

https://dspace.org/

Minibus taxi drivers are they all 'children born from the same mother?'

Sauti, Gloria

2008-10-22T07:16:50Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/5779

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

RESEARCH REPORT

MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS ARE THEY ALL

'CHILDREN BORN FROM THE SAME MOTHER?'

By

GLORIA SAUTI

Submitted in the partial fulfilment of the degree

MASTERS IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In the

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

NOVEMBER 2006

TITLE PAGE

MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS ARE THEY ALL 'CHILDREN BORN FROM THE SAME MOTHER?'

By

GLORIA SAUTI

SUPERVISOR: PROF. DAVID B. COPLAN

DEPARTMENT: Department of Social Anthropology
University of the Witwatersrand

DEGREE: MA COURSEWORK & RESEARCH

The minibus taxi industry in South Africa is the most popular form of public transportation and is used by the majority of commuters. At least 65 percent of the country's commuters make use of this mode of public transport while the rest travel by busses or trains. Although minibus taxis are the most convenient form of transportation the industry is however associated with various complaints from commuters, the media and society at large. Most of the complaints are about "violence or taxi wars", "unsafe taxis" resulting in high accident rates and the manner in which minibus taxi drivers appear to drive, behave, over speed and overload taxis etc. All these complaints are directly related to minibus taxi drivers. The purpose of my research is to investigate whether or not all minibus taxi drivers are indeed behaving in these similar ways and whether it can hence be argued that they are all "children born from the same mother?" In the field, it was important to go beyond the stereotypes of South African minibus taxi drivers. My study focussed specifically on minibus taxi drivers in the Johannesburg – Randfontein route, which is about a forty five minute drive each way.

DECLARATION

I declare that this Research Report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree Masters in Social Anthropology in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

_____

(Signature of Candidate)

_____day of_____2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

- I would like to thank God for the guidance and wisdom he gave me.

- A special thanks to Prof. David B. Coplan my Supervisor and mentor for his guidance and constant support and to Dr. Pamila Gupta her guidance.

- I would like to extend my gratitude to the love of my life, my husband, companion and mentor Dr. Godfrey Sauti who encouraged me during my most challenging and difficult times while writing the proposal, conducting fieldwork and writing this report. I most of all want to thank him for his patience while I was away from home.

- I would like to thank my mom Mrs Jean Stevens who prayed for me at all times and ensured that I was spoiled and comfortable during my stay with her. She also made me realize that children never grow up to their moms.

- My gratitude to my beloved and belated dad Mr Robert Stevens.

- A special thanks to dearest Ricardo who made it easier for me when he studied while I burned the midnight oil, encouraging me a lot.

- A special thanks to my brothers Felix, Marshall, Donald, Robert and to my sisters, Doreen and Lillian who encouraged me and emotionally supported me during this time.

- A special thanks to my mother and father in law Amai and Baba Sauti and my sisters in law, Loveness, Dorothy and Tambudzai who contributed in every way possible.

- Special thanks to "Madzibaba," Mike Gora who always encouraged me and believing that I can do it.

- Special thanks to Aunt Jenny, Uncle John and Geoffrey Brien, who found the research idea interesting, gave their input and encouraged me in every way possible.

- A special thanks to all my informants, the Western Gauteng Taxi Council, Randfontein Taxi Owners' Association, minibus taxi drivers, taxi marshals, passengers, volunteers, traffic officials, the women and male vendors at taxi ranks and to all those within my community who assisted and contributed.

Gloria Sauti
Stellenbosch
2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE . ……ii
DECLARATION iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS x
LIST OF FIGURES xi
PREVIEW ..... ……..xiv

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION: MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS, DEFINING CONCEPTS, JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE RESEARCH AND ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT 1
1.1 Introduction..... 1
1.2 Minibus Taxi Drivers..... 2
1.2.1 What it takes to be a taxi driver..... 3
1.2.2 A typical day in a minibus taxi driver's life. 3
1.2.3 Salaries of minibus taxi drivers..... 4
1.3 Defining the concept "children born from the same mother."..... 5
1.4 Justification for the Study 7
1.5 Research Questions..... 9
1.6 Organisation of the Thesis 10

Chapter 2 RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY, LITERATURE REVIEW. ..... ……..13
2.1 Introduction..... 13
2.2 Research Design and Methodology 13
2.3 Literature Review 16

2.4 Conclusion 29

Chapter 3 FIELDWORK: OBSERVATIONS OF COMMUTERS AND QUEUE MARSHALS' AND THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON MINI-BUS TAXI DRIVERS. 31

3.1 Introduction..... 31

3.2 Observations and Interviews with commuters on the Driving Habits of Minibus Taxi Drivers..... 31

3.3 Commuters' perspectives on the behaviour and attitudes of taxi drivers..... 43

3.4 Commuters' views at taxi drivers concern for their safety and the condition in which taxis are. 46

3.5 Queue marshals and their perspectives on Minibus taxi drivers 48

3.6 Conclusion 53

Chapter 4 MY OBSERVATIONS OF THE TAXI RANKS AND MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS, AND INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH WOMEN VENDORS, HAWKERS AND TAXI CLEANERS 54

4.1 Introduction..... 54

4.2 Observations of the Randfontein and the Johannesburg taxi ranks..... 54

4.3. Overall observations of Minibus Taxi drivers on the ranks and route..... 58

4.4 Interviews conducted with women vendors..... 60

4.4.1 Observations, Participant observation and Interviews with the "breakfast women." 62

4.4.2 Observation, Participant observation and interviews with women vendors who sell traditional and various dishes at taxi ranks. 67
4.4.3 Interviews conducted with women who sell fruits and other delicacies at taxi ranks. 71
4.5 Interviews with Hawkers and their perspectives on minibus taxi drivers..... 74
4.6 Taxi cleaners and their views on minibus taxi drivers. 76
4.7 Conclusion 77
Chapter 5 INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED AT THE WESTERN GAUTENG TAXI COUNCIL AND THE RANDFONTEIN TAXI OWNERS ASSOCIATION AND THE TAXI RECAPITALISATION PROGRAM..... ……...78
5.1 Introduction..... 78
5.2 Interviews conducted with the executive at the Randfontein Taxi Owners Association 80
5.3 Interviews with the executive at the Western Gauteng Taxi Council and their perspectives on the taxi industry and minibus taxi drivers..... 90
5.4 The Taxi Recapitalisation Program and its impact on minibus taxi drivers. 99
5.5 Conclusion 101
Chapter 6 TRAFFIC OFFICERS', OTHER ROAD USERS' AND THE MEDIA'S PERSPECTIVE ON MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS. 102
6.1 Introduction..... 102

6.2 Traffic officers' perspectives on minibus taxi drivers' obedience for rule of the road. 102

6.2.1 Traffic officers' views of the conditions in which taxis are and the driving habits of minibus taxi drivers..... 104

6.2.2 Traffic Officers' views on the attitudes and behaviour of minibus taxi drivers 105

6.3 Other road users' perspectives on taxi drivers' driving habits and behaviour..... 106

6.4. The Media and their publications on minibus taxi drivers..... 107

6.5 Conclusion 109

Chapter 7 MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS: THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR DRIVING HABITS, BEHAVIOUR, AND THE "SPIRIT OF UBUNTU."..... 110

7.1 Introduction..... 110

7.2 Minibus taxi drivers' views on their driving habits. 111

7.3 Minibus taxi drivers, their perspectives on the impact commuters have on their driving habits. 111

7.4 Minibus taxi drivers' perspectives on other road users..... 114

7.5 Minibus taxi drivers' experiences with owners. 115

7.6 Minibus taxi drivers' views on their behaviour and attitudes.. 117

7.7 Minibus taxi drivers' complaints about the condition their taxis are in..... 120

7.8 Taxi Drivers perspectives on traffic officers. 122

7.9 Minibus taxi drivers' perspective on the Taxi Associations and Taxi Councils..... 125

7.10 The "*Spirit of Ubuntu*" does it exist amongst minibus taxi drivers?..... 126

7.11 Conclusion..... 128

Chapter 8 CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS..... 129

8.1 Summary of Findings..... 129

8.2 Overall conclusion..... 131

8.3 Further Research..... 132

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 134

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Codeta	Congress of Democratic Taxi Association
CATA	Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association
GATACO	Gauteng Taxi Council
NTTT	National Taxi Task Team
RTOA	Randfontein Taxi Owners Association
SABTA	South African Black Taxi Association
SATACO	South African Taxi Council
SANTACO	South African National Taxi Council
TETA	Transport Education Training Authority
TRP	Taxi Recapitalisation Program
WGTC	Western Gauteng Taxi Council

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Metered taxi. xiv
Figure 2 Minibus taxis at the Johannesburg taxi rank. xv
Figure 3 The structure of the taxi industry, as discussed in this thesis. Note that the various taxi associations and councils are groupings of taxi owners. xix
Figure 4 A map of Gauteng showing the region of the Randfontein-Johannesburg route. Randfontein, Krugersdorp, Roodepoort and Soweto belong to the Western Gauteng region. xxiii
Figure 5 Minibus taxis at the Johannesburg taxi rank during off peak times 4
Figure 6 Minibus taxi drivers at the Johannesburg taxi rank at the start of the lunch mini rush. In the background hawkers can be seen selling various items to passengers seated in taxis through the windows 6
Figure 7 A passenger boarding a taxi during off peak hours. Notice that the passenger prefers to be seated in the back seats even though the front seats are vacant. 32
Figure 8 A queue marshal, checks the number of trips made by the various taxis. 48
Figure 9 One of the queue marshals at the Johannesburg Taxi Rank 49
Figure 10 Passengers boarding a taxi during peak hours, at the Johannesburg taxi rank. 51
Figure 11 A notice board on the Johannesburg taxi rank showing various destinations in the direction of the Johannesburg – Randfontein route. 55
Figure 12 An overcrowded street leading directly into the Johannesburg taxi rank at the Johannesburg station. 56
Figure 13 Stands at the Johannesburg taxi rank where some women sell clothes from. 57
Figure 14 A front side view of the women vendors' kitchens at the Randfontein taxi rank. 61
Figure 15 One of the women vendors who sell breakfast at the Randfontein taxi rank. The tea and coffee is prepared in the pots shown in the picture. 63
Figure 16 A woman vendor dishing up a meal for the taxi driver at the Randfontein taxi rank. Her daughter, who acts as her assistant, can be seen in the foreground. 68
Figure 17 A taxi driver who also preferred to be interviewed while having lunch in one of the kitchens and asked for this picture to be taken 71
Figure 18 Women who sell candy, fruits and vegetables on the Randfontein taxi rank. 72

Figure 19 Hawkers with their wares displayed on the pavement at the Johannesburg taxi rank. 75
Figure 20 The offices of the Randfontein Taxi Owners Association where interviews were conducted. 81
Figure 21 A minibus taxi driver at the Johannesburg Taxi Rank. 111
Figure 22 Taxi Drivers at the Randfontein Taxi Rank. 118
Figure 23 A photograph of some of the seats which the taxi driver referred to in the text. 121

"The heart is like a black minibus taxi, always room for one more"

David Ansel

PREVIEW

Taxis as a form of public transportation began years ago when there was a need to transport blacks who had to walk long distances to and from urban and rural areas. Prior to that, taxis were only available in white suburbs, individuals could call for a taxi as the need arose.

Freedman, Ngcoya & Chapman (1987:2) assert that taxis in South Africa began to operate in "non-white townships since the late 1950's, but they were mainly metered and used by one person or a specific group, for casual trips, it carried at most 6 commuters per trip". 'Fourie L.J. (2002) also states that sedan vehicles such as Valliants and Chevrolets were used as taxis for trips into black townships.

The 1970's to the late 1990's was a period of growth in the number of metered taxis, such as the one in Figure 1, for blacks. These are different from minibus taxis. They are often used by commuters who, prefer to be transported immediately and on their own. Metered taxi costs are quite high and can be as much as R30 – R40 for a five minute trip.



Figure 1 Metered taxi.

For the Johannesburg to Randfontein route studied in this work, which is a forty five minute drive each way, a metered taxi would cost up to R300 or more per trip, which is about R290 more than the R10 trip in a minibus taxi, over the same distance.

The period 1977 to 1987 was characterized by the struggle of the minibus taxi industry to be recognized as a public transport operator. The minibus, shown in Figure 2, is the most widely used form of public transportation currently in South Africa and carries 65 percent of the commuters. This was however not the case previously when most passengers travelled by train or bus.



Figure 2 Minibus taxis at the Johannesburg taxi rank.

The minibus taxi carries 10 to 16 passengers per trip, but is overloaded at times, to such an extent that passengers are often packed like "sardines." There is always room made for one more passenger. The 16 seater minibus taxi is preferred by commuters due to its convenience and accessibility and carries passengers in urban areas as well as a high percentage of rural, intercity, and even cross border travellers.

This also resulted in the growth of the number of minibus taxis and drivers.

Bosman and Browning (1989:8) note that the minibus taxi industry has grown rapidly since the late 70's and point out that at the time minibus 60 - 80 000 minibus taxis carried approximately 500 000 passengers daily. This was despite strict economic entrance control in terms of the Road Transportation Act of 1977. The authors, who refer to the minibus taxi industry as the "shared taxi industry," state that it had adequate "ingredients to flourish" and uplift the economic standards of Blacks in South Africa, creating employment for a large number of people. This resulted in the large number of minibus taxi drivers currently.

Khoza (1990:56) also writes that there were three forces which were central within the revolutionary growth of the taxi industry in the 1980's. First, the bargaining power of taxi associations, in mobilising the involvement of big business in the industry. Secondly, the penetration of finance capital in the Black community and thirdly, the shift in the apartheid state from previous ruthless policies on black trading in general to accommodation of the taxi industry in particular in the 1980's and 1990's.

The continuous growth in the minibus taxi industry created employment for blacks. It also created various opportunities for men and women to be able to sell a variety of goods at taxi ranks, in order to make a living. Khoza (1992: 232) observes that "the taxi industry has been celebrated as the most extraordinary socio-economic phenomena in South Africa in recent years.

As David Ansel also observes that "where there's transport there are people and where there are people there's commerce. Second hand clothes, roasted mealies (corn), alarm clocks, plastic wash basins, hair cuts, hard boiled eggs, frozen treats, boiled eggs, and the ubiquitous jumbo bag of cheese curls. Taxi ranks are also notorious for small-time thuggery." These items found at taxi ranks are often sold at affordable prices to commuters, taxi drivers and taxi cleaners at their convenience.

When the majority of commuters began to travel with minibus taxis, it impacted negatively on bus services, although they continue to operate. Mc Caul (2001: V) observes that taxi took its toll on the bus and railway industries. The bus transport figures reflect that 'total bus passenger loads nationally dropped from 100 passengers to 72 passengers per trip between 1980 and 1988, due to commuters' preferences for taxis, which were highly convenient. Bus and rail transport were highly regulated and inefficient.

This resulted in disputes between minibus taxi drivers and bus companies. Bus companies such as Putco, tried to prevent more minibus taxi owners from receiving permits but failed in this regard and the minibus taxi industry continued to grow. Fearing that continued intervention in the transport sector would result in heightened politicization and sustained boycotts the Breda commission of Inquiry into transport deregulation was established, Khoza in Dugard (2001:1). The commission found that South Africa 'had reached a stage of economic and industrial development which enabled it to move towards a freer competition in transportation Mc Caul (1990:38).

The number of train commuters also dropped from 100 passengers to 81 passengers per trip over the same period Mc Caul (1990: 35).

The taxi industry operated as an informal entity and the need to formalize it became a serious concern. A governing body within the industry was formed and led to the formation taxi councils to regulate the industry and help in ensuring safe and reliable transport for commuters.

Although the South African Black Taxi Association SABTA was established first, the government signed a memorandum with the South African Taxi Council (SATACO). SATACO which was launched in 1999 was not recognised by the National Taxi Task Team. In September 2001 delegates from various taxi elected structures came together at the Durban exhibition centre for the All Nation Conference in which SANTACO was launched. (South African Consulate General, 2005).

The South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) is the umbrella body for all provincial taxi organizations (see Figure 3). Its duty is to regulate, formalize and stabilize the industry. The Council also acts as a mediator in disputes between taxi organizations and plays a role in eliminating the causes of these disputes and violence. Currently there are approximately 480 taxi association and council offices operating throughout the country. Taxi associations and councils are led by taxi owners who own one or more taxis on the Randfontein-Johannesburg route which they regulate.

Although the councils and the associations are in operation, the minibus taxi is still labelled “dangerous and unsafe” and in most instances the driver of the minibus taxi is hardly referred to directly. The aim of my study was to investigate the “man behind the wheel”

thoroughly, in order to obtain a holistic understanding of the labelling of taxi drivers, as well as how they fit into the industry.

The minibus taxi itself is referred to as a "monster" which has led to a large number of deaths on South African roads. My interest in this regard was to find out whether this was caused as a result of "negligence or reckless driving" by minibus taxi drivers, as often stated in the media.

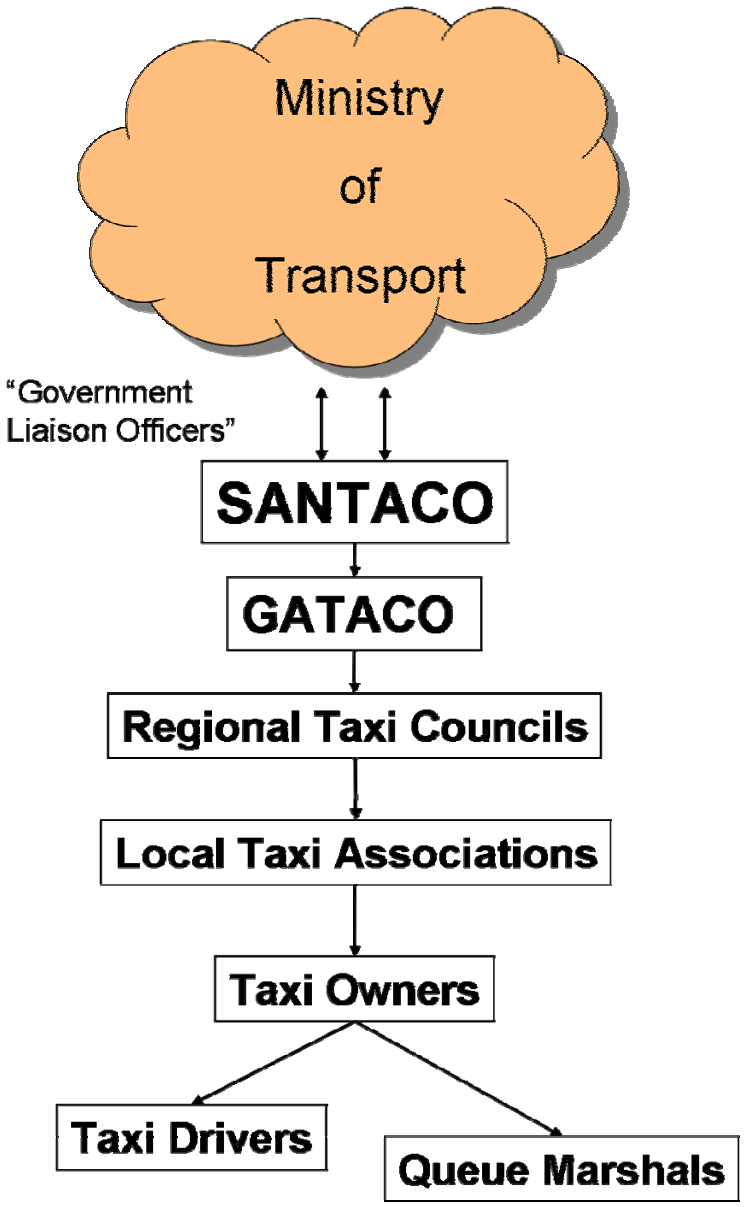


Figure 3 The structure of the taxi industry, as discussed in this thesis. Note that the various taxi associations and councils are groupings of taxi owners.

The Taxi Recapitalisation Program which began in 1999 is aimed at developing a R3 billion strategy to deal with economic challenges facing the 126 000 - strong taxi fleet. Most of the vehicles are more than 10 years old. The government's aim has been to replace, over a five year period, the ageing fleet with new, locally assembled 18 and 35 seater vehicles. Their aims were further, that the taxi should specifically be designed to meet high quality and safety standards which is required for public passenger transport, as well as to provide training for minibus taxi drivers, [Thabang M (2005:1)].

Although government had a final deadline for the signing up of new licences and the handing in of taxis to be scrapped, there is no model vehicle to date. The media showed the Russian made Gazelle which faced various problems. Government argued that they had given the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) a mandate to test vehicles and that none has been chosen. This left many drivers who are employed in the industry frustrated and unsure, of their future. Minibus taxi operators were also unsure of the period they will have to wait for the new taxis.

A large number of minibus taxi drivers are employed in the industry. Most of the drivers are male but lately a few females own and drives their either own taxis or are employed as minibus taxi drivers. Taxi driving is not only challenging but it can also be extremely dangerous due to "excessive violence and violent behaviour between minibus taxi drivers. There are also constant conflicts between minibus taxi drivers and law enforcement agencies as can be observed in the media and from various authors.

Although the industry seemed to have flourished it is however coupled with various problems, as observed by society at large. These problems

seem to be pointed specifically at minibus taxi drivers. Driving habits and passenger safety are some of the major issues which are complained about regarding minibus taxi drivers.

According to Morrison (1991:1), "the mini-bus industry was created as an alternative to the public transport system which has never really been good, there are unfortunately a few problems and taxi drivers seem to have no concept of the rules of the road." Whether or not this statement is true of **all** minibus taxi drivers was of interest to me during my research in the field.

The aim of my study was to find out whether the complaints of commuters and society at large on the driving habits, behaviour and attitudes of minibus taxi drivers are valid and whether or not they are all "children born from the same mother?"

Durkheim, in Moabi (1976: 28), asserts that individuals' aspirations emanate from human behaviour which may either be biological or social in nature. This is similar to Moabi's observation that minibus taxi drivers had a common goal, which was not only to reach quotas, but to increase their income, even though it resulted in 'deviant behaviour'. It was important during the study to find out whether or not these arguments are necessarily true, and in particular whether or not they are true of all minibus taxi drivers.

A similar conclusion was made on the "deviant behaviour" of minibus taxi drivers in an article written by Prega Govender in the *Sunday Times* 15 October 2006. In this article Professor Sebastian, discusses on violence in children's behaviour in schools, and suggested that "violence is a learned behaviour, and that a child's popular and sometimes only role models were gangsters and minibus taxi drivers." This is an example of the manner in which minibus taxi drivers are

regarded overall, he did not point out certain taxi drivers but referred to all minibus taxi drivers.

In the research at hand, finding out and evaluating whether or not the perceived ideas of the "ill behaviour" of minibus taxi drivers (if they are necessarily true) are learned while they are employed in the industry or whether or not they naturally behave and drive in a particular way was important.

Moabi (1976:30) asserts that minibus taxi drivers' group behaviour is adapted once they are employed in the industry. In sub culture tradition, the individual must identify himself with the delinquent group to which he belongs and must also adhere to and conform to its values and norms.

My aim was to hear the views of informants regarding the behaviour, attitudes and driving habits of minibus taxi drivers. Fordred (1994:27) suggests that it is important to "get the stories from the people, not from the leaders." My aim during on the field was to let the views of informants, at all levels, come through.

I conducted an in- depth study of minibus taxi drivers on the Randfontein-Johannesburg taxi route. Randfontein is situated west of Johannesburg as shown on the map in Figure 4 which consists of various communities. Randfontein is a relatively small town which has two major taxi ranks. The main and largest taxi rank is situated next to the railway station. Commuters from various neighbourhoods within the Randfontein metro area come, by local minibus taxi, to find further transportation. Commuters also travel on minibus taxis from this rank to various places outside of Randfontein as well as to Johannesburg city and various other destinations. The smaller taxi rank is situated in

the centre of town where commuters travel into and out of town to their local suburbs. Taxis from Randfontein to Johannesburg and other towns can only be found at the main taxi rank.

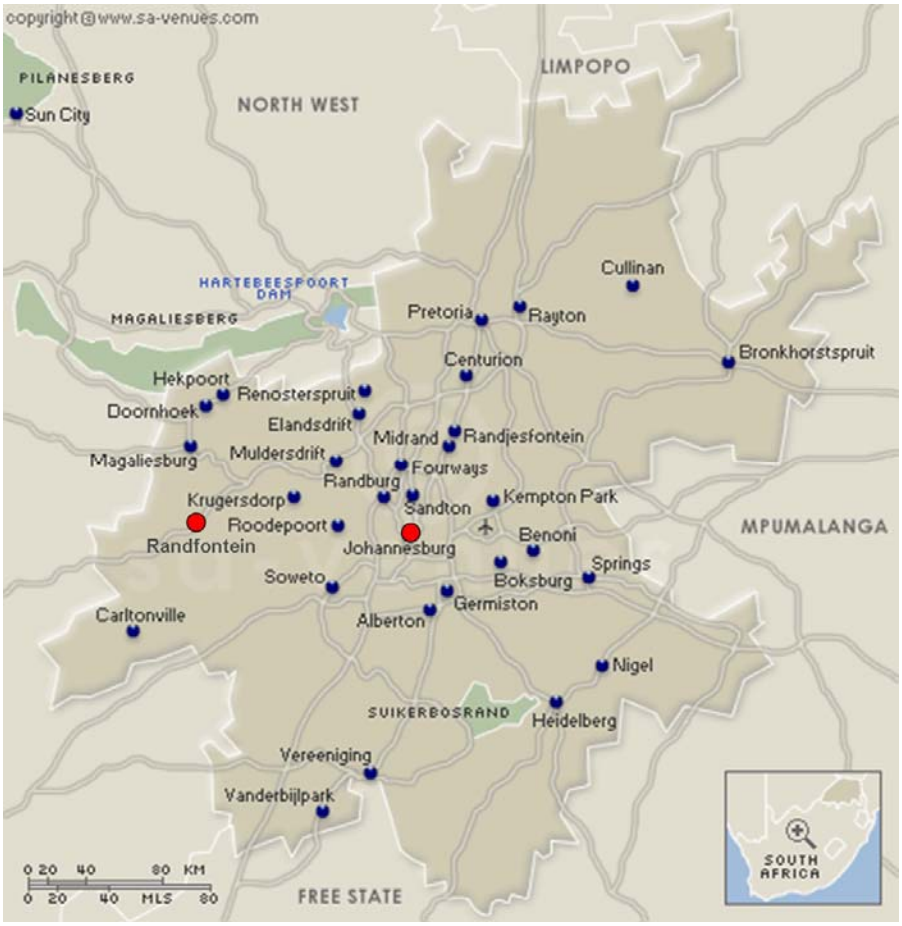


Figure 4 A map of Gauteng showing the region of the Randfontein-Johannesburg route. Randfontein, Krugersdorp, Roodepoort and Soweto belong to the Western Gauteng region. (Map adopted from **www.maps.com**.)

Johannesburg on the other hand consists of various suburbs and is a city in which a large number of taxi ranks are situated. The main taxi rank is in the centre of Johannesburg and is one of the busiest taxi ranks in the country and perhaps on the continent. It is built in combination with the Johannesburg train and bus stations which is the main railway station. Busses to various destinations within the

country as well as to neighbouring countries can also be found at this station. There are also a large number of metered taxis found near the station.

Minibus taxi drivers on the Randfontein- Johannesburg taxi route pick up and drop off passenger either at the taxi ranks or along the route depending on their destinations.

I conducted fieldwork research at the main Randfontein and Johannesburg taxi ranks and observed drivers and commuters while we were travelling on the road. During my trips I specifically focussed on minibus taxi drivers who transport passengers on the Randfontein-Johannesburg route. The purpose of my fieldwork research as stated above was particularly to find out whether or not minibus taxi drivers can all be regarded as being "children born from the same mother?"

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION: MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS, DEFINING CONCEPTS, JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE RESEARCH AND ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

1.1 Introduction

The taxi industry plays an important role in the lives of the majority, and particularly black, South Africans, who do not have or prefer to travel with their own transportation. They use them to travel to and from work and other destinations. The minibus taxi's convenience and accessibility as well as its relatively inexpensive fare, makes it the most widely used form of public transportation.

I discovered from the majority of commuters on the Randfontein-Johannesburg route, as well as in the media that minibus taxis are regarded as unsafe mobile coffins, although they continue to be travelled in. Filling the transportation vacuum of black communities overshadows these negative sentiments related to the minibus taxi industry and the taxi driver. Informants' voices on their views on minibus taxi drivers as well as the views of minibus taxi drivers themselves will be heard in the report.

In this chapter I will give a brief explanation on what is required to become a minibus taxi driver, as well as discuss who taxi drivers are. The concept "children born from the same mother" will also be defined. I will further give the justification for this study. The chapter will also outline some of the research questions asked during fieldwork and finally give an outline of the structure of the remainder of the report.

1.2 Minibus Taxi Drivers

Upon expressing my initial interest in studying the taxi culture and specifically minibus taxi drivers, I was often told that it would be dangerous and challenging as a female. My personal observation during fieldwork was that most taxi drivers were accommodative and determined to answer my questions.

Most of the drivers appeared to be friendly and humorous people although some were resistant and less friendly. Not only did I discover while interviewing taxi drivers on an individual basis, as my informants, that most were calm and cooperative, but I also found that each one's personality was unique.

I noticed that most of the drivers on the Randfontein – Johannesburg route are young adults between the ages 20 and 25 and while some mature man up to the age of 55. They are fathers, husbands, and single man who hail from different backgrounds. The majority of drivers spoke Zulu, a proficiency acquired in areas in which they spend most of their day, although some are originally Sesotho, Setswana or Xhosa speaking.

I found from drivers that they learned English on the route and at ranks by encountering passengers who speak none of the indigenous African languages. Some taxi drivers remarked that they learned the language through reading local newspapers such as the *Sowetan* and the *Daily Sun* during off peak hours. As a result the majority of the drivers seem to have no difficulty in understanding and speaking English and hence no interpreter was required for my interviews, which were conducted in English.

1.2.1 What it takes to be a taxi driver.

The highest level of education which is found amongst most minibus taxi drivers is secondary school although some have technical qualifications. No formal qualification is required to become a minibus taxi driver. A driver only needs to have a code 8 (light motor vehicles) driver's licence and a taxi permit if one owns their own taxi in order to ferry passenger. A taxi owner is legally required to own a taxi permit which should be in the possession of the driver.

1.2.2 A typical day in a minibus taxi driver's life.

The driver's workday normally begins at 4 am and lasts till just after sunset. The majority of the drivers on this route, I found, refrain from working too late in the evening due to hi-jacking fears. Frank, a driver interviewed by Oirin publishers, a community newspaper, for example "begins his workday at 4 a.m. and typically ends at 7 p.m. he occasionally takes Sundays off, but is mindful that doing so will eat into his weekly earnings" (Oirin News: 2006:1). As a result most drivers work seven days a week, in order to make up for a reasonable wage to support themselves and their families.

Early morning peak hours for the driver are between 4 am and 9 am. Queues are long as passengers are on their way to work. These are the times when the driver travels almost non stop, loading and delivering passengers to and from the ranks and along the route.

At around 10 am when the morning peak time is over, most drivers can be found parked at the taxi ranks (as shown in Fig. 5) taking a nap, reading a newspaper or discussing current affairs.



Figure 5 Minibus taxis at the Johannesburg taxi rank during off peak times

From about 1 pm to 3 pm their trips become more frequent due to lunch mini rush hour and due to children travelling from school.

From 4 pm to 7 pm it's peak time once again and ranks become extremely busy. Traffic is normally bad early in the morning and in the evening. I observed drivers taking short cuts and avoiding roads where the traffic is very bad. At these times they often drop off passengers at their home destinations and return to the ranks, without a full load, to ferry commuters waiting in the long queues.

1.2.3 Salaries of minibus taxi drivers

Minibus taxi drivers' wages differ, their salaries are in most instances determined by the employer. Some are paid much more than the R

1350 stipulated in the Labour Relations Act of 1995. During my interviews with minibus taxi drivers, some mentioned that because they earn 'very little', they buy food and take home R100 – R150 per day for themselves. Drivers are mindful that they are bound not receive a pension fund on retirement and explained that they do not have medical aid.

In his speech at the SABOA National Conference (2006) the Minister of Transport, Jeff Radebe, stated that some of the issues under consideration for minibus taxi drivers are wages, notice periods by the driver and the employer, hours of work, lunch breaks, the need or otherwise of overtime work and payment thereof, days off as well as looking at whether there should be a government pension scheme for taxi drivers. Whether this will indeed materialise in the near future will have to be observed.

In spite of various challenges faced within the taxi industry one of the main concerns of the minibus taxi driver is to provide for himself and his family, under whichever circumstances he finds himself in. These circumstances will be discussed further later in this report.

1.3 Defining the concept "children born from the same mother."

Children biologically born from the same mother are in most instances brought up in the same home, doing things in a similar cultural manner which is learned over time. They have similar beliefs in most instances, especially in terms of acceptable practices or behaviour at home and within their societies.

My key interest during the study was to find out whether the taxi industry has similar influences on minibus taxi drivers, through socializing (see Figure 6). My aim was also to find out whether or not drivers' behaviour is learned within the industry over time, and whether or not we can hence argue that mini-bus taxi drivers are all "children born from the same mother?"

Erikson (2001:93) describes kinship as the single most important institution, and explains that there are social ways in organizing and thinking about kin. What I needed to find out was whether, in the case of taxi drivers, similar social circles necessarily result in similar or identical behaviour and practices. In western culture, kinship is related to biology and blood ties. Schneider (1984) for example generally analyses it as cultural classifications of people and as aspects of a group formation. Can taxi drivers be regarded in a similar light and the industry as a social organisation?



Figure 6 Minibus taxi drivers at the Johannesburg taxi rank at the start of the lunch mini rush. In the background hawkers can be seen

selling various items to passengers seated in taxis through the windows.

Moabi (1976:72) observes that young taxi drivers are integrated into the industry through adult "connections." These connects are responsible for the planning and controlling of various activities, and they also serve as role-models for the young drivers. The role of these "connections" will be investigated in this study.

1.4 Justification for the Study

The main aim for conducting the study was to go beyond the stereotypes of minibus taxi drivers. Some of the key complaints about minibus taxi drivers from society at large are that they;

- Drive badly and have no regard for the safety of commuters.
- Drive taxis which are supposed to be scrapped because they are not regularly serviced and prone to accidents.
- Have no regard for the rules of the road.
- Would stop at any point along the operational route without warning picking up or dropping off passengers.
- Ask for small change from fellow drivers in the middle of the road, endangering the lives of passengers and other road users.
- Are arrogant, problematic, have attitudes.
- Often team up and attack those who disagree with them on the ranks or along the route.
- Are to blame for the majority of accidents on South African roads.
- Are only interested in making a profit rather than about commuters.

- Behave as if they are doing passengers a favour, rather than taking into consideration that they pay for the journeys.
- They all behave in similar ways.

During my preliminary observation of minibus taxis there appeared to be similarities in driving habits and the manner in which they behave and drive. I decided to embark on an in-depth study in order to get a holistic understanding of minibus taxi drivers overall.

Fabian (1990:3) observes that 'the postulate of a difference between reality and its doubles generates another assumption of difference, or rather distance; that, between the knower and the unknown. This comes naturally, as it were, with conceiving of the (scientific-philosophical) knower as a viewer and observer. Due to my limited knowledge at taxi drivers as a whole, it was important to investigate their behaviour, attitudes and driving habits instead of automatically assuming knowledge on how they all drive and behave.

Conducting research on minibus taxi drivers would have been incomplete without focussing on the minibus taxi industry as a whole. This prompted me to investigate the history and current status of the taxi industry in South Africa. While in the field I decided to also embark on investigating and interviewing the executive within the industry, taxi associations and taxi councils to obtain their views and perspectives.

As previously stated, most authors who have written about the taxi industry mainly refer to the minibus taxi itself and do not directly mention minibus taxi drivers. I needed to distinguish the minibus taxis from the individuals who behave and drive in their own unique ways. The industry and specifically minibus taxi drivers are described as

corrupt and their practices are identified with violence and reckless driving which results in 'continuous road accidents' etc. I sought to find out whether all taxi drivers are guilty of corruption and bad practices and whether or not they should be labelled as a collective?

Conducting fieldwork research within the taxi industry and particularly on minibus taxi drivers, impacts on me directly. My interest in studying minibus taxi drivers developed over the years as an undergraduate student commuting at taxis. In spite of negative perceptions and publicity of minibus taxis and drivers, commuters including myself continue to travel in them.

1.5 Research Questions

- As already outlined, there are various complaints from the media, commuters and society at large about minibus taxi drivers. One of the key complaints is the manner in which minibus taxi drivers drive or are perceived to drive and the negative impact which their behaviour and attitudes have on commuters and other road users. One can then ask, do minibus taxi drivers all drive in this same manner, and can we hence argue that they are all 'children born from the same mother?

- What are the day to day factors that influence the behaviour of minibus taxi drivers?
- What are their working conditions and family responsibilities?
- How do passengers and other road users treat taxi drivers that could this explain why they behave as they do?
- How taxi owners treat them that makes them so mad that shapes their behaviour and driving habits

- Could the way taxi drivers treat each other be the reason for the continued conflicts and attitudes?
- How do traffic officers treat them and how does this impact on their concern or lack thereof for the rules of the road?
- What role do taxi associations and councils play in the welfare of minibus taxi drivers?
- Do all taxi drivers drive similarly, breaking the rules of the road, and treat their passengers or other road users, badly?

The study, in distinguishing between the taxi driver and the minibus taxi itself, aimed to gain a broader understanding of the labelling of minibus taxi drivers, and so to speak, "to go into the mind and life of the taxi driver."

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

The remainder of this report is organised as follows; Chapter 2 will discuss the literature reviewed and reference will be made to authors who have written on the minibus taxi industry, taxi associations and councils and minibus taxi drivers over the years.

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth study conducted on the views of commuters and queue marshals on the behaviour, attitudes and driving habits of minibus taxi drivers.

Chapter 4 explores the interviews conducted with women vendors who sell various goods at taxi ranks and other hawkers. All these items, incidences and services were found on both taxi ranks but particularly at the Johannesburg taxi rank.

Interviews with taxi cleaners will also be discussed. The chapter investigates the views and perspectives of these observers on the behaviour, attitudes and driving habits of minibus taxi drivers.

Chapter 5 will discuss findings on the ethnographic research conducted on the executive within the minibus taxi industry. This chapter will discuss the interviews which I conducted at the Randfontein Owners Taxi Association and at the Western Gauteng Taxi Council. I conducted an in-depth study on the perspectives of these bodies on minibus taxi drivers. The Taxi Recapitalisation program and how it impacts on minibus taxi operators and drivers will also be discussed.

Chapter 6 discusses views and perspectives of traffic officers, other road users as well as media reports on minibus taxi drivers' regard for rules of the road, their driving habits, attitudes and behaviour.

Chapter 7 is based on interviews conducted with minibus taxi drivers themselves, regarding their own views and perspectives on their driving habits, behaviour and attitudes. Taxi drivers' views and perspectives at taxi owners, passengers, other road users as well as media reports will be discussed. The chapter will also discuss their views on traffic officers. Finally the chapter will discuss whether or not the "*spirit of ubuntu*" (solidarity and unity) exists amongst minibus taxi drivers.

Finally, chapter 8 discusses the overall conclusions made in the report regarding minibus taxi drivers will be presented.

Chapter 2 RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY, LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1 Introduction

There are many problems visible within the minibus taxi industry in South Africa and these are well documented. Most of the available literature is on the history of the minibus taxi industry, taxi violence as well as the Taxi Recapitalisation Program and related issues. Even though they appear widely in the literature, I will not focus at taxi wars, since these were not found on the Randfontein – Johannesburg taxi route and ranks where my fieldwork was conducted.

This chapter will first discuss the research design and methodologies used in the field and secondly focus on the literature reviewed.

2.2 Research Design and Methodology

One of the first and most important steps in the field was to find informants who would contribute to the research question at hand. Through direct participant observation as well as much time spent at the ranks and in taxis, I managed to gain the trust of my informants. Informants, were not only willing to answer my questions, but were interested in the study as a whole. Most informants requested to be informed regarding the outcome of the research. With the permission of my informants, throughout the research, I used a tape recorder and a notepad while conducting structured, semi as well as unstructured interviews.

I firstly embarked on interviewing **commuters and queue marshals.** Interviewing commuters' at the most opportune time was critical. Some of the interviews were conducted in queues at taxi ranks. My aim was to interview the commuter immediately behind me and the one immediately in front of me, while making my way along the queue. When the queues were long I managed to interview three or four commuters. They were all eager to voice their own experiences regarding minibus taxis and their drivers.

Commuters were also interviewed during journeys at taxis, where I often preferred to be seated towards the back. At times I was able speak to about four passengers per trip. At other times I merely commuted and observed how passengers interact with minibus taxi drivers and visa versa. Wolcott (2005:60) observes that in the field, anthropologists attempt to 'add qualitative dimensions to an enquiry, whether through observation, interviewing, or just wondering about. Some commuters were also interviewed in the privacy of their homes.

Interviewing of **queue marshals** was often not difficult because this was done during off peak hours at taxi ranks.

Once I completed interviews with commuters, I interviewed the **women vendors** who sell food, fruits and other items from their kitchens or stands at taxi ranks, mostly to commuters, minibus taxi drivers, queue marshals and taxi cleaners. I worked as a participant observer in agreement with the women. I later interviewed **hawkers** who walked about selling various items, as well as **taxi cleaners** at the Randfontein and the Johannesburg taxi ranks.

Initially I started by merely observing minibus taxi drivers while working with the women vendors, who kept the purpose of my continuous presence at the taxi ranks confidential from the drivers.

Dressing down made it easy for me to be regarded as one of the women although some minibus taxi drivers also recognized me as one of their commuters. The drivers were under the impression that I was learning some skills to be able to make a living. Bernard (2006:443) also suggests that "anthropologists use passive deception all the time." It was only later on when I began my interviews with the women vendors, that the drivers became aware of my study. Drivers became aware when they walked into the kitchens to buy food while I recorded and wrote down notes during interviews.

Hawkers and taxi cleaners were interviewed at taxi ranks during off peak hours when the ranks were much quieter.

I could not interview most **motorists** directly and decided to hand out questionnaires, at stop points, with the assistance a few volunteers. It had been expected that some of questionnaires would not be returned but I was not the least surprised that many did want to express their views and opinions. Of all the questionnaires handed out about 70 percent were returned. Some interviews with motorists were conducted at their homes.

Interviewing **traffic officers** meant driving, and often stopping along the route where two or more traffic officers were stationed. I avoided traffic officers whom I realized were working all by themselves and could not entirely focus on the questions at hand. I located and interviewed some of the traffic officers at the local traffic department and some in my neighbourhood.

Minibus taxi drivers were interviewed at the ranks during off peak hours between 10 am to 2 pm, when most of them would be found relaxing in the taxi or reading a newspaper. In this instance using a tape recorder was essential because drivers had much to say and were

willing to express their opinions on their driving habits, attitudes and behaviour.

Throughout all interviews, my main concern was to let informants voice their opinions. As noted in Marcus and Fischer (1986), "in order to include concerns which results in new directions in qualitative interviewing, one should give increased attention to the voices and feelings of respondents."

2.3 Literature Review

In this Literature Review an analysis is given of previous work on diverse issues related to the minibus taxi industry, its historical development, minibus taxi drivers and the Taxi Recapitalisation Program.

Various authors have written on the **historical developments** of the minibus taxi industry in South Africa.

Karol Boudreaux (2006) for example conducted research on South African minibus taxi industry and its economic developments and focussed particularly on how it impacts on minibus taxi drivers. In her article, **The Rise and History of the Minibus Taxi Industry,** she writes that in the 70's and 80's *entrepreneurs developed an interest in the black minibus taxi industry, this included metered taxis and non-metered minibus taxis.* She also notes that the minibus taxi industry is credited with supporting black South African communities by providing a depoliticised, decentralised, inexpensive and more accessible alternative to public transportation.

James Pinkerton (2002) in his article ***South Africa's Blacks Seek Economic Empowerment*** has written about the political transition, and how blacks became economically empowered through the minibus taxi industry. The industry impacted positively on blacks in spite of the political situation within South Africa at the time. He observes that "a taxi in South Africa is not a luxury but a necessity, filling in for a government that can't afford mass transit and a populace that can't afford autos." This is still noticeable within South Africa. Despite the rise of a black middle class, the majority still cannot afford their own transportation.

In describing the infrastructure associated with the industry Pinkerton writes "*hawkers" crowd hundreds of nearby stalls, selling everything from candies to shoes to chickens*." This has currently expanded to a large extent with kitchens being built at taxi ranks making it comfortable for various vendors to sell their items. Minibus taxi drivers engage in various transactions on the ranks interacting directly with the vendors. I found the same activities taking place at the ranks where I conducted most of my fieldwork. What was noticeable was that the ranks were extremely overcrowded due to vendors and commuters as well as taxis parked and taxi drivers waiting to transport passengers.

Taxi ranks and the manner in which minibus taxi drivers appear to behave, drive and operate resulted in negative comments being made regarding the industry. John Orcutt and Karen Overton (1996) write on transportation advocacy strategies with organisations in the Johannesburg metropolitan region his article, **South Africa: Transportation Struggles in the Post Apartheid City**. He states that the impact public transportation has on South Africa is a "patched-up, third-rate public transport inherited from apartheid and a

chaotic, unregulated minibus system which is a source of public complaint. He also points out that the kombis (minibus taxis) were well - suited to navigate the increasingly complex and decentred metropolitan areas in the 1980's and 90's and is currently the central feature in South Africa. He writes about the absence of regulation which promote "chaotic service" and schedules as well as the absence of safety standards or accountability. He focuses further in detail on violence specifically in Cape Town, over ranks and routes.

Colleen McCaul's book ***No Easy Ride*** (1990) focuses on various issues within the taxi industry as a whole. She points out statistics of the reduction of passengers in bus and rail transport over the years and an increase in the number of minibus taxis. She also looks at the role of taxi associations and broadly discusses rank managers and queue marshals. She also explains some of the issues pointed out by taxi drivers during interviews which directly relate to the pressures which passengers and owners put on drivers. While in the field conducting the study it appeared that for minibus taxi drivers transporting passengers was certainly "no easy ride" and neither was it an easy ride for commuters.

The rise of the minibus taxi industry resulted in the establishment of **executive bodies such as, taxi councils** and **taxi associations** some authors wrote on these bodies.

The minibus taxi industry is regulated by taxi councils and taxi associations, part of my fieldwork was to investigate the executives within the industry. Dugard (2001:10) in his article From Low Intensity to Mafia War, Taxi Violence in South Africa, **Violence in Transition**, asserts that taxi associations "sprang up rapidly around the country" and that associations began to use their "organisational

strength to extract income." Currently, taxi associations and taxi councils are spread throughout the country.

The taxi industry's growth also resulted in the establishments of various organisations such as the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO), The Western Gauteng Taxi Council, and The Randfontein Taxi Owners Association which created taxi borders. Miller and Servas, (1989), in their **CSIR Research Paper,** assert that **SABTA** was the first formal black taxi association in the minibus taxi industry and it resulted in the formation of various other taxi associations. Issues such as safety measures seem to have been emphasised for ages by associations but to date not much change has been made in this regard.

Miller and Servas (1989:2) observe that the formation of these associations can be ascribed as the natural tendency of individuals with identical concerns not only to associate but "also the necessity of persons with limited and often disadvantaged education and even more limited business knowledge to build negotiating muscle through the force of numbers. This force was to be reckoned with when government sets up a strategy to change the industry.

Some authors have written various articles and books at taxi **violence or taxi wars**.

In his article **Cops Step into Taxi Wars**, Chris Gaither (2001) observes "*under the apartheid government police ignored the taxi wars and now they are fighting back*." In this article Gaither points out the continuous violence in the taxi industry during 1994 when the existing government began to rule. He conducted various interviews with National Prosecuting Authorities (Scorpion) bosses who were members

of the previous regime. What was observed is that taxi wars are no longer against an apartheid government but between fellow minibus taxi drivers, drivers and the police and drivers and passengers as well as other road users.

Gaither also points out that in Shoshanguve, a township in Pretoria "two members of the taxi association were gunned down." Various reports such as these are made in the media regarding minibus taxi drivers on violent related issues.

What I found in articles written by some authors and in the media is that taxi wars occur almost weekly, particularly on Cape Town taxi routes. Several taxi drivers have been killed as a result of the violence. On the Randfontein-Johannesburg route where I conducted my study, no records of such extreme violence were found, although instances of disputes were raised during interviews.

Terru-Liza Fortein reported in the Cape Argus that; "Police arrested four men in connection with the wild shootouts at the Belleville taxi rank. The arrests came after two days of violence, mayhem and death at the rank, where the Congress of Democratic Taxi Associations (Codeta) and the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (CATA) are waging a bloody war."

Dugard observes that, Cape Town routes consists of major rivals in which the involvement of police contributed to severe violent activities and that most of the taxi violence is traced back to the executive within the industry.(2001:6-15).

The Gauteng Premier Mbazima Shilowa (2000) at the **Launching of the Gauteng Taxi Council** spoke about the reduction in crime within

the taxi industry and that the role of the council brought about drastic changes within the public transport industry in South Africa. He warned that those who "view the taxi industry as violence ridden and corrupt" in the South African public, has to be aware that there are "many good people within the industry who care about the industry, the lives of their fellow citizens - passengers and other road users - and are not driven only by the pure quest for profit".

Shilowa also comments on the positive impact which the council had and the role they played in "eliminating criminal elements" within the industry. Although this was mentioned in the year 2000, there seem to be no difference in the manner in which the minibus taxi industry is perceived, due to the continued violence which occurs not only between minibus taxi drivers, but against minibus taxi drivers and the police. Similar statements are currently made six years after the former speech in the media and at South African television stations. [Minister of transport Jeff Radebe, currently the speech is made in preparation for the 2010 World Cup].

Dugard (2001:17) observes that the National Taxi Task Team (NTTT) was established to deliberate the problem of violence in the taxi industry and suggested that the taxi industry be re-regulated as a matter of urgency. From my findings and observations, these and various other statements are currently still made by Minister of transport Jeff Radebe.

In order to conduct research it was important to enhance my understanding on **Fieldwork research** which is one of the key skills learned by anthropologists in order to obtain a holistic understanding of the lives and societies of informants.

Russell H Bernards (2006) writes in, **Research Methods in Anthropology,** that observation, direct participant observation, sampling and choosing informants, as important tools. He also discusses qualitative ways of interviewing and focuses on structured, unstructured, sampling, prompting and various forms of interviewing interviews. He points out that these are some of the most important skills learned in the field.

While conducting research these and other skills learned over the years in anthropology shaped the manner in which I conducted fieldwork research and made it possible.

Transporting passengers also requires understanding and obedience of **traffic laws**, the acts mentioned here are particularly of importance for the study and has been discussed.

Mc Caul (1990:35) and by 1982 more than 90 percent of black taxis were minibus taxis Mc Caul (1990:39). I also pointed out earlier in the report that lately minibus taxis carry up to 16 or more passengers including the driver and some minibus taxis are designed to carry up to a total of 35 passengers. During the study I noticed taxis taking off with more than the designated passenger loads. Taxis were often overloaded as a result of passengers who insist to be loaded or either as a result of drivers or queue marshals.

The Road Transportation Act of 1997, No. 74 of 1997 introduced the legal minibus taxi to carry 8 passengers and by 1982 90 percent of black taxis were minibus taxis. Currently minibus taxis carry up to 16 and some 35 passengers. In the field all the minibus taxis were 16 seater minibus taxis.

Although the industry is regarded as having operated illegally in the past, it is still adding positively to those who do not own their own mode of transportation and travel either by train and bus. The **Transport Deregulation Act of 1988** allowed taxis to operate legally for the first time in under radius permits allowing 16 seat minibuses to operate within a particular radius from a fixed location route.

The National Land Transport Transition Act (NLTTA), Act No 22 of 2000, gives fundamental restructuring of land transport with the emphasis of public transport and the types of vehicles which should be used. During my study I reviewed reports published in the media regarding governments plan for the type of minibus taxis which should be used for passenger safety.

In Oirin News (2006) quotes the secretary general of the Brunei-Muara Taxi Drivers Association as saying that, 'apart from the reduction of taxi permit duration from ten to seven years which could cause many taxi drivers to quit their profession they are also facing other problems such as "pirate taxis." Taxi permits are a major problem in South Africa and many drivers seem to drive without one, this is considered illegal. Pirating occurs in instances where other motorists load passengers which are supposed to be loaded by minibus taxi drivers. During my study I found that this was one of the key problems which minibus taxi drivers complained about.

There is other work written on minibus taxi drivers but none really focussed on the minibus taxi drivers as the individual who drives and behaves in his or her own unique way. Drivers are often seen as a collective, some of the writings reviewed are;

Khoza MM (1997) has written on female taxi drivers. In his article **"Sisters on Slippery Wheels"** he writes on South African female taxi drivers and argues that they behave different to their male counterparts. He conducted an in-depth study on female taxi drivers' regarding their personalities and behaviour and points out that the women are either treated badly, verbally and emotionally abused or are victims of sexual harassment. He also states that their experience and knowledge is underestimated. Females who are in the industry do not only risk their lives, but they have proved that they can survive in the industry in spite of their experiences with their male counterparts. Females also experience various challenges within the minibus taxi industry. I found that there were no female taxi drivers employed on the Randfontein-Johannesburg taxi route where I conducted my fieldwork.

Thabang Mokopanele (2006) commented in the ***Mail and Guardian*** 20 March 2006 that the Motor Industry Supports Taxi Plan, Despite Driving Habits. Like Khoza, he is of the opinion that female taxi drivers are ignored by male drivers and that their capabilities in the taxi industry are undermined. From what I observed on the ranks of taxis from other routes was that female drivers appeared to interact normally with drivers. I found from the association that females are encouraged to drive or own taxis and that they treat them equally.

Moabi's thesis (1976) on **Deviance and the Urban African Taxi** primarily focuses on the minibus taxi industry and minibus taxi drivers. The purpose of his research was to demonstrate, empirically, that taxi driving provides an opportune structure for criminal behaviour. He focuses on the deviant behaviour of minibus taxi drivers and explained how this type of behaviour is learned over time and eventually results in a subculture. He asserts in his study conducted in

Dobsonville that being a minibus taxi driver meant being involved in deviant behaviour such as stealing of car parts and hijacking. There was no instance during the study where I found that drivers were involved in theft related activities. Driving habits and traffic fines were some of the few issues in which drivers broke the law.

Mokgadi Pele (2005), author of the Ministers of Transport, Jeff Radebe's Speech*:* **"Launch of the Sectoral Determination for Taxi Sector"**, writes about the comments which he made on minibus taxis, stating that normal working hours should be implemented for taxi drivers, he also suggested the possible salaries which they should earn. He pointed out reducing long hours will impact positively on road and passenger safety. Fatigue also contributes to taxi drivers being less alert on the roads and causing accidents. In the field I found that taxi drivers were underpaid and work extremely long hours and starts work as early as 4 am.

For the purpose of my study on minibus taxi drivers I focussed on authors who have written on **Kinship** and **behaviour**.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen writes in his book ***Small Places, Large Issues*** on Social and Cultural Anthropology. One of the key issues he focuses on is Kinship and Descent in which he explains that kinship is the single most important social institution. He suggests that the kin group, in many cases, takes care ones livelihood, career, marriage, protection and social identity. He also suggests that there are many social ways of organising and thinking about kinship, although a widespread cultural notion regards this otherwise. While conducting research on minibus taxi drivers I discovered that they were regarded as part of a kin, whose culture appear to be similar driving habits and behaviour.

Moabi (1976) ***Deviance and the Urban African Taxi*** in which suggests that being a minibus taxi driver meant being in a criminal career. His conclusion was reached after a three weeks of fieldwork research. In my view he needed to have done his research over a longer period of time, prior to his conclusion that driving a minibus taxi is necessarily accompanied with ill behaviour. This was the aim of my research, looking beyond the stereotypes of minibus taxi drivers and conducting a holistic study on their driving habits, behaviour and attitudes over a relatively long period of time and through years of observation.

Over the years government had a plan to intervene in the minibus taxi industry as a result of the violence and lack of road and passenger safety. The **Taxi Recapitalisation Program** seems to have taken time to be implemented and is currently still in progress. During the study I embarked on finding the perspectives of the taxi associations and councils as well as from minibus taxi drivers themselves on the program. I also reviewed some of the writings on the program.

Fourie JL (2002) wrote in his thesis on ***"Rethinking the Formalization of the Minibus Taxi Industry in South Africa,"*** that the Recapitalization Plan was instituted in 1999 and by 2003 had not yet materialized fully and he was concerned if it ever will succeed. He suggests that the plan has drawn "fire" from drivers fearful of losing their jobs. This has impacted negatively on drivers and hence can be a contributing factor to their behaviour as perceived. He further focuses on infrastructure and its impact on public transport in the country and argued that improving roads would impact positively on driving. At the time of this study the program had still not fully materialised and only a few taxi had been scrapped. During the study I

observed that some of the major roads where minibus taxis and motorists travel have pot holes and related problems, resulting in continues accident rates on our roads.

IRIN publishers (2005) wrote an article **South Africa**: "**Confusion Among Minibus-taxi Operators as Regulations looms"** the authors focus on the most recent government strategy for reining in this unruly but vital industry in the Department of Transport's five-year Taxi Recapitalisation Programme, which aims to replace most of the older and unsafe "mobile coffins" as they are sometimes called, with larger, properly registered vehicles, equipped with an array of safety devices. The article also describes the incentives government offer taxi operators with its scrapping allowance. While I conducted my study I sensed dissatisfaction from the executive of the associations and council as well as from taxi drivers regarding their uncertainty of what impact the program will have on them.

Moyiga Nduru (2006) has written the article **Transport in South Africa**, Putting the Break on "Mobile Coffins." The articles discuss the Taxi Recapitalisation Program and the scrapping allowance. He discusses statements made by the Minister of Transport regarding the minibus taxis which are considered "moving coffins." The key issue explained in this article is that, replacing minibus taxis does not necessarily solve the problem at hand. One of the key issues which Nduru points out is that, Ciqelo Mabaso chairperson of the Top Taxi Six argued that "you can have a vehicle with all the necessary features but if the driver is unfit, he can still kill people." Providing a driver with the relevant skills as well as replacing current minibus taxis with safe taxis, might lead to commuters and motorists as well as minibus taxi drivers own safety. On the field the lack of the relevant training

for minibus taxi drivers were one of the key issues complained about from the council, associations and minibus taxi drivers.

Thale (2001) states that the **National Transport Ministry** has organised taxi bodies and agreed to restructure the industry. The main features of these sweeping changes are: *'the formation of a National taxi body, the legalization of taxi operators, the ending of taxi violence, a recapitalisation plan, improvement of taxi ranks, the establishment of a customer hotline, training of queue marshals, and, finally, the payment of tax by operators'*. Not much have changed in this regard since and well into 2006, although some taxi ranks have been improved or build, including the Randfontein rank where I conducted half of my fieldwork research. I discovered that the customer hotline was in operation although this was not mentioned by the executive of the associations and councils as well as minibus taxi drivers.

The Taxi Recapitalisation has unfortunately not fully materialized, and currently taxi drivers argue against the implementation of this programme. They argue that that the move to regulate the industry "failed to acknowledge their needs." Drivers also complained that government ignore their arguments against the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme which is in process and has been extended to 31 October 2006.

Various **developments** seem to be taking place within the public transport sector and the Minister of Public transport Jeff Radebe (2006) made the following remarks:

The Minister stated that "public transport plays a significant role in facilitating economic activity and maintaining social cohesion of many communities. Minibus taxis are part of the public transport sector and contribute economically to the country, but it is seems not to provide

social cohesion in terms of violence and unsatisfied drivers who earn little."

Based on the literature reviewed I discovered that there are still major problems in the minibus taxi industry. I also discovered that more than a decade since the establishment of the minibus taxi industry not many changes have been made by the department of public transport regarding road safety measures to date. On my findings on authors who have written on government's plan to change the industry and provide skills for drivers on passenger safety have not been implemented in more than a decade. The literature reviewed and many other articles and books written by authors have been discussed throughout this report.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the research design and the methodology used throughout the research on minibus taxi drivers. These methods were also used while interviewing informants. I further discussed literature reviewed on the historical developments in the minibus taxi industry, public transport including minibus taxi drivers, behaviour and kinship, taxi wars and the Taxi Recapitalisation Program. These included the articles written in newspaper regarding minibus taxis. I have also looked at the minister of transport speech regarding recent developments within the minibus taxi industry and how these developments impacts on drivers. The aim of my research was looking beyond the stereotypes of minibus taxi drivers and conducting a holistic study on their driving habits, behaviour and attitudes over a relatively long period of time and through years of observation. I aimed to study the unique ways in which minibus taxis drive and behave rather than as a collective. The aim of my study was

further to hear the views of minibus taxi drivers themselves rather than conclude based on my research conducted whether or nor they are all “children born from the same mother.”

Chapter 3 FIELDWORK: OBSERVATIONS OF COMMUTERS AND QUEUE MARSHALS' AND THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON MINI-BUS TAXI DRIVERS.

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the perspectives of commuters on minibus taxi drivers', driving habits, attitudes and behaviour. Commuters' views were critical for the purpose of the study because they travel in minibus taxis daily. I will further focus on interviews held with queue marshals at both the Randfontein and Johannesburg ranks regarding their perspectives on minibus taxi drivers.

3.2 Observations and Interviews with commuters on the Driving Habits of Minibus Taxi Drivers.

At first the thought of interviewing commuters in a taxi while on our way to or from Johannesburg looked almost impossible. I also thought that I would find it difficult for passengers to speak to me in a taxi. However, I found that it was ideal to occupy the seats towards the back of the taxi. This seemed to work excellently because passengers felt more comfortable answering questions when they are seated further from the driver.

My first impression in the field was that conducting research in noisy taxis and overcrowded taxi ranks was a challenging task. At first I sensed resistance from commuters whom I approached and noticed that some feared making any remarks in the presence of fellow commuters. This behaviour changed once they realised that fellow passengers were eager to answer questions openly.

One of the major complaints which commuters had was the manner in which most taxi drivers drive. Many complained that the majority of taxi drivers 'drive extremely rough" and stated that "most of the times with certain drivers, one is not certain if one will reach one's destination alive."

While observing queue marshals guiding passenger into taxis, I noticed that some of the passengers avoid the front seats, see Figure 7. I later found that part of the reason why passengers prefer back seats in most instances is to avoid having to collect and count fares. I also noticed that when the front seats are not occupied and an elderly person or a mother with her baby or small children arrives, the queue marshal would ask younger passengers, to move to the front.



Figure 7 A passenger boarding a taxi during off peak hours. Notice that the passenger prefers to be seated in the back seats even though the front seats are vacant.

Some informants commented that they normally choose which drivers to travel with during off peak times but are forced to travel with the next available taxi during peak times when queues are long.

After recording a few of my informants on their views discussed above, I decided to end my first day of interviewing commuters with a grandmother who insisted that I should interview her at home. As it was already early evening, I decided to take a taxi home and then drive to her home. Fortunately for me she lived in a neighbourhood near my home.

Excerpts from her statements are:

> "My child, I have been travelling by taxi for almost ten years now and always told some of the drivers that they should not drive so fast. They overtake all cars on the road and some of them do not even stop when the robot is red. I went for a check up at Strydom (on the Randfontein- Johannesburg route) hospital today and that is why I wanted you to see me at home. Just last month I travelled once again in a taxi in which a particular driver drove so fast on our way back that I almost got a heart attack and breathed heavily, but a nice lady next to me tried to help me and told the driver to slow down. I am telling you many people are going to die because of taxi drivers, you will see. I have already seen many accidents on the road of other taxis. I have no choice because the hospital is far from the train station and I have to travel by taxi. You know, they do not care if there are old people in the taxi, they are always in a hurry and they rush, I do not know what for. To me all the drivers drive the same there is no difference. I wonder what the traffic cops are doing. They should arrest them."

On another day, during interviews with two informants, Marissa* and Tersia*, who have also been travelling to school in taxis for years and are now at university. (* Note: the names of informants used throughout this report are not their real names)

Marissa commented:

> "As much as we like fast driving in a car as young people, it is understandable because we know the person who is driving and that they have a valid driver's licence. Also there are only a few of us in a car, but with taxi drivers it is different. We are never certain if the drivers have gone to driving schools. What makes this questionable is the manner in which they drive and the fact that so many people's lives are at stake. We think that drivers are more concerned about making money than their passengers. We do not travel by train because it takes 1 hour and 15 minutes per trip to Jo'burg and at times the train is delayed, but the taxi at a reasonable speed should take 25 to 30 minutes, I have travelled with a few drivers who travel at these reasonable speed, but most drivers they take only fifteen minutes, in cases where there are no traffic. We call them flying machines."

When asked whether or not all minibus taxi drivers drive similarly, Marissa remarked that "the majority do but there are a few who don't."

Tersia saw no difference in the driving habits of drivers and stated that "they all drive similarly." She also stated that she would never travel by taxi on her own without a friend or a relative, as she feared that should she die while in a taxi, no one would know her.

Some informants continuously complained throughout the study that the majority of taxi drivers have the habit of "stopping unexpectedly" on the road and do not consider vehicles in front or behind them. While observing drivers on the road I noticed how this happened. The passenger indicate to the driver where they intend to stop when they are about to alight. Phrases such as "Short left" and "Short right" have been introduced into the language to indicate these stopping points. This is not the case with trains and busses; one has to alight at a specified stop.

Grimmet (2006:1) also indicates that the drivers assumes from a hand signal that one know where the taxi is destined to. This is specifically determined while the taxi drives towards the commuter who stands along the route. He or she points out various signs used by minibus taxi drivers.

While observing during a journey I noticed how passengers got onto and off taxis along the route using various hand signals. The driver only stops if the signal indicates the direction in which he is travelling.

Some pointed out that "the slow lane on the left should be used by taxi drivers, when they need to stop" but that they prefer to drive in the fast lane and suddenly drive over to the left endangering the lives of passengers and other road users.

An informant Mandla states;

> "What the department of transport need to consider is a lane purely for taxis, like buses for example. This will prevent them from being a hindrance to other drivers on the road. For me all the drivers drive the same, there is not

> even one of them that I can point out and say that he drives better, they are all guilty of reckless driving but considering where I work which is too far from the train station to walk, I have no choice but to travel by taxi. It is also too expensive for me to use my car all by myself, especially with the petrol price that keeps on rising. Public transport is bad I am telling you but taxis they are the worst."

Most of the commuters interviewed argued that if they could find an alternative to taxis they would, but that it is unfortunately the only convenient transport considering where they have to alight.

A few commuters like Tokkie who have also been travelling by taxi for years were extremely concerned with the manner in which minibus taxi driver's drive and regard their passengers' safety.

According to Tokkie;

> "All minibus taxi drivers drive similarly and one cannot distinguish their manner of driving as different. I do not even bother to look who the driver is when I get into a taxi. I buy a newspaper before I get into the taxi because the minute they drive off they become totally different characters and one feels hopeless because you are just a passenger. At times I feel like taking over the wheel and driving. I know that making a comment will result in serious arguments and as a result I decide to keep quiet. These drivers can be difficult and they would all attack you at once and I have my family to consider. Drivers also cause various problems with other road users through their bad driving habits"

Many commuters in the field seem to be of the notion that minibus taxi drivers form a united front in times of disputes with passengers or other road users. From informants arguments many mentioned that the "*Spirit of ubuntu"* exists amongst minibus taxi drivers and stated that "if you touch one driver, you touch them all."

Some commuters were concerned that minibus taxi drivers' urge for competition with fellow drivers and other road users on "who drives the fastest" is easily noticed on the road.

Informants such as Phule also complained that "it is clear that minibus taxi drivers do not get any formal driving lessons, because they bribe traffic officers to either pass tests or they buy their licences. So what can one expect, the driver owns a valid driver's licence but cannot drive properly"

Complaints were also that drivers do not adhere to road signs and most feared for the worst in this regard. Some complained that traffic officers seem not to be at the most critical points where taxi drivers seem to over speed and at stop signs where they tend to break the law. They argued that "the system has certainly failed passengers' safety."

Margo stated:

> "I waited so long for someone to conduct research and write about these taxi drivers, man, where did you come from? I tell you these drivers drive bad. They always rush to reach their destination. I have seen drivers stop unexpectedly without any warning in front of other vehicles, at times we gasp for air because we often find ourselves in a narrow escape from an accident. They drive through red robots often and they only yield when there is an approaching car

> or when traffic officers are parked near a certain robot. Otherwise, they overtake almost everyone in front of them. I have seen accidents on the roads where taxis were involved and I believe that we are still going to see many more."

Most of the commuters made similar comments on the driving habits of minibus taxi drivers and I almost did not pursue the question further. I later decided to interview more informants in this regard and found similar comments.

Informants continued to mention the "bad driving habits" of minibus taxi drivers which resulted in major accidents on our roads. An informant, interviewed at her home stated that she had gone through various experiences with minibus taxi drivers who seem not to "care how they drive." She also explained that she was involved in accidents with two different minibus taxi drivers whom she has since avoided travelling with. She was concerned that although she did not obtain visible scars, it might have an impact on her health later on in life. Also it has had a psychological impact on her.

Some commuters questioned what role government plays when many have lost their lives as a result of "drivers who are careless." I also came across an informant whose late husband Victor I interviewed when I initially became interested in the topic at taxi culture.

According Irene;

> "Victor was involved in a taxi accident as you know and he lost his ear. I know that many people said that I changed after he lost his ear and little did they understand that his whole personality changed since the accident. He became

> moody and refused to be seen with me in public and thought that I was embarrassed by his situation, although everyone argued that it was the other way around. The Third Party Accident Fund paid him out but he became worse because his health deteriorated. He was the breadwinner of the family but could not go to work at times and died two months ago. I blame the taxi driver who was responsible for his death because at the time of the accident he travelled in a minibus taxi from Randfontein to Johannesburg. The taxi driver who over sped actually killed him".

A few informants also mentioned that some of the younger minibus taxi drivers seem to drive under the influence of alcohol and that they "prefer more experienced drivers who are always sober." They complained that most drivers seem to be under the influence on "Fridays and at the end of the month." Some informants commented that they have witnessed many accidents on the road due to "careless and arrogant drivers."

Mapule remarked:

> "Taxi drivers ignore the fact that they are carrying parents who have needy children at home. I have seen how some of the drivers drive. I have travelled with some drivers only once and never again. I take my children into consideration. I have travelled with taxi drivers for years now and know who drives well and those who drive badly. I normally prefer to wait for a driver who I choose to travel with even if I arrive at work late."

Informants complained that some of their family members lost their lives as a result of taxi related accidents, even though they were travelling in their own vehicles. The media constantly publish taxi accidents. In early 2006 a taxi accident occurred in Mpumalanga in which fourteen teachers were killed. This was a great lost of loved ones and breadwinners who travelled in the taxi.

Baffoe Kojo (2001:1) asserts it is not surprising that many seem to ride in taxis without the knowledge or experience on what to expect. He points out that during peak hours most taxis throughout the country are in a hurry as a result of queues of passengers at taxi ranks that need to travel home from work. He also argue that "*during peak hours* '*taxis move to commandeer the streets with horns blaring, transporting the workforce to and from their daily grind, all the while leaving in their wake high-strung and bewildered fellow motorists on the verge of road rage"*

The question arose at this stage of my interviews whether or not I should pursue this question further, because from what I had found and the comments made it was clear that all minibus taxi drivers seem to drive and behave similarly. I realised how important this particular question was, and needed to hear more views from informants in this regard and hence decided to continue asking questions on the driving habits of minibus taxi drivers. This also meant focussing more on the general attitudes and behaviour of the drivers.

Although 60 percent of the informants were dissatisfied with the driving habits of minibus taxi drivers, through conducting further interviews I found that 40 percent of the commuters had different views. These informants were "extremely unhappy with slower drivers" and preferred drivers who do drive fast.

Informants Rodney and Tebogo whom I interviewed on the driving habits of minibus taxi commented that they preferred taxi drivers who drive fast.

Rodney commented:

> "Some taxi drivers should not drive minibus taxis at all, because they are driving way too slow. They should try a hand at bus driving instead. I am against a driver who drives slowly; it really puts me off, because I often arrive late at work. I try by all means to avoid slow drivers because they would cost me my job. For the past 8 years of travelling in minibus taxis I know which of them drive fast and know those who drive slowly, so I make a choice who to travel with."

Another informant Tato stated:

> "I prefer minibus taxi drivers who drive fast and even if there is a long queue I have a membership card and the queue marshals know me very well, they will ensure that I get into a taxi with a fast driver. I am also not just in a hurry to get into any taxi because I know that even though some drivers take off first, a driver who drives fast and drives off later will still overtake those who left earlier. I will arrive way before the ones who left before me; as a result I never arrive late at work, although I have left home late. Drivers also do passengers a favour when the queues are long; they speed to return for the remaining passengers."

From the informants interviewed, 40 percent commented that they preferred drivers who drives “fast to extremely fast” due to the fact that they will always arrive at work on time.” They preferred drivers “who manoeuvre their way in front of other vehicles in order to reach their destination faster.” They also commented that although they witnessed accidents on the road, that, they “have never been in accidents with the drivers who over speed.”

These commuters also argued that “drivers do not earn much and as a result do not have time to waste on the road, and that “driving slowly, will impact on their “checking” (financial income) for the day.”

Some argued that if it was not for minibus taxi drivers who over speed, most of them would have lost their jobs. They argued that travelling with slow drivers in the past resulted in them facing “verbal and written warnings” from their employers. Overall this group concluded that not all minibus taxi drivers drive similar and suggested that “slow coaches” (slow drivers) “are responsible for accidents.” Informants referred to fast drivers as “good drivers.” What was surprising was that most of these arguments came from women!

The outcome of my research on the driving habits of minibus taxi drivers shows that 60 percent of the informants interviewed complained that minibus taxi drivers drive badly. The reason why most commuters still commute with the minibus taxis was due to its convenience. On the other hand 40 percent preferred minibus taxi drivers who drive above the speed limit. My overall findings were that minibus taxi drivers do no all drive similarly.

3.3 Commuters' perspectives on the behaviour and attitudes of taxi drivers

The behaviour of minibus taxi driver overall is often described by society at large in a negative way. One of my aims while conducting research was to hear commuters' perspectives regarding the behaviour and attitudes of minibus taxi drivers. In conducting the investigation I had to take into consideration that some passengers might either be intimately involved with taxi drivers or acquaintances of them. Commuters made the following comments.

Nomto stated:

> "Some minibus taxi drivers hardly greet passengers and appear unpleasant. Some drivers have attitudes they always complain that they do not have small change and that passengers must bring loose money. As drivers they know that they are dealing with passengers who might not have change. If I pay with a R 100 note, it might be my last money for the month or that I might have borrowed it early in the morning and could not get change. They always should keep change on them. They do not think for themselves and really upset passengers."

A few informants complained that most taxi drivers keep their music on too loud and when asked by passengers to decrease the volume, they ignore them. Some commuters also argued of the loud music of drivers that they are unable to hear when they need to alight. Drivers would rudely argue that the passengers should "speak up."

A few students declared that even though they know it is "*not a right*" to read in a taxi, it upsets them that they are unable to read or revise for exams throughout the journey as a result of the music. They stated that during exams they leave home earlier and travel by train instead.

Another student Naira stated "I will never try to read in a taxi because I know that it is impossible. It is noisy, and passengers also speak to each other loudly from all sides." She preferred drivers who play loud music and taxis over the train or bus.

Some of the commuters also commented that if they could afford their own vehicles they would have travelled on their own. They complained that most of the drivers are "rude" and that they "act as if they own the kombi (minibus taxi) which is not even theirs." According to them some minibus taxi drivers shout at passengers or have physical fights with those who accidentally do not or cannot pay. This is noticed when the money is counted and when it is found that fares do not add up. Some commuters also told me that there are incidences when drivers drop all passengers off along the route when their money for the trip does not add up. This leaves the commuters stranded and results in them arriving late at their destination.

A few commuters commented similarly on the same issue (it felt like interviewing the same person repeatedly) this is how most of my interviews with informants went.

> "Some taxi drivers act as if they are doing us a favour but they forget that we pay to ride in the taxi. They have to make sure that they treat passengers with respect, we are doing them a favour, and if it was not for

> us they would have no jobs. They do not know anything about customer service."

Other commuters argued that they prefer to travel with certain drivers who are "kind and do us favours," such as dropping them off near work. They preferred drivers who are humorous, tell jokes and are considerate of passengers.

I found quite a few who made positive remarks about minibus taxi drivers and also pointed out that in most cases some assist old and sick people. They further stated that "the driver would offer to drop off such passengers near the hospital or clinic or walk them to another taxi which they will board home."

Some commuters stated that they have the utmost respect for some taxi drivers on this route. They remarked that taxi drivers risk their lives and the possibility of being hijacked when they drive them from taxi ranks late in the evening in order to ensure that they arrive at their destination.

Pumi a commuter stated:

> "I was robbed of my bag in Jo'burg once and did not have money. I told the taxi driver and he was so kind to me and told me not to worry about money. I still had to take a taxi from the Randfontein taxi rank home, the driver gave me taxi fare. This was not my only pleasant experience with taxi drivers. I had many and that's why I say, even though I have travelled with some arrogant and badly behaved taxi drivers, I think the majority are good."

Other informants continued to comment that "minibus taxi drivers have much to learn on how to behave and treat their passengers" some stated that they "try to avoid travelling with taxi drivers who are rude." I also found a few who had verbal disagreements with drivers to an extent they took their complaints to the executives within the taxi associations and councils. Some stated that they "just did not bother," since nothing will come out of their complaints as the associations and councils officials are not any different.

Out of a total group of about fifty informants interviewed on the behaviour and attitudes of minibus taxi drivers ten argued that they were pleased with their overall behaviour and argued that they do not have attitudes.

3.4 Commuters' views at taxi drivers concern for their safety and the condition in which taxis are.

From the commuters interviewed, on the Randfontein-Johannesburg route, 40 percent argued that minibus taxi drivers ensure that their vehicles were in a good condition. The rest argued that most taxis "leave much to be desired" and that drivers hardly ensure that taxis are in a good or safe condition.

Some commuters stated that they blame minibus taxi drivers for the condition in which minibus taxis are and they argued that even though it is not entirely the drivers' fault, they expect them to ensure that owners spend money in this regard.

Donovan a passenger argued that "it is true when they say in newspapers that some of the taxis are moving coffins and not roadworthy, we can die anytime, but drivers and owners do not care at

all." He continued to argue that "some taxis are in a terrible condition but drivers still overload these taxis. All that the drivers care about is to make money; they do not even care about their own safety."

I also found informants who stated that "some of us are careful about the condition of taxis in which we travel. Drivers whose taxis are normally in a bad condition also tend to be rude and have attitudes because they are aware that passengers would protest regularly."

A few commuters often commented of the problems at taxis in which they travelled in and pointed out some of these taxis to me while we travelled on the road.

A few also mentioned that some taxi drivers should "change their attitudes and be aware that they are commuting mothers, fathers, and children." They also commented that some taxis in which they have travelled, "seats are broken, windows are broken and that these are not replaced during winter, when it is cold, or in summer when it rains."

Thabo a commuter stated:

> "A few taxi drivers are concerned about their customers and their own safety and are not only interested in making money. Such drivers' taxis are in a good condition and clean. I therefore think that not all minibus taxi drivers necessarily neglect their taxi or are inconsiderate of the safety of their passengers"

Overall what was found based on informants' views in this regard was that the majority of minibus taxi drivers do not take their passengers

safety into consideration. Some passengers commented that a few minibus taxi drivers do ensure that their taxis are in a good condition and hence service them regularly.

3.5 Queue marshals and their perspectives on Minibus taxi drivers

Both the Randfontein and Johannesburg taxi ranks have one or two queue marshals for the taxis on the route joining them, (see Figure 8). Queue marshals remain working at taxi ranks throughout the day guiding, commuters into and out of taxis except during off peak hours when passenger make a choice where they really want to sit. Queue marshals answer to taxi councils and associations but work directly with taxi drivers and are paid through them I observed queue marshals for a while before interviewing them.

It is the duty of all the queue marshals to record as noted in figure 8 the number of times each taxi transported passengers for the day, between the taxi ranks.



Figure 8 A queue marshal, checks the number of trips made by the various taxis.

They seem to be approachable (see Figure 9) interacting with taxi drivers and commuters and have become familiar with most of the regular commuters.

Queue marshals also commented that they ensure that taxis load the correct number of passengers. What I observed was that most taxi drivers spend their time speaking to commuters or fellow drivers while a queue marshal guides passengers into the taxis.

I also observed most mornings, during peak hours, how seats originally designed for three passengers are filled with four passengers. I saw how some minibus taxi drivers insist that queue marshals load additional passengers. What was surprising is that very few marshals or passengers protested when a taxi was overloaded, and I observed some taxi drivers take off with more than the specified number of passengers.



Figure 9 One of the queue marshals at the Johannesburg Taxi Rank.

As a regular passenger I became aware that taxi drivers give tips to marshals to overload taxis at times. McCaul (2001:100) also observed that queue marshals are open to bribes to taxi drivers and give them more passengers at the ranks than the legal limit.

From my own experiences throughout the years and my observations during the study, I also observed how certain passengers insist on being "squeezed" into a taxi which already has the designated number of passengers (see Figure 10) either because they are late for work, when it rains or when it is very cold during winter.

During interviews with queue marshals regarding their views on minibus taxi drivers' behaviour, driving habits and attitudes, they commented that some minibus taxi drivers are pleasant people and easy to work with but "not all of them can be tolerated."

One queue marshal commented that not all minibus taxi drivers prefer their taxis to be overloaded. Some drivers would refuse to take off or would offload any additional passengers. In such instances disagreements result between drivers and passengers. "These drivers," the marshal said, "avoid traffic fines" but the rest insist on carrying more passengers or simply drive away without counting

Another queue marshal stated during a morning peak hour:

> "Every morning there are too many people and too few taxis and I have to *'patch' (*fit in more) passengers. You can see how long the queues are? Drivers will have to ferry additional passengers, I have no choice. Passengers are going to be late at work and I have to overload taxis, I can't do otherwise."



Figure 10 Passengers boarding a taxi during peak hours, at the Johannesburg taxi rank.

When I asked queue marshals whether they were officially told what number of passenger they have to load per taxi, a few stated that they have been given instructions by associations and councils on the required load but that they do not always comply. They also do personal favours (like squeezing them in when they are late etc.) for commuters whom they refer to as "our regular customers."

I also needed to know from marshals how drivers treat them as well as their commuters and their regard for their safety and the obedience for rules of the road.

A marshal stated that:

> "Some of the drivers treat me like a child but I do not care because at the end of the day I am paid for the work I do or I will complain at the taxi council,

> the office will give the driver a warning. I know other queue marshals who did not work here long, they left the job, as for me I will stay and I have been here for many years."

I found that some drivers have the interests of queue marshals at heart and teach them to drive the taxi. This normally occurs in instances where the driver asks the queue marshal to reverse or move a taxi forward in the rank. Moving the taxi to and fro regularly is how some queue marshals learned to drive or improved their driving skills.

Two of the marshals commented that minibus taxi drivers from "Zulu or Xhosa cultural backgrounds seem to be more problematic" compared to their counterparts. They argued that some learned to behave "badly" at the taxi ranks while others came into the minibus taxi industry "with bad habits and attitudes" and argued that they will not change.

One marshal pointed out;

> "Some taxi drivers are really cool and wise and they make sure that they drive safe, you can just see by looking at the taxi. It's fifty, fifty, some are good and some are bad. The reason why I know how they drive is because sometimes I go with the driver to Jo'burg and return with him, I am aware how they behave."

What I found overall from queue marshals was that taxi drivers do not all drive or behave similarly and that some of the drivers' personalities are shaped by their cultural backgrounds. From their comments I learned that some taxi drivers get along well with

commuters, the women vendors and hawkers at the ranks as well as with queue marshals while some don't.

According to queue marshal the majority of the drivers seem to treat passengers reasonably well, and have no attitudes and obey rules of the road. They told that some of the drivers do not overload their taxis or treat marshals badly and are concerned about the safety of passengers but that there is a minority who do not comply with the above rules and behaviour.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I found that from the majority of the commuters interviewed complained that minibus taxi drivers drive badly, treat and behave badly towards their passengers. Commuters also commented that they have lost family members and some have personally been involved in accidents as a result of the reckless driving of minibus taxi drivers. Some informants argued that minibus taxi drivers are not all similar and that some are kind, helpful and considerate. Queue marshals on the other hand argued that the majority of the minibus taxi drivers behave relatively well towards commuters and treat them well but that a minority drive and behave otherwise. From my interviews conducted with commuters and queue marshals I found that minibus taxi drivers do not all drive and behave in similar ways or have attitudes and are hence not all "children born from the same mother."

Chapter 4 MY OBSERVATIONS OF THE TAXI RANKS AND MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS, AND INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH WOMEN VENDORS, HAWKERS AND TAXI CLEANERS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss my observations at taxi drivers at the Randfontein and Johannesburg taxi ranks. I will further discuss minibus taxi drivers' behaviour and interactions with each other and with the women vendors who sell food, fruits etc. respectively.

I will furthermore discuss my interviews with the women vendors conducted while working with them at both taxi ranks. The women vendors sell food from their permanent stands, while hawkers, who are either male or female, do not have stands at taxi ranks.

Interviews with hawkers and taxi cleaners will also be discussed in this chapter. Through my continued presence on the ranks I gained the trust of the women, hawkers and cleaners well before interviewing them. With the permission of my informants, I used a tape recorder and made notes during interviews.

4.2 Observations of the Randfontein and the Johannesburg taxi ranks.

Accessing both taxi ranks was not difficult; the difference was viewing the ranks as a researcher rather than a commuter. I spent much time observing and working as a participant observer with the women vendors.

The taxi ranks are large, busy places where commuters who travel to various destinations obtain taxis. A notice board (see Figure 11) at the Johannesburg taxi rank showing the destinations of taxis which can be found on that side of the rank.

I found that about 60 to 65 minibus taxis operate between the Randfontein-Johannesburg Route. The Randfontein taxi rank, houses between 500 to 600 taxis, and the Johannesburg taxi rank about 1000 or more.



Figure 11 A notice board on the Johannesburg taxi rank showing various destinations in the direction of the Johannesburg – Randfontein route.

I observed incidents where verbal disputes occurred between taxi drivers, although it never resulted into physical violence but the tension became noticeable as they avoided each other. Some of the key disagreements were over which taxi is supposed to load next, whose taxi is the best or is "spotted" as they refer to it or simply the fact that they dislike one another.

Taxi ranks are often overcrowded (see Fig. 12) and considered dangerous and unsafe. Some unemployed individuals also spend their time hanging around the ranks, speaking to minibus taxi drivers or the women and hawkers. From my observations, taxi ranks are also places where minibus taxi drivers socialize with fellow drivers whom they chose to. Some taxi drivers would either be found standing in groups, seated in taxis or speaking to commuters during off peak hours.

The fact that ranks were overcrowded made conducting interviews almost impossible. I also had to be careful that the questions I asked caused no offence to my informants. I interviewed informants who have been working on these ranks for four to eighteen years. Some of the women worked at taxi ranks such as Soweto, Alexander and Pretoria before moving to the Randfontein and Johannesburg ranks.



Figure 12 An overcrowded street leading directly into the Johannesburg taxi rank at the Johannesburg station.

What was important for my study was the years of experience which they had interacting directly with minibus taxi drivers as well as merely observing them. The other important fact was that the women's answers were based not only on drivers at the Randfontein–Johannesburg taxi route but also of the drivers at both ranks.

The type of goods sold on ranks such as clothes (see Figure 13), handbags and various other goods makes taxi ranks a semi - commercial boom. This also makes it easier for minibus taxi drivers and commuters to be able to access a market on the rank which sell items at reasonably cheap prices.



Figure 13 Stands at the Johannesburg taxi rank where some women sell clothes from.

4.3. Overall observations of Minibus Taxi drivers on the ranks and route.

While on the ranks I observed how minibus taxi drivers interact with the women vendors, hawkers, and with each other. I gained a totally different perspective of minibus taxi drivers seeing their personalities come through while they interacted with the women, or merely conversed with fellow drivers, in a relaxed manner. Observing minibus taxi drivers' behaviour and attitudes when they were unaware that they are being watched was particularly of interest to me. Bernard (2006:413) also suggests that "in unobtrusive observation, you can study people's behaviour *without their knowing it*. This stops people from playing an audience."

Drivers spend most of their time throughout the day at taxi ranks and have their breakfast and lunch time there, buying food, fruits and other necessities from women vendors and hawkers. This situation is typical to all taxi ranks and makes the Randfontein – Johannesburg taxi ranks no exception.

I observed that being first in the loading queue is critical for drivers because it impacts on their "checking" for the day and as a result, some drivers spend their night in the taxi, which can be extremely dangerous unless a few other drivers remain on or near the taxi ranks. A driver who does spend the night would go home during off peak hours to take a bath, and later catch a nap in the taxi on the rank. Drivers who ended their day reasonably early the night before would arrive on the rank as early as 3 am, in order to be among the first taxis in the queue.

While conducting my research I found that there were no reports from associations, taxi councils or drivers of instances where drivers were physically violent with each other to such extent that it resulted in killings on this route. According to media reports such incidences occur regularly in Cape Town and other taxi routes.

I have however observed disputes between some taxi drivers and other road users on the route, pointing fingers and exchanging insults at each other. This often results in road rage, which endangers the lives of passengers, because drivers end up driving over the speed limit in order to keep up with the person with whom they have an argument. Such incidences seem to occur regularly on the road not only between fellow drivers but between them and other motorists.

Disputes on this route result mainly due to certain taxi drivers picking up passengers who are supposed to be loaded by drivers from other routes. Another reason why disagreements seemed to have appeared during my study on the Randfontein and Johannesburg taxi ranks was when drivers want to compete with fellow drivers because they are likely to pick up additional passengers along the route. Passengers, who alight along the road, leave vacant seats for prospective commuters who would be found along the roads pointing a finger in the direction in which they want to go. Sign language between commuters and drivers is a major form of communication along the route. A finger pointed up indicates a trip to town which a finger pointing down shows a trip nearby ("local").

Taxi accidents in which passengers was either badly hurt or, in some instances, killed were observed along the same route. The fact that some minibus taxi drivers were involved in accidents and some not became of particular interest to me.

Other incidents observed on the route were reckless driving amongst some drivers who were found, to over speed, drive past red robots, and ignore stop signs. I also witnessed instances of road rage amongst taxi drivers and other road users. Some drivers were also driving at a relatively slow speed and this irritated some passengers who complained that they were late and that they would travel with a driver who drives fast, next time around. The driver would in some instance comment but usually or simply ignored the passengers.

Some minibus taxi drivers ignore passengers who complain. In some taxis one would notice several stickers with messages such as "If you are late, I am not, so don't rush me." Some passengers also seem to prefer a driver who "dodges" (manoeuvres his way through traffic). During my observations I found myself in taxis in which the drivers over speed and in other instances in ones in which we were overtaken. I later found out from taxi drivers that when they are overtaken on the road it impacts negatively on their "checking" for the day as the leading taxis pick up any passengers along the route.

4.4 Interviews conducted with women vendors.

Taxi drivers spend most of the day on the rank and throughout the day buy food and various items from the women vendors. Queue marshals, taxi cleaners and passengers also buy these items. The women sell various traditional dishes and amongst them the famous 'pap en vleis' "triumph" and "idombolo" (dumpling) from kitchens, (see Figure 14) which are built on the taxi rank. Some women also sell fruits, candy, clothes and bags, vegetables, provide telephone services, etc.



Figure 14 A front side view of the women vendors' kitchens at the Randfontein taxi rank.

At the commencement of my fieldwork research, I was introduced to all the sales women and men at the Randfontein and Johannesburg ranks by a taxi driver who is popular on both ranks. The driver knew me well and kept my presence on the ranks confidential from fellow drivers, while I observed them and worked with the women whom I later interviewed. Fortunately for me all the women agreed to be interviewed and answer questions regarding minibus taxi drivers and also kept the purpose for my presence on the ranks confidential. According to Bernard (1996:443), who spent hours pretending to be a shopper in department stores while observing mothers discipline their children, anthropologists use passive deception all the time.

I began my interviews on the taxi ranks with the women who sell various traditional dishes. These women were all interviewed separately in their kitchens and some at their stands at both taxi

ranks. There are normally two women found in a kitchen; one would be the owner and the other a helper who is normally a family member. In the following paragraphs I will discuss my experiences as an observer and a participant observer as well as my interviews with the women.

4.4.1 Observations, Participant observation and Interviews with the "breakfast women."

While conducting fieldwork research on the taxi rank and interviewing women I also regarded this as an opportunity to observe taxi drivers interact with the women including myself. Women who sell breakfast are often referred to as the "breakfast women." They spoke openly and were not hesitant to answer my questions. There was also no point where I could sense any form of fear from the women on what they were saying about minibus taxi drivers regardless of the type of responses they made.

A few of the drivers who knew me were surprised to see me working at the ranks. Some of the drivers were under the impression that my presence on the rank was acquiring business skills. Most of the drivers were unknown to me since I have not travelled in taxis on the routes in which they operate. Most drivers were friendly and some seemed to have a good sense of humour, joking around with the women but showing a great amount of respect for them.

Most of the drivers walked in to buy breakfast from early in the morning and would buy coffee and bread, or cakes (see Figure 15). I spent my time working with "*Mme"* (mother) Doris and her assistant. I noticed that most of the taxi drivers interacted and spoke politely with the women. A few drivers did not interact or speak well with the

women. Drivers would buy breakfast and some appeared difficult because they complained that the coffee or tea was too weak, or that the sugar was not enough.



Figure 15 One of the women vendors who sell breakfast at the Randfontein taxi rank. The tea and coffee is prepared in the pots shown in the picture.

The women would comment on and often point out difficult drivers. They would also comment on the drivers' behaviour and complain that some drivers "had attitudes," although they continue to buy food from them. Some drivers would take a seat and have breakfast in the kitchen speaking with the women while others would "take away" the coffee or tea to their taxi where they would sit and eat with fellow drivers or by themselves.

When I interviewed *Mme* Doris I found that she has been working at taxi ranks selling breakfast to taxi drivers since 1998. Her immediate

response was that most taxi drivers are "okay" and that she had minimal problems with them. She pointed out that most of the drivers are married men and that they treat her in the same manner in which they would treat their wives. She however also pointed out that the few who are arrogant would also behave inappropriately with their wives or their passengers. During my interviews and as a participant observer with the women vendors I found that their comments were more or less similar. They stated that they always have to be on the lookout for drivers who ask for breakfast without paying immediately, as some would take a while to pay and when asked to do so behave arrogantly.

According to the breakfast women taxi drivers at ranks and specifically those who work on the Randfontein – Johannesburg route are "very good taxi drivers." They pointed out that there are a few who were also "really bad." They remarked that it is unfair that many people in South Africa paint a bad picture of all minibus taxi drivers. The women commented that most, drivers treat them well when they buy from them and as commuters.

The women were however quick to confirm that there had been some bad experiences with minibus taxi drivers at other taxi ranks. They referred to their experiences with drivers when they worked at the Soweto and Alexander where "violence resulted into shootings and killings." They commented that compared to those taxi ranks, their complaints regarding the drivers at the current ranks were minimal.

Some of the women stated that the "bad" behaviour of taxi drivers resulted in them changing ranks and working where they felt "more at peace."

Mme Nana stated:

> "...some drivers are really rude, I do not care if they find out what I am saying, they come in here and spoil my day. Sometimes I feel like throwing them out with the tea or coffee or tell them to get it from the women next door. I have since told them to behave well or not to return. I often see them next door but my neighbours also complain about these drivers. I will show them to you if I see them next door while you are here. I just wonder that if they treat us like this, how they treat their wives and passengers"

Mme Nana later pointed out a few taxi drivers whom she considered problematic. The breakfast women also pointed out a few drivers who were "really good" according to them, and stated that most of the drivers that they have travelled with have good personalities and drive well but some "no, no, they don't and they are going to kill many people." They raised concerns on the role taxi councils and taxi associations play and wondered "whether or not problematic drivers are dealt with." They pointed out that some taxi drivers needed specific training on their behaviour and driving habits.

Mme Ntonti and a few other women commented that;

> "Taxi drivers who behave badly make it difficult for most of us and for commuters to see the good in others. The TV news also only publish bad things about taxi drivers, they do not show any of the good things taxi drivers do at all. Taxi drivers who also drive recklessly and treat passengers badly do harm to all. Another problem is also that passengers treat drivers badly and

> that might be the reason why some of them drive and behave badly. On the other hand, there is also no excuse why a taxi driver should drive and behave badly, they have to consider all passengers and respect all of us women on the taxi rank."

I found that almost half of the breakfast women seemed to have had unpleasant experiences with taxi drivers at one point or the other. They however explained that, not all taxi drivers are the same. Some of the women said that they have also witnessed various verbal disputes between drivers and pointed out that "difficult drivers often start quarrels first."

From my interviews with the women who sell breakfast on the ranks, I found that most minibus taxi drivers on this route appeared to behave well but found that a few behaved "arrogantly." The women answered questions based on their daily experiences with minibus taxi drivers while selling breakfast to them and as passengers in taxis.

The women pointed out a few of the drivers who they thought certainly do not behave well towards them. These drivers tend also not to treat each other and their passengers well. From the observations and comments of the breakfast women it is concluded that minibus taxi drivers on the Randfontein and Johannesburg taxi ranks are not all "children born from the same mother."

4.4.2 Observation, Participant observation and interviews with women vendors who sell traditional and various dishes at taxi ranks.

At the end of my interviews with the "breakfast women," I worked with the women who sell traditional and other dishes while observing minibus taxi drivers and eventually interviewed the women.

Most of the women had been working on the taxi ranks for 10–12 years. Their assistants, who are either a helper or an acquaintance, have worked for less. They had different opinions of taxi drivers. The women were straightforward in their answers and a few commented;

> "...some taxi drivers behave well and some really badly and you can't change them, this is how they grew up at home. Even if they buy food I just hand it to them. I cannot chase them away and tell them to buy next door, we just have to take it. What can we do?"

Most of the women stated that drivers, often complain about passengers who are "rude" and "swear" at them. Some of the women were concerned and commented that taxi drivers "are under stress," and that they "complain constantly about passengers and taxi owners." The women stated that this might be the reason why some drivers behave and drive in the manner in which they do.

I also found from the women that some taxi drivers have disagreements with one another at times but that this does not occur often. The women mentioned that they witnessed some incidences where drivers argue to the point where there is a physical fight. They however pointed

out that none of the arguments became extreme. Shooting and killing of fellow drivers has not occurred on the Randfontein and Johannesburg ranks. Other than that I found that drivers who do not get along "stay out of each others way."

While taxi drivers are enjoying a meal or wait for a meal they continuously discuss various issues with the women, (see Figure16). Most discussions are based on their daily experiences either with passengers, colleagues or owners. I found that much of the debates are also politically motivated, issues concerning their rights as taxi drivers as well as the Taxi Recapitalisation Program. From what I have observed and heard while working in the kitchens, some taxi drivers seem to have a good sense of humour.



Figure 16 A woman vendor dishing up a meal for the taxi driver at the Randfontein taxi rank. Her daughter, who acts as her assistant, can be seen in the foreground.

Many of the women asked what I could do to assist drivers with their problems, which they experience with taxi owners and passengers and hoped that this research would make a difference.

While interviewing the women some drivers walked in to buy food or sat to have their lunch in the kitchen. Some asked to be interviewed immediately. Later word spread that I was interviewing taxi drivers and soon I ended up interviewing women and taxi drivers (drivers' interviews are discussed in chapter 7) in the same kitchen (see Figure 17). I ensured that I interview the women when the driver (s) left the kitchens.

According to the women a few drivers wanted to know (these are some of the comments made when they speak to the women) if government is interested in making a difference. The women stressed that "government seems to make things worse for the drivers." They were also concerned that, "the behaviour of certain drivers was bad previously but lately they are even worse." They blamed the drivers "bad" behaviour on the government.

An interesting issue which women also continuously mentioned was the impact which cultural background had on the behaviour of minibus taxi drivers. According to the women, what they noticed from taxi drivers was the fact that there is much similarities as well as differences in their behaviour which they argued "clearly shows" their cultural backgrounds. The women mentioned that Sesotho and Setswana speaking taxi drivers seem to be less problematic compared to their Zulu or Xhosa speaking counterparts. They commented that the region from which certain taxi drivers hail is an added advantage or disadvantage.

A woman pointed out that; “people are quick to say that all taxi drivers are rude, drive fast, don’t know how to treat commuters but this is not true at all.” They said that from their personal experiences only some of the taxi drivers drive fast and are unkind to their passengers.

Ayanda one of the younger women pointed out that:

> “The drivers on this route are good to us and behave well but I have to admit that when it comes to driving, they all drive the same, they fly. It is just typical of all minibus taxi drivers. They say that they are going to get new taxis from government, but be sure, I do not even think government’s new taxis will make a difference. What will help would be for government to produce taxis which are slow, only that will work.”

The women also argued that “drivers should not all be judged as a group” and that, they avoid doing so. They argued that taxi drivers should be “judged individually based on their unique behaviour.” They mentioned said that some drivers speak to them about their experiences while having lunch in their kitchens.

The majority of the women also pointed out that some of the drivers are “extremely polite” and that passengers and other road users unfairly “dehumanize” taxi drivers and that this is a major problem.

From my interviews with the women I found that the majority seem to argue that most of the taxi drivers on this route behave and drive well. Some also pointed out that drivers are forced to behave the way that they do as a result of pressures from passengers and owners, which

results in “recklessly” driving. Arguments were also that culture plays a role, while others argued that although they do not necessarily all behave similar but that it is typical of all drivers to over speed. The overall outcome from these interviews was that minibus taxi drivers are not all “children born from the same mother.”



Figure 17 A taxi driver who also preferred to be interviewed while having lunch in one of the kitchens and asked for this picture to be taken.

4.4.3 Interviews conducted with women who sell fruits and other delicacies at taxi ranks.

During interviews with these women, I found that they have been employed on this route for 6 to 8 years and that they have had numerous experiences with taxi drivers. The women also discussed their experiences with minibus taxi drivers as consumers of their goods and as passengers. These women also had a broader view of taxi

drivers, because are seated outside and can observe them throughout the day, (see Figure. 18). They stated that they could see most of the taxi drivers from where they are seated. Some of the women commented that "we can see bad and good drivers and what we notice is that drivers, who drive on the same routes socialize with each other. They pointed out that drivers who transport passengers between the Randfontein – Johannesburg route, for example, would be found seated in taxis together or standing in groups.



Figure 18 Women who sell candy, fruits and vegetables on the Randfontein taxi rank.

Their immediate perspectives as commuters were that "not all drivers drive similar." From their observations they have noticed that most taxi drivers are "always tired and they would also spend most of their time taking a nap off peak hours because they wake up in the early hours of the morning." They also pointed out that most of the drivers seem to be constantly in disagreements with each other on petty issues such as "whose taxi looks the best" etc.

The women explained that some taxi drivers are easily affected by their daily experiences and continuously appear to be in "a bad mood." They stated however that they always try to "cheer them up" but do not succeed with most of them. They argued that "they are our customers and we show them that we care for them."

I also found from the women that although they are "grateful" to taxi drivers for buying their goods, they would not hesitate to speak about their attitudes and ill behaviour. They were not reluctant to point out that some of the drivers whom they considered arrogant, not only as their customers but also when they have travelled in their taxis. They explained that some taxi drivers behave as if they "do us a favour" and complained that drivers need to be aware that "one hand washes the other."

Some of the women were concerned about the loading of passengers but commented that queue marshals do not have much power and that they have witnessed how the driver would add an additional passenger in order to make more money. They argued that although they have not experienced much disputes with drivers during sales to them, they regard some drivers as problematic. Some of the women were keen to mention that I should not "make trouble for them" by mentioning to drivers what their responses were, but that they wanted to express they own views about minibus taxi drivers.

They also suggested that the majority of drivers seem to behave similarly and that only a few are "well mannered" as well as "drive the same." They said that they have witnessed drivers shouting at passengers who seem to carry too much luggage, and saw them arguing that a passenger pay for an additional seat.

I also found from the women that the "behaviour is influenced by cultural background and upbringing. In addition, they also seem to face various pressures at taxi ranks. Some of the women also commented that much of the bad behaviour is learned at taxi ranks and within the taxi industry over time. They however pointed out that a few of the drivers behave and treat their passengers well and "remain good."

What I found overall from these women was that the majority of taxi drivers behave badly but that a few don't. Their overall conclusion was that minibus taxi drivers are not all "children born from the same mother."

4.5 Interviews with Hawkers and their perspectives on minibus taxi drivers.

Most hawkers walk around selling various goods to commuters and taxi drivers and some have stands or are seated on pavement, see (Figure. 19). Hawkers either observe or interact with minibus taxi drivers occasionally or when they buy their items.

Hawkers pointed out that they are familiar with most of the taxi drivers and based on their observation and experiences, that minibus taxi drivers behave and treat them well as sales persons and as passengers.

They argued that they commute with taxis most of the time and stated that "passengers are to blame for the bad driving of minibus taxi drivers." They argued that, "passengers undermine drivers because

they think that they are not educated and that this might be the reason why they drive taxis instead."



Figure 19 Hawkers with their wares displayed on the pavement at the Johannesburg taxi rank.

They also argued that most drivers drive well but that only a few of the drivers drives "recklessly." One of the hawkers pointed out a few taxis and asked me how many are "dented or look like they were in a collision", from where I stood I saw that apart from the ones which he pointed out, that some had dents. He also remarked "look at the taxis, most of them are still new and look well."

From my interviews with hawkers I found overall that almost none of the minibus taxi drivers behave badly and that if they do, that it is as a result of commuters. They pointed out that although drivers tend to drive above the speed limit, that they are not reckless drivers. Based on these interviews it was concluded that minibus taxi drivers do not

all drive and behave badly, and are hence not all "children born from the same mother.

4.6 Taxi cleaners and their views on minibus taxi drivers.

The majority of taxi drivers have their vehicles cleaned on the rank and in this way interact much with the cleaners. Most of the cleaners whom I interviewed commented that taxi drives are "good people" and mentioned that they "take care" of them.

They commented that some taxi drivers are fine, but some have "personal issues which they have to sort out" and that only then will their attitudes change." A few others commented that taxi drivers who are owners and drive their own taxis seem to be more problematic and difficult to deal with.

According to Toko, he has personally seen and heard passengers refuse to travel with certain taxi drivers referring to them as "slow coaches who make us arrive late at work." He also mentioned that passengers pointed out drivers whom they referred to as very fast drivers and named them "one minute to town."

What came out of the interviews with the taxi cleaners is that taxi drivers have good relationships with them. They also argued that drivers behave well with each other and that there were no conflicts between them. They commented on the behaviour of taxi drivers both on and off the road.

Their final comments were that there are a few taxi drivers who over speed unnecessarily and that it is as a result of their "own preferences"

rather than being coerced by passenger or commuters on the road. They argued that taxi drivers should not be regarded as similar and should not be labelled as such. The overall impression was that minibus taxi drivers are not all "children born from the same mother."

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed my observation of the ranks as well as minibus taxi drivers' behaviour and interactions with the women who sell food and various items at the Johannesburg and Randfontein taxi ranks. I also discussed how they interact with one another. I further discussed interviews with the women, as well as with hawkers and taxi cleaners. Based on the answers given by informants, I found that taxi drivers do not all drive or behave similarly and hence it can't be said that they are "children born from the same mother."

Chapter 5 INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED AT THE WESTERN GAUTENG TAXI COUNCIL AND THE RANDFONTEIN TAXI OWNERS ASSOCIATION AND THE TAXI RECAPITALISATION PROGRAM

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in the preview, the rapid growth of the taxi industry resulted in the formation of taxi councils and taxi associations. These are groupings of owners who contributed a fee in order to form these organisations.

The Randfontein Taxi Owners Association (RTOA) deals with commuter and driver disputes. They also handle the issue of local taxi licences. All the executive members are taxi owners and focus on local minibus taxi drivers. All members are employers of minibus taxi drivers who transport passengers on the Randfontein - Johannesburg taxi route. Local meetings as well as meeting with the executive within the council are held often.

The Western Gauteng Taxi Council (WGTC) specifically oversees the taxis on the Randfontein - Johannesburg route. Some of the members attend meetings regarding the minibus taxi industry throughout the country as well as in neighbourhood countries. The executive in the council have an officer who liaises with SANTACO and government on various issues regarding the minibus taxi industry. The council informs the associations on the issues discussed. All executive members are taxi owners or operators who employ minibus taxi drivers. They hold weekly meetings in conjunction with the associations. Part of the duties of the council is to visit taxi ranks at least once a month.

The local taxi councils oversee taxi associations and deal with issues regarding owner and passenger disputes, as well as with commuter and driver disputes. They specifically deal with disputes which cannot be solved at taxi associations although some commuters approach them directly when they have complaints regarding taxi drivers.

One of my key aims during the study was to investigate what role these organisations play with regard to the regulation of taxis on the route. It was also important to find their views and perspectives regarding the behaviour, attitudes and driving habits of minibus taxi drivers.

My aim during the study was to find out how involved the associations and councils are in relation with any problems a driver might experience with colleagues, other road users, passengers, owners or with commuters at ranks and on the routes. I needed to find out, for the purpose of the study and specifically on this particular route, whether minibus taxi drivers were involved in conflicts, violence or any reported bad driving habits or behaviour over the years and how this was dealt with. Such questions were critical during fieldwork and were raised within the interviews conducted at taxi association and councils.

I was interested to know whether or not skills development programmes are available for taxi drivers, and investigated whether adequate training is provided in this regard. These questions were directed to taxi officials within the Randfontein – Johannesburg associations and councils based on the role which they play in the minibus taxi industry. The method used during interviews is described in chapter 1.

This chapter will discuss interviews conducted with the RTOA executive. I will further discuss my interviews at the Western Gauteng Taxi Council.

Finally, findings on governments' Recapitalisation Program and its impact on the executive at taxi councils and associations and particularly on minibus taxi drivers will be discussed.

5.2 Interviews conducted with the executive at the Randfontein Taxi Owners Association

My initial appointment was made with the Secretary General of the association after one of my interviews with a member of the executive at the taxi council. He gave me his number and asked me to call to confirm my appointment. I later called and an appointment was scheduled for the Thursday on the third week after my interviews at the council.

When I first arrived at the RTOA offices (see Figure 20) the Secretary General apologised because he had not discussed my appointment with the executive and promised to schedule it for the following Thursday. When I arrived at the association on the day of my new appointment, I had some idea what role they played regarding taxi drivers, but was not certain of their overall responsibilities.

I found two men waiting to be seen ahead of me. They later mentioned that the executive was dealing with a very complicated case. Apparently the executive refused to renew the taxi licence of an elderly woman who is a taxi operator. According to the men, whom I then learned were both taxi owners, she refused to leave the office before her licence was renewed. The men were aware who the woman was

and told me that we have to be ready for "a long wait, because she would not leave this time around." This was when I discovered that although there are no female drivers on the route which I studied, there are a few female taxi operators.



Figure 20 The offices of the Randfontein Taxi Owners Association where interviews were conducted.

It was a very cold morning and it became even colder while we waited in the hallway. The men started speaking to me about various issues such as the cold and the smell of cooked food in the building, which the old man joked he "wished he could taste." Later they discussed problems which they experience with their drivers, this happened before I told them what the purpose of my visit to the association was. The older man whom I learned was *Ntate* (father) Thabo felt that it became too cold, he asked one of the cleaners if they had a spare heater in one of their offices. She asked the secretary who later brought us one. I also learned that the name of the younger man was Tsekane. When I told them what the purpose of my visit was, they agreed to be interviewed. I decided to take notes in this regard but *Ntate* Thabo

noticed my tape recorder and suggested that I make use of it because, he had a lot to say.

I interviewed *Ntate* Thabo first, because he was the next person who was supposed to see the executive. I discovered that he had been driving his own taxi for the last 25 years. He explained that from his own experiences over the years, he has dealt with passengers whom he became aware, had different personalities. One of the key problems which he faced was "tremendous stress" because of the continuous need to understand and treat his passengers well. He referred to passengers as "our customers," for whom there was a need to provide a service.

He also stated:

> "…..I have no problems with my passengers overall. I have tried over the years to satisfy and assist my customers in every way possible because they are important to me and without them I have no business. Customers make it possible for my children to live and eat, so I cannot be funny with them. I have however experienced very difficult customers over the years but I have learned to humble myself. The reason why I am here today is because a man drove my taxi while I was away attending a funeral, he had just left before you walked in. He insulted an old women and she came to report him to the association. He did not humble himself and apologise to her. The association called me in as a result to deal with the matter. I would have made much money today but as a result I am seated here, but you see people are different we do not think the same and this is a driver who drives for another taxi owner. Unfortunately, this is now my problem which I have to solve because he drove for me at the time of the incident."

Ntate Thabo commented that he had many experienced problems with other road users as well as with traffic officers on various issues. What he was dissatisfied about, is the "bad picture" which society at large, as well as the media portrayed about all minibus taxi drivers. He commented that not all minibus taxi drivers behave and drive similarly. *Ntate* Thabo has had many experiences over the years and pointed out disputes witnessed between taxi owners and taxi drivers, between fellow drivers and between drivers and passengers. His main observation was that some drivers do not treat passengers well and that this should be the key concern of the association and owners.

Tsekane, on the other hand did not approve of the manner in which the minibus taxi drivers are treated by society at large. He told me that he previously drove his own taxi and had witnessed a few drivers over speed or behaves badly but purely as a result of pressure from passengers who were either late for work or those who were "arrogant." He complained that many drivers are treated like illiterate children. He stated that what is ignored is that many of the drivers are reasonably well educated and that some has obtained a tertiary qualification, but are employed as taxi drivers due to the high rate of unemployment in South Africa.

Tsekane also explained that he has obtained a tertiary diploma and has learned much while driving as a taxi driver, prior to owning his own taxi.

He further stated:

> "…..Some of my experiences which I would like to point out are that most passengers and traffic officers treat us badly.

> Some traffic officers create major problems for drivers. They treat us as if we are their businesses, from which they can make their lunch money for the day and bonuses for their children's Christmas clothing. As a result of my experiences with traffic officers I tried by all means to be legal and avoid fines in every way possible, and ensured that my vehicle was in a good condition, my current driver does the same. I am happy overall in my business but would even be happier if the public does not regard all taxi drivers as bad drivers that do not care about the safety of our passengers and the public. It is simply not true, a few do (not care), but most certainly not all. These accusations and perceptions should change within South Africa."

We waited for an hour in which I interviewed both taxi owners, before the Secretary General of the association came, apologised for the delay, and promised that he would bring their current meeting to an end. He suggested that the only way to end their current meeting was to invite *Ntate* Thabo in. He said, "Either this or she would never leave the office." A few minutes after that the woman walked out of the board room it was clear that the case was not concluded. She made various remarks and kept on referring to the executive of the association as "gender biased" and later she stormed out of the offices. *Ntate* Thabo stayed only a few minutes with the executive and then Tsekane went in and within 15 minutes he left the board room. My interviews with the executive began at lunch time.

I was invited into the boardroom and found about ten man seated around the boardroom table and I was introduced to the executive. Although the secretary had introduced me, I was asked to further introduce myself and this time, to explain to the board what the purpose for my visit was. Every executive member was also officially

introduced to me afterwards and each of them described their portfolio. What I did not expect was that they would ask to be interviewed as a collective. This initially looked almost impossible but became plausible in the end. With their permission I made use of a tape recorder during the interviews.

I found that most of them had been minibus taxi drivers at some point but now own taxis and employ drivers. The executive deal with various disputes relating to taxi drivers. They also focus on disciplinary hearings which they stated are endless and normally occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

During interviews one of the members told about his experiences while he was driving his own taxi. He stated that he accidentally turned the wrong way through an industrial route, on a road that could still get him back on the road towards the taxi rank. He said passengers immediately started "insulting" him and exclaimed amongst each other *"ba mutsa kai o'*," meaning; "now where did they get this one from?" He argued that people are contemptuous of taxi drivers, and said that everyone laughed at him. He said to the passengers when he arrived at the taxi rank, "you must be from a different place thinking that I live in a "*mukuku*" (a shack or in an informal settlement) because you clearly do not know me". Passengers burst out laughing unaware that this was his own taxi and that he was chairman of the taxi association and had been for the last 12 years. He commented that the manner, in which taxi drivers are treated by passengers, was not unfamiliar to him.

While I continued my interviews and listened to various stories told by members, we were all served with lunch. I remembered *Ntate* Thabo's comment earlier because I got to taste the food. I kept my tape

recorder on and managed to continue asking questions and when they responded we all burst out laughing because of the tales told. I noticed that when interviews are conducted during a meal, informants tend to be more relaxed and speak openly about various issues which they would not normally discuss in a formal interview.

The executive also discussed issues in line with the training for all taxi drivers which has been a major problem. According to the executive "the statistics on the number of drivers trained and scheduled to be trained by government is a drop in the ocean."

One member pointed out that:

> "The last training took place in December and only about 10 of our taxi drivers were allowed to attend the training, this is ridiculous. Out of 160 associations, each association sends out 10 drivers, this is a drop in the ocean. Government offered training without asking what our needs are concerning the training of drivers and after the training each driver received a valueless certificate which is not accredited. We are not happy with the training at all. Government trained about 160 drivers from each region, this is simply not enough and when government speaks in press conferences, they boast that they have trained many taxi drivers."

An executive member immediately pointed out that if government plan on training drivers, what they have to do is find from taxi associations what the training needs are because they deal with problems daily. They explained that they are disappointed with the selective training of drivers which government implemented and require that every taxi driver be trained. They suggested that the government should only

assist with the facilitators but that the training should be based on the skills of minibus bus taxi drivers need.

One member stated:

> "Government told us to send 10 of our taxi drivers to be trained during one of their training sessions and I personally attended the training. We were under the impression that the training was for taxi drivers on customer care etc. The training which was offered there had nothing to do with taxi drivers. The association understands the type of problems some drivers experience and we do not blame the drivers. We have major problems with government and the manner in which they regard us."

What I also discovered was that there seems to be an ongoing problem between drivers and traffic officers. They discussed various problems between taxi drivers and passengers, some which they are still currently dealing with. Their main concern was that overloading is blamed at taxi drivers and queue marshals, by the public and the media, but what is ignored was that when passengers are late they insist on getting into the taxi and would say "*ake peche*", meaning "let me squeeze myself in." They stated that passengers are difficult and seem to ignore the legal implications in terms of accidents. A member commented that when a queue marshal or taxi driver refuses to load them they are considered bad. The executive argued that "it is much more difficult when it is very early in the morning and the marshal is not available."

Most members of the executive commented that taxi drivers are human beings and that they too can make mistakes at times. They

commented that it very difficult for a driver who is a husband and a father, when a young lady is rude to them. They complained that the driver "feels helpless" and is not certain how to react. They argued that the manner in which passengers behave changes drivers' behaviour and insisted that society should treat them like human beings, with respect and not like "animals." One member told a passenger "I am not a (steel) nut on a bolt I am a human being and if you want me to respect you, you will have to respect me too."

I was told that some of the key problems that have been dealt with at this office are that some passengers are inconsiderate to drivers and the taxi itself. The executive argued that passengers often bang the doors and that taxi drivers have to replace or repair doors often and that "this can be very costly." The situation, they argued; "becomes worse when a passenger is unhappy with a particular driver." Passengers also fail to understand that the taxi does not belong to the driver but to taxi operators.

They further pointed out that taxi drivers are not any different from individuals who are employed in the formal sector. According to the executive, consumers also complain about products which they purchase from stores. They further stated that some of the commuters are satisfied with drivers' service. They also stated that it is very difficult for the association because "like in any other business, the customer is always right."

Another issue which they discussed was that the taxi industry itself is undermined "because it is black owned" and as a result taxi drivers always experience abuse from the media who give them bad publicity. They pointed out that when fuel prices increase and they raise fares passengers verbally abuse drivers. They argued that they have no

control over petrol prices. They also commented that bus and train drivers are "never verbally abused when fares increase."

I found that accidents and violence is not common on this route but that violent behaviour had occurred occasionally between drivers and passengers. Some of the violence within the taxi industry was blamed on the upbringing of certain drivers as well as their cultural background. The executive further pointed out that individuals from certain backgrounds are problematic and that they have to deal with passengers' complaints

I discovered that problematic taxi drivers' behaviour is often coupled with bad driving habits and violent behaviour. Drivers are also fined for bad behaviour or the owner will decide whether to keep such a driver.

Some members commented that most minibus taxi drivers are "very polite, treat commuters well and are pleasant" and that the association had received various compliments about drivers who treat commuters well. I was also told that in spite of the fact that some of the taxi drivers aim to provide commuters with the "best service possible" they continue to treat them badly. They again emphasised that drivers are often referred to as illiterate.

An executive member commented that the reason why taxi drivers on certain routes are violent, is as a result of motorists on the road who "*pirate*" passengers, meaning, (that they illegally and deliberately pick up commuters on the road, who are supposed to be carried by taxi drivers). He mentioned that this result in taxi drivers losing out financially.

They concluded that not all taxi drivers behave or drive badly. They explained that each driver behaves in his own unique way and they know because the associations are like the drivers "mother and father" and not all their children behave and drive similar. According to the executive of the taxi associations, minibus taxi drivers are not all "children born from the same mother."

5.3 Interviews with the executive at the Western Gauteng Taxi Council and their perspectives on the taxi industry and minibus taxi drivers.

The council deals with the associations as well as driver owner disputes if the association cannot deal with them. Almost all members of the executive are also taxi owners who own between two to six taxis.

On my arrival at the WGTC offices, I knocked and someone called and invited me in. From the corridor where I stood, I waited for a while but no one came to speak to me. As an anthropologist, observation is one our key tools. While observing my surroundings, I noticed a boardroom on my left and a notice board on my right. I also saw newspaper cut outs stuck on the notice board. These papers contained violence related stories concerning minibus taxi drivers. One of the headings read "Soweto taxi drivers fined R1000!" This was regarding drivers' illegally driving on a Benoni route as a result of which violence erupted." Various other newspaper clips were spotted on the wall. In the boardroom I noticed a white board on the wall on which schedules for meetings of the executive were written.

Most of the officials seemed not to be available at first and those who were appeared not to be interested in my research. I thought if they

only knew what my research was all about, they would understand what impact my study might have on minibus taxi drivers and they would listen to me. Coplan (1998) commenting on his fieldwork in Motse-mocha, a village in Lesotho, where he encountered resistance from a prospective informant writes, "in my head I rehearsed the little speech about the indirect, longer-term, cumulative, broader social value of my research that I'd have made to him if only he'd been disposed to listen." This made him wonder where informants of the past were, who were eager to tell their stories (in his case) to Europeans who came by once in a while.

Arranging and making appointments with the members of the executive was a challenging task because they were hardly available due to continuous meetings which they had scheduled. Some of the members of the executive were attending conferences which were held throughout the country and this almost made any findings on my research impossible.

It was only later when the secretary managed to schedule appointments for me, after a detailed discussion with the executive on what the purpose for my research was. My interviews were arranged for days when most members would be available. Interview times were scheduled for very early in the morning just before executive meetings.

Later on I became aware that my research was regarded as an ideal "platform" from where the executive could state their own views about the industry and particularly on the stigma attached to minibus taxi drivers. Their answers were informed by their previous experiences as minibus taxi drivers as well as current circumstances as owners and as the executive of this route.

I commenced my interviews with the executive at the council. Some of the interviews began as early as seven o'clock in the morning. I had to ensure that I arrive ahead of time in order to prepare for the interviews. These were very cold winter mornings but I was shown much hospitality from the chairman who provided me with a warm heater and a hot cup of tea. At times conducting fieldwork research means drinking and eating what informants offer, as they tend to trust researchers who seems "at home" with them and willingly share their stories.

The chairman, whom I interviewed first, gave me permission to use my tape recorder and I took notes. His immediate comment was that there are various individuals within society who have negative perspectives and views on minibus taxi drivers. He felt that it was "unfair because not all minibus taxi drivers behave similarly." He pointed out that while there are instances where they dealt with disputes, either among drivers or between drivers and commuters, such dispute did not necessarily include all minibus taxi drivers.

An executive member pointed out that all taxi drivers are referred to as "hooligans and this is not fair." According to him all taxi drivers "get painted black" and what is ignored is the fact that some minibus taxi drivers are caring and have the interests of their passengers at heart. He argued that:

> "....bad news sells and the reality is that some of the taxi drivers are helpful and kind people, these are hardly mentioned by the media and society at large. What about incidences where passengers are ill and need to be dropped off at home, or where passengers do not have fares to travel. Taxi drivers always give needy passenger a free ride without expecting the money to be

> returned. Taxi drivers also assist passengers with their luggage and often direct those who do not know their destination, how to get there. These and other important issues are obviously ignored."

An executive member stated that "some taxi drivers are reckless as a result of pressure from passengers. He also argued that drivers always complain about the behaviour of passengers, that they misbehave and "call them names." He also stated that passengers asked to be dropped off almost anywhere on the road in spite of approaching traffic from behind, in front of or next to the taxi. He argued that as a result of the passengers, drivers are in constant conflict with other road users.

I also discovered that drivers are put under pressure as a result of route disputes which they have to "fight on behalf of taxi owners who remain in the background. A few members also pointed out that minibus taxi drivers' lives are put at risk daily due to owners' problems. They pointed out that these are some of the reasons why some minibus taxi drivers behave the way they do.

According to the Public Relations Officer of the WFTC, the committee decided to conduct regular rank meetings with taxi drivers, monitoring the behaviour of drivers at the ranks and to see if there is order. He also commented that there are various incentives for drivers in order to encourage them to behave and drive well, but that they do not always all comply with expected standards.

I continued with interviews at the council over two weeks, all the executive members continued to be accommodative and willing to give me their individual feedback. In instances where I quoted three or

more views simultaneously in this section, it is due to similarities in the responses.

An executive member also complained that "taxi drivers are the regarded as animals" and that they are not given a fair deal by the media, taxi owners, passengers and society at large are. I discovered that drivers who do retaliate when they are attacked verbally by passengers and motorists who provoke them "purely react because they are human and any human being can get upset at times,"

I also found different views from some executive members who pointed out what taxi drivers' duties to passengers and society at large are. They suggested that taxi drivers are supposed to provide customer care and good services to commuters, orphans and widows under the taxi "*empit*." Drivers are also taught to "respect passengers, be liable to the public and know that their commuters' needs should come first." They also pointed out that although they provide certain training programs from the council "it is entirely the owner's responsibility to ensure that they deal with issues regarding the route." Owners are also advised to ensure that the taxi is in a condition and serviced regularly, and they argued that this "will shift pressure away from the driver."

The executive also stated that they received various complaints regarding some taxi drivers at the office and explained that complaints which are brought to the council about taxi drivers, by passengers and other road users, are thoroughly dealt with. They pointed out that a driver who is at fault is disciplined in one way or the other or has to pay a fine.

Page (2006) in the *Sunday Times* quotes Top Taxi Six taxi official, Theo Malele saying pointed out that; "Government is offering training and assistance through taxi federations, for taxi drivers. The training is funded by the Transport Education Training Authority (TETA)." The executive commented that the training program "does not serve much purpose when it only benefits two to four out of sixty drivers."

The PR officer, who is also a training officer for taxi drivers on behalf of government, shared his disappointment on the limited number of trainees.

He argues:

> "During the last training session I trained about 59 taxi drivers. This is an accredited course which consists of 14 credits for a grade 1. This training is spread throughout various provinces and at times government would allow for 100 taxi drivers from Gauteng and from this route that you are researching very few drivers eventually receive training. From the Randfontein group only about 4 taxi drivers were trained which means about 2 were trained on the Randfontein- Johannesburg route. I also ensure that queue marshals are trained but because taxi drivers pay them directly, at times they will overload taxis. Our last training session for taxi drivers was held on the 15th of July 2005 which lasted for two weeks. Unfortunately there are only 2-3 yearly training programmes organised for taxi drivers who hail from various provinces."

Some pointed out that what needs to be taken into consideration is that minibus taxi drivers hail from various cultural backgrounds and that this impacts on the manner in which they behave.

They explained that drivers' main purpose was to make a living. They also argued that there was evidently no reason found why they would behave irresponsibly, when they want to be employed in this, or in any other industry. The executive also suggested that "passengers" behaviour should be monitored closely" and explained that "there are two sides to every story." Most members of the executive's arguments were also that it is possible that some drivers might drive badly and be "arrogant" but that certainly not all do so.

The Secretary General of the council pointed out that, in spite of the manner in which drivers are treated and the manner in which some behave or drive, "society should not conclude that all necessarily do so."

He also suggested that;

> "…It does not mean that because deputy president Jacob Zuma (is alleged to have) raped a woman, which he of course denied, that all men are rapists. Another issue is that all taxi drivers are supposed to see that the taxi is taken care of and that it is serviced regularly but some don't. It is required that all taxi drivers are responsible for the safety of their passengers and are hence supposed to drive carefully but this is ignored by others. Blaming rough driving, road rage and inappropriate behaviour on all taxi drivers is very unfair. I think society has to rethink their perceptions of taxi drivers and also look at bus drivers and train drivers who also cause accidents. Why is the focus mainly on minibus taxi drivers?"

The council explained that they are aware that drivers are threatened with dismissal by some owners, who are unreasonable, for no apparent

reason and that they disapprove of such behaviour. A hearing is held where both sides are evaluated and eventually dealt with. They however mentioned that it is the owner's final choice whether or not he prefers that a taxi driver continues to drive for him.

A few members of the executive were of the opinion that the Taxi Recapitalisation Program might make circumstances more reasonable for drivers on the latter issue. Issues such as leave as well as compassionate leave are also arranged between the driver and owner and usually not catered for in the package offered to the driver when an employment agreement is made. I also found that it was only in times of severe disputes between drivers and owners that the matter is either referred to the council.

An executive member stated:

> "It is not only taxi drivers who are problematic and certainly not all them. Workers within offices are also problematic and disputes occur amongst workers and their bosses, this is the same with taxi drivers. Not all workers drive arrogantly but some do and culture plays a major role. Unfortunately for the taxi driver, his office is in the public and everyone can see what is happening within his office, which is under continuous public scrutiny. Taxi drivers are clearly judged and all are said to drive and behave equally bad but this is not the case. Not all drivers are the same even though they are from the same mother, the council and the associations. The council is like a mother to taxi drivers and we are aware that not all our children behave the same, we do deal with certain complaints from commuters which show that some drivers are problematic but not all taxi drivers are guilty. However if my driver is problematic I call for a hearing and

> suspend him if he does not comply with rules and treat passengers well, in order to please the public because my duty as an operator is to the public."

It was mentioned to me that minibus taxi drivers are aware that if they do not behave according to stipulated rules they will lose out on various opportunities such as being promoted. Drivers who behave and drive well learn to become trainers and facilitators while they are still driving. They are also encouraged to work in such a way that they become part of the executive based on their history as taxi drivers.

An executive member commented that unfair dismissals are a problem which they are currently seriously looking at. Meetings are held with owners to bring drivers in for disciplinary hearings before they dismiss them. The council deal with the most difficult problems relating to the driver which association cannot sort out between the driver and the owner. Drivers are not informed what their rights are and certain owners hire them without signing any formal contract and as a result the driver is under pressure to work long hours or go on leave without a salary. This puts the majority of minibus taxi drivers "under a lot of pressure."

Drivers are also advised to ask owners to sign a contract when they are employed because after years of driving, owners refuse to do so; this is very stressful for the driver. I discovered that drivers are only allowed compassionate leave by the owner (but was not told how many days leave the drivers receive) but that the leave period is not in terms of Labour Relations Act. According to the executive, the amount of hours which taxi drivers should work is 8 hours per day and not more than 12 hours overtime and that overtime work have to be paid for.

Overall their arguments remained that not all minibus taxi drivers necessarily drive, behave badly or have attitudes in spite of the challenges which they face.

The council also stated that they are working on a strategy to deal with various issues such as working conditions etc. to make taxi driving pleasant for all drivers. The council's aim was to deal more effectively with disputes which result amongst some taxi drivers as well as related issues such as passengers and drivers' relations etc. They concluded that minibus taxi drivers do not all drive and behave similarly and hence are not all "children born from the same mother."

5.4 The Taxi Recapitalisation Program and its impact on minibus taxi drivers.

On the field one of my key interests while interviewing the executive in the minibus taxi industry was to hear and investigate their views regarding the Taxi Recapitalisation Program (TRP). I needed to find out what impact the program will have at taxi drivers and what their role is in this regard.

The executive members also argued that what they need in South Africa is training for all drivers - and that the "fancy stuff" which government plan to add, such as improving taxi ranks, changing taxis etc. will not be the answer if the driver is not properly trained."

The executive explained that drivers and operators formed a united front pointing out their dissatisfaction with the Taxi Recapitalization Programme which government has instituted. They argue that they

have paved the taxi routes and that government currently claims ownership of the industry.

Mandla Mnguni in Thale (2002:1) asserts that "the National body enjoys support from virtually all taxi operators". He argues that SANTACO "*has thrown its weight behind the government's plan to 'recapitalise' the industry. The major objective of the council is to streamline the industry and to enable taxi operators to speak with one voice in their dealings with government and to transform taxis into a service industry.*" It was critical to find out during interviews from the executive whether or not minibus taxi drivers are speaking with one voice in this regard.

The members of the taxi associations and the taxi councils of the Randfontein and Johannesburg route also explained that most taxi drivers are unaware of the impact which the RTP will have on them but are determined to protest, should it then impact negatively. They did however explain that taxi owners are directly involved and apply to government's expectations overall. They however stated no taxi has been handed in to be scrapped. Drivers who are also owners seem to be aware of the entire program and the changes which will take place within the taxi industry.

The minister of transport Jeff Radebe during an interview on SAFM on the 19th of September 2006 pointed out that a final postponement of scrapping old taxis would take place by the end of October 2006. He was interviewed after taxis produced by a Russian manufacturer made headlines in the *Sunday Times* of the 10th of September 2006 for their unreliability.

The executive commented that the department of transport's delay and taxi drivers' uncertainty regarding their employment might result in

violence, accidents and deaths on South African roads. In the *Sunday Times* it was reported that "the Allies won a world war in less time that it has taken Montana and his department to put a safe taxi on the road."

The minister mentioned that a skills development program is being implemented for all minibus taxi drivers and that they are encouraged to drive well. However what I found from the executives in both the taxi councils and associations was that the TRP has increased pressure on drivers.

Whether the TRP will materialize at the expected time is a major concern when not a single modernized taxi had been produced at the date of the interviews.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the role of the Randfontein Taxi Association and the Western Gauteng Taxi Council in the minibus taxi industry. I further discussed what role they play regarding minibus taxi drivers. I furthermore discussed the executives' views on minibus taxi drivers' driving habits, behaviour and attitudes and finally discussed the Recapitalisation Program and what impact it will have on minibus taxi drivers. From my overall findings with the executive at the taxi association and the council who regulate the Randfontein - Johannesburg taxi route I discovered that minibus taxi drivers are not all "children born from the same mother" as they do not all drive and behave similar.

Chapter 6 TRAFFIC OFFICERS', OTHER ROAD USERS' AND THE MEDIA'S PERSPECTIVE ON MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS.

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss fieldwork conducted on the perspectives of traffic officers, other road users and the media regarding the driving habits and behaviour of minibus taxi drivers. My questions were mainly on the drivers' obedience of the law as well as their attitudes and behaviour overall. I will also briefly discuss how the media portray taxi drivers in terms of violence, behaviour and driving habits.

6.2 Traffic officers' perspectives on minibus taxi drivers' obedience for rule of the road.

Locating traffic officers to interview was not any easy task, and conducting interviews at the local traffic department was almost impossible. Officers were either controlling or observing traffic on the road, monitoring driving tests, or in court where cases on traffic fine related issues were being heard. Fortunately three officers who live in my neighbourhood and have been working on the route for years were willing to share their views on the driving habits and behaviour of minibus taxi drivers.

The Administrative Adjudication of the Road Traffic Offences Amendment Act of 1999 is supposed to provide a more efficient system of collecting traffic fines and for the introduction of a points demerit system, linked to the new credit card-format (CCF) driver's license. In terms of the Act, a driver's license will be suspended when he or she

has 12 penalty points against his or her name. For every point over and above 12, the motorist's license will be suspended for three months. Points can easily be accumulated, for example four points each for exceeding the speed limit by 50 percent or driving an unregistered vehicle.

According to Browning (1989:12), those who break rules are often required to pay a fine. Such questions were critical during fieldwork and were raised during interviews.

According to the officers, a few minibus taxi drivers who were stopped on the road were found driving without a driver's licence or a taxi permit. Taxi drivers who are caught without a permit often could not explain why they did not have the licence or permit. The officers also explained that when caught, some of the drivers are arrogant and threaten them with violence.

As Ngcoya and Chapman (1987:13) indicates, the task of law enforcement agencies is to ensure that only drivers with Operating Permits (OP) were operating for hire and reward. Drivers often use the excuse that the owners needed the permit for some business transactions or another where it is required.

According to traffic officers such taxi drivers are often fined. They also explained that taxi owners' aims are purely the business of making money and they employ drivers without a valid licence. However they blamed the driver for breaking the law. They also pointed out that some minibus taxi drivers are, "extremely difficult to deal with."

6.2.1 Traffic officers' views of the conditions in which taxis are and the driving habits of minibus taxi drivers.

Officers commented that some taxis are in a bad condition and that critical vehicle controls often do not function, endangering the lives of passengers and other road users.

Officers also remarked that some of the taxi drivers are "on the ball" and that their taxis are well maintained and in a good condition. Although they do not necessarily have to stop such drivers, when they do, they find their taxis in a good condition and well maintained.

According to some officers, drivers who do drive over the speed limit often complain that their speed-o-meter was faulty, or that they were unaware that they were breaking the rules of the road.

According to an official;

> "Some taxi drivers whom I have personally stopped are respectable and honest family men, just like any other road user who is trying to make a living for their families. Such taxi drivers drive well and ensure that they have all the relevant documentation and keep their taxis in a good condition. I agree that some have negligently caused accidents and that the majority are guilty of bad behaviour but certainly not all."

They argued that drivers are 'well aware where hidden cameras are placed and would normally slow down. They assert that there are not enough traffic cameras along this road and that this might encourage

speeding. They explained that they often catch and fine minibus taxi driver and motorists at hidden spots where they are unable to see them.

From the interviews conducted on this route, traffic officers commented overall that the majority of minibus taxi drivers on this route, drive beyond the speed limit, endangering not only passengers' lives but those of other road users as well as their own.

6.2.2 Traffic Officers' views on the attitudes and behaviour of minibus taxi drivers

Traffic officers commented that minibus taxi drivers behave in their own unique ways. They noted that some are "arrogant and rude" when stopped and often argue that they will be overtaken by fellow drivers. They also argued that there have been many instances where officers and drivers have had physical fights as a result of the "ill" behaviour of some minibus taxi drivers.

During the study I witnessed how some taxis are overloaded and officers stated that drivers often argue that it is the queue marshals' duty to ensure that taxis are not overloaded. They however complained that some drivers deliberately overload taxis in order to gain additional income for themselves.

When I finally asked officers whether or not minibus taxi drivers are all children born from the same mother? They commented that society should not conclude that all minibus taxi drivers drive and behave similar but that there some drivers who drive and behave badly.

6.3 Other road users' perspectives on taxi drivers' driving habits and behaviour.

Persons who drive vehicles other than taxis were interviewed in communities and on the road. What I did in this regard was to hand out very short questionnaires, on the driving habits of mini bus taxi drivers at stop signs. With the assistance of some volunteers I managed to hand out about one hundred questionnaires. We requested drivers to return the questionnaires the next day or any morning during that week.

This required standing at stop signs or robots where questionnaires were handed out. I was not certain if drivers would return the questionnaires but thought that if they wanted to express their points of view regarding taxi drivers they would. Within that week, most of the questionnaires (seventy percent) were returned and it appeared that many road users were willing to express their views on the driving habits and behaviour of minibus taxi drivers. I focussed primarily on minibus taxi drivers between the Randfontein and Johannesburg route but motorists responses also included drivers who travel on the routes from surrounding areas into the city.

Going through the questionnaires required sorting similar responses together and when this was done I read the responses. Three quarters of the questionnaires returned showed that most minibus taxi drivers had either "bad driving habits," "drive recklessly" or "behave badly" towards other road users. Drivers were also blamed for most of the accidents on our roads. Some road users commented that they avoid driving close to taxi drivers but that they would "somehow try to catch up with them one way or the other."

From the motorists interviewed at home the majority also argued that minibus taxi drivers "driver badly and recklessly." Some have personally been involved in accidents, lost a parent, family members or a friend in minibus taxi accidents as a result of drivers who constantly seem to be "rushing."

Some suggested that a special road lane should be built in which only taxi drivers should drive, similar to that of busses. They suggested that this would prevent the confusion on the roads which is caused by them. (The minister of transport in October 2006 began trials of a road policy in which a lane is designated for taxis and motorist with less than four passengers, between Johannesburg and Pretoria. The department of transports aims to reduce traffic volumes and improve traffic flows in this way).

6.4. The Media and their publications on minibus taxi drivers.

Most of the key media comments regarding minibus taxi drivers seem to be on "bad driving habits." Various comments are also made on accidents in which minibus taxi drivers were involved.

I observed that the media does not distinguish between good or bad minibus taxi drivers but simply state that "minibus taxi drivers" were involved in one incident or the other. These also report on "violence or taxi wars." I embarked on reading old and current local news papers but could find almost none in which positive comments were made regarding minibus taxi drivers.

A positive media publication regarding minibus taxi drivers which I found was a report on the driver who received the "minibus taxi driver of the year award" which also featured in local newspapers. According to Dlamini (2006:1), "the minibus taxi driver of the year was set up by Brandhouse three years ago. A ceremony is held in which the title is handed over to the best minibus taxi driver of the year. He states that the aim of the competition is to influence drivers' behaviour and to encourage good driving habits as well as their responsibilities to commuters and to society at large. Other than this article and a few others, it was difficult to locate positive media comments.

Most of the headlines which relate to minibus taxi drivers reads: "Violence Erupts Again in The Taxi Industry," "Taxi Drivers Caught for drunk driving," "Soweto Taxi Drivers Fined for Operating Illegally on route set out for Germiston taxi drivers," "Taxi Drivers Arrested for Bribing Traffic Officers" etc . The list is endless and taxi drivers are regarded as largely driving and behaving similarly.

A few comments such as that of Dullar Omar, the then Minister of Transport at the Gauteng Provincial Taxi Conference of July 27 2000, that "*the taxi industry, despite all bad press has done as much as any aspect of the industrial relations system to contribute to employee productivity",* are also carried in local newspapers.

Some of the most recent news published on minibus taxi drivers is regarding the protest march against the Taxi Recapitalisation Program as well as for the cancellation of all traffic fines. In spite of drivers resistance to the program some minibus taxis were scrapped publicly.

Overall what was found and observed published, in the media, is that minibus taxi drivers, behave badly and seem to have similar attitudes.

The strongest statements made in the media often reflect that all minibus taxi drivers do drive and behave similar and hence seem to be "children born from one mother."

6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the views and perspectives of other road users, traffic officers and the media regarding the behaviour and driving habits of minibus taxi drivers. The overall conclusion found from informants was that the majority of minibus taxi drivers have bad driving habits generally behave badly and seem to have attitudes. Traffic officers for example argue that only a few minibus taxi drivers obey the rules of the road, behave well and are pleasant. Despite suggestions indicating otherwise in the media the overall arguments made regarding the behaviour and driving habits of minibus taxi drivers was that they are not all "children born from the same mother."

Chapter 7 MINIBUS TAXI DRIVERS: THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR DRIVING HABITS, BEHAVIOUR, AND THE "SPIRIT OF UBUNTU."

7.1 Introduction

This chapter I will discuss the interviews conducted with minibus taxi drivers who transport passengers on the Randfontein-Johannesburg taxi route, regarding their driving habits, behaviour and attitudes. My aim was to hear the views and perspectives of minibus taxi drivers themselves before concluding whether or not they are "children born from the same mother."

In the previous chapters various comments were made about minibus taxi drivers' behaviour and attitudes by different observers. Drivers regard for the law and how they treat commuters, as well as their driving habits were also one of the key complaints made by society at large. Some of the perspectives from informants are that the "*Spirit of Ubuntu*" or solidarity exists amongst minibus taxi drivers and that they are a united front.

My informants were minibus taxi drivers, Figures (eating driver, 20, 21 and 22) who have been employed on this route for as long as four to twenty years. Although some minibus taxi drivers were initially sceptical of me as a researcher at first, my continuous presence at both taxi ranks, and working with the women vendors in their kitchens increased their willingness to share their views and experiences with me later on.

7.2 Minibus taxi drivers' views on their driving habits.

My primary aim was to find out why they drive in the manner in which they are perceived to.



Figure 21 A minibus taxi driver at the Johannesburg Taxi Rank.

Most taxi drivers interviewed argued that their driving habits are mainly influenced by passengers, other road users and owners. Therefore, my secondary aim became to find their views on how commuter impact on their driving habits!

7.3 Minibus taxi drivers, their perspectives on the impact commuters have on their driving habits.

One of the key issues which minibus taxi drivers complained about regarding commuters was the issue of **small change,** and how it

impacts on their driving habits. Drivers pointed out that fares for one trip total up to R150 made of R10 each from 15 commuters. In most instances a few taxi drivers often end up with R300 early in the morning, which consists of three R100 notes. Pat, Simon and a few other taxi drivers argued that, at times they ended up with as much as R1000 consisting of ten R100 notes. This results in major problems because they have to either stop at a fuel station, unexpectedly, or ask for small change from fellow drivers along the route.

Drivers commented that they are often confused by passengers who do not have small change. They argued that passengers "shout" at them and tell them to have readily available change. Passengers who do pay with small change complain when a driver has to drive into a fuel station or exchanges money on the road with fellow drivers. They complained that they cannot keep up with, the conflicting demands from passengers and lose focus on the road.

Most of the drivers also complained that they also have to **stop unexpectedly** along the operational route, as a result of passengers who alight along the way. They argued that passengers do "not speak" early enough when they want to alight and that this results in them changing lanes and stopping unexpectedly in front of other motorists. This often results in conflict between drivers as well as passengers and drivers and motorists.

Some taxi drivers commented that, although they do drive fast to reach a certain target or quota or to remain ahead in the taxi queues, at the ranks it is mainly as a result of the passengers. They argued that when they drive at a reasonable speed passengers refer to them as "slow drivers" and would refuse to commute in their taxis. Word, that a driver is slow, spreads fast and this puts pressure on the driver to often

rush because it will impact on him financially when passengers refuse to travel with him.

Minibus taxi drivers argued that they are blamed unnecessarily for taxi accidents which are caused as a result of passengers who arrive at a taxi rank saying that they are late for work and insisting that they have to be on time. Jabu a taxi driver told that they are expected to drive at (80 – 100) kph, but that commuters insist that they drive 140 kph.

Some drivers who drove above the speed limit previously decided to change their "bad driving habits." Tsoko who has been employed in the taxi industry as a driver for six years states:

> "…..I used to drive very fast but realized that if I continue to drive over the speed limit my life, as well as that of my passengers would be endangered. When passengers tell me to drive fast I ignore them and tell them to arrive on time because I have to face paying fines. I have already paid many fines and so refuse to drive fast. Alternatively, I tell them to take over the wheel and drive and that I would gladly shift over but they often do not respond."

Tsoko further commented that over speeding also impacted heavily on his salary in the past because he was responsible for paying traffic fines. He often drove through a red robot ended up paying "too many fines."

Some taxi drivers also argued that they would not purposefully drive fast to endanger their own lives but that commuters insist that they do. A few drivers commented that they have to drive fast during peak hours because they take into consideration long queues and passengers who wait to be transported.

Mandla who has been driving on this route for seven years, stated;

> "I drive fast and very fast at times. My first few trips with passengers are normally fast because there are queues of passengers early in the morning. If a fellow driver drives faster than me and overtakes me I will lose out. This is gambling and if you do not gamble right, you will lose out."

Soho, who has been employed as a taxi driver on this route for the last 12 years explained that he has a good relationship with most of his passengers and that they have mutual respect for each other. He often rushes because he is concerned about the safety of his passengers who might be "robbed" if they wait for a taxi till late in the evening. He commented that taxi ranks are not safe and certainly not in the evenings.

Some taxi drivers agreed that they do drive over the speed limit because they have to make enough money and reach a certain target for the day or they would be fired by employers.

7.4 Minibus taxi drivers' perspectives on other road users.

Kenny a taxi driver stated that other motorists show no respect to minibus taxi drivers. He argued that "motorists are to blame for the manner in which taxi drivers drive" and stated that some drive below the speed limit and hold up traffic. He is of the opinion that they (the slow motorists) have no driver's licences and therefore fear that they would be stopped. He argues that this might be the reason why they

slow down abruptly and cause much confusion on the road. Some taxi drivers also commented that motorists "swear at us, point fingers and constantly call us stupid."

Patrick, another driver on the route also argued that when motorists see a "*gap*" (an opening) where taxis can drive through on the road, they "purposefully drive in front of the taxi." He also complained that motorists regard them all as "reckless drivers, stupid and uneducated" and argued that this is not really the case. The drivers expressed the latter sentiments repeatedly.

The majority of the minibus taxi drivers also complained that motorists blame the driver but are not aware of the circumstances under which they driver this includes "difficult passengers" and related pressures from owners.

7.5 Minibus taxi drivers' experiences with owners.

The majority of the drivers interviewed complained that they work strenuously and are underpaid. They complained about long working hours and that they hardly spend time with their families. Some drivers complained that owners are under the impression that "we pocket some of the cash for ourselves but this is not possible because every trip is recorded by queue marshals." McCaul (2001:73) also observes that rank managers, makes note how many trips drivers took per day; this makes it almost impossible for a drivers to "pocket" any money for themselves.

The majority of taxi drivers also complained that most owners ignore the number of taxis currently on the road and still expect them to reach

a certain quota per day. I later found that drivers who do not mostly speed were employed by owners who had more than one taxi.

Although most of the drivers complained that they were under pressure to reach a certain target per day, about 40 percent of those interviewed said they do not really have to drive over the speed limit. Most of these are employed by owners who insist that they drive at a reasonable speed. Some commented that they would not drive over the speed limit as a result of owners who put them under pressure to do so, because they also have to consider their own safety.

Rank managers were previously paid by minibus taxi drivers, at least "R2 weekly" according to McCaul (2001:94). Nowadays rank managers own their own taxis, are employed at taxi associations and monitor drivers at taxi ranks to the book. The situation is worse when a driver's employer is the rank manager. While interviewing minibus taxi drivers a rank manager walked in and they immediately changed the subject. They later mentioned that they that he would report them and that they feared losing their jobs.

Some drivers argued that they are put under pressure by owners to drive above the speed limit in order to make a certain amount of money per day or they face being fired.

A driver Stompie argued;

> "I drove at a reasonable pace previously and my boss said that if I do not increase the amount of money which I currently make per day then I will lose my job."

Many drivers also made similar comments. Stompie also said that he was warned by his employers several times that he should do well and "make more money or park the taxi in the yard."

Bosman and Browning's (1989) conceptual analysis of what is actually happening is that with more operators emerging on the scene "competition starts to take place and only those who are able to compete will remain in business. With the current numbers of taxis in the industry, much pressure is placed on the driver to compete with fellow drivers resulting in them being under extreme pressure. The will to compete increased further because many drivers are unsure what impact the Taxi Recapitalisation Program will have on their employment and hence try to please their owners.

7.6 Minibus taxi drivers' views on their behaviour and attitudes.

Passengers, owners and other road users often complain that minibus taxi drivers lack "customer service skills," behave ill and have attitudes.
A few taxi drivers commented that they have good relationships with most of their passengers. They however stated that there are certainly "serious problems" in the manner in which they are regarded by some.

Bruno, a driver, commented that he has built a relationship of trust with his passengers. He argued that commuters take them for granted when they appear friendly and stated that some of his passengers are indebted to him because he constantly did them "favours". He complained that "some passengers owe me thousands, accumulated over the years."

Some taxi drivers, also complained that their passengers should realise that they have to pay fares because the taxi does not belong to them and that owners expect the checking for the day. Drivers also explained that they occasionally assist passengers who have genuine problems (with paying fares) but who would eventually have to pay.

On two separate occasions I saw a driver off loading passengers along the route when they realized that fares did not add up. Passengers are left to sort out their money which the driver hands back and they are left stranded on the road where they will have to stop another taxi and end up arriving at work late. Passengers often complain that taxi drivers who leave them stranded have "attitudes and are inconsiderate." (It must be noted though that these commuters would not expect to get into a store and carry out items without paying!).



Figure 22 Taxi Drivers at the Randfontein Taxi Rank.

I discovered that sometimes passengers' demands exceed drivers' responsibilities because they would tell a driver to look out for taxis which will take them further on their journey once they reach the city.

I also found that passengers often tell drivers that they "do not own the taxi" and that they are "just boys."

Taxi drivers complained that passengers are difficult to deal with particularly on Fridays and at the end of the month when they receive their earnings. Passengers also tend to litter the taxi and when drivers try to find out who is responsible for the litter they are treated with "contempt." Passengers would comment that the driver has to clean his dirty taxi. Drivers argue that such behaviour from passengers is what results in them behaving in a manner that appears arrogant. Mike a taxi driver also commented that he has to deal with passengers who are under the influence of alcohol towards the end of the month.

Puti a taxi driver mentioned, a female commuter had an argument with him once and told him "this is not your taxi you are merely a boy and boys do not have a *blue card* (unemployment insurance fund) and neither do you receive any benefits". He remarked that she boasted that she earns a salary of R7000 each month, has medical aid and will receive a provident fund once she retires and pointed out that he will receive none. She also stated that when she falls ill, she can take sick leave, but he will have to continue work even though he is ill. A few taxi drivers pointed out similar experiences.

Rabbi also said that "it is important to be nice to passengers and that they would be nice in return."

He further pointed out;

> "….we do behave badly as drivers and I have witnessed some of my colleagues also treat passengers badly. We are also to blame for the behaviour of passengers

> because we treat them with no respect, although I must admit that some do. Most of us never listen to passengers although they might have genuine complaints. Without these passengers we have no jobs, so we have to treat them well."

The majority of taxi drivers disagree with statements such as Rabbi's and argued that passengers are "unnecessarily difficult and refuse to corporate."

From the interviews conducted with minibus taxi drivers I found that drivers are constantly put under pressure by passengers and owners. I also found that it is difficult for them to keep up with their demands and that these pressures impact on their behaviour.

7.7 Minibus taxi drivers' complaints about the condition their taxis are in.

Papi, a taxi driver, also complained about the condition in which taxis are and that owners do not "want to repair the taxis." He complained that passengers refuse to travel in his taxi and constantly complain. Papi also stated that passengers are unaware that some of his "tyres are worn out" and said that if they were aware they would not travel with him. He asked me to take a picture of the tyres, hoping that this might make the owner aware that they need to be replaced.

Another taxi driver Tommy complained about the taxi which he drives and referred to it as a 'moving coffin. Most of his passengers refuse to occupy the front seats, (see Figure 23), because "they are very uncomfortable." He has asked the owner, who owns six other taxis, on several occasions to repair this taxi, but it only resulted in arguments

between himself and his employer. Commuters also argue with him daily about the condition of the seats.

Tommy also comments:

> "I have problems every day when I load passengers because no one wants to sit on the front seats. You see the person who sits next to me will have to lean on me and the person next to him will lean on him. Just imagine can a passenger really be seated like this from Randfontein to Jo'burg? You can just imagine my situation I cannot do anything because the owner wants the taxi, at the rank and to make money. If I complain I will be fired."



Figure 23 A photograph of some of the seats which the taxi driver referred to in the text.

Some complaints from certain drivers were about the condition in which the windows of taxis are, many drivers commented that they understand commuters' complaints regarding their safety, which is not considered at all. Some of the complaints from drivers were that windows are broken or do not close properly and that this is particularly a problem during winter.

Drivers argued that they are always told by passengers that they are driving "unroadworthy taxis" which are prone to accidents. They hoped that the Taxi Recapitalisation Program would make a difference in this regard but also feared that they might also "lose our jobs" as a result.

7.8 Taxi Drivers perspectives on traffic officers.

The majority of drivers pointed out that there are constant 'wars' between them and traffic officers. A driver argued that a traffic officer beat him up when he was stopped after he drove through a red robot and had no money to pay a bribe. A few also argued that traffic officers normally ask for bribes and that they have to pay a bribe of R100 if they are caught driving through a red robot and R20 if you are caught not wearing a seat belt.

Legally every taxi driver is supposed to have a public driver's permit before operating but evidently based on comments made from drivers some still do not have the necessary documentation. Minibus taxi drivers who do not meet the requirements are bound to be stopped by traffic officers and fined accordingly.

One driver whom I interviewed stated that he was stopped by traffic officers but did not have a Professional Driving Permit (PDP). He

complained that he had to pay a bribe of R1000 or faced paying a R1500 fine and 7 days suspension from the road. He stated; "I begged them for mercy and told them that I did not have money but they insisted that I pay R1000 to them immediately". He explained that he had no choice but to pay and saw the officers share the money.

Some drivers stated that they would never drive without a licence or permit and that they ensure that they obey the rules of the road at all times, and as a result, do not have problems with traffic officers.

Some drivers also argued that they prefer not to break the rules of the road, because they would have to pay fines from their salaries when caught. When drivers are arrested for breaking the law their family will have to assist them to pay. McCaul (2001:92) also points out that in the past Vaal owners employed drives without proper licences and then generally did not pay the fines if the driver is arrested, for such reasons. Some drivers on this route also commented that some owners do not ask for a licence when they hire drivers. Drivers argued that when there is a problem with authorities, the owner will "leave me at the police station, fetch the taxi and hire a new driver." These practices are not in terms of the Labour Relations Act of 1995.

The majority of the drivers at the Randfontein side of the route argued that traffic officers swear at them regularly especially females. A few drivers suggested that female traffic officers seem to be negative towards them as men. A driver stated that a female officer told him "you men are in the habit of abusing women I am in charge here not you." He stated that the officer called him stupid and said that he "baths under a tap." She made this statement due to the fact that taxi drivers start work at 4 am, and do not take proper baths at home as a result and so have to wash only their faces at taxi ranks. The driver

stated that he became angry and spoke his mind. Drivers commented that they are punished for the "sins of other men."

Drivers mentioned that male traffic officers are usually reasonable and only stop them for legitimate reasons and almost never give them a 'raw deal' unlike their female counterparts. Taxi drivers however noted that some traffic officers would stop them unnecessarily during the middle of the month when they are "broke" and do not have money. Officers then look for "petty mistakes" on the minibus and threaten them a fine, while really asking for a bribe. This happens less often at the end of the month.

While in the field I found that many taxi drivers had been driving without a valid driver's licence or a taxi permit for years. One driver stated that;

> "I had been driving without a taxi permit for years and I always have to run away from traffic officers because I always have to pay a fine or a bribe. I complained to the owner and he did not get me a permit for three years, I received my taxi permit recently."

One of the key arguments from minibus taxi drivers during the research was that owners and not the drivers are to blame for taxis which are not roadworthy and in a bad condition. They argued that their purpose is "simply to drive and hand fares collected to taxi owners."

7.9 Minibus taxi drivers' perspective on the Taxi Associations and Taxi Councils.

During my research I found that some taxi drivers were not frequently in contact with the associations or the councils. A few taxi drivers mentioned that the associations "do nothing for us as drivers." Taxi drivers complained about unfair labour practices and taxis which are in "a bad condition and unsafe." Some argued that they reported their experiences to associations and the councils but according to them "nothing was done."

Drivers also complained that they never attended any training programs which would assist them with their daily experiences and on "customer service." Taxi drivers who are not owners complained that they "do not understand what the associations are really doing to assist them with reported complaints, including matters regarding training and related issues." The majority of taxi drivers complained that executives at associations "never consider their side of the story in times of disputes"; they complained that they are always accused of being guilty."

The majority of drivers argued that they complained about the Taxi Recapitalisation Program and needed to understand what impact it will have on them, and they were referred to taxi owners who could also not explain their future in the industry. Drivers recently [in October 2006] protested against the Taxi Recapitalisation Program and proposed that all their traffic fines should be cancelled.

While interviewing drivers I questioned the following statement as published by Oirin News (2006:1) and whether it applies to all taxi drivers. According to the report some drivers talking about the Soweto

Taxis Service (STS), argued"...we need the association," and that, "the Taxi Association is like a father and a mother: they tell you what to do and they look after you." We come from different nations - Zulu, Xhosa, and Swazi - but we have one mother". According to the drivers when interviewed their views are contrary to this statement.

I decided to interview minibus taxi drivers who are owners on this issue to hear their views, they also complaint that the executive of the associations and councils makes conditions very difficult for them. They complained that the driver is always undermined and treated as "nothing" and all that "we as owners want is to make money and a living for our families." Page (2006) in the *Sunday Times* quotes a taxi owner who is driving his own taxi stating in excitement "Everybody is waiting for the 2010 World Cup, we taxi owners too. We are going to get more business. Tourists are going to use our taxis and we are going to get more money." Taxi drivers are constantly under pressure to drive fast in order to make more money in spite of the conditions in which their vehicles are, and many argued they do not know what benefits the 2010 Word Cup will bring them.

7.10 The "*Spirit of Ubuntu*" does it exist amongst minibus taxi drivers?

Minibus taxi drivers are often regarded as a collective and are hardly distinguished as individuals who behave and drive in their own unique ways. In most instances their behaviour is referred to as a collective, this might not necessarily be the case as already observed in this research. Both commuters and minibus taxi drivers were asked whether the "*spirit of ubuntu*," (solidarity or unity) really exists amongst fellow drivers.

My findings from some informants were that minibus taxi drivers always "stick together in times of disputes." The majority of the informants interviewed also argued that all drivers seem to have formed a united front. Most arguments were from what they observed on the road. Some have witnessed incidences where drivers were attacked by other road users and noticed how fellow drivers immediately assisted.

However most taxi drivers interviewed on this route argued that the "spirit of ubuntu" does not exist amongst them. What I also observed at taxi ranks is that a few drivers get along well and speak to each other regularly. I noticed that most drivers do not speak to each other and a few mentioned that they keep to the few who are part of their group. They also mentioned that a small group of drivers socialize with each other at taxi ranks and that some keep to themselves.

Most drivers interviewed also mentioned that they do not get along with each other as a result of various conflicts over passengers and queues. From the drivers interviewed on this route few argued that they would assist fellow drivers in times of dispute. I also found that there is "gossip and jealousy" amongst minibus taxi drivers.

Moabi (1976:51) also suggests that people who join hands in deviant enterprises need not necessarily be people with similar problems nor need their deviance be of the same kind. This was the case on the Randfontein – Johannesburg route and I noticed individuality from taxi drivers whose purpose was solely to transport passengers and make a living. On the other hand however there were those drivers who "vowed" that in times of dispute between a taxi driver and motorists' that they would not hesitate to intervene, to protect a fellow driver.

From my research conducted on "*the spirit of ubuntu*", the majority of the drivers argued that it does not exist in the minibus taxi industry and amongst them. Some drivers argued that although the "spirit of ubuntu" does not generally exist amongst drivers, they have similar interests and they would assist a driver in times of disputes with other road users.

7.11 Conclusion

In conclusion this chapter discussed minibus taxi drivers' views on the manner in which they are perceived. I discussed drivers' views on the impact which passengers, owners, motorists and traffic officer have on their overall behaviour and driving habits. I further discussed the "*Spirit of Ubuntu*" and whether it exists amongst minibus taxi drivers. I found from my interviews with minibus taxi drivers that although they are regarded by society at large as a collective this is not really the case. I also found that although the majority seem to behave similarly, some don't and hence conclude that minibus taxi drivers are not all "children born from the same mother."

Chapter 8 CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

8.1 Summary of Findings

Chapter 1 gave a brief explanation on what is required to become a driver, as well as who taxi drivers are. The concept "children born from the same mother" was explained. I further discussed the justification for this study. The chapter also outlined some of the research questions asked during fieldwork and finally give an outline of the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

The aim of the research was to find whether or not all minibus taxi drivers drive or behave in the same manner as complaints by the media and society would appear to suggest, and whether or not we can hence argue that they are all "children born from the same mother." The research primarily focussed on minibus taxi drivers on the Randfontein-Johannesburg route.

Chapter 2 discussed the research design and methodologies used in the field and secondly focused on the literature reviewed on the minibus taxi safety, taxi permits as well as taxi wars and other issues related to the industry.

My findings in chapter 3 were that the majority of the commuters interviewed complained that minibus taxi drivers drive badly, treat and behave badly towards their passengers.

Informants argued that minibus taxi drivers are not all similar and that some are kind and helpful. I found informants who prefer drivers

who drive over the legal speed limit and who argued that they refuse to travel with taxi drivers who drive at a relatively slow speed.

Queue marshals who were interviewed also argued that minibus taxi drivers are not all "children born from the same mother." They argued that drivers have different personalities and that their behaviour is mainly based on their cultural background, but, that some learned to behave in a particular way as a result of being in the minibus taxi industry.

I observed how minibus taxi drivers behave and interact with the women who sell food and various items, on the Johannesburg and Randfontein taxi ranks. I found that most of them behave contrary to what would be expected from the general comments made on them. Through the interviews conducted my overall findings were that minibus taxi drivers do not all behave and drive similar or have attitudes and hence are not all "children born from the same mother."

My findings from the taxi associations and taxi council, discussed in chapter 5, were that minibus taxi drivers behave and drive differently. The executive in both the associations and councils also argued that some of the taxi drivers' behaviour is shaped by their cultural background. Some arguments were taxi drivers driving habits and behaviour is shaped by commuters, passengers and motorists who stir bad driving habits. I discovered based on arguments made by the executives at the associations and councils that minibus taxi drivers are similar to any other employees in offices and the only difference being that the drivers' office is in public. Based on informants' views minibus taxi drivers are not all "children born from the same mother."

During interviews with minibus taxi drivers, presented in chapter 7, I discovered that taxi owners' main priority is to "make money" and that they do not take into consideration the circumstances under which minibus taxi drivers' work. I found that drivers were under pressure as a result of vehicles which are in a bad condition and that they are often fined by traffic officers. I discovered that drivers' driving habits and behaviour is shaped by passengers, owners and society at large. Uncertainty due to the Taxi Recapitalisation Program, has added to driver stress. I discovered that there is no overall unity and solidarity amongst minibus taxi drivers and that the "*Spirit of Ubuntu*" does not exist amongst them.

8.2 Overall conclusion

Although it has been argued on the basis of the research conducted, that minibus taxi drivers are overall not all "children born from the same mother."

The Taxi Recapitalisation Program is about making a third world service into a first world one, minibus taxi drivers transport "third world passengers." Passengers will not be able to afford the fares that this new service will cost and hence job losses will result for taxi drivers and in this regard their fears are legitimate.

South Africa has a "first world" landscape and a "third world" landscape which is divided by class, culture and race. What has to be taken into consideration is that the minibus taxi industry is a third world service which operates under a first world landscape which stipulates rules of the road and laws that has to be obeyed and understood by (in most instances lower class) taxi drivers in a third world industry.

What has to be noted is that unfortunately for minibus taxi drivers, their daily experiences are faced by commuters, motorists and third world traffic cops with their first world laws, who want to change their third world driving habits to first world driving. Minibus taxi drivers are expected to drive like private suburban motorists, which is almost impossible under the circumstances in which they work.

Based on my findings as stated in the report, the reality is that minibus taxi drivers drive under completely different circumstances to their fellow motorists. Drivers have to constantly drive over the speed limit to satisfy passengers who are demanding and insisting that they would arrive late at work. They are also forced to rush and compete with fellow drivers and take into consideration that they might lose out financially if they don't and hence end up paying fines and bribes. The driver is forced to ensure that his passengers are carried to their destination in spite of "ridiculous" working hours which he is working.

It is in this sense that minibus taxi drivers **are** "children born from the same mother", because they face similar challenges and experiences on the road from passengers, motorist, traffic officers and taxi owners under the same real conditions.

8.3 Further Research.

Further Research should be conducted on minibus taxi drivers who do obey the rules of the road and manage to treat their commuters well. It is important to find out how they manage to succeed when their counterparts who work under similar circumstances seem to fail?

Research should also be conducted on the current Taxi Recapitalisation Programme and how it impacts on the employment minibus taxi drivers, in a country whose unemployment rate is high and difficult to manage.

Further research should also be conducted on, the minibus taxi driver in the "new" minibus taxi, it is important to study if the latter will automatically change "problematic" driving habits and behaviour?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ansel David 2000, A to B in South Africa, The Worlds Magazine, http://www.g21.net/africa1.html

Baffoe Kojo 2001, Street Philosophy, Design Indaba Magazine, Interactive Africa., http://www.designindabamag.com/articles/R75.html

Bernard Russel H. 2006, ***Research Methodology in Anthropology***, Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, Altamara Press, 4th edition, Rawman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, New York, Toronto, Oxford.

Bosman J. & Browning P. 1989, The Shared-taxi as a means to promoting economic upward mobility, Annual Transformation Convention, August Pretoria.

Boudreaux Karol 2006, Mecartus Policy Series. Policy Comments No. 3 Taxing Alternatives: Poverty Alleviation and the South African Taxi/Minibus Industry. Mercatus Centre, George Mason University.

Coplan B. Coplan 1998, ***African Studies,*** the Anthropological Narration of Post-apartheid South Africa, 57(2) December, pp 133-146, University of the Witwatersrand South Africa.

Dugard Jackie 2001, From Low intensity War to Mafia War*:* Taxi Violence in South Africa (1987 – 2000). Website http://www.wits.ac.za/csvr/papers/papvtp4.htm

Dugard Jackie 2001, From Low Intensity to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa (1987-2000), *Violence & Transition Series* Volume 4-2001, Centre for the study of Violence and Reconciliation, Braamfontein South Africa.

Davies Eustace, 2006, Kombi Taxis-stepchildren of the SA passenger transport Industry, 28 September 2006, Moneyweb Holdings limited, 1997-2006, www.moneyweb.co.za

Eriksen Thomas Hylland 2001, ***Small Places, Large Issues***, An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology, Second Edition, Pluto Press, 345 Archway Road, London N6 5AA.

Fabian Johannes 1990, Presentation and Representation: ***The Other and Anthropological writing***, Critical Enquiry, Vol. 16 No.4 Summer (1990), pp 753-772, Chicago Press.

Fourie Jacobs Louise 2002 (Dissertation Summary) ***Rethinking the Formalisation of the Minibus Taxi Industry*** in South Africa, University of Pretoria. http://upetd.up.ac.za

Fordred Leslie 1994, "Natal Cockroaches Fly" in G. Marcus, ed. ***Cultural Producers in Perilous States***, Chicago, 23-53.

Freeman M., Ngcoya J, Chapman J. 1987, ***The Combi Taxi, Past, Present and Freedom***; Stellenbosch University.

Gaither Chris 2001, Cops step into Taxi Wars, http//journalism.berkerly.edu/projects/safrica/faicing/taxi.html

Govender Prega 2006, Pupils who Wreck South African Schools, *Sunday Times* 15 October 2006, South Africa.

Grimmet Neville, Taxi Hand Signals, http://www.durban.gov.za

Hodder – Willams Richard 1990, "Research into the political attitudes of white farmers in Marondera (Marandellas), ed., ***Truth be in the Field***. UNISA, Pretoria

Khoza M. Meshack 1992, Routes Ranks and Rebels: ***Feuding in the Taxi Revolution***. School of Geography, University of Oxford. Journal of South Southern African Studies.Vol. 18. No. No. Special Issue. History of Resistance in South Africa

Khoza M, Meshack 1997, Sisters on Slippery Wheels: ***Women Taxi Drivers in South Africa***, Transformation. School of Geography, University of Oxford.

Khoza M, Meshack 2001**,** Accumulation and Labour Relations in the Taxi Industry, Transformation 24, School of Geography University of Oxford http://www.blackwell –synergy.com

Labour Relations Act of 1995

McCaul Collen 1990, No Easy Ride, ***The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry***, South African Institute of Race Relations.

Measure on Mearsure 2003, International Magazine Issue, 13 October 2003.

Molcopanele Thabang 2006, Motor Industry Supports Taxi Plan, Despite Driving Habits, *Mail & Guardian* 20 March 2006.

Morrison Paul 1999, *Minibus-Bus Taxis in Africa*, Earth (Real), How to Catch a Ride, on One of Africa's Biggest Killers, UK Amazon, http:pdv.pdv.systeme.de/users/martinv/pgg/08R/08R075.html

Miller PK and Servas VP. 1989, A Process of Identification of research needs for the Southern Africa Black Taxi Association, Annual Transport Convention, Pretoria.

Nduru Moyiga 2006, Transport-South Africa, Putting the Brake on "Mobile Coffins", Friday June 23 2006

Orcutt Jon 1996 South Africa: Transportation Struggles in the Post Apartheid City, ITDP Representatives, South Africa.

Oirin Publishers 2006, Bridging the Information Gap, South Africa: "Confusion among minibus-taxi operators**,**" Tuesday 9 May 2006, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Page Paul 2006, Minibus taxi rev ups for 2010, *Sunday Times,* 11 August 2006, www.sundaytimes.co.za

Pele Mokgadi 2005, Minister's Speech: "Launch of the Sectoral Determination for Taxi Sector"; Speech given by Minister of Labour at African Window Conference Centre – Launch of the Tax Sectoral Determination on 28 April 2005.

Pinkerton James 2002, South Africa's Blacks Seek Economic empowerment, ***Newsday*** (5 September 2002), New American Foundation Publications.

Radebe Jeff 2006, Address by the Minister of Transport, *SABOA National Conference*, CSIR, Conference Centre Pretoria.

Road Transportation Act of 1977

Wolcott F. Harry 2005, Selection from ***The Art of Fieldwork*** Alta Mira 55-114.

Thale Thomas 2001, "Winds of Change in the Taxi Industry", Transport in Jo'burg, Johannesburg.
http://www.suntimes.co.za/2001/7/14/business/news/news24asp.

The National Land Transport Transition Act (NLTTA), Act No 22 of 2000,

Transport Deregulation Act No 80 of 1988

Yahnke Robert 2001, **Notes and Questions**, General College, University of Minnesota

www.maps.com