about Robin Armtout. I had to dig deep to find details. Her murder occurred in 1985, a month before Chevy’s, but her case went cold far sooner, and by 2000, with Herzog awaiting trial for her murder, I could find little information about her even from the prosecutor’s office. Her case file was thin, and had passed through numerous hands, with the original investigator having long ago retired. Testa, who was Shermantine’s and Herzog’s prosecutor, admitted to me that it was likely she’d been stigmatized by police due to her work in the sex trade--consistent with Meisenbach’s (2010) research that identified discrimination and neglect as negative outcomes of stigma. Furthermore, people typically blame the stigmatized, feeling as though these individuals somehow “asked for” their marginalization (Smith, 2007). Other research shows a large body of literature pertaining to crime victims, which shows they are often “judged by outsiders as being responsible for their own fate” (Grubb & Turner, 2012). So if Robin Armtout, and others like her, turned up missing, it’s not surprising that law enforcement responded with less enthusiasm or decreased vigor than they would have in cases where victims seemed to be members of the dominant group. And so sex workers may have become easy prey for a pair of serial killers.

One reason why I may have become so interested in learning more about Robin was because she was my age. I thought about the wildly divergent lives we led. When I prepared to celebrate my first birthday as a young bride, she was driving out of the Stockton city limits with a killer by her side. I wondered why no one seemed to take up her case. I thought about her last moments, wondered when a typical drive in a car
became moments of fear for her personal safety, and then a bleak understanding that this, for her, was the end. I wondered whether she saw the violence coming, whether she saw the situation as dire, whether her line of work had placed her in similarly risky situations before. I wondered what I had been doing the day she was murdered, about what inconsequential annoyance I had complained. Later, I wondered why her family did not attend either the trial of Wesley Shermantine, who was not charged in her death, or Loren Herzog, who was. I wondered what right I had to expect them there, or to judge them because they were not. I wrote profiles about Robin, trying to bring her life to my readers. I did the same for JoAnn. It was not enough to pull them from the shadows. I did not know what would be.

As the cases evolved from preliminary hearing to trial to sentencing, I became the reporter who “owned” the story: Prosecutors, defense attorneys, court personnel, law enforcement, and family members called me first, rather than other journalists, giving me exclusive access to information that often merited a news story. For example, after Shermantine’s conviction on multiple murder counts, he told his attorney he would reveal the location of a burial site in exchange for $20,000 and the dismissal of the death penalty option. Cyndi’s and Chevy’s family members, consulted by the prosecutor before a decision was made, called me to tell me immediately. The front-page story that announced the offer sped across the wires, with newspapers across the country printing my story. The next day, other media outlets scrambled to chase down the details, using my headlines as a guide, and the families appeared on one of the national morning news shows to tell the story to the world. This episode is a good example of how print news
drove network news in 2001. Journalism’s online presence was still in its infancy then, with newspapers still trying to figure out appropriate ways to use the Internet.

Meanwhile, I soaked up the kudos from my editors and colleagues, who prized such exclusivity. Once, another reporter from a broadcast news station called me to ask where I got my information. I politely declined to tell her, not simply because of journalistic protection of sources (see Reich, 2011; Rieder, 2009; Smith, 2011), but also because of the trust in these relationships that took a long time to develop. After I hung up the phone, I ridiculed her to my colleagues. “Can you believe that?” I asked my friends in the newsroom. “What a lazy reporter! What self-respecting journalist would let another person do her work?”

I did not know it then, but the case of Wesley Shermantine and Loren Herzog had become an integral part of my occupation as a journalist, and would become an integral part of my current work as a graduate student, and my overall career narrative. As I noted earlier, this prolonged serial murder case and its victims became the impetus for my thesis and a core aspect of my professional identity. I wanted to tell the story of these people, of my occupation that seemed to me not to do enough at times, and of changing journalistic norms, views on different parties in articles and features, and technologies. These different threads of my own story and those of other journalists are integrated throughout this thesis. To explain this integration, I next discuss multi-level career narratives before sketching out the rest of this thesis.

A career narrative is a story that helps a person define who she is, and how she should act, within the context of career (Meijers & Lengelle, 2012). This thesis is an analysis of three distinct, yet related, career narratives: a metanarrative, a mesonarrative,
and a micronarrative. Meininger (2010) describes metanarrative as “suprapersonal stories that people understand by means of a more or less fixed concept” (p. 196). In this study, I examine the field of journalism through metanarratives that reflect the sea-change brought about by the advent of the Internet and the production of on-demand news (see 111th Congress, 2009; Rainey & Wellman, 2012; Weldon, 2008). Using the story of two serial killers, I show how the industry has begun to think differently about doing news between the time these men were arrested in 1999 and in the year 2012, following the revelation of abandoned wells that contained the remains of murdered women and a fetus. I also explore how Facebook™ can be used by journalists to take a glimpse into the stated thoughts and opinions of sources who may not be willing to speak to the press—sources such as the family members of Shermantine and Herzog.

The mesonarratives—defined by Herrmann (2011) as those that create institutional and organizational identities that constrain/enable employees and attempt to influence internal/external audiences—have been identified via thematic analysis of interviews conducted with eleven newsrooms leaders, whose career narratives have not evolved predictably as they might have expected, due to industry transformation. Their interviews shed compelling light on the practices newspapers have taken to remain relevant, and how these changes personally affect the way they see themselves, their worth, and their futures. These interviews also repeat some of the overarching metanarratives of the industry.

Whereas the story thread about Shermantine and Herzog is dominant throughout my thesis, it does not factor into the part that I have labeled as the mesonarrative, that is, the story of journalists’ career journeys and sensemaking. Indeed, each of the journalists
can recount a particular event that had an impact on their personal and professional lives, 
much as the story of Shermantine and Herzog haunts me. Rather, I have used the bits and 
pieces or mini-stories of the Shermantine-Herzog case to illuminate theoretical constructs 
and practices within the metanarrative and the micronarrative sections. In these sections, 
the Shermantine-Herzog story provides examples of how such a series of news events can 
be woven into organizational or industrial accounts as well as individual sensemaking 
about career communication simultaneously.

Finally, my own career story--and the associated serial murder case--provides the 
subject matter of this thesis’s micronarrative, affording a narrative examination of my 
own transition out of journalism and into new career opportunities (Inkson, Khapova, & 
Parker, 2007). My career identity has been tightly sewn to journalism, even after leaving 
the industry in 2008. I explore how that identity evolved, and is changing, as I take on 
new career challenges and academia. I also explore how my identity as a journalist has, at 
times, receded into the background.

These three intersecting story layers are centered on career, the themes that 
underlie individuals’ work and related goal-oriented activities, as well as the structures 
that shape and are shaped by work (Buzzanell & Lucas, 2006). These career layers are 
constituted communicatively through and marked by difference--gender, class, sexual 
social orientation, bodily abilities, race, amongst others--and by dimensions of time, 
space, identity, and dignity (Buzzanell & Lucas, 2006, 2013).

In sum, I construct and analyze three career narratives that are interwoven and 
that mutually inform each other. The micronarrative centers on my personal career 
journey and the ways in which this journey has been marked by a single new story that
has evolved over time and has consumed my quiet hours. The mesonarrative incorporates the voices of journalists who, as interviewees, reflected upon their careers and the changing nature of journalism. The metanarrative invokes the cultural discourses and external tensions that have changed journalism as we know it.

In the next chapter I examine the scholarly literature that helps to inform this project. I focus on social constructionism as my metatheoretical lens and on narrative as my theoretical approach. I conclude Chapter Two with statements of my research questions. Chapter Three follows with discussions of methodology. In this chapter, I discuss the participants in the micro-, meso-, and metanarratives, as well as the procedures whereby these data are analyzed. Chapter Four details the results of my research, and in Chapter Five I offer results and conclusions from this study, which include how narratives of an organization can influence and are influenced by narratives of those who work within it as a group and as individuals. I also discuss the limitations of this study as well as its practical implications and opportunities for further research.

1.3 “Do You Think I’m Done Up Here?”

March 30, 2001

The sun had dipped behind the Calaveras County hills as the media loaded cameras into their trucks and sport utility vehicles and prepared to leave a scrubby, desolate hillside. Cyndi Vanderheiden's friends and family had spent another frustrating day at the mouth of one of Calaveras County’s 26,000 mineshafts, waiting to see what lay beneath. It appeared to contain skeletal remains of something--a small animal? A human? 

*Cyndi?*
Joined by law enforcement agencies and the media, the family watched for hours while experts lowered underwater cameras into the mine, and a search and rescue volunteer rappelled to a ledge for a better vantage point of whatever lay beneath. Like everyone, this volunteer hoped it was Cyndi’s body. More than 100 miles to the west, Shermantine, convicted of her murder and the murders of Chevy Wheeler, Howard King, and Paul Cavanaugh, awaited sentencing. Herzog’s trial would take place later in the year. During Shermantine’s trial, witnesses testified that the hunting enthusiast often boasted of knowing how to hide bodies in mine shafts and "make people disappear." Jurors watched a chilling video of Herzog’s statement detailing Cyndi’s death. Her family just wanted to lay her to rest. But first they had to find her.

This day, law enforcement called it quits when the property owner demanded the media and volunteers leave. Although they left without recovering a body, family members vowed to keep searching. Officials expressed skepticism about whether the mine contained human remains. Cyndi’s family, convinced that a body lay under the rubble that obstructed their view, left unwillingly, hopes dashed yet again.

"Do you think I'm done up here?" asked a defiant Kim Wrage, Vanderheiden's sister. "I think they're just trying to discourage us, and they don't want to believe what we have to say."

Chevy Wheeler's father, Ray, showed up to demonstrate his support for the Vanderheiden family. His weathered face and taciturn manner was not unlike John Vanderheiden’s. But now he shook his head over the outcome of the day. He, too, had yet to bury his daughter. He, too, had accompanied authorities on dozens of such searches. He knew what lay ahead of him in the evening hours to come.
"Now I've got to go home and face the wife," he said. "She's going to cry herself to sleep."

1.4 A Measure of Dignity

I was one of the journalists who stood along the ridge of a dust-dry slope that day, talking to the families periodically, visiting with the law enforcement, and chatting with the Sacramento broadcast journalists. It was a warm, spring day, with a high of 80 degrees (Weather Underground, 2001), and we had been to the spot earlier in the week, as well. I remember how hot we got standing, waiting with no shade but the inside of our cars. As the day wore on, I checked in with my editor, explaining nothing had been found. Between interviews with family members--and possibly using one of two laptops The Record had recently purchased--I sketched out my story and wrote down impressions of the surroundings: “On the back side of New Hogan Reservoir, hills swell and tumble across a rural expanse” (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2001j). I provided context by offering details of recent developments: “During Shermantine's trial, witnesses testified the 35-year-old hunting enthusiast often boasted of knowing how to hide bodies in mine shafts and ‘make people disappear’” (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2001j). I gathered my quotes, double-checked my facts, told jokes with the camera crews, and when the property owner demanded we leave, I made the 40-minute drive back to downtown Stockton and the newspaper’s office building, the setting sun flashing gold against my windshield.

Sunset occurred at 6:26 p.m. that day, according to records (Weather Underground, 2001). I probably filed my story at about 7:15 p.m. I may have arrived home to my three young sons and my husband at about 7:45 p.m., where I likely turned
my attention to other, more domestic matters. And it is likely that as I lay waiting for
sleep to come that night, mentally reliving my day, I thought about Cyndi, about Chevy,
about Robin and all the other women who may have died at the hands of violent
offenders such as Wes Shermantine and Loren Herzog. I have frequently done so for
more than 10 years.

It is now my hope that by engaging in my thesis research, by giving voice to these
women, I might put them, and myself, to rest at last. As I do so, I hope to provide for
them a measure of dignity that was wrenched from them in death, and in its aftermath, as
their cases became fodder for front page news in the hands of journalists rushing toward
deadline with competing interests in an ever-changing organizational structure.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 “You Know What I’m Capable Of”

Marriage to Wesley Howard Shermantine taught his ex-wife a simple but chilling fact.

"It doesn't really matter how long you know a person," said Sherrie Hendricks, who married Shermantine in 1988 and bore him two young sons. "I dated him for five years. I lived with him for 10. I still don't know him."

Hendricks sat down with me in February 2001 to discuss life with Shermantine just a few days after a jury found him guilty of killing four people—all of them after he began dating Hendricks. He once whispered to her, lying beside her in bed, that he'd killed 19 people. Hendricks remembers asking, “Were any of them women?” She said she could not remember his response.

In 2001, Hendricks, then 35, was a vital source for authorities as they investigated the murders of Cyndi Vanderheiden, Chevy Wheeler, Paul Cavanaugh, and Howard King. She was also a powerful witness for the prosecution at the trial, rattling off dates and times of incidents in her no-nonsense voice, correcting misstatements by both defense and prosecution, and staring at her soon-to-be ex-husband coolly.

From 1992 through 1997, she watched Shermantine’s drug use accelerate. It spawned paranoid rages that were often aimed at her. In talking about her life during
this time, Hendricks remarked, "If you were five minutes late coming home, [he believed] you were out having an affair. You had 10 or 15 minutes to get to the grocery store [or otherwise] he was out there looking for you." He could be charming one minute, and bite your head off the next--unpredictable as a summer storm, she said. At the end, she grew weary of the games, the drugs, the fights. She figured her chances of surviving the marriage looked pretty slim. His threats were wearing her down--and her attitude toward them showed it.

"Finally, there at the last, when he used to say, 'You know what I'm capable of;' I would say, 'I'll go out there and dig you the hole and save you the trouble,' " she said.

2.2 Introduction to Literature Review

In this chapter, I examine the bodies of scholarly literature that are relevant to the three separate, but related, threads in my thesis. I begin with an examination of the scholarly literature on social constructionism, because its concepts form the metatheoretical anchor for my research, and on narrative, which provides my study’s theoretical framework. I offer definitions of the kinds of narratives I employ--meta-, meso-, and micronarratives--and how they supply the structure for this project. In the metanarrative section, I examine organization and organization-societal linkages, which provide key problematics or underlying tensions (Mumby & Stohl, 1996; Putnam, 2012) that help guide the metanarrative’s analysis and the framework. I then move to an examination of the literature on career, which helps guide analysis of the mesonarrative: thematic analysis of interviews I conducted with 11 journalists who have had to adjust to career changes during the (current) turbulent period that began with the Internet and that
continues today with the infusion of social media and globalization. Lastly, I examine my own career story—the micronarrative of this research thesis—which is a story of how my own career identity evolved and is yet evolving from one tightly-bound to journalism to something more difficult to define.

By taking such a multi-level approach, I aim to present a comprehensive picture of a dynamic industry that is undergoing significant changes. I aim to show how the metanarrative, mesonarrative, and micronarrative simultaneously affect and inform each other. Throughout this thesis, I include portions of news articles regarding the Shermantine-Herzog murders. It is my way of trying to return agency, dignity, and voice to the people affected by their crimes. It is also an attempt to show the compelling nature of these horrific crimes, and place those who died in a new context.

In this chapter, I align with others who describe how people engage in the (a) social construction of reality and the relationship of framing to such constructions. Second, I discuss (b) organization and career, followed by (c) journalism as career and (d) narrative. Finally, this section concludes with a (e) summary and research questions.

2.3 Social Construction of Reality

We are all social beings. As such, the world and society in which we live helps us to refine and cement our own identities as well as make sense of the events that go on around us. When we ask ourselves, “Who am I?” we are really asking a comparative question: “Who am I, compared to…?” We look at others around us at work and at play and ask ourselves how we measure up. In this way, we are constructing our own realities,
and our judgments about them, based on societal norms and conventions. We live in a socially constructed world, where truth is less black-and-white than one might think.

Media are powerful forces in creating and disseminating the comparisons by which we may answer critical questions about ourselves and our lives. One thing is certain: The media are not objective forces that never offer value judgments. Surrette (1992) points out that newspapers and the wider media are not “neutral observers or social agents providing simple entertainment or news; their pervasiveness alone makes their influence extensive” (p. 192). For example, a content analysis conducted by Glens (1996), revealed that media “grossly overrepresented African Americans in their pictures of poor people as a whole” (p. 536). These images sent the inaccurate message that poor equals black. In addition, by “implicitly identifying poverty with race, the news media perpetuate stereotypes that work against the interests of both poor people and African Americans” (p. 538). In this way, the media help to create a commanding frame of reference through which to view our society, our nation, and our world. History is recorded based on what the media consider important. To ensure their place in history people must rely on media exposure. Institutions typically advance their messages through accepted media forms. As Gamson et al. (1992) tell us: “We walk around with media-generated images of the world, using them to construct meaning about political and social issues” (p. 374).

It is certainly true that the media exert a powerful influence in our society. Gramsci (cited in Mumby, 2009) used the term “hegemony” to describe not only how the dominant class secures domination by establishing political, moral, and ideological leadership but also how those who are dominated unconsciously subscribe to and
perpetuate this status quo. Mumby (2009) called for a theoretical examination of the
dichotomies that are inherent within the concept. This view enables us to tease out the
forces of resistance and domination conceptualized as constructs that exert pressure on
each other in society, and in organizations. Media reinforce both dominant and resistant
aspects of our society but often do so through processes that minimize, stereotype, and/or
ignore (Surrette, 1992). We can find some of these hegemonic constructs in newsroom
organizations. There, editors and reporters make daily decisions about what is and is not
“newsworthy,” acting as gatekeepers to knowledge about the world in which we live. But
it is also more complicated, because technology opens up more of these so-called “gates”
through which information flows and impacts the traditional notion of gatekeeping by
expanding its processes and reach (Cossiavelou & Bantimaroudis, 2009). Still, newspaper
reporters and editors have their place in the filtering and defining of information. As a
typical example, after a story appeared in the New York Times that oversold the benefits
of an experimental cancer treatment, Nature (1998) questioned the editors’ responsibility
in the situation:

Typically (and the New York Times is no exception) a newspaper's front-page
stories are picked at a conference of section editors who each advocate their
stories. Does a tendency to hype arise in such selling? Are journalists tempted to
oversell their story to news editors to gain such prominence? (p. 97)

Additionally, the convergence of traditional and new media in newspapers
throughout the world are bringing traditional views of journalism and the business of
news into question; the changing world reflects a new frontier where anyone can be a
journalist, and readers become consumers as well as creators (see Cohen, 2002; Pew
Ten years ago, researchers found that editors focused almost exclusively on developing reporters’ skills instead of reflection and theory (Deuze, 2001). That may be changing. A recent study found that public relations specialists know reporters are spending less time vetting the press releases sent to them but still are publishing them nearly word for word due to increased pressures to turn out more stories quickly (Bajkiewicz, Kraus, & Hong, 2011).

New technologies are playing a powerful role in journalists’ and ordinary citizens’ daily lives and creating new spaces in which we interact with powerful forces such as those that dominate and those that resist. One of these is social media. As newspapers struggle to adapt to changing models and ways of producing news, they look to their peers to learn from successes and failures (Wenger & Lynn, 2012), but assimilation into a working model remains an ongoing struggle. When I covered the Shermantine and Herzog case, Twitter™ and Facebook™ were nonexistent. Now Scott Smith, the reporter covering the case, uses Twitter to interact with his readers, his Facebook page as a professional tool, and web updates to publish breaking news (Scott Smith, personal correspondence, February 12, 2013).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) proclaim that “everything is about Social Media” (p. 67), where users connect by creating personal profiles, inviting friends into these spaces, and using the applications to communicate with each other through a variety of ways--including photos, video, audio files, and blogs. There are more than 100 billion friend connections on Facebook, and users generate about 2.7 billion likes and comments daily, according to Caryn Mahoney (2012), Vice President of Technology Communication at Facebook. This social hub has become the new corner bar, coffee house, or front porch.
Reporters like Smith can use these tools to find out more about their sources. They can even view the Facebook pages of the perpetrators’ families, as I have done, and perhaps gather some small glimpse into their thoughts and opinions. But how to use these tools can create controversy as news organizations seek to employ them in ways that are consistent with organizational missions and objectives. The Associated Press drew criticism when it forbade the tweeting of exclusive content on prior to its customers’ ability to use it (Associated Press, 2012), but these rules remain in force today.

Information consumers, too, have an enormous array of choices. Media inform so much of our lives that it is difficult to establish where its boundaries lay, if they exist at all.

Within the powerful umbrella of media influence is subject of the frame. Issues can be examined from varied perspectives, through a variety of contexts, and under numerous circumstances. How people think about an issue depends on multiple background factors and nuances, including our education level, gender, experience, and values. A frame helps to organize reality, provide meaning to a sequence of events, and promote certain interpretations of a situation or issue (see Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 2007). Frames are all around us, especially in the newspaper articles that we read. The mere size of a headline across a front page may deliver an unspoken message about the newsworthiness of the particular item. Whereas a banner headline demands attention, a one-paragraph brief tucked inside the B section may deliver a message that this information is, by comparison, less important. In the same way, online newspapers frame importance through placement: the more important a story is, the more likely it will be the first thing you see on the website’s landing page, accompanied by large
headlines, photo slideshows, graphics, videos, and any number of interactive options (Singer, 2011).

In research that focuses on framing as it applies to political culture, Chong and Druckman (2007) explore how frames are used to mobilize voters behind a particular issue or candidate by encouraging some attitudes and opinions over others. Thus, framing can be considered an extension of agenda setting (Scheufele, 2009), where agenda-setting indicates what to think about and framing indicates how to think about it. In a traditional Western angle on the media, media representatives are supposed to be communicating facts and information without bias; they are “supposed to tell the truth about the world by giving expert explanation and context” (Nerone, 2009, p. 32). Yet these stories, and how they are written, help audiences to place facts and circumstances into particular contexts. The way the reporter frames the story can affect how the public thinks about it.

One example of framing is in a study conducted by Otto Santa Ana, associate professor of Chicano studies at University of California, Los Angeles. Santa Ana, López, and Munguía (2010) compared newspaper coverage, television coverage and a Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)-commissioned report of violence that occurred on May 1, 2006 in Los Angeles. On this day in 2006, thousands of people gathered to participate in immigrant-rights rallies around the nation. In Los Angeles, the situation turned ugly. Police later admitted to mishandling the situation, and some were later disciplined for using excessive force on peaceful demonstrators. Officers shot more than 140 bullets into a peacefully assembled crowd and roughed up marchers who were exercising their first amendment rights.
As the incidents were going on, journalists at the demonstration framed the situation as excessive force, and placed the responsibility on the LAPD. But barely 24 hours later, the media reframed the issue based on police statements. What was originally called “excessive force” was reframed as “riot control.” By changing their linguistic choices, journalists projected blame onto demonstrators who were using the forum to protest public policy. Using a riot-suppression frame, journalists “undermined the social movement’s appeal” by casting demonstrators as aggressors. “The news media falsely cast doubt on the moral legitimacy of nonviolent marchers who called for greater respect for immigrants,” the study says (Santa Ana et al., p. 95). This work is a powerful indictment of journalists who covered this event, and one example of the power of the frame.

2.4 Organization and Career

An organization is a system that consists of people coupled with “physical, economic and informational resources, whose purpose is to produce a good or service for themselves or for the whole community” (Mario, Zamorano, Varela, & Gonzalez, 2008, p. 1121). Organizations and organizational communication can be discussed through metaphor (Putnam & Boys, 2006), through their adherence to core values, beliefs, and problematics (Mumby & Stohl, 1996), and through the ways in which organizing is communicatively constituted (Kuhn, 2012). These different conceptualizations of organizational communication highlight the organization and organizing processes that shape and are shaped by societal and institutional structures.
In a recent survey conducted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the American Press Institute, respondents defined the industry’s core mission as: “quality writing and editing; … investigative reporting; serving the community and defending the First Amendment” (American Society of Newspaper Editors, 2011, para. 53). This core mission may well be at work in many newspapers across the country. But it could also be argued that this core mission may be threatened by economic and competitive pressures, as newspapers struggle to redefine themselves in an era where technology is quickly evolving. These changes affect newsroom organizations and challenge mid- to senior-level journalists to remain flexible and adaptable.

The organization-society and organization-communication relationships explore internal and external communication relationships as well as the ways in which both organization and society mutually influence each other (Mumby & Stohl, 1996; Putnam, 2012). Within these intersections, organizations and the industries in which they are embedded and also change are tightly linked to issues of career. Sullivan and Baruch (2009) define career as “an individual’s work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organizations, that form a unique pattern over the individual’s life span” (p. 1543). This definition is appropriately wide-ranging and inclusive of many different issues, from psychosocial to organizational, economic, and beyond.

As Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2011) point out, the field of career research is an interdisciplinary one. They cite Bourdieu’s landmark theoretical contributions, calling his theory one of multi-level concepts that address “the interplay between his three conceptual building blocks--field, habitus, and capitals” (p. 24). “Field” is the social space in which actors use established social rules and regulations to gain and wield power
and advance their positions. “Habitus” is the sum of our expectations, preconceived notions, cultural, and social norms. “Capitals”--economic, social, and cultural (defined as cultural skills, products, or academic degrees)--are “labor in either a materialized or embodied form” (Swanson, 2009, p. 347). Field, habitus, and capitals intersect in organization, society, and career in a variety of ways, including how individuals interact; how power structures are established, maintained, and deactivated; and how people talk about career, both individually and within groups. These aforementioned examples are just some examples of “the overall functioning and dynamics of a given social order” to which Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2011, p. 20) refer when discussing the usefulness of Bourdieu’s theory in examining such intersectionalities. Furthermore, these concepts cross a multiplicity of scholarly disciplines, just as the study of organization and career does. For example, Lawrence (2011) points out that career can be examined through many lenses, including psychology, management, and sociology, and she calls for more comprehensive interdisciplinary approaches to the study of career. In this thesis, concepts surrounding organization, sociology, women’s studies, and media studies intertwine, and create a complex and sometimes-contradictory narrative that, like Bourdieu’s ever-changing conceptual building blocks, interact with and affect the actors within.

Other researchers (see Burke & McKeen, 1990; Buzzanell & Goldzwig, 1991; Lawrence, 2011; Lee, Kossek, Hall, & Litrico, 2012) reinforce the value of interdisciplinary theme. This thesis draws on a number of interdisciplinary texts in order to form a cohesive, layered argument. Disparate primary sources include texts from newspaper articles, content found on websites and social media, interviews with print newspaper journalists, and retrospective reflections on one individual’s career. All these
sources form the basis of narrative in context with organization, career, and career identity.

Organization is also linked to narrative. Some would say that organizations are identifiable by the stories that they and others tell about their organizational identities, cultures, and the discursive positioning of particular organizations within industry and occupational narratives (e.g., locale-specific discourses, see Kuhn, 2006). Uncovering the different narrative threads that link individual, organization, industry, and societal levels of organizing and career processes invites examinations of multi-level process whereby people reflect on their work and careers. Career is linked to narrative, and we see this through examination of career theory, some of which are developed through use of narrative, particularly career’s relationship to organization, and how both have changed over the past several decades. We learn through interviews with workers how they are affected by the loss of the linear, traditionally stable concepts of career and organization where the (usually male) worker pledged his loyalty to the organization, and in return received stability, extrinsic rewards and, if warranted, upward mobility (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Meijers & Lengelle, 2012). As women have taken their rightful place within the corporate world, researchers have used narratives to define these women’s experiences, with relation to their families, their organizations, men, and a host of other issues (Buzzanell & Lucas, 2006; Lee et al., 2012; Koppes, 2008; Paugh, 2005; Wingfield, 2009). Likewise, scholarly examinations use interviews to build narratives of career and organization within the context of work-life issues with other research addressing the impact of technology on career (111th Congress, 2009; Bajkiewicz, Kraus, & Hong, 2011; Rainey & Wellman, 2012; Weldon, 2008). Scholars also have learned that
environmental changes, such as increased globalization, rapid technological advancements, increased workforce diversity, and the expanding use of outsourcing and part-time and temporary employees, have altered traditional organizational structures, employer-employee relationships, and the work context, creating changes in how individuals enact their career. In fact, organizational narrative interviewing has emerged, along with personal narrative interviewing, as an important method of communication research, especially for the organizational communication scholar (Lindoff & Taylor, 2011).

Organizational narrative interviews are told by members of the organization and industry as situated within specific contexts (in this case, journalism, particularly U.S. journalism). Taken together, these narratives may illuminate key truths about the larger organization. As Bucholtz (2011) points out, scholars who are analyzing narratives must recognize that although they are presented as accurate accounts, they may not necessarily be so. They may be embellished, edited and framed, omitting one block of information while highlighting another. Narrative analysts are more concerned with understanding how these stories function, and thus are less focused on confirming their accuracy. Moreover, in taking a social constructionist stance, narratologists understand that narratives may not be objectively true, but they are truth for the participants and incorporate the framings of life and organizational or industry events that drive their actions.

In this study, through examinations of 11 interviews with newspaper journalists, I seek to add to organizational communication literature. These interviews are first and foremost personal narratives. All tell these journalists’ career stories, filtered through
their own experiences and views of their world. As they tell these stories, the journalists
make sense of their histories and explain career choices they made. Their narratives help
shed light their own personal growth, as well as how journalists mature, survive, and
adapt within an ever-changing industry.

Society’s view about work has evolved as society has evolved over centuries. Researchers draw a historical timeline between the likes of ancient philosophers and
modern-day scholars (Moore, Gunz, & Hall, 2007). They describe the impacts on how we
view work through sociological, psychological, and vocational lenses. They also show
how Plato and Shakespeare both dealt with the meanings of work and how work related
to personal satisfaction, depicting such writings as the earliest “systemic advice books
about how best to choose an occupation for oneself … first published as early as 1747”
(Moore et al., p. 24). The early philosophers equated the ideal vocation with the search
for purpose, but occupational “choice” was profoundly restricted, with more than “half of
all men continu[ing] exactly in the same occupation as their fathers” (Moore et al., p. 21).
For women, the options were even more limited up until almost 40 years ago. Ideas about
women, work, and career continue to evolve and, with middle-class white women
flooding the workplace, the relationship between home and work remains a vital area of
inquiry by scholars (Buzzanell & Lucas, 2006). In fact, the birth of modern career theory
took place during the 1970s thanks to the efforts of academicians whose work remains
pivotal today.
2.5 Journalism as Organization, Journalism as Career

The journalism field is predictably hierarchical, and definitions of success are enmeshed in how far one advances (Hardt & Brennan, 1995). Reporters who are just starting out generally begin work at smaller papers—that is, less prestigious news outlets that are smaller in size and located in smaller towns and cities (Beale, 2003)—and are typically assigned to cover the paper’s smallest cities or the daily cop shift. These assignments—or beats—help young reporters build competency through the execution of routine tasks. Such reporters are often tapped to work Saturday or weekend hours. In comparison, senior reporters cover topics such as legal affairs, politics, education, and health. Senior reporters participate in long-term, award-seeking projects, “A1” (front page) Sunday centerpieces, and investigatory pieces, in which junior reporters are may be only involved peripherally (Schachter, 2003). These centerpieces are generally the week’s best and most compelling stories, so-named because of their placement on the center of the front page, with a corresponding photo and graphics treatment. Newsroom promotions are meted out by editors who have traveled much the same road as the reporters whom they are supervising. The typical career route or journey can be phrased as: “Do a good job with your small city beat, and you’ll earn the right to the big city beat. Show enterprise working on the occasional feature, and a small project might come your way.” As a new journalist, I knew the path that successful journalists trod, and I pointed myself in that direction. My mentors were my editors, and the senior reporters who shared their knowledge with me.

During the past 30 years, the journalism profession, particularly the newsroom, has undergone dramatic changes, which has resulted in staffing cuts (Marshall, 2008). A
study by the Marshall (2008) finds that the number of editors who check stories prior to
publication are thinning, especially at larger papers where 67 percent of those polled
reported they had cut back on copy editing staff. Small papers still reported cuts of 42
percent. The advent of cable and the 24-hour news cycle altered journalists’ and
audiences’ interaction with and expectation of newsgathering and news delivery
(Klinenberg, 2005). Satellite radio expanded news availability for consumers. The
Internet and social media have created a new world for information seekers, redefining
the way journalists do their jobs (Schwitzer, 2009, p. 4). The industry has staggered under
intense economic pressures, and advertising revenue has tumbled amid changing news
models. The 2008 housing crash sent the real estate market--and associated classified
revenue--into a tailspin, while an increasing number of readers moved from paid
subscriptions to mostly gratis web-based news (Wall Street Journal, 2007). To stop the
fiscal hemorrhaging, newspapers have increased focus on their web product, laid off staff,
and, in extreme cases, stopped their presses for good (see Beale, 2003; Clark, 1987; Pew
Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010; Schwitzer, 2009).

But journalism is far from dead, and it is seeking to transform itself through
technology. In 2010, undergraduate enrollments in U.S. journalism and mass
communication programs increased by two percent, reversing a two-year slowdown;
graduate level enrollment is also on the rise, with Ph.D. programs up six percent and
master’s programs up 13.4 percent (Vlad, Becker, & Kazragis, 2011). University
curricula at journalism schools around the country are changing to meet different industry
needs. Columbia University students are learning how to merge journalism and
technology in new ways. Bill Grueskin, the dean of academic affairs at Columbia’s
Graduate School of Journalism, says that any technological skill students learn will soon
be obsolete, but the idea is to also teach them to be open to the lifelong process of
learning (Mangan, 2009). While training for young journalists is available during college,
they must stay current with trends (Schwitzer, 2009, p. 16), and older journalists must
continue to adapt to changing audiences and technology platforms, or face the prospect
going the way of the dinosaur.

Those who have been working for years as journalists now must adapt in a
pressure cooker; they must do the jobs they have always done, but, to survive in the
industry, must also learn new skills, learn to think differently about journalism as career,
and change the way they think about their own career identities. A survey of newspaper
and TV executives found that a majority believes convergence skills are important for
new hires (Kraeplin & Criado, 2005). “Convergence” is a term that refers to the evolving
trend in corporate journalism to produce news using multiple media platforms—print and
web products; television; online videos, blogs, and other social media tools (Urdal, 2011).
In a more recent study, one news media recruiter “suggested that some younger
journalists, with little to no professional experience, may have much-needed skills that
the veterans do not” (Wenger & Lynn, 2012, p. 10). The current state of print media is
nothing if not uncertain, where such issues cast a constant shadow over protean career
trajectories.

2.6 Narrative

Narrative is an appropriate framework theoretically and methodologically for my
research project. It provides the researcher with a form and process whereby
chronologically linear events and sequential actions that have meaning for the narrators can be organized, made sense of, and shared with others (Tuhoy & Stephens, 2012). Narrative helps to uncover an individual’s perceptions about judgments and feelings, motivations, fears and triumphs, and is where personal experience provides a way to study career choices and observations. According to Fisher (1989):

   The narrative paradigm is a philosophical statement that is meant to offer an approach to interpretation and assessment of human communication—assuming that all forms of human communication can be seen fundamentally as stories, as interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character. (p. 57)

In addition, Fisher (1992) tells us that narrative is a “conceptual frame that would account for the ‘stories that we tell’” which are, in turn “are meant to give order to life by inducing others to dwell in them” for a number of purposes including that of developing community (pp. 203-204).

He also explains his paradigm as having five main components. First, humans are storytellers. Second, our decision-making and actions are grounded in “good reasons.” Third, the production/use of these “good reasons” are ruled by history, culture, and character while constrained by things such as time and place. Fourth, rationality is grounded in human beings’ nature as narrative beings and their ability to sense whether a narrative “hangs together” (narrative coherence) or makes sense (narrative fidelity). Finally, Fisher (1992) argues that the world is a series of stories from which individuals must choose in order to live their lives “in a process of continual recreation” (pp. 204-205).
Narrative helps to shape identity, and therefore helps to shape career identity. As subjects cast themselves as the prime actor in their own stories of career, plots unfold, support, and shape their perceptions; narratives help to construct their own realities, advance their interpretations of their own successes, failures and adaptation, and mediate disconnects between past, present, and future selves (Meijers & Lengelle, 2012).

2.7 Summary and Research Questions

This project operates at the nexus of organizational communication and areas of career and narrative. On a more focused level, it may also help to define organizational aspects about the field of journalism and those who work within it, addressing questions about how they do career, and how new media have changed the nature of these newsroom leaders’ identities, and the power structures. Through narrative, this project provides glimpses into personal experiences--including my own since I became a journalist in 1999--that reflect growth, adaptation, and change for journalists navigating career during a turbulent time in the profession. Finally, I hope that my retelling of the stories of those who encountered Shermantine and Herzog restores to them some dignity and respect. In many cases, their lives have been cut short or significantly altered because of two violent men.

In sum, the research questions (RQs) that guides my scholarly inquiry are as follows:

RQ1. What does an examination of a single crime story, over more than a decade’s worth of coverage, reveal about how has the journalistic career changed since 1999?
RQ2. How do journalists see themselves retrospectively and in the present with regard to their careers?

RQ3. What does one individual’s career narrative reveal about negotiating change in journalistic identity, and how did her coverage of a particular crime story affect her career identity?

2.8  “You Will Be Back”

May 16, 2001

Angry, bitter and hawking his innocence, Wesley Howard Shermantine vowed to adapt to life on California’s Death Row. He swore his victims' families would never know the whereabouts of their loved ones' remains and insisted he would make no apologies to victims' families.

"People want me to show emotion," he said. "I'll never show no remorse for something I haven't done."

Three months earlier, just days after his conviction, Shermantine had offered to reveal the location of Cyndi Vanderheiden’s body in exchange for a $20,000 reward offered by a search center set up in Vanderheiden's name.

"I never asked for no reward for Chevy," he pointed out. "There was a $10,000 reward for (information on) Chevy. But Chevy was my friend."

In addition to the reward money, Shermantine in 2001 demanded that the San Joaquin County District Attorney request a commutation of his death sentence to life in prison without the possibility of parole. But the D.A. had a demand of his own. He wanted Shermantine to waive his appellate rights. Shermantine refused.
Knowing he holds the answer to some families' torment gave Shermantine a sort of satisfaction.

"I may die, but my family will have some place to visit me," he said grimly.

"Them people will never have any place to visit their child."

Shermantine also insisted that his longtime friend Loren Herzog had revealed to him the burial places of Vanderheiden, Wheeler, and Joann Hobson, an east Stockton girl who disappeared a month before Wheeler did. But Shermantine wanted assurances that if he told where the bodies were, he would not be prosecuted for additional bodies found at the site. And knowing the Vanderheidens had spent thousands of dollars searching mineshafts for their daughter, he offered them an ominous message.

"There's 26,000 registered mine shafts in Calaveras County," he said. "At 14 a day, it will take you five years to search every one. At the end of that time, you will be back, asking me to tell you what Loren told me" (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2001b).

2.9 Conversations with a Killer

Organizations, particularly organizations in which we earn our living, offer daily opportunities to negotiate relationships, tasks and problems. These negotiations take place around the “big stuff” such as salary and job promotions, and around the “small stuff,” such as minor deadlines and cubicle politics. Research tells us how negotiations take place (Kolb & Putnam, 2000), and how gender influences negotiation success or failure (Levina & Orlikowski, 2009). I did not realize when I began working as a court reporter, that part of my opportunities would include negotiating conversations with a serial killer.
The first time I spoke to Wesley Shermantine, he initiated the contact. In mid-July 2000, while he was still housed at the San Joaquin County Jail, he left a message on my work phone and asked me to come to see him. I had to listen to the message twice. I felt physically sick--stunned by his unexpected request but overwhelmed by the pressure to perform the way a journalist should. I knew that the results of the interview, once transcribed into a story, would occupy prime real estate on the front page. I knew no other media outlet would have such a story.

Thirteen years later, I have a vague recollection of my behaviors resultant to that phone message. I believe I may have let out a triumphant whoop, startling my other colleagues. It was not unusual for a reporter to deliver news of a big story by announcing it in general to those around her. I remember sticking my head into the office occupied by the city editor.

“Wes Shermantine wants to talk to me,” I told her. I don’t exactly remember her reply, but she probably said something like: “Holy crap. Go. Now.”

A San Joaquin County deputy led the shackled Shermantine into a secured, closet-sized visiting area for inmates. He was dressed in a red jail jumpsuit reserved for inmates housed in Administrative Segregation. These individuals were separated from the general population due to gang affiliation, the nature of their crimes, or other circumstances. I looked at him from behind a thick glass window, where I was seated in the public visiting area. We talked on telephones that echoed and cracked. The place smelled of stale cigarettes and body odor.

Shermantine’s pleasant, polite manner surprised me. He didn’t act like someone who could slit a woman’s throat, and his voice was smooth and well-modulated, with a
hint of country twang. He refused to talk specifics of the trial, but spent two hours
protesting his treatment by jailors and medical personnel. He brought copies of numerous
complaints he had filed, including several against a physician assistant who refused to
provide medication stronger than ibuprofen for pain relief, despite his repeated requests
for morphine. Shermantine shoved the paperwork, called a grievance, up to the window
that separated us from each other so that I could read it. I tried to examine its contents
and noticed with a jolt that it, and several others, were issued against my sister-in-law,
who worked as a physician’s assistant at the jail. She and I shared a last name, though I
hyphenated mine, attaching to it my maiden name. Did he know that we were related? He
must have.

The question never crossed my lips, and the detail never entered my story. Either
would have brought the personal into the professional, which for journalists is verboten.
Instead, I continued the interview and pretended not to have noticed. I asked questions
about specifics of the grievance and we concluded the interview. I filed the story. It
appeared on the front page, and I felt satisfied with the results, especially when my
competitors used it as a source for their own coverage the next day.

That evening, I called my sister-in-law to report what I had seen. She kept her
own observations to a minimum, sharing the laugh with me. The incident quickly became
a family joke. “Don’t grieve me,” she would say to me--a code for “Quit complaining.”

The last conversation I had with Shermantine took place a few days before his
formal sentencing. On this occasion, I approached him. Clearly bitter about the outcome
of his trial, he seemed uninterested in how he appeared to the public. He continued to
complain about the unfair treatment that he had received from the judicial system, from
the jury, and from his former friend, Loren Herzog. The conversation was much more abbreviated than our first. Its details remain sketchy in my mind. By then, he had written sporadic, rambling letters to me over the two years, none of which contained much of consequence. I learned in his first letter after our initial visit that his attorney had not been happy with him for initiating the interview.

I never wrote him back. I had become convinced that speaking to him was an exercise in futility, that all it did was keep me ahead of the competition. I did not expect him ever to admit any wrongdoing, or articulate the burial locations of Cyndi, Chevy or any other women who had gone missing.

On both counts, I was wrong.
CHAPTER 3. METHODS

3.1 Introduction to Methods

In this chapter, I discuss the methods used to analyze the three separate, but related, narratives contained within this project. I describe the processes used to gather data for each level examined. First, I describe the methods used to analyze the metanarrative, which seeks to discover the story of how journalism has evolved since 1999, when I first began covering the case of Wesley Shermantine and Loren Herzog. I then move to describe the methods used in the analysis of the mesonarrative, which seeks to discover the story of how journalists are reacting, adapting, and adjusting to changes in the industry during their careers. Finally, I describe the methods used to analyze the micronarrative, which seeks to uncover my own career identity and transformation as I transition out of journalism into the next stage of my life.

In order to accomplish my goals, I developed three studies to uncover insights about journalism as career and that correspond with meta-, meso-, and microlevels. In each, the data are different such that the metanarrative analysis examines changes in an industry through the eyes of a particular case, namely, the case of the two serial killers. Next, the mesonarrative analysis offers glimpses into the themes within and across 11 journalists’ stories of work as they adapt to (or fail to adapt to) the change. The
micronarrative has one participant, myself, as I reflect upon and construct a changing occupation, and my own needs for further transformation.

### 3.2 The Metanarrative: Changes to Journalistic Career

R.Q. 1 asks: What does an examination of a single crime story, over more than a decade’s worth of coverage, reveal about how has the journalistic career changed since 1999? To attempt to provide answers to this question I examined an unnamed set of participants.

#### 3.2.1 Participants

The participants in this part of my study are nameless; they are the people, the economics and the materialities that create the story of how print journalism was covered in 1999 and how it is covered today. By examining the processes by which journalism was done in 1999 as compared to how it is done in 2012 and beyond, I build a metanarrative anchored by the high-profile news narratives surrounding the Shermantine-Herzog case; namely, the arrest, trial, and convictions of Wesley Howard Shermantine and Loren Herzog, two Northern California men convicted in 2001 of multiple murders. The San Joaquin County Sheriff’s investigations of one woman, who disappeared in 1998, sparked their arrests, trials, and convictions during 1999 and 2001, when I covered their stories as the court reporter for The Record. I examine the public posts of three individuals associated with the perpetrators in this case in an effort to learn more about their thoughts and emotions during media coverage of the case.
The metanarrative is also informed by the discourses and materialities connected to key Shermantine-Herzog stories that I covered between 1999 and 2004, and those covered today. These include the journalistic structures and practices that were performed by journalists then and now. Included are my memories of how some of the bigger stories were constructed. Paying particular attention to digital media and use of social media tools, I also examine how journalists’ access to sources changed. Specifically I examine how my access to the thoughts and feelings of some of Loren Herzog’s family members differed from journalists’ access today. In 2012, select family members’ thoughts and feelings are publicly visible to anyone who cares to view them, through examination of their public Facebook™ posts. Through such an examination, I consider whether these posts offer these family members’ spaces to resistance media coverage and marginalization.

3.2.2 Procedures.

In attempting to create print journalism’s career and occupational narrative during a time when the industry is undergoing serious changes, I examined these videos, blogs, and new media that were used in 2012 to tell the latest news about Shermantine and Herzog’s crimes. I also examined dozens of the original stories that I wrote about the case. A search of The Record archives reveals I wrote more than 150 between mid-1999 and 2002. I looked for similarities and differences between the stories of these two time periods, at what was gained and what was lost through technology. I also looked at social media sites such as Facebook to determine what information is available to reporters today to which I did not have access at that time. Finally, I looked for evolving themes
and patterns as I built a relatively cohesive story of journalism’s change over time. Correspondence with Record reporter Scott Smith also helped build a clearer picture of the metanarrative.

I covered the case until 2004, at which time I was promoted to a management position at The Record. Smith took over as court reporter two years later, and after writing him and several other Death Row inmates, has developed an ongoing relationship with the felon. In 2011, Shermantine told Smith that he would be willing to reveal the location of Cyndi Vanderheiden’s remains, Chevy Wheeler’s remains, and a number of other burial sites in exchange for his release from prison. Insisting on his innocence, he claimed to know the locations only because Herzog had told him. Authorities denied the offer, but Shermantine kept talking, kept suggesting different deals.

Herzog, meanwhile, had seen his 78-year prison sentence virtually eliminated, after a high court ruled that investigators violated his constitutional rights during the infamous interrogations wherein he described Cyndi Vanderheiden’s death. By September 2011, he had been paroled, a fact that outraged the public. Since no California county would accept him as a parolee, he lived in a small trailer on the grounds of the prison where he had been incarcerated. He wore an ankle bracelet and had to meet frequently with his parole officer.

One morning in January 2012, Herzog had a telephone conversation with a bounty hunter who had been trying to convince Shermantine to reveal the burial locations. The bounty hunter explained Shermantine planned to speak imminently. He advised Herzog to seek legal advice. The next day, Herzog’s parole officer discovered him dead; he had committed suicide by hanging. Authorities began searching the hills of Calaveras
County within days. Within two months, authorities had recovered and identified Cyndi’s, Chevy’s, and Joann Hobson’s remains, along with the remains of two other young women and a fetus. The story was once more dominating the news.

But this time, much had changed about the news cycle. Here, I compare how breaking news was covered when I covered the preliminary hearings and trials with how breaking news is covered now, during peak news cycles in January 2012. Further, I examine the differences between access to the thoughts and feelings of killers’ families, and access to thoughts and feelings now.

For the Facebook study, I developed a qualitative study that examined the publicly available Facebook posts of three members of the Herzog family between September 2011 and October 2012. During this time, several salient newsworthy events occurred: Shermantine’s public revelation he would reveal multiple burial sites of missing women; Herzog’s suicide; and the recovery of several bodies, including Cyndi Vanderheiden’s and Chevy Wheeler’s.

The Herzog family continued their custom of refusing to comment on the case, which had been their custom when I was covering the investigation and trial. However, now some of them had Facebook accounts with publicly available posts that reporters could access, should they so choose. I therefore decided to examine some of their relevant posts to determine what I could learn about their thoughts and feelings about the developing events.

Facebook’s privacy policies are broad. Users can choose whether content on their pages are available to the public, to their own network of approved “friends,” to a subset of these friends, or only to themselves. All data within this study were public when
collected. In keeping with Purdue IRB approval guidelines, the individuals were given pseudonyms ("Susan," "Jan," and "Mike") and identifying information was removed. All three subjects know each other and are interactive Facebook friends who post on each other’s pages. Demographic information about each is taken solely from the individual’s Facebook profile. Susan and Jan are between the ages of forty and fifty, while Mike is an adult, but younger than 25. All are white. All are high school graduates. None express affiliation with a postsecondary institution. All list an employer and list Linden as their hometown.

To determine peaks in media coverage during that time, I searched relevant news organizations’ websites using pertinent terms such as “Shermantine” and “Herzog.” I then looked to link that coverage to related Facebook posts. I only saved posts that I believed had some relevance to this study. For example, I disregarded those that had no mention of the case. I included those that contained direct or indirect references to the media, media coverage, Shermantine or Herzog, or the relationship between the subject and Herzog. I also included posts that detailed the subject’s emotional state during times of peak media coverage.

Since themes reside within the stories that we tell (Schiffrin, 1996), thematic analysis is a useful way to understand the kinds of narratives we build. I therefore drew on Owen (1984) and his three criteria for the existence of a theme: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness throughout my analysis. According to Owen (1994), recurrence occurs when at least two parts of a report contains language that conveys the same meaning (and not necessarily with the same words). Repetition is present when there is “an explicit repeated use of the same wording” (p. 275). To identify recurrence and repetition, I
examined the individuals’ written status updates, posted images and comments to friends who posted on their pages.

Owen’s third criterion, forcefulness, referred in part to written characteristics, particularly “underlining of words and phrases, the increased size of print or use of colored marks circling or otherwise focusing on passages in the written reports” (pp. 275-276). I therefore examined the content with an eye toward culturally acknowledge social media forcefulness, including use of all capitals (akin to shouting), emoticons, profanity or exclamation points.

In total, I examined 392 publicly visible posts. Of those, 378 (96.5 %) had no bearing on this study. However fourteen (3.5 %) did provide some insight into the thoughts and feelings of these individuals (see Appendices 1-3) regarding their relationship to Herzog. Specifically, Mike had the most publicly available posts (n=227), but only 1% were applicable to this study. Of Jan’s publicly available posts (n=130), 6.9% were applicable, and of Susan’s publicly available posts (n=35), 5% were. Taken together, these posts met Owen’s criteria of recurrence, repetition and forcefulness, which enabled me to establish that there existed within them themes of resistance to news media’s coverage and judgmental behavior by society. These themes identified helped to inform the overarching metanarrative studied here.

3.3 The Mesonarrative: Journalists’ Career Narratives

As journalism changed, those who worked in the field faced change to how they performed organizational tasks as well as how they thought about journalism as career.
RQ 2, in asking how journalists see themselves retrospectively and in the present with regard to their careers helps to tell their stories.

3.3.1 Participants

Primary data were gathered during phone interviews of eleven journalists known to the interviewer (me), most of whom worked as mid- to senior-level newsroom editors at small- to mid-sized newspapers that publish print and digital products. Though twelve subjects initially agreed to participate, scheduling conflicts prevented one from completing the process. Seven of the eleven, or 63%, were men, and four of the eleven, or 36%, were women. The median age of these newsroom leaders was 50.1 years with a range of 27 to 64 years. The median number of years spent in the industry was 29 with a range of 5 to 43. All but one subject was Caucasian. Almost all had at least a bachelor’s degree; the remaining subject had completed three years of college. A complete demographic description can be found in Table 3.1.

Some participants, like Dan, entered the field of journalism in the 1970s; others entered the field in the 1980s; the rest entered the field in the 1990s. Only one entered the field after that, and she has worked for newspapers since she was a high school student by contributing to her local paper’s teen page. Since the study began, three of the journalists have left daily journalism; one spent four years as an independent journalist living abroad (as an expatriate from the United States) and covering foreign affairs, human rights, and women’s issues for global internet publications. He has returned to a traditional journalism environment, working in the newsroom of a newspaper.
3.3.2 Procedures

After giving consent and demographic information, I asked the subjects a series of questions in an attempt to learn about their careers. I asked subjects to describe the type/length of journalism internships or pre-career experiences they had and their age when they were first hired into their first professional journalism job. They were then asked to talk about their early career experiences, lessons learned on the job, and who helped them to learn these lessons. The interviewer also asked research participants about mentors that they may have had during the course of their careers and how these people fulfilled that role. Finally, the interviewer asked each subject to discuss the impact of new media on their careers. Responses were transcribed and examined for similarities, differences, and emerging themes, once again using Owen (1984), and his three criteria for the existence of a theme: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. My thematic analysis was also informed and developed through discussions with an expert in qualitative career and organizational issues, which helped to further uncover the broad semantic patterns in language and meaning that can be found in these interviews. I then used a computer program to code each interview, which further confirmed these emerging thematic patterns and helped to build a library of examples and instances of each.

For my analysis, I once again turned to Owen to help with thematic development. I determined recurrence by observing content revealed through the interviews. I also examined the language to identify the existence of Owen’s second criterion, repetition, by seeking to discover repeated key words, phrases, or sentences. Owen’s third criterion, forcefulness, referred in part to vocal characteristics, which I judged via the audios
### Table 3.1 Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Newspaper Circulation</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Highest Educational Degree</th>
<th>Years in Daily Journalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stacy**</td>
<td>275,000</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire**</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doug</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3 yrs.’ college</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hal**</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Circulation numbers are rounded and current as of March 31, 2012 (The Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2012).

**Participant either did not work at a daily newspaper or left work at a daily newspaper during the course of this study.*
of the interviews. For example, in listening to them, I could determine whether certain words were emphasized, via tone or tenor, and this helped me to build a more complete analysis of the data.

3.4 The Micronarrative: Negotiating Changes in Career Identity

The final part of my thesis is distinctly personal and reflexive, as I examine my own career narrative and ask, in RQ3: What does one individual’s career narrative reveal about negotiating change in journalistic identity, and how did her coverage of a particular crime story affect her career identity? This is my own story.

3.4.1 Participant

There is one participant in this section of this study. I am a 52-year-old white woman with a bachelor’s degree in Liberal Studies. The story of my career identity is not completely bound up in journalism, nor is it completely tied to the Shermantine-Herzog cases. Its beginnings were rather chaotic, as I had an unsuccessful early college career, spent my twenties working as a preschool teacher, and re-entered college at age 26, just weeks after the birth of my first child. As a nontraditional student, I was focused and determined. I spent the next six years attending school part time, working part time, and caring for my growing family. When I graduated with my bachelor’s degree, I was pregnant with my youngest child.

My first jobs in journalism were for small community newspapers, but by the time I was 34, I had been hired full-time at a medium-sized newspaper in southern California. I worked as a city reporter, and did well enough to earn promotion to the political beat.
When my husband’s job took us to northern California, I got a job at *The Record* covering legal affairs. I was on the job barely two weeks before I began covering the Shermantine case for the first time. This case, and the actors within it, have certainly created spaces for my own career success and advancement. It has also haunted me, during the time that I was in daily contact with the families of both sides (when the hearings and trials were proceeding), and afterward, as I held other positions in the field and then transitioned out. This case is an effective tool for my own exploration of career story, narrative, and adaptation.

### 3.4.2 Procedures

In this portion of my study, I employ autoethnographic techniques to examine the tensions that arose within me as I covered the Shermantine-Herzog case, and those that stayed with me after I left the job of reporter and began a transition into the next phases of my career. Ngunjiri, Hernandez and Chang (2010) tell us that autoethnography, as a qualitative research method, uses data about one’s self and context to learn about connections between oneself and others. In addition, autoethnography is “qualitative, self-focused, and context-conscious” (p. 2).

I use Owen’s procedures and processes to complete my analysis. I look for recurring semantic patterns through examination of recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. To assist me in this process, I wrote reflections and retrospectives, which appear throughout this project, that helped me put my own career story into context. My training in journalism encourages me to attempt to uncouple my story from my emotions--to look for themes and patterns in these writings that stand up to scrutiny by other
researchers and scholars. However, the narrator in me realizes that my own story is framed and shaped by ongoing experiences and sense making that makes the themes and realities that I reveal true in spirit. I ask myself: What do my writings say about my own career narrative? How does my narrative fit with my colleagues’ or that of the metanarrative of journalism? What do I think now about journalism as career, and what did I think then, and how do they differ?

I also ponder the lives of the men and women who Shermantine and Herzog killed, or are suspected of killing. I think most especially about the women. Their stories have stayed with me since I first received the assignment of covering the Shermantine-Herzog case. As I covered the case, I wondered whether my quest for the next story was turning them into names on a printed page, whether I was stripping them of humanity through my coverage. I know now that the thoughts and emotions I had then were centered around themes of marginalization; but I did not have the theoretical background or the language to fully understand this myself what I was feeling. My graduate education gave that to me. And as I learned about social constructionism, hegemony, and marginalization, and as I internalized these and other concepts, I also began to wonder whether I marginalized Shermantine’s and Herzog’s family members.

3.5 An Elusive Kind of Justice

In 1999, it had been years--more than a decade, in fact--since a Calaveras County jury had handed down a conviction for rape (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2000d). I don’t remember how I learned that fact. But when I did learn it, I was stunned. And I knew I
had a story. It appeared on Sunday, November 7, 1999, on the paper’s front page (Hughes-Kirchubel, 1999b). Parts of it appear below.

The staff at the Calaveras Women's Crisis Center is busy. This year, more than 130 women have called or visited the yellow house on Gold Hunter Drive seeking help for the emotional scars of sexual assault. The center's executive director, Kitty Meyers, says that the majority of these women are dealing with old wounds. And only five reached out to law enforcement to say: I've been raped.

Justice is elusive for Calaveras County rape victims. The county lacks some of the most-basic tools necessary to investigate and prosecute rape. There is no investigator at either the district attorney's office or the Sheriff's Department dedicated to sexual assault. The Sheriff's Department dedicates only $1,500 annually to give women rape exams. The average rape exam costs $750. Sheriff Dennis Downum thinks it's enough.

"If it wasn't enough, we'd move it from other areas of the budget," he said.

"Money has never been an issue."

For me, hearing a quote like that was like winning the lottery, because it supports and advances the kinds of marginalization the story seeks to highlight. At the time I heard it, I probably thought, “Are you kidding me? Did he really say such an ignorant thing?” As a reporter, I knew the quote had to go into the story, and I knew how some of my readers would react when, while sipping coffee and reading the paper, they came across these words. Like me, they would marvel at the ignorance it reflected. They would agree with me, with my editors, and with so many others, that that things needed to change in Calaveras County. And then maybe things would change. I hoped things would change. I was, and remain, an idealist.
As I read the quote today, I still think, “Are you kidding me?” However, I have achieved a deeper intellectual understanding about how such attitudes are constructed over time. I am a bit less judgmental about the sheriff’s opinions and good-old-boy ways. Exposure to feminist and social constructionist theories (see Chudizkowski & Mayrhofer, 2011; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Meisenbach, 2010; Mumby, 2009) enable me to better understand how the dominant culture impacts individuals’ opinions, behaviors and communications. Hegemonic forces create spaces in which men and women express what may seem to be parochial viewpoints that have evolved from male-dominated structures. I am also able to better understand the rape myths that have been a part of our culture (Grubb & Turner, 2012). As I reflect upon my motivations for writing this story, I believe that it reflects my own attempt to resist culturally dominant forces that enables such laissaiz-faire attitudes reflected in the sheriff’s quote. I didn’t know it then, but I was beginning my transition from a career journalist to a thesis-writing graduate student grappling with complex cultural issues.

Since June 1997, District Attorney Peter Smith has filed charges in three rape cases. Two of the suspects pleaded guilty and were sentenced to time in the county jail or state prison. The third defendant chose to go to trial and was acquitted of all charges.

His name is Wesley Shermantine Jr.

"They practically had to carry me out of there when I heard the verdict," said Sonie Pisano, whose daughter, Lisa, pressed charges against Shermantine. "I just collapsed."
"I felt horrible about the verdict," Smith said. "We were as a whole very disappointed, because we believed her, and we wanted to prove this case and put Mr. Shermantine behind bars."

Shermantine’s case hinged on the assertion that he had sex with Lisa Pisano, but it was consensual. His attorney attacked Lisa Pisano's credibility, presenting witnesses to testify to her past sexual conduct. Prosecutors from other counties say privately that a prosecutor who specialized in sexual assault could have successfully rebutted this defense using the Robbins Rape Evidence Law, which prohibits defense attorneys from using a victim's reputation and specific instances of previous sexual conduct to prove evidence of consent.

On December 1, 2000, Lisa once again testified against Wes Shermantine. This time he was facing multiple murder charges (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2000b). Before she did so, the judge admonished her to avoid all references to sexual contact, since Shermantine had been acquitted of the earlier charge. She was allowed to explain that Shermantine’s wife was her best friend. She was allowed to reveal he called her for a ride home when he was too drunk to drive. She was allowed to answer questions about the situation that took place in her car on a dark Calaveras County road—but only insofar as to reveal it was unpleasant and involved a physical confrontation. One slip, the judge warned, and he would declare a mistrial. The woman who labeled the incident a violent rape, became linguistically constrained by the judicial system that day as she sought to describe the events of Valentine’s Day, 1998. At one point, faced with a question from the defense attorney, she turned helplessly to the judge.
“Sir, I don't know how to answer this without bringing up the… physical confrontation," she said, trailing off; she was silenced by hegemonic structures that prevented her from speaking to others about something that she considered traumatic, frightening, and invasive.

The trial wrapped up two months later, and the jury deliberated eight days before announcing its verdicts. In a March 2001 interview with me, jurors called her testimony “credible” and told me that they had immediately understood the described “physical confrontation” could have included a sexual assault (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2001c).

But I did not know this when I ducked from the courtroom into the hall moments after the verdicts had been announced. Throughout the course of the trial, Lisa had spoken to me about her experiences with Wes Shermantine, but almost always off the record. As promised, I pulled out my cell phone to call her and let her know the outcome. As my fingers punched in her phone number, I was acutely aware of the date on which the verdict had been delivered.

“Hi Lisa, it’s Linda,” I said when she answered. “Happy Valentine’s Day. He’s guilty on all counts. You’ve got your Valentine’s Day back.”
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

In this chapter, I discuss my results from each of the three RQs in each of the three narratives. This includes my research with the Facebook™ posts, the interviews with the journalists and my autoethnographic examination of my reflections and thoughts about career.

First, I explain the results of my first research question, which asks what an examination of a single crime story, over more than a decade’s worth of coverage, reveals about how has the journalistic career changed since 1999. Within the context of this research question, I examine the materialities within journalism, as well as a marginalized source: the families of one of the perpetrators.

Next, I explain the results of my second research question, which asks how journalists see themselves retrospectively and in the present with regard to their careers. To do so, I discuss the results of qualitative interviews I did with 11 journalists, in which I asked them a series of questions related to this study.

Finally, I discuss the results of my final research question, in which I examine what one individual’s career narrative reveals about negotiating change in journalistic identity, and how did her coverage of a particular crime story affect her career. Since this last research question is focuses on my own career, I use autoethnographic research to uncover the results herein.
4.1 The Metanarrative: A Crime Story Details Organizational Change

In this section I reveal the results of my examination of RQ1: What does an examination of a single crime story, over more than a decade’s worth of coverage, reveal about how has the journalistic career changed since 1999?

4.1.1 Narratives of Challenge and Change.

In 1999, newspapers were fatter than they were in 2006, while 63 percent of college graduates relied on the newspaper for their news; that number had dropped to 55 percent in seven years (Pew 2007). The industry had been in decline for more than a decade. Also in 1999, a landmark survey of journalists exposed unease and discomfort with the way their profession was headed (Pew, 1999). The survey, and accompanying commentary by experts contains language consistent with themes of challenge and change:

This is a critical signal, quantified for the first time in this survey of how news professionals at all levels and across all media view themselves. Such shifts in self-awareness usually precede even larger change. For journalism, it could either alter the current direction of the industry or simply persuade more people to abandon the profession. Whether the result will be professional reform or retreat is not yet clear. (para. 2)

4.1.1.1 News Production

With respect to its processes, the narrative of challenges and change are evident. It is easy to talk about the difference in the news production. During the early days of the
Shermantine case, *The Record’s* circulation was more than 70,000 (Goldeen, 2003). It came to doorsteps crammed with Wednesday coupon sections, Thursday entertainment magazines, and Sunday television guides. Now *The Record’s* circulation is 33,000 (Mondo Times, 2012). *The Record* abandoned its television guide in 2006, under my watch as Features editor, because cable television offered free channels dedicated solely to channel lineups. Increases in the cost of newsprint forced editors to trim the “news hole”—the sections available for news. The metro section, dedicated solely to news within the city, was folded into the national section. Many other newspapers were doing the same (Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2006).

In 1999, my deadlines came at the end of the day, built around the process of getting a newspaper on a doorstep by 5 a.m. The press spat out its first papers at about midnight, with a second press run closer to 2 a.m. The second press run enabled editors to shoehorn late-breaking news into print, along with traditionally late sports scores. Crews loaded delivery trucks, which crisscrossed San Joaquin, Calaveras and parts of Sacramento counties, and papers crammed with news ended up on thousands of doorsteps. Examining *The Record*’s treatment of breaking news in 2012 also confirms a narrative of challenge amid change that exists within the organizational structure. Now, deadlines for the paper come throughout the day. Breaking news goes up onto the newspaper’s website as soon as details are ready and updated throughout the day. An example of how this occurs is evident from an examination of coverage of Loren Herzog’s suicide, published first online by *The Record* at its website, Recordnet.com. Herzog’s suicide occurred on January 16, 2012. Between the time he was found dead and the close of the news cycle on January 18, 2012, *The Record* published five stories online.
On January 17, 2012, news of Loren Herzog’s suicide reached the media. *The Record* turned to its online edition to go head-to-head with television news in its coverage of this newsworthy and unexpected event, pushing four stories and a video online as coverage unfolded.

*The Record* published initial news of Herzog’s death online at 8:20 A.M, January 17, 2012. This story was subsequently updated at 10:09 a.m. and 11:35 a.m. Though the archival content shows only the content of the latest (11:35 a.m.) version, readers searching for the story can see that earlier versions had existed. These could have been as short as two or three sentences long. In any case, they were updated when new information became available. The final, six-paragraph story urged readers to “Check back for updates and read Wednesday's *Record* for more on this story by staff writer Scott Smith.”

In addition to the main story, *The Record* at 11:30 a.m. published reaction from Cyndi Vanderheiden’s father, John. Headlined “Father of Herzog victim: 'As long as he's dead, that's great.'” The online story detailed the perspective of a victim’s relative. This story contained statements of satisfaction with Herzog’s suicide, and was updated at 4:04 p.m. It, too, contained a last paragraph directing readers to “Check back for updates and read Wednesday's *Record* for more on this story by staff writer Scott Smith.” Finally, *The Record* published a video interview with John Vanderheiden. There is no time stamp. Its headline: “Father of Herzog victim: ‘What goes around, comes around.’”

At 12 a.m. January 18, 2012, *The Record* published the full text of Scott Smith’s stories regarding the events of the day. “Herzog found dead in home” offered new details of the events, and added substantial information, including an interview with authorities,
victims’ families, and others. A second story, which fleshed out the John Vanderheiden reaction piece, added details that represented the perspectives of the murdered women’s families. A reference to Herzog’s family failing to return calls was included, in passing.

4.1.1.2 Materialities

Newspapers have struggled to develop a model that works in the digital age and successful confronts economic issues, such as ad revenue, as well as declining subscription rates, due to the access of internet-based news. While newspaper online audiences have grown steadily since 2000, print circulation continues to decline. The industry “shrunk 43% since 2000” (Pew Research Center, 2012, para. 17), but technological changes make the job more difficult for editors and reporters, who are increasingly challenged to create content that is appropriate for smartphones and tablets, establish a social media presence, put out the print edition, and provide news to the website. These competing priorities (Pew Research Center, 2012) help to develop an organizational narrative of challenge and change.

In 1999, *The Record* was just beginning to invest in the kinds of technologies that 14 years later are routine tools for its reporters. It had purchased several laptop computers for the newsroom reporters to share. Its website was beginning to take shape. Cell phones and texts were becoming more commonplace as tools of the trade, not just communication devices. At the time, I did not have a cell phone; like many others throughout the country, I used a pager to keep in touch with family and work.

In 1996, Motorola introduced the first two-way pager (Telepage, N.D., para. 12), and by 1999, some 45 million Americans owned them (Grossman, 2009). In 1999, the
pager was a convenient way for editors to contact me while I was off-site. While sitting covering the Shermantine-Herzog preliminary hearing, which dragged on for several weeks, I’d get pages with the code: “411” from the newsroom, which generally meant: “I need information on what is going on with you.” Sometimes the page would read: “423” (Call me now) or 423911 (Call me now – it’s an emergency!). The pay telephones on the first floor of the San Joaquin County Courthouse enabled me to returned calls, gave case updates, and received information from my editors--provided I had a quarter. Of course, it wasn’t long before cell phones replaced pagers as newsroom tools, and now smart phones enable a reporter to engage in ongoing conversations with her editor, or with the public. On February 24, 2012, Record reporter Scott Smith used his smart phone to engage his readers via Twitter, as he drove to San Quentin to interview Shermantine on Death Row. His tweets, and the public’s responses, became part of a story through an application called Storify, which combines content from the likes of Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to create an online story. Such methods drive readers to the paper’s online source, where they are told repeatedly to check back online and in print for the full story.

Email correspondence was not uncommon, but my editors did not allow email exchanges for interviews. In The Record newsroom, reporters either conducted interviews in person or on the telephone. Editors frowned upon use of email for interviews except in the occasional case where a source was unable to reach through conventional means. Facebook and Twitter had yet to be invented. This changed over time, and email interviews became more frequent and an acceptable form of reporter-source interchange. In addition, use of laptops and remote filing was becoming more commonplace in 1999. For example, Shermantine’s preliminary hearing and associated pretrial appearances took
place in downtown Stockton, a five minute walk from The Record newsroom. But the court ruled he could not get a fair trial in San Joaquin County due to the pretrial publicity. A survey of San Joaquin County residents shows that 73% of people polled knew of Shermantine's case, and, of those, 56% believed that he was guilty of multiple murder (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2000). In August 2000, an expert witness testified that in the 18 months since Shermantine’s and Herzog’s arrests, four newspapers had published 220 stories on the case, while five television stations produced 490 clips (Adamick, 2000). It therefore became my job to travel the distance from San Joaquin County to Santa Clara, a distance of about 90 miles, watch the day’s courtroom testimony, and return to The Record to file my story. I took notes in the courtroom, wrote during lunch and boring testimony, and when possible filed before I left Santa Clara. However, often I had to return to the office at the end of the day to file the story. For some reporters, including those at The Record, the newsroom is still the central hub for filing news stories, but new technologies enable reporters to post directly to the web from offsite locations, if necessary.

In 2012, Scott Smith covered the recovery of the bodies of Cyndi Vanderheiden and Chevy Wheeler, as well as the remains found in the Linden well. During an email correspondence with me, he explained the technologies he used while covering these particular stories. He received his first information from the bounty hunter, Leonard Padilla, who had offered to pay Shermantine more than $30,000 for information about the bodies’ locations. Smith said:

News broke on Cyndi’s find when I was at lunch in downtown Stockton. Leonard Padilla called my cell phone, and I ran back to the office. I don’t recall how I
learned initially of Chevy’s find. The well came when I was out to dinner on a Saturday night with my parents at Ihop. The Sheriff’s PIO called me on my cell. In an initial dig with Leonard Padilla’s crew on Shermantine’s parents’ former property in Linden, I used my iPhone to take photographs, which never ran, and I communicated that we were unsuccessful in that dig for Chevy with my editors from Leonard Road in Calaveras County. I had surprisingly good reception. I also used a Record laptop to file that story on Dec. 22. I went to a Starbucks in Valley Springs and used their Wi-Fi to email it to the office for a late file.

In 1999, The Record’s website was beginning to take form, but as second fiddle to the print product. We posted evening updates late, hoping that our competitors would not have enough time to report on exclusive news items. We were developing new ways to use the digital format, but these relied heavily on the print product to provide direction and inspiration. This mimicked the industry norm: As an organization, journalism was still testing ways to use the Internet to its best advantage and seeking a model that would also help pay the bills. When I left the paper in 2006, the paper was beginning to use social media, mostly for blogs and in LENS, the features department.

Now the newspaper has an active Facebook account; but it has seen significant increase in its use during 2012. An examination of the Facebook page shows that there were no posts on the page between January 13, 2012 and February 1, 2012 (Herzog committed suicide on January 16). The first post about Shermantine was a March 1, 2012; it is a link to a blog post (Guinn, 2012) about an interview with Chevy Wheeler’s mother. The next post was issued on March 5, linking to a story about Shermantine’s letters to
Scott Smith (Smith, 2012b). However, by year’s end, posts are occurring daily, and readers appear to be much more engaged.

A study by Palmer and Erikson (1999) examined 48 digital newspapers, including the *Indianapolis Star*, the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The researchers found that the newspapers were “quite cautious in their design,” “quite limited in the number of non-traditional marketing activities used,” and happy to import “the existing print model to the Web” (p. 39). This turned out to be a financial mistake, as use of the Internet soared while subscription numbers plummeted (Pew Research Center, 2012).

4.1.2 “First” or “Exclusive”: Organizational Conundrum

Scott Smith, 41, worked at *The Record* for most of the 2000s. After beginning his work in a bureau, he then “moved up (to the Stockton newsroom) to cover night cops and then courts/prisons.” Like reporters throughout the industry, Smith has experienced a change in the way that journalism is performed during his time at *The Record*, especially in response to the 24-hour news cycle. The advent of CNN in 1980, broad expanse of internet and cable, and the rise in participatory journalism have all contributed to the promotion of a 24-hour news cycle. With the creation of newspaper websites, new questions emerge about over whether to publish information first (on the website) or hold on to it for an “exclusive.”

“When I started, we wrote only for next day’s newspaper,” he said in an email correspondence with me. “Now, we often put up a short news brief, teasing what we will amplify in a full story to run in the next day’s paper. This is tricky because we have to be careful if we have a scoop and don’t want to tip other reporters.”
This comment reflects a change from when I first worked the Shermantine story. Scott experiences increased pressure to produce and report information that can go up on the website during the day--this pressure was less intense for me in 1999. If needed, I had the luxury of working on a story until as late as 10 p.m. before turning it in to an editor for the next day’s paper. In this fast-paced world of Twitter updates and minute-by-minute reports, Scott’s news production is more urgent and cyclical. He tends to report on Twitter and through other means, issue a story for the web, report some more on that story and other issues, and update the web story. Readers turn to him for his updates; they expect them frequently; and the organization wins if readers come to its website rather than a competitor’s. Exclusivity is prized as much as it ever was, but this exclusivity may be reflected in the timing of a web update than in other ways (e.g., the timing of updates late at night, when other organizations are unable to chase down the story.)

4.1.3 Sources: Examining the Marginalized through Facebook Posts

Since 1999, social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook have been developed, and reporters are using these and other social media tools to get a glimpse into the thoughts and opinions their readers. It may be, also, that they are using these tools to examine the thoughts and opinions of sources who refuse to speak publicly, as did the families of the two perpetrators in this case.

To learn more about how these kinds of use this kind of sourcing, I searched out expert opinion. Many comments that I found echoed themes of challenge and change linked to technology. Ward (2012) says that “a media revolution is transforming…the nature of journalism and its ethics” (para.2), while others pointed out that with the
Internet-driven blurring of the public and private, reporters’ now had easily access to personal information, but that didn’t doesn’t mean it was suitable for use (see Associated Press, 2012; Betancourt, 2009; Mizner, 2009; Rosenstiel, 2012).

But for me, Facebook provided a fascinating way for to gain insight into the narratives of those who I judged were shut out of media coverage: family members of the perpetrator. What could I learn from their publicly visible Facebook posts? To answer this question, I viewed 392 publicly visible Facebook posts of members of the Herzog’s family (Shermantine’s family had no such publicly visible posts.), of which fourteen (3.5 %) provided some insight into the thoughts and feelings of these individuals (see Appendices 1-3). Taken together, these posts met Owen’s criteria of recurrence, repetition and forcefulness, and thus established themes (described below) that can help to inform the narratives present on all individuals’ Facebook pages. Furthermore, the themes identified helps to inform the kinds of narratives present on these Facebook pages, and whether narratives of resistance existed.

Two unique themes emerged from this analysis of the three individuals’ posts (“Jan,” “Mike,” and “Susan.”) Both are consistent with standpoint theory, because they speak to marginalization, of being “other,” and of being pushed aside by other dominant groups. One of the themes identified existed on each of the individuals’ Facebook pages, recurring and reinforced (as per Owen) by posts of one (e.g., Jan) on another’s page (e.g., Mike). This theme, “Do not judge me based on someone else’s actions” was a shared theme and one that all three interacted about. The second theme--media harassment--is directly mentioned on Jan’s Facebook page only. Both themes advance a narrative of
resistance, a refusal to be stigmatized, a struggle against society’s marginalization, and, in Jan’s case, direct messages of resistance to the media.

My search of news sites revealed vast coverage of this case. The region’s broadcast stations combine coverage of Sacramento, Stockton and Modesto into the nation’s 20th largest news market (Digital Syndicate, 2012). Broadcasts nightly reach all three cities and their surrounding areas, including Linden. During the time period examined, these three stations broadcast more than 730 news stories across multiple platforms about the Shermantine-Herzog case. The CBS affiliate’s website ran more than 350; the NBC affiliate, more than 100; and the ABC affiliate, more than 80 (KOVR, 2012; KCRA, 2012; News10, 2012).

In addition, newspapers published 260 articles about the case. The Record (circulation 40,000) published the majority (57.6 %), with 150 articles. Three other area papers, The Lodi News Sentinel, the Sonora Union Democrat and the Calaveras Enterprise, which operate within a 20 mile radius of Linden and together have a readership of about 40,000, jointly published 80 stories. Further north, the Sacramento Bee, with its 275,000 circulation (Burrells Luce, 2007), published 30 articles. These numbers do not include the online components of coverage, including videos, Twitter exchanges, photo galleries, and blogs.

Coverage peaked between January 17, 2012 and March 31, 2012, when a number of newsworthy events occurred: Herzog’s suicide (January 16); searches for Cyndi Vanderheiden and Chevy Wheeler (February 9); recovery of the young women’s remains (February 9-10); searches of an abandoned Linden well, recovery of human bone fragments, and further searches (February 12-24); and an interview with Shermantine
(February 26). Stories about forensic results, Cyndi Vanderheiden’s and Chevy Wheeler’s memorials, Herzog’s autopsy reports, and other stories dominated headlines in February and March.

4.1.3.1 Theme 1: “Do not judge me based on someone else’s actions”

This theme was shared across all participants, through individual as well as interactive posts. It is clearly articulated within posts initiated at different times by Mike and Susan, to which Jan comments back indicating her agreement with this sentiment. In general, interactions between Mike, Susan and Jan, and their larger social networks, frequently articulated and reinforced the idea that people should not judge others; further, some post explicitly state the family should not be held responsible for other’s (presumably Herzog’s) actions.

One status update, written by Mike on September 28, 2011, seems to articulate his perception that he is being stigmatized based on his last name. At the time, media coverage of the Herzog case had intensified, because Herzog, as a parolee, was having difficulty finding a county that would accept him as a parolee. Mike’s status update details a situation in which he apparently was attempting to help someone whose parent made a derogatory comment about Mike’s last name. His reaction was swift and profane as he wrote a status update that directly addressed this person (all posts are repeated exactly as posted except for name changes into pseudonyms per IRB instructions):

Oh so my last name offends you? Well maybe i should change it to something a little less controversial, like [Mike] SuckMyMotherFuckinCock…. I didn't judge
YOUR son, even though I hate HIS parent. I took the time to talk to him and he understands how things are supposed to work. But obviously your to stupid and thick headed to realize I'm a decent kid.

The sarcasm and the vulgar profanity provide the forcefulness required by Owen to determine a theme; the post goes on in a similar vein and ends with another forceful profanity.

Thirty-three like-minded replies to Mike’s status update, including one from Jan and one from Susan, demonstrate his network’s unanimous for support for him. Jan’s post to Mike (“Those who live in glass houses should learn not to throw rocks”) reinforced the identified theme. Susan’s post expressed her love for and pride in him. Both women “liked” the original post, in essence sending a message of endorsement. Others offered their own profane judgments of the person in question, demanding to know who had said such an ignorant thing. One friend posted “You sir are a stand up, outspoken guy nd anybody who doesnt like you for who your family is can go fuck themselves.” Similar comments, sentiments of “I love you,” “Do not let these people get you down” and “We will stand up for you” peppered the page. Mike replied to the outpouring with many “likes” of the comments, a few comments, and some smiley-faced emoticons. In this way, his network of friends and family gathered protectively around him (virtually), offering him love and support.

Similar to Mike’s, but separated from it by more than a year, is Susan’s post, written on October 15, 2012, after a week of additional coverage about Shermantine’s actions, which always contained references to Herzog:
So here's the deal: if you don't like me or my family because of our last name then it's your loss not our's. If you are the kind of person that judges someone based on someone else' actions then You are an idot. We are good honest people and We will NOT bow down to anyone, EVER!

The capitalization coupled with the exclamation point indicates forcefulness, and the theme “Do not judge” is both explicitly and implicitly expressed. Like Mike, Susan received an outpouring of support in comments to her status update. It is not clear what prompted Susan’s post; but an examination of media coverage indicated a surge in publicity about the case had recently occurred. None of The Record’s coverage had sought out opinions from impartial observers, attempting to give some kind of representation of the family’s reactions to the situations that they found themselves as a result of Herzog’s suicide; instead, the stories gave the most cursory attention to the existence of Herzog family members through the well-worn statements indicating they were not interested in providing comment to the newspaper.

Jan expressed a particularly noteworthy sentiment on January 21, 2012, barely a week after Herzog’s suicide. She posted an image with the caption: “While you were busy judging others, you left your closet open and your skeletons fell out” (see Figure A.) Her accompanying comment “And you know who you are!” She received several “likes” and short statements of support from friends. The image clearly reinforces the theme of “Do not judge me based on someone else’s actions.” At the time, the media was buzzing about Herzog’s suicide, and stories referred to attempts to call family members for comment. Jan’s post may have been a way to relieve the pressure, and send a message of resistance at the same time.
4.1.3.2 Theme 2: Media harassment.

Six posts written by Jan between February 5-14, 2012, detailed this theme, either explicitly or implicitly, and four of them directly addressed the media. These posts are a clear indication that she used her social network to stand up against media coverage during this time.

On February 5, she wrote a single sentence: “Tsunami after tsunami, when will they stop?” Without proper context, this could be construed to be about any incessant problem – an infestation of ants, bill collection notices, her children bickering in the playroom. But comments from her social network help the reader to determine that the reference is to the media. Her friends tell her that they love her and urge her to be strong. Five days later, the remains of both Cyndi Vanderheiden and Chevy Wheeler had been recovered, and authorities were investigating a Linden well for more bodies. The national media descended on Linden, San Andreas and the surrounding area like the proverbial plague.

On February 11, 2012, Jan posts three status updates speaking directly to the media. First, she accuses them of behaving like paparazzi. Next, she accuses the media of harassment. Finally, she specifically calls out the ABC affiliate:

REALLY, Channel 10, just what are you hoping to accomplish filming my children, sitting in my car, in my drive, on my property. What good for humanity are you doing? What are you accomplishing? Oh, what did you see? I’ll tell you what you saw, you saw frightened children hiding under their hoods, in the back seat, confused as to why someone would do this to them. What did I see, SKUM!
This status update prompts the following from Susan: “They are low life heartless money hungry pieces of Shit!!!!!” Jan’s final public status update of the day references a “Fox40 facebook hacking” and expresses her love and support for Herzog.

On February 14, two status updates continue Jan’s determination to stand up for herself and her family. The first directly addresses the San Joaquin County’s Sheriff’s office, who she apparently called for help and who suggested that she and her family (who Jan calls “innocent people”) “leave town for awhile.” Jan’s response is to call such a solution “completely out of line.” The final public post of the day is a warning to the media: “Anyone caught photographing my innocent children and posting them on TV without my permission, which you know you DON'T have, will be prosecuted within the full extent of the law. Period.” Words like “innocent” advance the harassment narrative. All these posts have numerous replies of support for her and her efforts to stand her ground against the media “tsunami.”

Finally, two straightforward and poignant posts expressed resistance to the media’s portrayal of Loren Herzog, and though these posts did not appear to fit within the thematic analysis, they may be important to consider here, in light of these families’ thoughts and feelings regarding the death of their loved one. Neglected in all of the coverage is any hint that there may be another side to the story; another family that is in pain; another point of view besides the ones held by the mothers, fathers, and friends of those who were murdered or who had disappeared.

The first post appeared on Jan’s Facebook page on January 17, 2012 at 2:57 p.m., barely 12 hours after Herzog was pronounced dead by the Lassen County Coroner.
Today is such a sad day for us because no matter what others might have thought, he was my [relationship redacted]. Such a painful path, we were so close. I love you, [Loren] Give my baby a hug because I know she is there to catch you, her beloved [relationship redacted.]

The second post appeared about two weeks later on Susan’s Facebook page. The post appeared the evening of February 10, 2012, when the media clamored to report how a search of property formerly owned by Shermantine’s parents yielded the discovery of a set of human remains (later identified as Cyndi Vanderheiden). In the 24 days since Herzog’s death, The Record had published upwards of 25 online stories about the case, as well as several videos and letters to the editor. Other news organizations covered the story with similar frequency (a Google search of the term “Loren Herzog” and “suicide” yields about 20,000 results, with top results occurring during the first 10 days after Herzog’s suicide.) The coverage seemed to be wearing on Herzog families members, including Susan:

If I read 1 more negative comment about [Loren] I'm gonna start telling some people some Shit to their FACE!!! He was a good man with a huge heart. He carried more pain in himself then any of you could ever handle. He was NOT a coward, it seems to me that no one remembers that He is the one to talk to the law about WES SHERMANTINEs evil, horrible actions and for the record, his death IS being mourned by me and the rest of his family and friends who were lucky enough to know the REAL Loren, not the monster that you all and the media have said he [was] the past 12 years. So by all means; SHUT THE FUCK UP!!!!
Together, these two posts generated more than fifty responses (comments and “likes.”

This posts clearly expresses the family’s thoughts and feelings about the life and death of Loren Herzog. The use of the term “for the record” is telling; this idiom, which has its linguistic anchor in the legal world, but has been adopted by journalists to mean a statement that is authorized for publication. It seems to be appropriate for use by an individual who in some way seeks publication of the sentiments, or at least acknowledgment by those in the public domain.

4.2 The Mesonarrative: Journalists’ views of themselves and their careers

RQ 2 asks: How do journalists see themselves retrospectively and in the present with regard to their careers?

The eleven journalists that I interviewed worked primarily at small newspapers, with three exceptions. Two worked at newspapers that had circulations at or above 100,000. The final journalist worked in an online format only. The subject sample was middle-aged with an average of 50 years and range of 27 to 64 years. Participants reported that they worked an average of nearly 30 years in journalism with the range of 5 to 43 years, and they worked at newspapers that could be generally be classified as small-to-mid-sized.

Using Owen’s (1984) analysis, these interviews revealed three distinct narrative themes. The first and most often found was that of digital media’s impact on these individuals’ careers. Second, the analysis uncovered spaces of resiliency, especially in discussions of journalists’ acquisition of new skills related to organizational change.
Finally, these journalists, and their views of themselves, reveal themselves as a bridge from one era of journalism to another, struggling to manage change gracefully while continuing to advance their careers. All these situations reiterate the overall themes of challenge and change found in the organization level. However at the next level, within the meso level or structure and narrative discourses of those who work within the organization, the story of Shermantine and Herzog does not figure into this portion of my study, as indicated previously.

4.2.1 Challenge and Change: The Impact of Digital Media

The increasing use of digital media has made a clear impression on the careers of the interviewed journalists. Conversations about their work focus on how technological changes have impacted their views of themselves in terms of the way that work was constructed in the past and the way it is constructed now. In particular, all of these journalists express conflict between embracing new technologies, and adapting to new changes in their profession.

4.2.1.1 Theme: Conflicted About New Technologies

Each of the journalists interviewed expressed excitement about the ways that technology has created a new world for print journalists. But there are different kinds of excitement about this brave new world. Listening to David, a 59-year-old editor of a newspaper in the northwest, one hears the lilt in his voice, the speed with which he talks and the enthusiasm in his tone of voice as he explains his view about the value of new
technologies to the existing heart of journalistic traits. Like many of those interviewed, he believes digital and social media is helping journalists, and newspapers, stay sharp and focused:

The power is in our hands. We can cook interest in a story for tomorrow or a story available right now by using Twitter. And it’s also had a dramatic effect on who gets credit for breaking a story. You know, it has really ramped up the competitiveness—the great competition that keeps us alive and vibrant (which) used to be measured in hours and minutes and now it’s measured in seconds.

Others, however, are more reserved in their endorsements of new technologies. David calls the new pace of journalism “cyclonic.”

“There are days that it all feels like a blur,” he said. “There’s so much to learn and so much to know and so much to watch these days it makes for the most exciting period in journalistic history that I can recall.”

The journalists in this study see the value and power of the newly developed industry trade. But six of them say they are expected to acquire new skills and techniques without sufficient support from management. Stacy, 44, explained that her newspaper bought reporters iPads and laptops for the newsroom, and helped reporters become accustomed to using them. The paper also sent senior managers to trainings and seminars, mid-level editors like herself were forced to figure out the changes to newsroom production on their own. The day that our interview took place, she had just purchased her own iPad—thus displaying her commitment to learning new skills, keeping up with the reporters she supervised and maintain her commitment to journalism as an evolving career. She said:
Print might go away and so I’m trying to be enthusiastic and embrace it. In fact, this morning I was trying to figure out my brand new iPad and how to get the stuff in the cloud. I’m excited because it’s fun to learn stuff. It’s cool. It’s dazzling. It just makes me tired.

New technologies are pushing the online product in front of the printed page, making it important for newsrooms to work toward construction of two daily products. This changes the way that journalists do their jobs, and all the interviews contained references to new job descriptions for editors and reporters.

Doug, 50, a managing editor for a newspaper in the west, said: “There used to be a time when you did a story and you told it to sell papers the next day.” He continued: “Now it’s less about that and it’s more about getting it out somewhere first, whether its picked up by TV, or radio or another website– just get it out there first.”

When news breaks, Stacy juggles an increasingly heavy load of tasks as compared to days gone by:

It used to be that when a story broke you just worked the hell out of it and got everything you could, came back to the newsroom and crafted this great, fabulous story and jammed as much into it as you could. And now reporters are doing that, but they’re also feeding online live. So I have to run two stories – with one foot in the right now and one foot in the place where we step back, ask what smart thing are we going to say about it? It’s truly like working two jobs at the same time.

This “don’t feel like journalism,” Stacy said, especially when it concerns use of the newspaper’s online publishing system, HTML coding and related activities. “It feels like a distraction or detraction from gathering good information and the story in it and
figuring out the most artful way to tell it.” At the same time, the need for speed clashes with concerns about the impact on quality. From news tip to web posting, reporters and editors struggle to get vet and produce accurate information to the waiting public. This impacts longer-range planning, as Keith, a 63-year-news editor, points out:

[We live in] …, in this 24-7 world … in a world where every other minute somebody is releasing something. Yesterday I think I did three what we call “web postings” on the Internet, on our website, before 10 o’clock, instead of doing things like thinking or planning or getting ready for the Saturday paper or actually, because it was the weekend, getting our Sunday package together.

Other reporters experienced job loss thanks to new technologies, which for them reinforced the need to learn new skills to secure their futures. Amelia blamed digital media for what she called “the downfall of journalism” which for her resulted in a layoff. She spent months searching for a job before finding one in the southwest. Now a city editor, she manages reporters, edits stories and leads the production of the daily newspaper. She also updates the Twitter feed and Facebook page and posts breaking news. She explains:

And when my court reporter calls back and has got a plea deal on a significant case, I’m composing the story with background material she is giving me and I’m posting it on the web, which is something the city editor wouldn’t have done eight to ten years ago.
4.2.1.2 Theme: Resilience

All the journalists interviewed expressed through their narratives themes of resilience and adaptation. None seemed willing to abandon journalism for other fields as they discussed the new challenges they faced thanks to new and emerging technologies (although some have left since interviewed.) But what is resiliency? Resilience is the ability to recover after traumatic experiences (Buzzanell, 2010). A more narrow concept is that of social resilience--a community’s ability to recover from traumatic experiences such as social, economic and other kinds of stress and seems applicable as we consider journalism in the 21 century. They looked to professional development and flexibility as means toward developing new skillsets that, in the end, would help maintain and advance their careers. Many expressed confidence in their ability to grapple with and acquire new skills. In addition, they coupled belief in the value of their own experiences with recognition of their understanding of journalism’s core principles. In this way, they affirmed a set of identity anchors, which Buzzanell (2010) defines as “a relatively enduring cluster of identity discourses upon which individuals and their familial, collegial, and/or community members rely when explaining who they are for themselves and in relation to each other.” These journalists see themselves as able to provide information that is verified, contextualized and produced. They are not concerned that the career will go the way of the dinosaur.

“People are always going to need information that's been vetted through gatekeepers,” said Claire. “And a journalist’s role--possibly number one [role]--is to be the gatekeeper of information.”
Leslie concurs: You’re still doing the same job. You’re just doing it differently. So [reporters] still have to have those right questions, [have] the right analytical kind of mind, that inquisitiveness.”

Most importantly, however, these journalists each linked their own career narratives with the deeply rooted principles of journalism. Matt, the executive editor of a mid-sized newspaper outline the things that he believed would never change:

The method of doing it is different, but I think the desire to tell good stories, to report news, to be the first to report breaking news, to take good photos--that sort of thing is inherently the same as it was. I think the passion for reporting and telling news is really similar now to the way it was before the tools of our trade changed.

Leslie, who is married to a journalist, used strategic career planning to find spaces to thrive and grow, and this is reflected in the ways that she speaks about her career, reflecting upon its past and looking forward toward the future. For example, she explained that her latest career move was predicated on decisions about journalism as an organization. Several years ago, she and her husband left an upper Midwest newspaper hit by recession, decline, and union unrest. The two took positions at a southern newspaper chosen with its demographics in mind. Her career narrative is built upon the understanding of who will be reading print editions of the newspaper, and who will not:

We came here specifically because it is a retirement area, and if newspapers are going to survive anywhere, they’ll be here. And this area will be one of the last areas where they disappear, if they ever do. We were thinking longevity in the career.
Still, she is hedging her bets. She recently accepted a job as breaking news editor at her organization; the acquisition of new skills is another way that she builds career resilience. Her job is to “file it to the web first, and put things on social media first, and get photos and video first before we even do the print product.” As she embraces the new situation, her reporters help her to learn the skills she needs to survive as a techno-savvy journalist. She remembers earlier career times where she learned from others, and then segued to positions where she, in turn was the teacher.

“Now I’m kind of both,” she said. “I’m teaching those reporters that I’m bringing along in the career, but at the same time I’m learning myself. It’s exciting again, I guess. It just shows how everything is constantly changing.”

Dan, 57, took his first journalism job at age 19 and worked in various reporting and editing positions over the course of his career. During our interview, however, he explained how he had only recently left the structure of a traditional newsroom, working and living overseas as a freelance writer selling his stories to online publications. He explained how he was struggling to build his online reputation, once again making “cub reporter wages.” New media, he says, has “messed [his career] up and left me wondering what the hell to do.” He disliked having to market himself in the online environment.

“You have to go out, and glad hand and expose your name and say why you're such a great reporter and blah blah blah,” he said. “It's like flogging that horse every day. It just never ends.”

Still, Dan’s narrative reflects his own discourses of resiliency as he details his own skill acquisition and development of new communication networks. He reminds me, and by extension, himself, that qualities like determination and resourcefulness that had
served him so well as that cub reporter are seeming to serve him once again. He reached out to experts in digital and social media to get tips and take classes about online news strategies. He explained his pursuit of new skills through online courses on branding. He wasn’t willing to quit, and believed at the time that his only avenue was that of an independent reporter.

“But having said that, it's starting to work,” he said. “And you either retire or you become a fast food account person or whatever you want to do but for either that or bite the bullet and go into new media.”

4.2.2 Challenge and Change: Building Bridges Between Two Worlds

It was easy to get these jobs. You got your experience in one place and then you moved on to another place. And you just kept moving up.

— Leslie, about the 1990-era newspaper industry.

All of the professionals that I interviewed spoke plainly about finding themselves at the beginning of a learning curve due to the changes in the journalism industry. As the organization evolved from its focus on print first to a new way of thinking, which stressed “digital first” (Klinenberg, 2005), these journalists spoke often about challenge and change. But as they did so, and as I analyzed the thematic structure of the interviews, it struck me that these journalists offer a unique perspective: a bridge between an era that is disappearing and the brave new world of newspaper work.

For example, Dan recounted the story of an editor who taught him how to be an aggressive reporter by forcing him to contact public officials at all hours of the day. Nearly 30 years later, younger, more tech-savvy journalists taught Dan how to
aggressively market himself as an online reporter. He credits with these individuals as having an important impact on his career:

They have helped me tremendously, because I hook up with these people who are experts in the field or experts in [redacted] politics or experts in human rights or experts in women’s rights, which I do a lot of writing on. And so I connected with these people and I got access to their e-mail addresses and their phone numbers, things like that and it's really helped me a lot to develop as an online reporter.

This narrative, or ones like it, is often repeated throughout the interviews. Journalists tell stories of turning to younger professions who have been taught these skills in journalism school. Amelia, Matt, Stacy, Leslie and Doug talked about experimenting with the technologies, talking with colleagues, and observing how other organizations used the new tools. Edward, 64, explained that he learned his cache of digital media skills “mostly by watching the young people, to be perfectly honest. You know, I’m an old goat.”

Today’s journalism school students are learning technological skills like video editing and camera techniques along with Interviewing 101 and Introduction to Copyediting (Deuze, 2001; Mangan, 2009) They are, in turn, taking them into their workplace. Of the journalists that I interviewed, only Claire represents this new generation, and her formal education included a focus on new media; in fact, she majored in it. Her narrative is peppered with suggestions that she benefited from being at the right place at the right time: She worked for her hometown newspaper as a young teen and through her college years, but set out on her own for graduate school. After earning her
master’s degree, she called the editor who had given her that first job and asked him to hire her:

“I said, ‘I want to come home,’” she said “‘I know times are tight, but I have something you need.’” He hired her as the paper’s first multimedia reporter.

Claire believes she came away from graduate school gainfully employed because of her digital media skills, and she expressed a confidence in her job security that appeared absent in Leslie’s, Dan’s, Amelia’s and others who expressed concern about the industry and outlined strategies for securing their careers. Yet though Claire embraced the newest technologies and, in her job, helped others do the same, she left daily journalism several months after our interview. She is now involved in academe.

In the meantime, journalists like Keith expressed confidence in their ability to continue to contribute to the journalism profession, no matter what technologies were developed. In his comments, Keith expressed his thoughts that made clear the linkages between the journalism of the past and the journalism of the present and future:

Five years ago I was thinking, “Will I even make it to the end of my career? Will all the stuff go away that I know, and it will be a different world?” I don’t think that anymore -- not at all. I think something that we do as journalists is more important than ever, because there are a thousand voices. There is so much information out there. The need for clarity, fairness, understanding the journalistic professional is greater than ever.
4.3 The Micronarrative: My Story

In this final section of this study, I ask: What does one individual’s career narrative reveal about negotiating change in journalistic identity, and how did her coverage of one particular crime story affect her career identity?

By employing autoethnographic techniques, I examine the tensions that arose within me as I covered the Shermantine-Herzog case, and those that stayed with me after I left the job of reporter and began a transition into the next phases of my career. Ngunjiri, Hernandez, and Chang (2010) describe autoethnography as a qualitative research method that helps us to learn about connections between ourselves and others. In addition, autoethnography is “qualitative, self-focused, and context-conscious” (p. 2).

Using Owen’s procedures and processes to complete my analysis, I looked for recurring semantic patterns through examination of recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. The reflections and retrospectives, which appear throughout this project, helped me put my own career story into context. I probed my memories to recover the emotions that I experienced, but had to I stifle, while covering the story. I looked for themes and patterns in these writings as I asked: What do my writings say about my own career narrative? How does my narrative fit with my colleagues’ or that of the metanarrative of journalism? What do I think now about journalism as career, and what did I think then, and how do they differ?

4.3.1 The Impact of Shermantine-Herzog: Now and Then

My career narrative is wound up in the Shermantine and Herzog case. It made the most impact on me as a journalist, as a woman and as a graduate student. I think about
the women who died at his hand; the women who may have died at his hand; and the
women who survived his abuse. Some of their stories are unknown to me—I believe there
are more victims, and we will never know all their names. Those who we do know--
Cyndi and Chevy, for example--have stayed with me since those early days covering the
case. In my mind, Chevy will always be the 16 year old that left Franklin High in 1985
and never came back. Though Cyndi was four years younger than Cyndi, she will always
seem older, because she lived nearly ten years longer. I have no sense of who they are as
individuals; and yet, they feel familiar. I seek, now and when I was covering them, to
treat them humanely. As I do so, I realize that in the past I may have unintentionally
alienated others who are just as deserving of humane treatment: the families of the
convicted murderers. My study of their Facebook posts is an attempt at rectifying this
situation, but it is not enough. I understand that, and I further understand that these
individuals probably have no desire to have their Facebook posts included in this study.
Facebook’s privacy settings enable me to take a look into their lives, and their posts are
part of the public sphere.

When I think about how I thought about the organization of journalism between
1999 and 2004, I recognize that I as a journalist had many strengths and limitations. As
reporter eager for the next exclusive story, I was eager to succeed; newspapers were
looking for the same thing. Within these reflections, my career narrative uncovers
repeated references to an upwardly mobile path. My mentors were my editors, and the
senior reporters who shared their knowledge with me. I listened to them, followed their
examples, and began to advance in my career. I tapped into my competitive side, and thus
helped to advance my career. I sought success; I was successful. The Shermantine-
Herzog case provided for me a way up. I sought to demonstrate my newsgathering skills as I tenaciously worked my sources to come up with stories that had yet to be told: interviews with Shermantine’s ex-wife, a woman who accused him of rape, Robin Armtrout’s mother and sister, and the many other voices of this story.

My narrative also reveals that I was grappling, even then, with themes of marginalization. I did not fully comprehend the various complexities the term engenders. I lacked the academic background to express theoretical constructs such as standpoint theory and social constructionism. With respect to Robin Armtrout and Lisa Pisano, I judged that law enforcement marginalized Robin because of her criminal record, and that the Calaveras County judicial system treated Lisa because it was backwards and ignorant. These are overly simplistic conclusions.

As my career identity shifts away from its close ties with journalism, it moves toward a yet undefined area that is loosely associated with academe. I can see that as I analyze the reflections, as I use forward-looking phrases that imply uncertainty about change. The reflections that I have written also demonstrate a new understanding, formed by my exposure to academe, an understanding that I participated, and still participate, in upholding a culture that is socially constructed by a variety of forces, especially the media (Gamson et al, 1992). Within me stirs the need for change.

As I look back on my work, that is, the stories I constructed while a journalist, I can see that I relied too heavily on law enforcement sources. This understanding is uncovered by my graduate research as well. I had not yet read the scholarly research that revealed that this is typical for journalists; that research shows those who cover crime and courts generally do so (Surrette, 1992). Reviewing these stories, and my reflections upon
them, I regret my failure to have made better attempts to honestly and carefully represent the viewpoints of Shermantine’s mother, father, or sisters. I attempted to interview Herzog’s family members but they were not interested in speaking to me. After 12 years, this has not changed, according to Scott. Smith. I give him credit for the efforts he made to contact the Shermantines and Herzogs, some of which were successful, though most of which were not. He writes:

I tried to contact Herzog through letters and he never wrote back. I sent a clip of a story I wrote of the dig for Chevy with my business card paper clipped to it, asking him to contact me when he was ready. A few days after he committed suicide, the envelope came back with the word “deceased” stamped on it. His family hung up on me when I called, and I never felt comfortable or safe knocking on their door in Linden after his suicide. I’ve called Shermantine’s ex-wife, Sherrie, at Shermantine’s request, and she never called me back. I’ve spoken with one of his sisters, Barbara Jackson, early on and she talked a lot. But she subsequently stopped talking to me, but I have not made great efforts to contact her further.

There are social scientists who can help to reveal these individuals’ pain and disenfranchisement (Jones & Beck, 2006; Meisenbach, 2010; Smith, 2007). Though interviews with the families may not be possible, interviews with scholars may be a way to inform the public about another set of individuals who are heavily invested in the case. Just as Scott has not interviewed Herzog’s family, his wife refused interviews with me. So did his mother and his sister. I attempted to speak to Shermantine’s youngest sister, Dolly, but she merely pushed past me in the courtroom corridor without comment.
It is true that Scott and I along with many other journalists are unable to obtain interviews with the family members of these kinds of perpetrators. But journalists have other options. They can, instead, seek interviews with scholars who specialize in research on stigmatized individuals; that scholarship can be integrated into news stories and educate readers and viewers about missing story aspects and nuances. Looking back, I see that I lacked a level of sophistication to understand how media coverage marginalizes some while privileging others. Had I fully understood this processes, and had I sought out scholars to provide other perspectives on my stories and the cases at hand, I may have given voice to marginalized individuals who are families of serial killers.

As I look backwards in my life and career through my reflections, I also see stories of success, power, and my own competitive nature. For me, journalism as a career is filled with metaphors based on the traditional, bureaucratic hierarchy of success and failure. Success can be defined by how far one climbs “up the corporate ladder [hierarchy] to the top of the pyramid” (Buzzanell & Goldwig, 1991, p. 470). Failure can be defined as stagnation or failure to move up. I achieved professional power through my linear progression in my career, from junior reporter to senior reporter covering politics or legal affairs. I achieved promotions from the metaphorical “bottom” of the newsroom pyramid and attained skills, competencies and value as an employee. As a result, my paycheck grew significantly from my years as a junior reporter throughout my 16 years in the field. This is part of the success metaphor examined by Buzzanell and Goldzwig (1991). Scott Smith’s work on the Shermantine case has earned him a new beat, covering the city of Stockton. He may or may not consider it a promotion; but he negotiated with his supervisors the right to keep the Shermantine story, which shows its value to him.
But there are also moments where the crisis meets opportunity to produce change. In looking back upon my career, I reflect on how I made the leap from reporter to editor. This significant step is not outlined within the reflections that are scattered throughout this project. It was not a well-strategized plan. So how did it come about? Did I apply for a position and receive a promotion? Well, sort of.

It was a summer day in 2004. The staff had been called to the conference room with the understanding that there would be an announced newsroom reorganization. Our editor, new to the job, was a boisterous and blustery individual who would be fired before the summer was out. Our managing editor, one of my mentors, was struggling under the weight of this editor’s personality. The editor’s style clashed with nearly everyone. I tried to stay out of the line of fire.

I sat through the meeting, becoming increasingly sick at heart. The reorganization required me to report to an assistant city editor (ACE) who I considered incompetent, overly-sensitive, and difficult. When the editor announced this assignment, my close friends did not look at me. My face reddened and I experienced an adrenaline rush, as the blood pounded in my ears and I saw, stretching before me, a new career experience, wherein the joys of my job would disappear, chipped away by ridiculous demands and accusatory conversations with this ACE. At the end of the meeting, I remained seated in the conference room, collecting myself before going back to my desk. The rest of my colleagues trickled out.

My managing editor and the new executive editor stayed behind. My managing editor crossed him arms and stood by the conference room door. He took control of the conversation. “What’s going on, Linda?” he asked. I figured he should know: I’d shared
with him my frustrations with the ACE before. And anyway, I wasn’t the only reporter to have done so. In general, I attempted to be polite to supervisors. The new guy was in the room, and I was fairly intimidated by his overbearing attitude. But this time I was angry, and when I become angry, tears well up. I did not want to cry, especially in front of the new guy. I could barely choke out a response.

“You know you’ve just made my life hell, right?” I said bitterly.

I heard my managing editor shut the door, but I wasn’t looking at him. I was staring at the conference room table.

“Well, Linda, there’s a way for you to remedy this situation,” my managing editor said. “You can apply for the vacant features editor position.”

It’s a bit stunning how the physical reaction from disappointment, bitterness, and gloom can recede, replaced by amazement, wonder, and hope. Yes, we had a vacant features position. But I never considered applying for it--until then.

“Consider it done,” I said immediately. In an instant, my career trajectory had changed.

I applied for the job, constructing a statement of purpose for the section and spending hours researching it and writing it. My managing editor promoted me, but this kind of advancement did not feel as if I had methodically plotted out my career. It felt, and still feels, capricious and impulsive, and I wonder what would have happened that day had I been reassigned to an editor whom I respected.

I attach no value judgments to the fact that I, like thousands of other workers every day, sought to do the best job possible, as I understood it, and reach for promotions where they are available. As a reporter, supervisors expected me to get the story first, get
it right, and represent those within it fairly. Just as Scott Smith is now, I was at times the star reporter; the go-to girl, basking in the rays of the most recent accomplishment. But those moments are short lived. A standard joke that echoes around newsrooms: Great job on the story; now what have you done for me lately? It speaks to the feeding frenzy that is the news. Challenge and change exists within my career narrative, but because I have stepped outside of journalism, not because I continue to exist within it.

Buzzanell and Goldzwig (1991) remind us that it is “through organizational membership [that] most individuals in the United States obtain substantial parts of their identities” (p. 469). This is true of many journalists and it was very true of me. Tell someone that you are a newspaper reporter and you can see the change in expression. They become alert, impressed, interested in hearing about the people with whom you interact, the stories you are covering, and the way you do your job. Does a nurse get this same kind of attention? Does a teacher? While the media is criticized as an institution, it seems to me many are slightly in awe of the field. When I left journalism, it surprised me just how much I missed being connected to the prestige of my “organizational membership” and how much a part of my own identity the field was, and still is.

Buzzanell and Goldzwig (1991) also challenge the myth that women can have career and family life without sacrificing advancement, calling it a “nonalternative alternative” (pp. 476-477). I certainly agree. Looking back for notations of family in my reflections, I am surprised to find they barely exist. I consider that at times they were edited out for one reason or another. For example, I did not include the reflection that explained how, while covering the Shermantine trial, I got a call from my 15-year-old son, who had broken his arm and was at the hospital. I had taken public transportation to
Santa Clara that day, so it took my more than two hours to get to the hospital where Erich was most definitely not being treated. Without my signature, the hospital would not give him even an aspirin for his pain until I arrived. I felt guilty, upset, and helpless as I rode two trains and the Bay Area Rapid Transit system (BART) to get to downtown Stockton, and then drive the 20 minutes to hospital. Once there, I received a phone call from that certain assistant city editor that would become the source of my grief in a newsroom meeting three years on. But in 2001 he had just begun work at The Record. When would I file my story? he asked. I had already told him my situation, and reminded him that I was at the hospital. He paused for a moment, and then asked if the emergency room had a place where I could access the Internet so that I could send the story right away. He showed little concern for Erich’s condition.

4.3.2 Change and Challenge: My Evolving Career Narrative

I delayed entry into a 9-5 field until my children were in preschool, and I left journalism to spend more time with my youngest child, who was in his teens, and my middle child, who was preparing to go off to college. I do not regret making either decision. However, the decision yielded a significant cut in pay (from which I have not recovered) and status. I am (attempting) to address these career challenges by pursuing a master’s degree and finding meaning in my academic pursuits--something I would have not had time nor flexibility to do were I still working in newspapers.

As I reflect upon the evolution of my career narrative, I realize that there is a disconnect between my career as a journalist and my current career, which is evolving. Now out of the industry, I no longer experience the kind of ego boost I experienced from
being a journalist covering a high profile story that, over time, stepped in and out of the national spotlight. In my current situation, I am far from my aspirational self. But through my academic endeavors, I am continuing to write my own narrative of challenge and change. It is a challenge, but I am experiencing professional growth and academic successes. Earning my master’s degree was important to me, because it meant potential career advancement. But a funny thing happened on my way to that degree. I discovered that it helped to fill a gap that was missing, and enabled me to find meaning through research and academic success. I now desire to dive more deeply into some of the scholarly issues raised within this work, and that desire is driving me forward in pursuit of further study and a higher degree.

In some respects, the challenges that I am experiencing as I transition, intellectually and emotionally, from journalism to whatever lies ahead, are similar to those that older journalists are facing. Like many of them, I am learning new skills as I move into another field. Like many of them, I am faced with a real need to adapt or be left behind. And like many of them, I am drawing on the internal knowledge that I possess unique and valuable skills. Reframing the skills that I used as a journalist to succeed in my current position and my work in academe help me negotiate change. I am learning how to reframe the values of journalism. In my life as a journalist, I was seen at times as the so-called “star” reporter. In my current employment, situated in a more traditional work setting, as well as in my work as a graduate student, I find purpose and meaning.

I am learning much in my current situation. As a young and developing journalist at the beginning of her career, I developed mentoring relationships with individuals who
were familiar with the journalistic career path. Now, I feel somewhat isolated, surrounded by members of academe in my workplace, but not seen as one myself. It is a liminal state—simultaneously uneasy and exciting, looking backwards and searching forward. I am seeking new opportunities, but have recently realized that I am in some ways constrained by past successes.

I reflect upon my past successes. Amazingly, from the time I was 21 until earlier this year, I received an offer of employment for every job interview I had. Once, I even leveraged an offer for an increase in pay and more vacation. To accomplish that leveraging, I actually negotiated very little within the context of that conversation. In fact, I recall walking nervously into my editor’s office, sitting down, and explaining that I had a job offer from a competing newspaper. He asked me what I was planning to do. I explained how I really loved my current job and that I was conflicted. The editor shrugged, offered me a 30 percent pay increase, and added a week of vacation to sweeten the deal. I agreed immediately, rather stunned at what had transpired. Later it occurred to me that I could probably have asked for a raise beyond the 30 percent. But I was young and inexperienced, and, anyway, why negotiate when your boss seems to be handing you a golden egg?

More than 20 years of never receiving the “thanks but no thanks” phone call or letter ill prepared me for such events. As I look back, many of my supervisors created opportunities that helped me soar. I worked hard, yes, but others saw my potential and urged me on. These mentors pulled me up through various career stages, and helped me to access more prestigious beats, special assignments and supervisory positions. It may be
that previously I did not reach high enough; that I should have pushed myself toward loftier goals.

These self-questioning and career transitions are not unusual. Lawrence (2011) talks about career perceptions and expectations, and the relationship between those two factors and actual success. Lawrence explains how women tend to have lower career expectations because they tend to compare themselves to other women, who occupy mid-level jobs. Buzzanell and Goldzwig (1991) define alternative ways of defining success that focus on value rather than position. But in my experience, position is like a drug; once you have had it, its loss can make you hungry for it once more. Having experienced the successes of covering the Shermantine-Herzog case early on, I wanted to and still want to experience successes in the next phases of my career.

During the past year, I have at times wished that I was back in my old position, covering the big stories about which Scott Smith did such a wonderful job. However, I fully understand that after Shermantine was sentenced to death, I never picked up a pen to contact him, as Scott did. And so the victories of this past year are built on his excellence as a reporter and belong to him and him alone. His hard work negotiated the revelations that brought Cyndi and Chevy home. However, the Shermantine (and Herzog) case has taken its toll on him just as it has done to me:

I don’t usually get emotionally attached to stories, but this one got to me. It was very stressful when my letters from Shermantine became public and deputies in San Joaquin and Calaveras were digging for remains but finding nothing. Then other reporters got onto it and pressed authorities; in one news conference…San Joaquin County Sheriff Steve Moore said his deputies were searching based on
tips Shermantine provided to “reporter Scott Smith.” On the other side, I felt an incredible thrill when they did find Chevy and Cyndi. With that thrill came guilt because I was celebrating my success on the ultimate grief the victims’ families felt for years of having lost their daughters. It has been a mixed bag of emotions for me. Ultimately, I’m proud of my work.

I am proud of Scott’s work, too, and thankful that he has stayed with a story that could have ended very differently. As I’ve read the stories and watched the videos, as I’ve followed the Twitter streams and commented on the blogs, I have ceased to think of Shermantine-Herzog as a story that I owned. It belongs much more, now, to Scott Smith. This understanding is helping me to negotiate further transitions from my former career of journalism into the worlds beyond. I am beginning to define next career steps, but these steps are, as yet, tentative ones.
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This research is a study of narratives--organizational, career, and autoethnographic. I have attempted to determine ways that three layers of narrative can inform and impact each other, especially with regard to transformative themes such as challenge and change. Narrative is an appropriate framework theoretically and methodologically, and it enabled me to examine chronologically linear events and sequential actions, find meaning and create form as these narratives are shared others (Tuhoy & Stephens, 2012). I have attempted to uncover organizational and individual stories of change, while examining the motivations, judgments and, when possible, emotions associated therein. Since themes reside within stories (Schiffrin, 1996), I used thematic analysis as a way to understand the kinds of narratives build within a metanarrative (the organizational narrative of journalism), a mesonarrative (the career narratives of journalists), and a micronarrative (my own narrative of transition). Situated within the metanarrative is an examination of how new technologies enable journalists a glimpse into the thoughts and emotions of sources who in years past have refused interaction with reporters, including me.

This study, and its examination of three layers of narratives, makes the following theoretical contributions to the study of organizational communication. First, these
narratives can inform and influence each other, especially during times of crisis and change. The organizational metanarrative affects the career narratives of those who work within it, both collectively (as in the mesonarrative) and individually (as in the micronarrative). These layered and interlocking narratives can also inform how we—as researchers and practitioners—think about organizations, industries, and occupations that are undergoing critical changes. Journalism is precisely such an organization, occupation, and industry. From the interviews with journalists, we learn more about how people negotiate career changes in such circumstances. This study helps unpack how challenge and change occurs across the meta-, meso- and micro narratives. It does not have a linear, uni-directional progression; rather, it is multi-directional, with each affecting and affected by the other.

Neither is such change a fixed process. These multiple narratives and realities both account for, reinforce, and make sense of broader structures and institutions in society—in this case, journalism. Because narratives are socially constructed and changeable with new insights and in different contexts, the narratives can provide different entree points at which new phases of restorying are possible. It is with uncertainty and excitement that I anticipate the next phase for myself as well as for these career journalists as we create and craft new career stories for ourselves and for the organization, industry, and occupations with which we continue to identify.

5.1 The Metanarrative

In my first research question, I asked: What does an examination of a single crime story, over more than a decade’s worth of coverage, reveal about how the journalistic career changed since 1999?
Using the case of Wes Shermantine and Loren Herzog, I examined how journalism as an organization changed from between 1999 and 2004, when I covered the case, and 2012, when the remains of five individuals were recovered--Cyndi and Chevy from property once owned Shermantine’s parents, and, from a well in Linden, Joann Hobson, and two other women and a fetus. This study yielded a metanarrative of challenge and change, particularly in regards to how journalism is done now thanks to new technologies. When I covered the Shermantine case, *The Record’s* circulation was more than 70,000 (Goldeen, 2003) and the print edition the focus of the journalists’ daily routine. Our readers expected the paper on their doorsteps by 5:30 a.m., crammed with news and special sections such as the television guide, coupon sections, and advertisements about the next week’s sales. Now, its print circulation hovers around 33,000 (*Mondo Times*, 2012); but that figure does not tell the whole story given that the number of readers who daily read the online version is less clear. *The Record*, like so many newspapers across this country--and throughout the world-- is moving forward as the industry of journalism moves forward: pushing digital to the foreground, backgrounding the traditional print medium, seeking ways to monetize the resulting product. The narrative of challenge and change within the industry of journalism continues, as the organization responds to the rapid changes of technology. As individual users interface with these technologies within the context of organization, new understandings of the industry emerge, reflecting further nuances and layers of the narratives of challenge and change which, in turn, filter down to its workers as groups and individuals.

Between 1999 and 2012, Twitter, Facebook and other social media became powerful new tools for the industry. But the conventions for their use are still evolving. As
shown here, Facebook--unavailable to me in 1999--offers a new glimpse into the thoughts and emotions of sources who traditionally do not wish to speak to the media. Through the Facebook study, I revealed Facebook as a space where Loren Herzog’s wider family pushed back against prevailing opinion about Herzog and received support through its online community. I address this issue more specifically in my epilogue, but, broadly, the family’s posts advanced themes that suggest they feel marginalized by media coverage. Reporters who examine these posts can know so much more about these families than I did when I covered the case.

5.2 The Mesonarrative

RQ2 asks, How do journalists see themselves retrospectively and in the present with regard to their careers?

To answer this question, I conducted thematic analysis of interviews conducted with eleven newsroom leaders. Within the context of these leaders, I examined what new practices newspapers have taken to remain relevant, and how these changes personally affected the way these newsroom leaders see themselves, their worth, and their futures.

There are limitations to this study in that the data set is small and it would benefit from a larger group of interviews. Also, the researcher is well acquainted with them all, which may reduce their desire to reveal information that might embarrass them or make them uncomfortable and, conversely, impact in some way researcher objectivity or interpretation. Additionally, there are other research theories that would be useful to useful when exploring the various stories represented here. This research has touched on but a few.
Much more was said in these interviews than was used herein, which speaks to the richness of the data and the ability to frame new research questions as well. These may include quantitative studies about journalists managing organizational change; mentoring; and skill acquisition both before and during careers. It would be useful to consider whether these journalists are acting as mentor to others, and, if so, whether their mentoring abilities in any ways mimic those of the mentors that they had. It would be particularly useful to learn what kinds of resilience skills can be promoted in newsrooms across the country through training, strategic career planning and identity management.

Nevertheless, I hope that this examination proves useful for those engaging in scholarly discussions of career, especially with regard to journalism. As the profession undergoes massive changes, and newspapers are either shut down or forced to lay off staff, journalists who are developing successful strategies to remain employed can teach valuable skills to others both inside and outside the profession. The narratives that they share help shine a light on themes of adaptation, resiliency, and change, and they can provide examples of how to “do” career in an uncertain and unstable environment.

5.3 The Micronarrative

The autoethnographic portion of my study enables me to reflect upon my own career, and my transition from journalist into a world of academe. My research questions asks: What does one individual’s career narrative reveal about negotiating change in journalistic identity, and how did her coverage of one particular crime story affect her career identity?
Organizational membership helps most individuals in the United States define themselves in terms of identity (Buzzanell & Goldwig, 1991). My reflections reveal how I formed my identity throughout my career as a journalist, and beyond. I sought out success, using the standard practices of the day. I worked hard, became the reporter of record for the Shermantine-Herzog case, and received kudos and accolades--and probably promotions--because of it. I sought to balance work and family, and was startled to realize that I had backgrounded my family within the course of the autoethnographic reflection-writing. This realization creates a space for future autoethnographic work that contrasts past and present issues such as motherhood, work-life balance, commuting, and organizational change.

During my coverage of the case, I interviewed women like Sherrie Hendricks and Lisa Pisano, who had survived Shermantine’s assaults, and I had sought to learn more about Robin Armtrout, whom authorities believe had not. Then, I had a rudimentary, gut-level understanding of the effects of hegemonic constructs and marginalization but lacked the linguistic and academic sophistication to vocalize these constructs either in my career or in my stories. Fourteen years and (almost) one graduate degree later, I have developed a new understanding how was marginalized, and my own participation in the process.

It may be that now, as I seek to break through to the next level of my career aspirations, I must be willing to seek out opportunities that require a change in the way I think about my career success. Soon I will have obtained the advanced degree that seems to be so critical to upward mobility, at least in terms of status and economic position. Simultaneously, I will start another degree program to continue what I have started here. I have no doubt that Shermantine, Herzog, the women that they killed, and all those
involved in the case, will stay with me for the rest of my life. I hope future opportunities include ways to learn more about social construction of reality, marginalization, and other theories and themes found in this thesis. It remains to be seen what is next for me.
EPILOGUE

As I pursued my research about narratives of challenge and change through my examination of the metanarrative, mesonarrative, and micronarrative, I uncovered some important insights into a group of forgotten stakeholders. When I began this work, I imagined that those who were forgotten were the victims of these crimes; and that is true; but as I proceeded, I learned how I participated in the marginalization of another vulnerable group--this one among the living. The Shermantine and Herzog families, too, were among the forgotten.

My analysis of the Herzog family’s Facebook posts reveals much about how the media treat certain groups--and individuals--whose circumstances do not engender sympathy. There is more research to be done on this subject, and I offered glimmers of this issue through the analyses in Chapter 4. I chose not to foreground this issue, however, because it was not the main (academic) purpose of this work. Just as journalists must and do choose how to frame and focus the narratives in the stories that they write, so must I now frame and focus the narrative of this thesis, foregrounding themes of challenge and change. And so I take moment here, in this epilogue, to explore some of my underlying themes and motivations a bit further.

Through the Facebook study, I revealed that social media affords a discursive space where Loren Herzog’s extended family pushed back against prevailing opinion about Herzog and received support through its online community. Collectively, the family’s posts advanced the theme “Don’t judge me,” while Jan’s posts also fought back against perceived media harassment. Although this part of my study has limitations in
that I use a very small data set, I argue that further research into social media use by forgotten stakeholders, including those who are deemed unsympathetic by virtue of their association with someone or something stigmatized, would uncover much about human sensemaking, identification, and empathy beyond that associated with my study and with the serial killers and their family members. Furthermore, family members who find themselves in such difficult, stigmatizing situations may be empowered to create spaces on social media that enable them to speak out against marginalization.

Socially shunned, these families become victims of a different kind. It appears likely that they experience disenfranchised grief (Jones & Beck, 2007). In the case of Loren Herzog, the family had to endure the repercussions from their loved one’s arrest and conviction for what were arguably some of the most heinous crimes in California history. Herzog’s suicide was front-page, breaking news, and contained no statements of compassion for those who knew and loved him (Smith, 2012a). Perhaps it is understandable that the Vanderheiden family unanimously voiced their joy. Perhaps it is understandable that prosecutors said they were sorry that information had died with him. However, the media took no steps to present the other side of this tragic story beyond the perfunctory statements indicating the Herzog’s family refused to comment. These practices in journalism and in normalized discursive space reinforce the unspoken idea that this family is not “sympathy worthy” (Jones & Beck, 2006).

When Herzog committed suicide, there were no obituaries published. Jan and Susan expressed their sorrow for his death while expressing the realization that most members of society would be dancing on his grave. Not surprisingly, the individuals studied here have developed a deep, fierce anger toward the media. From social media
posts, we learn that Herzog’s family members have had to hide from the press; that their children are fearful of them. Jan and Susan express their displeasure in public posts, perhaps knowing the press will peruse Facebook, see the posts, and receive the direct messages that they seem to be sending to the media.

My Facebook study has both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it is an unexplored space in which the public and private come together, generated by publics who won’t acknowledge private grief. The study also extends the notion of forgotten stakeholders to groups that are marginalized through their association with violent crimes, and links the concepts of forgotten stakeholders with disenfranchised grief and Web 2.0 technology, thus bringing new research possibilities to communication scholars. Through the study, researchers, practitioners, and family members can gain a space to talk about how to use technologies to address these families’ needs for positive interventions, such as support and grief counseling.

It also creates a space to discuss whether journalists should receive more training about how they can, as professionals, increase coverage of these families fairly and ethically without having to rely on direct quotes if family members decide that they do not wish to speak out. Education about such stigmatized families may prompt journalists to include context from experts on the subject within their coverage of stories like the Shermantine-Herzog case. These educational materials may be provided through professional development classes, webinars, curricula provided by journalism schools, or conference proceedings. By increasing journalists’ sensitivities to these subjects, publics may in turn benefit from new understandings that help them to think differently about the families of violent offenders.
More research on this subject is certainly warranted. It may be that this portion of my thesis contains the seeds of my future career narratives. In life, one thing leads to another. In research, undoubtedly, the same is also true; and as my own transformation out of journalism continues, I see a road of ahead of further challenge and change; the sign posts are inviting.

And so off I go.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


The above image was posted on Jan’s Facebook page a few days after Herzog committed suicide. It is an example of the kind of images she and others used to deliver messages that advanced the ongoing “don’t judge me” theme.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Facebook Content</th>
<th>Theme/Message</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/17/12</td>
<td>Herzog committed suicide on 1/16/12.</td>
<td>Today is such a sad day for us because no matter what others might have thought, he was my [relationship redacted]. Such a painful path, we were so close. I love you [relationship redacted]. Give my baby a hug because I know she is there to catch you, her beloved [relationship redacted.]</td>
<td>My family is in pain. No matter what others think, he was important to me. To Herzog: You are beloved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The next day, media coverage appears in a number of outlets in dozens of Northern California including <em>The Lodi News Sentinel, The Record, KCRA-TV, News10, The Sacramento Bee, Fox40 News.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/21/12</td>
<td>Coverage of Herzog’s death continues, spreading throughout the northern California area and the nation.</td>
<td>Shared visual image with text: “While you were busy judging others, you left your closet open and your skeletons fell out.” Jan’s comment: And you know who you are!</td>
<td>Stop judging others.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/21/12</td>
<td>Coverage of Herzog’s suicide continues.</td>
<td>Need prayers right now... If you are my friend click the like button &amp; then re-post. If I don't see your name, I'll understand. May I ask my &quot;Facebook Family&quot; wherever you may be to kindly copy, paste and share this status for one hour to give a prayer of support to all those who have family problems, struggles and worries and just need to know that someone cares. Do it for all of us for no one (sic) is immune. I hope to see this on the walls of all my friends just for moral support. I know some will!! I did it for a friend and you can too. Share some faith and love to those in need. God works in mysterious ways! Better days to come in 2012</td>
<td>I need moral support from my Facebook family. Show me you care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/5/12</td>
<td>Coverage continues as news discusses the potential for finding bodies.</td>
<td>Tsunami after tsunami, when will they stop?</td>
<td>“They” are relentless.</td>
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Table A.1: Jan’s Facebook Posts (continued)

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Facebook Content</th>
<th>Theme/Message</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/11/12</td>
<td>Investigators began searching the Shermantine family property on 2/9/12. Media coverage ignited after having dropped off since Herzog’s suicide. Cyndi Vanderheiden’s remains were found that day; Chevelle Wheeler remains were found the next day. (2/10/12).</td>
<td>I have had it with the reporters, my own paparazzi. My little girl is afraid to go to bed because she thinks a reporter might show up in the middle of the night. That’s it, you are harassing my family and it’s got to stop so BACK OFF!</td>
<td>I am fed-up and frustrated. The media is harassing my daughter/family.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Coverage</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/11/12</td>
<td>On 2/11/12, authorities moved the search from San Andreas to an abandoned Linden well. By the end of the day they had recovered more than 300 bone fragments, as well as shoes, purses and other personal affects.</td>
<td>REALLY, Channel 10, just what are you hoping to accomplish filming my children, sitting in my car, in my drive, on my property. What good for humanity are you doing? What are you accomplishing? Oh, what did you see? I’ll tell you what you saw, you saw frightened children hiding under their hoods, in the back seat, confused as to why someone would do this to them. What did I see, SKUM!</td>
<td>The media invading my privacy. I cannot comprehend what good comes of this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11/12</td>
<td>I was going to post a picture I found hanging in my daughters room this afternoon, while I was hiding from the aparazzi, [sic] but in light of Fox40’s facebook [sic] hacking, I will just quote her words “Fish like you mean it [relationship redacted], I love you forever.”</td>
<td>I have to hide from the media. I cannot safely post on Facebook. My daughter loves and misses Herzog.</td>
<td></td>
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Table A.1: Jan’s Facebook Posts (continued)

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Facebook Content</th>
<th>Theme/Message</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/14/12</td>
<td>The search efforts have by this time uncovered more than 1,000 bones from the Linden well. News of the events have appeared in media outlets throughout California, the nation and the world. This included coverage in the Washington Times, the Seattle Post Intelligencer, CNN, MSNBC, London’s Daily Mail, and Reuters.</td>
<td>To the Sheriff’s Department, telling innocent people to leave town for awhile [sic] is completely out of line.</td>
<td>We are innocent. We should not have to leave our home (presumably to avoid the media.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14/12</td>
<td>Anyone caught photographing my innocent children and posting them on TV without my permission, which you know you DON’T have, will be prosecuted within the full extent of the law. Period.</td>
<td>My children are innocent. No one has permission to take their pictures and put them on TV. I will take legal action against those who do.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>Facebook Content</td>
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<td>10/15/12</td>
<td>On October 12, the San Joaquin County Sheriff’s Office reported that the mother of a homicide victim received commingled remains after the excavation of a mass grave earlier this year. In other words, more than one victim’s remains were returned to the mother, who decided to have her child’s remains independently tested.</td>
<td>So here's the deal: if you don't like me or my family because of our last name then it's your loss not our's (sic). If you are the kind of person that judges someone based on someone else's actions then You are an idiot [sic]. We are good honest people and We will NOT bow down to anyone, EVER!</td>
<td>Do not judge me based on someone else’s actions. Do not judge my family based on someone else’s actions. We are good, honest and proud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/24/12</td>
<td>Link to News10 video released on Feb. 24 entitled Shermantine sent Sacramento bounty hunter letter saying there are more bodies</td>
<td>Systematic red tape......? That's a good description for B<em>ll</em>hit. Same as what's coming out of WES Shermantine's mouth I would say.</td>
<td>Wes Shermantine is lying to those who are listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>News Event</td>
<td>Facebook Content</td>
<td>Theme/Message</td>
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| 2/16/2012  | On this date, the press was continuing its ramped-up coverage of the search for a second well, which Shermantine said contained more remains. On February 16, Authorities began talking about bringing in cadaver dogs to aid in the search. | Photo uploaded: Picture of a restored black truck  
Comment: Deffinately (sic) not a truck your parents can drop 50,000$ on and give to you. More like a fucking master piece built by hard work. Things aren't just handed to us. My family is STILL working hard just to survive the challenges all you brain dead pricks are putting us through. Now please Fuck off. | My family works hard for what we have.  
We still are working to survive challenges imposed upon us by “you.”  
Leave us alone. |
| 10/7/2011  | Photo uploaded: A foot with a skull tattoo on it.  
Comment: thanks, [Herzog]! | Message of thanks implies Herzog, who had hundreds of tattoos on his body, had somehow provided either the inspiration or the artwork for this tattoo.  
Comments confirm the foot belongs to Mike. |