Thompson, "Handling the stigma of handling the dead"

This article talks about being a mortician and the process of constructing meaning and identity from one's occupation. Consider the following points as you read this article.

1. What method does Thompson use to draw his conclusions?

2. The article talks a good bit about the "stigma" associated with being a mortician or funeral director. Identify the two main stigmas associated with this profession. How does stigma affect the personal identity of those involved in this work?

3. Regarding "symbolic redefinition" what are some words associated with their profession that funeral directors avoid in an attempt to avoid negative stigma? What words are used in place of stigmatized words?

4. Describe the three methods funeral directors/morticians use to distance themselves from such a stigmatized role.

5. How does this occupation rely on professionalism to establish its boundaries? Are there elements of professionalism in the occupations associated with your majors? Why is professionalism so important (ie how does it relate to/influence our identity)?

6. Do you agree with what they charge for caskets, vaults ect? They try and defend the mark-up, do you buy it?

7. Think about occupational prestige versus socioeconomic status. How is the right balance between these issues extremely important to mortician/funeral home directors?

8. After reading this article do you have more or less empathy for people in this profession? Do you understand better the impression management involved for these professionals? How so?