

Doctoral Thesis

Culture, Change and The Management of London's Taxi Drivers



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of the requirements of the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This research has been based on my experiences of London taxi drivers, both before I entered the London Taxi Industry, whilst studying to be a London taxi driver and during the thirty years I spent within the industry in a number of roles.

My research has been undertaken in an inductive, broadly ideographic style. The study has been developed through initially narrating my experiences and observations in the industry and then analysing this account reflexively. The material that formed the basis of my narrative account was collected in an ethnographic style. In addition to my narrative account I also referenced the small amount of published material concerning the London taxi industry and interviewed a number of taxi drivers. A significant constraint was the lack of peer reviewed literature concerning taxi drivers and the taxi industry.

Once I had developed my narrative account I then interpreted it in order to better understand the experiences and observations, the institutions and the people within the industry to understand and relate how they react and behave within their environment. The analysis involved deconstruction and interpretation against a framework of relevant literature to facilitate my understanding and assist sense making. I also interpreted the interactions with those outside of the taxi drivers' environment and analysed the persona that journalists and others have constructed that is meant to represent the London Taxi Driver. I considered the identity and characteristics implied by journalists with the prevailing culture and the identity that taxi drivers and the industry sought to portray.

The qualification to become a taxi driver is known as the Knowledge of London. The Knowledge, as it is known in the industry, is recognised as an onerous task and has developed according to many in the industry into a rite of passage. I found that this process, with its rituals and arcane practices, which are accepted consensually by the industry, had a significant effect on the taxi drivers' identity and their status amongst non-taxi driver peers. Taxi driving is considered in working class circles to be at the upper end of a hierarchy of professional driving roles largely due to the achievement of passing the Knowledge of London together with the earning opportunity, perceived job security and flexibility afforded by being one's own boss.

Knowledge of London students and taxi drivers appear to demonstrate common behavioural traits which I have explored in my research. London's taxi drivers appear to fear an assimilation of their role with other lower status driving roles and this fear has a significant effect on any attempts at change within the industry or within its institutions.

The institutions within the industry provided much material for me to consider in the context of their alignment or clash with the culture of the industry. Changes in business processes and some of the institutions' relationships with their taxi driver stakeholders and the challenges to the industry's culture are considered as case studies within my reflexive account.

The contribution to original knowledge is the insight into the culture and identity of London's Taxi Drivers, the behaviours and relationships within the industry both between drivers and the institutions that regulate, represent and benefit from the industry. Taxi drivers' responses to organisational and business process change. Further contributions to original knowledge are provided from the realisation that much of the structure developed within conventional organisations by management has developed organically without management intervention in the taxi industry. Many of the traits of life in offices and factories are likewise present in the London Taxi Industry despite the disparate and virtual nature of the industry and its reliance on consensual adoption of rules and practice rather than managerial influence and formal processes and procedures.

GLOSSARY

As a number of words used in the reflexive account and taxi driver interviews are likely to be unfamiliar to the reader or used in an unfamiliar way a glossary of terms has been provided to make reading the document easier.

The glossary is augmented by a description of the word within the text of the document on the first occasion that the word is used.

Appearance

A colloquial term used amongst Knowledge Students referring to an appointment for a verbal topographical competency (Knowledge of London) test.

Bankers

Questions that are regularly asked by Knowledge of London examiners are termed bankers, i.e. Knowledge Boys can bank on them being asked.

Bilker

A bilker is the industry term for a passenger who absconds without paying the fare.

Blocking

It is rumoured within the industry that Knowledge Boys who have committed minor misdemeanours, turned up late or who have not honoured the rituals of the Public Carriage Office are blocked by the Knowledge of London examiners. Blocking means the Knowledge Boy is delayed from progressing through the Knowledge. This is achieved according to rumours by examiners asking very random or obscure points/questions. (See also holding back)

Blue Book

The Blue Book, which actually has a pink cover, contains 468 lists of journeys. They are set out simply as lists e.g. Manor House Station – Gibson Square. No further information is provided. Knowledge Students are advised by the Public Carriage Office to learn each one of these journeys referred to in the industry as; runs.

Bunce

Industry term for extra, bonus or unexpected income

Bus Routes

This is a description for very straight routes that take place normally during the evening and at night e.g. West End Theatres to Suburban Destinations. Taxi drivers normally undertake these trips using main roads similarly to the routes buses would use.

Cabbing

Driving a taxicab as a vocation.

Circuit

Circuit is the colloquial name for radio taxi companies in the taxi industry

Cockney Rhyming Slang

A type of dialect or phrase construction in the English language which relies on rhyming words and phrases that sound similar to the subject matter. It is widely used amongst people from the East End of London and amongst street traders. Examples are; apples and pears = stairs, saucepan lids = kids, trouble and strife = wife.

Cottoning Up

Knowledge Boys learn the shortest route between two points [Places or landmarks] by placing a length of cotton on a map and tracking the roads that will provide the shortest route between them.

Cover

Fulfil or undertake a radio taxi booking.

Dirty Dozen

Twelve streets that driver memorised to take them through the complex one way systems in Soho.

Double Bubble

At one time London Taxi Drivers accepting a hiring of more than six miles were able to legally negotiate the fare, this was normally double the metered fare hence the colloquial term double bubble

Drives

Industry term for the specialist taxi driving test.

Etiquette

Taxi drivers refer to an etiquette whereby one taxi driver does not take a trip/passenger that rightfully belongs to another driver. The etiquette has evolved apparently by consensus and taxi drivers rigidly abide by it.

Fares

Within the industry fares have two meanings; passengers/customers are frequently referred to as fares; the financial value displayed on the meter is also known as the fare.

Flyers

A word used to describe trips to the airport e.g. I got a flyer today (I got a trip to the airport today) or the airport (I was at the flyers today).

For Hire Light

A yellow light that is fitted into a cowl on the roof of licensed taxis in London. When lit this light indicates that the taxi is available for hire.

Gamification

Developing a business process, procedure or interface into a game or sport. Smartphone apps are often modelled on computer games.

Governor (Often pronounced G'vnor or Guvnor)

The colloquial term for a taxi fleet owner. Fleet owners are typically small companies who hire taxis to taxi drivers in London. Drivers still speak of 'working for' x or y garage or 'my governor' does this or that (normally these comments relate to policy issues e.g. holidays etc).

Historically, although still self-employed, the fleet owner paid the drivers' National Insurance contributions. Due to changes in legislation this is no longer the case. In earlier days fleet owners exercised an element of control over drivers in that it was uncommon for drivers to own their own taxi and so the fleet owner dictated the hours the driver could work. During this period drivers shared their fares with the fleet owner. Today's fleet owners charge a flat rate for the hire of the taxi and it is up to

the taxi driver to make a profit. Fleets today are in effect vehicle rental companies. The influence of fleet owners, within the industry, remains to an extent as their trade organisation; the Licensed Masters and Proprietors' Association (LMCPA) is invited to take part in consultations with regulators, legislators and local authorities.

Holding Back

It is rumoured within the industry that Knowledge Boys who have committed minor misdemeanours, turned up late for an appearance (verbal competency test) or who have not honoured the rituals of the Public Carriage Office are held back by the Knowledge of London examiners. Holding back therefore means the Knowledge Boy is delayed from progressing through the Knowledge. This is achieved according to rumours by examiners asking very random or obscure points/questions. (See also blocking)

Knock Back/Knocking back

Knocking back means a radio despatcher refusing a driver's bid. Knocking back was a sanction when a driver offered a position that was outside of the boundaries of his bid.

Knowledge Boys

Knowledge Students (People studying the Knowledge) are known as Knowledge Boys within the industry regardless of age or gender.

Knowledge of London (The Knowledge)

All aspiring Licensed London Taxi Drivers must pass the vocational qualification known as the Knowledge of London which is sometimes shortened to the Knowledge.

LAGQ

An aide memoir to remind taxi drivers to remember the order of the theatres in Shaftesbury Avenue; Lyric, Apollo, Globe and Queens Theatres

Legal

Licensed London Taxi Drivers refer to passengers/customers who pay only what is displayed on the meter as; legals i.e. they pay only what is legally required.

Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA)

The LTDA is the largest trade association in the taxi industry. Its members are all London licensed taxi drivers.

Limitation

A policy to constraint membership of a radio taxi company to its current size i.e. limit the number of members.

Liver (the Liver)

Shortened name for Liverpool Street Station used by radio taxi drivers to shorten radio transmissions.

London Licensed Taxi Driver

The term London Licensed Taxi Driver relates to a person who has successfully completed the Knowledge of London vocational qualification as is required by the regulatory authority; Transport for London, is medically fit, has a clean criminal record and has been licensed as a taxi driver (see also Taxi Driver).

Masters

The trade nick name for the London Motor Cab Proprietors Association. This is an association of taxi fleet owners who rent vehicles to taxi drivers.

Metropolitan Conditions of Fitness

The technical requirements for vehicles to be licensed as taxis were introduced in May 1906 and updated in 1927, 2002 and 2007. Requirements include ensuring that taxis can turn within a 25 feet circle and that the step into the vehicle is 10 inches from the road. The conditions of fitness, as they are known in the industry, are adopted by many other licensing authorities across the country,

Minicab

Minicab is the colloquial London term for a private hire vehicle. Private hire vehicles can only respond to pre bookings made by telephone i.e. they cannot ply for hire on the street or respond to street hails or form ranks of vehicles available for immediate hire. Typically minicabs are saloon cars or multipurpose vehicles as opposed to the purpose built vehicles driven by taxi drivers.

Musher

A musher is a taxi driver who owns his/her own taxi.

One of Our Own

A common term of endearment or solidarity, implying a distant relative or honorary family member, frequently used in the taxi industry and the East End of London to describe somebody without pretensions. This term was used typically for a person who had done, or frequently did, good deeds in the community

PCN

Parking Contravention Notice/Parking Ticket.

Point

A point is a landmark, building, street or other location at the start or finish of a run/route. A point or points are colloquial terms used by Knowledge Boys as a generic description for the start or finish of a run or route which are used to test a student's topographical knowledge based on verbal competency tests.

Private Hire

The term private hire relates to vehicles and drivers who are licensed under the 1998 Private Hire Licensing Act. The term is also used in other parts of the country and relates to vehicle licensed under the 1976 Miscellaneous Provisions Act. Private Hire vehicles are commonly referred to in London as minicabs.

Public Carriage Office (PCO)

The Public Carriage Office is an administrative centre for the testing and licensing of hackney carriages (Taxis) and taxi drivers and the general administration and regulation of the taxi (and more recently private hire) industry in London. The Public Carriage Office is situated at 15 Penton Street, London N.1. The organisation is often referred to within the industry by the mynomic; '[The] Carriage Office', 'Penton Street' or 'the PCO'.

Public Carriage Office Officers/Examiners

The officers of the Public Carriage Office are responsible for two distinct areas; driver testing (Knowledge of London) and vehicle testing (Annual overhaul).

The Public Carriage Office Examiners are often referred to by Knowledge Boys and drivers by their surnames e.g. Lippet, Finlay et al. Alternatively they are referred to as; PCOs or Public Carriage Officers. In PCO literature they are referred to as Examiners or in the case of the head examiner; the Chief Examiner.

The Public Carriage Office's Officers who inspect the vehicles when they are first licensed and subsequently each year are known as; Brown Coats or White Coats. Those who wear white warehouse coats are supervisors and disputes or borderline cases are referred by the brown coats to them.

Punters

Prospective and actual passengers/customers of London Licensed Taxi Drivers are known colloquially as punters or fares.

Quickie Knowledge

A disparaging sobriquet appended to the attempt by the executives of the radio taxi companies to shorten the time taken to complete the Knowledge of London qualification which met with fierce opposition from the drivers, the trade press and the trade association that represents drivers.

Radio/Radio Circuit/Radio Taxi Company

Groups of taxi drivers have over the years organised themselves into cooperatives that have established and developed radio taxi companies. The phenomenon is often referred to as, radio, within the industry, drivers often ask; are you on radio or on the radio, meaning do you belong to a radio taxi company. Radio taxi companies are also known amongst drivers as; circuits or radio circuits. This possibly relates to the technologies used in the early days of radio taxi operations in London.

Reduction

A reduction is the term used by Knowledge Boys to describe a reduction in the time between appearances [Verbal Knowledge of London competency tests] which signify progress i.e. the shorter the time between appearances the more progress the Knowledge Boy has made. Initially tests are scheduled every 56 days, then they reduce to 28, 21 and 14 day intervals between tests.

Run

A route between two points e.g. Manor House Station to Gibson Square is known amongst Knowledge Boys as a run. Points and runs are the basis of verbal, topographical competency tests which the Public Carriage Office uses to ascertain progress towards the Knowledge of London vocational qualification.

Scrubbed, scrubs

Cancelled radio taxi company bookings

Sharp End

Point or front of a taxi rank – the term sharp end is used by radio taxi drivers.

Shelters

Small green wooden cabins provided by a charity set up by the Earl of Shaftesbury in 1874 to provide cabbies with 'good and wholesome refreshments at moderate prices

Stalking

If a taxi driver agrees a price with a customer and does not use the meter – this is called stalking. When taxi drivers used to split their takings with the fleet owner this practice meant that the taxi driver managed to evade paying the fleet owner for trips that he stalked.

Subscription Fees

Charges payable by a taxi driver to a radio taxi company to belong to or subscribe to the radio taxi company.

Taxi

A taxi is a licensed Hackney Carriage. The vehicles used in London are purpose built for the London market. Taxis are licensed by the Public Carriage Office (See above).

Taxi Driver

Licensed London Taxi Driver. A driver who has been found by the licensing authority (Public Carriage Office) to be a fit and proper person, satisfied the regulator as to his/her topographical knowledge through successfully passing the Knowledge of London vocational qualification and possesses a valid London Taxi Driver's licence (see also Licensed Taxi Driver).

Taxi Driver of the Year

Until recently an annual competition took place to find London's top taxi driver who was subsequently known as the Taxi Driver of the Year.

Tips/Tipping

It is common and arguably traditional to proffer a gratuity to taxi drivers. The payment is often referred to as a tip and the act of giving a tip as tipping.

Wangle

When a Knowledge Boy is ready to take his taxi driving test he practices in an old taxi i.e. an un-plated (or unlicensed) taxi. These old taxis are known as wangle cabs in the industry. When a Knowledge Boy is driving around in one of these taxis he is doing what is called within the industry; wangling.

WASP

The acronym used by Knowledge Boys to remember the order of a set of streets that are used to travel from south to north in Chelsea and that run into one another. (Walpole, Anderson, Sloane and Pelham)

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1. INTRODUCTION

My research is important from many perspectives; it is an original piece of comprehensive research about London taxi drivers, about their life, their work, the personal impact of their training to achieve the vocational qualification known as the Knowledge of London, and their relationships with customers, authority, the industry's institutions and each other. Taxi drivers appear to have a distinct identity which is perpetrated by passengers and journalists and which, in my experience is important to them and has a significant influence on their behaviours, beliefs and values and therefore informs their culture and that of the wider industry.

I was particularly interested in the industry culture, the drivers' motivation and how the management of taxi drivers who join a radio taxi company in effect an organised group of taxi drivers who have to comply with additional rules and protocols, fits or conflicts with the culture of the industry which I found strongly autonomous. I was also interested in how the evolving groups of Knowledge Students and taxi drivers interact and interface with each other and the industry regulator; the Public Carriage Office.

The reason I chose London's taxi drivers as a research subject was because I had spent many years of my career in the taxi industry and had the opportunity to work with, observe and interact with many hundreds of them. It has been these observations, together with material gathered from interviews with taxi drivers and from the trade and popular press that have informed my research. The aims of my research have been to shed light (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1-2, 1995) on an under researched community of people and uncover the complex networks, social structures, career paths and behaviours that contribute to or influence the culture of the industry.

1.1 The London Taxi Industry

London's licensed taxi drivers are the people who operate, what are universally known as London's Black Taxis, which are found plying their trade all over London. I have lived and worked in London for most of my life and have used taxis regularly during that time. The taxi drivers I encountered were always interesting to me as they appeared independent and yet provided what I considered and appeared to be a homogenous service. During every journey each driver appeared to have a story to tell, an opinion to share or used the interaction to narrate the key benefits and differentiators of the taxi industry.

The administration of the Knowledge of London qualification, vehicle testing and regulatory functions of the industry are the responsibility of the Public Carriage Office. I discovered that the Public Carriage Office and its management and staff have a distant relationship with the industry. The Public Carriage Office is apparently considered almost omnipotent by many in the industry with respect to granting drivers' licences and undertaking vehicle testing, both of which can affect the livelihoods of those in the industry, and is both feared and revered by taxi drivers and taxi owners (Garner and Stokoe, 2000).

There has been what is considered amongst taxi drivers and industry observers to be almost revolutionary change in working practices in the industry brought about by the introduction of technology and the emergence of what could be described as management dogmas amongst radio taxi company (see glossary) management

teams which have run counter to the industry's apparently normal consensus based culture. I analysed the transition of one Radio Taxi Company from a cooperative to a corporate entity with particular emphasis on how the business process change was managed against the culture of the industry and the impact of the process of change (see section 5.4). As will be discerned from my research the taxi industry in London has been a hotbed of industrial disputes and action as a consequence of these changes.

London's taxi drivers could be described as a disparate and virtual workforce with their own identity (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994), motivational and management issues. Externally the London taxi industry in general and taxi drivers in particular are apparently viewed with curiosity, affection and amusement (Martin, 2004; Grimshaw, 2005; Craik, 2009, Daisley, 2012). Consideration is given within the research as to whether these images have any similarities with the identity the taxi drivers themselves apparently cultivate.

I have spent most of my working life within the industry initially as a Knowledge of London student, then as a taxi driver, trade journalist, as a committee member of the industry's largest organisation and finally managing London's largest radio taxi company. As I moved from being a passenger to a Knowledge Boy (see glossary) I discovered a whole culture and a complex network of relationships within the industry between Knowledge Boys and Knowledge Boys, Knowledge Boys and the industry's regulator; the Public Carriage Office and Knowledge Boys and taxi drivers. Once I qualified as a taxi driver I became a stakeholder in an even broader network of relationships as I interfaced with the institutions in the industry.

1.2 Aims of the Research

The aim of my research is to fill a vacuum where there is little comprehensive or rigorous research into the people, their social structures, their behaviour, and their relationships with each other and the institutions that make up the London taxi industry. Through my research I wanted to uncover the complex networks, social structures, career paths and behaviours that contribute to, or influence, the culture of the industry.

The ability of taxi drivers to operate an apparently homogenous service within a virtual and disparate workforce group was an area that I wanted to research to establish how, if at all, they organised and managed themselves. I wanted to research how behaviours such as the etiquette (see glossary) which have evolved in order to avoid chaos and a selfish culture (Blau, 1986) developed and became accepted by the majority if indeed they had.

I set out to unearth the day to day motivational factors of individual and groups of taxi drivers and compare their behaviours with the social norms of working in a conventional, contemporary organisational environment (Hatch and Schultz, 1997) e.g. an office, shop or factory. I wanted to investigate the similarities between the procedures and behaviours that are imposed and encouraged by managers amongst workers in classic organisations (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Beynon, 1975) and those that have evolved, apparently organically, amongst London's taxi drivers and how this had happened.

Rich (1997) considers the impact of the many tasks that managers are responsible for on job satisfaction and their effect on performance. These are important issues for my research as London taxi drivers do not have a manager in the normal workplace

sense (Beynon, 1975) from which they may derive job satisfaction. Given that situation my research has sought to establish from where or from whom London taxi drivers derive their job satisfaction (Beynon, 1975).

Further I sought to highlight the conflict that occurred when the management of the radio taxi company in the case studies in section 5.4 tried to exert its managerial will during an organisational change management program which ran counter to the prevailing culture to this self-managed and independent group. Having been a witness to the conflict which appeared to be between the culture of the taxi drivers and the approach that management took in relation to organisational change I was interested to research the issues that apparently offended the drivers' identity of themselves, their place in the industry, their profession, and the perceived impact of organisational change on their identity.

I was not concerned with the change management process per se. My interest was as an observer to see how changes in behaviour, power and the frontiers of control (Watson, 1982) led in some cases to cultural conflict whilst in other cases they were accepted consensually and why this was the case.

1.3 Contribution To Original Knowledge

The contribution to original knowledge from my work will be to provide an insight into the culture of the people who make up the London Taxi industry and how they relate both to each other and the institutions within the industry. My research will also consider the evolution and development of an identity amongst individuals, groups of taxi drivers and to an extent the industry. Further I will provide an insight, as to how and why a disparate and virtual workforce evolves and adopts behaviours that in more classically constructed workplaces managers spend large parts of their professional lives trying to engender and instil into the organisations that they manage. An important contribution will be the importance of culture and identity when management attempt to introduce organisational or working practice changes.

1.4 Research Strategy

My initial research proposal concerned a more general interest in self-employed people who were part of loose formal and informal relationships and groups but bound full time to rules and procedures required or implied by the organisation(s) they were associated with. These groups also had strong ties to their profession as well as the organisations and institutions they were associated with. A key point was that they only derived part of their income from the organisations and institutions they were associated with e.g. Hospital Consultants, Interim Managers, Supply Teachers, Part Time University Lecturers, Management Consultants and Radio Taxi Drivers.

These early research ideas sprang from my familiarity with the business model adopted by London's radio taxi companies who require their drivers to have communications equipment fitted into their taxis, display external advertising logos (something that is not universally popular amongst taxi drivers); pay speculative subscription fees (see glossary), and agree to be bound by rules and procedures that have the potential to adversely affect their preferred working practices, personal independence or autonomy (Scwalbe and Wolkmir, 2001), and commercial returns. These sometimes unpopular requirements are accepted despite, as estimated by Computer Cab's [At the time of my research London's largest radio taxi organisation] management team that only an average 20% of the taxi drivers' income is generated through the association or membership of a radio taxi company. Although there is the

potential for the adverse impacts of the organisation's requirements or policies, particularly at the margins, to be detrimental to drivers, the overall proposition benefits the majority of subscribing taxi drivers either directly; normally in terms of enhanced income, or indirectly through motivational factors, a sense of belonging and/or identification with an organisation or institution (Whetten, 1997) or a worthwhile cause (Blau, 1986).

After some consideration my research topic developed loosely based on the approach suggested by Gill and Johnson (2002, 16-18) who propose that research students consider their research strategy based on the following criteria;

'access [to subjects and data], achievable in [the] time available, symmetry of potential outcomes, student capability and interest and the value and scope of the research'

I decided that narrowing the focus of my research to London's taxi drivers, which includes radio taxi drivers, provided a subject area that I was passionate about, and about which I had already collected significant data in a broadly ethnographic (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), participant observer (Thomas, 2004) tradition. It was a subject that as far as I could ascertain had not been previously researched and was therefore novel (Gill and Pratt, 1986).

1.5 Plan of the Thesis

In Chapter 2 I provide a background to the industry to assist the reader to get an early view of the industry, its external perception and an overview of its institutions.

In Chapter 3 I discuss relevant literature. In Chapter 4 I explain at a detailed level the methodology I employed and the rationale for it, my theoretical approach, and my approach to collecting and narrating my experiences and observations. My research was ideographic and inductive in nature.

Chapter 5 is my reflexive account which was developed from two discrete sources, the first set was my narrative account based on an ethnographic study of my experiences and observations in and around London's taxi industry together with material gathered through a series of interviews with taxi drivers. The second source was from relevant comment in the popular and trade press and material from other publications. A significant constraint was that there was very little peer reviewed literature concerned with the London taxi industry.

My reflexive account includes a significant piece concerning business process changes that were made at the largest radio taxi company (see section 5.5) and how these changes conflicted with the culture of the stakeholders in that radio taxi company. Importantly the relative power and tactics used by drivers to obstruct these changes and the actions taken by the radio taxi company management to move ahead with the business process changes regardless of the obstruction but what is in effect the workforce (the taxi driver members of the radio taxi company) are explored within the context of the culture of the industry as I perceived it through my research.

There is a chronological approach to my reflexive account. The account begins with the background to the industry describing how the industry operates, observations by those within and outside of the industry and its structure and institutions. I go on to give an account of my experience as an observer/passenger, taxi driver applicant, Knowledge student, taxi driver and ultimately radio taxi company manager. In this

section the importance of an informal, albeit widely practiced etiquette (Hooper, 2007:8; Townsend, 2007; Pessok, 2009; Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 (Taxi Driver Interview, 2008)) or code of conduct amongst taxi drivers is analysed.

I go on to explore the perceived importance of the Knowledge of London vocational qualification and its influence on the culture of the industry and its effect on driver identity (Christensen and Cheney, 2000) and self-worth. I have sought to identify why the Knowledge of London is apparently such an important issue for drivers and others within the industry. I have explored what I consider to be an important aspect of the culture of those within the industry namely the relationship between the regulator and the industry. I researched the behaviours and, interactions with one another, the public, the industry and its institutions. I examine the existence of a community and where evidence of this exists how it is manifested. In this section I have shed light on the complex relationships, practices and culture of the industry.

In order to assist the reader to better understand the case studies at the end of section 5 I have analysed one of the important and significant institutions in the industry; the radio taxi companies (see glossary). These organisations provide work to around a third of taxi drivers (Townsend, 2003) and have a significant impact on the organisation and motivation of taxi drivers. Although retaining their self-employed status the radio circuits or companies are the closest that taxi drivers in London get to working for an organisation. The drivers who subscribe to or belong to a radio circuit adopt certain rules and required to operate based on certain protocols. The radio circuits were initiators of substantial business process change some of which ran counter to the industry culture and led to industrial disputes. I use a case study to show how the largest radio taxi company in London sought to manage business process change and how the culture of the industry frustrated their efforts.

The final part of section 5 concerns the management of change within the industry. In this section I analyse a case study concerning industrial relations disputes where attempts were made by an association of radio taxi company Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) to champion changes to the way that the Knowledge of London vocational qualification was administered by the Public Carriage Office (see section 5.2.16) known within the industry by the derogatory term; the Quickie Knowledge, the relative power (Beynon, 1975) of those for and against this change and how the culture of the industry contrasted and conflicted with the explicit managerial desire for efficiency and their implicit desire for power.

In Chapter 6 I consider the aims of my research and present my conclusions and the key themes that have emerged through the development of my narrative account and my analysis. My conclusions consider the managerial aspects of the industry as well as the micro aspects of everyday life (Johnson and Duberley, 2003). The cultural stresses introduced by the macro organisation and their impact on the micro aspects of the offensive and defensive measures employed to both champion and defeat the changes are explained as are the reasons for the perspectives of the stakeholders. In this section I have considered the methodologies that I have used and their effectiveness or otherwise within my research specifically in relation to the development of my narrative account and the analysis. During my research I have identified a number of areas of further research these are identified in section 6. I have established that the taxi industry is touched and touches many stakeholders. Each of these will be influenced by, or will influence part or all of the London taxi industry.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE INDUSTRY

There are 25,000 licensed taxi drivers in London (Public Carriage Office, 2007). The number of licenced drivers has remained fairly static over the last two decades. To become a licensed taxi driver in London prospective candidates are required to satisfy the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, a task now delegated to Transport for London (part of the Mayor of London's administration) that they are fit and proper persons to become licensed taxi drivers (Public Carriage Office, 2007). This legal requirement has been interpreted by the Public Carriage Office as meaning that anyone wishing to become, and indeed remain, a taxi driver must have a clean criminal record, be medically fit, have a detailed topographical knowledge of London and be able to pass a specialist driving test (Public Carriage Office, 2007).

London taxis are purpose built vehicles that have to undergo a strenuous and exacting safety test every year as well as regular quarterly inspections. They are licensed by the Public Carriage Office on an annual basis. Vehicle requirements and fares are effectively set by the Public Carriage Office under powers delegated by the Secretary of State for Transport. Interestingly the mechanics of fare setting involves laying an order on the floor of the House of Commons. The Public Carriage Office has no responsibility for service delivery and no jurisdiction over the number of drivers who are licensed. Its responsibility is to licence applicants who meet the legislative and regulatory requirements and standards.

London's taxi drivers derive their business from ranks at stations, airports and focal points and from street hailing where prospective passengers lift their arm to signify to a taxi that is for hire (i.e. a taxi that has its yellow for hire light illuminated) that they wish to hire it. In addition around one third of taxi drivers belong to one of three radio taxi companies [known in the industry as radio circuits]. Radio taxi companies offer account services to businesses and provide a low priority telephone booking service to the general public. Bookings are allocated to a specific taxi in the vicinity of the pick-up address using increasingly sophisticated computer systems. Drivers pay a weekly subscription charge to belong to the radio taxi company. Account customers pay the fare plus a surcharge, the fare is passed to the driver and the surcharge retained by the radio taxi company. The fare is collected by the driver from passengers who pay cash. The radio taxi companies therefore have two revenue streams; driver subscription charges and customer surcharges.

London's taxi drivers are self-employed. They can buy a taxi or hire one. They can choose to belong to a radio taxi company or not. They can work whatever hours and days and in whatever areas of London they choose (Public Carriage Office, 2007). There is no formal career path within the industry. Length of service does not bestow any explicit or tangible benefits. Drivers often meet a regular group of colleagues in cafes frequented by taxi drivers (Townsend, 2007, Garner and Stokoe, 2000) or in taxi driver shelters (see glossary).

Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 explained that nicknames rather than actual names are a common feature of taxi driver relationships, Townsend (2003) also remarks on this characteristic of these relationships. Taxi drivers have a strict code of conduct known as the taxi driver etiquette. This etiquette is based on the concept of fairness and, if adhered to, ensures that each driver receives the trip that he is fairly entitled to. The concept of drivers not taking each other's trips is a legal requirement within the Hackney Carriage legislation.

The industry has a vibrant trade press through which the issues of the day are debated, obituaries are posted, and letters are published. Much of the press is available free to drivers at stations, in shelters and cafes. There are a small number of trade associations and trade unions within the industry. About one third of taxi drivers belong to a trade association, trade union or radio taxi company (Townsend, 2003). The industry has a strong commitment to charitable activities mainly concerned with underprivileged and disabled children, and ex-servicemen and women.

The main competitors to taxi drivers are minicabs. Minicabs are a mixture of family saloons, multi-purpose vehicles and high end limousine type vehicles. Until recently minicabs were unlicensed and operated for circa forty years through a loophole in the law. Over the last decade legislation (London Private Hire Act, 1998) has been enacted and licensing has gradually been phased in for private hire drivers and vehicles (minicabs) and now all minicabs are licensed. The chief distinctions between private hire vehicles and taxis are; taxis can accept street and rank hiring's; private hire vehicles can only respond to pre bookings (normally made by telephone or more recently the internet or smartphone apps). Private hire drivers can drive a wide range of vehicles whereas taxi drivers can only drive purpose built vehicles that comply with the Metropolitan Conditions of Fitness [A specific regulatory framework that has remained unaltered since 1927].

It is well documented (Garner and Stokoe, 2000; Townsend, 2003) that taxi drivers hate minicab drivers who they view as stealing their business. Taxi drivers also assert that minicab drivers are not properly qualified (i.e. they do not need to complete the onerous Knowledge of London qualification). The belief amongst taxi drivers is that if there were no minicabs there would be more business and therefore more income for what they view as the legitimate licensed taxi industry.

The next section contains references and assertions from sources external to the taxi industry. It is here to provide context and an external viewpoint of the identity and culture of London's taxi drivers i.e. how they are viewed by their service users, fans, detractors, and other stakeholders.

2.1 The External Identity of the Industry

There is very little peer reviewed literature concerning London Taxi Drivers and where it exists it is focused on the cognitive aspects of acquiring the Knowledge of London (Skok, 2000) and the regulatory aspects of the industry internationally (Skok and Kobayashi, 2007).

Garner and Stokoe propose the correct collective noun for taxi drivers is 'a grumble' (2000: 24) a reference to what is described by Martin (2004: 63) as the 'sheer bad-temperedness of cabbies'. Martin (2004: 63) further informs us that;

'among themselves, cabbies refer to business customers as "bowler hats", while they often address their passengers as "governor", with that familiar, fascinating cockney mix of deference and sarcasm (approximately one part deference to nine parts sarcasm)'

This comment is typical of a theme that is apparent amongst journalists and authors to describe London's taxi drivers' public facing demeanour. Grimshaw (2005:19), who is describing a new mobile marketing technology being fitted in some of London

taxi, provides a further example of this when he purports that one of the benefits of the system he is marketing is providing;

'relief for some of London's taxi passengers, stuck in traffic jams and being assailed by their driver's trenchant views on everything from the state of the economy to the decline of Spurs' [A London football team].

This is a fairly facetious and risky comment given that London's taxi drivers will be a key stakeholder in the success or otherwise of the product he is promoting.

Daisley (2012:1) describes taxi drivers and their topographical skills;

'The Black Cab Hobbits are a painfully irascible bunch. Yes they are a noble hoard of self-taught artisans, but - jeez - they can make the *Daily Mail* look life affirmingly cheerful. Black cab drivers' knowledge of the capillaries of London's heart is at times magical to behold'.

Daisley (2012) like Martin (2004) implies that taxi drivers whilst bad tempered or easily prone to temper outbursts provide much more than transport. Daisley (2012) acknowledges and in fact admires their Knowledge of London. Daisley goes on to assess taxi drivers' customer service skills and their psyche towards competitors;

'black cabs have been so used to being the only option that they have been completely cut adrift from any idea of service culture. Better distribution has meant they treated themselves like the only choice in town' Daisley (2012:1).

Daisley (2012) continues his theme when he remarks on the physical construction of taxis in London; 'I'm reassured by the protection afforded to me by the Plastiglass screen [Taxi drivers and their passengers are separated from one another by glass partition]. Like a jail visit on the move'.

The BBC website (2010) also relates its view of taxi drivers' behaviour towards the end of a factual piece explaining a new initiative;

'Black cab drivers across London are learning foreign languages ahead of the 2012 Olympic Games. More than 3,000 drivers for Radio Taxis, one of the city's biggest taxi firms, are being given CDs and MP3s teaching them useful phrases. The scheme, developed by publisher Collins, will teach drivers French, Spanish and Chinese. The company hopes tourists will get a taste of cabbies' colourful trivia and forthright opinions'.

In a similar style The Economist (2002: 60) exerts that London's taxi drivers have an:

'impact on popular opinion that scares politicians stiff. The thought of the city's [London's] 24,000 cabbies bad-mouthing them [Politicians] to several dozen passengers a day has discouraged successive governments from trying to reform the archaic regulations that protect licensed taxis'

Garner and Stokoe (2000) raise the concept of the Knowledge and highlight its value as a quality measure of the drivers' topographical knowledge of London as well as suggesting the existence of a particular culture amongst London's taxi drivers and reinforcing the entertainment aspect of a taxi journey in London;

'London's licensed taxi trade has a culture all of its own. In no other city in the

world can you climb into a cab and be more confident of getting a driver who knows where he is going, nor be certain of hearing so many apocryphal stories on the way' (Garner and Stokoe, 2000:42)

and

'The [London Taxi] drivers are a strangely homogenous group of raconteur chauffeurs; guaranteed to have an opinion on any subject you care to name and as likely to leave you in silence through your journey as they are to claim to have had Naomi Campbell [As a passenger] in their cab the night before'. (Garner and Stokoe, 2000:135)

and

'Next time a cabbie offers you some unwanted advice, cut him a little slack and just agree with him (it is easier in the long run): remember he belongs to a noble profession and be thankful he knows where he is going.' (Garner and Stokoe, 2000:13)



“If times get any harder, I’ll have to start charging for my witty and perceptive opinions on various topical issues of the day.”

(Reproduced with kind permission of www.CartoonStock.com)

Craik (2009:15) takes up the theme of added value. Writing in the Evening Standard [A London newspaper] she offers a sympathetic tone to the impact of the economic slowdown on the taxi industry as well as an insight into the dialogue between passenger and taxi driver and a rationale as to why she continues to take taxis and why she urges others to do so;

‘ “Where have you been all my life” my cab driver cried. After driving around for four hours, he had made £5.20p. As we are swept past Paddington

[Station], I could see why: the number of taxis queuing for the cab rank was enormous. The [For hire] lights were on but everybody was home. And they'd used the tube [The London Underground] to get there.

I do think London cabs are expensive when compared to other cities but I still persist in taking them. Here in the dog days of the recession, when hailing [a taxi] one feels excessive. I've filed the expenditure under a different category in my head: 'entertainment'. Black cabs equal black humour – and £12.50p for a bit of laughter is money well spent.

As well as being funny (sometimes unintentionally), black cab drivers are also fonts of knowledge. Since Christmas alone [The article appeared on the 19th January], I have procured the number of a really good builder, found out where to buy the cheapest bacon sandwich in town (a cab hut [Shelter] in Kensington Park Road – cheers Mark) and been schooled into how to get my daughter into Camden School for Girls (I can't divulge the means, and besides she is only two).

Then there was the journey where the driver started reciting poetry - his own composition, of course. A week later, a self-published book of his poems turned upon my desk at work, and while it was hardly Blake (Actually it was a bit Blakean, but with a dose of William Mc Gonagall thrown in), it was a nice gesture. Yesterday a driver told me that in thirty years of cabbieing [Driving a taxicab as a vocation], his back seat had never been as empty. Support your friendly cabbie before it's too late'

Craik's experiences with a number of London's taxi drivers appear to point to an added value service which she is happy to use herself and also to recommend to her readers. She highlights cost as an issue and yet justifies this to herself as categorising it as entertainment for which she evidently feels willing to pay. This justification is added to through what she appears to view as education in how to cut building costs, get her daughter into her preferred school and finding out where to buy a cheap bacon sandwich. The journey is almost remarked upon as a passing comment indicating that the added value is a more important part of the transaction than merely transport. Her closing comment and description of 'friendly cabbie' (Craik, 2009:15) appears to suggest affection for this band of entertainers, knowledgeable tutors and fundamentally transport providers.

The literature (Garner and Stokoe, 2000; Townsend 2003 and 2007) that appears to seek to describe the identity of, or assert what, a London taxi driver is, and how he or she behaves appears to be full of contradictions. The external perspective of the industry was not a significant aspect of my research but it did provide some contextualisation of the industry. The apparently popular identity of London's taxi drivers cultivated intentionally or accidentally by journalists (Martin 2004; Grimshaw 2005; Craik, 2009) and authors (Garner and Stokoe, 2000; Townsend, 2003 and 2007), appears to position London taxi drivers as a homogeneous tribe of verbose sometimes bad tempered or cheerful and often opinionated individuals with an influence on popular opinion, comprehensive industry specific language and regular use of cockney rhyming slang and an excellent knowledge of London's topography.

Whilst apparently suggesting a broadly common behavioural pattern amongst London's taxi drivers or a common passenger perception which contributes to an accepted folklore amongst feature writers and journalists, contributors appear to provide very diverse accounts, discourse and narrative concerning their experiences

using the Capital's taxis. Evidently without any obvious conspiracy to do so journalists, (Martin 2004; Grimshaw, 2005; Craik, 2009, Daisley, 2012) and authors (Garner and Stokoe, 2000; Townsend 2003 and 2007) have concocted a plausible picture of London's taxi drivers apparently based on a sprinkling of experience, legend, myth (Stacey, 2001) and possibly imagination and arrived at a popular caricature; in effect how the industry and those in it are perceived by others (Aaker, 1996; Argenti, 1998; BBC, 2010). Three common themes that emerge are the value and admiration of the comprehensive topographical knowledge, an apparent influence and nobleness, and an appreciation that taxi drivers provide more than just transport i.e. added value.

The next section explores the identity of the industry and people in it from feedback to the BBC's websites.

2.2 The Public's View of the Industry

The BBC website (1999) describes London taxi drivers in equally colourful language but suggests the concept of a particular though unflattering appearance and a cheerful disposition. The contributor(s) enlarge on Martin's (2004) comments concerning cockney terminology and introduce the issue of a specific taxi driver language along with the concept of the Knowledge which is a colloquialism for the vocational training and qualification process involved with satisfying the regulatory authority, the Public Carriage Office, that a driver has sufficient knowledge of London's streets, hospitals, landmarks, cemeteries, synagogues, hotels, theatres and other venues to be licensed as a London taxi driver.

'They [London's taxi drivers] are operated by incredibly cheerful, yet strange looking men (and very, very occasionally, strange looking women) who tell you, by way of introduction, that the 'rahd's gawn mayd' [Road's gone mad] today. They speak in a mixture of clichés and a dialect called Cockney Rhyming Slang and deliver gems from what they call 'The Knowledge'. This usually involves reactionary commentary on current news events mixed with some very colourful abuse hurled at motorists and pedestrians alike.' (BBC, 2009)

Another BBC website (2004) asked the public to email in their 'best [London] cabbie tales'. Given the nature of the survey it is difficult to ascertain whether the sample was representative of the wider population, whether the sample was unbiased or even representative of the public who use taxis.

There were forty one responses of which nine gave their address as London, seven from outside of the UK and the remainder from within the UK. It would appear that respondents had points to make whether pro or anti taxi drivers and as such it would appear that the sample had some positive or negative bias which they wished to express. The comments were interesting and relevant to my research as I was keen to understand the public's perception of the taxi drivers' identity and contrast this with the taxi drivers' perception. Of the London respondents only one gave a negative response that being from a pedestrian's perspective. All of the London residents' responses were generalised comments or views formed over a period of time. All of the non UK responses were positive, relating stories based on single trips and, notably, one long term relationship with a London taxi driver.

The non-London residents were most critical of London's taxis with just under half relating a tale of poor quality service, high cost or general dissatisfaction at an

individual taxi driver's conduct. These responses support research (Diener and Greysen, 1978) which established that people are more likely to relate bad than good experiences but that most are unlikely to make a formal complaint.

The email responses to the BBC website (2004) describing London's taxi drivers spanned a wide strata of human behaviour; from cheerful to miserable, honest to a rip off, courteous to greedy and unfriendly. The taxi drivers' Knowledge of London appeared not to be in contention and was accepted as being good but two respondents questioned its relevance given that satellite navigation systems appear to work well for private hire drivers. There was much criticism of taxi drivers' behaviour towards other road and street users. Whilst not scientific, or as far as one can establish a representative sample, the responses to the BBC website are so broad and diverse that the apparent journalistic consensus of a common set of behaviours is left in some doubt, albeit there is some corroboration of some aspects of behaviour e.g. the use of an industry specific language and a continuation of the theme that taxi drivers have an excellent Knowledge of London.

2.3 Knowledge of London

To become a Licensed London Taxi Driver a prospective driver must pass the Knowledge of London vocational qualification. The Knowledge of London is acknowledged by taxi drivers (Fisher, 2008a), Public Carriage Officers and many of the public in London as an onerous and difficult qualification to acquire. There is no published curriculum, topographical testing is random and unpredictable and the scoring process is secretive. There is a high dropout rate amongst prospective taxi drivers. This appears to be because of the length of time it takes to complete the Knowledge (Currently three to four years), the lack of a clear understanding as to the progress students are making, the demands of the Knowledge acquisition process which involves many hours per week of driving around London on a small motorbike in all weathers, together with the need to attend a Knowledge School (see glossary) and undertake call overs (see glossary). At a fundamental level the scope, size and scale of the task is enormous.

As well as the physical demands there are personal and financial deprivations and implications; many hours away from family and friends, reduced opportunity to generate additional income through working overtime and incurring the cost of purchasing and running a motorbike and Knowledge School fees. The Knowledge of London has come to be considered within the industry as a character building exercise (see appendix 3) or rite of passage (Taxi Driver Interviewee No.3, Taxi Driver Interviews, 2008) rather than simply the acquisition and demonstration of an adequate topographical knowledge appropriate to drive a taxi. Attempts to speed up the process (see section 5.2.16) have been resolutely rejected by taxi drivers and their representative organisations.

The Knowledge of London was regarded by anyone familiar with the concept from outside of the taxi industry that I raised it with as a very tough almost impossible barrier to entry (Porter, 1980) to the industry. When raised with the taxi drivers who were transporting me, the Knowledge was 'presented rigidly as the unequivocal expression of the organization and is exalted with a degree of reverence that borders on the absurd' (Christensen and Cheney, 2000:249). Taxi drivers that I travelled with as a passenger shook their heads in exasperation or resignation when I asked how tough acquiring the Knowledge had been. Fisher (2008a) explained that; 'you could never believe how tough it is and also how it completely dominates your life'. Garner and Stokoe (2000:62) describe the Knowledge as a 'scar that never leaves you'. I too

found the Knowledge one of the toughest physically and mentally demanding tasks that I have ever been involved in.

The literature directly concerning London taxi drivers tends to focus on the onerous requirements of the qualification to become a licensed taxi driver (the Knowledge of London) and the lessons it provides to those concerned with knowledge management and how the human brain acquires, maintains and accesses knowledge on the scale that London taxi drivers are required to e.g. Skok (2000).

Garner and Stokoe provide some historical context for the Knowledge and why it was introduced;

‘The Knowledge was first introduced in 1851 by Sir Richard Mayne, one of two Police Commissioners appointed to oversee the hackney carriage trade, following complaints by visitors to the Great Exhibition that drivers did not know where they were going’. (2000:62)

Alan Fisher (2008a) a London taxi driver and trade journalist provides an insight into the taxi driver’s view of the Knowledge;

‘The Knowledge is tough. I know some guys that took over four years to complete it. Knowing that you had to go out most days on a small motorbike [to learn or become familiar with the city] regardless of whether it was summer or winter - and winters can be pretty miserable in London - doesn’t exactly cheer you up! But London is a big city, and to become a licensed taxi driver in the U.K. Capital means knowing not just where every one of the 67,544 streets are, together with every building in every one of those streets, but at the drop of a hat [In an instant], how you get from one to another! How do you prepare? You can’t, because you could never believe how tough it is and also how it completely dominates your life. I know several drivers whose marriages or relationships never survived the strain the Knowledge puts you - and those around you - under’.

Despite the onerous demands and deprivations of the Knowledge people continue to choose to become taxi drivers. There is no published research as to the processes that prompt men and women to become London taxi drivers or why they tolerate the apparent deprivations and torturous ritual that is involved in acquiring the Knowledge. Abrahams (2000) explains why a number of Jewish men decided to become London taxi drivers;

‘When we finished our National Service, suddenly we wanted freedom, and taxi driving offered us that freedom, away from the factories, and away from the bosses. We were our own boss, our own entrepreneur’.

I ascertained that many, if not most, taxi drivers have not stayed on at school and continued through to further education. Most drivers that I spoke to about this subject had left school with few if any qualifications often this information was voluntarily supplied in relation to their aspirations for their children or to support expressions of regret about their own education or lack of prospects for a job outside of the taxi industry. Therefore, apart from apprenticeships, for many aspiring taxi drivers the Knowledge may well be the first formal qualification they have achieved. This lack of experience in studying added a further challenge to the Herculean effort that was needed to undertake and pass the Knowledge.

2.4 Market Research

A survey studying taxi availability carried out by IPSOS MORI (2007) but commissioned by the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA) included a section on customer satisfaction (2007:13) that indicated that 'an overwhelming majority of taxi users are satisfied with their taxi trip (92%) and 65% of these are very satisfied'. The survey went on to consider driver attitude and explained that 'the majority of passengers (83%) are satisfied with the attitude of taxi drivers, with only very few (6%) expressing dissatisfaction' (2007:14).

The IPSOS MORI (2007) survey established a claim that '88% of customers interviewed tipped [Proffered a gratuitous payment in addition to the fare] the taxi driver at the end of their journey' (2007:14). Could this reiterate satisfaction levels or simply indicate majority conformance with the tradition of tipping taxi drivers? Given that the tipping transaction is a private matter between taxi driver and customer the claims may also be exaggerated by interviewees to position themselves i.e. the customer as a generous person or someone who respects tradition.

There is some correlation between those claiming to tip and their satisfaction levels which may provide some validation of the tipping habits of those who were interviewed. Hooper(2009:6) writes in his feature article in Taxi Newspaper [the largest circulation taxi trade journal in London] that 'the reality is, whereas probably 80% of punters [The London taxi trade term for customers or passengers] tipped 30 years ago, it's probably closer to 50% (Or less) now'. Hooper could come from the perspective of wishing to understate tipping as leverage for compensatory fare increases. The organisation for which Hooper is an elected executive member, the LTDA, is involved in negotiating the annual fare increase for the taxi industry with Transport for London and he may well wish to minimise the value of tips in order to leverage higher fare increases. Customers could come from the perspective of appearing generous so neither estimate has, in my view, much veracity. Perhaps all one can conclude is that some but not all customers tip taxi drivers.

The survey also asked customers to compare London's taxi drivers with those from elsewhere (2007:15): the results showed that 76% of passengers believed that London's taxi drivers are better than anywhere else.

When compared with 'customer satisfaction amongst London's bus and underground customers where satisfaction levels are between 77% - 78%' (2007:14-15) London's taxi drivers (who scored 92%) appear to be providing a service that is a closer fit to passengers' expectations than other forms of transport although given the more personal and bespoke nature of the taxi service compared to the bus and underground service it is reasonable to expect higher satisfaction levels.

2.5 The Public Carriage Office (Industry Regulator)

The Public Carriage Office is as an administrative licensing function and part of the Mayor of London's corporate domain known as Transport for London, its objectives are set out below;

'The role of the Public Carriage Office (PCO) includes the licensing of taxi and private hire services in London. We are also responsible for:

Reviewing and setting taxi fares

Appointing taxi ranks

Improving travel information

Making services safer and more accessible

Helping the Mayor of London integrate public transport in the Capital'
(Public Carriage Office Website, 2009)

The Public Carriage Office (2007) claims on its web site that 'with 25,000 members, taxi drivers are part of a large family' introducing the concept of a homogenous tribal grouping or at least one that suggests a relationship, similarity or shared heritage, in effect a society of men and woman. Czarniawska (2000:274) comments that 'the creation of a family-like image of organization is but a way of evoking accountability towards an actual community, and not an abstract system'. Watson (1982:261) complains that organisational theorists have 'conceptualized organizations along the lines that managers would like them to be: rational systems. 'teams' or even 'families'. Watson (1982: 261) goes on to lament that adopting this approach 'has meant playing down the uncomfortable realities that managers' responsibilities perhaps should demand that they confront'.

Whether benefiting from the concepts discussed by Czarniawska (2000) or Watson (1982) was formally part of the thinking or intention of the management of the Public Carriage Office in their use of the metaphor family is unknown. The management of the Public Carriage Office may have been attempting to describe their perception of the industry, or as Czarniawska (2000) implies trying to evoke or develop accountability through an actual community or as Watson (1982) intimates to use language as a means of avoiding or not accepting responsibility to confront a management issue.

Alternatively the term family may have had a connotation that the Public Carriage Office Management Team thought would be attractive to prospective drivers. Abrahams (2000), a London Taxi Driver spoke of taxi drivers going on holiday together, an image that conjures up close relationships or even the term family. The image of community or family may have been considered less daunting for prospective taxi drivers than becoming part of a much loved London icon (Malthouse, 2010) and historical institution. The operation of the Public Carriage Office is discussed and analysed further in section 5.2.2 particularly in the content of its relationship with the taxi industry, its rituals and behaviour towards Knowledge Boys (see glossary) and taxi drivers and how the industry interfaces and regards it.

2.6 Identification Through Language

A specific taxi driver language features amongst industry and other journalists accounts of engagements with taxi drivers (Garner and Stokoe, 2000; Pessok, 2006; Jackson, 1999; Martin, 2004; BBC, 1999). Jackson (1999) lists on his website what he describes as 'excerpts from the taxi drivers' lexicon' in effect a number of terms or a language that drivers use in London in place of recognised English. Below are listed a selection of commonly used taxi terminologies;

Selections from the London taxi drivers' lexicon (Jackson, 1999-2005);

Butterboy - newly licensed driver

Clock - taximeter

Cock and Hen - man and woman passenger

Farmer Giles - piles, [Haemorrhoids] an occupational hazard for taxi drivers

Flyer - a fare to Heathrow or Gatwick airport

In and Out - a return journey
Legal - the full fare without tip [i.e. what is legally payable]
Linkman - hotel or club doorman
Mushers - owner drivers
On point - taxi at the front of a rank
Roader - fare outside the Metropolitan Police Area district [i.e. outside London]

(See Glossary for additional industry specific terms)

The letter below is interesting as the driver who uses the term 'Butterboy' and mentions taxi driver etiquette and also refers to the issue of older or longer serving drivers advising younger or newer drivers as to how they should behave (see section 5.3.4).

'Papa don't preach...

I write in response to Mr McEwen's letter, *Bad Manners*, in TAXI 290. For his information, we [newly qualified taxi drivers] are still given a talk on cabbie etiquette on presentation day and I for one stick to it! But he is correct in stating how bad the trade is getting. For example, I was travelling along Park Lane on the inside lane when I was overtaken by another cab, whose badge number started with 68 [Taxi drivers' badge numbers are issued serially so it is possible to approximate how long someone has been a taxi driver by his/her badge number], so he was no butter boy. He then pulled in front of me as I went on to Piccadilly and, you've guessed it, took the next job! I pulled up next to him and asked him what he was up to? He just laughed and basically told me to get lost. I was very angry at this point and a few words were exchanged. He continued to laugh and be very smug and told me that if I carry on like that I'll end up having a heart attack, and then drove off. In the past 15 months, since I got my badge, I've seen more bad drivers on the road sporting older badge numbers. It seems they feel because they've been at it for a few more years they have the right to take a liberty with the butter boys and girls, when they should practice what they preach'. (Taxi Newspaper, 2013)

Pessok (2006:2) in his research amongst readers of Taxi Newspaper claims to have compiled 'a list of expressions and words that have been used in the [London] taxi trade for over 150 years'. How the longevity of these expressions and words has been established by Pessok is not known. Within Pessok's (2006:2) report an attempt at identifying the source of the language is made;

'Roy Cumming, who was in charge of the Royal British Legion Taxi School [A school for Knowledge Students restricted to ex-servicemen or servicemen's dependents] for many years before he retired, Mr Cumming explained that cab-talk is a lingua franca (a hybrid language) of Cockney, back-slang, rhyming slang, Yiddish and jargon from horseracing and market traders'.

Pessok goes on to report that Cumming expressed concern that the taxi driver language is gradually disappearing, a trend which he laments. How Cumming has established that the language is disappearing is not known and neither is it clear why he is perturbed by its disappearance if indeed it is happening. If it is the case the greater diversity amongst taxi drivers in London may be a contributory factor. Pessok's research identified 229 specific words or expressions used or being used by London taxi drivers.

Garner and Stokoe (2000) devote a chapter of their book; *Taxi!* to what they term 'The Language' (Garner and Stokoe, 2000:71). It is apparent from Garner and Stokoe's (2000) accounts (See below) that the provenance of the taxi driver

language is not reliable. Garner and Stokoe (2000:71) provide amusing interpretations by anonymous taxi drivers of a number of the terms that are commonly used by taxi drivers in London;

'We call the new boys [newly qualified taxi drivers] butter boys. That's because they are taking the bread and butter from the older [longer serving] drivers. Or maybe it is because they've got the bread but not the butter. I am making this up you know. I should get it authenticated; I'm prone to tell lies – like all cab drivers' (Garner and Stokoe, 2000:78)

'The kipper season [Quiet or flat season] is January, February and March when the game [Business levels] is very quiet. It's the kipper season because we are so poor we can only have kippers for tea. Or perhaps it's because we are kipping [Sleeping] rather than working' (Garner and Stokoe, 2000:86)

The issue of what is described above as lies is returned later in the study albeit in less judgemental terms. An oral tradition of storytelling and exaggeration do seem to be a theme amongst many taxi drivers in London. The acceptance of and use of industry specific terms and words appears to be widely practiced and appears to demonstrate a familiarity with the industry and to be part of its culture.

3. LITERATURE DISCUSSION

This section is intended to provide an insight into some of the literature I have referenced and that has influenced my research. It will also provide an insight into my perspective of the literature. I have chosen what I consider to be the three most important themes within my research namely; Culture, the Management of Organisational Change and Identity.

The aims of my research are to provide an insight into the people, their social structures, their behaviour, and their relationships with each other and the institutions that make up the London taxi industry. Underlying these areas are complex networks, social structures, career paths and behaviours that contribute to, or influence, the culture of the industry. Through my research I am keen to highlight the conflict and its causes that occurred when the management of a radio taxi company that tried to exert its managerial will during an organisational change management program which ran counter to the prevailing culture to this self-managed and independent group. My research is not concerned with the change management process per se. My interest was as an observer to see how changes in behaviour, power and the frontiers of control lead, in some cases, to cultural conflict whilst in other cases where they appeared to be accepted consensually why this was the case.

To realise my research aims culture and identity are important areas to analyse and interpret. The conflict, and on other occasions alignment, with the management's approach to organisational change appear to be directly connected to culture and identity. I have reviewed and discussed the relevant literature in the sections below both at a broad level but also in relation to my specific research.

3.1 Culture

The term culture, its meanings and its relationship with ethnography are widely discussed and debated in the literature.

McDonald and Foster describe culture as 'the shared meanings, priorities and practices of a group' (2013: 340). Watson (1999:112) discusses culture at a broader level than meanings, priorities and practices and proposes that;

'Cultures manifest themselves in the behaviours that follow from them, of course, and they are also transmitted through artefacts ranging from the clothing people wear to the layout and decoration of the buildings in which they work'.

McDonald and Foster (2013) appear to view culture in an almost mechanistic form. Whereas Watson extends this somewhat narrow view to encompass the physical environment and adds some historical context. Both appear to suggest that culture in some ways lead to convention, acceptance of a set of unwritten rules and compliance. This apparently tidy and agreeable view of culture does not fit with the conflict amongst certain cultures which encourage divergence, disagreement and challenge to the status quo. Likewise whilst people may adopt certain norms such as wearing the same type of clothing or share views on priorities these do not in my view necessarily signify a culture. For example the police may wear the same uniform and share the view that they wish to stop or prevent crime but within the force there will be multiple cultures at different levels and many sub cultures. Trying

to develop a simple view of culture is in my opinion impossible as it is complex, multi-faceted, constantly changing and far from stable.

Schein describes culture as;

‘the patterns of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems’. (1985: 9)

I believe that what Schein has omitted is that new members of a group may not be simply passive and recipient to the prevailing culture or even many of the sub cultures that will exist. Culture will change, adapt and develop as the groups’ constituents change. The changes may not just be physical or restricted to personnel changes but changes in perspective and framing brought about by age, life experience and many other factors and emotions. What Schein describes could be seen as discussed by Fook and Watson (1992) below as attempts by the incumbent group members to establish an official culture.

Fook and Watson (1992) and Watson (1999) introduce the concept of an official and unofficial culture. The official culture is described by them as the culture that management aspire to for the organisation. Whereas the unofficial culture is considered to be the culture that is actually exists within the organisation. Watson (1999:114) asserts that the official culture is ‘the system of meanings, values and norms espoused by the managerial dominant coalition’. Watson (1999:114) argues that for long term survival and cooperation that there needs to be ‘not too great a gap between the official and unofficial cultures of the organisation; between the managerially espoused and the actually prevailing set of meanings, values and norms’. A wide or widening gap between the official and unofficial culture would it is suggested lead to a lack of cooperation, meanings and values amongst the management and the rest of the organisation leading to stresses and lack of cohesion. This concept is similar to my views in that I believe based on my experience that there is often an official and unofficial culture that develops in groups. I am not convinced that the official culture necessarily has to be espoused by management as groups are quite capable of developing an official culture i.e. a culture that the group believes its members should aspire to whilst practicing, at least at times. An unofficial culture could be a less desirable or unattractive culture but still attractive to the group’s members but may not necessarily be socially acceptable.

Thomas usefully explores culture in relation to ethnographic studies; ‘ethnographic studies have become more common in management research’ and tend to focus on three topics ‘organizational cultures, organizational processes and organizational employee groups’ (2004:135). Thomas (2004:133) adds that ethnography is about ‘describing and understanding unfamiliar cultures and ways of life’. I largely accept this view of ethnography but I take issue with the term organizational cultures. I believe that cultures and sub cultures develop within groups or among disparate workforces which may be viewed as mini organisations.

In summary what is clear from the literature is that there is no overarching description that can sum up what culture is, how it is formed and developed, and the argument remains in a chicken and egg style conundrum as to whether culture is something we influence or something we are influenced by. Overall I believe culture to be an unstable, ever changing and complex phenomenon which may well be adopted by

some at a high level enabling a concept of an official culture to be perceived. I also believe that underneath the veneer of an official culture there are sub cultures and unofficial cultures and these are influenced, changed, constantly reassessed and renegotiated by existing group members, new members and external forces and influences.

The next section reviews the literature concerned with organisational, corporate, individual and group identity and its relationship with culture.

3.2 Identity

Before I even embarked upon my research it was clear to me that identity would become an important theme in my research. Schultz et al (2002) introduce the concepts of corporate and organisational identity which they describe as 'addressing the same phenomenon even though they do so from different perspectives' (2002:3) which they link to image and culture. Hatch and Scultz (2000) discuss the concept of identification with the organisation where they stress that a key issue is the interrelationship between personal and social aspects of identity construction. Hatch and Schultz (2000:15) refer to this concept as 'who we are' and 'what we stand for' and presumably how our beliefs about who we are and what we stand for aligns or not with the organisation we are associated with. Schultz et al explain that;

'In general, the concept of organizational identity refers to how organizational members perceive and understand 'who are we' and/or 'what we stand for' as an organization' (2002:4)

Within my research the concept of an organisation is much looser and less defined than is implied by Schultz et al (2002). Therefore the concept of an organisation existing in some physical way is not helpful. However even in a virtual organisation constituted of disparate groups with few common traits the concept of who we are and what we stand for (Schultz et al) is questioned through the trade press, amongst groups and even by individuals.

Corporate identity as proposed by Schultz appears to be an aspiration probably promoted by management as an official culture (Watson, 1999) whereas organisational identity appears to be based on the members of the organisation's critical view of their behaviour, values, ethics, and ethos. I would further propose that there is an evaluation of the organisation against the culture of those within the organisation where it would be difficult to align the organisation's identity with the members' identity as they see it unless there was a strong cultural fit. Culture and identity are certainly in my view entwined and almost reliant on one another. Culture being about what we do and how we do it, what we might describe as the inputs whereas identity is much more about a representation of culture almost the outcome.

Albert and Whetten proposed that organizational identity is;

'a particular kind of question. The question, 'what kind of organisation is this?' refers to features that are arguably core, distinctive, and enduring and reveal the identity of the organisation' (1985:292)

There appears to be a belief in a concept of an explicit test to identify the identity of an organisation although Albert and Whetten do not appear to highlight a great importance to alignment of personal and corporate or organisational identity. Albert

and Whetten seem wedded to the concept of a physical organisation rather than informal groupings with loose tie relationships.

Fombrun and Rindova (2000:95) note that;

'the projection of an organizational identity can be unintentional, (e.g. communicated through everyday behaviour, gestures, appearance, and attitude)'.

Hatch (2000:25) draws links between organisational identity, cultural assumptions and values;

'identity involves how we define and experience ourselves and this [is] partly influenced by our activities and beliefs, which are grounded in and interpreted using cultural assumptions and values'

Hatch's (2000) description of the impact of culture I believe encompasses some very important concepts that are worthy of further discussion. The question of whether culture develops amongst groups or influences group culture is a fundamental issue. I can accept that the activities, beliefs and values of a group will impact the development of a group's culture but I cannot agree that culture is simply something that is adopted by new entrants to groups. Culture is not a stable state concept in my view but more of a developing and changing collection of influences. Hatch's (2000) views on identity do align with mine in that we define ourselves through a range of tools and interfaces and clearly our culture, our activities and our beliefs will influence how we develop our identity. I believe that organisational identity and how we formulate, make sense of and describe it are also influenced to a large degree by our a priori, our culture, our activities and our beliefs.

Hatch and Schultz (2000:19) continue the theme of projecting organisational identity as they propose that 'communication of organizational identity to external stakeholders therefore requires opportunities for personal interaction with them'. The theme of personal identity is described by Scwalbe and Wolkomir as what they term 'strategically crafted accounts' (2001:213) of individuals' lives and actions. Stacey describes how 'identities are constructed in the process of interaction between people' (2001:37). Stacey's arguments appears less reliant on the existence of the physical constructions of organisations and much more aligned with informal networks which is more aligned with my research subject.

Watson links identity to culture with his assertion that;

'we all work on our identities all of the time: making meaning through a dialogue with the culture (or cultures, in so far as we are parts of several groups), its norms, values and symbols. Through our actions we are contributing to culture as well as taking from it' (Watson, 1994:21)

Watson (1982) goes on raise the important contribution of language rhetoric, knowledge, and ideology all of which are used both at an organisational and individual level to develop identity.

In summary much of the prevailing literature appears to consider identity through the frame of physical organisations or corporate bodies and the alignment of a formal culture establish a corporate or organisational identity against which personal identity is considered. This very tidy approach to management, personal identity,

organisational identity and culture is in my view improbable. Identity is complex and multi-faceted and changes frequently. I agree with the literature that suggests that personal identity and potentially corporate identity are not stable state concepts as they are continuously renegotiated and strategically crafted. The overall concept suggests a continually changing set of criteria influenced by personal interactions, culture, strategy, beliefs and values, external influences, ambition and aspiration. Stacey's (2001) view that identities are constructed through interaction between people together with Watson's (1994) assertion that we all work on our identities all the time underlines in my view the influences and flux within which identity formulation develops. Corporate or organisational identity appears to be much less organic than personal identity and much more aspirational. In a virtual organisation constituted of disparate groups it is difficult to understand how identity at anything other than a personal level can develop and if this can happen apparently organically and without management intervention simply through Stacey's thesis of identities being created through interaction between people.

There is a lack of literature that considers the ephemeral nature of virtual organisations and its impact on the already unstable concept of identity both individual and organisational. The earlier review of the public's view of the taxi industry (see sections 2.2. and 2.4 above) which was largely around the identity that is presented by the industry highlights that virtual organisations are capable of projecting an identity at both an individual and organisational level. My research will add significantly to this body of knowledge.

In the next section I explore how organisational change and change management evolved and have developed from a largely scientific management and engineering perspective over which management exercised considerable control to a contemporary situation where change relies far more on championing change and encouraging buy in amongst stakeholders. My research includes a small number of important organisational change case studies and examines how these were managed in relation to culture and identity.

3.3 Management and Organisational Change

Although my research is not based on organisational change or change management per se a small number of important organisational change case studies have been used in my research to highlight various aspects of the conflict between the prevailing culture amongst radio taxi drivers, their identity with the industry, their profession, the institutions within the industry and how these conflicted and aligned with management's organisational change practice within one radio taxi company.

I have explored how organisational change and change management literature and thinking has evolved over time and explored and discussed the background to this. My research explores how culture influenced those who sought to champion and those who sought to resist organisational change and the strategies, tactics, rationale and rhetoric that they adopted. Much of the literature below apparently springs from the pretext that change is inevitable which I consider a somewhat modernist proposition from the basis that systems and organisations are stable organisms where change is a tidy process that can be replicated regardless of the environment, the history, the culture and the identity of the business. My perspective is that a modernist approach can frequently focus on the hard factors with little consideration of the soft issues. My belief is that focus on the soft factors can make a bad change into a good one where as an overly modernist approach can have the opposite effect.

My view is that a modernist position falls down where a culture of consensual retention of the status quo exists as this runs counter to the apparent consensus and impetus for constant organisational change within so much of the literature.

Strickland and Thompson assert that;

‘the need to understand change as a phenomenon is becoming increasingly important and that [the] capability to manage change is not as effective as it should be’ (1998:9)

Although somewhat removed from the prevailing contemporary paradigm amongst organisational change literature Strickland and Thompson’s assertion that change can be managed is an interesting concept. This stance conflicts with proponents of managers having to adapt to change rather than it being an organised, mechanical activity or process e.g. Hays, (2002), Stacey (2001). No doubt some change can be managed based on a mechanical process but I would assert such change is unusual and only effective in a very special and often extreme circumstances. It is also arguable how much formally implemented change actually becomes ingrained and effective in organisations.

Strickland and Thompson (1998) are not alone in their belief that change can be managed. Burnes goes further in his view that change is inevitable (Burnes; 2004). Burnes explains that;

‘change is a constant feature of organisational life and the ability to manage it is seen as a core competence of successful organisations’ (2004:1).

Whether change management should be viewed as a core competence or the ability to cope with or adapt to change, is a question that I feel worthy of consideration. If we accept the proposition that change(s) continues to happen at many levels can we manage that change(s) in a mechanical, procedural way or is planning for adaption, and a more flexible approach to strategy, really the way forward for organisations? Burnes appears wedded to the concept of being ‘in charge’ (Burnes, 2004:1) of change;

‘those in charge of planning the change program (change strategists) and those employees who receive the impact of the change program (change receptors)’ (2004:1).

There are clear examples of this apparently polarised concept of deliberate or planned change in the organisational change case studies within my research. The case studies appear to emanate from a scientific management or positivist approach to operations management whereby there is a single best way. Burnes’ consideration of the impact of organisational change and how it is received, accepted and its effect at different levels of an organisation is an important aspect of change.

Various schools of thought exist about organisational change; Hiatt and Creasey (2003) argue that they stem from two disciplines i.e. engineering/mechanical and psychological. Indeed Hiatt and Creasey (2003) posit that;

‘to understand change management as we know it today, you need to consider two converging and predominant fields of thought: an engineer’s approach to improving business performance and a psychologist’s approach to managing the human-side of change’.

This appears to be a somewhat restricted, positivist view of organisational change that ignores continuous incremental improvement, environmental influence, competitive discontinuities or even evolving and/or informal change processes. Despite the limitations of the proposition it has some similarities with the case studies considered within my research as they appear to have been considered from a single dimension amongst both proponents (engineer's approach) and opponents (human side) of the organisational changes.

Mills et al (2009) argue that early management theories were effectively early theories of change management with a goal of restructuring the way work was designed and executed. These early attempts to manage and organise work were not given the label change management or organisational change but that does not misconstrue their appearance as examples of change management and almost certainly examples of organisational change. The historical context of organisational change appears to suggest that management had more control about how their business was managed than appears to be the case today. This is not the subject of this piece of research but I have some sympathy with the proposition as the human aspect of change in the early part of the last century would have been less important and the engineering aspects would have been heightened in importance. This paradigm is of course is very different in contemporary organisations and counter to today's prevalent organisational culture of engagement and consultation (Burnes, 2009).

Similar to Strickland and Thompson (1998), Hiatt and Creasey (2003) assert that our understanding of organisational change has been shaped by the classical or scientific management, human relations and contingency theory schools of thought. Burnes, (2009) also appears to agree with this concept. Strickland and Thompson (1998) examine the correlation between organisational change and scientific management further. They point out that scientific management advocates viewed organisations as rational and scientific entities where workers were solely motivated by financial reward which can be adjusted to improve productivity and thereby business performance. Strickland and Thompson (1998) remind us that scientific management advocates believed that jobs should be designed in such a way as to minimise an individual's skill and discretion and to maximise management control.

The scientific management school of thought did not take into account external factors that could affect performance it was very much inward looking and viewed change as 'an internal planned affair driven by a unitary world view focused on the rational mechanical nature of work at the operational level' (Strickland and Thompson, 1998:31). This very tidy view of organisational change is almost certainly a time based phenomenon and its relevance to modern business thinking is in my view almost negligible. The change management case studies in my research are clear examples of the conflict between a polarised scientific management school type focus and the human relations movement which is discussed below.

As a consequence of the perceived unpopularity of the scientific management school by the workforces impacted by it the human relations movement came about whose main advocate, Elton Mayo, renowned for his Hawthorne experiments (Mayo, 1933) placed emphasis on the human needs and the psychological aspects of work. The human relations movement subscribed to the idea that improved productivity can be achieved by creating an environment which catered for the emotional and psychological needs of workers. This involved not only improving the ambience of work areas but also introducing the use of soft skills by managers. Burnes (2009)

points to Mayo's theory that workers have to be involved in change if it is to be successful. The question of success is perhaps not as black and white as Burnes implies, as I would argue that success will be measured from different perspectives in any organisational change process and the potential for diverse and conflicting views is significant.

Although there is an obvious difference in approach between scientific management and the human relations movement both share some common traits Mills et al (2009:27) conclude that 'both approaches lacked clear guidelines for implementation in a variety of situations' and failed to explore other means of resolving problems. Advocates of contingency theory apparently believed 'that an organisation's operation and structure was contingent upon specific internal and external variables namely, organisational size, environment and relevant technology'. (Strickland and Thompson, 1998:32). This list seems somewhat short and omits what I feel are important issues such as structure, ownership, workforce perception of themselves e.g. knowledge workers, instrumental workers etc, stage of business development, readiness for change, strategic objectives, competitive position, product lifecycle, location, culture and employed vs. a sub contracted workforce.

Burnes concluded that because of the factors above, plus I would suggest many others (e.g. availability of technology, funding, capacity constraints and demands), organisations would be faced with non-identical problems which would require different solutions making the point that rather than have a 'one best way' (2009:29) approach to managing change in all organisations it was better to have a 'one best way' (2009:29) approach for each individual organisation. I struggle with this very tidy perhaps even twee approach to what is arguably one of the toughest demands of management i.e. delivering organisational and/or business process change as in any organisation the types of change will vary significantly as will those who are involved in the change as will the level of control and which stakeholders have most influence or control. I would assert that cultures can be different in different business units, in different departments and that sub cultures can exist within even small departments. My belief is that change is both messy and painful and attempts to introduce change without giving due consideration to the messy and painful aspects of change, the type of organisation, as well as the relative strengths of the workforce and management could lead to conflict and obstruction. Burnes' conclusion also assumes that management control all change, a positivist perspective, and yet contingency theory practitioners and modernists may struggle to adopt this assumption.

Strickland and Thompson, (1998) support my argument to an extent when they highlight Burnes' failure to acknowledge environmental change dynamics as well as its mechanistic approach to implementing change. I believe that even this broader perspective is unnecessarily and unhelpfully limited.

Banford and Daniel, (2005:392) make the point that the planned approach 'views organisational change as a process that moves from one 'fixed state' to another through a series of pre-planned steps' e.g. the unfreeze, change, freeze model (Schein and Lewin, 1987). Hays, (2002) argues that:

'this school of thought assumes that change strategies are intentional and rational processes, that rely on analysis, forecasting and planning, thus resulting in the logical and rational implementation of change within the organisation'.

This suggests that planning and executing change in this way is part of a well thought through management strategy. Burke (2008:123) describes planned change as 'a deliberate, conscious decision to improve the organisation in some manner or perhaps to change the system in a deeper, more fundamental way'. Once again this apparently privileged view of what is good and what is not appears narrow and unhelpful in change management programs where many stakeholders are likely to be impacted and each will have a view as to whether the changes will improve the organisation or whether changing the system in a deeper or more fundamental way is good or bad for them.

Burnes, (2009:328) asserts that the use of the term 'planned' should not be taken in its literal sense i.e. a group of people purposefully working out in advance details of how and when changes should be made; he clarifies that organisation wide assessments are made to ascertain which areas of the business requires change and once such areas were identified a plan would be put in place to manage the change process in order to achieve the desired objective. Change in this sense is clearly different from change that would occur as a consequence of unplanned events such as accidents, competitive pressures or disruption, and compliance or governance issues or governmental, legislative or regulatory interventions. Burnes (2009) posits that planned change is closely associated with Organisational Development and forms the centre piece of the practice. Burke (2008:41) describes Organisational Development as 'an approach to organisation change based on applied behavioural science steeped in the theoretical tradition of applied social psychology' which appears to be closely associated with the work of Lewin. Mills et al (2009:50) conclude that 'the [Organisational Development] field focuses on people, organisations and planned change with a clear commitment to the human factor and organisational effectiveness'.

My view of the literature is that not enough credence is given to what I would term the change landscape and the multiple views and perspectives that are awoken by any change particularly organisational change. It is interesting that the change management and organisational change community appear to see change as a top down activity. Amongst the earlier literature the ethos appears to be that management know best and that change is good. Little real emphasis appears to be placed by them on alternatives to change. Even more recently change has achieved almost a beatification as a management tool. It is possibly viewed as a convenient alternative to improving management of the status quo. I would also observe that the lack of concern and consideration given to the environment within which change will take place contributes to the poor record of change within many high profile projects. In my view the human perspective needs to be very carefully considered in any change program so that there is an understanding of the need for the change and any opportunity to develop change champions is grasped. It is also important that as many risks and options are gathered and considered by those championing the change as possible and these are just not categorised or considered as negative inputs or obstacles to change.

In summary change appears to be an unquestioned facet of business/management life with challenges to change often viewed negatively. Change appears to be viewed as inevitable by much of the literature, as an expected management activity and in many cases as an area where management have and can exercise control. The alternatives to change seem to be considered rarely as do the wider implications of change. Sudden, reactive change does not feature widely in the literature and assumptions about the lack of control in many change situations are not considered in any depth other than by Stacey (2001). Stacey's rather disarming and possibly

alarming views on allowing people to simply get on with the job in the way they think best does not have much cohesion in the management literature concerning organisational change.

My own view of organisational change is that the human dimension is paramount to achieving a successful change and is an area that needs considerably more focus than the literature suggests. Likewise I believe that history, culture, structure, ownership and other less tangible issues should feature much more in the planning stages of organisational change. Sudden and responsive change is an area where different tactics are needed to planned, top down changes and it is my view that within a tactical change environment management can and probably should take a more strident and directive approach. My view is that currently management are operating counter to this logic which is why many organisational change management projects are unsuccessful. These important considerations are very relevant to the case studies within my research.

3.4 Organisational Definition

I had originally termed the mass of London's taxi drivers as a virtual organisation throughout my dissertation. The term virtual organisation was challenging as it has been used within the mainstream literature as a label for organisations such as Amazon and Ebay (Baroudi, 1994, Malhotra, 2000, Mowshowitz, 1997, Nohria and Berkley, 1994). Whilst I accept its common usage I would argue that this is an erroneous definition as these organisations physically exist. These organisations may well conduct their business virtually but it is possible to visit their offices physically and to speak to their employees. They conduct businesses from warehouses and file accounts as organisations. My view is that they are web based companies who conduct their business on-line and that the term virtual has been used to set them apart from traditional traders who operate from high street shops. Hinds and Kiesler, 1995 talk of ICT based organisation forms which I believe is a more accurate description of Ebay and Amazon type organisations.

The level of virtuality achieved by the taxi industry leaves ICT based companies such as Ebay, Amazon and Google appearing to be relatively classic organisations (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Beynon, 1975) that manage their businesses within the strictures and systems adopted by most large organisations albeit they present themselves as less formal, less orderly and offering their employees and customers more freedom and choice than their longer established peers. Virgin has to an extent attempted to do the same with its airline which presents itself as young, trendy and informal yet behind the thin veneer presented to its customers it is very much an airline with all the normal safety, procedural and classic organisational structures in place that are common amongst its peer group.

The taxi industry has no such veneer. It does not need to disguise the classic systems and controls of any peer group(s) as they simply do not exist. The organisation is formed from a disparate workforce who have evolved their own rules which are practiced voluntarily and consensually and together they have co-created their own culture, identity and to a great extent their modus operandi. I would propose that the mainstream literature has been somewhat indulgent and possibly misled or overawed by the veneer of newer retailers and knowledge management companies who because of selling their wares on-line have positioned themselves as fundamentally different to their peer group. The taxi driver community makes no such claims but is clearly an organisation that operates virtually within a well-defined framework but without any of the constraints, systems, processes and controls of

classic business structures. It is what Stacey describes as a loose set of complex responsive processes (2001).

I would term the mass of London's taxi drivers as an organisation due to the way they have organised themselves into a workforce, a community, instigated training and self-help, set up processes and rules and procedures. In effect a group, that has co-created an organisational entity that is truly virtual but certainly not contemporary (Hatch and Schultz, 1997). Taxi drivers operate in what I have termed a Framework Organisation. I have derived this term from the concept of framework contracts which are normally evolved from a formal tender process. The tender process seeks to identify suppliers who meet certain minimum criteria and can prove that they can deliver the product or service with a high degree of homogeneity. London's taxi drivers operate within a framework organisation; they have applied, completed the qualifying requirements (the Knowledge) to be included in the framework and provide services to the organisation's customers and participate informally in many of the functions and practice of more contemporary organisations whilst managing to do so without any of the trappings, procedures, buildings and organisation encumbrances of more contemporary organisations.

My definition of the taxi industry as a framework organisation is based on my research which found some 25,000 people operating completely independently of each other whilst appearing to be part of a single organisation or entity by virtue of the homogeneity of the service they provide, the key messages they communicate, the uniformity of the rituals they participate in, the rules they have evolved e.g. the driver etiquette, the co-creation of their identity and culture and the social structures and hierarchy that they have developed and within which they operate. They have no employees nor do they file accounts for the industry – they are free spirits who nonetheless operate within a framework to create what can only be described as an organisation.

Within the taxi industry (radio taxi companies, vehicles, ancillary suppliers, regulators) there are many bricks and mortar and, what the literature describes as, virtual organisations. These organisations don't in my research deflect from the phenomenon that the mass of taxi drivers have evolved practices which have formed them into a framework organisation. This framework organisation clearly interacts and interfaces with many other, more classic organisations within which taxi drivers choose to participate or not.

Wenger (1998) introduces the concept of informal work units which interact with both formal and informal work units. Taxi drivers would be difficult to describe as work units as they are very clearly individuals operating within a framework of regulation, custom and practice. Arguably taxi drivers who belong to radio taxi companies may just about fit Krachardt's (1994) concept of participants and non-participants as those that subscribe are certainly participants whereas taxi drivers who don't subscribe to such organisations are clearly non participants. However I would determine that even groups of radio taxi drivers are quite some way from being determined as a work unit given their freedom to take business from ranks, street hailing and/or their radio taxi company.

I believe it is useful to compare taxi drivers to professional organisations e.g. doctors, barristers, accountants, who have written codes of conduct and form themselves into a professional elite (Stacey, 2001). Similarly to taxi drivers they attempt to create hierarchies amongst their members, to set standards of behaviour, of practice and to co-create identity and culture and likewise develop into a professional elite. The Bar

is an organisation but much of what they do, what they expect of each other is conducted virtually. Promotion and recognition is often given through almost ephemeral observations, rumours, and stories. Yes they all have to pass formal exams, not dissimilar to taxi drivers, but after that their careers are driven by their success, their reputation, their observance and consensual acceptance of the hierarchies within the professional organisations they belong to.

Hemingway and Breu (2003) stress the transition from traditional to virtualised organisations and work units. The taxi industry has been engaged in no such transition. The work practices appear to have changed little over the three hundred years that they have been operating in London save the substitution of internal combustion engines for horses and the introduction of radio in the mid-fifties. Arguably the recent establishment of organisations such as Uber and Hailo who provide applications (apps) for both customers and taxi drivers to communicate has added what the main literature defines as a level of virtualisation to the taxi industry. I have therefore defined the taxi industry as a framework organisation throughout my dissertation.

4 METHODOLOGY

The research topic I have chosen is an under researched subject that can contribute significantly to understanding how socio systems and processes develop organically i.e. without formal organisational and management structures, processes and procedures or any explicit leadership amongst a self-employed, virtual and disparate workforce. I considered that it was important that my research was much more than an autobiographical or auto ethnographic (Hammersley and Atkinson1995) account of my personal history in the industry and that as far as possible the researched were at the centre rather than the researcher.

Due to the apparent lack of any previous comprehensive formal research into the London taxi industry, its drivers, social structures and institutions my work should be considered an early and hopefully nascent enquiry into the industry. I am keen through an ethnographic approach to shed light (Hammersley and Atkinson1995: 1-2) on its society, values, beliefs, communication channels and culture and how these conflicted with attempts to change business processes and institutional structures in the industry. Stacey encompasses much of what I sought to identify and interpret during my research;

'knowledge is created in the stories a community of practitioners tell each other. Looked at in this way, knowledge is embedded in the ordinary, everyday conversation between people. It is primarily localized and contextual, distributed through an organization rather than centralized in data banks, and embedded in the stories people tell each other about their experience, stories that interactively create their experience. Socially constructed views of this kind also stress power differentials and politics in organizations'. (2001:36)

The methodology I have adopted for my research is qualitative and inductive. The main body of material consists of a significant and comprehensive ethnographic study which I narrated from my observations and experiences collected whilst working within the industry and from a number of interviews with taxi drivers. In addition I have used material gathered from the popular and industry press.

4.1 Inductive vs. Deductive

It is my belief that a deductive (Gill and Johnson, 2002) methodology based on a positivist epistemology would have required hypotheses and a clear research question (Hammersley and Atkinson1995). Arguably I commenced my research thirty years ago building up a repository of stories, participant observation (Thomas, 2004) and experiences. My research was based on my narrative account which consisted of those experiences and observations, which I considered against relevant literature and theory.

I could have taken an objective, modernist, empiricist or deductive (Johnson and Duberley, 2003a) approach but considered that this would not be appropriate to my research goals (Hammersley and Atkinson1995) as I had no intention to 'develop universal generalizable theory' (Johnson and Duberley, 2003:107) or to seek a rational or objective outcome or to uncover a 'single true meaning, only numerous different interpretations' (Johnson and Duberley, 2003:96). I was keen to engage with myself through thinking about my own thinking (Weick, 1999). I was interested in taking an approach whereby I surface and question my intuitive understandings

(Schon, 1983). This approach was important given my familiarity with the industry, its institutions and the community I was to research as there was a high risk of me not recognising the taken for grantedness assumptions (Johnson and Duberley, 2003)

Control of the direction and focus of the research is I believe much stronger when deductive methodologies are employed but also I feared at the time that they could be somewhat limiting and bounded. This was something I sought to avoid in my research. Inductive methodologies in my view accommodate events, emerging themes and opportunities derived from tangential diversions (Dalton, 1961) but are also much more useful in nascent research of this nature to establish a broad vista of themes.

Although I could have developed a clear research question or hypothesis to prove or disprove instead what I wanted to do was to consider and analyse the narrative I had developed reflexively rather than respond to a question or prove or disprove a hypothesis. I was keen to let the story, the narrative and the direction of the research evolve. I would have found the stricture, as I considered it, of a deductive approach extremely difficult to embrace as I feel it 'necessary instead to delve deep into the subjective qualities that govern behaviour'(Holliday, 2008:7).

I would further add that given the richness of my narrative account and the lack of previous, comprehensive research in this area and from my perspective a lack of desire to develop a clear research question until quite late in the research process if at all, an inductive enquiry was the more obvious methodology.

Dalton (1961:3) complains that positivist epistemologies and deductive methodologies;

'frequently do not get close enough to industrial situations to consistently get at covert activities and the meanings assigned to them by participants, and to spell out the consequences, in terms of individual and group actions, for the organization'

My narrative is rich with group actions, covert activities and, as can be discerned from my reflexive account; the consequences of such activities. It was therefore important for me to get as close as possible to the industrial situations that were and are present in the London taxi industry. As my research progressed I found that my methodology enabled me to get close to these situations and the multiple voices that were the research subject.

My approach could be criticised as being the outcome of one person who took the roles of an interviewer, narrator, respondent, and interpreter. My sense of this is that it might well be an issue if it were not for the approach I took to analysis which was based on Linstead's (1993) concept of deconstruction. This approach enabled me to rigorously analyse the narrative that I had recorded and I believe enabled multiple voices albeit viewed through a single frame.

Burrell and Morgan (2003:6) go on to 'stress the importance' within an ideographic methodology of 'letting one's subject unfold its nature and characteristics during the process of investigation'. Whilst making no claim to having researched using a purely ideographic approach (Burrell and Morgan, 2003) I have allowed my research to unfold (Burrell and Morgan, 2003) both during my period of first hand involvement but also through the process of narrating the experiences and observations and interpreting them reflexively (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

I was surprised during this process about how much I discovered not only about the industry, the community and its culture but also about myself and even my views on events and concepts that I had previously simply accepted or failed to be cognitively or explicitly aware of.

4.2 Method Selection

Having read much of Tony Watson's work I became interested in his focus on industrial relations and work place politics (Watson 1994). This interest and his ethnographic approach (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) was further developed through reading *Working at Fords* (Beynon, 1975) and *Men Who Manage* (Dalton, 1961). My research methods were strongly influenced by these practitioners' work. My research was based on real life industrial relations issues. I wanted to explore these through developing a reflexive account and present my research in a practical and readable format but also ensure that it was academically and analytically robust. The approaches to the study and research of industrial relations by Watson (1994), Beynon (1975) and Dalton (1961) were, I felt, similar to the research that I intended to undertake into London's taxi drivers. I found the format of these works (Watson, 1994, Beynon, 1975 and Dalton, 1961) where they blended conversations and conversational interviews with observations and academia in a reflexive style lent itself to my research subject, and the analytical and ethnographic methodology I sought to deploy.

4.3 Qualitative Research

Holliday (2008:10) describes qualitative data as doing 'what we all do in everyday life' and goes on to explain that;

'we have to continually solve problems about how we should behave with other people in a wide range of settings, to do this we need to research not only how others behave but also how we should behave with them'.

Thomas (2004, 19) describes qualitative research as 'that which deals mainly with meaningful accounts or narrative and verbal data'. Thomas however muses as to whether it is helpful to provide definitions between types of research (quantitative and qualitative) and concludes that it is not helpful 'particularly in a multidisciplinary field such as management' (2004, 20). Thomas (2004) justifies his assertion on the reduced likelihood of methodological broad-mindedness, collaborative work across the boundaries and between different management subjects.

Layder links ethnography with qualitative data;

'The ethnographic approach tends to use qualitative methods and forms of data to describe and analyse particular settings, groups or organizations and is sometimes associated with theory building'. (1993, 30)

In my own research I have collected experiences, stories, and observations in an ethnographic tradition over a long period of time to narrate the story most of which was qualitative, and then interpreted it to develop my reflexive account.

When I began narrating my account it was not to get my story on paper but to describe, discuss and consider the experiences of others in the taxi industry and then to interpret them. I wanted to compare them with the literature and to uncover original knowledge about this unique group. Where similarities exist with an auto ethnographic (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) approach is that my reflexive account

has a strong story running through it. However I would argue that it is not my story but a corporate story (Larsen, 2000) seen, interpreted and written through my eyes. I am part of the story but certainly not at its centre. What I have attempted to do is 'to shed light' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:1-2) on the culture of London's taxi drivers and place that insight at the centre of the story.

The balance between descriptive and theoretical narrative is considered by Layder (1993:34)

'It is also possible that the field researcher will decide that the aims of the research are more descriptive than theoretical, such as providing information on a social process (for example, professional client counselling, or training to be a nurse) or on a group (such as homosexuals, or students, or footballers) about which little work has been done, or where there are gaps in knowledge'

Narrating the descriptive and analysing against the theoretical and academic whilst maintaining a balance was an area of concern for me until I read Layder's (1993) thoughts concerning this. Whilst I have attempted to consider the theoretical and the academic constantly during the narration and analysis there are areas where my narrative moves firmly into the descriptive but where that is the case I consider that this adds important context to the research.

Stacey (2011:35) theorises about what he terms as 'narrative knowledge' and explains that 'narrative knowledge takes the form of anecdotes and stories, interspersed with evaluations of them'.

My narrative account was based on my experiences and observations (Tedlock, 1991) of the industry which were gathered in the tradition of an ethnographic study (Spry, 2001) during thirty years of working in the industry. I have linked the macro with the micro aspects of organisational life which Layder (1993:31) observes as; 'one of the central theoretical problems in sociology concerns understanding the relationship between macro and micro aspects of social life'.

The events that I have relayed in my reflexive (Johnson and Duberley, 2003) account are heavily concerned with anecdotes and stories particularly within the discussion and analysis of the industrial relations disputes (Beynon, 1975) concerned with the Quickie Knowledge (see section 5.2.16), and the business process change (see section 5.4). Language (Watson, 1982), rhetoric, knowledge, and ideology (Watson, 1982) were significant concepts leading to the disputes and the activities that each side took to prevail. I was involved, in all of these industrial disputes and many others, some passively and actively in others and I have taken care during my analysis as far as possible 'to expose the underlying assumptions on which arguments and stances are built' (Holland, 1999:467).

4.4 Research Duration and Methodologies

There are stark differences in the duration of subject observations involved in ethnographic (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) studies. Smircich (1983) and Kunda (1992) carried out observations lasting six weeks and twelve months respectively observing organizational culture. Watson (1994) spent a year as an open participant observer (Gill and Johnson, 2002) in a manufacturing company. Dalton's 'field work and follow up visits continued for over a decade' (1964:2). There are also significant differences in the approach to ethnographic research (Dalton, 1964; Beynon, 1975; Burgess, 1985; Rosen, 1991; Watson, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The

primary method of obtaining data by Watson (1994) was through informal dialogue with his fellow managers having developed personal relationships with them over time albeit the subjects all understood that Watson was carrying out research whereas Dalton (1964) used covert participant observation over many years; two very different approaches.

Smircich (1983) observed the executives who were the subject of her study in a variety of organisational settings and held conversational interviews with them whereas Kunda (1992) operated as a participant observer, undertook extensive conversational interviews with staff members and drew on documentary sources. Each had very different methods of data collection.

Beynon's approach in his book 'Working for Ford' (1975) does not discuss his methodology but his approach of writing an account, discussing it with the reader in a reflective style whilst not identifying his personal findings or judgement had a strong resonance with the style that I adopted albeit I was keen to be far more explicit about my 'involvement' (Kildruff and Mehra, 1997:464), influence, selectivity and where made; judgement.

I can claim to have observed, engaged and experienced immersion in the culture of the London taxi industry over many years but sadly did not make notes and formal observations during that period in Dalton's (1961) style. My approach has been to comprehensively narrate my experiences, feelings and recollections after the event and then through analysis and reference to the literature develop my reflexive account.

A hybrid approach unintentionally invoking elements of the approach taken by Watson (1994), Kunda (1992) and Dalton (1961) has evolved and a strong similarity to Beynon's (1975) style of analysis and writing can be discerned in my work.

Within the development of my reflexive account the areas that have been fully within my control are; to decide which events, behaviours, values, apparent beliefs, and topics to include and exclude. These have been selected and/or discarded based on a simple question; so what? If I wrote up a section and then asked the so what question and found that it added nothing to my quest to shed light on (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) the identity, culture and management of London's taxi drivers I dropped that section.

Narrating the largely descriptive and qualitative and descriptive account that I developed to collect all of my material together, and then deciding how best to analyse them could have been a challenging task. My decision to present it as a reflexive (Johnson and Duberley, 2003) account provided the rigour that I needed to deconstruct (Linstead, 1993) my narrative and question my implicit and explicit assumptions and the taken for grantedness (Johnson and Duberley, 2003) assumptions that can be difficult to discern after such a long period of involvement in and consequently familiarity with the industry. Further the approach I took provided the framework to narrate the information I had collected, consider it reflexively (Johnson and Duberley, 2003), contrast it against the literature, and begin to make sense (Weick, 1999) of it, develop themes and reach robust conclusions.

4.5. Ethnography

Although not an ethnographic (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) study in the purest sense I would posit that my research has been undertaken in an ethnographic tradition. My approach to ethnography contains some elements of autoethnography

which Denzin and Lincoln describe as 'setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation' (2000:765). Each of these ingredients is present to a degree in my reflexive account. However further reading provides a clear difference between the style of ethnography I adopted which I would claim to be more in the style of some aspects of Rosen (1991), Johnson and Duberley (2003), Dalton (1964), Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) Watson (1994) than an auto-ethnographic study (Spry, 2001).

Some aspects of Spry's approach is present within my work where she talks of 'a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts' (2001:710). Whilst I have not based my analysis on this I have compared and contrasted my values and beliefs, with others notably the taxi drivers that I interviewed. I have consciously attempted not to use 'privileged knowledge' (Johnson and Duberley, 2003: 84) or authority as a researcher to be judgemental about myself and others rather I have attempted to highlight and explain differences rather than evaluate them from an ethical, cultural or social perspective.

Although the aims of my research could be considered less ambitious than Rosen, his description of the ethnographer's method of collecting data is useful and has similarities with the approach I have taken. Rosen (1991:5) describes;

'The ethnographer's method of collecting data is to live among those who are the data. He or she tries to learn the subjects' rules for organizational life, to interact with them for a frequency and duration of time 'sufficient' to understand how and why they construct their social world as it is and explain it to others'

Rosen's (1991:5) description is interesting as he suggests that it is possible to 'understand' and 'explain this to others'. Compared to Rosen's aspirations of understanding and explaining to others my research has been closer to Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995:1-2) attempts to 'throw light on the issues that are the subject of the research' I have attempted to 'pay serious attention to the means and methods whereby social actors [In this case London's taxi drivers] perform social life and how they achieve orderly conduct' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1994:169).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:2) describe in a similar style to Rosen what ethnographers do;

'In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating overtly or covertly, in people's lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research'.

Whether I had collected my material 'overtly or covertly' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:5) is an interesting point to consider in hindsight. What is certain is that during the process of collecting my material I asked lots of questions, listened to what was being said and observed very carefully what was happening. Much of my research could be classified as verging on covert as at the time of observation the concept of undertaking a research study was not a conscious activity. I do not consider that there is any ethical conflict (Thomas, 2004) as the observations were general in nature with any specifics reported with full anonymity retained.

There is an apparent, significant difference between the planned outcomes or epistemological reference frame of Rosen's (1991) and Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995) research in that Rosen appears to expect to 'understand [why] and explain' (Rosen, 1991:5) whereas Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:2) are content to 'throw light upon the issues'. Rosen (1991) appears to posit an observational role stressing understanding and interaction whereas Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) imply a much more participative role. During the collection of my data I have both observed and participated but did not equal Rosen's achievement of understanding why and then explaining it to others. What I have done is to throw light upon the issues and propose potential causes, reasons, and theories as to why events, reactions, emotions and outcomes happened as they did based on the circumstances, environment, experience, history and culture as it could be established.

Thomas (2004:135) explains that 'ethnographic studies have become more common in management research' and tend to focus on three topics 'organizational cultures, organizational processes and organizational employee groups'. Thomas (2004:133) adds that ethnography is about 'describing and understanding unfamiliar cultures and ways of life'.

These themes are central to my research into London's taxi drivers from a cultural and social science perspective and in their relationship with and the processes concerned with the management and delivery of the Knowledge of London vocational qualification, the motivation and management of independent London taxi drivers, their concerns regarding their identity, and taxi drivers who work for or with London's radio taxi companies, relationships between customers and drivers and the rivalries and interfaces between the various driver groupings and factions and the power structures e.g. the Public Carriage Office.

4.6 Reflexivity

The meaning of reflexivity is argued and debated by Holland (1999) who takes some credit, or as he terms it responsibility, for 'introducing reflexivity into certain areas' (Holland, 1999:463). Holland (1999) purports that reflexivity is;

'Applied to that which turns back upon, or takes account of, itself or a person's self, especially methods that take into consideration the effect of the personality or presence of the researcher on the investigation' (Holland 1999:464).

Another explanation from Holland is that 'an important function of reflexive analysis is to expose the underlying assumptions on which arguments and stances are built' (Holland, 1999:467). All of this is very relevant to the reflexive account that I have developed as I was very close to much of the material that I collected and which formed my narrative account. It was important therefore to recognise this and to get under what happened and try to ascertain why or when this was not possible. What factors; social, structural, historical, political or environmental influenced events, actions and outcomes.

At the time I was not, in my view, a researcher in any formal way nor would I have termed myself a researcher or thought of myself as carrying out research. My belief is that the experiences, stories and observations I collected, the analysis and the interpretations I placed upon them will be affected by my a priori especially at the fundamental level of what to leave in and what to take out. My a priori will influence what I consider to be significant, mundane or worthy of inclusion or indeed exclusion.

Alvesson, Hardy and Harley (2008:480) explain that;

'reflexivity means thinking through what one is doing to encourage insights about the nature of social science and, especially, the role that language, power/knowledge connections, social interests and ideologies, rhetorical moves and manoeuvring in the socio-political field play in producing particular accounts'.

Alvesson, Hardy and Harleys' (2000) explanation of reflexivity is broader than Holland's (1999) and introduces the issues of language, power, knowledge, social interests and ideologies as well as underlining what are in my view the political manoeuvrings present in all sociological research and life in general. My reflexive account is of course my account and almost inevitably within that there will be my own manoeuvring and field play (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) however much I have guarded against this and attempted to present as objective account as is possible.

Lafitte (1957) provides further help with understanding reflexivity; 'All learning depends on the reflexive interpretation of one's experience together with the experience of others' (Lafitte 1957:17). Here Lafitte appears to position the researcher at the centre with the researched or observed being somewhat secondary. This is an interesting concept and I contend an important one for the approach I am took with my research. I analysed my narrative account reflexively (Johnson and Duberley, 2003) against my own reference frame and against relevant literature to provide perspective.

Johnson and Duberley (2000: 178) compare two forms of reflexivity; 'methodological reflexivity' and epistemic reflexivity'. The dichotomy between the two forms focuses on the exclusion or inclusion within a research framework of the 'taken for grantedness' (Johnson and Duberley, 2000: 179) views of the researcher. Johnson and Duberley (2000: 178) imply that methodological reflexivity 'is concerned with the monitoring by the researcher of their behavioural impact upon the social settings under investigation'. Within an epistemic reflexivity 'attempts are made to relate research outcomes to the knowledge constraining and constituting impacts of the researcher's own beliefs which derive from their socio historical location' (Johnson and Duberley, 2000: 179). They go on to relate that 'there will always be more than one valid account of any research' (Johnson and Duberley, 2000: 179). I have tried within my research to identify the taken for grantedness of each situation and event that I have explored within my research. I have also tried to relate the outcomes to the knowledge constraining and constituting impacts of my own beliefs.

My reflexive account was based on, my memory, my experiences and ultimately my judgement and the question; so what. So what i.e. why am I writing/telling this was the determinate as to what events and issues should be included and what were not. These decisions were all inevitably influenced significantly by my a priori (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Whilst I had no intention to place myself as the researcher at the centre of the story inevitably this has frequently been the case in practice. Lafitte goes on to provide an additional perspective; 'The psychologist's reflexive judgements will be limited by his knowledge of himself in some of the ways his subject's reports are limited' (Lafitte 1957:21). I would suggest that for psychologist read researcher and I believe we arrive at the same place. I would propose that it is necessary for the researcher to recognise his/her a priori and how this affects judgement, bias, and ultimately the analysis. I would further propose that the more this is recognised, understood and appreciated by the researcher the more rigour it is possible to apply to the analysis.

Johnson and Duberley (2003:8) argue;

‘a key skill that any manager should possess is the ability to reflect critically upon the modes of engagement they deploy in making sense of their experience then the importance of epistemology to practitioners is only too evident because studying epistemology exposes to critical interrogation the often unnoticed taken-for-granted assumptions and values which influence how versions of reality are socially constructed’.

This is a significant risk within the methodology I have used in my research. Having been exposed to the industry for such a long period of time accepting or being oblivious to the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ (Johnson and Duberley, 2003:8) of many practices, routines, and rituals (Stacey, 2001). Within my reflexive (Johnson and Duberley, 2003) account I have used deconstruction (Linstead, 1993) and tried to question every area that I raised and ensured that I undertook my analysis with this risk clearly in mind. Johnson and Duberley, (2003:146) add a further warning ‘the need for researchers and the researched to be reflexively aware of their own presuppositions and values’.

Goulder continues in a similar style; ‘A Reflexive Sociology means that we sociologists must acquire the ingrained habit of viewing our own beliefs as we now view those held by others’ (Goulder, 1970:490). I found that the concept of researching one’s self and beliefs can be a difficult concept to grasp let alone practice. Once one has had occasion, as I have done, to be surprised at my own beliefs it is then considerably easier to start to adopt Goulder’s suggested habit.

Hammersley and Atkinson join the apparent consensus that;

‘the concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including values and interests that these locations confer upon them’ (2007:15).

They also provide a thoughtful point;

‘We do not believe that reflexivity implies that research is necessarily political, or that it should be political, in the sense of serving particular political causes or practical ends. For us the exclusive, immediate goal of research is, and must remain, the production of knowledge’.

Holliday views reflexivity as; ‘the way in which researchers come to terms with and indeed capitalize on the complexities of their presence within the research setting, in a methodical way’ (Holliday, 2008:138). Amongst the literature I have reviewed there exists almost a consensus of what reflexivity entails; the impact of a priori (Holland 1999; Lafitte 1957; Johnson and Duberley 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) and the researcher’s beliefs and values (Alvesson, Hardy and Harley, 2008; Goulder, 1970; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Holliday, 2008). Conversely there is no obvious consensus in the areas of power and politics, language, and ideologies. It is difficult to see how any researcher can be apolitical, which in itself is arguably a political standpoint, and also difficult to see how any situation that is being researched can be devoid of any politics or power issues. I believe that research into politically charged environments benefit from the process of reflexivity (Holliday, 2008) as much as those where there is an apparent consensus.

4.7 Research Question

An issue that arises frequently in the literature is that of the research question (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1994, Holiday, 2007, Thomas, 2004). The issue for me was at what point the research question(s) is developed and how the research setting can influence the question. I did not feel, given the nature of my research (inductive), that it was particularly important to frame a research question early on in the process if at all. What I knew was that I had a great deal of data about the taxi industry, the culture and how within a management context change had impacted on and conflicted with this culture and it was these data that I intended to analyse reflexively and from which identify themes and a contribution to original knowledge.

Unsurprisingly given the nature of his research Dalton (1961: 274) took an apparently relaxed view to developing his research question. He lists an eclectic mix of some eleven sentences of which most contain more than one question as he describes his process to develop a research question. Alternatively Holliday, (2007:28) boldly asserts that; 'the researcher also needs to determine what she wants to find out within the area or topic she has chosen'. I would agree in a deductive, quantitative study that a clear question or hypothesis early on in the research process is needed. I am far less aligned with this assertion in an ethnographic research study where it is inductive in nature and the data is therefore qualitative. As one of the approaches to ethnography is to research 'unfamiliar cultures and ways of life' (Thomas, 2004:133), how does one know what one is likely to find out until the research is well underway?

My research gradually developed around a desire to uncover the complex networks, social structures and behaviours that contribute to, or influence the identity of London's taxi drivers, their culture and that of the industry and their impact on attempts to manage this disparate and virtual group.

4.8 Research Design

The material that I had collected in a broadly ethnographic tradition was 1) the observations and experiences that I had collected during my career in the London Taxi Industry 2) taxi driver interviews and 3) the articles and features from the trade press, books concerned with the taxi industry and articles and letters from the popular press and media.

I originally proposed to interview a maximum of thirty people as suggested by Bailey (1994:97). This initial proposal had a caveat that it could be significantly lower dependent upon the level of cooperation experienced from both London's taxi drivers and the management of the radio taxi companies they worked with. As it transpired the material I had collected during my career in the London Taxi Industry and which I had narrated and analysed in my reflexive account and the initial group of interviews I undertook with taxi drivers together with the features and articles from the trade press produced so much data that there was no necessity, in my view, to undertake the originally planned number of interviews.

My research set out to include both drivers affiliated to one of the radio taxi companies and drivers who were not affiliated to any radio taxi company. This could have provided some interesting insights into any cultural differences between taxi drivers who belonged to a radio taxi company and those who did not. Within the industry only around one third of drivers work with a radio taxi company (Townsend 2003). It transpired that the drivers who the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA) selected for interview in response to my request to them were all affiliated to a radio taxi company albeit not the same one. During the course of my research it

quickly became evident that my reflexive account was substantial in terms of both richness and volume. Therefore the opportunity to broaden my research to include the different perspectives of taxi drivers who belonged to one Radio Taxi Company or another or none at all was not possible. The perceived impact on the industry of radio taxi companies and their drivers from the perspective of non-radio drivers could be an interesting area to explore in the future.

I was keen to discern any variances in commitment to the industry and the profession between radio and non-radio taxi drivers. Likewise, whether the views expressed by newer and longer serving taxi drivers came from different perspectives. As ultimately my research moved in a different direction (Burrell and Morgan, 2003) I consider this to be an interesting area for future research.

The approach I adopted was broadly similar to Gill and Pratt (1986) whose research team favoured an in-depth treatment of a limited number of cases in an under researched, and relatively novel area this provided what they asserted was an alternative, valid approach. Mintzberg (1979:583) also promotes the concept of 'small samples rather than less valid data that were statistically significant'. The culture and management of London's taxi drivers is certainly an under researched area, and could be argued to be novel (Gill and Pratt, 1986) based on the unusual nature of acquiring the vocational qualification, employment status as well as the lack of a contemporary organisational structure (Hatch and Schultz, 1997) and hitherto the lack of formal, comprehensive research.

Mintzberg (1973) goes on to add that unstructured observation was perhaps 'less likely to be comprehensive in that it was open to researcher selectivity' (226). I would agree with this statement and fully accept the concept of 'researcher selectivity' (Mintzberg, 1973:226) as I have been able to select data that I consider important enough to include and also reject those data that I decided to exclude. Inevitably my a priori will feature in this selection as the recollections are almost certainly based on what I recall as being important, interesting and significant thereby both intentionally and unintentionally leaving out the more mundane although I have attempted to include the 'micro aspects of organisational life' (Johnson and Duberley, 2003:107) which I consider are important to throw light on the research subject as well as broader themes and specific events and themes that contextualise my research.

It is important to point out that my research is not intended to envelope the whole of the London taxi industry merely the landscape that was visible to me during my largely opportunistic (Hammersley and Atkinson 1994) period of immersion in it. Despite the recognition of selectivity I would vigorously defend my research. I have, I believe provided a thick description (Holloway 2008) and represented the richness of the data setting and the areas that I have implicitly or explicitly selected to include. Further I would challenge any suggestion regarding any lack of comprehensiveness (Mintzberg, 1973) within the study.

4.9 Research Framework

My ontology is subjectivist. I work within a broadly 'interpretive paradigm' (Burrell and Morgan, 2003:28) and like Burrell and Morgan's description (2003:28) of the interpretative paradigm 'am informed by a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience'. I accept Burrell and Morgan's view that an interpretative paradigm 'sees the social world as an emergent social process, which is created by the individuals

concerned' (Burrell and Morgan, 2003:28). This description is congruent with my a priori.

My approach to the research has been broadly ideographic (Burrell and Morgan, 2003) having spent much of my career 'getting inside situations and involving oneself in the everyday flow of life' (Burrell and Morgan, 2003:6).

I do not accept Burrell and Morgan's view that 'one can only understand the social world by obtaining first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation' (2003:6). It was opportunistic (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1994) that my research had been undertaken using observations and experiences that were derived first hand but I would argue that this is not the only way to gain understanding. If this were the case the opportunity for obtaining knowledge and understanding would face significant obstacles. It is not possible for every researcher to develop the skills, competence and acceptance and obtain entry both vocational and to research the research subject that they are interested in or have chosen. Therefore huge swathes of research would just not take place, robbing humanity of understanding and valuable contributions to knowledge.

To accept this approach would mean that research would be restricted to a participant perspective implicitly constraining thought to particular, limited reference frames and dependent upon the development of the skills to gain first-hand knowledge. Burrell and Morgan, in my view understate the significance and benefit of subjectivity in research. I do not view empiricism as the only basis for research. Of course this may be to take Burrell and Morgan's assertions too literally.

4.10 Research Setting

Hammersley and Atkinson (1994:28) discuss how the setting and cases are chosen and talk about identifying an 'interesting situation or group of people' about 'opportunistic research' and about 'studying history in the making'. I associate these three areas strongly with my research. My association with the taxi industry was opportunistic, by dint of my employment, and involved meeting with, and working alongside, a most interesting group of people who operate in an unusual situation as a virtual workforce. My research has been focused around my observations of the interactions between the industry regulator and those in the industry, Knowledge Boys, taxi drivers on the road, at taxi ranks, in cafes, at meetings and passengers' behaviour. The relationship between self-appointed and formal industry leaders and industry organisations e.g. radio taxi companies and taxi drivers is a theme that developed during the collection of my data and research and which uncovered much of the culture, values, and identity (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994) traits of London's taxi drivers.

The conversational interviews and trade press features, articles and comments were used to compare and contrast with my sense making and the apparent consensual vision of a taxi driver that journalists and others (Grimshaw 2005; Martin, 2004; Craik, 2009; Daisley, 2012) have developed but I was keen for the drivers I interviewed to introduce their own subjects and topics (Dalton, 1961) and for them not to be constrained to my, admittedly flexible, agenda. The interviews and trade press content have introduced a contemporary element to the study which is something that I consider important given the long duration over which the main corpus of my data has been collected. There is no intention to carry out any form of gap analysis to uncover explicit differences between the culture that I uncovered during my research and that which now apparently pertains as this is outside the scope of my research.

4.11 Narrative Account

The main body of my research is a descriptive narrative from which I developed my reflexive account. The material was collected in an ethnographic tradition and narrated into an account that was then interpreted and analysed. My narrative account included individual events, conversations, observed behaviours, feelings about events, actions and activities as experienced by me, descriptions of scenarios, and explanations of my observations during my career in the industry.

I would propose that an important area of my research has been in narrating the 'submerged aspects of organizational life' (Turner, 1971:34) about which I gained an understanding through the time I spent both as a taxi driver and as a participant observer (Thomas, 2004).

I have not attempted Burgess's (1984) recommendation during the period when I collected my material of keeping analytical notes or memos in which preliminary questions, hypotheses and models can be recorded. I have been in no rush to reach the analysis phase but instead I have been keen to let the data talk, to develop the story and narrative in order that it is not polluted by trying to analyse its meanings too quickly or to reach early conclusions. I have not attempted during my research to seek, identify, prove or disprove hypotheses.

Until I reached a point where I concluded that all the material I intended to capture for this research project had been narrated I had given no thought at all to data analysis.

4.12 Analysis

The literature concerning qualitative data analysis is wide ranging in its discussion of the merits of various methods (Thomas, 2004; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Pearsall, 1999). Thomas advocates a process of condensing and summarizing data 'so that they are meaningful in terms of the study's objectives' (2004:204), Thomas goes on to explain that the general aim of analysis and interpretation is to enable 'the analyst to see the wood for the trees'. This seems a narrow interpretation and I would argue describes a methodology to deliver a clarification of the data rather than rigorous analysis. I would argue that some trees are necessary to provide the descriptive narrative to enable thick description (Holloway, 2008) and provide the context that I view important within an ethnographic study. Thomas goes on to provide a number of techniques that 'are intended to condense textual materials by reducing them to summary statements or by identifying their structural properties' (2004:217). Thomas expands the range of techniques in later sections explaining the use of maps and of 'telling stories' (2004:22). Miles and Huberman (1994) and Yin (1984) have been critical of narrative as a technique to analyse qualitative data. Conversely Pearsall (1999) argues that narrative is the means by which human beings communicate.

Thomas adjudicates on this dichotomy by suggesting that;

'stories organize events and actions in to a coherent whole by showing the connections between them and the ways in which the linkages combine to produce end results or consequences. The outcomes to be explained range from individual conduct to large scale collective events' (2004:225).

My narrative account is a combination of 'individual conduct' (Thomas, 2004:225) and 'large scale collective events' (Thomas, 2004:225) but it could be judged to be presented in a story telling format and is certainly chronological.

The areas of divergence between my narrative account, the trade and popular press and the interviews I undertook were a potentially rich source for discovery. Attempting to understand the beliefs and values that underpin contradictory issues and points of agreement enabled a fuller understanding of the culture that was being researched.

Dealing with text Derrida, (1976) suggests that there are no grounds for arguing that any particular interpretation is authoritative. Derrida appears to approach this matter through a post structuralist frame. Whilst accepting that text is open to wide interpretation and whilst not wishing to claim an authoritative interpretation of the text that that I have quoted, cited and reproduced and that are my data I feel that it is possible to attempt to be objective about its meaning based on my familiarity with the context of the text. Without sacrificing description for objectivity and being explicit about subjectivity it is difficult to see how the rigour of academic research can be applied to the text and how light can be shed on the subject (Rosen, 1991). Hirsch (1967) argued that certainty cannot be achieved but objectivity can. I am not convinced as to the validity of this assertion nor the underpinning need for either certainty or objectivity. I do however appreciate their worthiness as analytical goals. I tend to agree with Thomas' view that;

'The interpretation of a text involves the interaction of the reader's frame of reference and prior understandings with the meanings of the text itself' (1994:220).

Hammersley and Atkinson infer that a feature of ethnography is 'a tendency to work primarily with unstructured data, that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytical categories' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1994:248). Much of the material that I collected was in the form of experiences and observations in the style of Dalton (1961), Beynon (1975), and Watson (1994) and were unstructured at the time of collection although the act of narrating these experiences began to provide some structure at least at the individual experience or event level.

A criticism could be made that some of the data in my study could suffer from reliance on my memory rather than diaries, field notes and other documentary records (Dalton, 1961) that could have been developed over the period I collected my material. To an extent such criticism has validity. I would counter that this potential weakness is more than outweighed by the advantage that Mintzberg (1973: 226) identified in unstructured observation that 'nothing need stand between the work... [The researcher]... observes and the theory he develops save his own ability to interpret'. Mintzberg (1973: 226) went on to observe 'that unstructured observation was unsystematic and difficult to replicate'. This is a significant issue in my view, given the nature of my research; ethnographic, broadly ideographic, inductive and reflexive I had no intention to produce replicable results or to deliberately enable future researchers to repeat my data collection and analysis methodologies and arrive at the same conclusions. I wanted to deliver 'a product of the time and context' (Van Maanen, 1987:75).

Holliday (2008:61) discusses the importance and questions the 'higher status' of verbatim data. She asserts that 'it is certainly not the case that what people say is

hard evidence of what they think'. I have used verbatim quotes from interviews not specifically as hard evidence (Holliday, 2008) but as examples of terminology, specific industry language, as polemics, or to introduce opposing or collaborating concepts, arguments and standpoints.

My research does not endure the mono or single frame approach that Rosen (1991) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) experienced as my research is based upon both observation and participation. I was one of them; a licensed London taxi driver, I was a committee member of the largest trade association, a commentator on the trade through my role as a feature writer in a number of trade publications, I recruited drivers to the radio taxi company I worked for, dealt with their problems, and disciplined them when necessary. I also managed upwards of four thousand taxi drivers in my ultimate role of Group Managing Director of London's largest radio taxi company. There are of course drawbacks to this level of immersion particularly in respect of identifying and challenging areas of taken for grantedness (Johnson and Duberley, 2003). These are risks I was aware of during my analysis and to which I have applied as much rigour as I could. Tietze (in Symon and Cassell) recognises the challenge;

'if the 'normal' (researcher entering research scene as stranger) process of research is to transform the 'unfamiliar' and 'strange' into the 'known' and 'familiar', the research process for the researcher-employee is reversed: the challenge is to transform the 'familiar' and 'known' into the 'strange' and 'unknown', with a view to generating a different and more informed understanding of the issues under investigation' (2012: 60)

In order to achieve the process and outcomes described by Tietze (2012) there has been a need for deconstruction and sense making (Weick, 1969) to take place in the process of taking a raw, mainly unstructured narration and then analysing and interpreting this to develop my reflexive (Johnson and Duberley, 2003) account. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:162) propose that 'the initial task in analysing qualitative data is to find some concepts that helps us to make sense of what is going on in the case or cases documented by the data'. It was some time before the concepts (which I later termed themes) that I was keen to emerge from my narrative account and interpretation became visible to me.

My views, feeling, beliefs and values have been made explicit wherever possible whilst fully accepting that they may not always be discernible to me. I have adopted Kildruff and Mehra's (1997:464) assertion that;

'instead of trying to erase all traces of themselves from their work, researchers should seek to demystify technology of mediation by explicitly detailing their involvement'.

I adopted Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007:163) advice to 'exercise some analytical nerve, tolerating uncertainty and ambiguity in one's interpretations resisting the temptation to rush to determinate conclusions'. The analysis process took me nearly two years and during much of that period there was significant uncertainty as to what much of my narrative account actually meant. Gradually I accepted that my research objective was not to provide complete answers but was intended to shed light on what is a tribe of people with their own rituals, behaviours and practices.

4.13 Taxi Driver Interviews

I was keen to interview a number of taxi drivers to add a broader dimension to my research. I was keen to compare and contrast my views with those of the interviewees and thereby to expand the insight into the behaviours, interfaces and culture of the industry.

Women represent less than 1% of London's taxi drivers (Public Carriage Office Website, 2009) therefore no special methodologies have been invoked to either include or exclude them from my research. There are a total population of 'almost 25,000 taxi drivers' (Public Carriage Office Website, 2009) in London. The age range of the taxi driver population in London is from: 21 - 94 years of age (Public Carriage Office Website, 2010). There is no published information regarding ethnicity or educational background.

The interviewee sample was generated by the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA) who had agreed to help me. They, I believe, contacted a number of their taxi driver committee members and asked if they would be prepared to be interviewed by me. What became apparent when I met them was that the sample had similar demographics although there was significant diversity of views expressed in their interviews.

Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001:204) provided some interesting and useful insights into interviewing men which they address to those 'who do inductive or quasi inductive research because our [their] advice presumes that interviews are open to change over the course of the study'. This is an interesting point and one that was borne out during the study as the interviews did change but how much of that was concerned with the inductive (Gill and Johnson, 2002) nature of my work rather than, hopefully, allowing the interviewees to determine the direction of the interviews is arguable.

Thomas (2004:165) asserts that 'in some forms of research such as ethnography, information may be sought by the researcher through informal interactions with informants'. This was the approach that I felt best fitted with the interviews that I intended to conduct although there was the formality of setting a time, venue, etc. As against the much more informal approach taken by Watson (1994) where conversations apparently just happened. The interviews together with my observations of the industry, the trade press and personal experiences enabled me to identify patterns, tentative themes and to provide the insights into the industry that was the objective of my research.

4.13.1 Interview Format

During the period of participation and participant observation (Tedlock, 1991) of London's taxi driver population I was conscious that I had formed my own views and opinions of the culture. There was a clear risk that this could introduce interviewer influence (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) and/or bias. In order to address this risk, as far as possible, I attempted to adopt a neutral stance during interviews and did not directly challenge responses that failed to accord with my own implicit or even explicit view of the London taxi industry or radio taxi companies operation or their impact on the industry. Where such issues arose I asked for clarification or for the interviewee to expand their point(s).

As the culture of London's taxi drivers is largely unresearched it provided a wholesome and rich source of research subjects. This methodology supported the ideographic (Burrell and Morgan, 2003; Gill and Johnson, 2002; Johnson and Duberley, 2003; Holloway, 2008) approach which I adopted in interview where I observed the importance of letting one's subject unfold its nature and characteristics during the process'. (Burrell and Morgan, 2003: 6). The ideographic approach (Burrell and Morgan, 2003) with its emphasis on subjective accounts and reliance on exploring the detailed backgrounds of subjects was very useful in developing the interview format.

Roethlisberger, (1941:93) provides guidance which I attempted to adopt concerning behaviour during the interview;

'In the interview I use a number of simple rules or ideas; I listen. I do not interrupt. I do not give advice. I avoid leading questions. I refrain from making moral judgements about the opinion expressed. I do not express my own opinions, beliefs or sentiments. I avoid argument at all costs'.

The interviewing style, given the nature of this research, which I adopted and used, was conversational interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:3). This style was adopted due to its fit with ethnographic studies as explained by Burgess (1984:102) that 'the researcher learns about the culture and setting of the field site through informal, conversational interviews with informants'. Spradley (1979) refers to three types of questions in this style of research: descriptive, structural and contrast questions. Examples of these three types of questions that I used were;

Descriptive; describe your normal daily routine

Structural; if you knew passengers were waiting for taxis at all stations on a Sunday evening would you change your working hours to serve them?

Contrast; can you contrast your role as a taxi driver with your occupation before you became a taxi driver.

I followed up on responses from the interviewees by 'probing' (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001:208) using questions such as;

That's very interesting can you tell me more about that?

How did that make you feel?

I was conscious of avoiding any threat similar to what Scwalbe and Wolkomir describe (2001:208) as;

'the threat built into any intensive interview. The situation is usually defined as one in which a stranger sets the agenda, asks the questions, controls the flow of talk, and probes for information about internal; or backstage realities. To agree to sit for an interview, no matter how friendly and conversational is to give up some control and to risk having one's public persona stripped away'.

I wanted to make the interviews as conversational as possible and although I offered at the beginning of the interviews to send a draft of my interview notes to the interviewee, none wanted me to do so. I also made a point that they could ask for anything they felt unhappy with to be excluded from my notes, once again they

indicated that none did. Further I offered to either use their name or a non de plume and none felt the need to use a non de plume. These questions whilst genuine were a subtle attempt to move the power (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) of the interviewer into the interviewees' hands and to avoid the need for power play by them which Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) identify as a risk in male on male interviews.

The conversational interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:3) were held at the premises of the LTDA. I had offered the drivers a choice of being interviewed at home, in the back of their taxis or somewhere else that was convenient for them. All of the interviewees opted for the LTDA offices. I discovered during the interviews that all of the drivers had links with the LTDA. I did consider the possible inherent bias that this common bond may have introduced but was satisfied that given the diversity of views that were expressed during the interviews and the varying nature of interest in the subjects that they and I introduced during the interviews that this was a not an important feature in my analysis. This may have been an influence in their venue preference in that the premises were not completely neutral to them thereby providing familiarity, comfort and security (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) for the interviews if that were needed.

My approach was to welcome the interviewee, invite them to sit at a corner of a square committee table with myself sitting opposite at the other side of the corner of the table. There was a slight barrier between the interviewer and interviewee but I had positioned both chairs so that they were not obstructed fully by the table. I asked them how they had travelled to the interview, had they worked first [In their taxi] or had they come straight from home. I then spent a few minutes making small talk.

After this I explained that I was carrying out some research into London's taxi drivers and if it was okay with them I would like them to explain about how they became a taxi driver, what they thought about the Knowledge, the job, their colleagues and anything else they would like to tell me about. I then proceeded to ask an opening question e.g. why did you become a taxi driver. I then listened and just prompted where appropriate. As far as possible I tried to get them to expand their points rather than introduce new points myself. This approach worked well in my opinion.

4.13.2 Interview Content

At the time of carrying out the interviews I was still developing my narrative account. At this point I did not have a clear research question. I had no specific issues that I needed or wanted to be clarified by the drivers I was interviewing and was really unclear about what might come out and how useful it might be. I knew that I was interested in their motivation, the way they saw themselves being managed or how they managed themselves, their identity and that of the industry and how they viewed the culture of the industry. My strategy was to just meet up and listen prompting when they had exhausted a subject. In reality little prompting was needed. The drivers appeared happy to talk. Some of this was no doubt because they were keen to provide, consciously or subconsciously 'strategically crafted accounts' (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001:213) of their lives and actions. I feel I got beyond this activity by periods of silence, by appearing generous and not challenging any of these accounts and once the interviewee had been able to present the persona he wanted I believe moved on to provide me with insights in the industry which were less strategically crafted (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001).

Burgess (1984:102) refers to a 'style of interviewing which employs a set of themes and topics to form questions in the course of conversation'. My preparation for the

interviews was based broadly around this concept. The prompt sheet (see Appendix 1) I developed was a list of themes and topics. I used this to start the interview and then formed questions where needed from the topics and themes that were being enunciated by the interviewee. My initial scene setting highlighted the themes and topics that were my primary interest but I was happy to sacrifice my topics and themes to explore interesting tangents.

The interviews were approached with Fontanna and Frey's (1994:367) advice that interviewing is an aspect of the 'art of science' in mind. The topics in my prompt sheet (see Appendix 1) were developed to introduce new subjects and concepts into the conversation in the event of pauses and gaps so that broad areas of interest were raised but I retained the opportunity for expansion, tangents and side tracking by the interviewees in Dalton's (1961:277) style; 'questions were prepared but quietly dropped to pursue interesting leads as they emerged'. I was keen for the interviewee to do the talking and had no intention of slavishly asking each interviewee the same questions. The purpose of the prompt sheet was, to an extent, a safety blanket for me, during interviews I knew that if the interview dried up and/or I needed to introduce a new subject I had some broad ideas listed that were relevant to my research that I could introduce to the conversation (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001).

Where appropriate Gouldner's (1954:247) interview techniques which are described as 'partially non-directive' were employed. This approach enabled interviewees to pursue areas they wished rather than to be required to follow my agenda. The research subject and the people involved have a strong tradition of oral based storytelling relating to their industry's heritage (Townsend, 2003). The questioning style proposed by Gouldner (1954) is relevant and appeared to me to be a style that engaged and stimulated the group to provide useful and in depth responses. A clear goal was to become aware of what Gill and Johnson (2002:166) describe as 'important factors that did not form part of his or her [The researcher's] preconceived notion of the situation' e.g. previous employment as reason to become a taxi driver; Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 (Driver interview: 2008); job security concerns; Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 (Driver interview: 2008); flexibility to fit with his bouncy castle hire business; Taxi Driver Interviewee No.4 (Driver interview: 2008); bankruptcy.

I approached the explanation of the interviewees' rationale for their first response to any questions or themes by asking supplementary questions after they had provided an initial answer by asking questions like; what do you mean by that; can you expand; what is your assertion based upon. This caused the interviewees to reconsider, justify or draw on evidence, examples or reasons for their assertions rather than for me to enter into a dialogue that could explicitly expose my position on these subjects.

Where these tactics did not immediately prompt additional contributions I remained silent until the interviewee commenced enlarging upon their previous points. However given the ethnographic and reflexive nature of the study there was no intention to simply relay interviewee contributions in an observer mode. What I have attempted to do is to explore and analyse what was said, what tone was used, what expressions, semiotic indicators and context were present and if any contradictions were evident e.g. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1's (Taxi Driver Interviews, 2008) dichotomy between customer service and his work life balance, and from that seek meaning and reason for it and relate it back to the aims of my research.

My experience during the interviews was that I only very occasionally referred to the prompt sheet. The interviewees, particularly Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 and Taxi

Driver Interviewee No.3 needed very little prompting at all. During the session with Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1, who was my first interviewee, I referred to the prompt sheet more frequently than I did with Taxi Driver Interviewee No.4 who took part in my last interview. I feel on reflection that although during the first interview with Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 I was not conscious of feeling nervous or self-conscious that I probably was and these feelings were the reason why I repeatedly referred to the prompt sheet.

On reflection I believe that I was keen to cover off as many of the issues on my prompt sheet as possible although having realised that I still feel that Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 had opportunities, some of which he took, to introduce, explore and pursue areas that he wished (Gouldner, 1954). I have reflected upon the Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 interview and how my influence may have affected the outcomes. It was interesting that this interview focused more on emotions than the other interviews and yet I have described Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 as initially appearing to me to be apparently unemotional and impassive (Taxi Driver Interviews, 2008). At the end of the Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 interview I recall being quite surprised at just how much information I had collected. During the rest of the interviews I was far more conscious of Gouldner's (1954) and Gill and Johnson's (2002) approach and referred to my prompt sheet less frequently.

4.13.3 Interview Notes

I made minimal notes during the interviews (see Appendix 2) and did not use a tape recorder. Scwalbe and Wolkomir, (2001:210) label these (recording devices, note taking etc) as 'signs of an interviewer's power' though that was not my primary reason for avoiding their use I do concur with the point. My primary reason for not using a tape recorder was that I wanted the interviewees to relax as quickly as possible and I felt the use of a tape recorder would be a barrier to this objective.

Brief field notes (see Appendix 2), which were mainly notable comments or quotes, were taken during the interview on a contemporaneous basis with recall note making and reflection being undertaken reflexively (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) after each interview had concluded. This approach was taken to avoid losing eye contact for long periods and to fully observe the behaviour of the interviewee during the interview. I was keen to concentrate on what was being said and to keep the interview as relaxed as possible. I suspected that the interviewees may be somewhat nervous and by maintaining eye contact, nodding and looking interested I would help to provide reassurance and a comfortable environment. However, my main focus was on listening to and remembering as much of the interview as possible so I could later record it in a reporting format. I made the notes immediately after each interview while matters were fresh in my mind. Wherever possible I used the interviewees' words, phrases and constructions even if this reduced the clarity of the write up and required the use of parenthesis to provide meaning and approached this task reflexively (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) asking myself questions such as;

'What did I feel and when did I feel it as the interview was unfolding?
What kind of impression did the subject seem to be trying to create?
What was said or not said or not said that surprised me, and why was I surprised?' (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001:217)

Due to the length of the interviews and because I had plenty of time between interviews to write up the notes and reflect on the interview I had time to consider the questions (above) posed by Scwalbe and Wolkomir. The brief field notes (appendix

2) that I took together with the proximity of the interviews to writing them up I believe compensated for not recording the interviews.

4.13.4 Interview Outcomes

Despite my fairly clear goals and approach to the interview process I was not sure just how much would come out of my first taxi driver interview. Watson's (1994) assertion that like any other social researcher he was influencing those he was researching has an a priori inevitability connected to it. Regardless how hard I attempted to remain neutral I could not eradicate my a priori and therefore I attempted to follow Watson's (1994) assertion of endeavouring to be honest about this.

The benefits of my approach were that the interviewee did the talking not me as the interviewer. In all of the interviews the interviewees appeared happy to talk away with little prompting necessary. This provided the interviewee with the stage, they were able to reinvent themselves, craft their public persona (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) exaggerate, and avoid areas they would have found challenging or difficult. This could be described as a disadvantage of my approach as there was no attempt to catch the interviewee out or to validate assertions. A further disadvantage could be perceived as the lack of control by the interviewer. The interview was largely driven and directed by the interviewee which achieved the aims of my research in general and the interviews in particular.

4.14 Summary

I have used a qualitative methodology based on an ethnographic study which has spanned almost three decades. I have enhanced the material I gathered through the small amount of published material and extracts and comment from the trade and popular press. I have then contrasted and compared this to develop my narrative account which I have analysed reflexively to develop my reflexive account.

The next section is my reflexive account in which I have narrated and investigated the material that I have gathered in an ethnographic tradition to provide a unique insight into the social structures, complex networks and behaviours that contribute to or influence the culture of the industry. The industry is fascinating given its disparate and virtual nature and yet how it manages to provide an apparently homogenous service that is highly rated amongst its customers. Whilst not a specific aim of the research the organisation of the industry is remarkable given the lack of any real leadership function or day to day management. Some organisations within the industry are considered within my reflexive account, notably a radio taxi company and the regulator; the Public Carriage Office and how taxi drivers relate to and behave towards these organisations. The importance of the Knowledge of London qualification and its impact on the identity of taxi drivers is also examined.

5 REFLEXIVE ACCOUNT

My reflexive account begins with my view of the industry, largely moulded by my interactions with London's taxi drivers before I entered the industry. I explore my reasons, and those of others, for deciding to enter the industry and the experiences of doing so. I follow this with an account of the industry from the inside, exploring the complex web of relationships, interfaces, and the impact of the culture and identity of London's taxi drivers on their behaviour and reaction to attempts by institutions and groups to impose organisational change.

My reflexive account was developed from a narrative account of my experiences and observations together with interviews with taxi drivers. This material was augmented with material from the taxi trade and popular press, media articles and publications. I have interpreted my narrative account reflexively (Johnson and Duberley, 2003) in order to interpret and make sense of the experiences, stories, anecdotes and interviews, together with the actions of individuals and the institutions within the industry, and the relationships, structures and relative power of groups and how they react and interface with each other to throw light upon the culture of London's taxi drivers.

Gill and Johnson (2002: 147) relate in relation to reflexivity that

'rather than to attempt to eliminate the effects of the researcher on the phenomenon under investigation, the researcher should attempt to understand his or her effect upon, and role in, the research setting and utilize this knowledge to elicit data'.

I have attempted throughout my reflexive account to clearly identify my opinions, where my a priori has influenced my interpretation or where my thinking or beliefs have changed through my reflexivity. I have used a framework of relevant literature as outlined in the previous chapter as a reference point to aid interpretation and compare this industry with other workplace and industrial situations.

5.1 The Identity and Culture of The Industry

5.1.1. *Early Reflections*

I am keen to provide context to my reflexive (Johnson and Duberley, 2003) account and to identify the feelings, recollections and events from which my account is developed. Therefore I have begun with my earliest recollections of taxi usage in the area of London where I grew up; Islington. I viewed these through the lens of hindsight. I remember there being a strong tradition of occasional taxi usage amongst my family and our friends. Taxis were viewed by our family and, I believe, by many others in the area, as an occasionally affordable luxury. When I was young and before I ever thought of joining the industry, they were a mode of transport that was a practical alternative to bus usage when time was critical, when one was travelling with luggage or as an occasional treat. This was in an era when car ownership was low and certainly beyond my family's financial means.

When I was in my late teens, taxi drivers generally appeared to me to be of my father's or grandfather's generation. They were always Londoners, white and generally wore a jacket, shirt and tie. Only when I was in my twenties did I begin to see any younger drivers and drivers who were more casually dressed. The age observation may of course be contextual; as I became older taxi drivers began to

look younger, although my observations regarding a change in dress from fairly formal to increasingly informal are more reliable, I think.

The taxis at this time were clean and fairly standard in appearance both inside and out. Fares were a bit of a mystery as often drivers had fare charts displayed in the taxi on the partition window between the driver and passenger, which were used to calculate the fare payable; in effect a calculation of, and supplement to, the fare shown on the taximeter. In the days of mechanical and electro mechanical meters, adjusting the meters for periodic fare increases was a major logistical exercise and presumably expensive to undertake, so a stick on/adhesive fare table showing the metered and actual fare was used to avoid the cost and logistical challenge of replacing thousands of taximeters. Fares were considered by me and my family as fair and I was vaguely aware that they were regulated.

Taxi drivers always expected a tip, a gratuity, on top of the fare. It was normal amongst my family to tip and on occasions where I tried to avoid providing a tip the drivers' objections were loud and threatening. Tips were expected and apparently viewed as mandatory by drivers, not an occasional or even discretionary consideration, and certainly amongst my family the done or correct thing to do.

My experience of taxi drivers prior to joining the industry was that, when I hailed a taxi or walked up to one on a rank, I was never quite sure if a taxi driver would take me to where I wished to go or whether the driver(s) would refuse the trip request. I mused as to whether this was a power play, the autonomy often demonstrated by men (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) or a commercial issue? The driver was apparently able to choose at will whether to accept the fare or not. I recall that when we went on our annual holiday my father would go out early to find a taxi just in case drivers at our local rank did not want to take us to Paddington Station. As a member of the public it was difficult to understand why taxi drivers refused some trips and accepted others. Normally refusals were courteous and based on distance (too far), time based (not at this time of night/day etc) or personal issues (I have to collect my children from school). Taxis were viewed by me as always available, affordable and normally reliable despite the problem of spasmodic refusals.

What I gathered from these early recollections was that there was a culture amongst taxi drivers that was presented as a fiercely independent identity. This was evident through their behaviour; choosing whether to accept a fare or not, practically demanding a tip and dressing in a formal style. This was somewhat paradoxical given the regulated fares which demonstrated a need to conform to authority. Although an ephemeral phenomenon, the dependence of my family and other non-car owners on them may well have influenced the independent nature of the drivers' identity.

In the next section I explore the identity of London Taxi Drivers further and contrast and compare this with the organisational identity that appears to be portrayed to the public by taxi drivers. This is highlighted by taxi drivers to their passengers and appears to be based on a mixture of regulatory requirements that they consider to be important differentiators from minicab drivers, who they view as illegitimate competitors.

5.1.2 Taxi Driver Identity

This section is an introduction to the identity of taxi drivers that they appear to cultivate and demonstrate to their passengers through reinforcing apparently

important aspects of their qualifications and the regulatory environment in which they operate. I also consider naming conventions and the relationship between taxi drivers and the industry, which appears to be regarded as an institution in the broadest sense, with a high level of legitimacy. The taxi drivers' identity appears to rely on being a London Taxi Driver, which is associated with the onerous requirements of the Knowledge of London qualification and the shared values and beliefs of the community they belong to. As such I see each taxi driver as part of an important institution rather than just someone working in a branch of the transport industry.

In my experience, once a trip was accepted and the journey commenced taxi drivers were either completely quiet, which was quite unusual, responding to any attempts at conversation with short sharp answers or, and more normally, they were very chatty, often asking lots of questions and providing information about their industry and their role in it. They appeared happy to 'attempt to make sacred a constellation of symbols representing the organization' (Christensen and Cheney, 2000:249). In this case due to the lack of an organisation in the classic sense (Hatch and Schultz, 1997) they would frequently describe the strict regime under which they operated, the onerous requirements of the Knowledge of London qualification, the expense, safety and ruggedness of the purpose built taxi, the fairness of the regulated fares system which Christensen and Cheney describe as 'the essential symbols of their identity' (2000:249) and to compare these unfavourably with the unregulated minicab industry.

From a structural or organisational perspective London taxi drivers are at best a loose coalition of individuals (Watson, 1984) and yet they have been able to identify their core competences (Hammel and Prahalad, 1990) and demonstrate a 'strong need to remind themselves [and their customers] on a regular basis about the symbols, values and catchwords that unite them' (Christensen and Cheney, 2000:251).

These experiences provided my early introduction to what I view as the meeting point between the individual taxi driver and the taxi industry's organisational identity (Fombrun and Rindova, 2000). Fombrun and Rindova (2000:95) helpfully explain the way that these identities are communicated;

'the projection of an organizational identity can be unintentional, (e.g. communicated through everyday behaviour, gestures, appearance, and attitude)'.

Although there is no evidence that the drivers I experienced were conscious of the process in which they were participating, the taxi drivers I encountered before joining the industry were making 'explicit claims about what the organization is, their claims [carried] some of the cultural meaning in which they are embedded' Hatch and Schultz (2002:1001). This embedded culture I perceived contained strong traces of a belief in their righteousness, of their legitimacy and of their favourable hierarchical position compared to their direct competitor minicabs and other driving jobs e.g. bus drivers and van drivers, which were openly viewed by taxi drivers as lower order roles. This judgement of other driving jobs appeared to be based on a perceived lack of skill i.e. absence of the Knowledge qualification, lower earning potential (Taxi Driver Interviews, 2008) and the imposed stricture of working for an organisation (Taxi Driver Interviews, 2008) or a boss (Abrahams, 2000). Albert and Whetten described this process of evaluation

'...in terms of a series of comparisons; (1) outsiders compare the target individual with themselves [In this case minicab, bus or van drivers]; information regarding this evaluation is conveyed through conversations between the parties ('Polite boy', 'messy boy') and the individual takes this feedback into account by making personal comparisons with outsiders, which then; (3) affects how they define themselves.' (1985:273)

An issue that is frequently aired in the taxi trade press is the question of whether taxi drivers are black cab drivers or licensed taxi drivers. The debate is frequently raised by two of the trade's editors; Alan Fisher and Stuart Pessok. Normally the issue focuses on stories in the London or National press where taxi drivers have been referred to as black cab drivers or an incident that one of the editors, who are both London taxi drivers, has been involved in and where a member of the public has used the term black cab or black cab driver. The debate is focused on the fact that taxis in the past had to be black in colour but in more recent times can be any colour approved by the Public Carriage Office. A recent article, in Callsign magazine (2008:32), that was based on a vox populi amongst seven taxi drivers, apparently chosen at random, explored this subject. The responses from drivers were centred on whether their title still differentiated them from minicab drivers; they explained that they were licensed taxi drivers and would always be so despite what passengers or anyone else called them. One taxi driver, interviewed for the article, mentioned that he 'was proud to be a licensed taxi driver' and another mentioned that he 'had always been proud to be a licensed taxi driver'. Differentiation from minicab drivers and being recognised as a licensed London taxi driver were apparently more important to taxi drivers' identity than whether customers called them black cab drivers or licensed taxi drivers. The reactions from taxi drivers who took part in the Dial-a-Cab survey point to an apparent acceptance of the on-going development of this issue, but also a strong need for a clear differentiation to remain between licensed London taxi drivers and other drivers, particularly minicab drivers, if indeed it exists anywhere other than in taxi drivers' minds.

My view on this limited research is that all of them had an opinion on this issue, suggesting that identity, naming conventions and the reputation and values afforded by being a licensed London taxi driver are evidently important to their identity (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994). The importance of identity was borne out during the taxi driver interview I carried out with Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 who became emotional when relating his pride at becoming a taxi driver.

From my research and reflection it became evident to me that taxi drivers cultivate a broadly common identity and also demonstrate a desire to associate themselves with that identity and the values, beliefs and status that it represents. Identifying themselves as London taxi drivers is a source of pride for many drivers. As well as cultivating their personal identity London's licensed taxi drivers appear to align their identity closely with that of the organisational, or wider taxi industry, identity. The taxi drivers' values seem to align with the requirements of the regulatory environment and they appear to juxtapose those onerous requirements into a hierarchical scorecard that places them above others who work as drivers in the transport industry. A pride in being a licensed London taxi driver and belonging to the industry appears to be widespread

In the next section I consider the identity of the wider industry of which the taxi driver is just a part. I also consider how the drivers' identity meshes with the identity of the industry.

5.1.3 *Industry and Organisational Identity*

London's taxi drivers are part of larger entity which could be described as an industry or an organisation, albeit a virtual organisation. Further there are aspects of it that are almost institutional in nature. In this section I look at how the wider industry has developed its own identity. This is remarkable given that the industry has no management function and is a loose tie (Gladwell, 2000) grouping of disparate organisations, businesses, institutions, authorities and individuals. Each of these have some influence on how the industry's identity is formulated and then perceived by the public, the press and media, taxi drivers and other stakeholders.

The debate in the taxi trade press around identity and naming conventions is symptomatic of a branding or identity issue and the drivers' relationship to that brand or identity and the values that are implied by it. Hatch and Schultz (2000:15) refer to this concept as 'who we are' and 'what we stand for'. It appears that drivers are happier to be defined as belonging to the institution, that is the licensed and legitimate industry, rather than to be defined by the colour of their vehicle (see section 5.1.2 above). Being defined by the wider organisation and the licensing system carries with it the attributes of the Knowledge of London qualification, the strict driver and vehicle licensing regime, the three hundred years of history associated with the icon (Malthouse, 2010) that is the London taxi industry. Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail term this phenomenon as organisational identification; 'the degree to which a member defines him or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization' (1994:239).

Having analysed the industry and its social and organisational structures, the consistency of the message developed and delivered by the taxi drivers which I encountered apparently spontaneously is now considered by me to be somewhat amazing. There is no overarching organisation in the taxi industry concerned with marketing, public relations and identity. The only organisation which effectively spans the industry is the Public Carriage Office which is strictly a licensing and regulatory body (PCO website, 2007).

The 'traditional and accepted patterns of differentiation' (Beynon, 1975:169) were apparently important to taxi drivers to retain the perception of being higher skilled, by dint of the Knowledge, than other professional drivers. They were also engaged in the process of marketing the wider organisation; the London taxi industry. A constant fear amongst London's taxi drivers often discussed in the trade press and debated by groups of drivers is whether their role in its current form will last into the future. The proactive marketing and re-enforcement of the value of the individual driver and the legitimacy and safety of the wider industry may well be an almost subconscious attempt or possibly campaign to preserve the institution. The shortcomings of the taxi industry, e.g. trip refusals, are ignored in my experience, as were the virtues of the minicab industry, as the taxi drivers I travelled with presented themselves as 'insisting that they represent the 'one true' purveyor of a product or service in their industry [in this case personal transport] and that all competitors are merely imitators or impostors' (Christensen and Cheney, 2000:249), or much worse, as was frequently described to me by taxi drivers when describing minicab drivers,.

London's licensed taxi drivers provide the most visible and accessible interface between the public and the industry. They appear to actively communicate, on their own volition, the positive aspects of their own and the industry's identity to the travelling public. This appears to be an informal and largely unofficial method of adding value to the journey, reassurance of the quality of the service and re-enforcement of the key differentiators from competitors and substitute services

(Porter: 1980,) positioning both themselves and the industry as a value added service. The remarkable consistency of the message, from what is a disparate and virtual workforce, is important to the identity of the driver and the industry. London's licensed taxi drivers appear to add credence to the generational learning theory espoused by Dickson and Buchholz (1979) whereby ideology is passed from generation to generation. The outcome appears to be a very effective communication of the identity of both the individual driver and the taxi industry. The lack of any coordination of this communication system is an interesting point of learning, as conventional organisations expend considerable resources to define their identity and communicate it to their stakeholders, yet this virtual organisation appears to manage this process completely informally and unconsciously.

In the next section I explore how and why taxi drivers use slogans to project their ideology to passengers. I also examine the dilemmas faced by taxi drivers between their industry, their passengers and their families.

5.1.4 Identity Enhancement through Ideology and Slogans

As explained in the previous sections, most taxi journeys I experienced appeared to involve the taxi driver seeking or sharing opinion, information or extolling the virtues of the industry and embellishing his identity through comparisons with other industries or other jobs in the transport industry. In this section I examine the slogans and messages that drivers relied upon to explain their ideology to passengers.

The taxi drivers' discourse that I experienced as a passenger appeared to seek to 'project four things: who you [In this case they] are, what you, [they] do, how you [they] do it, and where you [they] want to go' (Ollins, 1995:3). The taxi drivers I encountered were keen to talk up the difficulty of qualifying as a taxi driver [who they were], how they were subject to a strict licensing regime that regulated everything concerned with the vehicle, the fares and how they worked [what they do]. They often compared their qualification, licensing regime, regulated fares and prescribed vehicles unfavourably with unlicensed and unregulated minicabs and explained why minicabs should be banned [where they want to go] and that taxis should be the sole provider of personal transport in London.

Christensen and Cheney (2000:251) go on to question whether 'restating the same simple slogan week after week' might be 'seen by the external spectator as nothing more than an undue repetition of the obvious'. I recall my feelings towards the information that taxi drivers gave out about their industry and the personal demands and deprivations of the Knowledge to be ones of interest, of confirmation of what friends and family members and other taxi drivers had previously related to me. I felt it added value to the journey. It reminded me of the safety and assurance afforded by the Knowledge of London qualification, and the value of the highly regulated licensing and safety regime under which taxi drivers and their vehicles operated. At a later point, when I was a taxi driver, I recall relating the same points to my own customers, almost an ideology, in very similar language and style to that used to relay these points to me. Dickson and Buchholz (1979:236);

'Ideologies result partially from the legacy of institutions and ideas which is adopted by each generation, much as a child adopts the grammar of his native language and, partially as rationalizations of current self-interest and action. In this way ideologies are formulated through the constant interplay between current contingencies and historical legacies'.

I believe that I voluntarily adopted ideologies that were apparently part of the legacy of the institution; pride in the Knowledge of London qualification, the licensing regime, the rugged vehicle and respect for regulated fares. I also think I adopted much of the ideology of customer management and work ethic, which in truth was to work when I could maximise income rather than specifically at times of acutest customer need/demand, unless of course they conveniently coincided. The Public Carriage Office website (2007) describes the employment status of London taxi drivers to people considering becoming a taxi driver; 'as a licensed driver you can be a self-employed business person with the freedom to work as and when you wish on a 24/7 basis, 365 days a year'.

During an interview with taxi driver Taxi Driver Interviewee No.3 he related that 'the beauty of the job is that I can go out [to work] whenever I want'. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2, another taxi driver that I interviewed, confessed that he 'had joined the trade for flexibility' [of working hours] and that he 'chose to work evenings because they were busy'. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 'works set hours but go home when I get a job fairly close [to his home]'. It could therefore be argued that the Public Carriage Office have accepted the custom and practice apparently prevalent in the taxi industry that drivers suit themselves rather than mirror their working hours to the demand profiles (Slack & Lewis, 2002) of the public and have used that the prevailing practice to promote the job to prospective taxi drivers.

I would assert that the licensing authority implies that the industry is more about the driver than the customer in their assertions concerning freedom to work as and when drivers wish. This is not as surprising as it first appears when the *raison d'être* of the Public Carriage Office is considered. The Public Carriage Office website states that its responsibilities are to 'regulate the industry and license fit and proper persons as drivers' (2009). There is no mention of satisfying customer needs, having any supply side (Slack & Lewis, 2002) or demand fulfilment obligations or similar responsibilities. In a more customer centric environment demand would be the guide to when drivers should work rather than encouraging an ethos of supply being the predominant feature of the service.

This section highlights a paradox in the ideology and the culture of the industry whereby London's taxi drivers demonstrate almost an ownership and certainly a high degree of support for the imposed regulations and rules of the industry, [i.e. the Knowledge of London training and qualification] and the purpose built vehicle and its benefits for passengers, but where they have choice, e.g. to work or not during periods of high demand, they often put the interests of the industry and passenger behind their own personal interests. The use of slogans to communicate the key differentiators and value added aspects of the service appears highly effective. London's licensed taxi drivers appear to share common ideologies, perhaps as a consequence of their narrow demographic and the shared experience of the Knowledge of London and the status they enjoy amongst their non-taxi driving peer groups.

As my research uncovered taxi drivers form groups which could be considered communities and almost inevitably within a community there is a desire to form hierarchies. The next section considers the frameworks that support those hierarchies and how they are formed and developed and their importance to personal status.

5.1.5 *Personal Status And Identity Building*

There is no career path as a licensed taxi driver. Drivers are fundamentally at the same level from the day they receive their badge until they retire. This is very different from conventional organisations and most professions and occupations where promotion, power and status are common themes as people build their careers. Consequently it was interesting to reflect on how taxi drivers tried to build a perception of seniority and to build personal status. This was often attempted through displaying industry knowledge, often with a strong historical bent and using often obscure industry terminology to differentiate themselves from new entrants.

My analysis highlighted the importance of information dissemination and storytelling, and the way that these activities are used in the London taxi industry to create differentials and pseudo superiority and inferiority amongst those who are, by many evaluation criteria, equals.

Stacey points out that

‘Knowledge is created in the stories a community of practitioners tell each other. Looked at in this way, knowledge is embedded in the ordinary, everyday conversation between people. It is primarily localized and contextual, distributed through an organization rather than centralized in data banks, and embedded in the stories people tell each other about their experience, stories that interactively create their experience. Socially constructed views of this kind also stress power differentials and politics in organizations’. (2001:36)

My research uncovered the inclination for older drivers to use stories to create an aura or perception of implied seniority within an industry that had no formal career path or hierarchy. In effect they were stressing socially constructed power differential phenomena (Stacey, 2001). This was evident amongst drivers who had been driving for many years, who used their knowledge and experience of changes in regulations and practices to imply or even claim deeper knowledge (and thereby wisdom) to establish their place as somehow more senior than newer entrants to the industry. Experience of issues were used to cultivate their appearance of seniority, such as a long defunct practice known amongst taxi drivers as double bubble (see Glossary), which they highlighted as something that was sadly missed. This practice was used when the price for journeys over six miles was, by law, negotiable, and it is claimed by advocates of the system that a typical outcome of that negotiation was a requirement by the driver that the customer paid double the metered fare. The practice had no relevance to newer drivers and was merely a tool by longer serving drivers to burnish their credentials as being more knowledgeable about the industry than their newer counterparts.

Longer serving drivers were also at pains to introduce the information that they had undertaken their Knowledge of London tests at Lambeth Road [the site of the old Public Carriage Office until 1966] rather than Penton Street [the site of the new Public Carriage Office from 1966]. This information was almost certainly provided to validate their length of service. The Public Carriage Office in Lambeth Road’s procedures for Knowledge of London testing were often referred to by longer serving taxi drivers as being far more onerous than those at Penton Street (Townsend, 2003). This assertion thereby achieved three differentials; the first being the completion of what was claimed to be a tougher Knowledge of London testing system than had recently been the case, historical knowledge of the industry and a validation of their long service.

These longer serving drivers also used industry terminology e.g. stalking (see glossary) (Townsend, 2003:56) referring to the time when drivers were normally employed by a fleet owner and fares were shared between the fleet owner and the driver. As well as frequently using obscure or obsolete industry terms, they often related to points [Places, venues] that had disappeared e.g. Churchill's [A gentlemen's club that used to be at the junction of New and Old Bond Streets], and which were frequently referred to with affection. The affections were based on the quality of work, the social standing of the customers, the fairness of the doorman or similar. These terms and locations were exclusive and apparently designed to create a perception of greater knowledge in a proxy or quasi seniority. In fact I believe conversations where these phrases were dropped in were often initiated for the same reason. The exclusiveness of these terms and locations were in many respects finite, as well as belonging to an era that had passed and therefore could not be replicated or effectively acquired by newer entrants to the industry. Stacey discusses such points in the context of identity where he asserts 'identities are constructed in the process of interaction between people' (Stacey, 2001:37).

In contemporary organisations (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Beynon, 1975) there are clear symbols of hierarchy or deference, often indicated by the formal office layout, differences in privileges between levels of management, the way people address each other and, less often, less explicit symbols such as whose work is prioritised over whose (Watson, 1994). Given that taxi drivers do not have offices and management privileges these important symbols do not feature in their day to day working lives and alternative symbols have been developed to create the perception of seniority.

Tangible differentiation of status or seniority was found in artefacts such as moving from renting a taxi to purchasing one. Renting a taxi appeared to those who owned their own taxi to be viewed as bestowing a lower status on the driver. This may be because the majority of London's taxi drivers own their own taxi (Public Carriage Office Website, 2009), for reasons of greater autonomy or for other intangible reasons. Rarely were financial factors cited as a rationale for ownership and in my experience rightly so as there is little economic incentive to commend one approach over another, although Taxi Driver Interviewee No 1, implying economic reasons, appeared genuinely mystified as to why anyone would hire a taxi.

As is reputed to be the case with former council tenants who purchase their homes and replace the doors and windows to differentiate them from the non-owners, owner drivers embellished their vehicles with tell-tale signs of ownership e.g. chrome bumpers (Instead of black rubber ones), chrome wheel rims (Instead of black ones), or they bought a non-black taxi e.g. red, silver etc., which stood out as an owner driven taxi, as most hired taxis were black. The keenness to identify their taxi as owned was almost certainly part of the desire for status, and the status came from owning rather than renting a taxi. Presumably the need for status came from wanting to demonstrate that they were advancing along an albeit intangible career path.

Joining a radio circuit was another event that somehow showed that drivers were progressing their careers. Radio Taxi drivers implied that they were a step above non radio drivers, or were able to earn money quicker or easier than everyone else either through being cleverer, smarter or gaining an advantage through the radio circuit they belonged to, or through acquiring an additional qualification, e.g. the London Blue Badge Tourist Guide licence.

Newer drivers tended to obscure their badge (see photograph below), whilst older drivers display it prominently. Taxi drivers' metal badges display a number which is issued serially, so it is simple for drivers to estimate how long a driver has been a taxi driver using their own badge numbers as a reference point and adding circa 700 (the trend average) new badges per annum. Seniority either through accumulating years or service driving a taxi, being an owner driver or belonging to a radio circuit all appear to be accepted by drivers as the basis of a hierarchy although none of these actually proffer any real or tangible benefit in terms of career, seniority or other explicit benefit to the driver



A London Taxi Driver's Badge
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As can be ascertained from the section above the taxi industry has a culture that has developed based on the importance of the Knowledge of London qualification, the ephemeral nature of many of its relationships and the desire for differentiation based on length of service and a desire for tacit and tangible symbols of seniority.

Minicabs are a fairly new innovation when compared to London's taxis having been licensed for some three hundred years. The next section explains their establishment, the relationship between minicabs and London's taxi drivers and their position in London's transport system.

5.1.6 Minicabs – Differentiating Identity

The minicab industry was relatively new in the mid 70's (before I joined the taxi industry), having been in existence for around fifteen years. Minicabs operated through what was often described by detractors as a loophole in the law and at that time were unlicensed and unregulated. The minicab industry was singled out for vitriolic criticism by taxi drivers through the trade press and also in informal conversations at ranks and stations to which I was a witness. The descriptions enunciated by taxi drivers with whom I travelled ranged from driven by rapists, muggers and murderers to their vehicles being uninsured and falling to bits, to charging whatever fare they [Minicab drivers] felt like. These charges, heavy with metaphor 'on organizational [or industry] identity' (Hatch and Schultz, 2002:1000), stem from 'the deeply held assumptions and values of its [the taxi industry's] members which then become closely associated with its identity and its various manifestations,' namely regulated fares, safe and robust vehicles, clean criminal records, insured vehicles and a long history of serving London.

In my experience the uncertainty as to whether a taxi driver would accept a hiring or not was the major drawback of using taxis versus minicabs. Minicabs seemed always to take me where I wanted to go. At the time I did not know whether this was due to oversupply (Slack and Lewis, 2002) in the minicab industry, a more flexible approach to pricing enabling trips that were financially unattractive for taxi drivers to be made attractive for minicabs through price enhancement, or a peculiarity of the market that made minicabs keener to take any trip. Minicab fares were not regulated and the driver charged an amount, normally £x per mile, reputedly based on the vehicle's odometer reading, although my experience was that minicab drivers often asked

what I had been charged the last time I had undertaken the journey and charged the same. Tips seemed much less of an issue for minicab drivers than was the case for taxi drivers.

Although I had no knowledge of the minicab drivers' criminal records that I travelled with, they always appeared fairly harmless types, albeit the vehicles, which were mainly family saloons, were often a little tired in appearance. My experience of the fares in minicabs was that they were fairly consistent and generally reasonable when compared to similar trips in taxis.

As far as knowing where they were going, minicab drivers often relied on me, the passenger, and presumably other passengers, to direct them. This was not the case with taxi drivers who objected to being asked to take a particular route. The assertions concerning the taxi drivers' vocational qualification, the regime under which they operated, the safety and comfort of their vehicles, regulated fares and taxi drivers' disparaging view of minicabs in general were in my opinion a participation 'in an on-going identity game in which their interest in their customers are often overshadowed by their interest in themselves' (Christensen and Cheney, 2000:247). Interestingly minicab drivers did not normally offer any views on taxis or taxi drivers and seemed far less political.

The impact of minicabs on the taxi industry was to show that it was possible to provide door to door personal transport without undertaking the onerous Knowledge of London qualification, nor was it necessary to drive a purpose built vehicle. The minicab industry to an extent undermined the taxi drivers' belief in their legitimacy and the public's approbation of them and the service they provided. At a financial level there was a belief that the minicab industry was reducing the income levels of taxi drivers. There was also condemnation of the taxi industry regulator for not stopping the establishment of minicabs and for not making any visible effort to close the loophole that enabled minicabs to operate.

Minicabs were a disruptive new entrant (Porter, 1980) which taxi drivers resented. They were clearly a competitive threat and undermined licensed taxi drivers' identity and hitherto exclusive right to transport the public. The competitive features of both services were clearly delineated, with licensed taxi drivers relying on the Knowledge of London qualification, rugged, purpose built vehicle and Hackney Carriage licensing versus a lower cost service, local availability and, importantly, providing a door to door to service which was bookable by phone. Minicabs were to remain a serious competitive threat to the taxi industry throughout my career in the industry.

5.1.7 Summary

This section was largely based on my experiences of the London Taxi Industry before I became a taxi driver and as such supports the aims of my research to provide an insight into the people who make up the industry and their relationships. It has other important contributions to the aims of my research. Culturally there is a strong reliance within the London Taxi Industry and amongst taxi drivers specifically to market the key differentiators of the taxi industry to passengers. The taxi drivers use this communications channel with their passengers to develop their own identity and highlight their attributes and also those of the industry. From a managerial perspective the taxi industry has no centralised or even distributed management function. It is therefore an important finding to note that without any formal processes or procedures London's taxi drivers communicate surprisingly consistent messages to their passengers.

London's longer serving licensed taxi drivers use historical anecdotes and obsolete and obscure industry language to create pseudo, quasi status and differentiate themselves from younger and newer taxi drivers. This concept of status development appears to be necessary to create a perception of seniority amongst longer serving and older taxi drivers. Other icons of seniority such as owning a taxi and purchasing one in a different colour to the standard black taxi to highlight ownership are also used to portray a perception of seniority. This apparently cultural need to enhance individual identity appears to fill a gap in an industry where there is no career path compared with more conventional organisations where status, seniority and career paths are normal outcomes of career progression. With no management function it is remarkable that London's taxi drivers have developed their own career path; via seniority and process the licensed taxi drivers seek to establish an identity that clearly differentiates them from minicab drivers and positions such taxi drivers as an elite within a perceived hierarchy of professional drivers. This positioning appears to be important and widely practiced amongst licensed taxi drivers.

The next section investigates the history, the processes and the apparent importance of the Knowledge of London training process and qualification to the identity and culture of London's taxi drivers. The Knowledge, as it is known colloquially, is far from a simple administrative process and the rite of passage achieved by qualifying as a taxi driver has a significant effect on the demographic, culture, identity and the reaction to attempts to manage taxi drivers and their response to organisational and process change.

5.2 The Knowledge of London – Ritual and Rite of Passage

The Knowledge of London, or as it is known in the industry, the Knowledge, has evolved from an administrative function to resolve problems with taxi drivers not knowing where they are going into what I think is a system of arcane and obscure rituals with onerous physical and personal demands. The system is accepted consensually by the industry and a number of attempts at change and modernisation have been strongly resisted. The Knowledge of London qualification has a Darwinian effect on the industry where only the strongest and/or most determined candidates survive the process. This situation impacts on the demographic of the industry, narrowing it to the tenacious and determined. The Knowledge also influences the identity of the individual driver as well as the wider industry.

In this section I examine the history of the Knowledge, the processes and systems, the folklore, the outcomes and attempts that were made to modernise and shorten the Knowledge. The aims of my research included shedding light on the behaviours of those in the industry and looking at the relationships between Knowledge Boys and licensed taxi drivers and their relationships with the institutions of the industry. The Knowledge of London provides opportunities to analyse all these issues, as well as considering issues of identity, culture and management within the wider industry.

5.2.1 Career Appeal

Taxi driving in London was considered by my non taxi driving peers and workmates as a good job. Taxi drivers were viewed as part of an upper or skilled working class that included publicans, porters in the wholesale food markets (Billingsgate, Smithfield and Convent Garden) and print workers, who at the time were envied for their closed shop employment rights and reputed short hours and high pay. Beynon discusses the concept of 'the new affluent working class' (Beynon, 1975:101) and laments that 'they have been increasingly concerned about money to the neglect of

traditional brotherhood with their workmates'. He pursues the theme of skilled workers and interestingly specifically printers;

'The skilled worker already has a freedom. A freedom which finds its expression in the dignity which printers and other skilled men derive from the superiority of their work' (Beynon, 1975:187)

This theme resonates with the beliefs amongst working class groups (Blau, 1986) that I belonged to, who had a clear hierarchy in mind when talking about different jobs, trades and professions. Taxi driving was seen as on the same level as printers and publicans, regarded as an elite in working class circles at the time. This description fits with the generally expressed view amongst taxi drivers when I first became a taxi driver. At that time conversations amongst drivers were that the part time drivers who were printers etc when driving their taxis did not "play the game" [Follow the informal rules or etiquette] and "were selfish". This was an interesting phenomenon as I found that licensed taxi drivers as a group generally committed to, and observed the rituals, traditions and etiquette of the industry. Perhaps the printers and others saw themselves as printers etc. who also drove taxis rather than taxi drivers.

Many of the industries (Dockers, electricians, porters in London's wholesale markets) that enjoyed short working hours, closed shop policies and relatively high pay that enabled their members to drive taxis part time were already largely defunct when I became a taxi driver. Fleet Street printers, the last of this group aside from publicans, were just starting to be made redundant due to increased automation and many started to drive taxis on a full time basis. As this process happened fewer mentions were made about printers, presumably they either began to play the game [follow the commonly observed etiquette] once they were full members of the industry or fell off of the non-printer taxi drivers' radar.

Taxi driving was often compared, by older, non-taxi driver acquaintances of mine, to London dock workers from a pay and right to work perspective. The term 'closed shop', implying high entry barriers or some form of limitation of numbers or grandfather rights, was often used by friends of mine to describe the taxi industry. The point that I believe my peers were making was related to autonomy (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) and the favourable terms that taxi drivers worked under as a result of their autonomy and apparently strong employment rights brought about by what my friends perceived to be closed shop practices. Although the taxi industry was never a closed shop per se, the Knowledge of London was an effective, albeit unintended (Garner and Stokoe, 2000) barrier to entry (Porter, 1980) that had the effect of presenting a closed shop ethos. An interview with a taxi driver (Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1) highlighted the same feelings about being a taxi driver that I had gathered from my other peers; the concept of autonomy (Scwalbe and Wolkmir, 2001), flexibility in relation to working hours (taxi driver interviews) no boss (Abrahams, 2000) and security (Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1) which is analogous to the closed shop principle.

I knew that I had to be twenty one years of age to become a taxi driver and had considered becoming a taxi driver off and on since passing my driving test when I was seventeen. I started a part time catering business when I was eighteen which after three years became full time, albeit most of the work took place at the weekend. I finally decided to become a taxi driver during the transition from ceasing full time work to build the catering business, as I had the interest in doing so, as well as a good income and plenty of spare time which would enable me to undertake the

reputedly onerous training that would be needed. My situation was very similar to the claims made by both Taxi Driver Interviewee No.3 and Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2. All of the drivers I interviewed and many that I engaged with whilst working in the industry valued what they termed flexibility highly.

This flexibility enabled taxi drivers to work part time in other roles, engage in hobbies or even live in other parts of this country (Cornwall is an example) or, in two cases I know of, abroad (Holland and France), and then work in London driving their taxis in short intensive bursts.

My career decision to become a taxi driver was based on information and assumptions accrued by me over a number of years about the benefits of becoming a taxi driver, plus two final pieces of personal experience; my sister in law's father and both of her brothers were taxi drivers, and my knowledge of their lifestyles accorded with the picture I had formed of a taxi driver's earning potential. In addition to this my elderly workmate's son was a London taxi driver and he used to relate occasional snippets about particularly good trips that his son had undertaken and observations regarding his lifestyle; home owner, car owner and ability to take frequent family holidays abroad, which was less common at the time than is the case now.

I knew that I would shortly be leaving my part time job and would have the time needed to undertake the Knowledge. Subsequently I left my job and made the decision to become a London taxi driver, based on peer group information about earning and lifestyle potential but without any guarantees that these would be achieved. My decision had been based on anecdotal evidence and second and third hand accounts of the requirements of the Knowledge and the earning potential of a taxi driver. I had no real insight into the job itself, motivational factors, or any potential risks or downsides, but I was happy to launch into the major undertaking that was the Knowledge of London qualification. However I did own and operate a burgeoning outdoor catering business so my income was secure. I also I had the time required to work on acquiring the Knowledge of London.

Although my decision might be considered foolhardy or impulsive I was to discover during my research that my approach was not unusual. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 is 45 years old and has had a London Taxi Driver Licence for thirteen years. Before he became a taxi driver he had worked at a courier company. He 'decided to become a taxi driver after a workmate suggested doing so'. When asked why he had decided to become a taxi driver Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1's view was that 'it provided him with security'. The security he was seeking was a response to the prevalence of people being sacked for no apparent reason by the courier company. He went on to explain that he 'knew nothing at all about being a taxi driver' but was 'attracted to being able to work whenever' [to be able to work at any time].

Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 explained that the company he worked for routinely 'just sacked people' and whilst he was not overly concerned he was aware that the next routine sacking might involve him. This discussion demonstrates the image that taxi driving has amongst working class people. It is seen as being a secure job, (Beynon, 1975) where you are your own boss (Abrahams, 2000). I was to establish that the level of security enjoyed by taxi drivers as assumed by people outside of the industry was not shared by those in it. These are similar views to those that used to be expressed amongst my peer group towards other trades e.g. printers, porters in wholesale markets, publicans et al, which are seen as upper working class roles. Ultimately all of these roles have changed significantly and are now either skilled white collar roles or substantially less prestigious amongst working class peer groups

and in terms of the benefits previously afforded through the closed shop protocols. The belief of job security was sadly misplaced and has ultimately crumbled in many upper working class roles but despite the pessimism of many within the licensed taxi industry it has endured.

In this section there is evidence that those outside of the taxi industry in working class roles view the job of a taxi driver as being towards the top of an intangible hierarchy of roles. I, like many applicants, had decided to attempt to join the industry with little real understanding of the demands of the Knowledge and the actual earning potential of the job. It does not seem unusual to join the industry for the benefits of being your own boss, the flexibility and perceived job security. This rather shallow consideration of whether to plunge into the Knowledge of London training may explain the high level of attrition amongst Knowledge Boys which is highlighted in the next section.

The next is focused on a discussion of the Public Carriage Office, the regulatory entity responsible for the taxi industry in London, and those who work there.

5.2.2 The Public Carriage Office

From the moment that potential drivers wish to become taxi drivers they experience what I believe to be one of the most significant and, to an extent, archaic control systems that I discovered within the industry; the Public Carriage Office (PCO). The PCO website defines the organisation's role;

'The role of the Public Carriage Office includes the licensing of taxi and private hire services in London. We are also responsible for:

Reviewing and setting taxi fares

Appointing taxi ranks

Improving travel information

Making services safer and more accessible

Helping the Mayor of London integrate public transport in the Capital'
(Public Carriage Website, 2009)

This apparently innocuous list is modest in comparison to the drivers' apparent beliefs in the PCO's near omnipotence within the industry. What the PCO does or does not do and what they should or should not do is a common theme within discussions between drivers. These themes and discussions feature regularly within the trade press [Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 and see extract from Taxi Newspaper below (Taxi, 2012)];

30 TAXI | 18 SEPTEMBER 2012

LETTERS

STAR LETTER

Taxi rant

After 40 years driving a cab, I'm sure you will agree that I have served my apprenticeship and can speak with a great deal of experience.

I am also sure that I'm not alone in being sick and tired of all the empty platitudes that London cab drivers receive. 'National treasures,' 'salt of the earth,' 'London icon,' you have all heard them, especially when lost property is returned, or the war disabled and disadvantaged children are helped by trade charities.

We are also told that we are an intricate part of London transport; what a load of old tosh! Do the public carriage office help us? Do they hell. Local authorities are constantly issuing PCN notices. Now the so called finest, our Metropolitan Police Force, always put us down and speak to us with contempt, yet those are the very same police that are always seeking our help.

If you can find a police station open to hand in lost property then you'll be lucky. And then they treat

you like a criminal and want to give you a ticket because you have the audacity to park outside.

By the way, can anybody tell me where you can answer the call of nature without the threat of a PCN ticket?

Were we told that, unlike the bus and underground workers who received bonuses, with our unique purpose built taxis we would be very busy over the Olympic and we are entitled to a fare supplement? What utter garbage. The work over the Olympics was the worst I have ever known.

Am I cynical? What do you think? Will I put myself out of work during the games? It is too late to protest now, but can this be the catalyst that brings together a united front of trade representative bodies and unions, who have the trade's best interests at heart?

I know that if Paris had won the games and treated its drivers with the same contempt there would have been riots.

D Purcival, Herts

The above letter is interesting as it highlights the mismatch between how the Public Carriage Office defines its role; very much as an administrative licensing authority and regulator and how many in the trade, including the writer of this letter, see it and its role. Of particular note is his expectation of 'help' from the PCO in dealing with the police, local authorities and others.

At the time that I was first involved with it as an aspirant Knowledge Boy, the Public Carriage Office (PCO) was under the control of the Home Office and operated by the Metropolitan Police. It has since moved under the control of Transport for London, the authority responsible for commissioning all forms of transport in London. The PCO then was housed in a grey pre-fabricated or modular concrete, 60's type building situated in Penton Street in Islington in Central London (See photo below).



Public Carriage Office, (<http://blackcablondon.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/penton-street.jpg>) reproduced by kind permission of <http://blackcablondon.com>

My impression was that the atmosphere in the PCO building was governmental and bare, the temperature inside was cold, there were plain neutral coloured walls, polished tiled floors. It was very quiet, with very few people in sight, although behind frosted glass panels one could see human shapes and hear voices, phones ringing and other office activity.

Watson (1999:112) in discussing culture, explains that the physical environment and other artefacts have a purpose;

‘Cultures manifest themselves in the behaviours that follow from them, of course, and they are also transmitted through artefacts ranging from the clothing people wear to the layout and decoration of the buildings in which they work’.

During my early interactions with the PCO I formed an impression of being treated very much as an outsider and certainly not a welcome visitor or somebody visiting what I had assumed to be the headquarters building of the industry I was attempting to join.

The PCO staff members were in my view typical civil servants of the era; they had an institutional aura that gave the impression of the task being more important than the public they served. I don't know what their view of aspiring taxi drivers was but it certainly did not fit the description used latterly amongst Government and Local Government Officers of clients. At the Public Carriage Office women were receptionists and clerical workers whilst the managerial roles were filled by white, apparently middle class, middle aged men.

The men were polite but in a stilted, head-masterly manner. Their speech was unusually slow and considered, neither heavily accented nor overly affected. The men were dressed quite formally; sports jackets, slacks, crisp shirts and ties and well-polished shoes. They were clean shaven with very tidy hair. This style was described by Scwalbe and Wolkomir as to 'convey a business like seriousness of purpose, without crossing into off putting formality' (2001: 209). The PCO Examiners as I learnt their job title to be, certainly managed to convey a 'business like seriousness' (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001: 209) but their manner appeared almost fashioned to be off putting. Their semiotic indicators e.g. withering looks, as though viewing an undesirable substance rather than a group of people seeking a new career were certainly off putting as was the delivery of their speech. When I later discovered that they were all retired policemen working a few years into their retirement I was not surprised. Neither was I surprised when I discovered that their surnames were typically English or Scottish, e.g. Smith, Miller, Lippet, Stoddard, Finlay, Shearn, all very British. The apparent culture of the Public Carriage Office was counter intuitive to Watson's (1999:112) proposal that;

'for effective cooperation to take place, people need a degree of common language and some sharing of priorities but also, for people not to be endlessly calculating their cynical and sectional self-interest and keeping themselves at a distance from others, there have to be assumptions and relations based on common values'

None of Watson's proposals were apparent to any extent in the culture of the Public Carriage Office, in their language or their behaviour or artefacts, as far as I could see.

The PCO's individual offices were peculiar in appearance; they were longer and narrower than normal offices; noticeably sparsely furnished and felt decidedly chilly at any time of the year, this was before the days of air conditioning being common. The small uncomfortable waiting room, the anonymous corridors where staff and their activities were obscured from view by frosted glass and the bare, cold offices of the Public Carriage Office conveyed an institutional message that the Knowledge Boys were very much on the outside. I felt the venue conveyed a feeling of lowering the significance of the Knowledge Boy from being part of the institution to a mere invitee or barely tolerated visitor. When compared to other testing or regulatory regimes there was no collegiate, client or partnership approach. The Public Carriage Office, its staff and its functions appeared to have nothing to do with Knowledge Boys and yet their existence and purpose was largely concerned with Knowledge Boys and administering their vocational testing.

The examiners' desks were unusual. They were similar in style and appearance to Government issue teachers' desks that were seen at the time in schools and other public sector buildings, save that at the Carriage Office they had a shelf on two wooden brackets at the back of the desk (the side nearest to the Knowledge student). The shelf appeared to provide no purpose other than to further separate the students from the examiners and possibly to obscure the paperwork on the examiners' desks. There were no pictures, personal effects, bookshelves or anything that suggested that someone worked in these offices every day. Possibly the offices were only used for interviews and the Public Carriage Officers then worked in another part of the building. Why this would be so is difficult to understand. Alternatively perhaps the Public Carriage Officers were as unattached to the Public Carriage Office as they apparently were to the taxi industry. My early interactions

with the PCO and my perceptions were, I learnt, not uncommon amongst Knowledge Boys. The institution that was the PCO, the building and its employees projected a very clear identity; they were above Knowledge Boys, authoritative, scrupulous, cold and discreet. The behaviours were almost akin to that of a closed religious order. The culture of the institution appeared to be strong and perhaps derived or influenced by the backgrounds and a priori of the management i.e. the police force. The demographic was narrow and therefore the behaviours that were exhibited were unsurprisingly similar. Why the PCO management encouraged, if they did, sanctioned, if they did, or even tolerated this unfriendly culture was and remains difficult to understand.

The next section explores the power structure that was exercised by the PCO in general and its Knowledge of London examiners in particular. Although seen at times by some Knowledge Students as oppressive and unnecessary it was interesting to discover the high degree of consensual acceptance, and, amongst some in the industry, belief that the ritualised power plays were actually beneficial to the longevity of the industry.

5.2.3 Public Carriage Office – Power Structure

The Public Carriage Office is both highly regarded and feared by those in the industry. The PCO had the ultimate power with Knowledge Boys; the examiners could decide to sanction what are known as reductions (see glossary) or ask awkward questions that meant that the Knowledge Boy was unable to proceed to become a taxi driver. For taxi drivers the PCO has the power to pass his taxi mechanically sound to operate for another year or to insist on a plethora of minor (or major) repairs prior to passing or licensing the taxi. Likewise the PCO has the power to revoke licences. On the more positive side the PCO is viewed by some as the bulwark of the industry and through its power to uphold standards provided reassurance of the industry's continued existence and future.

Although the Public Carriage Office exerts considerable power over the Knowledge of London and vehicle licensing processes it is not the only power structure within the industry nor is it the only institution, either internal or external, to the industry that can exercise power over, or influence on it. Amongst London's taxi drivers there appears to be confusion about where power lies, its use, misuse and impact on their identity. Metonyms (Musson and Tietze, 2004) appear to be used to disguise their confusion; terms such as Penton Street [the location of the Public Carriage Office], the PCO [Public Carriage Office often shortened to the Carriage Office], and the vaguer terms them and they. Assertions such as; they should do something about minicabs [meaning presumably that the Public Carriage Office need to initiate change to legislation or regulation], or, it is alright for them dictating which vehicle we have to use [vehicle types for use as taxis are prescribed by law], are common amongst groups of taxi drivers when discussing the shortcomings of or desired changes to the industry. These terms are used to signify decisions, pronouncements and impacts on their job, security or as a demand for action e.g. Penton Street need to do something about this.

These vague almost metaphorical (Musson and Tietze, 2004) references to authority I feel contrast very strongly with the very clear delineation and structure of power at Fords (Beynon, 1975). The understanding of those structures appears to be facilitated by the trade unions at Fords. A clear difference between the situation at Fords (Beynon, 1975) and the taxi industry is that at Fords the workers were clear about the power structure within the organisation and how they identified and

interfaced with it. Apparently the workers at Fords felt threatened by the organisation but protected by both their union and their group behaviour or response to any dispute or realised threat. Whereas in the taxi industry the fear of assimilation is widely felt, as explained during the taxi driver interviews I undertook, the facilitation or protection enjoyed at Fords is absent due to the lack of commitment by the majority of taxi drivers to organisations such as unions and trade associations (Townsend 2007), and the disparate nature of the industry structure. Arguably it is easier to organise groups of workers who are in the same building or at the same plant each day. The virtual structure of the taxi industry adds a layer of complexity to anybody or any group seeking to coordinate unified behaviour in response to a threat.

Within the London taxi industry there is no tradition of any coordinated or group response to any external or realised threat to individuals or the industry in general. The workers at Fords were able to identify with the union whereas the taxi drivers appear to identify with the Knowledge and the longevity of their industry to provide some form of job protection or obstacle to change. It is interesting that whilst the taxi industry clearly has structural weaknesses that mitigate against waging an effective defence of the status quo or pushing back any imposed changes, politicians appear genuinely concerned at the influence that the industry can generate (The Economist, 2002).

Beynon's (1975) book is rich with stories of management and workers battling out the dividing lines between power, control and identity. Workers were apparently able to identify with either Fords or with their trade union but not both. Taxi drivers do not have the same enemy as the Ford workers as discussed by Beynon (1975) i.e. management, neither do they have the protection of a trade union in the way Beynon (1975) describes it nor the group dynamics and unity displayed by workers at Fords.

The Public Carriage Office's use and arguably misuse of power (Townsend, 2007) appears to be accepted consensually by the industry. This phenomenon appears to be a consequence of taxi drivers' fear of assimilation and their implicit belief that the tougher the regulatory regime the more likely the industry will remain in its present incarnation. The ritualised torment of Knowledge Boys during their Knowledge of London tests is seen as a quality control measure and, although not explicitly stated, I strongly suspect as an effective barrier to entry to the industry.

The Public Carriage Office whilst viewed by some in the industry as misusing power appears actually to align with many in the industry through the retention of the high standards in the vehicle testing that the industry generally champions as a key differentiator with minicabs. Its use of power concerned with the Knowledge is accepted consensually by many. The taxi industry appears impotent in protecting itself from imposed change or abuse of power but has the reputation of being fearsomely powerful by some outside of the industry. This paradox is interesting and somewhat puzzling. Comparisons with other industries such as the motor industry provide some important contrasts; Ford workers were strongly aligned with their union and resentful of their management whereas the taxi industry seemed until recently unaligned with any organisations such as unions and unclear about who their enemy, if they had one, actually was. This situation was perhaps aggravated by the virtual nature of the industry.

The PCO is seen as a powerful player in the taxi industry. One of the ways in which this power is exerted is through its role as the sole taxi licencing body for London. Its methods are sometimes criticised by the industry but its purpose is accepted largely consensually. The next section describes the business process for learning the

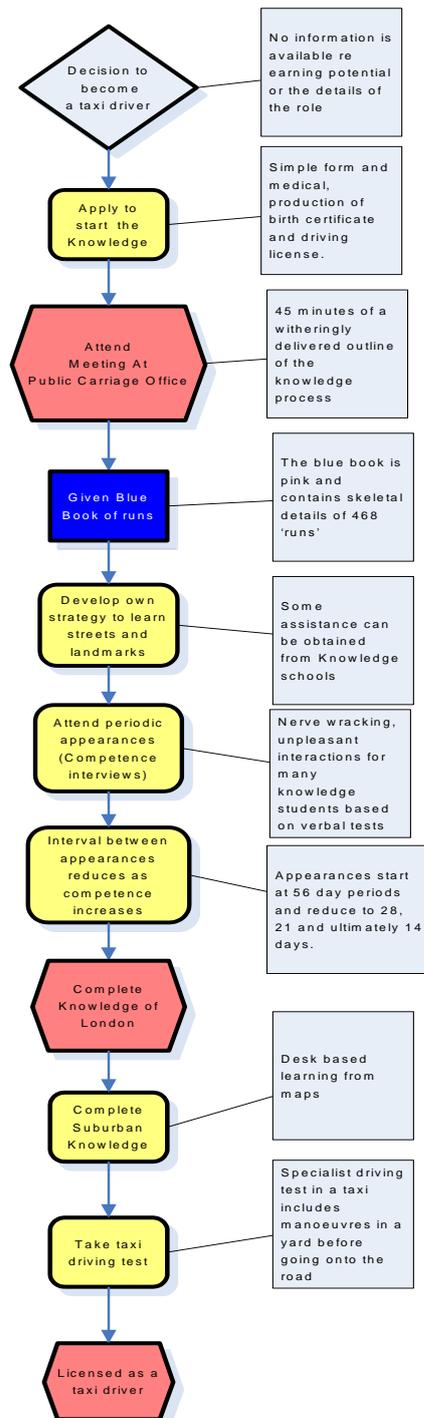
Knowledge of London. Although neat and tidy in graphical form each step I was to discover was painful, difficult, demotivating and/or uncomfortable.

5.2.4 The Business Process for Learning the Knowledge

The business process for learning the Knowledge of London is set out below. The entire process took me just over a year but some students took double or treble that time due to other commitments. I have added a brief description of each stage of the process;

Diagram 1 – The Knowledge Process

Below is a diagram of my experience of the business process of learning the Knowledge.



Although presented as a linear process similar to any curriculum the impact of the Knowledge on Knowledge

Boys is considerable. The personal discomfort of travelling around London on a motorcycle, uncomfortable interviews, the scope of knowledge acquisition, the separation from wife and children, the financial deprivations of not being able to work overtime and overall adverse impact on friends, family and life are all narrated and discussed in the following sections. Like much of the Knowledge of London process there were no clear instructions as to how one went about applying and once accepted what one actually had to do. The next section explains what I and others discovered and how we progressed through the application process and induction meeting.

5.2.5 The Knowledge of London - Application and Induction

This section highlights important issues around the relationship between the PCO examiners and Knowledge Boys, their relevant identities and how these are presented and positioned. It is also important from the perspective of Knowledge Boys' relationships with and to each other.

My sister in law's brothers and her father were all taxi drivers and it was they who informed me about what I needed to do to apply to begin the Knowledge. After obtaining the relevant forms from the Public Carriage Office (PCO) I completed them and returned the application and medical forms to the PCO. At this point I was asked to attend a meeting at the PCO on a set day and time over which there was no choice. I attended dressed in what is nowadays commonly termed smart casual as in my view I was only attending an introductory meeting.

The induction meeting for new Knowledge Students took place in a large room at the Public Carriage Office, it held around 30 people. The seats were typical Government issue and made of tubular steel with a moulded grey plastic seat and backrest. My peers, the prospective taxi drivers, were all white males. Most were dressed in suits that had the appearance of mainly being used for interviews, weddings and funerals and few of my peers looked comfortable in them. There were clear signs of nervousness amongst the prospective taxi drivers; pale faces, sweating, uncomfortable gestures and worried expressions. On the way into the building I had seen several standing outside nervously smoking. Personally, I felt quite comfortable despite being dressed a great deal less formally than my peers. In my view there was no threat or reason for concern. We were simply there for a presentation. The reasons for the appearance of nervousness amongst my peer group was, I later discovered, concerned with the rumours and stories (Stacey, 2000) that circulate in the taxi industry and amongst Knowledge Boys to which, up to this point, I was blissfully unaware.

The meeting was conducted by a pleasant but rather stiff middle aged man who looked and dressed as described earlier (see section 5.2.2.). Hatch and Schultz (2000:19) propose that 'communication of organizational identity to external stakeholders therefore requires opportunities for personal interaction with them'. The meeting was exactly that, the opportunity to communicate the Public Carriage Office's identity with a group of prospective new entrants to the industry, which I remember feeling was governmental, formal, distant, cold and official. Christensen and Cheney (2000:258) expressed the belief that 'most organizations want their audiences to see them as stable yet responsive entities, with an inspiring history and a reliable presence'. I am not convinced that this belief applies to my early experience of the Public Carriage Office. Whilst its staff were able to portray stability, the representative of the organisation showed no interest or aptitude for responsiveness. History was mentioned during the presentation but the presentation could not even remotely be described as inspiring. The Public Carriage Officer

appeared to see his presence as a stabilising influence on the process but he clearly had no personal connection with the industry, or if he had he went to great trouble to disguise it.

The Public Carriage Officer was relatively well spoken with a trace of a Home Counties accent. He provided a brisk and somewhat lofty run through of the requirements of becoming a London taxi driver, occasionally delivered in somewhat withering tones. It was neither encouraging nor discouraging. He spoke in a matter of fact manner, outlining the scope of the Knowledge of London qualification by listing, somewhat airily, the types of landmarks, buildings and routes that prospective taxi drivers would be expected to learn, including around 25,000 streets. Interestingly Fisher (2008a) a part time journalist and London taxi driver who completed the Knowledge, claims that taxi drivers are required to learn 67,544 streets, considerably more than the Public Carriage Officer's estimate. His presentation lacked any passion, any interest or any imperative. He could have been presenting a health and safety briefing that he had made hundreds of times before. I probably expected more encouragement and some emphasis on the scale of the task that the group were setting out to undertake. Notably there was no attempt at humour.

The Public Carriage Officer went on to explain that recognising the location of landmarks and important buildings and knowing how to get from one 'point' [a point is the industry terminology for the start of a run. It can be a street, landmark, building or focal point] to another using the shortest route [known within the industry as a run] would form the basis of a series of verbal tests. His tone was what I considered at the time to be detached complacency. This may be explainable as Roy (1954:257) alluded to 'the social class, educational, cultural and general historical awareness of actors condition the set of ideational resources which can be drawn on'. Did he view himself as a mature, white collar, professional from the middle classes addressing a group of young blue collar workers? Did he consider himself better educated or qualified than this group who would trawl the streets of London for years trying to acquire the Knowledge with many giving up the task as it proved too difficult for them? There appeared to be a power play at work but if that was the case what was the purpose? Watson helps here with his assertion that;

'we all work on our identities all of the time: making meaning through a dialogue with the culture (or cultures, in so far as we are parts of several groups), its norms, values and symbols. Through our actions we are contributing to culture as well as taking from it' (Watson, 1994:21)

One could certainly claim that either deliberately or subconsciously the Public Carriage Officer did a great deal of work on his identity during the meeting and as a by-product did quite a lot of work on our identity, which meant that by the end of the meeting I felt that both parties were quite clear that they came from different ends of a continuum and that there were no obvious shared values or goals. My goals were to join an industry to enjoy a relatively good income and flexible working hours, to be part of an admired and envied group of upper working class people and to feel a belonging to an iconic feature of life in London. The Public Carriage Officer appeared to distance himself from the industry and showed no enthusiasm for the industry, its iconic status or wish in any way to be part of it. Dalton (1961:49) introduces the concept of being 'able to work behind a screen of assured formalities'. As my engagement with the Public Carriage Office continued through my taxi driving career my perception was that formality was used as a defence mechanism, a safety blanket and a methodology to avoid dealing with issues.

These traits, discerned through the manner in which the Public Carriage Officer delivered his presentation, suggested to me that he saw himself as completely detached from the taxi industry. This struck me as strange as he was very much part of an organisation, the Public Carriage Office, that was in my, and I later discovered amongst many Knowledge Boys', view totally omnipotent, and in reality was responsible for the administration of that very industry that he was at pains to distance himself from. The Public Carriage Officer displayed an identity that was far more associated with the Metropolitan Police and the Home Office, of which the Public Carriage Office was a department, rather than the taxi industry which it was responsible for administering and regulating, and with which it had daily contact. If the Public Carriage Officer on that day and my subsequent experience of them was meant to relate what Dutton and Dukerich (1991:521) defined as 'organizational image' being 'what [organisational members] believe others see as distinctive about the organization', it was certainly very clear that being inscrutable, clinical, detached, impersonal and in some way from a higher order were effectively communicated by this organisational member (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991).

Watson (1982:266) posits

'the implicit contract which existed between each member of the group [that he was researching] and the organization was of the type more associated with members of the middle class than the working class'

In this case it appeared to be that we were being excluded, subtly and skilfully, from any implicit contract other than to understand that like the gap between clergy and laity one is allowed to see in, but not to come in. Watson's observation (above) was explicitly demonstrated and anyone who had the perception of belonging to, or an aspiration to join the middle class was clearly targeted and stripped of these illusions.

The language the Carriage Officer used was accessible without being particularly inclusive. The Public Carriage Officer studiously avoided any hint of friendliness, encouragement, respect or awe for the task ahead. The administration of the process was clearly his only interest. He provided no advice on how to go about the learning process, no insight into the eventual job as a taxi driver and maintained an impersonal detachment throughout. He spoke of the public's requirements 'to jump into a taxi driven by a driver who knew where he was going'. The term public was delivered from my perspective as though the people at the meeting were not part of it, as though they were a race apart; these were Knowledge Boys and then there were the public, they were not interchangeable, one could almost describe this as being a form of caste system. This feeling, which I would attribute to a 'radical humanist' (Holland 1999:473) perspective of attempting to 'alienate and dehumanise the person' is one that I am not normally aware of feeling but in this case I felt it very strongly.

By applying to become taxi drivers and by attendance at the Public Carriage Office's introductory meeting we had somehow been positioned or involuntarily positioned ourselves as no longer members of the public. It could even be argued that we had ourselves surrendered our membership of the group known as the public and entered what was presented as the vague world of the Knowledge. Was this a way of establishing the Public Carriage Officer's 'group ideology' (Watson 1982:266) through 'the development of a set of images and justifications'? If so what was their ideology? The implicit indications from the Public Carriage Officer were that Knowledge Boys were a form of sub class. Presumably if my earlier point pertains and the Public Carriage Officer's behaviour was about his identity (Watson, 1994) and not ours, he

viewed himself as a member of the officer or executive class. I perceived that he was trying to establish a hierarchy whereby applicants to undertake the Knowledge of London were at the bottom. He certainly appeared to be at pains to make clear that he had personally managed to retain his membership of that group known as the public.

The Public Carriage Officer went on to explain that road traffic and criminal offences incurred whilst acquiring the Knowledge of London would result in automatic exclusion from the Knowledge. This was delivered with the absolute conviction of an autocratic institution, an organisation that was above any normal legislative principles such as appeals, due process or judicial scrutiny. Watson (1994: 115) suggests that this is a management technique acting as 'a unified body imposing a new language and way of thinking'. The thinking that was being encouraged was that the Public Carriage Office and its officers were empowered to act outside of the normal principles of natural justice.

The Public Carriage Officer's penultimate comment was that only ten out of every hundred applicants finish the course and become taxi drivers. This was delivered with mild glee, he could have added the words; so most of you are just wasting both your own and my time. What was apparent was that the Public Carriage Officer took no interest in, or no responsibility for, the high dropout rate. Whereas in many organisations this level of attrition would have been an area for concern there was no apparent concern acknowledged by the Public Carriage Officer. The Public Carriage Officer's final and closing comment was linked to this statistic when he related that he would therefore probably not see most of us ever again and weakly, with some embarrassment or discomfort and certainly in my opinion no sincerity, wished me and the other prospective Knowledge Students luck with our endeavours.

The meeting had lasted some 45 minutes. At the end we were invited to ask questions – oddly not one question was raised. This struck me at the time as a very odd event. I have often reflected on how the power play that was evident throughout the event evolved. Were we as a group already conditioned to accept that the Public Carriage Office and its officers were omnipotent? Were our predominantly working class sensitivities bowed by the Public Carriage Officer's middle class pretensions? Did our desire to become a taxi driver, our self-interest (Watson 1982) overcome our natural instincts to ask questions, stick up for our rights and challenge authority? Or had the Public Carriage Officer spent the forty five minutes intimidating us all so we did not ask any questions?

From my own perspective I had been told by my sister-in law's father (who was a taxi driver) to say 'yes sir, no sir, and three bags full sir' when attending the meeting and if in any doubt to keep my mouth firmly closed if asked anything by the Public Carriage Officer. Perhaps everyone else at the meeting had been given the same advice or versions of it. My perception of this meeting was that it was a well-rehearsed ritual where both parties had their clearly defined roles which they had played out. The Knowledge Boys had proven they were happy to capitulate their demographically cultivated behaviour norms in deference to the pretensions of the Public Carriage Officer. He had underlined the Public Carriage Office's rumoured institutional omnipotence and privilege, and his personal seniority within the relationship through language and gesture.

The delivery of the briefing by the Public Carriage Officer was slow, it was deliberate, it was withering and it came across as routine. Dickson and Buckholz (1979:235) refer to

‘the legacy of institutions and ideas which is ‘adopted’ by each generation, much as a child ‘adopts’ the grammar of his native language and, partially, as rationalizations of current self-interest and action. In this way ideologies are formulated through the constant interplay between current contingencies and historical legacies’.

This begins to explain why we adopted our roles within the meeting. What is not explained is why at the end of the meeting everyone departed without comment or eye contact with one another. Why did this happen? Why was there not a sigh of relief, a smile, or a knowing wink? We were apparently of a similar age, culture, almost certainly from a working class background and I would suspect all Londoners. We were peers, we had all just been through the same shared experience and were heading for the same career. It struck me at the time and has since that the lack of recognition of one another amongst this group was strange and quite unusual. Lads of this age in similar situations often, in my experience, demonstrated some gesture or body language, a nod, a toss of the head, eyes rolling to heaven or muttered ‘Alright’ or some other commonly observed term or behaviour. If an ideology had developed amongst this group, how had it happened? Did they all have relations who were taxi drivers and who told them before going to the meeting to adopt a totally different persona to that which is normally displayed amongst working class young men? I did not research this at the time but from my own perspective I had been told not to engage with anyone and just leave the meeting quietly by my brother’s taxi driver in-laws.

On reflection I concluded that the meeting had demonstrated to me that people, me included, were prepared to jettison their normal social rituals, expectations and aspects of culture in exchange (Blau: 1986) for being recognised as conforming with the behaviour expected to be exhibited by the Public Carriage Office. The unwritten rules had apparently been communicated to all those present who then adopted the role, the rituals and behaviour that was required. This struck me as incredible at the time and even now on reflection is surprising and notable.

I perceived that the meeting had very little to do with explaining the Knowledge acquisition and testing process and instead was an exercise in using language to create a hierarchy and understanding about the institution and its relationship with Knowledge Boys, together with the behaviour expected from them. I wonder, on reflection, whether the introductory meeting at the Public Carriage Office and the behaviour demonstrated by both the Public Carriage Officer and the Knowledge Boys was an implicit contract (Watson, 1982:266) developed through tradition or whether it was a carefully orchestrated attempt to demonstrate the relationship between trade and regulator or possibly both.

The next two sections describe the process for acquiring the Knowledge of London. The first considers the difficulties in finding out how to actually begin acquiring the Knowledge and the second describes the challenges of the process involved in testing. These difficulties and challenges are relevant to my research from the perspective of explaining the process that Knowledge Boys need to go through and the exacting detail that is involved in the learning and testing processes. It goes some way to explaining why acquiring the Knowledge of London takes so long and is considered so arduous by those who attempt to complete it. It also explains the high drop-out rate amongst Knowledge Boys. The length and the difficulties of acquiring the Knowledge of London appear to influence both the culture and the identity of London’s taxi drivers. The perseverance and tenacity required to complete the

Knowledge of London adds a Darwinian element to the demographic of the survivors i.e. those Knowledge Boys that actually qualify as London taxi drivers.

5.2.6 *The Knowledge of London - Path Finding*

This section is descriptive rather than analytic or reflexive as I believe it is important to describe the process of learning the Knowledge so that the scale and scope of the task is clearly defined.

Having been to the Public Carriage Office for my introductory talk I embarked on acquiring the Knowledge of London. A booklet was provided by the Public Carriage Office known as The Blue Book, which curiously had a pink cover. The booklet listed 486 runs that provide a framework for acquiring the Knowledge of London. An example was the simple listing of Manor House [Underground station] to Gibson Square; no other instructions were provided.

The concept was to find the shortest distance between each point (e.g. Gibson Square is a point) noting places of worship, entertainment and importance, as well as landmarks and institutions such as hospitals, gentlemen's clubs, embassies, airline offices, cemeteries, sporting venues and local authority buildings that were on the routes (or, as they are known in the industry, runs). In addition one was advised to try to remember junctions and side streets and generally to develop a complete picture of the run (e.g. Manor House to Gibson Square is a run). The advice on what to do and how to go about it was provided to me by my sister in law's relatives who were London taxi drivers. However I was aware that they were printers working on national newspapers as well as taxi drivers with families and had busy lives. So despite implying a genuine willingness to help me I knew that the reality was that they did not have the time to do so. I also had gathered from my sister in law's relatives that acquiring the Knowledge was to be a solitary occupation. Blau (1986:15) describes a 'solitary activity' as 'pathetic' and I can concur with that description because trundling around the streets of London on a moped getting wet and cold was pathetic.

The steps on the run, in effect a plan of the route, were ascertained by either of two main methods. The first method entailed Knowledge Boys purchasing or acquiring (I acquired them from my sister in law's father) a complete set of blue book runs. These runs would contain a list of instructions similar to ones below;

LoL	[Leave on the left]	Green Lanes
X	[Cross]	Brownlow Road
R	[Right into]	Pemberton Road
X	[Cross]	Grosvenor Avenue
F	[Forward into]	Wallace Road

The format above is important as the competency interviews [known as appearances] require the Knowledge Boy to provide their answers in a ritualised form based on the example above e.g. Leave on the left Green Lanes etc.

Obtaining the runs already formulated as above made getting started as a Knowledge Boy very easy as it avoids having to work out routes prior to setting off. It also avoids having to change routes when one is out on the motorbike learning them and discovering that a route has to be recalculated due to restricted turns, one way systems etc which were not discernible from maps. The development of Satellite Navigation Systems (SatNavs) and map based computer applications postdates my

involvement with the Knowledge. The impact of SatNavs and other technologies on the process of learning the Knowledge will be an interesting area for further research.

An alternative approach is known as 'cottoning up runs' (Townsend, 2003:11). Cottoning up involves a process whereby the two points of the run e.g. Manor House (Underground Station) and Gibson Square are located on a map and then a piece of cotton is stretched across the map between the two points. The Knowledge Boy then traces the shortest route, in effect the roads and streets straddling the length of the cotton, and records these for later use on his moped when he goes out to learn the streets and landmarks. This method is an excellent methodology to build a picture of the map of London in one's head, as one is constantly referring to the map and learning the relationships between main arterial and radial routes. It also assists with spatial familiarity. However it is often fraught with problems when one actually drives the run due to one way systems, restricted turns and roads that are closed in the middle or partially or fully pedestrianised.

A Knowledge Boy



A Knowledge Boy (reproduced by kind permission of <http://www.pbase.com/reddishtiger/image/47397549>)

As can be appreciated the level of detail that the Knowledge student is required to learn is significant and many regard it as tougher than a degree course. That was certainly my experience. The requirement to actually visit all of the points, drive and learn the runs and as a consequence being exposed to the elements begins to explain why many people consider the Knowledge such a difficult task. As discussed elsewhere, these difficulties ensure that only the most determined and tenacious Knowledge Boys complete the course. This has the effect of limiting the demographic of taxi drivers to the determined and tenacious. The cost of the Knowledge from an intellectual, personal, financial and physical endurance perspective affects taxi drivers' identity and leads them to feel that their job should be secure as they have in effect earned a right to be a taxi driver. It also has the effect of drivers positioning themselves as being at the top of a vocational driving hierarchy. These perceptions evidently impact the culture of drivers and of the industry more generally.

In the next section I examine the Knowledge of London testing process

5.2.7 Threat to Masculine Self

This section examines two cultures; that of the Public Carriage Office and its examiners and staff and the Knowledge Boys who were trying to become London taxi drivers. The two cultures were in most respects very different. There are also clear examples of identity cultivation amongst both groups, both for very different reasons.

Power plays were very evident amongst the Public Carriage Officers who had the mechanisms in place to stop, hold back and hinder the progress of Knowledge Boys apparently quite autonomously and without any sense of fairness or potential for audit or appeal. There were no video cameras, recorders or any other equipment used during appearances [the colloquial name for topographical competence tests]

and therefore no audit trail of appearances. Any complaints would have been simply dealt with on the basis of the Knowledge Boy's word against the Public Carriage Officer's. I have no evidence of anyone ever complaining in a formal manner about the conduct of any competency test as do so would have exposed the Knowledge Boy to the risk of being held back i.e. stopped from progressing to become a taxi driver.

Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001: 209) purport that when interviewing men 'where an interview is held conveys a message about what the interaction is about'. Their advice concerned selecting appropriate venues. The Public Carriage Office appeared to wish to convey that Knowledge Students were very small cogs in a very big wheel. Their physical comfort and emotional needs did not feature and if there was an objective, establishing discomfort appeared to be the goal. In each examiner's office, which was bare and cold, there were two chairs, one for the examiner positioned behind his desk and one for the student. The student's chair was positioned approximately ten feet from the examiner's desk.

The ritual on entering the Public Carriage Officer's office was to stand in front of his desk until he had sat down (or if already seated looked up) and outstretched his hand, at which point the Knowledge Boy handed the Public Carriage Officer his appointment card (see appendix 4). He would then wait to be asked or be told to sit down. This instruction varied slightly by examiner from officious to almost being politely invited to do so.

Stories abounded amongst Knowledge Boys of Knowledge Students sitting down before being asked or invited to do so, or moving the chair nearer to the examiner's desk and starting the appearance by being asked "Are you a furniture remover Mr X" or "Do you, or have you ever, worked for Pickfords" [a large, well known furniture removal company] and when the surprised interviewee responded in the negative he was told in no uncertain terms to 'leave the furniture alone then and replace the chair in its original position'. This 'minimizing' (Scwalbe and Wolkomir 2001: 209) appeared to me to be a demonstration of power, to set the scene and to reinforce the formality which was used to maintain control.

The ritualistic questioning was in my view a tactic designed to impose or retain control. At each appearance the examiner launched into asking about eight questions in rapid succession which took the format of "take me from Smith Street to Portman Square". This took place without any niceties or greeting.

Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001:208) propose that 'the interviewer will offer some sort of preamble before launching into questions'; their advice is written as a guide to good interviewing techniques. The very opposite appears to be the case with Public Carriage Office examiners who studiously avoided any small talk or 'preamble before launching into questions' Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001: 208). The motivation for this appears to be in order to exercise control and/or distance, authority or even inscrutability rather than what Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001:208) suggest as the correct way to set the scene for an interview; 'This lets men feel less like they relinquishing control to a stranger with an unknown agenda'. An unknown agenda describes precisely the nature of the interview questions being asked which involved journeys from anywhere to anywhere within Europe's largest city.

Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001:204) explain that 'in Western culture, men who wish to claim the full privileges of manhood [or in this case seniority] must distinguish themselves from women [or in this case Knowledge Boys] by signifying greater

desires and capacities for control of people and the world, autonomous thought and action, [and] rational thought and action'. Scwalbe and Wolkmir (2001:204) describe this concept as 'masculine self'. Ironically I consider that the interviewers (the Knowledge of London examiners) were very aware of the threat to masculine self (Scwalbe and Wolkmir, 2001) and of demonstrating their perceived power, and thereby to locate Knowledge Boys as lesser (less masculine) beings. It would appear that the interview was considered a success by the Public Carriage Officers if the threat to masculine self was fully realised and adversely affected the Knowledge Boy's confidence and consequently his ability to respond competently to verbal testing.

This implicit threat to masculinity may well have contributed significantly to the dread of appearances that many Knowledge Boys described. The combined impact of unfamiliar surroundings, a ritualised approach to the interview including, arrival, the small and uncomfortable waiting room, being called from afar, ritualised presentation of the appointment card, not allowing the student to reposition the chair and then 'to open oneself to interrogation is to put oneself in a vulnerable position, and thus to put one's masculinity further at risk' Scwalbe and Wolkmir (2001: 218). For many Knowledge Boys this would have been, and appeared to be, a nerve wracking experience.

Although positioned as topographical knowledge tests, appearances appear to have been contrived to reduce Knowledge Boys' confidence, deliberately unsettle the students and to make each appearance an endurance. When one adds in the financial and relationship stresses that are caused by the need to spend many hours away from home and work on a motorbike learning London's streets the importance of quickly proceeding through the Knowledge was heightened and it is easy to understand why these apparently important occasions ended up for many as occasions to dread.

The Knowledge I discovered was bathed in ritual and pretension. These conditions had the effect of heightening any lack of confidence or nervousness amongst prospective Knowledge Students. This phenomenon was used by Knowledge Boys to develop stories and rumours which were often exaggerated adding to the stress of the Knowledge Boys. Like the training to acquire the Knowledge of London, the testing process was another test of endurance, tenacity and determination which restricted the pool of Knowledge Boys who actually survived to become taxi drivers.

The next section looks at behaviours between Knowledge Boys and how they formed groups and communities under certain conditions, but remained aloof singly or in small numbers in others.

5.2.8 Behaviour Between Knowledge Boys

In this section I examine the differing views amongst Knowledge Boys and taxi drivers about the task of the acquiring the Knowledge of London. I also provide a glimpse at the culture of Knowledge Boys through some insights into the behaviours and interactions between Knowledge Boys.

Learning the Knowledge was undertaken by most Knowledge Boys I knew and saw using mopeds. Normally the mopeds had a perspex or wooden board attached to the handlebars on which the details of the run or a map could be attached so that the Knowledge Boy only had to glance down as he was driving along to see the next step on the run (see illustration on page 87). A moped was the ideal transport to get

around and learn London as Knowledge Boys could stop at various points of interest and make notes or consult maps without adversely impacting other traffic.

These mopeds with their tell-tale board enabled fellow Knowledge Boys to be identified. The convention appeared to be that Knowledge Boys nodded at one another but conversation was rare even when arriving almost together at the same point at the end of a run. Where conversation did take place it was strangely stilted and cumbersome. There was an apparent embarrassment and barely disguised desire to avoid conversation and engagement. This behaviour appeared strange to me as in other scenarios where similar aged groups of lads from similar social backgrounds with a common interest met conversation was easy. The Knowledge appeared to provide a common starting point for conversation but did not seem in practice to do so.

Normally Knowledge Boys driving their runs and looking up points operated alone, but occasionally pairs were spotted. Conversation was strangely negative for a group of fairly young men. An opening question such as, "How's it going" would in most walks of life I had experienced warrant a polite, "Fine thanks" or even "Great". Knowledge Boys responded with comments such as; "It's tough isn't it", "Not too bad" or occasionally; "It's a nightmare" or just shrugged their shoulders nonchalantly or rolled their eyes upwards in a gesture suggesting "Don't ask". In my experience there was no concept of mentoring or mutual support as responders did not want to pursue the point that they had made. Nor did they wish to discuss the Knowledge, the run they had just completed or any other similar subjects. This I considered to be odd as the Knowledge and its foibles were the only subjects we as strangers had in common. Stacey (2001) describes these interactions as 'the local rules of communicative interaction' (2001:119). There was only one occasion where this experience was positive which I discuss later. It appeared to me that Knowledge Boys just wanted to get on with the Knowledge in their solitary and insular style.

The Knowledge was for me, in the main, a soulless, depressing and lonely activity. It frequently involved getting freezing cold and soaking wet and then trundling around for hours in that uncomfortable state. In order to complete all the runs, one had to travel considerable distances to the extremities of Greater London. Practical issues such as finding public toilets were a major issue. Some areas of London had both a reputation and a feeling of being quite inhospitable and sinister, added to which mopeds are prone to reliability problems which is a real nuisance if you are many miles from home.

Taxi Driver Interviewee No.4 had a different view concerning the Knowledge to most other taxi drivers I had discussed this with. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.4 thought, 'The Knowledge was the best thing that one could ever do'. He confessed to 'driving around struggling (to remember places etc) for eight months' and then 'eight months and a day later it came together'. He enjoyed learning the streets and the history (of London and its environs); he, 'loved every minute of it'.

A driver interviewed by Garner and Stokoe (2000:46) is less relaxed about the Knowledge process, 'It's like a recurring nightmare – you have to keep at it. Go out on the bike six or seven times per week. If you leave off for a week or two you lose it [i.e. you forgot what you had learnt previously]'

Acquiring the Knowledge is a self-managing activity. Knowledge Boys decide personally how much time to spend acquiring the Knowledge and at what times. They appear to operate alone and not to engage in small talk together, despite

sharing a common interest and through it a common bond with other Knowledge Boys. Despite the relatively narrow demographic, mainly young, working class men with a shared interest, they were not normally disposed to converse or share experiences. This culture appears to be developed disparately as many Knowledge Boys did not attend Knowledge Schools or congregate in groups. Possibly their taxi driver sponsors or mentors told them not to spend time chatting and instead get on with the Knowledge. Alternatively the hours away from home and impact on earnings through not being able to work overtime may have imposed their own discipline. As I explain later the experience as a Knowledge Boy on the road was very different to my experiences when I joined a Knowledge School.

The next section concerns an activity known as calling over which enables the Knowledge Student to learn and then recite the runs that he had learnt whilst out on his motorbike. This was important as not only did it remind the Knowledge Student of the runs he had learnt but also enabled him to practice announcing the run in the format required by the Public Carriage Office. The section below provides an important insight into the community based culture of taxi drivers which in the case below demonstrates the supportive nature of that culture. There is also discussion of the impact of the Knowledge on the wives, girlfriends and mothers of Knowledge Boys.

5.2.9 Calling Over

I was told by my taxi driving in laws that it was best to continually repeat to oneself the streets that one had travelled along throughout the run that one was learning, so that by the end of the run it could all be recited and committed to one's memory banks. This practice was known as calling over. On some runs this was easy yet on many it was very difficult as at the end of the run one could not remember where the run had started let alone recall the streets on the run. It was very demotivating and occasionally depressing. It was easy to see why the dropout rate, as described by the Public Carriage Officer at the introductory talk (see section 5.2.5) to the Knowledge, was so high. As well as the physical discomfort, the mental pedagogic challenge and the psychological stress of the task was hugely time consuming (Garner and Stokoe, 2000). I spent three or four full days per week on my bike and two or three hours an evening on call-overs (Townsend, 2003:14) [Call-overs or calling over were the industry terms applied to a practice whereby someone would assist a Knowledge Boy to recite the runs they knew]. I was to learn that the time I expended on the Knowledge was fairly typical of most Knowledge Boys who actually completed the Knowledge.

The process is to call over a list of directions, in a set format, for each run from memory, naming all of the streets, roads etc that took you from the start point to the end of the run. Students needed to mention whenever they could the major roads they had crossed, and then checking that the run that they had called over was correct (Townsend, 2003).

Calling over is an activity that often involved two or more Knowledge Boys or in some cases a wife (Fisher, 2008), a girlfriend (Townsend, 2003) or even the Knowledge Boy's mother (Fisher, 2008). The call over partner would announce the two points [the pick-up and destination in the same style as the PCO] e.g. Manor House to Gibson Square, the Knowledge Boy would provide the location of the two points verbally from memory i.e. Green Lanes, N16 and Theberton Street, N1, and then proceed to recite the run [The shortest route between the two points] in the same manner as was used by the Public Carriage Office for the verbal tests used to assess

competence. These are in effect mock Public Carriage Office topographical competency tests.

This activity could be very stressful as the wives, girlfriends or mothers didn't have any reference point apart from the printed or hand written run in front of them. Sometimes a Knowledge Boy when answering may have missed out a technical point e.g. crossing a road which is a nice to have rather than an essential element of the run, the non-Knowledge Boy call-over partner would stop the call-over and the Knowledge Boy would be struggling to understand why. Wives of taxi drivers I have come across in a social environment often talk about when their husband was on the Knowledge and their dread of assisting their partner/husband with call-overs. Call overs with taxi drivers or other Knowledge Boys were much easier and provided a social aspect to acquiring the Knowledge. I joined a Knowledge School (see below) which enabled me to find two call over partners and most evenings we went around to each other's houses and called over for two or three hours. One of my call-over partner's prospective father-in-law, Charlie Rubenstein, was a taxi driver and he used to take great delight in testing both his future son-in-law and I and was far tougher than the Public Carriage Office examiners. He also used to provide what I considered at the time to be interesting snippets about the industry, an industry which in truth I, along with most Knowledge Boys, knew little about.

During my research these snippets about the industry became an increasingly important source of information and knowledge about my new career and assisted me to learn about the culture of the industry. Stacey terms this phenomenon as 'narrative knowledge' (2001:123) which he describes as being 'embodied in the informal stories they tell each other about their work'. These stories provided me with information about issues such as taxi driver etiquette, the unwelcome behaviour and sharp practices of some drivers at hotels, reports regarding the behaviour and interactions with customers and discussions about real life trips that Rubenstein had picked up and the route he had had taken. Rubenstein gave up two or three evenings per week to assist his future son-in-law and me to acquire the Knowledge of London. Rubenstein was a taxi driver helping a new entrant. Whilst fully understanding why he might help his future son in law to get a new and hopefully well paid job it appeared to me to be an act of philanthropy for him to help me. Perhaps he gained from Blau's concept of 'social exchange' (1986:8).

Rubenstein also had three brothers who had become taxi drivers. I never discussed why he and his brothers had become taxi drivers but it was interesting that this family tradition had moved into the next generation with his future son-in-law becoming a Knowledge Boy and ultimately a taxi driver. During my time in the industry I assessed that 20-25% of the drivers I knew were 2nd or 3rd generation taxi drivers. This phenomenon was important to the culture of the industry as it provided continuity, generational links and channels through which historical stories were communicated. The longevity of the taxi industry appeared important to taxi drivers and was an important aspect of their culture and identity.

This section has highlighted the demands of the Knowledge from a time perspective and the impact on, and help from, Knowledge Boys' families. It also provides an insight into the consensual acceptance of the Public Carriage Offices' ritualised topographical testing regime. The impact on the culture and identity of taxi drivers is clearly significant due to involvement of family and friends and the self help and support networks that develop around the Knowledge Boys, as well as the intellectual and mental effort that was expended on acquiring the Knowledge. An important benefit of Knowledge Boys engaging with taxi drivers was that they began to receive

an insight into the industry, its rituals, its customs and day to day experience of being a taxi driver. This was often the first real insight that Knowledge Boys had of the industry that was to be their career.

The next section concerns another institution of the taxi industry, Knowledge Schools. My experience of the Knowledge School that I joined and then attended presented a very different culture amongst Knowledge Boys to that I experienced at the Public Carriage Office induction meeting and those Knowledge Boys I happened across whilst out on my motorbike acquiring the Knowledge of London. The Knowledge Boys who attended the Knowledge School that I belonged to presented a different identity and exhibited very different behaviours. They were much more of a community. This identity, the culture and the behaviours and social norms that had developed are described below.

5.2.10 Knowledge Schools

One particular encounter with a fellow Knowledge Boy led me to join a Knowledge School (see photograph below). The chap I met, whilst out on my moped, was a cheerful, cockney street wise type who enquired how I was getting on, this was quite unusual amongst Knowledge Boys. He quickly came to the conclusion that I was in need of some serious assistance. He advised me to join a particular Knowledge School, the first time I had realised such places existed.



A Knowledge School (<http://www.the-london-taxi.com/siteimages/hires/Knowledge-school-1.JPG>)

The Knowledge School was housed above a working men's social club in the Ladbrooke Grove area of West London. The school was situated in what was a large, rather run down, former functions room which was arranged with about 30 square tables each surrounded by four seats. The tables were covered with large maps of London mounted on boards and covered in plastic to preserve them. The manager and teacher was Stanley King, a pleasant and helpful man in his fifties who had been a taxi driver for many years. When I first joined the school he introduced me to, and sat me on a table with, another three Knowledge Students as he termed them. These Knowledge Students along with all the others I met at the Knowledge School were very friendly and happy to both enquire about my experiences with the Knowledge and relay theirs. There was a 'we are all in this together' atmosphere. This was very different to any previous encounters with Knowledge Boys whom I met on the road where conversation was rare and where it did take place it had been stilted. This was an interesting environment as there was definitely what Blau (1986:8) described as 'social exchange' in evidence.

The groupings at the Knowledge School were based on Blau's (1986:20) proposition that there are two types of association, where attraction is based on whether the outcome will be 'extrinsically' or 'intrinsically' beneficial. At the Knowledge School as far as possible Knowledge Boys selected the table to sit on primarily for extrinsic benefit. I was to discover that they were not there to help others but instead they were there to be helped and so sitting on a table with Knowledge Students that were more advanced than themselves made for a more beneficial session than one where the students were just pleasant and friendly but at the beginning of their learning and therefore of little, if any, help, or likely to provide any real benefit. However more advanced students had little interest in having novices at their table so manoeuvres took place to exclude those who had little to offer but much to gain. Normally these manoeuvres involved placing jackets or bags on seats or claiming that someone was expected to take the empty seat, or similar ploys. This was a social exchange (Blau, 1986) scenario; when one first joined the school seats were hard to find but as one progressed with the Knowledge one was welcomed by all and one found oneself in increasing demand and popularity.

The ethos of the school was self-help, with Knowledge Boys testing one another with some guidance from the teacher. The data that informed the curriculum at the Knowledge School was based on a group of students who stood outside the Public Carriage Office asking Knowledge Boys as they left the Public Carriage Office what questions they had been asked at their appearance [verbal topographical competency test] and then reproducing these questions on printed sheets. They also asked each Knowledge Student which examiner they had had their appearance with. On the sheets, next to each question, were listed the initials of the examiner who had asked the questions and the phase of testing that the student who was being asked the questions was on e.g. 56 days, 28 days, 21 days or 14 days. [Appearances start at 56 days and as progress is made the duration between each is reduced, conversely if progress is not made the duration can increase to 112 days etc]. An example of the entries on the sheet is below;

Lippet 21 [Days]

King Edward's Street	to	King Edward's Lane
Royal Free Hospital	to	St Pancras Coroners' Court

Finlay 14 [Days]

William Wallis Memorial	to	The Scotch House
Dunedin House	to	Caledonian Airways

Each sheet contained around 25 questions, or runs as they are known in the industry, and therefore 50 points [The start and end of each run is called a point]. It was considered important amongst Knowledge Boys to travel to each point to see exactly where it was and if there were any road traffic restrictions that would require a Knowledge Boy to provide a protracted answer, for example to see if there was a barrier in the middle of the road that would prevent the Knowledge Student answering "drop on the right" or similar. It was also suggested by Knowledge Boys that travelling to the point assisted them to remember it as well as developing the skill of getting from one random point to another.

Predominantly the age range of the students at the Knowledge School was fairly narrow between the mid-twenties and up to around thirty five. Approximately a third of the people were working in full time jobs and undertaking the Knowledge in their spare time. There were two sessions at the Knowledge School, lunchtime and evening, Monday to Friday. The lunchtime group was smaller than the evening

group. The lunchtime group were predominantly full time Knowledge Students or students with a part time job. A number of full time Knowledge Students had been undertaking the Knowledge on a part time basis until they reached a certain stage e.g. their appearances were reduced to a twenty one day frequency. The rumour (Stacey, 2001) amongst Knowledge Boys was that a reduction to a twenty one day testing frequency was significant and implied acceptance by the Public Carriage Office that the student's Knowledge of London had reached a standard that had demonstrated the potential of the Knowledge Boy's Knowledge to progress to become a taxi driver. There was never any evidence for this claim that I was aware of but this interpretation offered the opportunity for the student to feel they were exercising some control or ownership of the process. Evidence of this was that those part time students who could afford to do so, including myself, often decided to become full time students at this point. This interpretation enabled a pseudo milestone to be introduced into the process where few formal milestones existed.

The evening group was almost one hundred per cent part time Knowledge Students with full time jobs. Evenings attracted the very small number of mature or older students. The diversity of the group was narrow and appeared to include a 30/70 split between Jewish and non-Jewish students, who were what could be described as white British males with literally one to two per cent of non-white students. None of the students appeared to have any obvious disability. I was a fairly typical white, male British Londoner, who began as a part time student moving to become a full time Knowledge Student once I reached the 21 day testing threshold, and so was part of the stereotypical Knowledge Student population. The demographic struck me as unusual given the multi-cultural make up of London and the fact that around 50% of the population is female.

My experience was that much of the Knowledge Students' time together at Knowledge Schools is spent demonising the Public Carriage Office and its officers and frightening the life out of each other through exchanging stories, anecdotes and gossip. Stacey explains this activity; 'individuals are constructing much of the world in which they act' (2011:33). The activity was a representation of narrative knowledge (Stacey, 2001).

Stacey, (2001:33) suggests that;

'understanding [the] mind not simply as processes of representing an external reality but as processes of fantasy, repression, and so on, which construct an 'inner world' in which perceptions of reality may well be distorted'.

Dalton (1961:64) describes 'random cliques' who congregate to exchange 'incomplete bits of information' (Dalton 1961:64). In the case of the Knowledge of London process these activities have the effect of adding unnecessarily to the stress of appearances [verbal competency tests] that many students experienced and the onerous demands of the Knowledge in general.

It is difficult to see why this ritual of spreading rumours, telling stories, creating myths and generally creating mischief has become established and further why it continues. If as Stacey (2001) suggests the mind is constructing this world, what is the logic for developing an even more stressful situation than the actuality of it. One consideration could be that it is the creation of an excuse for failure or to exaggerate the difficulties and challenges to enhance the status of the Knowledge amongst non-taxi driver peers. As analysed later in this account this phenomenon is repeated amongst taxi drivers. It appears from Dalton (1961); Beynon (1975); Watson (1994), that

workplace gossip and exchange of 'incomplete bits of information' (Dalton, 1961:64) is a normal workplace occupation. Watson (1994:21) describes gossip as a form of 'talking to our culture' and of 'coping' with the big issues in life. In this scenario perhaps Watson's views could be stretched to highlighting a fear of never finishing the Knowledge and of the personal and financial impacts that this would have on the Knowledge student. Alternatively it could be viewed as creating an unnecessarily competitive environment which to some degree has a Darwinian effect of causing the weaker to drop out of the Knowledge thereby freeing up capacity for the stronger or more determined to succeed.

From the perspective of the aims of my research the Knowledge School provided a rich research setting. Behaviours were much more community based than was the case with random encounters with Knowledge Boys on the road. Social exchange was in evidence as were the manoeuvres to gain maximum benefit. Stories and anecdotes formed a significant part of the conversations that took place. Although the culture was based on self-help and mutual support there was also an undercurrent of one upmanship and a power culture based on spreading fear. There were some elements of identity cultivation; to appear more knowledgeable and to have more apocalyptic stories than other Knowledge Students. This slightly competitive culture was interesting to me as there was no real benefit to position oneself as more knowledgeable than other students other than from a self-worth perspective and to encourage invitations to sit with more advanced students.

In the next section the culture and behaviours exhibited by both Knowledge Boys and office staff at the Public Carriage Office (PCO) are considered. I also look at how principles and expectations of reasonable well-mannered behaviour are sacrificed in order to demonstrate conformity with the perceived formal cultural of the PCO. This section is important in the context of the Knowledge of London testing process, known as appearances in the industry, which is discussed in detail in section 5.2.12

5.2.11 Public Carriage Office - Organisational Culture

The second interaction that most Knowledge Students have with the Public Carriage Office (PCO) is when they are required to attend their first appearance. The appearance is a verbal test of the Knowledge Boy's topographical knowledge as described in section 5.2.10. In this section I examine the culture and exhibited behaviours of both groups; the Knowledge Boys and the staff at the PCO, I also look at how identity of the individual is sacrificed in order to demonstrate conformity with the rumoured requirements of the PCO. It is important to note that the Knowledge process was based on rumour and expectation rather than a clear set of published requirements.

The verbal competency tests at the Public Carriage Office, known in the industry as appearances [presumably because the student was asked to appear in front of the examiner], were apparently nerve wracking occasions for many Knowledge Boys. The reasons for this were initially unclear to me. Many of the people I knew, or whom I got to know, that were Knowledge Students were far from easily intimidated. Many were East Enders, ex boxers, street wise, physically and mentally tough and robust characters (Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1.) so what was it that injected such a visible and explicit nervousness into their normally calm and confident demeanour?

Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001, 206) suggest that issues such as 'race, class and age in combination with certain topics, can also heighten the threat potential of an interview'. For many Knowledge Students, age and class were a potential threat, as the Knowledge Boy community evidently consisted predominantly of young cockney,

working class lads whilst the examiners were apparently white, middle aged or older, fairly well spoken professionals who were of the Knowledge Boys' parents' or even grand parents' generation.



Knowledge of London examiners. (Callsign, 2003:8)

The appearances consisted of a question starting with any street, landmark or building in the whole of London and ending with the route to any other street or building in the whole of London. The randomness of the questions does much to explain the unpredictable nature of the appearance and hence the nervousness of Knowledge Students. I observed that for married Knowledge Boys in particular the outcome of a bad appearance, i.e. where the Knowledge Boy was unable to answer the random questions, effectively leads to a continuing, adverse financial impact and physical and emotional separation for many hours from their wife and family, during what was ostensibly their leisure time, as most of them worked full-time.

On arrival at the PCO students were required to go to the first floor and present their appointment card (see appendix 4) at a small window with a sliding panel. If the lady was not standing at the window the two or three staff who were typing or writing at desks in the office area that was visible from the window would not acknowledge or provide any gesture of recognition to the student. The receptionist, a rather sharp, snappy and unsmiling young lady would sigh, tick a book and tell, rather than request, suggest or advise, students to go to the waiting room. Why this behaviour was apparent or exhibited is difficult to understand. I believe that those working at the institution had developed a view of Knowledge Boys as a lower form of life and reacted and behaved accordingly. It was made clear through gesture and speech that there was a them and us culture pervading the PCO. The typists were not inclined to step in if their receptionist colleague was not available as the Knowledge Boy(s) waiting at the counter was less important than their work, and the receptionist clearly demonstrated resentment at having to deal with Knowledge Boys at all despite this apparently being her job and a significant reason for this group being employed.

In the waiting room there were normally six or eight Knowledge Boys. Often they were smoking [smoking at this time was perfectly legal and quite normal in public buildings], looking uncomfortable in their suits, sweating and shaking and generally

emitting an appearance of wishing they were anywhere but there. Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001:210) propose a concept amongst males of 'non-disclosure' or 'very limited disclosure' of emotions. This was not the case at the Public Carriage Office; many of the interviewees openly exhibited very nervous emotions. This was once again an unusual situation in my experience for young working class males, who normally presented a tough or unaffected persona in threatening or stressful situations. My strong suspicion is that the financial and personal strain of the Knowledge meant that every appearance was a stressful situation for these people. They knew that the test could result in them spending more time away from family and friends and possibly earning less overtime etc. These adverse impacts on their family life and finances with the ritualised, unfriendly, sometimes threatening and often unhelpful behaviour of those who worked at the Public Carriage Office and possibly their lack of experience of interviews and tests meant that the Knowledge Boys had difficulty in not disclosing their emotions (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001).

On one occasion when I was due for an appearance there was a lot of fog and as a consequence the trains were running late. I arrived about 10 minutes after the time indicated on my appointment card. On arrival at the window on the first floor I apologised to the receptionist for arriving late. I was expecting a response of "oh that's okay" or similar but instead was told in the sharpest tone possible that on this occasion I would be seen but if I was ever late again I "was off of the Knowledge". I have no idea if she had the authority to say this, if it was true, and if so under what circumstances this action could be enacted. I did not challenge it as I had become what can only be described as institutionalised into accepting whatever behaviour or admonishment the Public Carriage Office staff dished out rather than run the risk of being branded a troublemaker and finding my progress on the Knowledge halted or even worse, reversed. I had heard tales of such things happening to other, albeit unnamed, Knowledge Boys and did not wish to risk proving or disproving the veracity of those stories which were a form of narrative knowledge (Stacey, 2001).

If this was part of a planned brainwashing or character altering program it had worked. My badge had become more important to me than certain of my principles or sensitivities. I had submitted to a junior member of staff being unnecessarily rude and aggressive and threatening me with doubtful authority, but I was not prepared to challenge this behaviour. She had in effect exposed the fact that I had given her power for the reasons described by Blau (1986:122) 'power depends on people's needs for the benefits those in power have to offer'. My acquiescence was based upon the stories and rumours forming narrative knowledge (Stacey, 2001) about the organisation amongst Knowledge Boys of stoppers [These were obscure questions asked to stop the Knowledge student being able to answer questions at his appearances and therefore halt progress through the Knowledge of London qualification] and other tools and tactics that were rumoured to be ranged against awkward or non-conforming Knowledge Boys by the Public Carriage Office. An example of these was deliberately being kept waiting several hours for their appearance, which provided a powerful deterrent against such errant behaviour but also as an encouragement or incentive to demonstrate the expected or conformist behaviour and adherence to the rituals prevalent within the Knowledge of London environment.

It would be valuable to know if this approach to interviewing was official PCO policy and/or formed the formal culture (Watson, 1999) of the PCO. My view would be that this behaviour amongst Public Carriage Office examiners was what Watson (1999:113) termed the 'unofficial culture'. Whether this was the case or whether the

ritualised behaviour (Stacey, 2001) was exercised with the implicit or explicit sanction of the senior management at the Public Carriage Office is open to conjecture.

The Public Carriage Office from my first encounter at the introductory meeting had signified a middle class professional culture exhibited through business attire, cold tidy offices and an explicit expectation of conformity. It appeared that the rituals of organisational life, in this case the expectation of suitable attire, deference, and uncomplaining adherence to the rituals that were evident at the Public Carriage Office reinforced the concept of 'this is the way we do things around here'. Stacey explores this concept;

'institutions and organisations are the notions of habits, customs, traditions, routines, mores, values, cultures, paradigms, beliefs, missions, and visions. These are all ideas about the repetitive, enduring shared practices of people in their on-going dealings with each other in institutional life' (2001, 43)

Blau (1986:270) explains at length this phenomenon;

'These norms mediate between the issue of commands and the compliance with them, whereas other forms of power are not mediated but are directly enforced by the persons or groups who exercise power themselves. Legitimate power can reside in impersonal principles and offices, which makes it independent of the individuals who administer the principles and occupy the offices. It consequently, can be transferred from one person to another - from one incumbent of an office to another - and delegated by superiors to subordinates'.

Whether Blau's very interesting prognosis is accurate or not in relation to the receptionist and other staff at the Public Carriage Office is difficult to assess but it is certainly a strong possibility. Getting through the Knowledge as quickly as possible was a far stronger objective for me than a requirement to be dealt with courteously by the staff employed at the Public Carriage Office.

What is apparent from this section is that identities and cultures amongst the two main groups appear to be quite different. Whilst there may exist expectations of certain standards of behaviour these are lowered by Knowledge Boys in order to demonstrate conformity and minimise the amount of time taken to complete the Knowledge. The staff at the PCO appear to have adopted an organisational culture of demonstrating dislike for Knowledge Boys. Their dealings with Knowledge Boys appear to be condescending to the point of rudeness. As the PCO staff were not interviewed and were largely outside of the scope of my research it is difficult to understand how and why this behaviour developed, what purpose it served and whether it was encouraged or tolerated by the management of the PCO. Blau's (1986) interesting theory on the way that such cultures and behaviours develop appears relevant to the PCO.

Both the PCO staff and the Knowledge Boys demonstrate very clear identities and yet in the case of Knowledge Boys these are readily sacrificed consensually in order to pass through the Knowledge. This is significant given the identities that the Knowledge Boys appear to cultivate outside of the PCO environment where they appear tough, streetwise and generally confident. The observations made by Blau (1986) about how cultures develop within institutions appears very relevant and helps to understand why the receptionists in particular cultivated an identity of being snappy and unhelpful in order to reinforce the culture whereby the PCO staff and

officers are at pains to distance themselves from Knowledge Boys specifically and the rest of the industry in general. It has to be considered that an alternative theory could have been that the behaviour exhibited was not an institutionally or even group based development, but a generational or class based demonstration of discipline, communication, ritual and values. Theories about why the interactions between PCO and Knowledge Boys were conducted in this way were the subject of much discussion amongst Knowledge Boys.

The following section describes interactions between the Knowledge Boys and the PCO examiners during the verbal competency tests known as appearances. In this section I draw upon the observations and themes above to highlight the identity and culture of the actors.

5.2.12 Appearances – Verbal Competency Tests

This section provides important insights into the behaviour of PCO examiners and the prospective taxi drivers during verbal topographical competency tests known as appearances.

Although I did not suffer from the nerves that many other Knowledge Students displayed I certainly found appearances to be grim, strange and demotivating events. There has, according to taxi drivers always been a tradition of aggressive, mildly bullying behaviour amongst Public Carriage Office Knowledge Examiners (Townsend, 2003). Garner and Stokoe quote an anonymous taxi driver;

‘The examiners are tough. They are mostly ex-police officers. In my day there was one called Hedges; we used to call him the killer with a smile’ (2000:53).

It appeared to me that as all of the Knowledge Boys just wanted to become taxi drivers they seemed to have just accepted and tolerated this frequently exhibited, and often unreasonable, behaviour almost consensually. We had decided that our badge was worth more than our self-respect. Likewise the Public Carriage Officers had apparently decided that it was safe for them to behave in this way with little danger of complaints.

One of the explanations of this behaviour amongst Knowledge Boys was that the Public Carriage Office examiners were there to test the Knowledge Boy’s character and to prepare him for the abuse and bullying he would experience from the public. According to Taxi Driver Interviewee No 3 this behaviour was intended to be character building aspect of the Knowledge process. The importance of this process was later to be used as a key plank of the arguments against an initiative by radio taxi companies to shorten the Knowledge or introduce became known as the Quickie Knowledge (see section 5.2.16).

You were expected, when your name was called, to swiftly proceed from the waiting room to the examiner’s rather cold and very bare office and to present your appointment card (see Appendix 4). Although swiftness was never explicitly ordered or requested the nature of the call implied a need for speed. This implication of speed was interesting given that the Knowledge of London examiners were there to test Knowledge Students; the implicit message was that this task was being squeezed into a busy schedule and that it was not their primary purpose or interest but I have no evidence that they had any other tasks to perform.

Often the examiner did not look up when the student entered his office but simply held his hand out into which you placed your appointment card. A fellow Knowledge

Student, Alfie Bond, related a story of when he first went into Mr Finlay's office. He had heard that Mr Finlay was a difficult examiner with a fiery temper and he feared the worst. However, when he went in, Mr Finlay held out his hand in an apparently friendly gesture and Bond instinctively smiled, grasped Mr Finlay's hand and shook it. Bond related afterwards that when Mr Finlay extended his hand Bond quickly decided that the stories he had heard were erroneous and that, "Mr Finlay was a nice old boy". A visibly shocked Mr Finlay sharply withdrew his hand and shouted, "Card, laddie, card!". Bond handed over his card sheepishly and the appearance continued. Blau (1986:270) explains that

'social values that legitimate authority are [the] media of organization, which extend the scope of organized social control. The common values and norms in a collectivity that legitimate the authority of a government or leadership and enforce compliance with its commands constitute a medium of organizing power'.

While neither a government or in my view a leader the Public Carriage Office was a regulator with an administrative responsibility for quality, the quality being the students' Knowledge of London (Public Carriage Office, 2009). It was also apparent that the Public Carriage Office viewed quality to consist of more than mere topographical competence. It was evident through the behaviour of those within the institution that they saw the Knowledge Boys' compliance with their social values and norms as a quality issue that they were responsible for. In turn Knowledge Boys were prepared, as I was, in order to get my licence, to legitimate that authority (Blau, 1986) consensually thereby extending the scope of their social control. We conformed what Watson (1999) terms the formal culture of the institution.

The Knowledge Boys waiting for their appearances sat in a waiting room which was some 20-30 feet from the Public Carriage Officers' offices. Some of the examiners walked to the waiting room and asked for their interviewee whilst others shouted the Knowledge Boy's name from their office. When this happened it was not always easy to hear what was being said or the name being called.

On one occasion Mr Finlay shouted a barely audible name and as no one else in the waiting room moved I assumed it must be me and went into his office. He took my card, asked me my name and then asked me in sinister and cold terms in what could only be described as a growl, "Why if your name is Galvin have you responded to a request for a Mr Rocket". Mr Finlay had a pronounced Scottish accent and he shouted at me as a sergeant major would shout at an errant private that I "would never, ever make a taxi driver as you do not listen and if you ever did I would starve to death as you would only be able to pick up cockneys as they are the only people you can understand". He then ordered me out of his office. I slunk back into the waiting room to await another call. Looking at this reflexively Mr Finlay was demonstrating an extreme example of the rites of passage that appeared to form part of the organisational rituals (Stacey, 2001) of the Public Carriage Office. He demonstrated an example of his power, awarded consensually by me and others who had decided that getting a taxi driver's badge was more important than enjoying social niceties and experiencing normal standards of behaviour. It appeared to me that each Public Carriage Office examiner attempted in some way to change the Knowledge Boy's behaviour to reflect the Public Carriage Office's culture. A British stiff upper lip in the face of abusive behaviour evidently was one of the requirements.

Every Knowledge Boy I knew had a Mr Finlay story, all them involved a violent, aggressive and explosive incident. I have two; the Mr Rocket episode (explained

above) and another was when I had an appointment with him prior to his retirement. I was called into his office, I handed over my card and was told to sit down. He then smiled sweetly at me and went on to ask several questions. I could not understand any of them as he affected the strongest Scottish accent imaginable. I had been told before by other Knowledge Boys that under no circumstances should one ever tell Mr Finlay that you could not understand his accent as he would go ballistic [Ballistic was a colloquialism that was always used when relaying Mr Finlay stories]. I feigned forgetfulness of the precise location of the pick-up and destination points. I acted out a struggle to remember each point followed by a wearisome 'Sorry sir, I just cannot recall either point'. He was pleasant, he smiled a great deal, and he appeared sympathetic to my predicament of apparently not being able to remember these places.

As a result of his concern and demeanour the stories I had heard about Mr Finlay lost traction, apart from his Scottish accent. He seemed a pleasant and considerate man. We got painfully to the end of the verbal test without me being able to either understand or answer even one question and he handed me back my appointment card. He then appeared to, almost, talk off the record; he smiled and may have gently laughed and said in a mild Scottish brogue "Now tell me laddie, you could not understand what I was saying could you"? I stupidly concurred and chuckled and true to the rumours about Mr Finlay he exploded in rage and snarled at me that I "would never make a taxi driver because you would only ever be able to pick up cockneys!" If this was a character building exercise it certainly worked, this had been an awful experience and I faced another 56 days before I had another appearance. Blau (1986:259) comments that;

'social sanctions through which moral norms are enforced are essential in order to discourage individuals who are not strongly committed to them from deviating these norms as well as to fortify the moral commitment of those who have made it'.

The Public Carriage Officers, particularly Mr Finlay, were very good at demonstrating their power through implementing social sanctions (Blau, 1986) and these, certainly in my case, enforced moral and behavioural norms (Blau, 1986). Taxi driver interviewee No3 explained that ultimately when one became a taxi driver the ritualistic tormenting that had gone on became a social bond (Blau, 1986) between drivers, a shared experience that we had survived. In effect it is evidently a rite of passage consensually accepted by Knowledge Boys.

There was a set format in which responses to the Public Carriage Office Examiners' questions were to be answered. The format was ritualistic. The ritual was never explicitly requested by PCO Examiners but instead passed from Knowledge Boy to Knowledge Boy (Dickson and Buchholz, 1979). Stacey observes the concept of 'enduring shared practices of people in their on-going dealings with each other in institutional life' (2001, 43). This observation of shared practice, each of the actors playing their part; the PCO examiner's eccentric behaviour and the Knowledge Boy's acquiescence to the ritualised torment meted out to him, is present in the interactions described above.

During the interview and in response to the questions enunciated by the PCO examiner the Knowledge Boy was expected to state where both *points* were, e.g. Smith Street is situated off of Kings Road, Chelsea and Portman Square is off of Wigmore Street, Marylebone, adding the word 'sir' at the end of each point in a pseudo military manner. He was then required to provide a verbal route from one

point to the other, ideally using the shortest possible route, observing one way systems and where possible stating the names of roads that were crossed at junctions and intersections.

The questions asked at appearances were often highly esoteric and eclectic. They often included peculiar societies or organisations, unusual premises e.g. closed down theatres or cinemas, obscure alleyways and mews e.g. Bleeding Heart Yard or Hay's Mews, or oddly named buildings e.g. it was discovered that Isherwood House which was a commonly asked question was actually Fisherwood House – the F had fallen off of the sign above the building at some point many years before, hence Isherwood House. The F had been subsequently replaced but at the Carriage Office the question was still asked as Isherwood House. This approach to questioning suggests that the Public Carriage Office wanted Knowledge Boys to tap into the grapevine or rumour mill and to be able to demonstrate they had done so through responding to these idiosyncratic questions. This appeared to signal to the examiner that the Knowledge Boy was working hard to pass the Knowledge.

The Incognito Hotel had closed many years before I undertook the Knowledge but was still asked as a point. Knowledge Boys mused that this predilection for non-existent buildings and organisations was because people often use defunct landmarks as an identifying point. This may have some validity as my elderly aunt often used Collins' Music Hall, a concert hall on Islington Green, as a landmark decades after it had been obliterated by bombing during the Second World War. Alternatively the reasons may just be as simple as that many questions used by Carriage Office examiners have never been updated. This meant that Knowledge Boys who simply learnt the contemporary names for buildings and landmarks were at a disadvantage. This point is important from a learning process perspective. It was not raised at the introductory meeting to the Knowledge of London and although the reasons for it mentioned earlier in this chapter are appreciable it made learning and then answering questions at appearances difficult and added even more randomness to the potential questions.

In the same vein questions were often asked in strange, mildly amusing combinations; America Square to America Street, St George's Street to St George's Square and Webb's Road to Lettice Street. There were also macabre questions such as a hospital to a cemetery, Courts to prisons, Registry Offices to Maternity Hospitals and other peculiar combinations. Sometimes, once the Knowledge student had completed a recital of a route or run he was asked to reverse it. Such is the focus during appearances in getting from one place to another and picturing the route in one's mind's eye it was often difficult or even impossible to remember where the run had started and therefore the student could not complete the return run. This situation was for me an example of a real test of concentration, topographical knowledge and quick reactions. These questions were much harder than those which were apparently based on industry idiosyncrasies or examiner eccentricities.

Questions during appearances were often topical. If there had been a big story regarding a Government Department or a company it was common for the building that the organisation operated from to feature as a point. An example might be a highly publicised crime; the examiner may ask the Knowledge Student to 'take me from' the felon's address or the address of the crime to the Old Bailey or to Wandsworth Prison or similar. It was therefore important to keep up with London's events and news. I later discovered when I was a taxi driver that topical events did have some relevance with the job as either passengers asked if I knew where certain places were e.g. the Iranian Embassy (during the siege), or on occasion passengers

wanted to drive past addresses that were in the news. This was an area of questioning that I felt was relevant to the role of taxi driver. However all of this added to an already highly random and unpredictable questioning system.

Some Public Carriage Office Examiners, there were about six, asked questions regularly; these were known as bankers [a small set of questions a Knowledge Student could bank on being asked by each examiner]. Therefore if you knew which examiner you would be seeing at your next verbal test [this could be discerned from the pencil written initials in the next box on the appointment card (please see Appendix 4 where it is just possible to make out the initials on Fri 11th May as JF (Mr Finlay) and Mon 19th November SH (Mr Shearne)). Once you knew which examiner you were due to see at the next appearance you were able to learn his bankers for the phase of testing you were on (56, 28 or 21 day testing intervals), so that you answered as many questions as possible. The Knowledge Schools assisted this process by printing the examiner's initials and testing phase on the question sheets they produced and sent out to Knowledge Students each week. I imagine, and have evidence (see next paragraph) that knowing the bankers and being able to confidently recite them when asked provided evidence that the student was committed to the Knowledge. Alternatively they may just be questions that involved points (pickups and destinations) or runs (routes) that the examiner knew well. Of course neither explanation may apply.

Whilst sitting in the PCO waiting room before an appearance I was to witness an event involving the concept of bankers; a Knowledge Student had gone into Mr Smith's room. Mr Smith was a very typical PCO Knowledge of London Examiner. He was tall, smart, well groomed, and quite gentlemanly in manner, moderately well-spoken and around sixty years old. He had the aura of a head teacher or civil servant. Mr Smith's room was next to the waiting room. It was normally difficult to hear anything from the neighbouring offices when sitting in the waiting room, save for a low volume mumble. On this occasion voices in Mr Smith's office became raised and the student could clearly be heard complaining in aggressive and abusive tones that 'the Knowledge process is unfair'. Mr Smith's retort was that the student was not showing any commitment 'and did not even know my [Mr Smith's] bankers'. The Knowledge Student retorted loudly that he was 'fed up with being treated like shit'. Mr Smith then dismissively informed the student that he 'was off the Knowledge'. This was followed by Mr Smith's door being banged violently shut and aggressive muttering of abuse up the corridor by the, now, former Knowledge Student.

This incident indicated to me that knowing or not knowing an examiner's bankers was a significant issue, not only from a perspective of being able to maximise the number of questions answered but also by proving commitment. The reliance on and prevalence of bankers was certainly indicative that the PCO Knowledge of London Examiners only knew a small number of points and routes i.e. their bankers. If not why did they have bankers? Were they a proxy measure of commitment? The above incident implied that the Knowledge of London Examiners attached a certain level of importance to Knowledge Students knowing them.

It was not permitted to ask the Public Carriage Officer any questions about the run. I discovered this on my second appearance when I was asked what I thought was Leyton Road in East London. I responded in the required format; Leyton Road is in Temple Mills, off Major Road, Leyton, only to be told I was not correct by the PCO examiner. I then asked which Leyton Road he wanted and he responded gruffly "you are doing the Knowledge not me". At this point, frustratingly, I had lost the opportunity to answer the question. After my appearance I checked with the Knowledge Boys

who stand outside the PCO collecting points and they said the examiner had asked several students the same question and it was Leighton Road in Kentish Town. This suggested that the PCO examiners were not focused on establishing topographical competence but yet again demonstrated a form of ritualised power play and/or sought evidence of being plugged into the industry or Knowledge community in some way.

Once the PCO examiner had asked about eight questions that was the end of the examination. Normally no information or indicator was given as to whether the route was right or wrong, or whether the student had done well or badly. Why was the testing process so stark? Why were questions asked and answers given in such a ritualistic (Leave on the left N street, right into Z road etc) fashion? At the end of the test the ritual (Stacey, 2001) continues with complete inscrutability as to how the interviewee has done. No indication of success, failure, encouragement, admonishment or advice. The Knowledge Student had no idea at all whether the examiner knew the routes or even the points. Making no comment, entering into no discussion not showing any emotion nor giving out any semiotic indicators enabled the examiner, whether intentionally or not, to maintain his authority, anonymity, detachment and his apparent topographical superiority over the Knowledge Student. It also left the student unclear whether he had done well or badly unless he was the fortunate recipient of a reduction [a reduction in the frequency of appearances – see below]. At the end of the interview there was just an impersonal ‘take this card to the counter’ utterance by the Knowledge of London Examiner. Blau’s (1986) social exchange did not feature; the Public Carriage Officer had no apparent interest in any social exchange with Knowledge Boys.

Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001: 206) raise the issue of

‘the interviewer’s awareness of the threat potential [To the masculine self], alertness for problems arising because of this threat, and ability to respond in a way that makes the interview successful’.

and (2001:218) provide some advice that

‘if an interview feels tense from start to finish, or if a subject never opens up [In this context cannot answer the questions, even if he/she knows the answers], then it is usually clear that something has gone wrong and a change of style or protocol is called for’.

The achievement of a tense interview from start to finish would appear to have been considered a success by the PCO examiners involved and therefore no change of protocol would have been considered necessary.

Initially students are required to appear every fifty six days. Once they have shown some progress the student receives what is known as a reduction (see Glossary). Reductions are in effect a reduced number of days between tests or appearances. Appearances or topographical examinations are then held every twenty eight days, then every twenty one days and ultimately two or three occasions at fourteen day intervals. The consensus amongst Knowledge Students was that once a student received a reduction to 21 days they had been accepted as having a good enough Knowledge to become a taxi driver. As far as I am aware this assertion is based on assumption rather than fact. My experience was that the stories concerning the Knowledge are all really based around what to do and not to do to get through the Knowledge. At a lower level the stories are really saying ‘present the expected

behaviour and conform to the rituals'. The stories almost imply that the student is diligently acquiring the Knowledge of London but over and above that success is based on encouraging conformity with the institution's apparent values and not displaying maverick traits.

Some students who had enjoyed a reduction, e.g. from appearing every fifty six days to instead appearing every twenty eight days, found after two or three poor appearances that they were moved back to fifty six day appearances and had to start the long process of answering well again in order to get back to appearing every twenty eight days. I knew two people who had endured this unpleasant and highly demotivating experience. This event caused them to seriously consider quitting the Knowledge as this was a devastating blow and had serious impacts on their morale, stamina, family life and finances. Happily they both decided to continue with the Knowledge and went on to become taxi drivers. As always in the taxi industry, there were stories of students who were put on 112 days or even 224 days. As with many taxi trade stories, no one knew when these events had happened or what the students' names were. However these stories and rumours provided the motivation to be well prepared at each appearance i.e. to change behaviour and action in response to gossip (Dalton, 1961).

Despite the lack of evidence, and possibly quite unfairly, I and other Knowledge Boys suspected that rebels, however low key their rebellion might be, would be quietly squeezed out by the PCO examiners and it was this suspicion together with the rumours and stories that led me to overlook the receptionist's supercilious and often rude attitude, as I am sure other determined Knowledge Students did. It is difficult to discern what may be described here as the truth. It is more likely that this was simply a collection of rumours, stories and circumstantial and anecdotal evidence that were compiled by me and others to construct an inner world in which perceptions of reality may be distorted (Stacey, 2001). However it was significant enough for me to conform, overlook issues and generally comply with what I believed at the time was required.

The informal sanctions that were rumoured to be available to the PCO examiners were commonly known amongst Knowledge Students as; holding back, blocking and stoppers (see Glossary). Although each was subtly different the outcome was the same, the Knowledge Boy continues to have appearances at the same interval length e.g. every 56 or 28 days.

Stoppers and blockers, it was rumoured, were given to people who did not turn up smartly dressed or appeared not be servile, conformist or compliant enough with the rituals practiced by the PCO. Stoppers and blockers were, according to Knowledge Boy folklore, ridiculously obscure questions which no one could reasonably be expected to answer, or, as sometimes was suspected, to involve non-existent places. The theory amongst Knowledge Boys was that these were inflicted on students who arrived late for appearances, did not seem to be working hard enough at the Knowledge, were too flash, or had some form of misdemeanour on their criminal record or driving licence that was insufficient to keep them off of the Knowledge but that the PCO took a dim view of. Whether any of this is true, or whether the mythical Knowledge Boy who started such stories simply did not know the questions he was asked, is open to conjecture.

The last verbal test concerned with the Knowledge of London is known within the industry and at the Public Carriage Office as a req (see Glossary). No one I have asked is quite sure why it is termed a req. In the film *The Knowledge* (1979), a

description was given by the actor Leonard Rosenthal in his role as the difficult and legendary senior Public Carriage Office Knowledge Examiner, possibly based on Mr Finlay. He explained it related to a final test to requisition a [taxi] driver's licence. Knowledge Students are told at their last fourteen day appearance (most only attend one or two 14 day appearances) that their next appearance will be their req. Whereas all other appearances take place in the morning reqs are held in the afternoon (See Appendix 4 – Mon 10th March) and whilst most appearances consist of approximately eight to ten questions a req lasts about an hour and involves not only tens of runs but also scores of points. The points are usually read from lists e.g.

Bonnington Hotel
National Hospital
Royal Overseas League
Lobb
Purdeys
Horniman Museum
Etc

After each point is read by the examiner, the Knowledge Student states where the point is, e.g. Scott's – Mount Street, US Embassy – Grosvenor Square etc.

As seems to be the norm in the taxi industry rumours circulate amongst Knowledge Students that some unknown Knowledge Student at some unknown time failed his req. I found no evidence of this. Every Knowledge Boy I knew who went for their req passed and I suspect that is always the case. Once again the process that is the Knowledge is bathed in ritual and intrigue, which appears to enhance the achievement of the rite of passage from being a Knowledge Boy to becoming a taxi driver.

My req was very different to any standard appearance. After reporting to the normal sliding window that was signposted as reception, I was informed that I should sit on a chair in a corridor rather than the customary instruction to "go to the waiting room". Almost to the minute of my appointment time the Knowledge Examiner, a Mr Shearn, walked along the corridor, courteously checked that I was Mr Galvin and suggested I follow him to his office. He was visibly relaxed and whilst not quite cordial displayed an air of interest in the way that a headmaster might interact with a prefect or sixth former, or a doctor might interact with a patient. When we got into his office he suggested that I remove my jacket and hang it on a coat stand as "we shall be here for some time". There was an element of enabling me

'to assume a triple expert role: as one whose experiences are not easily grasped by outsiders [Learning or acquiring the Knowledge], as one who knows how questions ought to be asked to get at the heart of things [complex one way systems, runs involving taxi routes such as the colloquial nicknames given to routes by Knowledge Boys so they remember them e.g. WASP [Walpole Street, Anderson Street, Sloane Street, Pelham Avenue], LAGQ (see Glossary) and the Dirty Dozen (a route through Soho's complex one way systems)], and as one who knows the answers' (Scwalbe and Wolkomir 2001:208).

This was a very new and very welcome experience but at the same time slightly disconcerting. The conduct of the req was a complete reversal of the normal approach adopted by the Public Carriage Officers at appearances. There was an intellectual or academic feel to it, verging on mutual respect. In fact most of Scwalbe

and Wolkomir's advice re interviews which I cite above as being ignored or even reversed to create maximum tension was adopted and embraced. There were even positive comments about routes etc. "Yes, that was very good" etc.

Whilst not quite surreal the experience was somewhat uncanny. This was a pleasant ritual but very definitely a ritual of sorts. The journey through the Knowledge had started with the introductory meeting involving withering explanations about the Knowledge and how most people would never acquire sufficient Knowledge to become a taxi driver, what I and others (Townsend, 2003) considered to be ritualistic bullying at appearances and now a further ritual involving courtesy and apparent mutual respect. This gave me a feeling of being about to enter into membership of a 'professional elite' (Stacey, 2001:223). The removal of me as a Knowledge Boy from the rest of the group in order to attend an afternoon session for my req appeared to me to be significant. The invitation to hang up my coat rather than simply comply with the ritual of handing over my card, waiting to be told to be seated was another apparently significant relaxation of the ritual and Knowledge Boy/PCO relationship.

Blau (1986:254) suggests that 'cultural values legitimate the social order and the various arrangements that sustain it'. The PCO appears to be both dreaded and respected in equal measure by both Knowledge Students and taxi drivers. Knowledge Boys appear to appreciate that the Knowledge is tough and has to be gone through. There is no clamour for it to be dumbed down or reformed, and in fact the attempt by the radio taxi company executives to do so through the introduction of the Quickie Knowledge (see section 5.2.16) led to an aggressive backlash from the industry, thereby legitimising the social order as Blau purports (1986). The evidence was that Knowledge Boys I knew claimed that they had been asked "a load of rubbish" (i.e. points that no one could be expected to know) but as the tests were one on one it was never clear if any of this was true. I could never claim to have been asked rubbish or to have been held back. However apart from arriving late once by ten minutes, going into Mr Finlay's office when he had asked for Mr Rocket and confirming what appeared to be Mr Finlay's worst fears about Londoners being unable to understand Scottish accents (see section 5.2.12), I had followed the tacit rules and therefore did not fit the rumoured criteria for being held back.

In Blau's (1986: 254) words; 'Legitimation entails approving social consensus that endows existing or expected social conditions with value, thereby stabilizing or promoting them'. By doing everything that was expected; arriving early, suitably attired, using yes sir or no sir in response to questions, knowing all of the examiners' bankers, not moving furniture, etc. I had approved the social consensus. In exchange I had made more or less average progress through the Knowledge of London qualification.

At the end of the Knowledge the prospective taxi driver has two more hurdles before receiving his licence; he has to take a specialist driving test (see section 5.2.13) and then take a further, albeit cursory, test on his Knowledge of the suburbs of London. Once again this test was held in the afternoon (See appendix 4 – Mon 24th March). Once these two last tests are satisfactorily completed the Knowledge Boy becomes a taxi driver.

In summary what my research established is that PCO examiners have cultivated an identity and the PCO as an institution has developed or adopted a culture which is accepted by Knowledge Boys consensually. Knowledge Boys appear to accept the implicit institutional formal culture and cultivate the identity they present to conform to that culture. Much of the Knowledge process is revealed to Knowledge Boys through

rumour and anecdote as the PCO does not specify any of the behavioural expectations. The appearances are not merely a test. Due to the demographic, mainly young working class men, and their need to complete the Knowledge expeditiously due to financial and family pressures, appearances are fraught events. A bad appearance prolongs periods away from family acquiring the Knowledge and impacts them financially by preventing them from earning overtime. The Knowledge Boys accept the rudeness, the aggressive behaviour, the rituals and the idiosyncrasies of the Knowledge as a rite of passage from Knowledge Boy to taxi driver.

During these interactions between Knowledge Boys and PCO examiners peculiar ritualised behaviours are in evidence. These behaviours appear to have little to do with testing the Knowledge Boys' topographical Knowledge of London but appear to be accepted consensually by Knowledge Boys.

The ritualistic and idiosyncratic nature of the Knowledge of London testing process extends to a specialist driving test that all aspirant London taxi drivers are required to take. The next section describes the process, the ritual and the impact on aspirant taxi drivers.

5.2.13 The Driving Test Ritual

I imagined that the driving test would be a very straight forward administrative process that sought to establish the driving competency of the aspirant taxi driver. This proved not to be the case. Once again my feeling was that the PCO, assisted by Knowledge Boys, folklore and rumour, had managed to turn administrative processes into tests of character, introduce stress and worry and wrap the whole event up in mystique and intrigue. Once again the identity of Knowledge Boys is expected to be cloaked in conformity with the unwritten rules. Once again the PCO examiner, this time the driving test examiner, was at pains to avoid any friendliness or show, or even feign, any interest in the industry. The culture of both the taxi industry and the PCO were poles apart but like clergy and laity they briefly met, albeit with some embarrassment and an almost palpable desire to make any meeting or engagement as quick and painless as possible before retreating to the familiarity of their own cultural territory. The rules were communicated, as often they were during the whole Knowledge process, by anecdote and rumour rather than in an information leaflet. This ritualistic approach to the driving test was very clearly accepted consensually by the aspirant taxi drivers. As to why this culture has developed I can only assume that is a continuation of the rite of passage that taxi drivers value as proof of the onerous requirements of the Knowledge, which somehow differentiates them from other driving jobs and adds value to their vocational qualification.

I fully expected to receive my badge on completion of my driving test, known colloquially in the trade amongst Knowledge Boys as one's *drive* [my italics – see Glossary]. It was rather an odd test and the reasons for it and what it was meant to achieve were far from clear. There was no documentation or readily available information made available by the Public Carriage Office (PCO), merely a form to apply for a driving test. The Knowledge School that I attended organised drives as an integral part of their service. The prospective driver needed to book a drive with the PCO who administered and undertook the drives. Taxi driving tests took place on Wednesdays and Fridays only. When I enquired at the PCO about the driving test I was told to speak to a Knowledge School or garage [Large taxi fleet operators are often known as garages in the industry]. Curiously like the Knowledge process the PCO were not willing or did not expect to have to provide instructions as to the

process, curriculum or other information concerning the driving tests that they were responsible for administering.

A few days before the test I and another Knowledge Boy were told to stand at a bus stop which was outside the driving test centre. The test centre was an open compound in Balls Pond Road in Islington. We were instructed to watch another prospective taxi driver taking an actual taxi driving test. We were told somewhat furtively by the driving instructor that it was important to look inconspicuous and appear to be waiting for a bus and only glance over occasionally at what was known as the yard work, which involved the driver being tested manoeuvring his taxi between two pieces of wood on the floor, and between posts. Why this level of subterfuge was necessary was not explained but the delivery of the instruction implied widespread understanding and to ask why would have seemed naive.

There were the normal bleak taxi trade stories of students failing prior to setting off because the PCO examiner had spotted that the taxi had an out of date tax disc, the wrong tyres or was not clean enough. The veracity of these stories is somewhat dubious. A further twist was added to the driving test by Knowledge Boys who claimed that three failed tests resulted in the prospective taxi driver being thrown off the Knowledge. This added a level of stress to the driving test process because after passing through all of the stages of the Knowledge with its inherent pressures, the thought of it all ending based on failing a driving test seemed cruel. As in the previous section, there was no validation of these rumours and neither was there any documentation from the Public Carriage Office to refute it.

The driving instructor used to take a group of Knowledge Boys out on what are called in the industry wangles (see Glossary). Wangles are driving lessons in a taxi. I was also lent a wangling cab by the Knowledge School. A wangle cab was an old cab which is no longer licensed in which one can drive around and become familiar with the peculiar features of a London taxi prior to the actual driving test. The driving instructor claimed that the PCO driving examiner would trust his recommendation concerning a prospective taxi driver's driving ability. He also claimed that he "kept the examiner talking" whilst the student carried out the yard work. I witnessed this when I was watching another driver take his test, the driving instructor deliberately stood in front of the PCO examiner (In effect obscuring the examiner's view of the driver carrying out the yard work) engaging in animated conversation while the prospective driver did his yard work.

I was told by the driving instructor that during the test I was not to catch the examiner's eye in the rear view mirror, not to initiate a conversation and to answer any questions with both hands firmly and visibly on the steering wheel whilst looking straight ahead. My thoughts were that this was yet another ritualistic encounter bathed in mystique and fanned by rumour and folklore (Stacey, 2001), and yet it was nothing more than a driving test.

On the day of the test I was advised by the Knowledge School driving instructor to turn up suited and booted [A cockney expression meaning: well or formally dressed]. The examiner was a short, quite elderly man who wore a suit, shirt and tie, buttoned up raincoat, trilby hat and, as usual amongst Public Carriage Officers, his shoes were very well polished. He was very English looking and had a well-cared for moustache.

The yard work was in effect a three point turn which had to take place between two wooden poles laid on the ground, followed by two reversing exercises which involved reversing between two upright poles, as though reversing into a narrow entrance,

e.g. a garage. If the driver completed the yard work satisfactorily, which we were told by the driving instructor meant completing the manoeuvres without making contact with any of the poles, the driving examiner got into the passenger cabin of the taxi and directed the driver on a thirty minute journey. During the test he said nothing other than take the next available right, second left and other similar instructions. We travelled to the City of London where he instructed me to park up. He got out and went to the bank. He told me before leaving the taxi, somewhat gravely, that if a police officer came along I was to drive off but to return for him. When he returned from the bank, he simply told me to drive back to the test centre, i.e. no other instruction regarding the route. Once safely back at the driving test centre I was invited to sit in the passenger cabin of the taxi. I was told to sit on one of the fold up seats so that I was facing the examiner and was then quizzed by him on the Highway Code. Following this exercise I had to explain the meaning of a number of road sign images held aloft on cards. The test went without incident. After the Highway Code Test he told me I had passed. He then signed a form which I was to take to the PCO in order to collect my badge.

Similar to the Knowledge, the taxi driving competency test is the subject of much rumour, speculation and many stories amongst Knowledge Boys. Also like the Knowledge the preferred methodology to successfully complete the driving test is communicated to Knowledge Boys informally through the communications web of stories and anecdotes. Blau's (1986) observations concerning legitimation from social consensus has resonance with the PCO driving test. I have never heard of a taxi driver or Knowledge Boy criticising the test or the need for it. In my opinion it is another ritual that participants appear to accept consensually as part of the rite of passage. It had as far as I could see no obvious benefit to the driver or the public. What it did achieve was an embellishment of the claims made by taxi drivers as to the difference between them and minicabs [minicab drivers were unlicensed and therefore there was no requirement for an additional driving test]. Similarly to the process of acquiring the Knowledge of London with its strange, unwritten rules and requirements, that are made more stressful through rumour and myth passing, what appears to have developed into a very special, idiosyncratic driving test that is also subject to myth, anecdote and rumour appears also to have been accepted consensually by Knowledge Boys wishing to become taxi drivers. It is apparent that Knowledge Boys and taxi drivers view the trials and tribulations of these processes as somehow securing their future and differentiating them from other driving jobs and therefore being worthwhile.

The next section explains how a moment that should have been memorable felt like nothing more special than making a small purchase in a shop. Despite the ability of the PCO and the Knowledge Boy community to turn the Knowledge process into an art form cloaked in ritual, intrigue and rumour the purpose of it all was to become a taxi driver and at that point be presented with a badge (licence). The next section explains how at the end of a roller coaster ride type experience the presentation of the badge was nothing more than a minor administrative interaction.

5.2.14 Receiving My Badge

This section examines the process of collecting the coveted green taxi drivers badge once all of the testing, demands and deprivations of the Knowledge of London had been completed. Once the last two tests (Suburban Knowledge and Driving Test) were completed the driver is required to collect his badge from a window at the Public Carriage Office.

The apparent intimacy and professional respect demonstrated by the PCO Examiner at the req was not in evidence when I collected my badge and taxi driver licence. There was no ceremony, no 'well-done', and no good luck wishes. It was a case of hand in a form at a window, pay 15p [The maximum the Public Carriage Office is allowed to charge by law] and receive a Hackney Carriage licence, a copy licence which is given to the garage that a driver hires his cab from, and a metal taxi driver's badge. The badge is required to be worn at all times when operating as a taxi driver and, interestingly, when appearing in front of a Policeman or a Magistrate.

The process of issuing the licence and badge was handled by the Public Carriage Office administrative staff in the same way as a counter clerk providing a form at a post office or the experience of asking for and receiving a railway time table at a station booking office. The end of the Knowledge was less personal than the start and the start was a great deal less than personal. On reflection I recognised that whilst the end of the process or exercise had an administrative hue the beginning had been an exercise in social and cultural conditioning. My feelings at that point were that the Public Carriage Office was a curious mix of omnipotence, detachment, indifference and intimidation – how this behaviour benefited any one of the stakeholders is difficult to deduce.

I was somewhat surprised at the level of indifference and the detached behaviour demonstrated by the people who worked at the Public Carriage Office. I was especially struck that it continued even at the moment, a big moment for me and no doubt others, when I collected my badge. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 supported this assertion concerning the importance of this moment when he related that he could remember nearly twenty years later the precise day that he received his licence; 21st April 1995. This was clearly an important event for him; evidently more important than for me as some time later I could not even remember the year that I received my licence and certainly a great deal more important than the attention afforded to it by the PCO.

With hindsight I believe that this administrative approach to handing over the badge and licences could be compared to receiving notification through the post that one has been awarded a degree but at least with a degree there is an opportunity to attend a graduation. There was no such concept within the taxi industry although I did arrange a celebratory dinner with a few Knowledge Boys and their wives whom I had got to know whilst at the Knowledge School, together with my parents and Charlie Rubenstein who had helped so much with callovers and mock Public Carriage Office tests. Organisationally the Public Carriage Office maintained its stance of merely administering the taxi industry whilst remaining steadfastly aloof from it. I observed that the self-service approach to the Knowledge remained constant to the end. Therefore if anyone who passed the Knowledge felt a celebration was needed they needed to organise it themselves.

As I walked out of the Public Carriage Office after receiving my badge the normal gaggle of Knowledge Boys trying to find out what questions one had been asked was absent from the front of the building. It was around lunchtime and appearances are normally held up to about eleven o'clock. I presumed that they had all gone back to the Knowledge Schools to deliver the latest intelligence that they had gathered. There was no one to share my joy with. I had just passed what I and many other Londoners (Townsend, 2007; Garner and Stokoe, 2000; Fisher, 2008; Taxi Driver Interviews, 2008) considered to be the most difficult and arduous test in London and no one was there to say well done. I walked around the corner into Pentonville Road

and hailed a taxi to take me to Cambridge Heath Road in London's East End where I was to collect my taxi. The taxi driver never spoke during the journey.

Probably the greatest disappointment was at the end of the Knowledge when the realism dawned that all of this effort, ritual humiliation, physical discomfort and stress had been endured simply so that one had become a licensed taxi driver. Although that had been the goal it quickly became apparent that for the effort involved the outcome was slightly underwhelming. The camaraderie that had developed, the identity that I had built and the aura of seniority that I had managed to cultivate with other Knowledge Boys during my progress through the Knowledge School, which was a community (Blau, 1986) to which I had belonged and established myself within, was coming to an end and I was literally soon to start a new job as a taxi driver. Was I in fact almost sad to be moving from the Knowledge to driving a taxi? Almost ridiculously the Knowledge process had morphed from what had originally been simply acquiring a vocational qualification to become a taxi driver to an occupation in its own right. I had become immersed in the culture of the Knowledge and obsessed with the acquisition of London's topography not to be a better taxi driver but to beat the Knowledge of London examiners and also to burnish my credentials amongst my peers who were also on the Knowledge. I have often wondered since; did others feel the same? The process and experience of the Knowledge of London is a rich subject for further research.

I had arranged to hire a taxi subject to passing my driving test to collect it straight after I had collected my licence and badge. The people who owned and worked at the taxi garage considered me passing my test as a cause for celebration and were thrilled and generous in their congratulations when I arrived at the garage as London's newest taxi driver. I drove out of the garage, switched on my 'For Hire' light and quickly picked up my first customer. During my time as a Knowledge Boy I was told that the tradition in the taxi industry is that the first fare is given free of charge. This tradition, I was informed by various people in the trade during my time as a Knowledge Boy, would have an impact on one's luck as a taxi driver. A free fare for the first customer may not guarantee good luck but charging for your first fare would guarantee bad luck throughout one's taxi driving career. I honoured the tradition although my customer was incredulous and embarrassed by the gesture. Thankfully the trip was fairly short.

Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 related his experience; the fleet owner, Mickey Ascott, from whom he was going to hire his taxi, met him at one fifteen on the day he expected to receive his badge outside the PCO and handed over the taxi. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 explained that he immediately "trapped" [Was hailed by a customer] a job but he added that he carried out his second trip free of charge as well "just to ensure a lifetime of good luck".

The process of acquiring the Knowledge is daunting from every perspective, it is physically and mentally demanding and at times demotivating given the lack of feedback. The rituals are tiresome and the myths and legends that surround them add to the stress of the process. The view expressed by Taxi Driver Interviewee No.3 that it [the Knowledge] sorts the wheat from the chaff is true to the extent that one has to be determined to complete the task. As to the question of whether the process and all that entails actually means that a better calibre of person becomes a taxi driver I cannot claim to have found any evidence that either supports or contradicts this hypothesis. What the Knowledge certainly appears to achieve is a feeling of initiation, of having achieved a rite of passage to join a tribe, select group or even a professional practice who have shared an identical experience. This feeling I believe

manifested itself in a respect that was shown and observed amongst taxi drivers for each other.

This section shows that the PCO, in what it does and in what it fails to do, affects the Knowledge Boy and/or licensed taxi driver. The lack of a positive end to the Knowledge is I believe a reflection of the PCO's detachment from the industry and the individuals within it. The carefully crafted identity of being quite separate from the taxi trade was clearly in evidence when the whole process was completed. A feeling of being on one's own was experienced and I was soon to learn that was the nature of the job of being a taxi driver.

The next section examines how taxi drivers view the Knowledge process as a rite of passage and importantly as a phenomenon that binds the trade together.

5.2.15 The Knowledge – Binding the Trade Together

When I asked Taxi Driver Interviewee No.3 where he saw the taxi industry going in the future he responded; 'The Knowledge binds the trade together; it doesn't matter who comes into the trade, they all have to do the Knowledge'. 'I am against positive discrimination and the Mayor buying bikes for some ethnic groups to do the Knowledge'. [Just before the interview the London Mayor, Ken Livingstone, had announced a scheme to increase ethnic representation in the taxi industry and proposed buying mopeds, paying Knowledge School fees etc to encourage people from under-represented groups to undertake the Knowledge in order to make the taxi industry more representative of London's population]. This had been widely condemned in the industry and trade press on a 'we did it [paid our own way] and so should they [the underrepresented groups]' basis. 'The Knowledge should not be watered down, it is character building, and it sets the standard' (Taxi Driver Interviewee). Taxi Driver Interviewee No.3 'has four mates doing the Knowledge and I wind them up [tease them] that only one will pass'. It appears that amongst taxi drivers in London the high dropout rate amongst knowledge students is proof that the quality of new taxi drivers is assured and that the Knowledge is being maintained as a rite of passage.

An alternative view could be that the Knowledge has little to do with quality and just ensures that only the tenacious and the financially stable succeed. This view would in my opinion be fallacious as clearly the Knowledge achieves a high level of quality, as measured by taxi drivers' Knowledge of London, as explicitly noted by the BBC (2010, see section 2.1). The impact of the Knowledge vocational qualification on the identity and culture of taxi drivers is evident and given the high esteem that they are held in is similarly a quality re-enforcing process.

The attractiveness of becoming a taxi driver was considered by me and my workmates as the ability to work long, albeit flexible, hours in a well-paid job and migrate from being lower or standard working class to upper working class. As posited by Abrahams (2000) the independence of becoming self-employed as opposed to working for an organisation was also attractive. The lack of an obvious boss was also something in a working class environment that was viewed with a degree of envy (Abrahams, 2000). Taxi drivers were, amongst my workmates and peers, a group we respected because of the fact that they had passed the, widely acknowledged, very difficult Knowledge, were their own bosses and earned a much higher income than we did, all of which seemed to be paid in cash and on a daily basis. Those that we knew were home owners which was unusual at the time.

The recognition amongst taxi drivers and their peers of the enormity of the Knowledge as a task, together with the stress and pressure that was caused by the rumours and stories that circulate amongst Knowledge Boys appears to develop a mutual respect amongst taxi drivers. It appears that London's taxi drivers value the shared experience of the Knowledge and regard it as an identifier that forms a bond of mutual respect. This mutual respect concerning completing the Knowledge, together with the taxi drivers' faith that every single taxi driver has had to complete it, almost certainly binds the trade together and unites taxi drivers in the common cause of maintaining the status quo. This status quo, whereby every new entrant must complete the Knowledge of London, is important to taxi drivers as evidenced by their consensual acceptance of the rigours, the eccentricities and idiosyncratic nature of the testing process.

According to those I interviewed. Likewise the bond between drivers is also under threat. Without the Knowledge, or should the Knowledge be watered down London's taxi industry implicitly fear that it would be in danger of losing its place in the hierarchy of driving jobs where it is currently perceived to be at the top. If any loss of status, and thereby identity were to happen the very attributes of the role that attract many people to become taxi drivers would be at risk. The next section deals with just such a threat, caused by an attempt to disrupt the equilibrium within the trade by introducing what was termed as a Quickie Knowledge, and how the culture of the industry was counter to these attempts and the behaviours that were manifested as a consequence.

5.2.16 The Quickie Knowledge

During a period of rapid growth in demand for radio taxis in London during the nineties, caused by a buoyant economy and vigorous growth in the financial and legal sector in the City of London, attempts were made by some radio taxi company managements to urge the Public Carriage Office (PCO) to reduce the time it took Knowledge Students to complete the Knowledge of London qualification thereby enabling quicker entry to the industry. Their objective was to provide a larger pool of candidate taxi drivers from which to recruit drivers from to expand their radio taxi companies.

These attempts ruined the individual proponents' reputations within the industry. Very quickly a 'group ideology' (Watson 1982:259) developed that mobilised the trade press, trade associations and individual, and groups, of taxi drivers against the proponents. Bendix (1963:264) explains how ideology develops;

'The attitudes of individuals do not become the public opinion of a group merely by the process of addition. Instead, public opinion is formed through a constant process of formulation and reformulation by which spokesmen identified with a social group seek to articulate what they sense to be shared understandings....I call these articulations 'ideologies' in the specific sense of [an] idea considered in the context of group action'

What was clear early on in this process was that the Knowledge was sacrosanct amongst taxi drivers. This was evidenced from the consensual approach to the Knowledge whereby the physical and mental demands of acquiring the Knowledge together with the onerous testing process were readily accepted by Knowledge Students who completed the process and considered both necessary and important. It meant that all taxi drivers were equally qualified, it defined their identity and

influenced their culture. It was not viewed as public property and a candidate for small groups of individuals to manipulate to suit their narrow business or commercial needs.

The sobriquet of the Quickie Knowledge was adopted by critics to describe the initiative and this was used as a form of abuse to the perpetrators for years after their attempts had been abandoned. The major trade association, the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA), in effect the spokesmen as referred to by Bendix (1963), ran a campaign for many years; 'No to a Quickie Knowledge' which London's taxi drivers supported vociferously.

The trade press ran series of abusive articles verging on hate campaigns against the perpetrators. Letters apparently poured into the trade press and those that were published viciously refuted that there was any shortage of radio taxi drivers and condemned the vested interests (Callsign, 2003) attempting to ruin the trade as they described it by flooding it with poorly trained drivers.

'There has been much recent speculation regarding the issue of new taxi driver licences. It claims an apparent dilution of the standards now required to obtain the coveted All London Green Badge [Taxi driver's licence]. Led by one driver organisation, the speculation infers that the present day KoL [Knowledge of London] is tougher than it was a few years ago. It has also been claimed that pressure was brought onto the Public Carriage Office by taxi proprietors and other 'vested' interests, to pass out candidates quicker in order to satisfy those proprietor's profit margins without regard to any economic downturn and drivers' earnings at the time'. (Callsign, 2003:8)

The fact that less than a third of drivers subscribed to a radio circuit (Townsend, 2007) was cited as evidence that any structural defect was to be found in the sales proposition of the radio taxi companies rather than an inherent supply issue within the industry.

This was a clear example of what Watson describes happening in his case study;

'As a result of the need for individuals to come together to look after common interests in the face of greater relative power of the employing interest [or in this case the radio taxi companies a pseudo employer], we see a process going on at all levels throughout employing organizations in which individuals relate themselves to others in objectively similar circumstances to defend or advance shared interests. Group mobilization, both formal and informal, thus occurs throughout the organization' (1982: 264).

The culture in the taxi industry in London is very much one of maintaining the status quo, of all being equal and importantly that the Knowledge binds the industry together. These attempts by the management of the radio taxi companies offended each of those important principles. It went further as it provided no tangible benefit to taxi drivers directly, it merely enabled the radio taxi companies, in effect businesses, to benefit from the taxi drivers' loss of identity, status quo and was completely counter to their culture. The test was clearly one of relative power (Watson, 1982); could the taxi drivers and their organisations stand firm against the radio taxi company executives? The mobilisation that Watson (1982) refers to is clear in this scenario as can be seen from the vitriolic comments in the trade press, identifying the proponents as vested interests. A further example of this mobilisation was the trade press giving what was a from the proponents' perspective a change in business

process the sobriquet; the Quickie Knowledge. This term was then successfully through formal and informal means turned into a term of abuse. The informal networks that are very much part of the culture of London's taxi drivers were successful in highlighting this issue and influencing if not public opinion (Bendix, 1963) certainly the opinion of the community that were affected by it.

The Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association carried out a survey to show that there was an empty taxi every ten seconds in certain main thoroughfares of London and concluded that therefore there was no shortage of taxi drivers and no need to alter the Knowledge testing process. The LTDA issued a statement regarding the behaviour of a member of the Taxi Board [The London Taxi Board was an industry wide coalition of taxi organisations, the regulator and the vehicle manufacturers who met regularly to informally develop policy for the industry]; this individual was one of the proponents of the Quickie Knowledge.

'No Quicky Knowledge

A prominent member of the London Taxi Board recently issued a public statement to the effect that the 1089 new driver licenses issued last year in London were "Clearly NOT enough".

It is this type of view that prompted the LTDA to suspend its membership of the Taxi Board and to fight against those who wish to see a "quicky" Knowledge and London flooded with Licensed Taxi Drivers.' (LTDA, 2012)

The perpetrators were branded by the trade press, the de facto industry spokesmen, trade associations and the industry leaders, as having vested interests (Callsign, 2003). This term, vested interests, was widely and wildly thrown around at the time by the trade press and drivers. Watson elaborates, 'Group leaders or spokesmen play an important part here in converting potential common objective interests into recognized or subjective ones' (1982: 264). The Knowledge of London is an imposed vocational qualification and despite the personal, physical deprivations of it, the humiliating rituals enacted by the PCO examiners and the psychological overhead of separation from family, adverse financial impact, unclear curriculum and uncertainty over duration and progress, my research has established that it is accepted consensually by Knowledge Boys and regarded by taxi drivers as a rite of passage (Taxi Driver Interviews), as an achievement, as an investment and as a key differentiator from other driving jobs that taxi drivers perceive as being of a lower order.

Each of these are important points that influence the culture and form the identity of London's taxi drivers. The attempts to remove any of them or in some way to soften their impact on new entrants by claims of needing more taxi drivers and suggesting that somehow the Knowledge of London was tougher in recent times than was previously the case and doing so from an apparently privileged position of management once again offended the identity and culture of London's taxi drivers who strongly felt that they were all equal whether driving a taxi or managing a radio taxi company.

The coalition of taxi drivers and others that came together is understandable when we see that that the implicit contract or effort-reward bargain is constantly liable to redefinition to the employee's [In this case the taxi drivers'] potential disadvantage (Baldamus, 1961). The fear that the LTDA either helpfully highlighted or chose to use as a form of abuse, depending upon your viewpoint, was that enabling greater

numbers of taxi drivers through lowering what, is in effect, a barrier to entry (Porter, 1980), meant dilution of the available business and therefore lower profits or longer working hours for existing taxi drivers. As Watson (1982:264) asserts;

‘unless individual employees have qualities which are unique, or particularly valuable to the organization, they will be relatively powerless to defend themselves in the face of these pressures, and even less likely to improve their position’.

The watering down of the Knowledge of London as the radio circuit principals’ attempts were often referred to during the period of animosity, would have removed the unique and valuable quality (Watson, 1982) that taxi drivers consider as the important symbol of their security and from an academic perspective their identity, i.e. the Knowledge of London qualification. Beynon (1975:153) points out I believe quite rightly that; ‘what most working men want of a job is that it offers some security’. This was supported in the interviews that I carried out amongst taxi drivers; Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 stated, when asked why he had decided to become a taxi driver, that ‘it provided me with [Job and financial] security’. The moves to water down the Knowledge were in many taxi drivers’ view going to damage the level of job and financial security they enjoyed.

In their Joint Association of Radio Taxi Associations (JARTA) meetings the principals of the radio taxi companies used terms such as “Luddites” and “small thinkers” to describe what they termed “the illogical behaviour” of taxi drivers’ who had railed against the Quickie Knowledge. They accused the trade associations e.g. Licensed Taxi Drivers’ Association of “being politically motivated” and “opportunist”. The radio taxi management teams depended ‘on the assumed existence of certain organizational goals’ (Watson 1982:261), for example that all, or the majority of drivers/members, wanted to see their radio circuit continue to grow. What could never be assumed, and apparently was by the radio circuit executives, was that the taxi drivers would support these objectives even if was at a cost to themselves at both a collaborative and individual level. The direct cost to taxi drivers was potentially the loss of, or damage to, their status, identity, autonomy, and their financial and job security.

This is an interesting and important concept. The radio taxi company executives appear to have gambled that radio taxi drivers would put utilitarian ideals ahead of personal identity and the prevailing culture of their peers and the industry. They also seemed to question drivers’ intelligence and ability to make logical decisions, thus assuming for themselves a privileged position whereby their ideas were logical and made by more intelligent people.

The radio taxi management teams appear to have identified a need for the radio taxi industry to continue to grow and develop through meeting customer demand for more taxis and what was often referred to as “a more dynamic” or “responsive service”, which apparently meant taxis waiting for customers not customers waiting for taxis. The Knowledge was viewed by radio taxi circuit executives as a barrier to entry (Porter, 1980) and consequently an adverse impact on the growth of the businesses they managed and the taxi industry in general. Whereas the drivers and trade associations relied on two arguments, firstly that there were two thirds of the driver population (those who did not belong to a radio circuit) who could be recruited by the radio circuits if the proposition was suitably attractive and secondly that customer service would reduce, as new drivers came on stream who did not have the benefit of the traditional Knowledge of London which took a long time to acquire and was an

effective character test for aspiring taxi drivers. Their position was that the Quickie Knowledge would adversely impact the customer experience as the driver would lack adequate topographical knowledge and may not have the character traits to deal with the public. A further point was made that this situation would benefit neither the taxi trade in general nor the radio taxi companies whose principals were championing it.

In addition to the two arguments put forward by the taxi drivers and their champions, the implications were that the radio circuits were more interested in profit, salaries, and personal benefits such as pensions and company cars than in the taxi drivers' wellbeing, hence the sobriquet of 'vested interests' (Callsign, 2003). The underlying argument from the drivers and their supporters was that protecting drivers' incomes and job security was more important than greater availability of taxis for passengers during peak periods of demand. This is once again a demonstration of drivers' views of a hierarchy where taxi drivers' interests are evidently rated above those of customers.

Taxi drivers waiting for customers would have a direct adverse impact on their earning capability which is one of the important reasons to become a taxi driver. My research established that taxi drivers do not consider themselves to be an organisation in any conventional understanding of the term. They view themselves and are constantly presenting their identity as self-employed businessmen. This individuality appears to encourage placing oneself and one's own interests at the centre of decision making. It is this culture that enabled opponents of the Quickie Knowledge to marshal against attempts to consolidate the individual taxi drivers into a mass whose main purpose is to satisfy the needs of London's taxi travelling public.

During my interaction with the radio taxi organisation principals it was apparent that they had moved, psychologically, from being Knowledge Boys who had completed the Knowledge themselves to taxi drivers, to managers and then to businessmen and ultimately to self-styled and appointed statesmen of the industry. They used terms such as "people being unable to see the big picture", that "emotion had got in the way of common sense". They 'labelled pejoratively', in Watson's (1982:261) terms, 'employee reluctance to go along with such changes' as "resistance to change". "By implication, this is to be seen as a generally bad thing and, of course, an irrational thing.", (Watson:1982:261). Initially they adopted Watson's (1982) analysis that 'overcoming change is thus a matter of simply getting people to see sense, rather than a matter of some interest groups exerting power with regard to others' (Watson, 1982:261). I never heard the term irrational used during this period but 'illogical' was often used when discussing the driver and trade press reaction to what the radio company principals viewed as "a rational and logical" solution to a purely business problem.

One of the main protagonists for the changes constantly used terms such as a "logical process" and "what we need is lateral thinking, not blinkers" when promoting the change. Drivers who were vehemently against the changes were labelled as "ignoramuses", "not very nice people", "not very bright [intelligent] people", and "trouble makers" by management. A charge of "a lack of loyalty" was used by the radio taxi company principals to describe the actions of drivers who were against the change.

Pettigrew (197:573) draws attention to what he calls 'the less rational and instrumental aspects of organizational behaviour' and 'for greater attention to be to the paid to the ways in which organizational members [In this case taxi drivers, their representatives and the radio taxi company principals] act as creators of symbols,

languages, beliefs, visions, ideologies and myths'. All of the parties involved were busy developing their language; 'vested interests' (Callsign, 2003) was used as a form of abuse towards the proponents and trouble makers, and 'ignoramuses' towards the opponents. Symbols were also evident; suits were the symbol of the radio company principals and taxis [The vehicle] were the symbols of opposition.

Both groups had created a vision; opponents spoke of new Quickie Knowledge taxi drivers who, unlike those who had been through the traditional Knowledge of London training and testing process, no longer knew where they were going [had no, or scant, topographical knowledge], streets flooded with more empty taxis and taxi drivers unable to make a living due to the influx of new entrants. The radio circuit principals described an industry that was withering on the vine, unable to meet customer demand. Ideologies became increasingly entrenched and polarised, and language reverted to sound bites based around us and them. Interestingly both groups used the terms us and them to describe themselves and their opponents. Belief amongst both groups appeared absolute. Both groups apparently believed in their actions and ideologies and demonstrated a belief that they and their ideology were destined to save the industry.

Similar to Watson's case study the language was of 'improving communications and showing the workforce [In this case radio taxi drivers] that changes were to everyone's advantage and thus not to be resisted' (1982:263). Graphs were produced by the protagonists showing how long the Knowledge used to take and that it was now taking longer. This change was presented by management as a bad thing but many drivers saw it as good news as if the Knowledge took longer there would be fewer drivers. They reasoned that this meant more business for existing taxi drivers. Further statistics were produced which highlighted that there were more drivers who were over seventy years of age than under thirty five. This was presented in the press controlled by the radio circuit principals as shocking evidence of a trend of long term industry decline. What the true significance of this bald statistic showed was never validated or explained. Neither was any historical context or explanation provided, the taxi industry may have had an age profile where more drivers were over seventy than under thirty five for decades. The more the problem was considered by the radio taxi company principals as a communications challenge the worse relations became between the proponents and the opponents of the Quickie Knowledge.

The original proponents let it be known to the industry through the trade press that large fleet owners in London were also involved, supportive and championing the Quickie Knowledge and therefore in favour of expanding the number of drivers. This caused further acrimony amongst taxi drivers and other opponents of the Quickie Knowledge. The fleet owners like the radio taxi company principals viewed a higher number of taxi drivers as a potential opportunity to increase business. Even today fleet owners are often referred to in the trade press pejoratively as 'vested interests' (Callsign, 2003) or the Masters [This is taken from the name of their association, the London Master Carriage Proprietors Association, known as Masters for short – the term Masters is normally used sarcastically to imply bosses from when most drivers worked for a Master i.e. fleet owner rather than owning their own vehicle]. Although approximately one third of drivers belonged to a radio circuit less than 10% hired a taxi. This prompted terminology such as 'the tail wagging the dog' when drivers criticised the fleet owners' involvement in the campaign for the Quickie Knowledge.

I was never witness to the culture of London's taxi drivers and the identity that they cultivated being considered or discussed at proponent meetings. Instead the

emphasis was on resolving a communications problem. The lines between the parties were increasingly drawn as management against workers (taxi drivers). The taxi drivers were unhappy about what they saw as peers trying to position themselves as professional managers and irritated by the fleet owners siding with the radio taxi company executives. The radio taxi management teams were also irritated by the taxi drivers' refusal to address what they saw as an unemotional business problem.

Not surprisingly proposals for replacing the character building experience inherent in acquiring the Knowledge of London with the Quickie Knowledge, which would change the character of the qualification from a physical, mental and psychological endurance to a computer program that could be learnt from the comfort of a Knowledge Student's spare bedroom, and replacing live appearances with a Public Carriage Office Examiner with tests that are taken online, responding to multiple choice questions, were often argued as reasons to preserve the Knowledge in its current form. Once again it is interesting to observe that the qualification is viewed by taxi drivers as primarily what is good for the driver e.g. differentiation from other drivers, rather than providing a specific customer benefit.

It is also interesting to note that customers or their views were not involved in any significant way by either the proponents or opponents of the Quickie Knowledge. The only explicit reference to customers was the radio taxi company principals' reference to meeting customer demand. The opponents of the Quickie Knowledge (mainly taxi drivers and their advocates) made an implicit gesture to customer service when they mentioned the likelihood that new Quickie Knowledge drivers would not know where they were going which would obviously have an adverse customer impact. This non-involvement of customers appeared to be because the dispute was really a power battle between taxi drivers and radio circuit principals, and to a lesser extent fleet owners, and is another example that shows that customers' views are not really considered significant within the industry.

The radio taxi management teams in this scenario were in my view attempting to use language to describe and imply that the taxi drivers who were against the change were illogical, incapable of lateral thought, emotional, and therefore less able intellectually than the radio taxi management. One could go as far as to say that the protagonists of the Quickie Knowledge felt the taxi drivers were in need of leadership, or someone else to do the thinking, who possessed the experience, competence, qualifications or qualities that the taxi drivers lacked. This was analogous to Berger and Luckman's (1967) vision of the way language is used in the social construction of meanings and Mills' (1963) discussion of the exercise of vocabularies of motive. The motive here was to convince what were considered by management to be the silent majority, 'that to oppose management plans is not only to be other than sensible [illogical] but is to threaten the domestic harmony of the team' (Watson 1982:272).

The Knowledge qualification was, in my opinion, and still is believed to be, regarded as the 'master symbol of the organization' (Christensen and Cheney, 2000:249). The actions of the fleet proprietors and radio circuit principals were seen by many drivers, I believe, as treachery, an insidious attack on the trade by people who belonged to it and who gained their living from it. These comments are mine but contain the language and sentiment used at the time by drivers. The perpetrators were all licensed taxi drivers, although it was many years since they had actually driven a taxi for a living. The fact that members of the taxi drivers' own group were championing the changes annoyed the drivers more than if it had been driven by parties external to their group. As this was in effect a peer vs. peer battle, something that I discovered

during my research, it was considered to be the type of battle that encouraged the taxi drivers to feel able to fight with greater vigour. I believe that these actions brought out the worst in the taxi drivers as their biggest fear, lack of differentiation, loss of identity and assimilation with lower order driving roles, e.g. minicab and bus drivers, was heightened.

5.2.17 Summary

The Knowledge of London vocational qualification is judged by those who undertake it and their non-taxi driver peers to be a significant, demanding and difficult undertaking. The task appears to be made more difficult by the arcane practices adopted by the Public Carriage Office (PCO) who appear to provide little guidance, no feedback and expect prospective taxi drivers to discover through informal means what is required on many levels, including but not limited to behaviour in and around the PCO and its staff and examiners, the delivery of answers during topographical tests, how Knowledge Boys can self-assess their progress on the Knowledge and how to actually acquire the Knowledge. PCO staff and examiners appear to behave in an unreasonable manner at times to Knowledge Boys and yet this is accepted consensually by those acquiring the Knowledge.

The archaic and eccentric rituals of the Knowledge appear to have developed over time and to be readily accepted by Knowledge Boys. The high drop-out rate amongst aspirant taxi drivers appears to be accepted by both the PCO and Knowledge Boys. Knowledge Boys demonstrate a high level of subservience to the staff and examiners at the PCO. The PCO staff and examiners appear to have a formal culture of remaining diffident to the taxi industry in general and Knowledge Boys and the Knowledge of London process specifically. Knowledge Boys evidently spend a great deal of time and energy demonising the PCO through informal communication channels using rumour and anecdote extensively to do so..

Knowledge Boys whilst acquiring the Knowledge apparently deliberately begin travelling around London on their own. They appear to avoid contact with other Knowledge Boys. This behaviour amongst a narrow demographic is unusual. This culture then changes significantly when they join a Knowledge School and appear to join and behave very much as a community. Quickly hierarchies are formed based on topographical competency levels which are assessed informally.

The personal demands of acquiring the Knowledge, together with the approbation that is meted out by non-taxi driving peers when one becomes a taxi driver, is important in the formation of the identity of taxi drivers. In addition to these factors the longevity of the industry, the legitimacy of the role, and the acceptance into the industry by existing taxi drivers enables the new taxi driver to associate himself with the identity of the industry. These important factors appear to influence taxi drivers to adopt and cultivate an identity that is closely aligned with the industry, its antecedents, mores and values.

Given the technological changes that we are experiencing with SatNavs and other navigation aids the relevance and necessity for the Knowledge process could be questioned. However taxi drivers, Knowledge Boys and even those who are attempting to join the industry appear readily to accept the rigours and demands of the Knowledge consensually as a rite of passage, a quality control measure and a way of elevating their profession to be more than just a driving job. The demands of the Knowledge appear to be transposed from a vocational qualification to a justification and a probably naïve, albeit implicit, assurance of continuity and

legitimacy. The attempts by the executives of the radio taxi industry to downgrade the Knowledge, as it was viewed by the taxi industry, was roundly rejected and the proponents pilloried for attacking such an important icon of the industry.

Overall the Knowledge of London could be described as an anachronism. Whilst it ensures that every new taxi driver has an excellent topographical Knowledge of London and its landmarks, my research suggests that its real value is that it operates a rite of passage into an ancient and honourable institution. Its rigours and demands, together with the ritualised approach to testing, are consensually accepted by Knowledge Boys and almost revered by taxi drivers. These factors are important influencers on the culture of the industry and the identity of both individual taxi drivers and the industry which they are closely aligned with.

The next section considers the transition from Knowledge Boy to taxi driver and the social interplay, structures, etiquette, and culture of life as a taxi driver. The relationship between taxi drivers, passengers, the industry's institutions and, in light of a lack of management, the leadership of the industry are examined. An important factor in the next section is the similarities between the behaviours and aspirations amongst what is a virtual workforce and workforces in more conventional organisations (Hatch and Schultz, 1997).

5.3 Behaviours, Interactions and Identity

In this section I have provided an insight into the transition from Knowledge Boy to taxi driver as I experienced it and as it was related to me by other new taxi drivers. I examine the behaviours and interactions between taxi drivers and between taxi drivers and others in the industry and taxi drivers with passengers. I have examined the identity that taxi drivers appear to portray to each other and the wider community through the daily routines and rituals of taxi drivers' working lives, taxi drivers' values and beliefs and the relationship between groups and institutions within the industry. I have also sought to highlight ritualised behaviours and sought to understand how these have developed and why. All of these important interactions have provided an insight into the culture and identity of London's taxi drivers. During my research I was drawn to establishing whether there is a culture in the industry that new taxi drivers adopt or whether the organisation is a culture that subtly adjusts and changes with each new recruit. I have sought to identify why things happen as they do, why taxi drivers behave as they do and why the interactions that form the social exchange (Blau, 1986) on which the industry appears to thrive happen as they do.

5.3.1 Relationships; Taxi Drivers and Knowledge Boys

In this section I relate my experiences of the relationship between taxi drivers and Knowledge Boys. I use specific events to highlight the manifestation of the relationship. I go on to consider how, when a Knowledge Boy transitions to become a taxi driver, new taxi drivers are treated by the existing taxi driver community.

The relationship between Knowledge Boys and taxi drivers was in my experience ephemeral and consisted mainly of short vignettes. My research showed that it was common for the small number of taxi drivers who provided any acknowledgement of Knowledge Students to shout, some aggressively and others, I believe, jokingly, from their taxis to "Give it up" [it being the Knowledge] or "Give it up, the game's [industry is] finished" [No longer commercially viable]. Most taxi drivers, even when sitting in their taxi next to a Knowledge Boy at traffic lights, said nothing and did not make eye contact or acknowledge Knowledge Boys in any way. Very occasionally a taxi driver might enquire in a kindly manner how one was getting on with the Knowledge and

possibly indicate how tough they found it themselves and even make the odd positive or encouraging comment such as “It is all worth it in the end” or similar. These were generally snatched conversations whilst waiting at traffic lights or whilst waiting in traffic jams.

It appeared to me that from the more kindly or jocular taxi drivers’ perspective the Knowledge was something different and unconnected with the industry. Knowledge Students were in my view considered by taxi drivers at best to be *with* but definitely not *in* the industry Whetten (1997) and there appeared to be no competitive rivalry (Porter, 1980) or similar conflicts. This was a similar trait in my view to that of the Public Carriage Officer who gave the introductory talk to aspiring Knowledge Boys and his explicit detachment from the industry (see Section 5.2.5). Blau (1986:17) stresses that ‘...the basic reward that people seek in their associations is social approval’. In my experience social approval (Blau) was not given easily and certainly not frequently given by the taxi drivers or the regulator to Knowledge Students.

A small group of Knowledge Boys that I knew from the Knowledge School used to meet regularly at a coffee stall in Westminster at four o’clock each afternoon. The stall was frequented by taxi drivers who also met regularly as well as occasional attendees. Both groups, taxi drivers and Knowledge Boys, stood in their own groups and rarely interacted except for occasional light hearted jibes from the taxi drivers towards the group of Knowledge Boys. This was probably not surprising given the very different cultures that the two groups belonged to. The jibes were normally delivered as loud asides that the taxi drivers knew the Knowledge Boys would hear, often accompanied by the taxi drivers pointing or other gesticulations towards the group of Knowledge Boys.

The jibes concerned how, “They [the Knowledge Boys] all think they will become millionaires driving a cab” or similar. These jibes were made whilst each group of about four to six members stood in loose circles some six foot or so away from one another drinking tea. The Knowledge Boys also made jibes mainly with comments such as, “What’s the matter with you, had to work more than four hours today?” or, “Why has he got the hump [why is he fed up/annoyed/grumpy]? Only been to the airport three times today?” The taxi drivers were in my view trying to either assert their rank or superiority or undermine the Knowledge Boys albeit with what appeared to be light hearted banter. The Knowledge Boys were having none of it and sought to paint the taxi drivers who were leading the comments as inept, albeit in their apparently superior role. This rivalry was only ever on show to my knowledge at this particular tea stall. It had an almost informal or off the record feel to the interactions. At all other times as previously noted I witnessed that taxi drivers largely ignored Knowledge Boys.

Shortly after I received my taxi licence I clearly remember feeling that the Knowledge of London procedure and the role of taxi driver were poles apart in so many ways, e.g. the focus changed from learning to earning. As a taxi driver I soon became interested only in where my next fare/passenger was coming from and consciously stopped looking at and trying to memorise every building, something that had become habitual while undertaking the Knowledge. As a Knowledge Boy there were no thoughts of picking up customers; my only thoughts were trying to cram into my memory as many landmarks, streets, points and runs as I possibly could. So perhaps the separation of both groups was not as strange as it appeared to me at the time. I was not aware, apart from the odd aggressive, “Give it up” cat call, of any explicit antipathy from taxi drivers towards me as a Knowledge Boy. This could be explained through the high dropout rate of Knowledge Students (see section 5.2.5) which

controlled the number of successful students and thereby restricted growth in the taxi driver population. This appeared to allay taxi drivers' fears, if they had any, of being overrun by new or additional taxi drivers.

Even when I was a taxi driver and things were quiet, during cyclical downturns I can't ever remember feeling any personal antipathy to or threat to my livelihood from Knowledge Boys. I certainly had no intention or motivation to shout, "Give it up," or similar at Knowledge Boys and neither did I see any benefit in providing encouragement to someone I had never met before and was unlikely to see again; there was no social exchange benefit (Blau, 1986) to be derived from these activities in my view.

In summary, taxi drivers appear to have little real interest or antipathy towards Knowledge Boys and likewise Knowledge Boys had no reason to interact with taxi drivers. Both groups have their own distinct identity and tasks to perform. Both groups appear to socialise with their peers and have little real interest in or of socialising with each other. This is probably due to the lack of any social exchange benefit. The exception to this was the banter that was evident at the Westminster tea stall. The next section concerns the integration of the new taxi driver into the industry and its culture and how this happens.

5.3.2 Integration into the Industry – Identifying with Groups

In the taxi industry new taxi drivers are known as 'butter boys' (see Glossary). The reasons, like much of the lexicon of the industry, are lost in the mists of time (Garner and Stokoe, 2000). Butter boys are renowned within the industry as being hard working and are often derided by other taxi drivers as being greedy and or needy. This description has its roots, I believe, in an ideology prevalent in the taxi industry that the more money one person, e.g. a butter boy, takes, the less there is for the rest. Alternatively it could just be jealousy that butter boys are better motivated to earn more money and perhaps, due to personal circumstances, many are single, having waited to complete the Knowledge before getting married, and are therefore able to be much more flexible about their working hours than people with families.

I observed a number of Knowledge Students who became taxi drivers and when they did they certainly lived up to the reputation of a hard working butter boy. I felt that they summoned the energy and enthusiasm from the elation of finishing the Knowledge and the motivation that is derived from the fascination of starting a new job. It was quite usual for a new taxi driver to return to the Knowledge School with his shiny new badge where he received much approbation from his peers. On these visits it was common to state that he would, 'put his head down' an industry term meaning to work hard, until he had paid off his debts incurred whilst studying for the Knowledge and had saved up for a good holiday. Several full time Knowledge Students that I knew had put off the date of their wedding until the Knowledge was finished and so they had the goal of paying for a wedding, buying and furnishing a house and paying for a honeymoon. It was surprising to me just how quickly these formidable goals were normally achieved. This energy may well have been a consequence of the narrow demographic from which taxi drivers are derived, within which there is a great deal of self-discipline and determination which was used to acquire the Knowledge but may well then be utilised to work hard enough to achieve these financial feats.

Most of the part time and some full time Knowledge Boys I had known, once they received their badge, had the pressing need to earn money. Many had families and

the Knowledge had put financial pressures on their families. A lack of holidays due to spending all of their spare time learning London's streets, an inability to work overtime, the cost of a moped and Knowledge School fees and in some cases the need to pay back loans to family members and possibly banks and other institutions that had been needed to fund the completion of the Knowledge also played a part. New drivers were often keen to purchase their own taxi and were therefore focused on saving up the deposit. A number of these issues were, I recall, an incentive for many to live up to the hard working ethic for which butter boys were renowned. Although established or long serving drivers adopted a disparaging tone towards the long hours that butter boys typically worked, there was an acknowledgement that they had completed the arduous requirements of the Knowledge and had on the day they qualified had rightly become full members of the community or group.

The group of established drivers appeared to be particularly sensitive to, or consciously or unconsciously jealous or envious of, the often younger and certainly more energetic newcomers to the industry. Although this jealousy, if that is what it was, was largely concealed, only being made explicit when butter boys spoke of their takings and financial goals, or of purchasing new taxis, luxury holidays or similar. It may of course have been something very different; an inverted snobbery or a demonstration of what Scwalbe and Wolkomir (2001:213) observe, '...to recognize that men often exaggerate rationality, autonomy and control'. These older taxi drivers may be keen to demonstrate or claim that they have financial control and can therefore work less hours, or that they are more in control of the job of a taxi driver and make their money more easily than butter boys can. Working sensible hours for a reasonable return is likely to be far more prevalent and representative of the ideology of the older or long serving group than those they regard as newcomers such as butter boys, who simply want to earn as much as they can to achieve financial recovery from the adverse impact of the Knowledge of London on their personal finances followed by a return to financial stability.

Taxi drivers in London operate independently from one another and without any extrinsic need to form groups of any kind. Blau (1986) has much to offer in relation to the human need to form groups, the proclivity to associate with others and benefits derived from social exchange. He explores why people are attracted to one another and why they form and reform groups and discusses his concept of exchange, where he describes social exchange in which each gains something while paying a price. Blau goes on to propose that social approval is earned for conforming to group standards, and this exchange process is what generates in-group pressures. These in-group pressures seem to me to be instrumental in influencing almost universally accepted behaviours within the taxi industry.

Roy (1954) talks of workers belonging to lots of groups and their ideologies are therefore formed by these groups. One of the important groups that taxi drivers appear to belong to is likely to be constituted from taxi drivers of their own vintage. Knowledge Boys make friends with other students on the Knowledge and then as they graduate as taxi drivers they apparently and often form groups. As taxi drivers they get to know taxi drivers on the same radio circuit as they belong to and associate with groups who have similar interests, beliefs and values, e.g. groups of drivers who regularly go on charity outings or those who regularly work at the airport. If they are long serving and older drivers, their peers are likely to be similar in many ways; possibly they were conscripted to national service or were formerly trade union members or worked in similar industries prior to becoming taxi drivers. During my research I noted that they demonstrated many of the same cultural traits e.g. held very similar political views or were happy to follow regulations, both formal and

informal without questioning their relevance or veracity. Groups also form in the various cafes and shelters used by taxi drivers. These are often more than simply opportunist groups, and in my experience the patronage of these establishments were broadly likeminded individuals, supporting Blau's (1986) and Roys' (1954) theories about groups.

How much of the behaviour that is demonstrated is determined by membership of groups such as butter boys, taxi drivers, long serving taxi drivers and so forth, and how much is concerned with the 'masculine self' (Scwalbe and Wolkmir 2001:204) and gender is difficult to discern. The industry is almost totally male dominated and this may well influence conversation and boasting to present a masculine self whose autonomy was far greater than other groups such as butter boys. Older and long serving drivers appeared to want to present their prowess at what is in effect hunting and gathering as much stronger than amongst butter boys. These long serving drivers appear to be trying to present themselves as more in control of their world than butter boys who they position as being at the mercy of luck rather than benefitting from experience.

I remember feeling immediately after I received my taxi drivers badge and licence, known in the industry as the driver's badge and bill [the colloquial name for the drivers licence], that I was now part of the industry. I read the trade press avidly and spoke to drivers at ranks in railway stations. I continued to stop at a coffee stall known amongst taxi drivers as 'The Sanctuary' which was opposite Westminster Abbey. Here butter boys, whom I had known as Knowledge Boy peers, typically stopped and chatted and sought information or to share experiences. I quickly moved on to visiting cafes where taxi drivers ate and very soon developed friendships amongst taxi drivers and joined in the banter, as far as I was concerned, just as authoritatively as anyone else. These meeting places are analogous to the mini university at Astra Zeneca (Hatch and Rubin, 2005), that created a meeting place for professionals in the industry, the difference being that the meeting places for practitioners in the taxi industry had evolved rather than been created by management. The outcome was the same; a place for practitioners in the industry to meet.

There were a number of such places whose names and locations are very familiar to London's taxi drivers; The Royal Oak, The Granby Grill and The Piccolo, all of which were commercially operated establishments: in addition to these are the small green huts known as shelters (see Glossary) distributed across London (see photograph below).



Cabman's shelter, Hanover Square, March 2006 reproduced with kind permission of Urban 75

Many of these shelters are known by nick names e.g. All Nations, Bull and Horns, whereas others are known by the road or street they are in e.g. Pont Street Shelter, Hanover Square Shelter (pictured above) or even the area e.g. St John's Wood Shelter and Notting Hill Gate Shelter. Each of these venues gave taxi drivers, practitioners similar to Hatch and Rubin's professionals (2005), an opportunity to tell, share, agree and embellish the taxi industry's 'corporate story' (Larsen, 2000:197), as well as providing a platform and audience for individual anecdotes and identity formulation (Watson, 1994). Given the tradition of verbal storytelling amongst taxi drivers (Garner and Stokoe, 2000), these venues provide an important function within the industry in that they enable dissemination of information and the telling and preservation of the industry's history, albeit in an informal, verbal and often anecdotal format.

Whether my integration into the industry was typical is difficult to say. I would suggest that it was as others I observed had experienced a very similar integration. My observation of being a Knowledge Boy, the Knowledge acquisition process, the PCO, Knowledge Schools, call overs and ultimately as a taxi driver being accepted into the community by dint of my qualification leads me to conclude that mine was a very typical integration. Although I felt integrated into the industry at a macro level, integration or acceptance as a member of the various micro groups that continue to form in the industry are a very different matter. Eligibility, albeit informal, for membership of the various groups was reliant on certain dependencies e.g. age, a priori, length of service and also on the frequency of meeting at certain cafes and shelters or belonging to a radio circuit. Membership of these groups appears to involve acceptance of the culture of those groups and a strong identification with it. Whilst there was no imperative to belong to any group, Blau's thesis of social exchange and Roy's theories regarding members adopting the group's ideologies appear to be borne out by my observations.

Having discussed above my integration into the industry and some of the groups, the next sections analyse life as a taxi driver and what that means.

5.3.3 *Businessman or Employee*

From my research I discovered that most of the taxi drivers I knew had seen their employment status change from that of an employee to being a self-employed taxi driver. Whilst the two statuses, employee and self-employed taxi driver, appear very clear their definition were often debated by new taxi drivers. I found the role of taxi

driver to be very casual and informal. There was no contract (Watson, 1982, see below) with anyone. I realised that in previous, conventional jobs that I had been employed in I would have had a formal and/or implicit contract with my employer. There would have been agreement on the hours I was to work, how the work should be done and a variety of written and unwritten rules such as what to wear at work. Yet as a taxi driver any such decisions were left entirely to the individual. I recall this freedom to be both liberating and slightly worrying although some comfort was gained from observing other taxi drivers and through social interchange in cafes and shelters.

Another area of discomfort for me was that I appeared to be working in very short bursts for each customer I picked up, providing little if any job security.

Watson (1982:263) writes 'Every individual when he or she takes up employment in an organization can be seen as making an implicit contract with the employer. This involves a set of largely tacit assumptions built around the core of an explicit employment contract about what the employer will provide by way of meeting the personal goals, wants and interests of the individual (money, status, satisfaction, power, security etc) in return for the individual's contribution to the purposes of the employer (doing so much work of such a quality etc)'

These assumptions referred to by Watson were totally missing from my role as a taxi driver. I was not, in my opinion, truly a businessman nor was I an employee. I felt myself to be in a strange middle ground where I had much of the responsibility, and in all honesty the freedom of self-employment, but strangely lacked the freedom of a businessman to make fundamental decisions e.g. pricing [London's taxi fares are strictly regulated and any changes are subject to endorsement through Parliament through the laying of an order on the floor of the House]. In the role of a self-employed taxi driver every pound was earned as a direct consequence of my labour. I felt I had neither the implicit contract referred to by Watson nor the formal contract common amongst employees. What I had was a list of abstracts of laws and regulations, some constraints regarding fares, vehicle choice and compellable distance (see glossary) and no real feeling of achievable personal goals such as career path, power, authority or security. Discussions with other new taxi drivers concerning these issues provided evidence that other new taxi drivers felt equally bewildered and unnerved by the new found freedoms provided by their new career.

Aside from the legal and regularity framework inherent in the taxi industry I had full autonomy (Scwalbe and Wolkmir, 2001) regarding my working hours and the number and length of shifts I worked. Watson raises the issue of, '...an organisational future in the form of a promise of promotion or other forms of career advancement' (1994:61). A future of career advancement and promotion was not an option in the role of the taxi driver who was for the most part at the same level on the day he retired as the day that he first received his badge. There was/is no official promotion and any promotion was of a pseudo or proxy nature which was purely determined by the driver's own view of self and included advancements such as owning his own taxi, joining a radio taxi company and/or perhaps becoming a committee member of a radio taxi cooperative or a charity.

It appeared that there was likewise no chance to build a real business other than perhaps joining the small number of people who bought and sold airport trips from hotel doormen, as the only person one could employ was one's self. This is in some ways similar to many other self-employed, small businesses operated by

professionals e.g. solicitors, accountants, surveyors and architects where they qualify and then largely operate as individuals with no career path, although they have the choice of expanding their practice and employing additional professional staff. This was not an option open to London's taxi drivers due to the regulatory and legislative constraints that do not allow anyone but a licensed taxi driver to drive a licensed taxi. Similar to taxi drivers, the status of other professionals is often enhanced through taking up positions in their chartered organisations, charity work and involvement in their industry community. This suggests that the limitations to building a business that I perceived as a taxi driver are more of a self-employment issue rather than specific to the industry.

I found myself listening to fellow taxi drivers' views of themselves as self-employed businessmen and considering those views naive and even grandiose given the reality of what they could influence or control. My view included the feeling that many drivers considered the lack of a boss as evidence that they were a business man (Abrahams, 2000). There was a lack of any explicit customer focus, albeit even without this customers generally seemed happy with the service (Ipsos Mori, 2007).

The lack of any control or influence on marketing the service, sales and pricing, supply, capacity, workforce planning or geographical spread (Slack & Lewis, 2002) suggests to me that drivers are not businessmen but much more self-employed sole traders. Stacey (2001) champions corporations operating without the need for objectives and the other paraphernalia of organised work; could the taxi industry be his vision in practice? Is the taxi industry an institution that just works without the need for top down management frameworks? My view is that taxi drivers are business men in some respects given that they need to self-organise, self-regulate their working hours, organise their tax and other financial affairs and yet operate within a structured and regulated environment. This organisational environment could be viewed as very restrictive for those taxi drivers with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Having come from a background of running a small business I found the contrast with driving a taxi and considering that as a business stark. When I operated my own small business I had much more freedom to make choices about customer service, marketing, pricing and a host of other demand and supply side (Slack and Lewis, 2002) issues. Those choices had a very direct and quick impact on how my business performed. In the taxi business, drivers at taxi ranks and in cafes often described themselves as small businessmen and lamented a lack of respect for that position by the public and the regulator and the status and responsibility that went with it. I on the other hand viewed taxi driving as a job with more freedom and flexibility than during my period either as a conventional employee or as a business owner/operator.

As a taxi driver there were in my view no strategic decisions to be made at all. The strategy for the industry, if there ever was one, has been lost in the passage of time. If there ever was one it was probably only intended to clean up or regulate an informal industry (Garner and Stokoe, 2000). If I am generous about the regulator I suppose developing and operating a regulated industry with trained drivers and using licensed vehicles could be described as a mission. From a driver's perspective my decisions were almost entirely tactical and operational; when would I work and where would I work? The nearest I got to a strategic decision was whether to buy a taxi or hire one, whether to belong to a radio taxi company or not and whether to join a trade association, which I suppose in a formal or academic sense could be considered a strategic alliance (Das and Teng, 2001).

My research demonstrates that identity and image are perceived as important to taxi drivers albeit there are a number of dichotomies in the early part of a taxi driver's career; e.g. whether he is a businessman or a pseudo employee is a typical area of confusion. Their status as self-employed businessmen or pseudo employees is an important issue for many. Identity in general appears to be a significant issue at an industry level and differentiation at an individual level requires the development of status in an industry where everyone is equal in terms of earning potential and qualification and in reality where there is no career path. Taxi drivers have little real need for decision making outside of when to work and for how long. Most other decisions are made by the regulator. An interesting, fairly personal, cultural observation is the way that taxi drivers are happy to discuss these feelings despite their relationships with one another being what can be termed as loose tie (Gladwell 2000).

The way that relationships between taxi drivers develop and how they are manifested is explored in the next section. During my research I uncovered the concept of creating an aura of seniority by mainly older or longer serving taxi drivers, referred to above, through identity cultivation and the development of status symbols and the use of exclusive language and historical knowledge. Taxi drivers as a body appear to have created a hierarchy of driving jobs and placed themselves at the top; this phenomenon is also discussed below.

5.3.4 Relationships between Taxi Drivers

Transitioning from being a Knowledge Boy, which, as explained in earlier sections, had its own culture and behavioural norms, to being a taxi driver, meant learning a whole new set of behaviours (Stacey, 2001). It also meant forming new bonds and friendships as I had already established that taxi drivers did not socialise with Knowledge Boys. This section explains how I went about this, my observations and experiences and provides an insight into London taxi driver identity, culture and behaviour and the relationships that are formed amongst this disparate and virtual group.

From my earliest moments of becoming a taxi driver I recall that there was a noticeable change in the relationship and behaviour that existed between groups of taxi drivers compared to that between groups of Knowledge Boys or between taxi drivers and Knowledge Boys. It was quite normal as a taxi driver when stopping at traffic lights for another taxi driver who had pulled up next to my taxi to gesture with a knowing wink, or to raise his eyes to heaven or to exhibit similar friendly semiotic signals much as any other colleagues or workmates may do when in close proximity to each other. Relationships amongst taxi drivers, despite for the most part not being known to one another and being competitors, were generally somewhere between indifferent to cordial. Taxi drivers were normally helpful to one another, albeit with some tensions obvious at times between newer, younger and longer serving drivers. It appears that the need for social exchange (Blau, 1986) tempted younger drivers to listen to older/longer serving drivers. The younger drivers gained recognition and possibly information and knowledge (Stacey, 2001) and the longer serving drivers gained status as wise and knowledgeable and almost certainly derived amusement and value from the social exchanges, and set boundaries and parameters based on the cultural value of equality.

Whilst out working change for fares paid with high value bank notes were a frequent problem. Requests to and from other taxi drivers for change of a banknote were generally cheerfully and helpfully fulfilled. Likewise drivers were happy to remind one

of a particular club, restaurant or other point [Landmarks, addresses, destinations etc] that had temporarily slipped the memory. However behaviours changed somewhat when drivers congregated on taxi ranks.

When waiting on a taxi rank I quickly learned that older taxi drivers in particular were always happy to find a friendly, possibly young and naive face who would listen to their normally gloomy predictions of instant doom for the taxi industry. I felt that I had never earned money so quickly or so easily, in contrast older drivers painted a picture of a parallel universe where it was hardly possible to scratch a living. They also had a habit of finding ways to depress fellow drivers. As an example of this behaviour I recall one older taxi driver who walked up to the side window of my taxi in Euston Station and enquired, "New cab?" It was obvious it was new due to the condition of the vehicle and the registration plate. When I cheerfully responded in the affirmative, proud that I had bought my first taxi and the step I had taken along my pseudo career path, he went to great lengths to describe an inherent problem with the new model of taxi that I had brought and predicted imminent mechanical disaster.

Needless to add that taxi was one of the most reliable I ever drove. This man simply wanted to take the new butterboy with his shiny new taxi driver's badge and shiny new taxi, down a peg or two and by introducing doubt and concern ensured that I endured the same worries as drivers who were driving around in elderly taxis. Earning more money, displaying external symbols, e.g. a new cab, started to challenge this value and therefore caused offence. It was this offence in my view that this driver and many others in other scenarios sought to address with their putdowns. Why did they do this? Was this a method of bursting a young, keen taxi driver's enthusiasm or youthful exuberance? Was it a sport or some form of amusement to relate in a café or shelter at a later time? Was it once again a play for power through seniority and emphasis of apparent autonomy (Scwalbe and Wolkmir, 2001)? Was it simply the case that the older drivers were unable or unwilling to work the hours necessary to make enough money and were genuinely finding it difficult to generate sufficient income and honestly believed the industry was doomed? Through my research I reached the conclusion that this phenomenon related back, in my view, to the cultural value that all taxi drivers are equal.

Watson explores a concept that is relevant to this phenomenon, "A key assumption, encapsulated in the concept of work orientation, is that what a person's work means to them is a key influence on how they perform it," (1994:59). An observation based on Watson's concept would be that as a butterboy I enjoyed my work and approached it with enthusiasm and motivation and as such I believe I did a god job for the passengers. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 expressed similar views. Could it be that to these older drivers the job was boring and miserable and the way they performed it was the opposite to me? Or was it simply a relationship issue between new and older drivers? Watson helpfully adds that;

'An individual's orientation to work is never static; their life circumstances and the specific circumstances prevailing in the work situation influence what they are looking for and what they expect to get' (Watson, 1994:62)

I considered the disparaging comments made by longer serving drivers about butter boys working long hours to be a form of inverted snobbery. Many taxi drivers I observed apparently prided themselves on being wiser or smarter than their colleagues and working fewer hours, or even just claiming to work less hours. Such claims were a method of validating their apparently savvy taxi driving credentials. They appeared to want to position themselves through accounts that exaggerated

their 'rationality, autonomy and control' (Scwalbe and Wolkmir, 2001: 212) as being streetwise and nobody's fool (e.g. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.4). These observations of the relationship between longer serving and older taxi drivers were analogous to the relationship between taxi drivers and Knowledge Boys, albeit taxi drivers' professional competence was never in my experience questioned in these exchanges.

Taxi drivers considered themselves to be at the top of the driving jobs hierarchy, and at the top by a significant margin. My experience, as a taxi driver, was that I considered myself far better, more professional and somehow more legitimate than other people who drove for a living. This was because I had undertaken the Knowledge of London qualification and enjoyed the status and kudos associated with it amongst non-taxi driver peers. This assertion was commonly expressed by other taxi drivers when we discussed this. Some went on to add that our earning potential was far better than other people they knew who drove for a living. There were a number of taxi drivers that I knew who had previously worked as bus or other drivers; this apparent progression from bus or delivery driver to taxi driver (Taxi Driver Interviews) supported the concept of a hierarchy. Taxi drivers' position in the vocational driving hierarchy was evidently an important part of the drivers' identity.

A further example of the concept of an apparent hierarchy amongst different driving jobs was further evidenced by taxi drivers' comments regarding other drivers, especially bus drivers, who were viewed as part of a much lower order. Particularly during quiet periods of the year taxi drivers would make comments such as, 'If things get much worse I may as well become a bus driver'. The implication being that, during periods when business was quiet, taxi drivers' earning potential was reduced down to a similar level to that of bus drivers. Van drivers and motorbike couriers were viewed as even lower in the order of driving roles. This view was formed on the basis that no formal skills were required to drive a van or motorbike whereas even bus drivers had to prove their bus driving ability and operate with a special licence based on those skills.

Taxi drivers' behaviour, their relationships and their position in the vocational driving hierarchy all appear to be important to their identity as being at the top of driving roles. Their position at the top is validated by the onerous requirements of the Knowledge of London qualification. It also appears that culturally taxi drivers view equality with one another as an important concept. They are quick to deflate any of their number who seek to rise above the norm. Interestingly some of the behaviours that are presented, especially between older and younger taxi drivers, appear driven by a desire not to achieve equality but, it could be argued, are aimed at achieving a level of equilibrium within the industry.

The next section continues the theme of behaviours and relationships and examines how taxi drivers socialise whilst at work. The culture of the taxi industry appears welcoming and inclusive. New members of the industry appear to be readily accepted by the majority of other drivers by dint that they had completed the Knowledge of London and therefore deserved or had earned their place in the industry, as already discussed. However in a disparate and virtual workplace forming relationships as one would in a conventional job or profession appeared to be difficult. It was therefore interesting to explore how this has been achieved amongst my peers

5.3.5 *Socialising at Work*

In more contemporary jobs socialising is often achieved through getting to know colleagues during induction; those in the same team, those who work in close proximity, in the canteen, at the water fountain and photocopier and working in project groups. The London taxi industry is very different. Drivers who do not wish to may never talk to another taxi driver. They can simply go out in their taxis, do their work and go home. This section explores why taxi drivers socialise at work, how this happens and what benefits the parties derive from such interactions.

Holliday (2008) compares qualitative research with learning what we do in everyday life. She explains that to do this we need to research not only how others behave but also how we should behave with them. An example of this concept was evident to me when visiting a café for the first time where I knew many taxi drivers ate. The café was noisy, busy and crowded with many taxi drivers shouting excitedly, laughing loudly and gesticulating wildly. As I walked towards the counter past the tables I exchanged knowing nods and smiles with taxi drivers who caught my eye and looked vaguely familiar. I sat at a table with a few other taxi drivers, none of whom I knew but it was one of the few empty places available. I was soon involved in the conversation. The conversation was very different to those that take place on taxi ranks, which are often business related and relatively serious, frequently doom laden and often negative in style. The conversations in cafes were light, exaggerated, animated, there was much laughing and gesticulating, mimicking customers, speech and laughter was loud and raucous, whereas on ranks conversations were conducted in quiet almost restrained tones with minimal gestures. Whilst I was able to join in the conversation with the taxi drivers on my table apparently easily, I remember adopting Holliday's (2008:10) advice, "...it was necessary to watch for clues, form hypotheses – calculated guesses – about appropriate behaviour, then try things out, observe the result, then confirm, adapt or reject the hypothesis." Stacey describes these types of interaction as 'local rules of communicative interaction' (2001, 119) which he attributes 'to self-organizing processes from which the pattern of communicative experience emerges' (2001, 119).

What quickly became apparent was that being anti-establishment, particularly critical of the Public Carriage Office, Mann and Overton [the sole supplier of London Taxis at the time], the police and the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association, was generally accepted as good amongst my dining companions, whereas a far less critical approach was taken when discussing radio taxi companies, of which many of the participants were members. Banter would not include any encouragement to or glorification of violence, theft, disability, abject racism, sexual references or anything that would encourage any driver to risk losing their badge, although the personal traits of those present e.g. meanness, extravagance, politics and the personal traits of one's own kids (lazy, difficult), parents (a nuisance/great support), wife or girlfriend (demanding, expensive tastes etc), were all apparently fair game.

The next time I went into that café I was invited to sit at the same table that I sat at on my first visit and quickly a rapport developed. Over time we became friendly, rather than friends. These relationships are known in London working class circles as mates, in a similar style to workmates; friendly, loyal, happy to converse and share work issues but contained and not normally extended to be included in more personal aspects of a person's life. This relationship was described by Gladwell (2000:46) as 'loose ties', which he described as 'a friendly yet casual social connection'. These were relationships that had few demands; friendly when we met, able to memorise a few relevant anecdotes, stories or facts and possibly an in joke or continuation of a specific banter often linked to an event, previous job or personal

trait, e.g. sick note (frequently ill), lucky Jim (often unlucky), Eddie the bus (previously a bus driver), but requiring little or no maintenance or any explicit commitment.

Given the nature of taxi driving, which involves travelling all over London most taxi drivers have several watering holes [the industry colloquialism for cafes frequented by taxi drivers] that they use and quickly I found that I had a group of mates in each one. Despite picking up passengers all of the time, taxi driving is a surprisingly lonely job. Groups of friends in taxi based cafes provided a network in which one could share what I considered to be a more normal workplace relationship (Watson, 1994; Beynon, 1975; Blau, 1986). This development from simply focusing on earning money being a motivator to wishing to establish a network of workmates has similarities with Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs, moving from hygiene factors through to self-actualisation, and certainly fitted with Blau's (1986) social exchange theory. In the café we were individuals recognised for our personality traits, conversation and value as a human being. In the taxi we were simply part of a group or mass providing a somewhat homogenous service with apparently limited value or importance at a human or individual level. This concept is explored further in the next section.

Continuing my examination of the culture of welcoming a new member into the industry, I shed light on the local rules, cheerful and light conversation in cafés, laughing easily and demonstrating an explicit anti-establishment bent. An important insight was the comparison of conversations in cafes and on taxi ranks, which were very different. Learning these local rules enabled a smooth transition to the industry. Completing the Knowledge provided the rite of passage from Knowledge Boy to taxi driver and acceptance amongst that peer group. Quite how and why these local rules have developed is not clear. Meetings in cafes appear analogous with normal workplace interactions in conventional workplace settings and for the taxi driver appear to provide a sense of normality, of belonging to an organisation, which I certainly found a welcome interlude to the lonely and isolated nature of taxi driving.

The next section continues the theme of taxi driver relationships and is concerned with the relationships and behaviours between taxi driver and passenger. Some evidence is provided through trade commentators and magazines where drivers and passengers are presented as being in conflict, as discussed earlier. Customer comments are also examined in this next section and appear to show a degree of affection for taxi drivers and their views, despite some less positive aspects of behaviour. An important point in this section is the discussion of self help and advice provided by taxi drivers to taxi drivers to help them cope with what are perceived as difficult customers.

5.3.6 Relationships with Customers

London's taxi drivers spend approximately 50% of their working day with passengers. This section examines the relationships that taxi drivers have with their passengers, what their passengers think about their customers and how taxi drivers deal with difficult customers.

Given the random nature of the majority of taxi hires in London it is very unusual for a taxi driver to pick up the same passenger. However there appeared to me to be a desire for recognition amongst passengers who frequently used taxis. This desire appears to be handled by both regular taxi passengers and drivers through a familiarity with each other that quickly establishes a rapport during what are normally very short journeys. Frequent taxi users displayed a confidence, almost a fondness, and demonstrated what appeared to be affection for their driver. They asked rather

than instructed their driver to take them to a destination and always engaged in conversation. From the driver's perspective we knew that a regular user would always tip and never quibble about the journey or the cost.

Within the industry itself, random passengers as opposed to regular riders appeared to be considered as objects to parody, to mimic and to complain about. During an interview with Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1, he noted his surprise that, "drivers dwell on customers who are arseholes," which may go some way to explaining Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2's focus on miscreant customers. When I spoke about levels of importance Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1's view was that, "The passenger is more important than the driver as they are paying". Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 went on to explain that he thinks that, "The passenger is in charge as they are paying but the driver is in control".

During an interview with Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 he volunteered that;

"Stupid people [He was talking about customers] give me the hump [annoy me]; last week a customer asked, "Is Jermyn Street and Saville Row the same thing?" [same place]. Two months ago I pick up at Putney and am told to go to Mayfair; the customer said, "I will get [provide] the address on the way". We got to Hyde Park Corner [six miles from Putney and a quarter of a mile from Mayfair] and I asked, "Where in Mayfair do you want?", The reply was, "I don't like your attitude; you have a problem". We were only around the corner from Mayfair at this point."

I asked Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 how he viewed the customer and driver relationship in terms of hierarchy; he responded that, "The customer has the power to stop the driver and after all he who pays the piper...".

Commentary on the relationship between drivers and passengers within the trade press are critical, flippant or facetious, intimating a hierarchy that places drivers above passengers. McNamara (2007:6) publishes a regular feature in Taxi Newspaper called 'Stupid Customer Complaint Line', where drivers are encouraged to write in with stories about 'stupid customers' (McNamara, 2007:6). Hooper (2007:8) in his regular feature article in Taxi Newspaper provides an insight into his, and possibly the industry's, beliefs concerning a driver/passenger hierarchy as well as some interesting examples of the taxi driver lexicon mentioned earlier in my research;

"Number three has got to be the punter [taxi industry term for a customer or passenger] with no money who will 'have' to stop at a cash point [ATM]. What is it with these plonkers? [A mildly abusive term inferring lack of intelligence] If you were going out for the evening, or even getting a cab, wouldn't you get the cash out first? Like most people these idiots think you (because you are driving a taxi) can stop and wait anywhere, and when you point out that you can't, they just think you are another cabbie suffering from SAD! [Seasonal Affective Disorder]

Number four is the same plonker but this time he's got a £50 note. "*No change? Why not, you're a taxi aren't you?*" We've all heard that remark haven't we? To satisfy all situations you would have to carry a £300 quid float!

Number five has got to be the same plonker (he gets about don't he?) who then says "*Can I have a receipt for that?*" Never heard of a tip mate? "

A quote from an unknown taxi driver in Garner and Stokoe's (2000) on the subject of the relationship between taxi drivers and their customers asserts, "We're the only profession that is truly united – we all hate the public" (p139)

A customer writing in the letters page of London's Evening Standard newspaper reports mixed levels of service and poor value for money;

'I often have to take taxis home from work late at night, and could write a short novel about my experiences. I have been booted out [thrown out] of a cab halfway home because the driver suddenly remembered he had a pre-booked job, I've been asked to get out by a cabbie after I queried the much longer route he was taking, and a had a driver refuse to take me because I wouldn't pay in advance. Several times I have had cabbies unwilling to take me south of the river. I've had very positive experiences too, but given the cost of cabs, these should be the norm. If I take Addison Lee [London's largest Private Hire company] or the minicab firm near my work, I pay £15 less for the same journey'. (Evening Standard, 9th April 2010:50)

The customer appears to be a reluctant user of taxis and gives no indication of having made an official complaint. S/he is gracious enough to admit to having had positive experiences as well. From the customer report what appears to be in evidence is a high degree of autonomy by the drivers, who refused to take the customer, or threw the customer out of the taxi. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001:213) caution against believing that "...men act with as much autonomy as they claim or assert". Yet here we have an example reported by a customer that describes behaviour that indicates a high level of autonomy.

Taxi drivers, like many professionals, claim a high level of autonomy but my research agrees with Stacey's conclusions that this autonomy is 'precarious' (2001: 224) as taxis and key areas of the taxi drivers' business model (e.g. fares) are highly regulated and therefore autonomy is constrained. The ability to exercise autonomy is also socially constrained (Blau, 1986) by group behaviours such as observance of, and compliance with, the driver etiquette. The level of autonomy is also constrained by the legal framework under which taxi drivers operate where actions such as refusing trips and ordering customers out of taxis is in breach of regulations and quite possibly legislation.

It is worth noting that the customer uses the slightly affectionate term 'cabbie' (Evening Standard, 9th April 2010:50) when referring to what he or she describes as taxi drivers demonstrating miscreant behaviour. It is also interesting that s/he is prepared to pay £15.00p more than a substitute service (Porter, 1980) for a taxi journey on the expectation of a positive experience.

London's taxi service does not appear to be a typical standard public service, or customer service orientated transaction. Drivers expect a certain amount of respect for what they are; a much loved London icon as they were described by London's Deputy Mayor Kit Malthouse (University of Loughborough, 2010), what they have done i.e. qualified for the Knowledge of London (Garner and Stokoe, 2000) and the fact that they are self-employed and their own boss (Abrahams, 2000). Customers likewise can be robust and uncompromising in their dealings with taxi drivers. The letter to the Evening Standard (2010:50) highlights the customer tackling the driver about the route the driver was taking and refuses to pay the fare in advance, a not unusual, and arguably not unreasonable, request from drivers who work at night who

are prone to customers running off without paying, arguing over the fare or finding the customer does not have sufficient money at the end of the journey. The narrative and relationship is much more a business to business type dialogue than a business to public, consumer or customer facing relationship.

When I was discussing my experience in a cafe with a group of colleagues about a trip where the customer had moaned the whole journey about the route, the traffic, stopping at red traffic lights and zebra crossings the unanimous advice was to, "Just act thick" [Pretend to be stupid]. They counselled that people think, "You are just a thick cab driver, so act like one". This approach, which I tried, worked; it subtly moved the responsibility from me to the passenger. I felt absolved of the pressure to know what was in reality impossible to know and the trips became easier to manage. The other issue that often cropped up was that people would run up to the taxi, breathless and tell me that they were late for a meeting at, for example, eleven o'clock and could I find a way to dodge the traffic and get them there on time. This is a tall order on short trips where there is little scope for creative routes. It is an even taller order if the journey on a good day would take 20 minutes and when it was already ten to eleven. Encouraged by my colleagues I employed a tactic whenever someone jumped in and said they had to be at a destination within x minutes on a journey that could take twice the time of braking sharply, accelerating rapidly and generally providing an impression of enthusiastically doing my best. Generally these tactics worked with the customer, even if they arrived late they appeared happy with the service.

In later models of taxis on the roof lining just above the windscreen there was a clock fitted. My colleagues advised me that you should always set it five minutes slow. This gave the customers who were short of time a false sense of security, i.e. that they were not as late as they feared. I was a little concerned about the ethical dimension but as my colleagues said, it was not my fault the customer was late and this approach simply provided them some with peace of mind during the taxi journey. Notably this comment was followed by raucous laughter. Once again it worked. The function of this behaviour was to avoid taking the responsibility for arriving on time a responsibility that the customer was keen to move from themselves to the taxi driver. By following the advice of my colleagues I was able to avoid taking this responsibility.

Although these incidents had been introduced to me as almost facetious advice on reflection I believe I had been the beneficiary of an informal system that socialises new members into the doings of their workplace (Beynon, 1975). This system had started through tacit knowledge derived from trips with talkative taxi drivers before I had started the Knowledge, information gleaned from friends and family who were taxi drivers, the gossip and feedback that I gathered at the Knowledge School and specifically stories from newly qualified taxi drivers who came back to the Knowledge School to share their experiences. These together with the introductory talk at the Public Carriage Office, anecdotes from my call over partner's father-in-law, Charlie Rubenstein, and advice and features in the trade press had left me almost fully socialised. During this tacit process of what in a formal or contemporary setting might be described as induction I had become aware of and tacitly accepted the deep layers or meaning, value, belief and assumption (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1985, 1992; Schultz 1994) that forms the culture of the London taxi industry.

This socialisation enabled me to position the relationship with the customer appropriately and avoided me taking responsibility for issues that were not in my control. Although there appears to be a culture of toleration of customers amongst taxi drivers I don't believe I ever subscribed to it. I did however enjoy the parodying

and mimicking of customers by drivers and their light hearted advice as to how drivers should have dealt with various situations. These sketches were normally presented in a highly amusing and entertaining manner and because all of us had experienced the same types of customer issues were a shared experience. The next section provides some examples of the rituals that are evident and practiced in the taxi industry.

5.3.7 *Rituals at Work*

Although I witnessed some examples of ritualistic behaviour and routines (Stacey, 2001) amongst the taxi drivers I interviewed, their view derived from the taxi driver interviews that I undertook was that they did not feel they engaged in any rituals nor were they consciously aware of any other taxi drivers doing so. Presumably they never reflected upon this aspect of their behaviour. The drivers I interviewed did mention 'routines' and 'my normal route into work' both of which I would consider to be ritualistic but from their perspective were apparently considered habits. My experience conflicted with this position both as a taxi driver and as a passenger. I was impressed at the ritualistic behaviours that were demonstrated by both drivers and passengers.

The ritual of only taking one's own job (Journey/Passenger), which is discussed in section 2, known as taxi driver etiquette, is a significant ritual from which much of the taxi industry's behaviour and character is defined. Hiring, as discussed above, is also ritualised; the customer hails or approaches the taxi, states or requests to be taken to their desired destination, this is then momentarily considered by the driver before accepting the hiring. Any deviation from this ritual by customers was not appreciated by drivers. Customers appeared content to wait for the driver to signify that he was going to accept the hiring. This is peculiar given that the taxi driver is legally obliged to take the customer up to six miles [since changed by TfL to twelve miles]. Whether this legal obligation is widely known by customers was not explored during my research. Whilst operating as a taxi driver I was aware that some customers were aware or in some cases vaguely aware of this obligation. Whether they were aware or not the ritual could be explained as a demonstration of good manners; it is politer to ask than to tell. Alternatively regardless of the legal obligation customers may have felt more comfortable to travel with a driver who was willing to take them rather than one who was legally obliged or one who the customer had to insist took them to the required destination.

The manner in which the end of the journey process is conducted is also ritualistic, although different customer segments perform slightly different rituals. Almost all customers ask the driver how much the fare is despite it being displayed on the meter in front of them. The driver responds. The customer pays and a ritualised approach to giving a tip and/or asking for a receipt is followed. I would propose that these are rituals based on the repetitive and formulaic nature of the interchanges and the expectation of certain behaviour by each of the actors. It was interesting to note that the drivers I interviewed did not recognise these behaviours as rituals but instead saw them as good manners. This is strange given that what appear to be termed good manners are a highly ritualised exhibition of behaviour. The demographic of London's taxi drivers may explain this phenomenon as given they were mainly Londoners they would have travelled in taxis before becoming taxi drivers and just inherited the ritualistic behaviour they now demonstrate.

I found during my research that rituals were few but frequently practiced, e.g. the passenger/driver ritual of hiring and paying which took place at the beginning and

end of every hiring. Likewise the identity that taxi drivers have developed and informally market to their customers appears to be a defence against the apparently perceived threat of assimilation [the term assimilation is used in the taxi industry to signify the deregulation of the taxi industry i.e. the curtailment of the Knowledge of London and other regulatory requirements leading to an assimilation into a driving job rather than as it is currently viewed by those in it as a profession] which is discussed in the next section. It is nonetheless a ritual.

Taxi drivers in London have a constant and oft expressed fear of the concept of assimilation which is examined in the next section. There appears to be a tangible fear that the high standards that define the taxi industry (according to drivers) could be swept away and thereby the flexibility and job security that paradoxically the drivers appear to feel is secured through the ritual of acquiring the Knowledge and the requirements to comply with the regulatory framework, often expressed as onerous, that the taxi industry works within.

5.3.8 Assimilation - The Constant Fear

Although never expressed in such words by taxi drivers assimilation with minicab or other lower order driving jobs was a concern amongst taxi drivers. Any attempts to water down the Knowledge of London qualification, to deregulate fares, to adopt van conversions as taxis, to direct their labour in any way and to move from an expensive annual vehicle safety check, known colloquially in the taxi industry as the overhaul, to a standard MOT was greeted with fiery outrage. These stringent requirements appear to define the industry and are synonymous with the taxi driver identity that is commonly cultivated and presented to customers.

The oft mooted intention by Government to license minicabs, ostensibly due to safety concerns and in response to many campaigns by women's and other groups such as the Diana Lamplugh Trust [Women's groups were prompted to campaign for the licensing of minicabs in order to address the high level of sexually motivated attacks against women using unlicensed minicabs in London, often quoted as a rape a day] provided another threat to the industry which sent even the most placid of taxi drivers that I knew apoplectic. Taxi drivers wanted minicabs banned, not licensed, and pointed to the stringent licensing regulations for taxis and generally good safety record as reasons why licensing minicabs was unnecessary as taxis could take up the customer demand that would be displaced if minicabs were banned. How realistic this claim was is difficult to evaluate at the time but it proved a popular position in such debates.

I observed that the concern amongst taxi drivers was that their future could evolve towards sameness, homogeneity, and assimilation with other driving jobs and consequently loss of status, security, flexibility and earning potential. Taxi drivers commented that once the Knowledge was gone the erosion of other benefits would follow. They were particularly concerned about the adverse impact on fares which they saw as becoming lower if the Knowledge were dropped or watered down. In effect this was seen by taxi drivers as an attack on taxi drivers' autonomy (Scwalbe and Wolkmir, 2001). The freedom for taxi drivers to choose their working hours would also be at risk in an assimilated environment, they argued. This assertion is almost certainly based on a fear of loss of power through moving to an environment with low barriers to entry (Porter, 1980), which they believe would weaken the taxi drivers' autonomy as he would move from being relatively rare, courtesy of the effective barrier to entry caused by the Knowledge qualification, to a plentiful, albeit not so well trained, commodity.

Whilst only taxi drivers undertook the Knowledge, and whilst the Knowledge had a ubiquitous reputation, certainly amongst many Londoners and people who live or work in London, as arduous, hugely difficult and delivering real tangible benefit to customers, taxi drivers felt safe. Any attempts to remove or reduce the value of this great symbol of their industry (Christensen and Cheney, 2000) were strenuously and aggressively opposed as were any suggestions of extending a cut down version of the Knowledge to minicab drivers.

The risk of assimilation appeared to suggest three direct, adverse impacts on London's taxi drivers; a loss of their distinct identity, a levelling of the hierarchy amongst driving jobs that taxi drivers considered themselves to be at the top of and on working conditions such as earnings, flexibility and job security. The motivation for the assimilation process to begin and identification of the agency that would sponsor such an activity appeared somewhat vague. Drivers who raised the issue of a lack of longevity for the industry seemed to consider the lack of effective representation (Townsend, 2003) as a key weakness that might enable assimilation to take place with little meaningful opposition.

Without a management infrastructure and the communications systems and processes that are present in most larger organisations the taxi industry has developed informal methods to disseminate information effectively. The section below provides examples of how these methods work in practice.

5.3.9 Information Dissemination

London's taxi drivers work independently of each other but interface on ranks, in shelters and cafes. Information is provided informally by word of mouth and through more formal channels such as the bountiful choice of trade newspapers and magazines. As well as information, rumour and gossip are quickly spread around the industry. Likewise the history and notable historical events connected with the industry are communicated verbally to new entrants to the industry. This section sheds light on the types of communication that take place, the implications and the reasons and motives behind it.

Within a short time in the industry I quickly realised that the discussions that took place in cafes and shelters, in the pages of the trade press and casual, often short, discussions on taxi ranks enabled a process of diffusion (Ryan and Gross: 1943) of rumours, gossip, information and work practices. This informal, yet powerful, process enabled rumours, stories and more factual information to be disseminated through the industry very quickly and very thoroughly. The practical implication of this process is to demonstrate the power of maintaining culture through stories and anecdote.

A specific example of this concept was when there were changes to aspects of taxi vehicle design or engineering e.g. a new engine type. Drivers quickly established from early adopters of the new vehicle its good and bad points and then this information was communicated by word of mouth around the industry through the process of diffusion. Information was also shared to a more discrete community where a change had a narrower impact, for example amongst radio taxi drivers generally or a specific radio taxi company's drivers in particular, who were recognisable to each other as each member was required to display company logos on their taxis. This information was often perceived as negative if it related changes to policy, process or procedure, e.g. an increase in circuit charges [Charges to the driver for belonging to and receiving radio services]. It might also be news of a contract that had been lost by one Radio Taxi Company to another. As well as

rumours, drivers quickly passed factual information to one another such as a Public Carriage Officer making spot checks on the condition of vehicles at a particular station or taxi rank.

In considering this phenomenon I have considered some questions; what effect does this have? Why is it done? What is the function of this? The effect varies; if the gossip or rumour is positive (e.g. London's hotels have never been busier, possibly with the addition of a well-known hotel or two being cited as fully booked) it can motivate other drivers. Alternatively if it is potentially bad news (e.g. no fare rise this year, radio circuit fees being increased) the opposite effect is often the outcome – demotivation. As to why it is done and the function of it there appears to be no real purpose other than to temporarily enhance or help to 'construct the identity' (Watson:1994:21) of the person starting or spreading the rumour. Stacey suspects a deeper meaning; 'stories are the folklore of the workplace, which may express hidden organizational realities' (2001:125). Stories in the taxi industry were frequently lacking specifics such as names, dates and locations and yet were frequently delivered with what appeared to me to be absolute belief and conviction. The veracity of these stories were often in doubt and appeared to serve an anti-establishment agenda. Stacey (2001) alludes to stories being about something other than itself.

Stacey's assertion may well be the case as many stories that were told to me about vehicles for example may just have been highlighting a lack of trust about the vehicle manufacturer or the quality of the vehicle rather than the specific subject of the story or to position the message sender as being more knowledgeable or wiser than other drivers, often the receivers. The stories in the industry always appeared to be directly associated with the institutions in the industry and their actions and policies and rarely about individuals within it. Where individuals featured these were normally institutionally based, a dishonest despatcher or an over-zealous Public Carriage Officer. These types of stories frame the taxi driver as a victim of the more powerful forces represented by the institutions of the industry. Stacey's (2001) assertions have resonance with the positions of those who circulated these stories and their various political leanings.

Blau's (1986) concept of social exchange may also play a role. In return for an exaggerated or foundationless piece of information perhaps a more useful or genuine piece of information or gossip will be returned in exchange. Less seriously, Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 explained that; '[Taxi] Drivers are really good at telling stories, starting legends; it's a form of entertainment'. In some respects this is not dissimilar to behaviour in offices and factories (Beynon, 1975) where rumours and gossip are spread amongst workmates. The main difference in the taxi industry is that the workmates have much looser ties than people who work in more conventional workplaces and are often therefore exchanging gossip and stories with people who are for the most part almost strangers, only bound together by virtue of their licence and occupation. Gladwell (2000) points to the strength of loose tie relationships which are relationships of choice rather than of physical or institutional proximity.

I was possibly more gullible than Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 and felt in my early career that the flow of information from drivers had high integrity because it was being passed from one taxi driver to another i.e. within a peer group or amongst workmates, colleagues or fellow professionals or practitioners. To be effective these interchanges relied upon an implicit trust in one taxi driver by another and therefore I was ready to accept and believe the information I was given. The reality I discovered over time was that often information was used to further personal agendas and to

achieve this the information was often exaggerated, had no basis, was confused, simply malicious or deliberately distorted in a similar way to that noted by Allport (1947:139) where he describes how, 'The simple unadorned facts that constitute the 'kernel of truth' in this rumour were from the outset distorted in three directions'. He goes on to relate the processes; the story was 'levelled', all kinds of details that are essential for understanding the true meaning of the incident were left out and the story was 'sharpened' and a process of 'assimilation' took place. The story was changed so it made more sense to those spreading the rumour. It was also likely that other processes were at work that sensationalised the story enhancing its interest as well as enhancing the authoritativeness of the story teller.

An example of these processes at work was when new taxis were first fitted with power steering. I was one of the first drivers to purchase a taxi with powered steering and within the first few days was told by several drivers in quick succession that a number of taxis, the number varied randomly from three to five, had turned over due to the adverse effect of the powered steering unit. These rumours were never validated. No reports appeared in the trade or London press, there were no recalls, photographs or other evidence. I concluded that no such event had ever taken place however as I was an early adopter of a taxi fitted with power steering I can confirm that the steering did feel very different to previous taxis I had driven and drivers may well have experienced a sensation similar to the vehicle being likely to turn over. My point is that what Allport refers to as a 'kernel of truth' (1947:139) was present but the story was 'sharpened'.

Another example occurred one day whilst in Euston Station sitting in my brand new shiny taxi, an older driver explained in great detail how a new type of bolt had been fitted in new taxis which were hollow to save the manufacturer money and when it snapped, as it inevitably did, it caused the engine to be destroyed and for some obscure technical reason the warranty did not cover this problem. Once again no such thing ever really happened as far as I know: was this just an older driver trying to put down a younger driver who was a bit too proud of his new taxi, or the same processes, such as sharpening, at work?

Shelters and cafes were also popular venues for anti-establishment and often outlandish and excitably delivered stories about the Public Carriage Office. The stories normally related to the threat of fare reductions, increases in driver numbers, and/or Public Carriage Office Inspectors ordering taxis off the streets for the most minor issue imaginable, e.g. the driver was wearing shorts. LTI Mann and Overton (the taxi vehicle manufacturer) were frequent targets with stories of imminent and significant price increases, faults that were at epidemic proportions and of which LTI were either unwilling or unable to resolve, often involving growing numbers of taxis that were unserviceable with their drivers unable to work and therefore earn money. The reaction to such stories by groups of taxi drivers was frequently boisterous, abusive, ribald and humorous. In the environment of shelters and cafes the stories were delivered in almost polemical terms encouraging vigorous debate. The subject matter the PCO and LTI were almost guaranteed to generate a reaction as most taxi drivers had strong views about both institutions. Whereas on ranks and at stations there was a somewhat dark and sinister tense to the delivery. Why this difference in tone and tense was so discernible is difficult to understand and perhaps worthy of specific research.

London's taxi drivers used stories to customers to position their industry as superior to private hire drivers and, in contrast to private hire drivers at the time, legitimate. My experience of this phenomenon was prior to becoming a taxi driver when I used to

take taxis and be regaled by the driver with stories of how rapists, muggers and ex-convicts were driving private hire vehicles, which at the time were known as minicabs. Once I became a taxi driver I found to my surprise that I also engaged in similar, though not so extreme, diatribes with customers. Why I did so was difficult for me to understand. Was it just copycat behaviour, the need to promote or reinforce our unique selling propositions or was it identity formulation, or attempting to create a clear hierarchy in the minds of my passengers?

More malicious stories circulated about unpopular radio circuit dispatchers and/or management which were clearly designed and relayed to either damage the unscrupulous or to injure the reputations or election prospects of the innocent.

Stacey (2001:124) explains that, "stories perform a psychoanalytic perspective representing emotions, hidden desires and repressed wishes". I would suggest that these hidden desires and repressed wishes in relation to taxi drivers would almost certainly include an end to private hire/minicab drivers and a return to a taxi monopoly situation in London. They are also likely to include some trimming of the PCO's powers often considered almost omnipotent and certainly misused. The vehicle manufacturer was often described as a near monopoly and at times when the odd fringe manufacturer went out of business was factually a monopoly. Drivers variously wished for a mainstream manufacturer to enter the taxi vehicle market or some other event that would reduce what were considered exorbitant vehicle purchase prices. How do these rumours start? Who gains from starting the rumours? The answer to both of these questions would appear to be no one, apart perhaps for a momentary feeling of power when spreading the rumour to the gullible and receptive. These stories appeared to be based on envy and even I suspect malice for the vehicle supplier and/or to demonstrate to others a superior knowledge of what was happening within the industry. To be a bit more than an equal, to demonstrate that the teller was a little more street wise or in the know than the receiver. Festinger (1956) describes this activity as cognitive dissonance whereby people seem to want their cognitive expectations to be transformed into reality. This concept has some resonance given the examples provided above as the PCO, the vehicle manufacturer and minicabs all had axes that the taxi drivers frequently ground.

This section has provided an insight into the role of taxi drivers in disseminating information effectively to their colleagues. The method is very informal and often involves a lack of precise information, at times it is difficult to discern fact, fiction, malice and rumour. Amusement, genuine attempts to be helpful, social exchange, a temporary feeling of power or a wish to demonstrate meta knowledge plus less ethical reasons appear to form the reason for this activity. This informal process is also used to maintain and preserve the industry's history and notable events. Culture is influenced by this communications channel and identities are both built up and destroyed through the process. Overall the process is effective in disseminating information to a disparate workforce without the need for formal communications processes and policies that are common in conventional organisations (Hatch and Schultz, 1997). They are also used for more sinister reasons such as to unseat elected officials, damage the careers of the apparently unscrupulous and to give vent to personal vendettas leading to the recipients taking a view that there must be some truth in the rumours and stories and acting accordingly.

In the next section I consider the use of stories, jokes and pranks and the purpose and role of these in relationships between drivers. In the next section I shed light on some of the stories, jokes and pranks that I have learnt about and how and when they are used. Academics share their research about the reasons for these

behaviours and narratives and these are discussed and considered in the next section.

5.3.10 Stories, Jokes and Pranks

As you will read in this section there is a culture of in jokes, familiar stories, myths and fables, and pranks amongst taxi drivers. The reasons for these behaviours and their purpose are examined below.

London's taxi drivers are both proud (e.g. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2,) and bemused (e.g. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1) that those in the trade have so many stories and so much gossip to share with one another. Stories based on familiar themes (PCO, LTI and Minicabs) that have general interest within the industry and a standard, almost formulaic or ritualistic interaction amongst drivers in cafes and shelters enable almost instant familiarity, despite the level of friendship commonly observed amongst London's taxi drivers being what Gladwell (2000:46) describes as 'loose ties'. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 related that "drivers are really good at telling stories, starting legends; it's a form of entertainment at tea places and shelters. I only stop for the necessity to eat, for the banter, and the abuse [making fun of each other], driving is [a] solitary [occupation]". Taxi Driver Interviewee No.3. termed these stories as "rumour mongering" [spreading or trading in rumours] and hinted at a darker side [seditious or mischievous] to these activities mentioning the word "factions" [alluding to splinter groups within driver organisations and radio circuits seeking to overthrow the management teams for unscrupulous or mischievous reasons] in sinister tones.

Taxi Driver Interviewee No.4 related stories that he had heard or events, mainly tricks and practical jokes on other drivers, which he had participated in, all of which were light hearted and innocent. One example that Taxi Driver Interviewee No.4 related concerned a shelter keeper who was known to be very careful with money and always concerned that his customers paid for what he had served them. One evening a driver who appeared perfectly respectable, but completely unknown to the shelter keeper came in and ordered a dinner. He ate it, the shelter keeper was very pleased to have what he thought might be a new regular customer. When he had finished his meal he explained he was just popping out to get his cigarettes and never returned. The drivers found the shelter keeper's increasing discomfort hilarious and it was many days before they let him into the joke.

Likewise Townsend (2003) relates a story of drivers putting gravel into a driver's wheel hubs. This led to a constant noise which worried the driver and which he related to his friends in the shelter. They expressed surprise and warned of many possible and expensive likely causes. Once again it was sometime before they informed the driver of the actual cause. I never uncovered why drivers feel the need to do play these jokes and tricks on one another but what I established was that they were a constant source of amusement and hilarity in the shelters. The purpose appeared to be to build friendships and groups and to provide entertainment.

Beynon (1975) explains that at Fords there was an element of tricks and jokes being played on foremen and fellow workers. Beynon explains that 'often they had no purpose, they were just a joke' (Beynon, 1975:85). It is interesting to note that drivers who frequent the same shelters and form closer than normal relationships with other drivers take on the behaviour and characteristics of workers in factories who work much more closely together than the normal proximity of those in the taxi industry.

Shaw (2000:182) relates that 'narrative is used to preserve the past and to learn from it, usually with an internal focus, communicating to the same organization that the

stories are about'. In 2003, Alf Townsend, a London taxi driver for forty years published a book titled 'The London Cabbie' (2003) and in 2007 published a paperback version titled 'Cabbie'. Townsend's writing is very much in this vein.

The book concerns Townsend's long taxi driving career and contains a sprinkling of amusing tales. He relates stories of pranks, gentle revenge and far-fetched tales which could be described as well-known fables within the industry. These stories which have been told either to me, or within earshot many, many times are so ridiculous as to be without any real foundation. Within the narrative he draws on lessons that can be learnt and dangers for the industry in the future. It is unclear whether Townsend had aspirations of a wider audience than the taxi industry when writing the book. His book also provides an historical perspective and therefore preserves the past (Shaw, 2000) describing the introduction of minicabs, establishment of the largest taxi trade association (the LTDA), his experiences as Taxi Driver of The Year (see Glossary) and insights into the onerous experience of qualifying for the Knowledge of London.

An example of a story from Townsend's book that is commonly told in the London taxi industry (Townsend 2003) is reproduced below;

'Story 1. A mate [friend] of mine got a job [trip/journey/passenger] to Dover on the basis that the punter [customer] had missed his train and was trying to catch, or connect with, a cruise ship. He agreed an arrangement with the taxi driver whereby if the taxi driver managed to get the passenger to Dover in time for the ship he would double the fare (i.e. pay twice what was on the meter) but if the passenger missed the ship the driver would receive nothing. The taxi driver drove to Dover like a lunatic and just as they arrived at the East Dock in Dover they saw the cruise ship pulling out of the harbour. The taxi driver, who reputedly used to be in the navy, drives up to the top of the White Cliffs of Dover and signals the ship using his headlamps and semaphore. The ship's captain responds to his signal and returns to Dover. The passenger is so thrilled that he has caught his ship that he gives the driver double [the] fare plus a huge tip'. (Townsend, 2003:162).

This story appears to relate in exaggerated and ridiculous terms the ability of taxi drivers to turn adversity into victory. The driver had driven his passenger probably seventy miles and due to missing the ship was likely to receive nothing. Some quick thinking and his fortunes were turned around and both the driver and passenger benefited. Presumably the subliminal message is not to give up without trying everything possible first.

Story 2. 'A bloke [Cockney term for a man] I know was driving his taxi along when he was stopped by the police. The policeman was very rude and aggressive to the taxi driver concerning a trivial issue (minor road traffic violation or similar). Suddenly a window at the back of the cab opened and the passenger transpires to be the Commissioner of Police [or a High Court Judge, a Lord or famous Barrister, I have heard all four mentioned as different drivers related the story/joke to me] intervenes, the police either recognise the passenger or are convinced of his credentials and are completely deflated and embarrassed and the driver is then permitted to resume the journey. At the destination the passenger proffers his card and insists that the driver contact him if any more is heard of the incident'. (Townsend, 2003:162)

Townsend adds a slight twist to his version of the tale invoking the police vs. taxi driver example in that the passenger who is unknown to the police theatrically hands a business card to the driver telling him in front of the police to 'contact me at my Chambers' (Townsend, 2007:162). This has the expected impact on the police officers and they wave the driver on his way. When the driver later inspects the card it transpires that the passenger was a well-dressed fruit and vegetable merchant from Covent Garden wholesale fruit and vegetable market. What this story achieves is to portray the taxi driver as vulnerable to bullying, in this case by the police, but of being saved by his passenger. This story has similarities with the cultural fear of a driver's vulnerability to authority and the risk to his licence and continuing ability to earn a living.

Interestingly these behaviours are revealed to be similar to those exhibited in Ford's factory amongst workers there (Beynon, 1975). As you will read this is surprising given the different employment statuses of workers at Fords and taxi drivers. The amount of interaction and time spent together is very different between the two groups but this culture appears very similar. There appears to be various views as to why stories and fables are used ranging from a verbal record of the industry's history to an entertaining art form (Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2).

Beynon posits that at Fords 'the stories of victories that were relished most were those which were deeply imbued with humour' (1975:85). In both of the stories that Townsend (2003) chooses to reproduce in his book the taxi driver, despite the odds being weighed against him, achieves a victory against the misuse of authority. Beynon (1975) relates a similar scenario amongst workers at Ford where stories are told to newcomers. Like Townsend (2007), Beynon recalls that 'the same stories were told to me dozens of times' (1975:75). This is interesting in respect that in the factory environment at Fords the same people work closely all day, yet every day similar behaviour is exhibited by taxi drivers who in the majority of cases have loose tie (Gladwell, 2000) type relationships and see each other, with few exceptions, relatively infrequently and are a virtual rather than a conventional workforce. Is story telling based on myth and legend specific to the taxi trade and car production industry or a cross cultural workplace phenomenon? Beynon (1975) hypothesises as to whether the stories are a form of lesson handed down through generations;

'These stories provide us with illustrations of the period. The fact that they were told so often indicates the significance of this period. In their telling, the stories take on a further significance. In handling the present, men call upon the past for guidance. The lessons of the past are learned and handed on as stories. The past structures creating in men partial explanations of the world which are worked out in action. And told again'. (Beynon, 1975:75)

This section shows that there is a culture of jokes, stories, fables and pranks amongst London's taxi drivers. These behaviours appear to serve a number of purposes; humour, the preservation of history, the celebration of victories, and as a form of education. The practice and reasons for these behaviours are similar to those demonstrated at Fords and yet there are considerable differences between the identities and the cultures of the two groups. From my own perspective the culture of storytelling was adopted without consciously realising that I was actually doing so. Whether this was the case for every taxi driver is unclear but the behaviour was in my experience widespread and if nothing else provided entertainment, amusement and to an extent educational benefits.

In the next section the concept of taxi driving being a lonely occupation which, when faced with stress and conflict, can demotivate and depress drivers is explored. Drivers have informally developed methodologies that provide a form of support through the use of humour. Once again the behaviours presented by self-employed taxi drivers have similarities to those presented by office based employees, this despite their very different levels of interaction and work place proximity.

5.3.11 Gaining Motivation from the Experiences of Others

Given the disparate nature of taxi driving there is little opportunity to observe how colleagues deal with different issues. This is particularly true when dealing with difficult customers. In this section I shed light on how the industry has developed what could almost be called informal mutual support groups to assist each other to resolve stress through humour.

In my experience there were days driving a taxi where one hardly picked up a customer who spoke English. When customers spoke English there were times when they showed no interest in holding a conversation. There were likewise days where two or three customers in a row were rude, cutting, aggressive or critical of the vehicle, taxis in general, my driving, the route taken or the fare. These were depressing days and I often questioned whether it was a case of the customer being at fault or me being de-motivated or miserable in some way, in effect a cause and effect dichotomy. During such periods I would either just go home completely fed up (this was particularly in the early days of driving a cab), or stop for a sandwich, often eaten in the back of the taxi. Later I learnt that these were common feelings experienced by many taxi drivers and managed through unloading whatever the issues were or just choosing another mood via listening to others' embellished and elaborate stories about customer interactions in taxi shelters. This behaviour compares with someone in a conventional job (Watson, 1982) who may go to see their manager, HR, a confidante or, as with taxi drivers, socially exchange (Blau, 1986) with a colleague(s) at the photocopier or in the canteen.

After I had been driving a taxi for a while, probably a month or two, I would often stop in a café that was frequented by taxi drivers and join in the banter which had the effect of removing the de-motivating impact of miserable customers. In fact stories about miserable or unhappy customers were an important ingredient of the banter and jocular discussions amongst taxi drivers at such venues. Stories in taxi driver shelters and cafes of drivers' encounters with customers were a popular form of both entertainment (Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2) and, I strongly suspect, a form of therapy. My experience of difficult customers was a disturbing one, as they had the option to complain to the Public Carriage Office and thereby put one's badge [licence] and therefore livelihood in jeopardy. In addition they may refuse to pay the fare, or in some cases the likelihood of violence or at least aggression and/or abuse were a realistic threat. After a particularly difficult encounter with a customer some form of support was needed and cafes or shelters provided a useful venue to explain, discuss and rationalise those events which were normally presented as stories or occasionally as reports.

Taxi drivers would arrive at a café or shelter and either crossly, or in wearisome tones, describe to the group of taxi drivers present, some of whom they may know whilst others may be strangers, an event that has just happened in graphic detail, describing facial expressions, tone of voice, age, build, accent, gait etc. Often the story teller would parody and/or mimic the offending passenger, exaggerating accents, facial expressions, gait, or other idiosyncrasies. Sometimes this involved

rearranging clothing, borrowing a hat, spectacles or other garment from the taxi driver group. They would provide a blow by blow account of the altercation and then the rest of the drivers would join in with similar stories or suggested smart comments or ripostes that should have been made to this now absent customer. Rarely did anyone take the customer's side. Often additional drivers would arrive during or at the end of a tale. Often the whole story or sometimes parts of it were retold, normally during the retelling the story would get better with exaggerations or extra detail added in. The discussions amongst the group were normally laced with wit and ended in raucous laughter and clear guidelines, not always serious, about how to deal with similar customers in future. The end result was a café or shelter filled with much happier drivers.

This behaviour was in many ways an informal therapy or support session that motivated drivers who would have otherwise spent the rest of the day brooding about this one fare or just have gone home and forfeited the rest of the day's money. Blau (1986) discusses the approach taken to similar issues in a conventional office environment of a law enforcement agency. Regulations required that agents who encountered problems should speak to a supervisor. However Blau observed that;

'lunch periods were filled with shop talk, involving either one official telling the others about interesting issues he had encountered in a case or one asking the opinion of the others how best handle an intricate problem'
(Blau,1986:viii).

Despite the two environments being very different (an apparently classic office environment versus a virtual organisation or collective) and despite the two sets of workers being employed under very different circumstances salaried vs. self-employed the characteristics of sharing work experiences are remarkably similar.

These informal self-help groups amongst taxi drivers appear to quickly transform the bad experience of a difficult customer into a fun session where the whole group contribute similar experiences, suggestions for witty responses to criticisms and generally manage to motivate each other. Watson (1982) and Blau (1986) relate similar, although lower energy and less raucous, sessions amongst office based staff who had endured a demotivating experience. Blau's concept of social exchange (1986) is very relevant to the taxi drivers' sessions as everyone has something to gain from the exchange, motivation, fun, an appreciative audience and some practical advice for the next time such an incident was experienced.

5.3.12 *Summary*

The transition from Knowledge Boy to taxi driver is a painless process as within the taxi driver community the fact that one has completed the Knowledge of London provides an unquestioned rite of passage and acceptance into the industry. Although some stresses are apparent between long serving drivers and butterboys this is almost at the level of parent and adolescent, where the parent is urging the adolescent to adopt the culture, values, beliefs and identity of the majority. Amongst peers there is a ready acceptance and welcome for new entrants.

Those within the taxi industry, a virtual organisation, appear to adopt many of the traits and behaviours that can be seen in more conventional and closely knit organisations such as offices and factories. Stacey's (2001) work concerning how the local affects the global and vice versa has some resonance with my findings that the adoption of the same or very similar behaviours to office and factory workers appears

to be a natural phenomenon that even in a disparate and virtual organisation seems to develop organically from local interactions, whereas in more conventional organisation much management time is spent developing and stimulating the same behaviours and the processes and procedures to support them. Loose tie relationships without the overhead of maintaining close personal contact or working in close proximity appear to flourish and develop into a community not dissimilar to a factory or office. Communities appear to evolve and develop without any form of management intervention or leadership to provide support, guidance and establish behavioural norms that are accepted consensually by the workforce.

These communities or groups when formed appear to welcome new entrants, who quickly learn or are taught the local rules and expected behaviours. Jokes, myths and fables are used to convey humour, record history and educate. Informal support groups form and provide venues for off-loading demotivating experiences which are transformed into entertaining therapy sessions. Rituals are prevalent in the industry and are practiced by both drivers and their passengers but appear not to be recognised as such by the drivers I interviewed. The interactions between customers and taxi drivers are particularly ritualised. Communication amongst taxi drivers whilst informal and ad hoc is surprisingly effective, however the veracity of some of the information is questionable. Once again management in more conventional organisations expend considerable energy in attempting to introduce a team spirit and to establish processes for communication within the organisation. The London taxi industry appears to show that left to their own devices people will develop effective communication strategies and form groups and provide support for one another.

The formation of groups in the taxi industry is interesting and suggests that there is a human desire to form groups and be attached to peers. Moreover within these groups, despite the homogeneity of the role, earning capacity and career prospects drivers strive to create hierarchies and pseudo seniority. Once again this appears to be a human trait to differentiate and claim quasi privilege and respect through the use of trade specific language, historical knowledge and years of service. Drivers also jostle for individual recognition and status through claiming to work less hours and earn more money than their colleagues. Some drivers also assert a higher level of autonomy as proof of their superior knowledge of the industry. London's taxi drivers whilst apparently keen to differentiate themselves amongst their peers appear to be at one when comparing their professional qualifications with other driving roles. They claim a hierarchy of driving roles where they are at the very top due to their vocational qualification. Providing frameworks for seniority to be recognised is an area where management often intervene and provide the trappings of seniority, e.g. offices, bigger desks, parking spaces etc, whereas the taxi industry has managed to turn a completely flat structure into a multi layered system of status and seniority without any management or leadership intervention.

There appears to be a very obvious and strong culture in the industry and my research found that as new entrants adopt the culture and progress through their career, they appear to appoint themselves guardians of it. This guardianship is manifested through coaching new entrants and striving for equilibrium. The trade has a clear identity which is communicated by drivers to customers in a surprisingly consistent way. Drivers also appear to aspire to live up to the identity expected of a London taxi driver and apparently developed by drivers themselves guided by the trade press and influential writers such as Alf Townsend. An important issue for London's taxi drivers' identity is their employment status as self-employed businessmen and the autonomy that this status provides.

In the next section an important institution of the industry, radio taxi companies, are discussed. These organisations provide a channel to enhanced earnings for taxi drivers but are also a dichotomy for London's taxi drivers, who are independent and virtual operators and arguably sole traders and businessmen and yet are required to comply with procedures, rules and adopt certain behaviours. The section below explores this dichotomy and the implications for management of trying to get taxi drivers to conform to procedures and rules so that radio taxi companies can satisfy their corporate desire to provide a homogenous service, fulfil customers' needs and honour contractual requirements.

5.4 Culture and Change Management

Although largely an autonomous and virtual collection of individuals the London taxi industry has institutions that are conventionally managed and operated, e.g. the radio taxi companies. In addition there are those within the industry who seek to instigate or manage change, e.g. the various trade associations such as the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA, the trade association representing drivers), JARTA, (the trade association that represented radio taxi companies) and the trade press. Two examples of such changes that I was witness to during my career in the taxi industry were the attempts by the Radio Taxi Company Executives to introduce the Quickie Knowledge (see section 5.2.16) and the various changes that took place within London Wide Radio Taxis/Computer Cab, the largest of the radio taxi companies.

Radio taxi companies (also known as circuits) were the one part of the taxi industry where significant organisational and business process change took place during the course of my research. These examples are important and help to analyse the culture and identity of taxi drivers and the management style that appears to be needed to manage change in business processes and behaviour amongst taxi drivers. They provide important examples of the cultural beliefs and the impact of identity, both individual and organisational and how some approaches to change both offended and ran counter culture to the industry. The examples have been produced as case studies and are analysed in the sections below.

Radio taxi operators are an institution within the industry. Their function was to provide taxi drivers with additional income and provided value as a tool with which to fight the incursion of minicabs into the industry. Some drivers I know loved radio circuits and others hated them. It appears that every driver had an opinion as to whether they had been a valuable contribution to the industry or had damaged it. London taxi drivers I spoke to had decided to join a radio taxi circuit for a number of reasons, chief amongst these was the opportunity to earn more money or the same amount of money quicker and/or easier. Many also joined for altruistic reasons; to help what they viewed as the fight against minicabs and to win back business for the taxi industry. Often drivers were prompted to join a radio taxi circuit as a consequence of being recommended to do so by another taxi driver, this was what happened in my case.

The recommendations from other taxi drivers to join a radio taxi company were often based on increased earning potential, often expressed as having two irons in the fire. In effect a driver on radio [the colloquial term for belonging to or subscribing to a radio circuit] can trap [the industry colloquialism for securing or finding a fare] a trip from the street or through the radio, thereby potentially doubling the chances of picking up a fare. Fares from the radio circuit were also promoted as being higher value than street hails and typically involved travelling longer distances. There were

additional benefits in that payments were guaranteed by the radio circuit, every fare included an automatic gratuity and, as was often the case, waiting time was involved and a supplement was paid for the time the taxi and driver were kept waiting. Due to the nature of radio trips drivers used less diesel and benefited from frequent breaks rather than expending energy (physical and mental) and fuel driving around looking for fares.

Many radio taxi drivers identified with their circuits, manifested by its drivers who made unsolicited comments such as “I love this circuit” even in front of their organisation’s staunchest critics. Taxi drivers who supported radio circuits were impressed by the circuit’s ambition to win back the taxi drivers’ work from minicabs. Radio drivers would often drive long distances rather than let a customer down. They often operated uneconomically and accepted the rules and policies of the radio circuit management. These drivers had an explicit personal alignment of belief with the organisation’s espoused value system (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994 and Hatch and Schultz, 2000). This alignment appeared particularly prevalent amongst the newest radio taxi company in London, London Wide Radio Taxis (later to become Computer Cab), which enabled that radio taxi company’s management to ask and demand more from drivers than was really commercially viable (Blau, 1986). This love of their circuit and the organisational changes outlined in the paragraph below led to significant relationship problems between London Wide Radio Taxis’ radio circuit members, particularly though not entirely limited to founder members, and its management.

Some of the important organisational and business process changes (Burnes, 2009) that were introduced by London Wide Radio Taxis circuit’s management ran counter to the culture of the industry and the reactions to the disputes that were engendered by the change management process (Strickland and Thompson, 1998) were important in relation to the aims of my research, which were to provide an insight into the industry. During my interpretation and analysis I examined the target or formal culture (Fook and Watson, 1992) of the radio taxi companies, as determined by the management of the radio taxi company concerned, and considered both the formal and informal cultures (Fook and Watson, 1992) that prevailed within the taxi industry, in order to analyse why the changes were so resolutely resisted by the taxi drivers who belonged to that company.

The important cultural issues that were given insufficient weight by management during the change process appeared to be based around the movement of the frontiers of control (Watson, 1982). The view shared by many drivers was that they were self-employed businessmen and expected or wanted to be treated as such, The prevailing view was that all taxi drivers are equal (Taxi Driver Interview, No.2) and so did not want to have their working processes determined by those they viewed as their peer group but who in reality were business managers with fiduciary responsibility for the companies they managed. The sections below discuss the radio taxi companies’ attempts to introduce business process and other changes, how the various methods they invoked fitted or conflicted with the prevailing culture and the effect this had on the chances of successful implementation.

5.4.1 Computer Cab Change Management Case Study One

Computer Cab (formerly London Wide Radio Taxis) was an undercapitalized business entity owned by the Licensed Taxi Drivers’ Association (LTDA), which was also an organisation that had little capital. This case study is concerned events that took place in circa 1985. During one serious financial crisis for Computer Cab, and following the blocking of a number of resolutions to enable the LTDA to raise its

borrowing limits by the small number of activists who regularly attended LTDA branch meetings, the company's financial situation became acute. The Managing Director of Computer Cab and the General Secretary of the LTDA, who was also the Chairman of Computer Cab, announced that they would be at the LTDA North East Branch meeting which was to be held at the Queens Head Public House, in Hoxton, East London one particular evening. Computer Cab drivers were urged to attend. The agenda (raising money from drivers who belonged to the radio taxi company) had been deliberately leaked and as a consequence so many drivers attended that it was not possible for everyone to fit into the hall where the meeting was held. The meeting hall was a small functions room above the pub. Those who could not fit in the meeting room lined the stairs to the hall, stood in the pub or milled around outside.

It was estimated by those present that over three hundred drivers attended, which was about thirty per cent of the radio circuit's members at the time. The Managing Director asked that standing orders be suspended so that the one important issue of radio taxi-company funding could be fully discussed by the drivers who had turned up specifically for this one purpose. The small branch committee was ambivalent to his request (a demonstration of the 'we are all equal here' ideology) but following prompting by the General Secretary the branch committee asked those present to vote on the proposition to suspend standing orders. The six regular attendees, who were anti radio circuit activists, who had arrived early and were in their normal seats at the front of the hall facing the table occupied by the branch committee, objected in the strongest and most vitriolic terms. They claimed to have a complete lack of interest in the radio company's business, a desire to hold their normal LTDA meeting and that standing orders should be adhered to as they attended every month not "once in a blue moon".

Similar to union members at Fords, "strong elements of ritual permeate the branches and branch meetings" (Beynon, 1975:205) and these members saw no reason for their rituals to be disturbed. Arguments and scuffles ensued as to whether the standing orders should be suspended or not until in the end the General Secretary of the association stood on the committee table in order to be both seen and heard and insisted on discussing a proposal that every member contribute one hundred pounds in cash as a permanent loan to the radio taxi company. At this intervention the crowd in the hall erupted into both cries of support and anger. Members on the stairs were calling for the meeting to be moved out into the street so they could hear and probably so they could contribute to the discussion. Instead a system of verbal relays was used to pass the main discussion points to them. How accurate these reports were is difficult to say particularly given the taxi trade habit of sharpening and flattening stories.

My feeling was that the meeting was ugly, unpleasant, aggressive, loud, intimidating, and raucous. The temperature in the room due to so many people being there was really uncomfortable and the language was of the foulest variety. The management of the radio taxi company were accused of being incompetent, acting ultra vires [a small number of legal/Latin terms were used frequently at branch meetings – ultra vires was used to imply that the LTDA Executive Committee was acting outside of its powers as stated in the association's rule book] and being out of order and in breach of the rule book. Threats of judicial review and injunctions were thrown around by the regular attendees. The anger was palpable. Some of the regular attendees attempted to storm out of the meeting but could not do so because of the numbers of people in the room which meant that they had to squeeze and shuffle past people rather than exit with a theatrical flourish. Eventually after many options were discussed a system which was to become known as the roller bond was agreed. The system was based

on ten per cent of the value of contract or account trips being deducted at each payment cycle and then rolled up until they reached a set figure and then returned to the driver in a lump sum. The figure agreed at the meeting was four hundred pounds which was an effective loan of an average of two hundred pounds per member. It was also up to a four hundred pounds loan from driver to company. The net benefit was twice (£200) what the management had originally asked for (£100) and the impact at certain points just before the bond rolled over was four times (i.e. £400) what had been asked for.

After the matter had been resolved the drivers became very friendly and jovial, they congratulated the management for their courage in facing them and the meeting ended in the most amicable way possible with the management being clapped and cheered. Why the meeting began aggressively and became so emotive and why the eventual figure was twice what the management originally wanted was a mystery to me for much of the rest of the time I worked for the radio taxi company. The most likely reason was that drivers may not have been totally surprised or even totally against the idea of, or need, for a loan, but disliked the manner in which the change was introduced, which offended the 'we are all equal' ethos of the industry. The transition in mood from initial seething anger to clapping and cheering became a common format for radio circuit meetings from this point onwards. Quite why this format evolved is difficult to discern. However what can be taken from this example is that unlike relations between management and workers at Fords where almost a class struggle was played out (Beynon, 1975:88-89), taxi drivers appeared to want to work with management, albeit on an equals' basis. The management appeared unwilling to convince, persuade or try to sell to the drivers; instead they relied on their managerial status for the authority to impose change. This was counter to the culture of all taxi drivers being equal.

The next section considers the business problems experienced by Computer Cab in the early days of computing where computing power was expensive and difficult to scale up. In Computer Cab's case the technology partner, Honeywell Bull, was just not able to support the company's growth. Additionally, it was nearly impossible to acquire more radio channels due to the number of radio spectrum users in London. These practical constraints to growth led management to look at better using the resources they already had through business process changes. These business process changes led to significant industrial relations problems with the taxi drivers who worked with the company.

5.4.2 Computer Cab Change Management Case Study Two

The challenge of maximising growth in an environment of technical constraint (limited numbers of radio channels and computer processing power constraints) necessitated, from a managerial perspective, significant operational and business process change. Drivers responded almost uniformly to change. They did not find change easy and almost immediately after any change, however small, was introduced they left the company in larger than normal numbers (throughout Computer Cab's history 1% of drivers left every month). As well as leavers there was a residue of drivers who did not leave but instead continued their membership in a state of simmering discontent and unresolved conflict, expressed through very emotive, often angry and frequently abusive phone calls and a great deal of complaining and moaning over the radio and at LTDA branch meetings. Although LTDA branch meetings were not strictly speaking anything to do with the radio taxi company, members of the company's management team attended regularly in order to pacify existing drivers and potentially recruit new ones. The LTDA owned the radio

taxi company and its branch meetings provided a platform at which drivers used to air grievances about the radio taxi company.

An early example of this antipathy towards business process change was an amendment to the booking allocation process known as 'cab better' and the replacement of this process with a process known as 'first cab on the right call'. The shortage of radio channel availability and the growing volumes of trips meant that the management team needed to identify more efficient processes to allocate trips that used less valuable air time, as air time value was heightened by the peaks and troughs nature of demand and the paucity of radio channel availability. The traditional method of allocation, cab better, had been used since 1955 when radio taxi operations first started in London and was generally accepted as a fair system amongst drivers. This evaluation was based on the general principle of it ensuring as far as practicable that the right job went to the right driver and was therefore aligned with the industry's culture and generally adopted practice of taxi etiquette..

The process involved the radio dispatcher announcing the brief details of the trip, this included the first line of the address, whether it was a booking or an as soon as possible request, and the payment arrangements, i.e. cash or account. Radio taxi drivers from all companies were trained and then conditioned to push their talk button when they were within the correct calling distance and enunciating their call sign (e.g. Kilo seven zero (K70)) into the microphone. First call was 440 yards, second call 880 yards and so on. In areas that are heavily populated by taxi drivers eight or ten drivers may call in on first call. This led to a jumble of voices being received and the dispatcher having to take up valuable air time saying things like, "Was there a cab with a seven?" or similar until he could identify a whole call sign and then establish the driver's position. This also cast doubt on the integrity of the process. Some drivers felt that if the job was a good one (i.e. profitable) the dispatcher could tip off his friends by asking for a cab with a certain number.

Later technology was introduced to recognise the first driver's signal that was received and display his call sign on a small monitor in front of the dispatcher. This was a system known as automatic VI [Vehicle Identification]. This seemingly innocuous development was a major innovation in enabling trips to be allocated quickly and improving the integrity of the process. It saved significant air time through not having to waste time identifying call signs and enabled more trips to be handled. The dispatcher would identify the driver by his call sign from the VI indicator and ask him where he was. The driver would describe where he was e.g. Smith Street corner of Jones Road, the dispatcher would repeat this so the fleet could hear and then he asked for a cab better (hence the name of the process). Taxi drivers who thought or judged that they were nearer the pick-up than the driver(s) who had called in previously then called in and the process was repeated until the best taxi i.e. the nearest to the pick-up address was identified. Clearly with jumbled transmissions, false calls (cabs that were not better claiming they were), misunderstandings, and signal problems leading to elongated attempts to establish drivers' positions and an adjudication process by the dispatcher, this was a slow and cumbersome process. However it broadly matched the right driver/right job concept that was a core element of the culture of the trade.

In order to speed up the cab better process management announced a change which reduced the number of challenges to the first cab to four (previously it was unlimited), thereby capping the length of each cab better transaction. Drivers, mainly traditionalists, who reasoned that if there had been more than four challenges under the cab better system they would have been allocated a particular trip and so saw it

as their trip, resigned in anger. Clearly this change to the cab better process was in direct conflict with the London taxi driver ideology of an etiquette or belief in which trip or job belonged to which driver. No end of justification by management for the need for a mind-set (Watson, 1982) change from the nearest cab to the pick-up identified through cab better bidding, to a swings and roundabouts approach (Watson, 1982), where on balance and based on the law of averages all drivers would get their fair share, convinced drivers of the justification. Stories abounded of drivers who were outside a building when a trip was announced and would have, quite rightly in their opinion, received the booking in question under the cab better system but due to the four challenge system were excluded from what was rightfully their job. These stories were often spiced up with claims the trip was going to the airport or was an even more lucrative fare. Drivers in their quest for rationality went as far as to claim that they would prefer less work allocated if it was allocated fairly compared to the new process, which the drivers considered considerably less than fair. A minority of drivers even commented that they would not want the trip if it was allocated in these circumstances as "if it was not their job" [fare]. The ideology of, and obsession with, fairness appeared to override all other considerations, notably the management's expressed desire to improve both service quality and capacity to enable growth to achieve commercial success.

A further refinement quickly followed which was to be known as 'first cab'. It happened in two stages with the number of cab better challenges reduced to three (previously four). This caused a ripple of complaints and sudden highly emotive and angry driver resignations. Terms such as "This is a piss take", "This is a liberty" were used by drivers. Watson (1982:268) under similar circumstances asserted that;

'Management were in fact shifting the 'frontier of control'. They were invading certain 'territory' within the working day - territory which belonged to the workers themselves and [over] which managers had no rights'.

The territory that was being invaded and the frontier of control that was being shifted by Computer Cab management was the direct challenge to the taxi driver ideology of fairness, of luck and the fundamental concern about which trip was rightly whose.

Drivers expressed happiness with the cab better system, it may have been clunky and ritualistic, there may have been sharp practices and cheating, but it apparently established, through iteration, which driver should eventually receive the job that was he was destined to receive. Disgruntled drivers used language such as not wishing to be treated as employees underlining their ideology of being self-employed, of some believing themselves to be small business men, their attachment to autonomy (Scwalbe and Wolkmir, 2001) and their fear of assimilation with other driving jobs.

The management had 'depended upon on the assumed existence of certain organizational goals' (Watson 1982:261). These were 'changes initiated by management to achieve managerial goals' (Watson 1982:261) i.e. expand radio capacity, increase throughput and trip volumes and ultimately revenue, profit and commercial success. Management had expected what they considered to be a rational reaction to what was in their view a non-emotive business process change decision. Management had also convinced themselves that drivers were only interested in money, a term frequently used during management meetings by members of the Computer Cab management team who came from a taxi driving background. The Managing Director often asserted during this period that money solves most problems in the taxi industry and drivers just want more work [fares] and money. The discourse often used amongst the management when discussing driver

recruitment was that what we need are hungry, young drivers, with new badges, new cabs, big mortgages, kids, a high spending wife and a bird [girlfriend or mistress] on the side. This was a reinforcement of the management's belief that money was a key, possibly the only, motivator.

The business process change had been introduced by management without any consultation with the drivers. The change process simply relied upon a letter being sent out announcing the change. This means of communication was a direct challenge to the 'we are all equal' ethos of the industry as it positioned the letter writer, normally the managing director, as appearing to be above the rest of the taxi drivers. The rationale for the business process change explained in the letter was that Computer Cab would be able to deliver more trips to drivers. This rationale was based on the assumption that the majority would be prepared to accept procedural change for the benefit of more trips and that any resistance amongst the small number of founder drivers and traditionalists would be overwhelmed by the rational majority who were more interested in money than tradition. An important consideration here was the implicit requirement from management that drivers' organisational commitment (Blau, 1973) was stronger than their occupational/professional commitment (Burrell and Morgan, 2003). In industrial relations terms (Beynon, 1975) drivers were being asked to back management rather than colleagues. Nevertheless, the 'we are all equal' culture prevalent in the London taxi industry conspired against this strategy being successful.

Some background information was given out by management (Watson, 1982) about the lack of radio channels and inefficient use of airtime. There was also a term that was to be used many times over future years to justify the change; swings and roundabouts. Radio taxis according to the letter was about swings and roundabouts. It went on, "Yes, a driver may lose out on an individual trip that under cab better he would have received but as there will be more trips the driver will have more chances of receiving trips and overall do better" [i.e. make more money]. These claims of a common benefit were mathematically and operationally incorrect as the process would, inadvertently, if it achieved what management hoped for, actually level earnings, the effect being that the high earners would earn less and lower earning drivers would earn more. This went contra to the aspirations of the drivers who had been the target of Computer Cab's recruitment campaigns during the previous years. The target driver was someone who needed to earn more than the average driver, not the same. Likewise many lower earning drivers were lower earning for their own reasons and were not seeking to increase the amount of money they earned from radio.

Overall there appeared to be fundamental errors in the change management processes adopted by management. Management assumed a position of power and authority based on their responsibility to deliver commercial success. They ignored the cultural beliefs of all taxi drivers being equal and many believing they were small businessmen who expected to be consulted about any change. The belief that jobs or fares belonged to specific drivers based on a set of unwritten rules was also ignored in favour of increasing throughput and stimulating commercial success. The approach adopted by management appeared to be high risk and relied on a number of significant culture changes being accepted for the benefit of the majority. A core premise of the change was mathematically flawed and relied on the concept of swings and roundabouts. This offended the taxi drivers' cultural beliefs on many levels.

The next section examines the management's responses to the industrial relations' problem.

5.4.3 *Challenging Culture*

In this section a number of identity, cultural and political issues are examined. The relationship between dispatcher and drivers was a key interface and responsible for motivating drivers. The concept of gamification, drivers pitting their wits against dispatchers to earn above average income levels was also an important motivator and was under threat through the business process changes proposed by management. Important cultural and motivational factors were ignored during what became an increasingly political and personalised battle for control. Key cultural traits and beliefs such as all drivers, whether management or driver, being equal were challenged, as was the belief concerning which booking belonged to which driver. Management ideology clashed with taxi driver culture and led to increasingly bitter relations.

Watson (1982:272–273) talks of 'allusions'; in this case management attempted to create allusions of swings and roundabouts, they attempted to blame the business process change on the technical necessity caused by the shortage of radio channels, and the promise that there would be more trips and that drivers would have more chances of receiving trips and overall would do better. Watson (1982:273) views these attempts as a means of creating 'a specific vocabulary and hence a limited frame of reference which will effectively depoliticize the issues'. The 'other motif' (1982:272) of 'technical necessity' (1982:273) is also an attempt at depoliticising what is viewed by drivers as a clearly a highly political issue. Watson (1982:273) goes on to purport that 'attempts are thus made to frame the issues in ways which insidiously mobilize bias in favour of managerial interests'.

After the new business processes were imposed there were allegations that some dispatchers had given a trip to a driver who was further away than the 440 yards that was supposed to be first call. As commonly happens in the industry these stories were told and embellished in cafes frequented by taxi drivers all over London. The new business process relied heavily on the judgement of the dispatcher. These judgements had to be made quickly by the dispatcher and he had to establish whether the driver was within the distance specified or not. The dispatcher's adjudication was communicated across the radio channels and therefore heard and considered by every driver who was listening, often many hundreds. Each of these drivers possessed the Knowledge of London and was therefore capable of adjudicating on the dispatcher's decision. The dispatcher was in a no win situation. If the dispatcher accepted a driver who had given a borderline position the drivers who were well within the distance were quick to criticise and escalate their criticism to management. If he knocked the driver back (i.e. excluded the driver on the basis that he was too far away from the pick-up) the driver complained. Dispatchers relied on building rapport with drivers to get the bookings fulfilled during busy periods when drivers could easily accept street hirings in preference to radio despatched bookings. Dispatchers needed to be trusted by drivers and occasionally as part of this trust building process both enjoyed some latitude with each other. This latitude reduced as business process rules grew more prescriptive which impacted adversely upon the driver/dispatcher relationship. This relationship was important as it was the main and certainly the most frequent interface between the company and the driver.

Having been able to observe the management at close quarters during this period of business process change my belief is that Watson's (1982) view is somewhat worker centric and in this case unfair to management who genuinely believed that growth

would benefit everyone. A cynical view could be that those benefits would probably benefit management more than individual taxi drivers. Despite this I still believe that management appeared genuine in their belief that growth in market share and profitability would ultimately bring financial benefits to the mass drivers both directly in higher earnings but also from the perspective that the company's owners the LTDA would own a more valuable asset and provide an indirect benefit to drivers who were all LTDA members and therefore indirect owners.

Management's actions and language could be considered insidious (Watson 1982) as they were prepared personally and viciously to discredit any individual driver who disagreed with their philosophy. This was indiscriminate and included many founder drivers as well as comparatively new recruits. Hewitt and Hall (1973: 273) take a more reasoned view in their assertion that management are creating 'quasi theories'. Watson expands on this point to explain 'ad hoc explanations [are] brought to problematic situations to give them order and hope' (1982). My belief is that management's response to criticisms of their quasi theories lay somewhere between order and hope and insidiousness. I believe that they genuinely wanted drivers to buy into the new process in order for the organisation to overcome the technical constraints and prosper. However they also used the discontent as an opportunity to eradicate opponents, mainly traditionalists, and settle old scores. Importantly the gamification (see glossary) of radio was being lost or to a large part eroded by the new business processes thereby alienating high earning drivers, deskilling despatchers and tearing up the right job/right driver concept so valued by founder or long serving drivers and apparently the industry as a whole.

Some high earning drivers formed an uneasy alliance with another group, those who might be termed traditionalists, who wanted to retain cab better for its fairness rather than for any pecuniary advantage. The younger, hungrier, high earning drivers wanted to retain cab better for its unfairness, its opportunity for them to cheat and get more work but they did share a common agenda with their traditionalist colleagues – cab better was good for both of them albeit for different reasons. The proposed business process change had the effect of alienating founders, traditionalists and high earners. The middle tier of drivers, who were the majority of the fleet often described by management as "Mr Average" were less inclined to react in any way to these changes as they would be largely unaffected.

The discussion above shows that the management had assumed that drivers would put growth and success for the majority in front of their own narrow personal desire to achieve above average earnings, yet for a number of cultural, personal and political reasons this assumption was flawed. The approach to organisational and business process change adopted by the management appeared to alienate most groups of drivers, albeit for different reasons, and crystallised opposition. This situation was aggravated further through the settling of old scores, introducing a bitter and highly personalised element to a tense and difficult situation.

In the next section the tactics management adopted in light of an increasingly serious industrial relations problem are considered and examined in the context of the culture and identity of London's taxi drivers. A key theme was that management attempted as they saw it to manage. In effect this meant imposing change after change based on a top down philosophy which conflicted with the culture of the industry which considered all drivers, whether in management or not are equal.

5.4.4 *Frontiers of Control*

In this section management's quest for control over what it viewed as its business processes continued. Given the increasingly intractable positions of both sides and the cultural obstacles to resolution management sought to ignore the taxi drivers' antipathy towards the organisational and business process changes. This led to conflict amongst shareholders, directors and management as the level of the industrial relations problem became acute.

Computer Cab management played for time hoping that the issue would blow over and that especially new drivers, who, it was claimed by management, were only interested in money not procedures, would just get back to doing what they liked most; earning money. Opposition grew ever stronger amongst a growing number of disaffected drivers. These issues were aired loudly and angrily at LTDA branch meetings and during personal visits by drivers to Computer Cab's offices. Matters were also escalated directly and in some cases formally to the LTDA, the ultimate parent company of Computer Cab. Half of the four man LTDA executive team were regarded by Computer Cab management as anti-radio. This was actually a shortened, slightly skewed version of what they really meant which was anti radio company management, whom the anti-radio LTDA executive team termed as the tail wagging the dog. These so called anti-radio LTDA executive members happily took up aggrieved radio taxi drivers' concerns with the radio company management and insisted on change. It provided them with the moral high ground to criticise the radio taxi company management whilst being viewed by the growing number of disaffected drivers as the workers' champions. This contrasted with drivers' views of the radio taxi management as anti-worker. The position that the taxi drivers accused the management of taking conflicted with the cultural value amongst taxi drivers of all being equal.

Similarly to the management group that Watson (1982: 269) observed, Computer Cab management eventually 'realized that ideological utterances would not be enough to win the workers' acceptance of the change'. The management team at Computer Cab were increasingly a group who were under siege by their drivers, which were the workforce, and their ultimate parent and 100% shareholder, the LTDA. Some of the non-taxi driver management also began to feel uneasy and urge a more consultative approach to achieve a compromise and an end to the conflict.

The outcome of these splits, lobbying and protesting was that a change was made to the business process by the radio taxi company's management. The change addressed a symptom of the problem rather than the actual problem and was once again an attempt to delay any real change in the hope that the problem would go away. Instead of dispatchers having to use their Knowledge of London to adjudicate whether the route from the driver's position to the pick-up exceeded the specified distance, the distance would be measured on a crow flies basis. Prior to this change dispatchers had to calculate distances based on driven distance, cognisant of one way systems and restricted turns. This required dispatchers to possess and demonstrate an excellent and very detailed topographical knowledge together with the ability to calculate routes and make distance based decisions very quickly.

These skills which were displayed over the radio to the working drivers (which normally totalled many hundreds) flattered dispatchers self-worth, as possessing an excellent topographical knowledge and being skilled enough to make the right instant decisions. To operate the new processes dispatchers were issued with Perspex rulers that showed the 440, 880 etc. yard distances that the calls were based on. When the driver called in on the radio to bid for a booking the dispatcher was

required to measure the distance between the position the driver claimed to be at and the pick up on a map using the Perspex ruler. If the driver was within the correct distance he then allocated the trip to the driver and if it wasn't he continued to seek to identify a driver on the correct call i.e. within the correct distance from the pick-up.

The introduction of this procedural change made matters worse as the number of drivers now in contention for each trip had increased significantly due to the crow fly rule. (Prior to the crow fly rule many drivers would have been precluded as the one way and restricted turn system would have meant that they had to drive too far to qualify for a particular call). Amongst the despatchers there was what Watson (1982:268) described as 'a fear of deskilling'. Deskilling in this context is defined as despatchers and drivers no longer needing to use their skills, their Knowledge and expertise to assess whether the drivers were within the distance of the call. The skills acquired during the Knowledge of London process are fundamental to the identity of London's taxi drivers, whether driving or dispatching, and the attempts by management to deskill the process and by extension the role of both driving and dispatching offended the drivers and dispatchers view of their self-worth and professionalism.

Following this procedural change drivers were even unhappier than before. This was due to one way systems, restricted turns etc not being considered and frequently resulting in a driver with a much longer journey to the pick-up than another being allocated the trip. This offended the industry culture of trips being allocated to the driver who rightfully deserved the trip. The deskilling of the dispatchers' role also adversely affected their view of the process. They were now measuring maps with Perspex rulers rather than using and demonstrating the topographical and decision making skills of which they were very proud. Any discretion and latitude was effectively removed from the dispatcher's role, leading to a less favourable relationship with drivers. This bred antipathy towards the process which dispatchers subtly exploited by raising drivers' awareness of the perceived unfairness of the allocation model. As dispatchers were in constant voice contact via radio throughout a driver's entire shift the dispatchers were in a privileged position to make subtle asides and comments that influenced the drivers' perception of the process. Management now had unhappy drivers, unhappy dispatchers and unhappy shareholders.

The LTDA branch meeting attendances increased from six or twelve regular attendees at most meetings to well over a hundred on a regular basis. Letters from drivers, began to arrive daily at Computer Cab's office, which was unusual. The trade press letters pages began to fill up with Computer Cab drivers complaining about the first cab and then crow flies procedures. The company's management who adopted a 'management must manage' philosophy then implemented another version of the process, this had the unfortunate and almost certainly unintended consequence of pitting driver against driver. This situation was completely counter to the culture of taxi drivers having developed informal protocols to ensure that they worked harmoniously and thus avoided chaos.

The management decided that instead of the dispatcher deciding whether the driver was within the specified distance, drivers would decide this themselves. In practice the system returned to a driven distance i.e. one way systems and restricted turns were included in the calculation of the 440, 880 etc yards calculation but there would be no adjudication by dispatchers. When a driver called in on a particular call, his position would be repeated over the air and he would be automatically allocated the trip. Any driver who disagreed with the trip being allocated was advised to 'put the

driver on complaint' i.e. initiate disciplinary action. The number of drivers who came to the office demanding that their radio equipment be stripped out of their taxi because they had 'been outside a pick up address and still not been allocated the job' and yet 'a driver miles away had been given it' grew weekly. Fairness, an important cultural belief, or the lack of it, was a word and a concept that peppered every driver interaction on this subject.

This was a difficult time to work at Computer Cab as every interaction with drivers was dominated by anger at what drivers considered to be inept processes, irresponsible management, lack of consultation, constant change and more than anything else, unfairness. Dispatchers, who spent eight hours per day involved in angry exchanges with drivers and being accused of unfairness, were de-motivated and staff were generally frightened and confused as to which group, management or drivers, was correct. This was a clear and stark example of Hiatt and Creasey's (2003) engineer vs. psychologist dichotomy of change management.

After another round of what seemed like mayhem to me and many others working in the Computer Cab office, a referendum by drivers was sanctioned by Computer Cab management. The language that the management used in the referendum documentation was couched in terms that could be described as similar to a letter from a cooperative, trade union, or friendly society to their members. The documentation included terms such as the majority can decide, we want to be democratic and similar platitudes. This was much more aligned with the culture of the industry than the very managerialist style of letters that had been sent previously.

The referendum offered a number of options for the allocation process from which drivers who belonged to Computer Cab could select. There was no compromise on the first cab system but issues such as self-adjudication vs. dispatcher adjudication and crow flies and driven distance were offered to the drivers as choices. The referendum was counted by volunteer drivers and the results were grudgingly accepted by most drivers within the consensual culture of the industry. However the approach management had taken with these business process changes remained what can only be termed as an unresolved conflict for many years. This unresolved conflict manifested itself as a form of abuse against management, being an example of management arrogance of being out of touch and of acting in, as they described it, an undemocratic manner.

This had been the first serious industrial relations dispute (Beynon, 1975) that I had witnessed between Computer Cab management and its drivers. Effectively management had won their battle for control of the organisation's business processes but the cost in driver attrition, driver loyalty and management credibility had been high. Neither side had won outright as both sides had been exposed as weak. The drivers needed and wanted to earn money, management wanted to keep their jobs and their developing portfolio of perks. Many drivers were still loyal to the circuit but no longer to the management, an interesting position where loyalty to an amorphous concept was declared rather than to individuals. Many drivers who may have preferred to leave Computer Cab would not have qualified for another radio circuit as they did not own their own taxis and would in any event have to wait upwards of two years to join another radio taxi company, which would have adversely affected their income levels.

The outcomes were anger amongst drivers for management positioning themselves as a professional elite (Stacey, 2001) who were convinced of the virtue of their proposition and equally convinced that the drivers were blinkered, shop floor

operatives who should just follow orders and leave management and business process design to them. The management had in effect adopted a scientific management approach believing in a one best way to achieve improved efficiency. Beynon relates his analysis of a similar dispute at Fords, 'It is in this way that disputes over control at work, that the class struggle has been fought out by the British working class during this century' (1975:129), except in this case the workers (taxi drivers) did not view themselves as working class and neither did they view the company managers as their bosses. However these beliefs do not dilute the position that the dispute was very much about control at work.

As a staff member I had the feeling at the time of the company having been under siege, of being hated, of palpable anger from drivers and glib platitudes from senior management, who stayed behind their locked doors issuing letters and apparently making the situation much worse.

The changes had been introduced with a single objective of increasing throughput (Mills et al, 2009) thereby ignoring Pfeffer's valid observations that, 'organizations are involved in creation, holding and allocation of wealth and they thus affect their members' power and chances in society at large' (1978:271). Opening up opportunities, real and perceived, to deprive honest drivers and assist dishonest drivers, to level the field and to disenfranchise drivers who favoured the cab better system impacted the allocation of wealth and also impacted their chances in society at large through adversely impacting status, earning potential, power, job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Blau, 1973). The outcome was therefore a mixture of intended and unintended consequences. Every change that management made appeared to disenfranchise one or more groups and the formerly successful approach of managing largely through consensus and most definitely in alignment with the culture of the industry had been abandoned. The fatal flaw appeared to be the original aim of levelling the field which was not attractive to either high earners who saw their income drop or low earners who were happy to carry out a relatively low amount of business from the radio preferring to generate a higher proportion of their income in cash rather than on account.

The drivers' power in this scenario was weakened by their need to earn money rather than leave Computer Cab. I would suggest that they, like management, had a narrow objective, which was the right to continue their ritualistic behaviour with regard to trip allocation processes that delivered what one group, the traditionalists, considered to be fairness, and another, the less productive target drivers, as opportunity. Watson's (1982:270) observations of the management group he observed sums up the situation that Computer Cab management created;

'The more important inference to draw at the more general level is this; to understand processes of organizational change we need to recognize that the definitions of situations which people develop and the actions which relate to these are informed by real sociological and economic phenomena as well as psychological ones. The essentially political nature of organizational life has to be recognized and the social class context of employment relationships appreciated'

All the ingredients listed in Watson's description were present in the industrial relations problems at Computer Cab and each played their role in turning what management viewed as a logical change in the tradition of scientific management (Mills et al, 2009) into a type of class war (Beynon, 1975); management vs. workers (in this case taxi drivers). Computer Cab management's unerring belief that taxi

drivers' sole interest was in money clouded their judgement, and their ambition for growth based on the premise of swings and roundabouts and how the mean average would be beneficial to a group whose earnings were spread along a very broad continuum was apparently flawed.

The arguments about the dispute raged literally for years. Management and drivers who were members of the radio taxi company at, and before, the time of the change rewrote the history of the dispute in order to make their ancient arguments more credible. Weick's (1969) contention appears to normalise this situation, pointing out,

'that sense-making in organizations is largely retrospective – part of the continual and negotiation based process of organizing whereby attempts are continually being made to render information less ambiguous'

or in this case to render both sides' arguments stronger and more rational than the other and through that process make each side's arguments less ambiguous.

Faced with what at the time Computer Cab Management viewed as being an illogical and certainly non-commercial view of what were in their view unemotional business process changes that would have a beneficial effect on the organisation *and* an operational need to continue to make further changes, the management team had become increasingly shocked at the ferocity and duration of the dissent. As a consequence they became slightly more consultative, in effect a move away from their scientific management approach to a human relations approach. This consultation was limited in its application as the management were not seeking consensus and had no desire to expend the time, effort and energy needed to achieve consensus, neither did consensus fit with their new strategy whereby they positioned themselves as professional business managers. This positioning was explicitly counter culture to the taxi drivers beliefs. The approach management began to employ could be termed as engagement rather than consultation, telling drivers what the problem was and what the proposed solutions were; often these were presented as options. Mass meetings with drivers became more frequent, letters and magazines were frequently produced and the language changed from "Dear driver", when addressing letters and other communications, to "Dear member" (Handy, 1995:7) thereby attempting to develop a more collegiate model where drivers were encouraged to feel that they belonged. This could be described as an attempt to encourage a feeling of drivers working with rather than for (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994 and Hatch and Schultz, 2000) the radio taxi company.

Computer Cab Management had failed to understand, as did the management group that Watson (1982:270) studied, that 'the problems they faced in bringing about the changes were more than ones of communication'. Pfeffer (1978:271) points out that "a critical issue is not just what the consequences of various structural arrangements are, but who gains and who loses from such consequences". There were complex cultural issues and the changes which were poorly introduced ran counter culture to many taxi driver ideologies, such as which fare is rightfully whose, we are all equal and the taxi trade obsession with fairness. From phone calls, personal visits, the numerous driver meetings that were held and the new fashion of receiving letters from drivers it appeared that the three main groups all considered that they lost; the high earners were unable to gain advantage over other drivers, the founder members and traditionalists lost their preferred business process and the management lost their ability to manage the operational aspects of the business. The only gainers were the mid-level income group whose earnings increased as the average earning levels increased. The next section analyses how having realised the problem

Computer Cab's management team went on to address it. The management's tactics ultimately included some recognition of the culture of the industry which enabled an accommodation to be reached.

5.4.5 Referendum and Change Management Process Tactics

Following the difficult industrial relations period described in the previous section management decided to re-establish a working relationship with the drivers. In this section I explain how the management developed a number of tactics to resolve the industrial relations problems and how these went through a few fairly well defined stages. Overall the new approach adopted by management had a closer fit with the culture of the industry in that it appeared to treat taxi drivers as business men. Despite the changes dissatisfaction remained amongst some drivers particularly where they considered a change strayed across a frontier that they considered was outside of management's control. Meetings became part of the change management process and quickly these became ritualised and adopted a fairly predictable format and behaviour pattern.

As Computer Cab's booking volumes/demand grew and technical and operational constraints became more acute, operational and procedural changes were frequently introduced to drivers, using the concept of a six week pilot. The six week pilot concept relied upon a letter to all drivers (normally from the Managing Director) explaining the problem, the solution (the change) and that after six weeks a referendum would be held where members could vote to keep or throw the change out. This approach was generally successful as drivers appeared to enjoy being consulted and appreciated the opportunity to vote – response levels to referendums were in the region of 90%. The concept of a referendum fitted with the cultural belief that all drivers, which in the drivers' opinion included the ex-taxi driver element of the management, were equal, and so all drivers having a say supported the prevailing culture. I would suggest it also sat well with the belief amongst many drivers that they were small businessmen who would expect to be consulted over what were in effect contractual and business process changes within the strategic alliance that they had with the radio circuit.

Management also became more sensitive and responsive to criticism and driver feedback. Following a small number of letters from drivers questioning the vote counting methodology and its fairness, it was decided by the Managing Director that vote counting would in future be carried out by drivers under the supervision of a member of the management team rather than using in-house administrative staff. Once again this was a significant change where drivers were being invited into the organisation to perform a role rather than being kept on the outside.

In general terms the belief pertained amongst the senior management that the overall majority of drivers were more interested in earning money than voting. Following a small number of referendums few further industrial disputes arose. This appeared to support the management's view. However a small number of company watchers amongst the drivers were keen to raise the issue of referendums at every occasion possible and carried forward a growing amount of unresolved conflict. How many of the silent majority amongst the drivers felt the same way is not clear. Earning money was probably enough to keep them quiet but it did not mean they were happy about these issues. There was always a sense of an iceberg of dissent/support and although normally only small numbers of dissenters were visible occasionally an apparently small or innocuous issue would cause the mainly silent

majority to loudly dissent. The situation appeared to be a truce with both sides moving their ground towards an uneasy consensus.

London's taxi drivers do not even jokingly criticise each other in a professional sense having all undertaken the Knowledge there is an acceptance of a common standard of competence. The introduction of a system of referendum had removed the opportunity to criticise management because any criticism of any change would in effect be criticising fellow taxi drivers who had voted for the change; those who were against any change were effectively neutralised. Many more than usual management meetings were held during this unstable period and a common mantra amongst senior management when this phenomenon was questioned was that it's not about what will make the drivers happy – it's about what they will stand for.

The senior management team did not abrogate the responsibility for setting the strategy or policy making of the company to its [taxi driver] members yet the grounds or criteria for when an issue would go to a referendum were never made completely clear. Staff spoke frequently about what was happening as many were concerned for their jobs and the future of the company. Internally the belief amongst staff, including me, was that if drivers were likely to vote in favour of something then management would hold a referendum. If however the decision was in doubt or the change was an important one for financial, customer service or strategic reasons, it was deemed or classified by management to be a policy decision which was not open to a referendum. This assertion was generally accepted by drivers despite its clash with the prevailing culture. This suggests that drivers accepted to a degree that management had to manage. As a consequence of this policy where change was in management's view needed and where the senior management team considered it was unlikely to be accepted easily by drivers no referendum was offered but meetings would be arranged so drivers could raise their concerns (and voices). Non referendum based changes included policy changes such as increases in charges, decreases in payments, innovative incentive schemes and technology changes. Operational changes were used tactically as well as from necessity. If business was quiet or if there was going to be a charges increase this would often be preceded by an operational change. The type of changes that would be made included reducing the calling distance from 440 yards to 100 yards, changing the day of the week that cheques were sent to drivers for the contract work they had undertaken and introducing changes to the increasingly complex payments and credits scheme that was meant to motivate drivers to undertake more radio journeys in preference to street hail work.

The change would be announced, brought in, all hell would break loose and the charges would be increased. A drivers meeting would be called ostensibly to discuss the recent increase in charges, whereas the only real issue most of the drivers wanted resolved was the operational change. Drivers were interestingly quite tolerant of price increases but operational changes which were perceived as impacting on fairness, or the drivers' skills, or the number of trips that the busier and more outspoken drivers could undertake, clearly had a far greater impact on their earning potential than a low percentage increase in charges. I would suggest that this is not just an issue of financial vs. working practices or even acquiescence of increased charges. I believe it is far more fundamental and central to Watson's (1982) work regarding the frontiers of control. I would suggest that drivers were ambivalent towards company charges and increases in them as these issues could be viewed very clearly as being within the rightful control of management, whereas business process changes appeared to be considered by drivers as outside of the frontier of

management control. The consensus abruptly ended once working practices were changed particularly where the changes were counter to the culture of the industry.

At the driver meetings a ritualised demonstration of behaviour quickly developed. The normal format would be applied, the Managing Director would explain the reasons for the charges increase to an icy cold atmosphere, an occasional driver would storm out, a few drivers would interrupt the meeting and demand to talk about the operational change supported by the rest of drivers demonstrated through clapping and cheering, the meeting would be halted, the Managing Director would address the operational change, a compromise of some sort would be determined and everyone would eventually praise the management.

Over the course of these mass meetings the drivers who carried out most trips on the radio appeared to gain the ascendancy and have most to say. Meeker drivers or those concerned about lack of work or increased charges, who often appeared to act quite independently, would be shouted down, abused or even threatened by busier drivers to a point where they gave up trying to raise their points. The busier drivers also engaged senior management before and after the meeting, developing an almost informal, off the record type relationship. They appeared to view themselves as opinion formers and were even verbally and sometimes physically protective of senior management. If independent drivers were abusing or threatening management at the meeting this group would intervene and threaten, intimidate or abuse the individual until he either left the meeting or kept quiet. Although quite useful at times this was an unhealthy relationship but one that senior management did nothing to discourage or curtail. Gouldner (1954) referred to these relationships as an indulgency pattern which (Watson 1982:270) described as being where "supervisory authority was dependent upon a certain amount of conniving at rule breaking". Although the busier drivers were not supervisors in anything like a conventional sense their indulgence by management gave them an implicit authority to act as such at driver meetings.

It was clear that senior management believed that the busiest drivers were the smartest and had developed methods to circumvent operational rules. They were not subject to the driver vs. driver complaints system as they were capable of intimidating the complainant and thus avoiding formal resolution. Rumours circulated of drivers being physically assaulted or of their cabs being damaged. As with many rumours in the industry the truth of the rumours was unknown. In what was an increasingly political environment securing the support of influential groups such as these was a benefit to management, particularly given this group's aggression to dissenters, who they often threatened to take physical action against. Their protective nature towards the management was considered useful in situation which could often be volatile and threatening and enabled management to appear professional whilst the busier drivers maintained order.

This section provides some important insights into the rituals, behaviour and culture of the industry. The management's change of tactics to accommodate the culture of the industry appeared to be largely successful. In spite of the change in tactics not all of the drivers subscribed to the approach that management adopted and some contention was still discernible, especially where there was contention around the control of frontiers, Management had not fully aligned with the culture of the industry and therefore both drivers and management remained on the edge of trusting one another but in the main never quite achieved it. The next section highlights another series of changes that resulted in offence to the identity of both taxi drivers and dispatchers.

5.4.6 Dumbing Down the Allocation Process

An example of an operational change that was introduced by management, as described above, was a significant change to the methodology of allocating trips to taxis in the City of London. The City was/is one of the busiest areas for lucrative taxi contract work in London. This change was in my opinion second only to the roller bond issue (see section 5.5.1) in the impact it had on driver reaction. The operational problem to be resolved was that drivers would continually circle buildings in the City that housed large and very busy contracts. Whilst this was beneficial from a trip fulfilment (taxis were always available in the area) and a customer service (quick cabs) perspective, it was against the company's operational rules. Trips would be announced and drivers circling the building would inevitably receive the trip on the first cab allocation system. These practices worsened with drivers parking at the rear of buildings to save diesel or taking some time to drive off after dropping a customer off outside the building, which involved feigning administrative duties sorting out paperwork and exercising other delaying tactics, thereby being able to legitimately claim that they were outside if they were fortunate enough to hear a booking being announced on the radio. Driver dissatisfaction with what they saw as unfair practices mounted. Drivers alleged that other drivers had modified their radios so the signal was stronger; this was investigated but never proven. Others claimed that drivers had developed methods of ensuring their VI appeared on the dispatchers screen before others through pressing an emergency button just as the dispatcher finished speaking but before he opened the channel for drivers to speak. Claims became ever more imaginative and fantastic but management were aware that their credibility in running what had always claimed to be a straight [honest] circuit was being questioned.

At the same time as dissatisfaction was at its height the Corporation of the City of London Engineer and the City Police approached Computer Cab management with a proposal. The police needed to keep the area around Liverpool Street Station clear of parked cars in case of emergency but found it increasingly difficult and manpower intensive to do so. Their proposal was to create a huge taxi rank at Liverpool Street where cabs could rank and then if there was an emergency people would rush out of the station to hail the taxis and the road space would be clear for emergency vehicles. During normal conditions the ranking taxis would prevent illegal parking. The company's management readily agreed as there was a shortage of large ranks in the City and this creative approach was considered an answer to one of the company's operational problems. It was also flattering to the management to be consulted by the City of London Police and the Corporation of the City of London.

The rank was promoted to members (drivers) of Computer Cab by management telling them that for an experimental period (a tactic that avoided a referendum) all work from a number of contracts would be called to the rank i.e. drivers needed to be ranked up to be allocated a trip from particular contract addresses. Initially the dispatcher would see a trip from a named account and ask "who is on the Liverpool Street Station Rank" later shortened to "who is on the Liver". The shortened version fitted with the industry culture of developing nick names and radio specific jargon. The driver at the front of the rank, or as it is known in the trade on the point or the sharp end, would press his button and be allocated the trip. This system worked well for several hours but as the day passed into evening the rank was hopelessly oversubscribed and traffic in the area came to a standstill.

The Police Sergeant who had proposed the idea was livid and one particular evening gave Computer Cab two minutes to suspend the use of the rank, after which he would arrest the company's Operations' Director. A meeting was held and agreement was reached that Computer Cab would divide the City into four sectors and use six or eight ranks in each sector to call work for specified buildings that housed large contracts. The ranks would be called in rotation thus ensuring that there was no benefit in overloading any one rank. This system worked really well from an operational perspective. Trips were despatched to taxis that were close to the building; it was fair in that every driver had the same chance.

My experience of the taxi industry showed that there are two very clear ideologies amongst drivers with regards to taxi ranks; rankers and rovers. Some drivers will drop a customer off and then habitually drive to the nearest rank to await their next trip. These drivers will cite savings on diesel, taxi mileage, vehicle wear and tear and driver fatigue as well as claiming that the best jobs come off ranks, as their rationale for being rankers. Other drivers will drive past ranks on the basis of why sit behind thirty cabs on a rank when just up the road will be someone who wants a cab? This debate rages in cafes and taxi shelters night and day. Drivers on radio often say that a benefit of being on radio is that you don't have to sit on a rank. The significant impact of this change to using ranks in the busiest area of London for radio drivers was enormous. Letters arrived by the score, personal visits were made by groups of drivers who normally carried out large amounts of contract work presenting their radio work statements as proof of the detrimental impact on their earnings. Drivers demanded a meeting, a referendum and there was even talk of a strike, an unheard of concept in the radio taxi business. Some drivers drove around with a sign in their window; ranks no thanks. One driver removed his ComCab [Computer Cab's brand name] logos from the side of his taxi and refitted them upside down as a protest.

A mass driver meeting was arranged by management and a referendum was agreed as management were aware that they were in serious danger of losing, up to this point, their busiest or most productive radio drivers. This was a calculated risk. It was obvious that the busiest, i.e. most productive, radio drivers also represented the minority of drivers. It was also obvious from statistics that the average and below average driver, who made up the majority of drivers, had benefited significantly from the flattening impact of the change to the allocation of trips in the City. The referendum passed and ranks stayed. Apart from a small number of resignations most of the busier radio drivers stayed, as apparently they felt the process had been fair. This outcome once again provides evidence of the obsessive belief in, and cultural expectation of, fairness amongst London's taxi drivers. It is also likely, although unproven, that the busier drivers moved from working in the City to working elsewhere and were therefore able to operate as they had done in the City prior to the radio ranks being implemented.

In the London taxi industry it is apparent that even if drivers don't like a decision or change as long as they feel the process is fair most are prepared to accept it. Blau (1986:273) sums up this concept when he states that "common ideals provide incentives for the members of a collectivity to sacrifice the loss of 'material rewards', in order to advance its cause". The ideal in this instance was a democratic approach to decision making and although the vote was close the losing side accepted the material loss (i.e. the flattening effect of operating from ranks) in order to restore harmony.

The next section sheds light on the drivers' keen interest in technology and how they were influenced to make a considerable financial commitment to avail themselves of the most modern technology.

5.4.7 Taxi Drivers and Technology

In the late nineteen seventies and early eighties computer technology was generally in its infancy. Computers were massive installations and internet, pcs and mobile phones were yet to become commonly available to the public. This section highlights the desire amongst taxi drivers to access technology solutions and how this coincided with management's desire for scaling up the company's operations through technology and the tactics adopted to align these two positions.

Radio Taxi Drivers were almost to a man technology hungry this was evidenced through their constant requests to provide more gadgets and automation. They appeared to really enjoy demonstrations of new technology and were really keen to have new technology installed in their taxis. No reason was ever established for this by management but my view at that the time was that taxi driving could be mundane and repetitive and technology generally provided some interest; drivers were able to receive messages, review a list of trips they had undertaken, calculate the value of trips, plus it provided a discussion point with other drivers at station ranks. Whether the data and information provided by the system was the real interest or benefit or the availability of something to play or fiddle with was the real benefit is outside of the scope of this study. The technology in question was initiated prior to widespread availability of the internet, mobile phones, computer games etc. The subsequent and almost ubiquitous take up of these technologies over the last twenty years indicates that interest in technology is not peculiarly restricted to taxi drivers.

The biggest change that the company introduced during the first twenty five years of its existence was automated despatch. This concerned the replacement of voice despatch with a Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) tracking system. The process of implementing this change along with the outcomes was a fascinating experience from a business administration, commercial and industrial and social history perspective.

The problem of managing growth effectively and efficiently that management sought to solve had been recognised around five years after the company was formed in circa 1980. As referred to above the company was struggling to scale up during a period when technology was rudimentary and inherently inefficient. Very High Frequency (VHF) radio channels, which were the channel used at the time by radio taxi companies to identify the position of taxis and then allocate the booking by speech, were in high demand in London from emergency services, taxi companies, minicab companies, delivery services and couriers. There was not enough spare radio spectrum to meet demand. Due to both the limited availability of radio spectrum and the competing demands for it the Home Office, who licensed the use of radio in London, was unable to allocate any more channels to the company. The company had six channels. They brought experts in who managed to split the six channel frequencies that the company owned and thereby doubled the capacity to twelve. They developed a range of technical solutions over the years that addressed the capacity problems for a period of time but due to the relentless growth in demand for radio taxis from the influx of very large financial services companies each solution had only a limited lifecycle before volumes grew to a point where the latest solutions were once again ineffective. The problem was exacerbated by poor quality signals, outages and intermittent technical failures.

Managers and staff were instructed by the Managing Director to respond to all letters and complaints from drivers about poor radio signal quality, fairness of work allocation, capacity issues, late trip despatching and anything remotely connected with these issues as “insolvable until we have automatic vehicle location”. This term was often shortened to AVL. At mass driver meetings AVL was deliberately introduced into debates by management as the solution to most of their operational problems and gradually drivers started asking when AVL would be available. The standard company response which the staff who interacted with drivers was encouraged to provide was; “it is available now but we [the company] cannot afford it”. Drivers then started to ask how much it would cost and the response was always the same; lots (i.e. lots of money). Articles on AVL appeared in the company’s in-house magazine that was sent to drivers each month explaining how it could work and the potential and perceived benefits. After a twelve month campaign by management the drivers were practically demanding AVL. The management team judged when the time was right and a mass meeting was called specifically to deal with the adoption or otherwise of AVL.

The meeting, which was held at a nine hundred seat auditorium called the Logan Hall in Bloomsbury, was by London taxi industry standards a spectacular affair. Every driver was personally invited and urged to attend this important meeting but the agenda for the meeting was kept confidential for what were described as commercial reasons. Drivers were required to bring along an individually numbered ticket and a copy of their taxi licence which contained a photograph of the driver. On arrival drivers were issued with a professionally produced conference pack. Security on the day of the meeting, a Sunday, was both obvious and intentionally heavy handed. The presentation had been professionally produced and a large production team ensured that this was to be the most impressive event ever staged in the London taxi industry. At exactly two o’clock with the auditorium full of taxi drivers the lights dimmed, Space Odyssey was played at a deafening level and a picture of a space launch was projected onto the screen with dry ice smoke emitted in tandem with the launch of the space craft on screen. At the end of the launch the drivers enthusiastically clapped and cheered.

The Managing Director appeared on stage and during his opening remarks almost succeeded in taking full credit for the space launch which had been projected on screen. He then went on to give a 45 minute presentation concerned with satellite technology and how it could be used in taxis. Interestingly prior to the meeting a hall within the complex had been hired for drivers to watch a high profile international football match that had clashed with the meeting date. England won. During the meeting the Managing Director announced that England had also won a high profile international rugby game. These sporting events and the space launch somehow appeared to be an omen that the day was going well and that AVL, the system he was promoting, would likewise go well. At the end of his presentation his message to the drivers was that you can have all of this (what was termed as full AVL), some of it (a cut down zonal system), some minor modifications to the current system or none of it, but he explained, “If you want it you must pay for it”. Voting papers that were inside the conference pack were then completed and counted by a group of volunteer drivers.

Following a tense break while the papers were counted the results were announced. Overwhelmingly drivers had voted for full AVL but also voted to pay seventeen pounds per month for seven years to develop it. This was a total of some four million pounds. In nineteen ninety this was a lot of money for drivers to commit to something they did not own and that was merely a concept.

A number of ingredients that went into the lead up to, and the actual event, were fully in line with the culture of the industry. Rumour had been successfully used to stimulate interest in the technology, drivers had been informed about the technology, its application and benefits over a period of time by credible and authoritative sources. Drivers had felt that they were driving the agenda through raising issues at meetings, and demanding the technology and ultimately voting for and committing to paying for it.

The Logan Hall meeting and the call for members to pay for the AVL system had put management in the position where they needed, once again, to talk to drivers, to consult and to an extent ask their permission; this was welcomed by drivers. In my view this event demonstrated radio taxi drivers' love affair with technology, their developing trust in management and their willingness to invest in generating more trips. They had been consulted by the Managing Director. They had been treated like shareholders facing a cash call and were made to feel like equals, something that appealed to their values, beliefs, psyche and the culture of the industry. The format of the meeting and the supporting documentation, voting arrangements, catering and security all appealed to the feeling of being, or the aspiration to be, businessmen.

When compared to earlier attempts at change, e.g. the sudden appearance of locks on doors in the new office building, operating procedure changes and the introduction of the roller bond, this change had been managed to benefit from the culture of the industry rather than to ignore it or even challenge it. My earlier reflections that the taxi industry as a body did not like change and sought to maintain the status quo was challenged by this example. Changes introduced from above by what the drivers considered to be other taxi drivers offended the cultural belief of all taxi drivers, regardless of office or position, of being equal, that management somehow knew better than the thousands of people who make up the industry and see themselves as businessmen and very able to understand concepts such as capacity management, technology constraints and the commercial need to cut costs.

Overall what this section shows at a micro level is the importance of aligning change with the prevailing culture. Further the lack of a clear, well thought through strategy and contingency for such a high risk plan put the business in a precarious position. Internal and external communications appeared to exacerbate an already fraught and angry situation. Added to all of this the settling of personal scores concerning founder members, branch committee members and those who favoured the heritage first cab system just added to the alienation of various stakeholder groups who then contacted the LTDA Executive Team who were obliged to raise these issues to annoyance of the radio taxi company management team. Nowhere in the process were there any attempts to sell the concept, to develop champions or to consult in any meaningful way. This was very much a managing by position display that ran counter to the taxi industry culture of all being equal and many taxi drivers believing and identifying themselves as small businessmen and expecting to be treated as such.

5.4.8 Summary

This section provides an important insight into how the management of Computer Cab moved from attempting to manage by position to aligning organisational and business process change with the culture within the industry. This change appears to have come about through necessity rather than choice. The apparently disparate nature of taxi driving appears to be no barrier to acting as a united workforce when there is a cause of mutual benefit. The identity issue of wishing to be seen as a

businessman rather than just as an employee appears important. Management's recognition of these important factors and then presenting their proposition appropriately appears to have been a strategy that assisted the organisational change to be accepted by the drivers. This decision and the organisational change involved drivers in considerable extra expense but it addressed three important factors; culture, identity and management treating drivers as both businessmen and equals.

6 CONCLUSIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH AND LEARNING

The aims of my research were to fill a vacuum where there was little comprehensive or rigorous research into the people, their social structures, their behaviour, and their relationships with each other and the institutions that make up the London taxi industry. Through my research I set out to throw light upon the issues and uncover the complex networks, social structures, career paths and behaviours that contribute to or influence the culture of the industry.

The ability of taxi drivers to operate an apparently homogenous service within a virtual and disparate group was an area that I wanted to research to establish how, if at all, they organised and managed themselves. I wanted to research how behaviours such as the etiquette which have evolved in order to avoid chaos and a selfish culture (Blau, 1986) developed and became accepted by the majority if indeed they had.

I set out to unearth the day to day motivational factors of both individuals and groups of taxi drivers and compare their behaviours with the social norms of working in a conventional, contemporary organisational environment (Hatch and Schultz, 1997) e.g. an office, shop or factory. I wanted to investigate the similarities between the procedures and behaviours that are imposed and encouraged by managers amongst workers in classic organisations (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Beynon, 1975) and those that have evolved, apparently organically, amongst London's taxi drivers and how this had happened.

Rich (1997) considers the impact of the many tasks that managers are responsible for on job satisfaction and their effect on performance. These were important issues for my research as London taxi drivers do not have a manager in the normal workplace sense (Beynon, 1975) from which they may derive job satisfaction. Given that situation my research has sought to establish from where or from whom London taxi drivers derive their job satisfaction.

Further I sought to highlight the conflict that occurred when the management of the radio taxi company in the case studies in section 5.5 tried to exert its managerial will during an organisational change management program which ran counter to the prevailing culture of this self-managed and independent group. Having been a witness to the conflict which appeared to be between the culture of the taxi drivers and the approach that management took in relation to organisational change I was interested to research the issues that apparently offended the drivers' identity of themselves, their place in the industry, their profession, and the perceived impact of organisational change on their identity.

During my research I used a small number of organisational change management changes as case studies. I was not concerned with the concept of change management processes per se, my interest was as an observer to see how changes in behaviour, power and the frontiers of control had led in some cases to identity and cultural conflict whilst in other cases they were accepted consensually. I was interested to observe the impacts of change from a political, social and economic perspective.

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 *The Knowledge – Rite of Passage and Influence on Culture*

My research showed that the applicants who complete the Knowledge appear to regard surviving its deprivations and demands as a rite of passage to an ancient and honourable institution, the qualification to a new career and a status symbol amongst other working class peers. Those who complete the Knowledge of London, about 10% of those who start it, appear to already possess or acquire the personal characteristics of being self-disciplined, highly resilient to adversity, physical discomfort and surprisingly persistent. They also need to be people who can manage the financial hardships and challenges of the Knowledge. As well as coping with the demands of acquiring the Knowledge of London students have also to develop the strength of character to cope with the ritual humiliation (Townsend, 2003) of them by the Public Carriage Officers responsible for their testing.

The characteristics of this group suggest that the demographic of those who become taxi drivers is somewhat polarised from a personal characteristic and circumstances perspective through the evidently unintended consequences (Stacey, 2001. Garner and Stokoe, 2000) of the Knowledge of London process. The onerous requirements and ritual humiliation of the Knowledge process appear to be Darwinian in nature and consequently entry to the industry is restricted to a select demographic. This relatively narrow demographic appears to lead to adoption of the prevailing culture, a relatively common identity that shares very similar beliefs and values and presents very similar behaviours all of which are explained in the next section. The culture of the industry appears to be co-created.

The next section explains my conclusions concerning the culture of the industry and about how London taxi drivers identify themselves and how they identify with the industry. Taxi drivers appear to closely align their identity (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994) with the industry, its antecedents and its institutions. How this identity is cultivated and why and how that aligns with the identity of and with (Whetten, 1997) the industry given its disparate nature and virtual workforce developed into a particular interest for me during the course of my research.

6.1.2 *Identity And Culture*

My research showed that having successfully passed the Knowledge of London, taxi drivers immediately felt legitimised to drive for hire and reward and to join and identify with the taxi driver community. They appear to feel that they are part of a community and a legitimate industry or, in its broad sense, an organisation. This view was evidenced during my interview with Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1.

Taxi drivers demonstrate a strong commitment to both their occupation (Burrell and Morgan, 2003) and their industry, evidenced by the longevity of their service to, and membership of, the profession (Donaldson, 2005). This commitment appears to be heavily influenced by the deprivations and demands of the acquisition of the Knowledge of London qualification which adds both intrinsic and extrinsic value to their entry to the industry. In addition to the personal achievement of completing the Knowledge of London qualification drivers appear to be flattered by the respect of non-taxi driving peers who recognise the effort involved in gaining it. The qualification appears to provide instant acceptance and recognition for new entrants to the industry and they appear to be welcomed as part of the established community of taxi drivers, a form of practitioner who demonstrate many of the characteristics of a

professional elite evidenced by the mutual respect given and received amongst London's taxi drivers, the informal support groups that form in shelters and cafes and the sharing of information and intelligence.

In spite of these factors taxi drivers appear to have a low expectation of, or fear for, the longevity of their industry in its current form (Townsend 2003, Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1). The recognition or legitimacy that taxi drivers assume by dint of completing the Knowledge of London and from the perceived job security (Blau, 1986) and autonomy (Scwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) afforded by it quickly passes and drivers adopt the fears that are prevalent within the industry.

This situation could be compared with the threats and fears that Ford workers and their unions (Beynon, 1975) had with management and the ever present risk of finding themselves outside the gates. Both these groups of workers, Ford's and taxi drivers, appear to fear a threat to their livelihood and/or working conditions from people, powers or institutions outside of their peer group. This fear may be widespread amongst working class and professional groups but this possibility was outside of the scope of my research. This phenomenon has a number of impacts on taxi drivers' identity, particularly an antipathy towards change, attempts to control them and a suspicion of institutions and organisations.

This fear manifests itself in the development of an industry identity that is presented as heavily burdened by regulations (e.g. the Knowledge of London, specific vehicle regulations, regulated fares etc) which is used as way of demonstrating and demanding legitimacy. As they are viewed by taxi drivers, interlopers such as minicabs can operate free of this onerous framework and are permitted to threaten taxi drivers' aspirations to maintain the status quo, which is important to their identity as part of what they view as the legitimate institution of their industry.

The comments made by the unknown journalist from The Economist (2002) who asserts that London taxi drivers scare politicians stiff is an example of the external identity of taxi drivers that in many respects demonstrates two very different perspectives of identity. The taxi drivers view themselves as continually under threat whereas their external identity appears to place them as the threat. This perceived fear, it is alleged by the anonymous author, has discouraged politicians from trying to reform the regulations that protect licensed taxi drivers (The Economist, 2002). Assertions suggesting a closed shop, or of the taxi industry being protected or being some kind of monopoly, are a constant source of irritation and even anger in the taxi industry, as these assertions undermine their identity as people who had completed the Knowledge, have a clean criminal record and have earned their place as a member of their community, organisation or the institution that is the London taxi industry. In effect a meritocracy, they had earned the right to be a taxi driver through hard work, perseverance and physical discomfort and resent being categorised as merely inheriting these important rights.

The widely held belief amongst taxi drivers that they are able to earn more money than those in other driving jobs or careers, e.g. bus drivers, most of which are viewed by taxi drivers as lower skilled roles due to the lack of a requirement to complete the Knowledge of London qualification, appears important to taxi drivers' identities. They appear to regard their qualification as a taxi driver as a status symbol that placed them above other working class people. Money may well be an important determinant in the decision to become a taxi driver but earning potential does not remain the central concern nor the only influence on taxi drivers' rituals, behaviour, beliefs and actions. It appears that the drivers' ideology evolves and changes as they

achieve a level of financial equilibrium. Flexibility and job security is valued highly as a reason to become a taxi driver, as evidenced by the taxi drivers I interviewed as is the opportunity to be one's own boss (Abrahams, 2000) with the beneficial impact on identity and social status that this brings. Given the longevity of service (Donaldson, 2005) amongst most taxi drivers leading to almost permanence amongst this albeit virtual workforce a strong identity and culture has evolved and developed which appears to be adopted by newer drivers.

Although income does appear to be an important issue in the taxi industry a strong tradition of support for taxi trade charities, which are highly regarded within the industry and with which drivers are keen to be identified, as evidenced by the support they give to these important symbols of the industry's identity. Involvement in taxi charity outings is evidently considered important by a majority of taxi drivers as a method of identifying the industry as one that is constituted from a caring group of people.

How taxi drivers appear to identify with the institutions of the industry was demonstrated by the majority of radio taxi drivers who appear to develop a cognitive and emotional foundation on which they build attachments and create meaningful relationships (Hatch and Schultz, 2000) with their radio taxi organisation. Drivers have been heard to talk about how they love their radio circuit. This behaviour has been observed in cafes and taxi driver shelters as well as through the letter pages of the trade press. This compares in many ways with men who love the football team that they support and identify with it despite having no real input to the management of the club or exercising any tangible or even intangible influence as to how it is run or how or which players are selected to form the team. That same lack of power into the strategic direction of the radio taxi companies is in evidence. Taxi driver members of such organisations appear to have some tactical influence and during periods of change especially where change is perceived to be counter culture or is likely to adversely impact their identity the level of their influence or desire for influence is heightened.

These meaningful relationships featured amongst the drivers I interviewed with Taxi Driver Interviewee No.1 in particular providing what I considered to be an almost extreme example of an emotional and meaningful relationship with the organisation, in this case the London taxi industry. I found that taxi drivers feel immense pride in achieving entry to the community and the industry, an industry and community that closely aligns with many of their values and beliefs such as equality, honesty, fair play, professionalism, and legitimacy.

I found during my research that there is almost an obsession with fairness (Hooper, 2007) and equality across the industry. Fairness is a key concept in the industry that appears to be commonly accepted and defines expected, and to a large extent, demonstrated behaviour and practice, as can be determined from the protocol that has evolved to classify which trip belongs to which taxi driver. This etiquette is commonly observed (Hooper, 2007) and is largely consensual. Acceptance of the radio taxi companies' disciplinary code, as evidenced by radio taxi companies' complaints committees, based on peer based judgement being accepted by London taxi drivers is another example of drivers' desire for fairness and their readiness to accept power consensually where it is deemed to be legitimate, fair and/or necessary to do so to avoid a crudely selfish culture (Blau, 1986). Stacey (2001) views this type of behaviour as a form of management control by webs of self-managing professionals with shared interests and common values. The radio taxi companies operate with various management structures, some elected and some appointed, but

their drivers or more correctly the drivers aligned with them tend to operate as groups of franchisees rather than employees. Management set the boundaries in which taxi drivers are obliged and agree to operate. Communication of, and adherence to the taxi driver etiquette is a clear example of Watson's (1987) definition of culture, where he talks of shared meanings which define what is good, bad and appropriate ways for members of a group to think and behave.

An important finding of my research was that the flat career structure within the industry whereby drivers have the same earning potential and, without intervention or identity cultivation, status, on the last day of their career as they did on the first is overlain by a pseudo hierarchy created by the drivers themselves.

Although London's taxi drivers are self-employed business men (Public Carriage Office Website, 2009), operating as a disparate and virtual workforce they display many behaviours more typical of those working in conventional jobs (Hatch, 2000). Longer serving taxi drivers appear to attempt to build pseudo seniority strata through antecedents, artefacts, stories, behaviour and the use of exclusive language and the development of proxy status symbols. They also try to identify with other long servers. Due to their long careers as taxi drivers (Donaldson, 2005), promotions, CVs, qualifications and former jobs cannot be used to cultivate identity and status so length of service and development of an identity that is the antithesis of a butterboy [newly qualified taxi driver] was the apparently commonly adopted method.

Rumours and exaggeration are part of the taxi industry in London. Associated with this are gossip and storytelling. This appears to be as much of a sport and skill development activity as a malicious and divisive activity or a method of communication. What is evident is that gossip and storytelling is widespread between drivers and between drivers and customers and it appears that it is used for a variety of purposes including highlighting attempts to introduce practices that are counter culture to the industry or where cultural beliefs and values are being challenged or attacked. They are also used to influence and reinforce behaviour and adherence to the behaviours that are commonly adopted by the majority of drivers.

My research found that London's taxi drivers appear to identify with the values of the London taxi industry but also quickly adopt the identity of their industry. Their identity appears to be fashioned by aspects of the traditions of their industry, for example the onerous requirements and deprivations of the Knowledge of London qualification, the generosity of supporting the trade's charities and the reputation of the industry for honesty and integrity. Some aspects of a common identity are adopted in order to stimulate acceptance within the taxi driver community. Some taxi drivers appear to enjoy the adoption of the identity that has been created by the press and amongst non-taxi driving peers as being tough and street wise. It appears that taxi drivers enjoy the status of being perceived of being at the top of a hierarchy of driving roles and identify strongly with it. Overall identification with the industry, with each other and as part of a long established and highly respected community appear important to those within it. Doubts and fears about the longevity of the industry amongst taxi drivers are mitigated through championing the status quo. The personal achievement of gaining the Knowledge of London not only qualifies the individual to become a taxi driver but also to adopt the identity and culture of that industry and to identify with it and the individuals in it.

The next section looks at the institutions and influences on taxi driver behaviour and the cultural response to attempts to manage them by manipulating the frontiers of control and/or to exercise control over taxi drivers.

6.1.3 *Management and Change*

My research clearly established that in the London taxi industry there is no concept of managers or management in the conventional sense. Where these concepts do exist, for example in the institutions of the industry drivers appear to consider themselves above any such roles. There is a strong belief amongst drivers that the taxi industry exists for taxi drivers rather than for the benefit of the public. This belief colours the interactions with authorities, trade associations and other institutions. Further the culturally based belief that all taxi drivers are equal neutralises attempts by any whom by dint of their position try to introduce organisational, business process or cultural change.

The taxi trade press appear to position themselves as the body that sets out, or enables individuals to set out, how London's taxi drivers should behave. The taxi trade press is normally distributed free, drivers can take it or not and read it or not and practice what is proposed, purported or not. Amongst a disparate workforce it is an important part of the extensive communication's web that is evident in the industry. Therefore some influence on culture and behaviour appears to be exerted through the trade press. In addition to the trade press there is evidence that radio taxi companies, and to a very limited extent the industry regulator, the Public Carriage Office, also attempts to influence taxi drivers' behaviour. The advice from these institutions is often resented by taxi drivers whereas the trade press's advice, criticisms and proposals are largely accepted by most taxi drivers. This appears to be due to the trade press often criticising the radio taxi companies and the Public Carriage Office and therefore being considered by drivers to be on their side and providing helpful advice for the common good, whereas advice provided by the institutions of the industry are apparently viewed by drivers as being critical and exceeding their remit or powers.

The level of resentment felt towards the Public Carriage Office appears somewhat complex. Prospective and licensed drivers appear to submit to the authoritarian ethos of the Public Carriage Office consensually with little dissent. Knowledge Boys comply with the ritualistic conduct and the humiliations of the testing program required to gain the Knowledge of London vocational qualification. My research shows that Knowledge Boys and taxi drivers are influenced by the myths and stories surrounding the Public Carriage Office, possibly invented by and apparently spread by Knowledge Students, particularly in relation to the Public Carriage Office's reputation for retribution against mavericks, non-conformists or rule breakers. Whilst this could simply be considered a communication of the culture of Knowledge Boys my research identified it as a form of informal coaching and mutual support. There is very little explicit objection to the Public Carriage Office's behaviour towards taxi drivers, although individually drivers express resentment towards what they consider a mixture of heavy handed discipline and enforcement of regulation against taxi drivers and the demonstration of impotence towards interlopers such as minicabs. It is my finding that this sometimes grudging acceptance of the Public Carriage Office's attempts to manage the industry is influenced to a degree by risk aversion or, as in my case, narrow self-interest. There also appears to be a view that the strictness of the Public Carriage Office towards the industry will somehow juxtapose into the preservation of the industry in its current form.

The culture of the industry is heavily based upon a view that everyone within the industry is equal (Beynon, 1975). There appears to be little, if any, tolerance of one

set of drivers attempting to dominate the majority. This point is clearly made amongst the co-operative radio taxi companies where popular election speech content is based upon rhetoric such as electing a candidate because he is a working driver and will bring a driver's common sense to the boardroom often using terms such as; being one of you, just a cab driver like you. During a driver interview with Taxi Driver Interviewee No.3 he made a point that; "I don't want people to feel I have become too big for my boots" further enforcing both the fear of being identified as attempting to dominate, act, or imply some seniority to other drivers and a desire to remain as a driver, in spite of owning a significant number of taxis that he hires out to other drivers. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.3 still drives a taxi frequently to remain, or to appear to remain, just another taxi driver and thereby an equal.

I found during my research that attempts by the radio taxi companies to take a management role and influence driver behaviour and organisational change processes were not accepted anywhere near as readily as those emanating from the trade press or even the Public Carriage Office. Two significant events (The corporatisation of London Wide Radio Taxis (see section 5.4) and attempts by the Radio Taxi Company Executives to introduce the Quickie Knowledge (see section 5.2.16) manifested themselves as a clash between management power and the culture of the industry. The reasons for the antipathy these changes attracted from individual taxi drivers and the industry in general was evidently because rather than an external body empowered with legitimate executive power radio circuits were managed by people the taxi drivers considered to be peers and consequently equals. The culture of the industry appears to be based strongly on a belief that taxi drivers are all equal and attempts by a group of peers to move the frontiers of control or affect fundamental change from a position of assumed or self-appointed powers were viewed with hostility.

My research established that where taxi drivers are involved in battles with each other, intra industry, or when the battle is peer based it is evident that groups supporting or opposing the issue quickly form and evolve a coherent and unified response. A good example of this was the battle between Computer Cab and its drivers over the business process changes (see section 5.4.2). This is very different when the battle is with a party or parties external to the industry. The lack of an effective trade union type organisation and the cooperation needed to form a united opposition or group action in disputes with organisations regarded as the establishment or external to the industry amongst a disparate workforce appears to inhibit effective responses to unwelcome or harmful interventions e.g. a dispute with the vehicle manufacturer. My finding on this was that taxi drivers felt much more comfortable fighting with their peers who had attempted to usurp the informal rules or culture of the industry than it did fighting with external bodies e.g. hotels who allowed their doormen to sell airport journeys to minicab drivers. This was perhaps due to the potential threat to their licence, a threat never made peer to peer but one of the first retorts from external organisations seeking to neutralise driver protests or other activity.

My interpretation indicates that the relative power of cliques (Dalton, 1961) or small groups (Blau, 1986) to effect change within the industry is dependent for success upon the alignment of their arguments with the prevailing culture. This concept is amply demonstrated by the adversity that arose through the radio circuit managements' attempts to reduce the scope of the Knowledge of London through the concept that became to be known as the Quickie Knowledge, compared to the consensual acceptance of, and adherence to, the taxi driver etiquette championed by Hooper (2008), Pessok (2006) and Townsend (2003) through the trade press. The

attempts at the corporatisation of London-Wide into Computer Cab by the company's managers; as they saw it, to professionalise the organisation they managed, was another example of the adverse reaction of trying to introduce change that ran counter culture to the industry e.g. the belief that all taxi drivers are equal meant that taxi drivers did not take kindly to a what they considered to be a small group of peers setting themselves up as management professionals who knew what was best for the organisations.

Although radio circuit management teams appear to have significant power regarding policies such as levying charges from and making payments to drivers and designing business processes and workflow (Slack and Lewis, 2002) their power, at an industry wide level appears, when judged by their attempts at industry wide change, to be muted. Their attempts when championing the Quickie Knowledge to appeal to the mass of taxi drivers using slogans such as seeing the big picture, putting the customer first and other rhetoric added to the drivers' determination to obstruct attempts to water down, as they saw it, the key differentiator (the Knowledge of London) between them and the lack of vocational qualifications of other driving jobs. Some of the adverse reaction amongst taxi drivers was as a result of poor organisational change management practice (Strickland and Thompson, 1998) but overall the change was not acceptable to the industry for cultural and identity reasons and this together with the poor change management practices that were adopted appeared to lead to the revolts and vilifications that resulted.

During the industrial dispute concerned with the Quickie Knowledge the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA) was able to garner the taxi drivers' support for their campaign against the introduction of the Quickie Knowledge as their defence of the Knowledge was a cultural fit with the beliefs and values of the majority of drivers. The LTDA was able to capitalise on the industry's inherent fear of assimilation with private hire or other apparently, low paid and mundane driving jobs. It warned that any watering down of the Knowledge of London would ultimately lead to London taxi drivers' biggest fear, the demise of the industry in its current form and the assimilation to taxi driving just being another driving job would be axiomatic, with the consequent loss of autonomy, status, identity, earning potential, job security, and flexibility of being a taxi driver. The psychological contract that linked the demands of the Knowledge with the entitlement to operate as a taxi driver was being threatened by a group that had appointed themselves as appearing to be superior or senior to the taxi driver and not caring for or considering the driver, all of which conflicted with the culture amongst taxi drivers and the identity they had developed.

6.2 Further Research

During the course of this research study a number of subjects that have not been comprehensively researched were uncovered. Of particular interest are passengers' views of the service, the driver discourse and their view regarding the added value provided by drivers as alluded to by Craik (2009). The whole area of customer and driver relationships is an area of social research that could provide useful outcomes in relation to understanding how useful the taxi proposition meets customer needs and requirements. Taxi Driver Interviewee No.2 whilst being interviewed referred to the changes in customer/driver interactions given the impact of mobile phone technology. This area could be expanded to include the impact of social media on stories, gossip and the dissemination of information within the industry.

Minicab drivers appear to have less trenchant views about taxi drivers than vice versa. This may be as a consequence of the lower barriers to entry (Porter, 1980) to the Private Hire industry than is the case for taxi drivers. It would also be interesting to analyse the minicab drivers' views of their own legitimacy and identity (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994). A further benefit of this research would be the correlation, if any, between taxi drivers and minicab drivers' views on their jobs and commitment to the profession.

The PCO is a significant stakeholder within the taxi industry and latterly, following the introduction of Private Licensing, the Private Hire industry. It would be illuminating to understand how the principals within this institution view their role in the industry and how they influence the culture of the London taxi industry. The relatively recent changes that have seen the PCO moved from the control of the Home Office to Transport for London would also be an interesting area of research to see if the previous rituals and processes pertain and the effect of any change on the status of the Knowledge and the consequent impact on driver identity.

Although my research has looked in depth at the Knowledge of London experience, the usefulness and longevity of the Knowledge and the impact of Satellite Technology and other systems on the Knowledge is an area that I am keen to research. The impact of any change to the Knowledge could potentially impact the current narrow demographic that survive the Knowledge and become taxi drivers. It would be useful and interesting to track any changes in demography prior to and post any changes to the Knowledge of London.

The role and culture of the industry may change due to the impact of technology on the Knowledge of London, taxi drivers and the taxi industry. The variances in commitment to the industry and the profession between radio and non-radio taxi drivers and the perspectives of newer and longer serving taxi drivers are areas that are touched upon in my research but deserve further analysis.

The taxi and private hire industries will continue to evolve and develop and as they do it is my view that they provide an interesting and valuable research subject.

6.3 Lessons For Other Organisations

My research has some important lessons for more conventional organisations, especially those that could be described as communities of practice (Stacey, 2001). My research provides a usual reference tool for a range of stakeholders including taxi drivers, radio circuit managers, Transport for London, trade unions and trade associations, the London Mayor's Office and policy makers. It also has a useful and reusable contribution for those who are managing dispersed workforces, groups of contractors or other disparate supply chains.

Although a somewhat negative use my work also provides a very useful historical context to the industry and if the taxi industry were to wither as a consequence of new entrants and changes in technology, the ever growing number and quality of substitute services the behaviours, identity, culture, institutions and management structure are recorded for posterity. The lessons are transferable to similar practice groups of dispersed and disparate supply chains.

The lessons for each are discussed below;

My research has shown that whilst managers agonise over what has become to be seen as management's role to define, develop or set up frameworks for influencing or even more adventurously setting organisational culture, expending vast amounts of effort on developing processes for communication, identifying key messages, mission and vision statements and putting succession plans with multiple strata of management levels in place a virtual organisation, the London taxi industry, has achieved all of this with almost no formal management function. This is an important and valuable lesson. My research shows that people left to organise themselves are quite capable of doing so consensually and very effectively (Stacey, 2001). Before embarking on major programmes to implement processes I would propose that consideration be given to what is in place, whether the processes will develop anyway and whether management have better things to do.

A counter argument could be that there are shareholder pressures, regulatory requirements or other pressures for a directive management style that sets out how and when, and in what direction the processes should be orientated. If this is the case, and as a consequence organisational change management programs are needed, then another important lesson is that any change must be aligned, at a strategic level, with the culture of the organisation and at a tactical or operational level with the identity of those who will be affected. My research has shown that informal communication channels can be as effective and in some cases even more effective than formal or corporate communication channels. Organisational or business process changes that are counter to culture or offend the identity of those who are affected are likely to be targeted by groups of objectors who form quite informally but effectively and who are capable of frustrating management's attempts to implement change.

In my experience ethnography does not feature strongly in managerial thinking. Reliance on processes and top down change are often dressed up as strategy and necessity and any opposition, formal or informal, is viewed as disloyal or at the extreme ignorance. A more ethnographic approach to understanding the workforce, their behaviours, their identity formulation, their culture and their values and beliefs could provide many valuable insights into what change is already happening, what could happen and the best way to align culture, change and identity. Reflexivity is likewise a concept that is not widely practised in management thinking in my

experience. Positivity, a reliance on data, an obsession with change, has crept into business management practice and viewed as far more certain and providing predictable outcomes. My research has shown that these concepts need to be questioned as people are much more capable of adapting to and even championing change if their culture and identity are understood and change is aligned with them. The need for change is not an axiom, it is an opinion, a judgement and often a flawed one. The eagerness of management to be seen as in charge, decisive, and doing something can override the natural direction of an organisation and it can also demotivate, sap energy and be corrosive to an organisation's culture, identity and encourage behaviours that are unhelpful.

My research has recorded, ethnographically and in a reflexive style a period of evolution and development in the industry and the reactions and behaviours of those in it to that evolution. Regulators, Transport for London, and the Mayor's Office aspire to, as they would claim, improve customer service and transport provision generally. This research provides a contribution to original knowledge about how change is perceived, rejected and embraced amongst the specific research subject, London's taxi drivers. It provides a reference point from which to start to develop plans for change that references the importance of culture and identity and the myriad of sensitivities that pervade the industry and its drivers.

Taxi drivers, I believe will find the research useful in providing a valuable insight into their world. They will no doubt recognise much of what is presented but, due to the nature of my research, will obviously differ in their views of the validity of some aspects and conclusions. Nonetheless when threatened by or with change this research will assist them to understand the nature and level of the threat and the remedies needed to resolve remove it. Likewise trade unions and trade associations can call upon the research to interpret the industry, the drivers' culture, the importance of identity and both the similarities with more conventional organisations and thereby other examples of change or threats to culture, identity and/or practice.

The taxi industry has provided a very interesting case study. The lack of management and formal process, the lack of a management layer and none of the normal clutter of organisational life has not apparently harmed this virtual organisation. Without a formal communications plan the taxi drivers have inherited and developed and refined their key marketing messages. They have set up informal support groups. They have developed coaching skills. Their culture could be described as co-created (Mintzberg, 1973). Despite being a virtual organisation with only loose tie relationships they have established a community with clear rules, values and beliefs. Whilst not promoting a movement to remove management from every organisation I would urge management to carefully reflect on just how much intervention and direction is required to maximise business efficiency.

7. POST SCRIPT

This section provides a short overview of changes that have taken place in the taxi industry since I completed my research. Minicabs have been licensed and have gained considerable market share leaving the three licensed radio taxi companies struggling for survival. New entrants, such as Uber, utilising mobile applications (apps) have suddenly appeared in London and have had a further adverse impact on the viability of the taxi industry. The Mayor of London has recently announced that the number of Knowledge Boys has reduced by 30%. This is the first time any such reduction has been experienced.

Uber has manifested itself as the most serious threat to the survival of the taxi industry in its history. Uber in particular has been the recipient of billions of pounds of Venture Capital Funding which has meant that it can provide free fares, introduce a new concept of promo codes [promotional codes that enable service users to deduct amounts of money e.g. £10, £20 from the journey cost] and refer a friend schemes whereby both the recommender and the recommended receive a payment. Uber has also been very effective at encouraging people to join the industry as minicab drivers. The number of licensed minicab drivers has increased over the last three years from circa 55k drivers to 107k drivers. Uber presents itself as a disruptor. Its disruptive strategy has largely impacted the taxi industry reducing business carried out taxis by a reported 40-50%. The introduction of free fares, promo codes, recommend a friend schemes and continued price erosion by Uber has been largely responsible together with oversupply and easy to use technology has largely been responsible for the acquisition of market share from taxis to Uber. Uber has ignored and frequently manipulated regulations and regulators to enable it to grow its business at the expense of the more highly regulated and compliant taxi industry. Offshoring their tax affairs has provided additional benefits to Uber.

The response to this external threat from taxi drivers has been that many more have joined organisations such as the LTDA. Its membership has increased from 7,000 to 10,000. This supports my research which found that external threats are the most difficult for the taxi industry to combat due to their disparate nature and the lack of effective representation due to the independent nature of the industry and its tendency to shun membership of trade organisations.

Taxi drivers have changed their communication channels from conversations on ranks and in shelters to social media. Twitter is now an important communications channel. Conversations in taxis between driver and passenger have also reduced as drivers are constantly talking to one another on hands free mobile phones and passengers act in a similar way.

Although Uber and other new entrants have largely captured market share through various methods of cutting fares the taxi industry has been unable or unwilling to do likewise and therefore simply expanding the gap in fares between the disruptors and the incumbent taxi industry.

A generational change has taken place in the trade press which now features a lot fewer examples of the words that were peculiar to the taxi industry. The diversity of the industry has broadened to include many more women and a greater representation of ethnic minorities. Many familiar traditions continue; the thirteen shelters appear to be in rude health whenever I walk past them, obituaries continue to appear in the trade press with the familiar explanations and claims as to the 'deceased' decency, honesty and commitment to the trade.

The industry has become more militant and has over the last year and held many drive-ins. These are basically protests where taxis all drive to a certain place at a pre-determined time. These protests have focused on TfL's inability to regulate the new entrants to the industry properly. A recent Greater London Hearing into taxi drivers and the PH industry's complaints about TfL's regulatory enforcement and determined that they were 'woeful'. TfL displays no obvious regret that the taxi industry is unhappy with their standard of regulation. The apparent reduction in standards and the reduction in drivers' earning potential is affecting the identity of drivers, which is moving from proudly independent and autonomous to victim.

The pride the industry took in the 90% failure rate of those undertaking the Knowledge of London, the strict regulation of the industry, their position in the hierarchy of driving jobs and their ability to earn above average wages appears to be waning, and with that there is an impact on taxi drivers identity which in turn affects the culture of the industry. An industry that found change difficult to cope with is evidently in the midst of a revolution in public and personal transport. New entrants who have not undertaken the Knowledge are able to cut prices and yet still attract customers, the number of minicabs have grown and continue to grow, the larger minicab companies have displaced in the region of £100m per annum of account business from taxis to minicabs, public transport benefited significantly from investment running up to and since the Olympics. The overall impact according to the trade press is that London taxi drivers' income is down 30-40%.

The change to the environment has been sudden, somewhat brutal and shows no sign of returning to the previous equilibrium. These issues perhaps expose the weakness of an organisation that does not have a management layer, whose workforce in the main inflexible in relation to working hours, charges, qualification standards, is largely opposed to change and to an extent relying on their perceived legitimacy and qualification to somehow rescue them from commercial reality. The trade associations' response has been to encourage militancy, initiate legal proceedings on peripheral, very technical regulatory breaches by new entrants and to attempt to influence politicians to 'save the taxi'. The change that has taken place is very much in the commercial environment and that is where ultimately, I believe, the battle will be won and lost. My research showed that battling external threats is where the taxi industry is at its weakest. The new entrants and substitute services are also strong where the taxi industry is at its weakest notably strategy, ability to change, marketing expenditure, pricing flexibility and access to a significant pool of low cost labour.

Having survived for 350 years the taxi industry now faces its greatest risk to survival.

End

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APPENDIX 1 – TAXI DRIVER INTERVIEW PROMPTS

Introduction

- **Ask if they wish to use a pseudonym or their own name**
- **Tell them interview will last approximately 45 minutes**
- **Provide background and purpose of interview;**
- **Research into the people in the industry**
- **No right or wrong answers**
- **Interested in what they think**

Interview

- **Why did you become a taxi driver**
- **How long have you been a taxi driver**
- **What did you do before you were a taxi driver**
- **Will you stay a taxi driver**
- **How long did the Knowledge take**
- **How did you find it**
- **Did you know any taxi drivers before you came into the industry**
- **Describe your working day/your normal daily routine**
- **Do you observe the taxi etiquette**
- **How did you learn the etiquette**
- **What do you think about other taxi drivers**
- **What do you think about customers**
- **Do you have views on tipping**
- **What do you think about the PCO**
- **Will the trade continue as it is**
- **Would you like things to change if so what**
- **Do you think the trade is homogenous, why?**
- **If I were to ask you about the culture of the industry how would you describe it?**
- **Is there an official and unofficial culture and if there is how it is defined and manifested?**
- **Describe your relationship as a radio taxi driver and the radio taxi company leader**
- **The relationship between radio taxi drivers and their radio taxi company leader**
- **What trust issues are important to you.**

Closing

- **Thanks for your time**
- **Is it okay if I email or phone you if I need any more information or want to follow up on any of what you have said?**

End

**APPENDIX 2 – SAMPLE TAXI DRIVER INTERVIEW NOTES
(TAXI DRIVER INTERVIEWEE NO.1)**

26/6/08



Use own name

'95 left TNT

Cowser, Swahome suggested doing the knowledge
Security

know nothing, work wherever etc
£200 for the working machine

'Wheat' from 'Chaff' detailed account

Working as well

14/5 mths knowledge

18 mths full time

→ Got lots of info re tax i took

Knowledge Schools - initially lonely / club like
Did not have to study so much at home

(21/4/1995 got badge

New drivers returned + 'held count'

Mickey Ascott, Tower Bridge

met outside PCO at 1315 hrs

1st trip

Devonshire St - LAP

long time

→ Aware trip (mine) two trips free

No real surprises

→ Surprised drivers dwell
on customers who are
arseholes

Initially right 8-4 more money - rights needed to

① catch up from daily

Parents good financially.

Thinks of it as a job, providing it as a family.

7 - 4/5 days

Freedom to make up a day (Day off)
Must make it up.

Part of the trade? Yes because of what we went through
'Proud to be a cabbie'
'Still on'! (emotional)

London cabbie 'Operated, not aggressive but not to mess with, 'bolshy'
True Y/N 'Yes'

Some do a terrible disservice 'Rip off people, rule'
need humanity.

Enjoys getting people on time even if they start off late

'Like to think the customer would like to take another 'cab'

'Too good job'

'Shortest + quickest route', 'know the quickest way'

Entertainment? hooded/questioning 'What do you think of the Mayor' 'Whats all this traffic then?'
Expect a robust response + get.

conversations but only if initiated by customer

Other drivers - don't know

Adapts to different passengers

Never be rich but will do okay

Earn money + go home

When he listens to passenger 'thank God'
↳ ~~Office politics~~ conversations on the mobile

Not competing / other drivers not competitors

10-2 = £200 / £350 etc. early days
adjusting hrs etc

Money works out the same if he works
the hours

Routines

'Magic' get hotels
sewn up
Waltham to Putney - likes to drive
through Richmond

Always goes Fulham rd (got a goal
job yrs ago in
Fulham High St)

Only station cabs not hotels (best)

↳ Drives past them
but feels sorry for
passengers,

Tells Dorman it's best
enjoys

Punters get ripped off

Not impressed think they are clever.

(3)

45 years

Go's on protests

→
Association does a good job

Ideal job would be working for the association
Whe to keep the trade as it is. Whe the
tradition

Never thinks about changing jobs
Most people come in and stay.

'Driving a cab is a battle of the mind'
not give up during a working day
Could look for reasons to give up.

Job at 1300hrs to Putney ^{does he go back} to work at home

An old boy said 'Do your hours!'

Etiquette - Hilton, Rosh + Victoria etc

'My job' Abuses - let them know they have
pulled a stroke.

Themes below here.

Renters seem a bit odd - it doesn't add up

Passengers - Driver is control but passenger in
charge
they are paying so are most important

Fri, Sat + Sun even, stammering response, uncomfortable
in the chair etc

(4)

not that he doesn't care, could affect him
in the long run. Would not feel
guilty.

Stable family - ~~does~~ most important

Management - size of tips
tips not a big deal → to report
part.

Proddington - Anthermen - City
got their at 12 → 3 minutes to twelve
\$25-60 paid \$10-00

'legals' don't bother him.

Only tips where expected! → other people
eg waiters ^{does not} _{are tip} = waiter

'Need to justify their existence' late, dealers etc
can't trust taxis + buses.

Not cheap needs to justify their existence,

'Not showing off the driver hangs his
but stuff!'

No shelters goes to the Piccolo.

Does not talk much to the cabbies want to
get home.

Knows a guy who goes to the All Nations
always there. sometimes goes home after lunch
ten etc

Trade Press, very loyal to LIDA

Had differences re alternative vehicles, LTI
take diabolical liberties re offer sales etc

(5)

Armed

Likes Taxi - very interactive

Badge - [redacted] (What he does done to DAC)

LCDC 800 members

Quality LIDA Guilds, Bob Oddy shirt tie, knows how to handle himself

DAC heard about it 12/13 Gentlemen's Guild went by his friend's advice. 'Driver owned it'

Used to reject work eg Arzon St - Victoria. related what if a customer wanted to go

Logos + cards (Don't enjoy it)

- ↳ Puddington to Hallfield estate
- ↳ Never had them when it was voluntary

Initially 'All in together, good of the trade, all working together'

Thinks LIDA should deal with the trade issues; not cab trade rep, not good corporate image. Against sell off prefers a co-op.

Major worry 'losing the identity' through the change in vehicles

AGM's platform for trouble makers, 15 people to abuse the management

(6)

APPENDIX 3 – Callsign Magazine Article

Cars v Taxis

This is the first time I have ever written a letter to this magazine, but the despair I feel with the erosion of our work has inspired this momentous event. Ok, let's assume cars are cheaper. If we control the cars, why not first offer the job to the DaC fleet? At 2pm there is a trip from Jermyn St to LAP fixed at £55; if no one wants it, then pass it on to the cars. Alternatively, at 2am, Ropemaker St to Basildon fixed at £80. Again, if no one wants it then pass it on to the cars. Board members must realise there is no such thing as cab and car work, it has to be less rigid. I'm not paying subs to fatten the wallet of car drivers. If this does happen, we must keep our mouths shut. If we carry a banker, do not tell him what an a-hole [arsehole] he is even if it is true! Finally we need a Board passionately committed to the product it is selling. Is that this BoM [Board of Management]? I am yet to be convinced...

Stephen Field (F68)

Brian Rice responds: Who said we control the cars? We don't, the customer does! You must remember that we only have Concierge [a booking distribution engine that routes bookings to minicab companies] in five of our larger accounts and they are the only accounts where we handle their ground transportation - there is not one other account in our database that requires us to send them cars. I think you will agree Stephen, these five are our largest accounts, so what makes you think they will accept a taxi when they actually ask for a car! If you believe we can actually dictate to a client and tell them they can only have what we say - then we would not have that account for very long!

Finally, to accuse me and the BoM of not being passionate; I don't know if you have put that in for effect or you actually believe it, I hope it is the former!

During my stewardship, we have acquired Deutsche Bank, Citi and JPMorgan, three of our largest accounts and three of the largest in London, please don't insult me by telling me I am not passionate about DaC - just look at our achievements!

NB Brian Rice is the chairman of Dial-a-Cab

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<http://www.dac-callsign.co.uk/10/May10/page33.html>

Appendix 4 – Public Carriage Office Appointment Card

Ref. No. 374785
 Mr. GALVIN M. S.

Time	Date	Time	Date
11.00	WED 13 SEPT	10.30	MON 19 NOV
10.00	THURS 9 NOV	11.00	THUR 13 DEC
10.00	Fri 10 NOV	11.00	MON 4 JAN
10.00	FRI 12 JAN	9.30	MON 4 Feb
10.00	FRI 9 MAR	9.30	MON 25 Feb
10.00	FRI 9 MAR	2.30	MON 10 March
10.00	MON 16 July	2.30	MON 24 March
10.00	MON 24 Sept	9.0	10 APRIL
10.30	MON 25 OCT		

