The role-set of the truck driver: Issues of worker autonomy, ideology, and identity

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The role-set of the truck driver: Issues of worker autonomy, ideology, and identity

Abstract
In this dissertation, I explore occupational socialization and identity formation within the context of work, the workplace, and work practices. The workers presented in this study are long-haul, freight carrying truck drivers. The components of this study include: (a) a socio-historical analysis of the trucking industry, and (b) how characteristics of the truck drivers' work influence his identity, and how this influence is different for various types of drivers.

I have reviewed changes in the trucking industry from its beginnings at the start of this century to its current status in 1996. This includes looking at organizations developed in response to the growth of the trucking industry such as the Interstate Commerce Commission, large hauling companies, and the union.

The second component of this study is concerned with how the truck driver maintains his professional identity when faced with influences from contradictory groups that make up his role-set. For this purpose, I conducted 76 in-depth interviews: 70 interviews were conducted with long haul truck drivers; 6, with other individuals in the industry. I asked them open-ended questions about aspects of their work as truck drivers as well as questions about their family life.

An overall finding of this study is that workers who experience more autonomy in their day-to-day work activities are more likely to resist understanding their identity through lay interpretations they receive from their role-set members. These differences in autonomy are experienced through two elements that might be present for any driver: (a) the Industry Status of the driver as independent or self-employed, or as working for a trucking company, or (b) the Length of Service of the driver in his occupation. These different elements that drivers experience at different levels allow the truck driver’s socialization process to be mediated, resulting in a variety of attitudes towards work that seem to vary according to the independence of the driver (Industry Status) and how long the worker has been driving (Length of Service).

Keywords
Sociology, Industrial and Labor Relations, Economics, Labor, Sociology, Social Structure and Development

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THE ROLE-SET OF THE TRUCK DRIVER: 
ISSUES OF WORKER AUTONOMY, IDEOLOGY, AND IDENTITY 

BY 

Bruce P. Day
B.A., University of New Hampshire, 1987
M.A., University of New Hampshire, 1992

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

September, 1996
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

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7/2/1996
Date
DEDICATION

For the family that surrounds me with love and support. My brothers, Brian and Barry, who showed me we all have our own paths to follow. My parents, Don and Carlene Day, who would never give up on me, sticking with me in dark times, and sharing the times of light. My wife, Amy Sosik-Day, who is my heart and the center of my life. And lastly, but most importantly, the two tiny planets that now orbit my universe, my daugthers, Sophie Alexandra and Isabel Frances Day. The work I do is to make this world a better place for you, and to prepare the world for your enchanting presence.
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I would like to thank the employees and management of the truck stop where interviews were also conducted, as well as the teaching staff of the Oxford Hills Tractor Trailer Drivers Education Program.

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE-SET OF THE TRUCK DRIVER:
ISSUES OF WORKER AUTONOMY, IDEOLOGY, AND IDENTITY

by

Bruce P. Day
University of New Hampshire, September, 1996

In this dissertation, I explore occupational socialization and identity formation within the context of work, the workplace, and work practices. The workers presented in this study are long-haul, freight carrying truck drivers. The components of this study include: (a) a socio-historical analysis of the trucking industry, and (b) how characteristics of the truck drivers' work influence his identity, and how this influence is different for various types of drivers.

I have reviewed changes in the trucking industry from its beginnings at the start of this century to its current status in 1996. This includes looking at organizations developed in response to the growth of the trucking industry such as the Interstate Commerce Commission, large hauling companies, and the union.

The second component of this study is concerned with how
the truck driver maintains his professional identity when faced with influences from contradictory groups that make up his role-set. For this purpose, I conducted 76 in-depth interviews: 70 interviews were conducted with long haul truck drivers; 6, with other individuals in the industry. I asked them open-ended questions about aspects of their work as truck drivers as well as questions about their family life.

An overall finding of this study is that workers who experience more autonomy in their day-to-day work activities are more likely to resist understanding their identity through lay interpretations they receive from their role-set members. These differences in autonomy are experienced through two elements that might be present for any driver: (a) the Industry Status of the driver as independent or self-employed, or as working for a trucking company, or (b) the Length of Service of the driver in his occupation. These different elements that drivers experience at different levels allow the truck driver’s socialization process to be mediated, resulting in a variety of attitudes towards work that seem to vary according to the independence of the driver (Industry Status) and how long the worker has been driving (Length of Service).
CHAPTER I

SOCIALIZATION AND IDENTITY: THE CASE OF THE TRUCK DRIVERS

This is an exploratory study, concerned with truck drivers, their role-set, adaptation to cross-pressures, sense of professionalism, individualism, and autonomy, their world view, and the influences that shapes their perspectives.

This chapter will begin by stating the problems that will be addressed. Secondly, I present a discussion of identity and the worker. Thirdly, I will discuss Merton's conceptual framework of the role-set (1957) as the context that will be used to investigate the world view of the truck driver. The truck driver's role-set consists of the following: Federal legislators, including the National Transportation and Safety Board; state and local law-enforcement agencies, including the state Departments of Transportation; labor unions, especially the teamsters; hauling companies, some of which are employers (vs. self-employed truckers), warehouse workers (lumpers), customers; the public; and fellow truck drivers. The final section will review the existing literature concerning the identity of truck drivers and how these images are formed.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The following propositions serve as the central questions focused on the issues of this study:

Proposition 1: A driver’s perceived level of autonomy (as well as the importance he places on this autonomy) is dependent on his length of service in the industry. This relationship will also be influenced by the intervening attribute of the driver being “captive” (working for a company) or “independent” (working for himself) within the industry.

Proposition 2: A driver working in the industry as captive will perceive less conflict among members of his role-set than the perceived role-set conflict of the independent driver.

Proposition 3: A driver’s understanding of his professional and public identity varies with his length of service and whether he is captive or independent in the industry.

Proposition 4: Conflict experienced by the driver will influence his level of integration within the industry, and is dependent on whether he is captive or independent in the industry.

Figure 1 (next page) presents these variables in a flow chart to clarify the relationships described by the above propositions.
Figure 1  THE PROCESS OF OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY

Status Types

Length Of Service

Captive or Company Drivers

Independent Drivers

Workers Perceptions Of The Role-Set

Conflicting Interpretations Of Occupational Identity

Influences From The Role-Set

Occupational Identity

High or Low Levels of Industry Integration

Truck Driver's Occupational Socialization
The flow chart on the previous page is an illustration of the social process I will be exploring in this study. The independent variables of "captive" and "independent" designate whether the truck driver works on his own as an owner operator (independent) or as an employee of a hauling company (captive). I hypothesize that the variable "Length of Service" also has an affect that influences the occupational socialization of the truck driver, and influences the truck driver's process of identity creation. The dynamic part of this flow chart is contained by the continuous process involving the truck driver's role-set. Workers develop perceptions of the role-set surrounding their occupation (Worker's Perception of the Role-Set), and the role-set, with differing levels of involvement or influence, send messages through social action or policy to inform the perceptions of the worker (Influences From the Role-Set). This process can result in a feedback effect that is described as "Conflicting Interpretations of Occupational Identity." From this dynamic process of individual perception and social influence comes the occupational identity, in this case, of the truck driver. With this in mind, my working definition of identity is that it is a combination of designated status levels (for this occupation those are: being captive or independent in the industry, and seniority or length of service), and the dynamic process of the individual interacting with his or her role-
set. One element of the truck driver’s identity that will be a particular focus of this study is autonomy. Autonomy is defined as the freedom and/or independence that the worker perceives and experiences as part of his day to day worklife. I place particular emphasis of the element of autonomy as the worker understands it because I want to show the link between the worker’s worldview and how this is incorporated into his identity.

Similar to the role autonomy plays in this research, ideology is defined as the justification the worker uses for his understanding of what the occupation is and how the occupation or social milieu dictates the actions of the driver. Here again emphasis is placed on how ideology is understood by the workers in the occupation even though the source of the ideology maybe from outside of the occupation such as individualism and capitalism; two elements of many occupational ideologies that can’t be connected to anyone occupation as its source. Even though I am exploring the link of autonomy, and ideology to identity, I am not placing these variables as a subset of the truck drivers identity. Instead, I will show the connection of these variables to identity while also commenting on how they influence the truck driver’s work independently from identity.

I also hypothesize that this process not only results in
the worker's occupational identity, but also indicates the worker's level of integration in the industry. Industry integration is a composite measure that includes indicators such as a worker's expression of professionalism, how strongly he identifies with his fellow workers, and how much conflict is generated by the opposing interpretations of the occupation expressed by the worker and his role-set. In this case, I am not using conflict in the classical Marxian sense. For this study there is no utility in describing conflict as a tool of class oppression. Instead, conflict is defined as "causing or modifying interest groups, unifications, organizations. Conflict is thus designed to resolve divergent dualisms; it is a way of achieving some kind of unity" (Simmel, 1955:13). This definition doesn't stray too far from Marx in that it does look at conflict as a catalyst for social change, yet for Simmel, the results of change tend to be further integration and stability of society while Marx looks toward more continuous conflict and social upheaval. It is this aspect of Simmel's definition that I believe makes this view of conflict more appropriate for a case study of an occupation. When looking at a specific occupation and how it fits within the world of work, as well as the rest of society, mainenance and stability of an occupation are more central elements within a single occupation and class oppression would be more successfully applied to the entire occupational hierarchy.
Certainly, some would disagree with this point, but Simmel's definition of conflict is more closely aligned with the direction of this research.

The Truck Driver As A Case Study

Recent concern over safety issues within the trucking industry has set the stage for renewed attempts at further regulation of truck drivers. The driver has been pointed out as the source of these safety issues with little attention turning to the other agents that are part of the trucking industry. The safety issues that are at the center of the controversy may never be corrected if regulators continue to target the workers rather than the trucking industry. In the face of renewed attempts at regulation, the truck driver must maintain his own perception of his work, while negotiating new influences that would, if successful, change the driver's perception of his work. Understanding the connection between the involvement of the worker within an industry, and how the worker negotiates personal perceptions of his profession can offer insight into how to resolve conflicts that occur between the worker and the different regulating agencies of an occupation.

Workers do possess a certain measure of autonomy with regard to defining the activities of an occupation as well as
holding the right of inclusion in the occupational community. Although Hughes (1971:287-292) seems to link his concepts of "license" and "mandate" only to high-status occupations that are usually dubbed "professions," the two concepts in my opinion apply to all occupations, for occupations are, among other things, guilds that attempt to protect themselves, estates that compete economically and socially with others within the overall political structure of the nation-state, and extended families or communities of social bonds and mutual assistance (Khleif, 1981:168). Hughes use of the concepts "license" and "mandate" is helpful to the analysis of the social situation described above. "License" is meant to describe both the legal permission to perform work in an occupation, and the expectation of being part of an occupational community due to lifestyle or work experience. In this sense, license describes inclusion as both the permission and the acceptance of the worker into an occupation. "Mandate" establishes the power of defining the occupation and its practices to clients and the general public. This places the power of establishing proper procedure in the hands of the members of the occupation, usually in high-status occupations or professions, but, nevertheless, exhibited by low-status occupations also. Definition of procedures may be influenced by lay interpretations: "In times of crisis, there may arise a
general demand for conformity to lay modes of thought and discourse," (Hughes, 1971:290). Lay interpretations can come from any number of sources, including those with the authority to regulate the occupation, but themselves come from outside the occupational community.

There is no identity without boundaries; hence, occupations strive to protect their boundaries to keep out intruders and strengthen their own ties of allegiance. Not only do occupations have license and mandate to maintain the boundaries of their members' work, but when other groups feel there is a crisis within the occupation the result is often external pressure to change boundaries or procedures. By detailing the aspects of license and mandate that are experienced by truckdrivers I expect to find evidence of external pressures, or crises, that challenge the workers' definitions of their occupation.

For this research, I will examine literature relevant to the structure of occupations and occupational identity. The work of Hughes is most relevant here as well as selections from Berger's (1964), and Merton's (1957) writings.

The case study design of this research is used to construct a more detailed exploration of the working world of the truck driver. This choice of method does limit the generalizability of the conclusions of this research, but my hope is that using a case study will help to clarify the
important variables within this research, opening the doors to the possibility of larger research projects designed around the same assumptions concerning occupational identity, conflict and industry integration.

A Word About Identity

This research is a case study of truck drivers and some issues of the trucking industry. I will be examining how workers shape their own occupational identity by either accepting or rejecting the interpretations of others, both within and outside of the particular occupation. My primary concern is to see how identity is constructed by long distance, freight-hauling truck drivers.

Identity is constructed through the interactions of the individual with the society he or she is immersed in. G.H. Mead has pointed out that the very "self" we know as our identity is one that is both a "transitory image" and a structure or configuration of typical responses that people have toward themselves (Mead, 1934:140). This means, according to Mead, that the self can be, to some degree, crystallized in a set of attitudes towards oneself, yet also contain a fluidity that allows for adjustment in different social contexts. In other words, identity is a social construct that can be viewed as both a structure as well as a process for each member of society. Berger and Luckmann (1966:174) point out that identity is historically-produced,
linking to "specific historical structures [that] engender identity types, which are recognizable in individual cases."

It is the work of Hughes (1958:42-55) that connects identity with the study of occupations. Different occupations are individual cases that can be used to look at identity types. Hughes recognized that a person's work, as part of social life, is a central identity type that "is one of the more important parts of his social identity, of his self; indeed, of his fate in the one life he has to live, for there is something almost as irrevocable about choice of occupation as there is about a choice of mate" (1958:43). Obviously an occupation is enhanced as an aspect of one's identity to the extent that one has an allegiance to it, is proud of it, feels that it defines him. I am assuming that truck drivers are defined by their work.

Role-Set and the Truckdriver

In this section, (section A) I will first present Merton’s conceptual framework of the role-set, incorporating examples from truck drivers and the trucking industry to illustrate the usefulness of the role-set as an analytical tool. Section B(pp.20) reviews some of the recent literature on the work of truck drivers, and demonstrates how the role-set, though not referred to specifically in these studies, is, nonetheless, employed to describe the identity of the truck

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driver.

A. Role-Set of the Truck Driver

One of the core variables that will be explored in this research is the role-set of the truck driver. My working definition of role-set is any and all groups with the ability or potential to influence the everyday work of the truck driver. This could be a long list of connected groups with truck drivers as their core, but for this research I will be using a circumscribed set of these influential groups. Among the members of the truck drivers' role-set that will be included are:

1. Law enforcement including: state police, local police, and Department of Transportation officers.
2. The Teamsters union.
3. Freight hauling companies.
4. Other truck drivers met on the road.
5. Motorists sharing the roadways with truck drivers.
6. Clients receiving freight including: shippers, receivers, and Lumpers (paid freight handlers).
7. The family of the truck driver.

Merton conceptualizes society as a network of role-sets, that is each person or group associated with the role-set of the truck driver -- for example, the state Department of Transportation -- in turn has a role-set attached to it, e.g., the state budget office personnel, the attorney general's
office personnel, and so forth. In turn, further, the attorney general's office has among its role-set the state governor's office, and so forth. The role-set according to Merton, is an expansion of the traditional view that each social status has an associated role. Role, as Linton (1936) has opined, is the dynamic aspect of status, that is, of actual behavior associated with, for example, being a truck driver. Merton makes the distinction "that each social status involves not a single associated role, but an array of roles" (Merton, 1957:110). It is to this array of roles that Merton gives the name role-set. Separate from the idea of "multiple roles" -- which Merton points out should in actuality be "various social-statuses" -- the role-set is a social structure that usually allows the status-occupant to have some stability in his social relations; we might picture this social structure as a web of relations that serve to minimize conflict and generally support the status-occupant.

The challenge to research is how we may apply this theoretical concept of the role-set to identify and articulate social structures:

This notion of the role-set ... raises the general problem of identifying the social mechanisms which serve to articulate the expectations of those in the role-set so that the occupant of a status is confronted with less conflict than [he] would obtain if these mechanisms were not at work (Merton, 1857:111)
The role-set has been a widely accepted analytical tool in social research that has been used to investigate a variety of social roles, such as: psychiatric residents, (Khleif, 1974); school superintendents, (Khleif, 1975); college athletes, (Adler and Adler, 1987); advertising executives, (Zey-Ferrell and Ferrell, 1982); and government research and development executives, (Miles, 1977). The strength of Merton's concept of role-set emerges from his emphasis on the social arrangements that integrate the expectations of the members of the role-set. This orientation keeps his focus on social structure instead of individual coping strategies of the status-occupant.

Still, the role-set isn't conceived to be wholly a structure of stability. Due to the differing status levels of the members of the role-set, particularly in relation to the status-occupant, there is room for conflicting expectations. The status-occupant is compelled to deal with these conflicting expectations, either one-to-one or as a complete set that needs to be more fully integrated into the expectations of the status-occupant. The various status levels, the hierarchy, of members of any role-set, then, are the fundamental disturbance of any role-set. Having identified this problematic, Merton uses it to clarify two central questions that need to be answered concerning any status-occupant's role-set:
1. Which social mechanisms, if any, operate to counteract such instability of role-sets?
2. Under which circumstances do these social mechanisms fail to operate, with resulting conflict and confusion? (Merton, 1957:112-113)

The social mechanisms Merton describes can be thought of as the tools social actors use to mediate the differences between their own perception of identity, and the perceptions others form of the actors identity.

Work, perhaps, is the chief definer of identity. As mentioned earlier, Hughes 1958:43 says, "...A man's work is one of the more important parts of his social identity, of his self, indeed, of his fate..." Doing is being; for every role, for every type of work, there is an imputed identity, understood by others, and usually internalized by the person himself (Khleif, 1985:101). Berger (1964:215) saw that at the heart of the study of work is a problem of meaning, of what is taken-for-granted about the activities of people, activities legitimized and institutionalized in society.

In industrial society, fragmented and ever-changing work no longer provides the person with a firm profile: "Status and identity based on work have become fluid, insecure, and thereby subject to manipulation" (Berger, 1964:216), that is, to one-upmanship, competitiveness, and protection of "image."

In the words of Hughes (1971:339-340),
It happens over and over that the people who practice an occupation attempt to revise the conceptions which their various publics have of the occupation and of the people in it. In doing so, they also attempt to revise their own conception of themselves and of their work.

There are usually two systems of work in industrial society (Khleif, 1980, "Ethnography of Occupations"), those of the overworld and the underworld (partially interconnected, for example, through doctors, lawyers, politicians, and law-enforcement personnel who may operate in both the former and the latter world). In the overworld, the occupational hierarchy consists of: (a) high-status occupations, established professions, e.g., in the U.S., medicine and law; (b) emergent professions, e.g., social work, school teaching, or nursing, that is, professions that have not yet gained full autonomy and prestige; (c) trades; and (d) unskilled work. This is a hierarchy of competitiveness, of defense and offense, of more-or-less stable or precarious self-definition.

Berger presents the hierarchical structure of work in industrial society as a typology based on a continuum metaphor: (a) work roles with importance, prestige, and fulfillment; the professions; (b) a gray neutral region of mostly blue and white-collar jobs, which includes the masses of labor; and (c) a zone of "oppression," where jobs that present a threat to self-identification are located. Whereas
identification with one's work as a basis of self-presentation and identity may vary from role-closeness to role-neutrality or role distance (Goffman, 1961:83-152; Levitin, 1964; Stebbins, 1967; Khleif, 1985) and be associated with all levels of the occupational typology outlined by Khleif (1980), or Berger (1964), what is worth emphasizing is the precariousness of identity particularly in the lower zones of the occupational structure. Occupations under pressure, for example, such as that of the truck driver, tend to be constantly fraught with issues of identity, with protection of identity.

Berger (1964:227, 232) adopts both a structural and social-psychological approach to the study of occupations: (a) analysis of an occupation in terms of its location within the larger society, its economic base, social and political organization, and capacity to influence legislation, and (b) analysis of an occupation in terms of the work situation it engenders, in terms of its environment as a social system, a social milieu with different actors and personality types. Both the structural and social-psychological aspects of an occupation are constantly changing, with concomitant change in social relations and identity. These two aspects of the study of occupations, the structural and the social-psychological, will be reflected in questions incorporated into my interview guide with truck drivers.
Another notion that may be applied to my study of truck drivers is what Hughes presents -- in relation to professions, but which I would like to adapt to the study of lower-status occupations -- is that of the three aspects of self-presentation and inter-personal relations: (a) the creed of an occupation, what Berger calls the "ideological aspect," that is the idealized image of the occupation as worthy and useful; (b) the code of an occupation, that is, the rules and guidelines to regulate its internal relations among colleagues as well as external relations with clients; and (c) the etiquette of an occupation, that is, its bedside manner, so-to-speak, the way its members treat the public, especially on first encounters. Again, items for creed, code, and etiquette will be part of my interviews with truck drivers.

B. Studies of the Truck Driver’s Work

The previous section (A, pp.12) has described the role-set of the truck driver. Now we focus our attention on research on driver’s work.

There are very few studies that address the truck driver or his role-set as a central focus of the research, but the few that are available offer excellent insight to the work and identity of the truck driver. Blake’s (1974) work for example, establishes categories for the images truck drivers create for themselves. To a certain degree we might consider
these images as the results of role-set influences, and through considering the role-set I hope to understand the possible sources of these self-images.

In all, seven images of the truck driver were developed in this study. Blake calls this the "truck driver mystique" which is "a set of abstract characterizations of types of truckers and trucker situations" (1974:212).

1. **Knight of the Highway** - The truck driver as a traveling good Samaritan, rendering aid to motorists in need. An image reinforced by songs such as Red Sovine's "Phantom 309" about a ghostly trucker still picking up hitchhikers after his death in a truck accident where he saved a bus full of school children. Also "The Ballad of Jim Blynn" paints a similar image of the trucker as lonesome hero.

2. **Brute Monster** - The driver as a callous yet powerful controller of the road by virtue of the enormous strength and power of his vehicle. This image can be seen in the popular media in the 90 minute made-for-television movie "Duel" in which a motorist angers a truck driver and then is relentlessly pursued by the trucker. The trucker is a faceless monster hiding behind a darkened windshield trying to push the motorist off the road. Despite this fictionalized account, there has been reported cases of this activity to trucking magazines such as "Overdrive."

3. **Sailor of the Highway** - The romantic adventurer
navigating the roads of America. An image built on freedom, independence, and control.

4. Asphalt Cowboy - This image is another that is immortalized in song: "A faded pair of Levi's, sharp pointed rubbered out boots, Fancy buckle on his belt, he's got that Texas look. He's a cowboy. He's a diesel - doggin' truck drivin' asphalt cowboy" (Lawton Williams). According to Blake, this is an image that can be seen at truck stops through dress mostly, but also through behaviors such as "raisin' Hell."

5. King of the Road - A self-image based on the power of the truck and the almost eagle eye view the truck commands over the other motorists on the road. "I really enjoy ridin' above everybody. Listenin' to those pipes roar out there I really feel like I'm king of the road (Overdrive, May, 1971).

6. Professional - An image not disseminated in song, humor, or truck stop talk as much as an image pushed by driving schools and by feature articles in trucking magazines. Excellence in job performance and a professional attitude are accentuated to validate the work of the trucker as well as to maintain boundaries - keeping out unprofessional truckers - and define norms considering procedure.

7. Small Businessman - Stems from the professional image as well as the non-industrial structure of the work. They
manage their own time and schedule once the work has begun.

All of these images are ones observed by Blake when he conducted his study in 1974. Twenty years have passed as well as massive deregulation in the trucking industry since Blake outlined these trucker images. If many of these images are still prevalent for the truck driver than it would seem these aspects of identity have more to do with the work at hand for the truck driver with little connection to the shape of the industry, which is largely most of the truck driver's role-set.

Bisanz (1977), in his field study of an independent driver's strike, makes excellent observations about trucker culture. Instead of the self-images of Blake (1974), Bisanz creates generic categories to describe the trucker culture from outside the occupation, as an observer. On closer inspection, Bisanz' work begins to detail some of the elements that are used in the fifth mechanism of Merton's role-set: mutual social support among status-occupants. One of the first categories Bisanz deals with is meant to describe background and lifestyle orientations of the drivers including some points about family support:

*Inner Directed, Self-Reliant Orientation.* There are important similarities in the background and lifestyle orientations of independent truck drivers. Many have rural backgrounds and were raised in independent truck driver families. Most
continue to live in rural areas. Owner-operators tend to be inner directed, and to value self-reliance and success through independent accomplishment (Bisanz, 1977:63).

Bisanz also found that despite the independent nature of the work and the physical separation of workers on the job, there are extensive communication networks. These communication networks are based on the use of the citizen band radio (CB), and can at times be ad hoc local networks to established networks between truckers and CB radio users with base transmitters in their homes. Information can be quickly relayed to other drivers or drivers might engage in discussion of any number of professional and nonprofessional topics.

Social networks are another important element of the trucker culture according to Bisanz. Social networks range from the connections drivers have to other drivers living in the same rural areas, to the simple support networks of truckstops and the truckstop workers. Friends and connections are often made at the many truckstops, and in areas where a trucker might have a regular route, certain truckstops may be frequented often. Social networks were also supported through membership in independent trucker organizations such as the Fraternal Association of Steel Haulers, and the Mid-west Truckers Association. Each of these aspects of Bisanz' study enhances our understanding of at least this fifth mechanism of the role-set.
The two most recent studies, (Ouellet, 1994; Rounds, 1993), both work as detailed case studies of the truck driver's work. Due to this focus on the trucker and his work tasks, in both cases, a rich array of role-set members are also presented in detail. Rounds' book (1993) is an account of how Arthur Imperatore, the owner and director of APA Transport Corporation of North Bergen, New Jersey, has succeeded in winning the loyalty and devotion of his truck drivers by "treating them right" although encountering a "notoriously hostile labor market." The book includes conversations with, and profiles of, a number of truck drivers, dock workers, dispatchers, billers, salespeople, and company managers, that is, of members of the trucker's role-set.

Ouellet's thesis for his study is "how a worker's sense of honor is created and maintained" (1994:7). Ouellet believes that the high effort levels and pride for the work of driving the trucks refutes the assumption that blue-collar workers are only "people to whom things are done" (1994:7). Ouellet, to some extent, views his study as a critique of many earlier blue-collar studies:

Lost in these formulations is a full understanding of workers' needs and motives and how these shape workplace activity. In the case of trucking, work is more than a battle for more money or better pay rates and against monotony and fatigue. It is a place where the self is forged. Truckers attempt to manipulate the workplace to construct a positive
self, a self they can live with, that places them
in a satisfactory relation to their social world
(Ouellet, 1994:11).

To support his thesis Ouellet develops an analysis of the
truck driver's role-set. Ouellet divides the role-set into
basic themes; for example, his chapter on work audiences
basically deals with those members of the role-set that could
be thought of as having a higher level of observability of the
truck driver's work tasks. In this chapter, Ouellet looks at:
the police, other government officials, hauling company
support personnel, dock workers, and other drivers. Ouellet's
approach is much more sociological than Rounds' who is trained
as a journalist. This should be looked upon as a benefit to
this study though, because most of the same role-set members
are considered in both books, offering a rich analysis from
two very different perspectives.

One important similarity links Merton's work on the role-
set, and the research I have just presented on truck driver's
identity. This link stems from the fact that none of the
above research can describe the identity of the truck driver
without incorporating information from the other members of
the truck driver's role-set. By presenting this literature,
I wish to draw attention to the identity as a structure that
develops out of social relations, particularly when we are
talking about occupational identity.
SUMMARY

For every product in the United States that is manufactured there is a truck driver that transports that product. Every product that arrives at our ports is transported across the land by a truck driver. The trucking industry is possibly the largest domestic industry in the United States, and -- since deregulation in the early 1970's -- this industry has had very little positive attention. It is hoped that this research would clarify how occupational socialization contributes to a worker's identity so that we may better understand the role that identity takes on in the workplace and during labor disputes.

In this chapter I have stated the problems that will be the central foci of this exploratory study, as well as presented discussions on identity, Merton's role-set, and previous literature regarding the identity of truck drivers.

Chapter II will be a presentation of how the sample of truck drivers was selected, and a description of the methods used for collecting data. This chapter will also include a discussion of my role as a researcher through descriptions of the field experience.
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS: AN INQUIRY INTO WORKERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF IDENTITY AND OCCUPATIONAL WORLDVIEW

This chapter presents the sample used for this study, as well as methodological concerns connected with studying long haul truck drivers. First, I describe the sample and setting, as well as my methods of data collection. Secondly, I discuss the manner in which these data are analyzed. Finally, I discuss my role in the field including some issues of participant observation.

Sample and Method

How do workers make sense of the messages they receive from the authority structure that is imbedded in their role-set? What reference groups make up the influential authority that affects the work of the truck driver? This study examines how workers negotiate competing messages from their role-set with their own notions of identity.

Fundamental to understanding issues of occupational socialization and identity is to consider reference groups that develop links from within an occupation, as well as links to the fringe of an occupation. Expectations of an occupational role are not mere reflections of the idiosyncratic views of individuals; they are based on group norms and values. Subjective judgments about a person’s
status (whether it is self judgment or the judgment of others) are made through comparison with (or in reference to) some other group or individual. "Thus, a reference group can be any group to which an individual compares himself or herself in arriving at a judgement about his or her status" (Pavalko, 1988:88). Kelley (1952) and Shibutani (1955) point out that reference groups can serve other, more specific functions for the individual than just comparison. Kelley (1952) opined that reference groups have both a comparative function and a normative function. The comparative function is most commonly thought of as the evaluative aspect of the reference group. The normative function, on the other hand, refers to the groups ability to set and enforce standards. To complete this trinity, Shibutani (1955) pointed out that reference groups also provide the individual with acceptance either within a particular group or within a larger social community. This study examines how the workers within an occupation, truck drivers, perceive the references groups (comparative, normative, and accepting) that contribute to both their socialization — the process of endoctrination into the occupation— and their identity — the acceptance and rejection of role-set influences to create a catalogue of characteristics that result in the individual driver’s view of himself within the occupation. Specifically, what do truck
drivers understand about the influence of these reference groups on their own identity, and their perceptions of other workers in the same occupation? For example, many of the drivers interviewed expressed concern because of how they are pushed to drive illegally by overburdened company schedules. The widespread knowledge of this practice is embedded in the driver's identity though it is often expressed as; everyone is doing it, it is illegal and the other drivers do it for the money, but I do it to survive, I am not a criminal, there are drivers that are criminals, that is not me.

These difficult and often contradictory aspects of identity and role-set pose challenges to the researcher through analysis, but perhaps the greater challenge is gaining access to an occupation that is based on isolation and travel. Interviewing in the workplace would mean finding the stationary elements of the truck driver's work, and approaching him there. By looking at the different role-set members, I able to find access to the drivers by becoming a part of their role-set, by attaching myself to one of their reference groups.

In the next section I discuss my method of gaining access to the workers (specifically, long haul truck drivers), provide a description of my methods of sample collection, and present a description of each setting where interviews took place.
The Sample and Setting:

Initially, the challenge to gaining access to my sample seemed like a daunting one, but through perseverance I was able to conduct interviews in a number of settings. My first plan involved simply "cold calling" truck drivers at local truck stops. Truck stops vary in size and are scattered around major highways and hub highway areas. A hub highway area is a place where major routes and highways intersect, thus you have a lot of traffic coming from many different areas. The truck stops I would be using as settings for interviews surround just such a hub area. Truck stops are highway rest areas designed mostly for truck and truck driver traffic. They offer larger bays for the fueling of big trucks, mechanics and parts for tractor trailers, restaurants, laundry facilities, showers, phones, fax machines, gift shops, television screening rooms, job boards that advertise loads available nationwide, and some even have attached motels for drivers to spend the night in some place other than in the cab of their trucks. Despite this emphasis on the truck driver, these stops are open to the general public also and are, in fact, working towards attracting a wider clientele as described in this quote from the manager of one area truck stop:

We certainly realize that the bulk of our business will be from the truck drivers, and we've remodeled with that in mind. We have TV's at every seat,
courtesy phones for free local calls or easier long distance, private showers in the back, a movie screening room...but we don’t want to lose sight of the traveling customers also, you know, people driving through on vacation, we have tried to create an atmosphere for them too. A clean place to eat, get gas, what ever! We need their business just as much (Interview 53:262,Sept.29, 1995).

This openness to the public was certainly something that would work in my favor for making contacts, but I admit that I was still intimidated to approach the truck drivers in this “neutral zone” between the public and their work.

During the design phase of this research project, a situation that could best be explained as serendipity occurred. While discussing some of my research ideas with students in one of the undergraduate classes that I teach, one student mentioned to me that he worked on the loading dock of a large grocery store warehouse. He pointed out that in this setting, he came in contact with at least a hundred truck drivers a week. The student supplied me with the name of his supervisor and through this initial contact I was able to gain access to the loading dock. It was through my time spent on the loading dock that the first phase of interviews were completed.

Through connections I made as a result of gaining access to the loading dock, I came in contact with a professional driving association. From this organization I received newsletters, manuals, and press releases connected to the
trucking industry. I was also invited to attend the bi-monthly business meetings of the organization. This connection also resulted in interviews, but unfortunately I was only able to schedule a handful due to the distance many of the members lived from me, and the demands of the schedules truck drivers must keep.

Only after conducting a number of interviews on the loading docks, and in the homes of a few drivers, did I return to the truck stop to cold call subjects. I felt much more comfortable approaching drivers in this situation because of the previous experience on the loading dock. To some extent I felt more socialized into their world, with a greater depth of understanding of the language as well as the responses that might be elicited by my questions.

I interviewed a total of seventy six persons involved in the industry of truck driving. Of these seventy six persons, seventy were drivers (though one was no longer working because of a permanent disability). The interviews were conducted at a warehouse loading dock (the frozen foods dock, and the dry goods dock), in the homes of drivers, at a truckstop, as well as one driver being interviewed in his truck on an overnight run, and a driving school instructor at the school while supervising a driving class. The number of persons interviewed in each setting is listed in Table 1 below.

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TABLE 1:

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION BY INTERVIEW SETTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frozen Foods</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Groceries</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver's Homes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck Stop</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On The Road</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>76</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample for this study is a snowball design. Within each of the settings I listed above I used no other criteria for choosing subjects other than who was available and willing to talk. Some may argue that gathering a sample in this manner -- interviewing the "willing" subject -- would result in a biased account of the situation. I would agree with that assessment if I were confronted with many refusals to be interviewed, suggesting a self-selecting population. When combining all settings I had no more than two refusals where the subject said they didn’t want to be interviewed, and five more refusals due to time constraints and the need for the driver to leave the setting. Besides, this is an exploratory study intended to generate hypotheses and interpretations, not a statistical survey of a region.

Although I conducted interviews in these various
settings, and there are bound to be some differences in responses between settings, I am not suggesting that these settings bear any significance to the responses given. I do assert, however, that there are qualitative differences in responses based upon such characteristics as whether a driver is an independent or a captive of the industry, and the length of service of the driver. The breakdown of the sample of drivers (six interviews were conducted of non-drivers) by length of service is presented below in Table 2.

**TABLE 2:**

**SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION BY YEARS OF SERVICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 to 10 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 20 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although my sample distribution for length of service is very equally balanced, I think much of this circumstance can be explained by looking at the third category "21+ years." If I were to further separate the sample in decades as I have for the first two categories, we would see a splintering of the last category due to it currently including drivers with service records up to forty five years. I decided to collapse
this category under the assumption that any worker with twenty
or more years of their life invested in one occupation is most
likely to remain within the occupation, and has probably been
fully socialized into his occupational role.

Another important aspect of the sample distribution
was whether the truck driver was a "captive" (company driver)
or "independent" (self-employed driver) within the industry.
Though I did try to control for the differences in these
groups when I began interviewing in the truck stop, the
numbers for this distribution reflect a fundamental aspect of
the industry. Simply put, there are many more company
(captive) drivers than there are independent drivers.
According to the American Trucking Association (ATA)
statistical center in Arlington, Virginia, there are no solid
numbers to know precisely how many owner operators there are
compared to company drivers. Instead, they were able to
supply me with approximations based on registration with the
bureau of labor statistics. In 1995 there were approximately
2,861,000 truck drivers on the road, and 250,000 to 300,000 of
these drivers were owner operators. Using 275,000 as an
estimate, this means that approximately 9.61% of the drivers
in the industry are owner operators. My sample resulted in an
over-representation of this group (34.28%). I don't see this
as a potential problem because without expanding the sample
for owner operators I would have ended up with a sample too
small to be able to draw patterns from the responses. If I was closer to the proportion of independents in the industry, but had the same sample size I would have only 7 owner operators to work with.

One reason for the relatively small number of owner operators compared to company drivers is that in the competitive atmosphere of the trucking industry, companies have more success putting large numbers of drivers on the road and cutting the hauling down as low as possible. This atmosphere is difficult for the independent to survive in. Table 3 presents the sample breakdown by captive and independent drivers.

**TABLE 3:**

**SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION BY INDUSTRY STATUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the beginning of this research I considered also separating the sample according to race and gender. Unfortunatly, these numbers would prove to be very insignificant as well as being not very descriptive. If my interviews are a fair reflection of the industry, then it is
dominated by white males. In all settings I only spoke with two women and four African American males -- though I sought out these individuals in all settings. I should also mention that despite the fact I conducted the interviews in only a few settings, due to the nature of the work of truck drivers, my sample reflects many regions in the country. The subjects I interviewed lived in homes ranging as far West as Texas and Colorado, South as far as Florida, and North as far as Canada. In the end, the work of the truck drivers greatly enhanced at least the regional diversity of my sample.

To fully understand the data gathering process I would like to describe the two major settings -- the warehouse loading dock, and the truck stop -- in more detail, as well as offering some general impressions of the homes that I was invited into.

The Warehouse Loading Dock. After a chain of calls ranging from the floor supervisor of the loading dock up to the warehouse manager, I was granted permission to conduct interviews at Fine Foods Warehouse (a pseudonym). Fine Foods Warehouse is a distribution facility for a chain of grocery stores throughout the Northeast United States. Almost every product that ends up on the grocery store retail shelves is first trucked into this warehouse from the growers and manufacturers, then is delivered to the store by Fine Foods own fleet of trucks.
The warehouse is split into two major loading docks: frozen foods, and dry groceries. Due to the nearly constant receiving of goods and shipping to Fine Foods stores, frozen foods and dry groceries are brought to the warehouse on completely different shifts. All trucks ("reefers" short for refrigerator trucks) that deliver frozen foods are scheduled to arrive and unload at the warehouse from 12:00 midnight to 7:00 am. Trucks hauling dry goods are scheduled to arrive and unload between the hours of 2:00 pm and 9:00 pm. The facility itself has a separate loading dock for frozen food that is kept at a constant 32 degrees. Behind the dock is the area called "the box." The box is a large open warehouse about four stories high where the temperature is kept below freezing. This is the area where the warehouse receivers store the frozen freight the truck drivers deliver. Drivers unload their trucks into the dock area and the receivers move the freight into the box after it has been counted. This dock has ten doors onto the platform for unloading, but all ten are rarely in use at the same time because the warehouse doesn’t have the labor force to handle all of that receiving at once. The diagram below illustrates the basic layout of the frozen foods loading dock.
The beginning of any receiving shift would start with a line of truck drivers gathering in the offices pictured at the center of the loading dock. Here they would wait for their appointments to unload to be verified, and then they would be assigned one of the ten doors. The driver then backs his truck into the door, and unloads into the dock area. The actual unloading of the truck may be done by truck driver, or a dockworker paid by the driver to do the unloading, called a “Lumper” hence, unloading is often referred to as lumping. The appointments drivers have are dispersed from midnight until 7:00 am so that the loading dock and the receivers don’t get
overburdened with freight being unloaded.

I was present at the dock for two shifts a week for a period of three weeks. I conducted interviews with drivers at a picnic table just outside of the offices on the edge of the tarmac. Thankfully, these interviews were conducted during the Summer when sitting out of doors through the night was not inhibited by the temperature. This picnic table was an area commonly used by the drivers to wait for the chance to unload their freight. I found them very willing to talk, and some nights I didn’t have enough time to speak with all subjects that were willing.

There was nothing particularly striking about the frozen foods loading dock. At the picnic table there were cigarette butts strewn all over the ground (this was the only legal smoking area), the office areas were neat, but not necessarily clean. The offices and loading dock were simply ordered and well worn from the constant traffic of drivers, receivers, and lumpers (freelancers who will unload the truck for the driver for a negotiated fee). The look and the atmosphere of the loading dock was not far removed from the way I imagined it would be. Business was brisk, but laid back, relaxed. Everyone was working hard, but no one was in a hurry.

Despite the dry grocery loading dock having an almost identical physical setting, the atmosphere of this shift at
the warehouse was controlled chaos. Everyone seemed in a hurry (though this seemed to have no effect on my response rate) and the atmosphere was one of tension. As I mentioned above, the physical setting is nearly a mirror image of the frozen foods loading dock, the only major differences is there are no large refrigeration units for the warehouse, and the entire dock and warehouse area is larger. This makes perfect sense when you consider what the inside of a grocery store looks like. Most items are packaged dry goods with smaller sections for frozen and refrigerated foods. The dry goods dock had twenty six doors for trucks to unload, so there were more receivers as well as truck drivers working during the receiving shift (2:00 pm to 9:00 pm). The dry goods loading dock was to the left of the frozen foods dock, and though the doors faced out in the same direction with a set of offices in the center as in diagram 1 page 39, the dry goods dock was set forward so that the two formed a staggered line. Diagram 2 shows the basic layout of the entire facility (see next page).

The dry goods section of the warehouse also had picnic tables outside of the receiving offices at the center of the dock. After spending three weeks attending the night time frozen foods shifts, I spent three more weeks on the day shift on the dry goods side of the warehouse. The basic situation was the
same. Drivers waited in this area to unload, and I would interview them as they were available. Interviews ranged from two hours long to just thirty minutes, depending on the time available to the truck driver. None of the interviews were less than thirty minutes, but most fell in the range of forty five minutes to an hour. The interview guide may be found in Appendix B. Although I was introduced to the supervisors on both of these shifts, the contacts I would make with the drivers would result only from my own initiative.

The Truck Stop. The Travel Rest (a pseudonym) truck stop was the second setting I used for gathering data and
interviews. This truck stop is located in a hub area where many highways and routes intersect, making it an ideal spot for a truck driver to use for fuel, food, or even a shower. The truck stop itself had been locally owned for years, but had now been purchased by a larger company that managed a chain of truck stops across the country. As a result of this buy-out the truck stop had been newly renovated. I was told by some truck drivers when discussing this truck stop that this was actually a rather small stop and that some areas of the Mid-West have truck stops large enough to accommodate hundreds of drivers and their trucks at once. "The parking area around this truck stop could probably hold fifty to seventy five trucks" (Interview 53:261, Sept. 29, 1995).

My contact at the truck stop was the manager of the facility, Richard Halley (a pseudonym). I approached him personally at the work place explaining that I was a college student researching the truck driving industry and hoped that he wouldn't mind if I spent some time hanging around his counter, asking drivers if they would speak with me. Mr. Halley was very enthusiastic and asked what were the sort of questions I planned on asking. I told him I was interested in general attitudes of different aspects of the truck drivers work, specifically, what they thought about DOT, the trucking companies, the unions, and the public. He was very interested in the research and said he would be happy to help out any way
he could. He informed me of the busy times at the truck stop when I would find many drivers available to interview. Mr. Halley gave me a quick walk through of the truck stop pointing out the various amenities designed for truck drivers. All of what Mr. Halley showed me was available to the public at anytime night or day. The truck stop included a family style restaurant with lunch counter, a gift shop, a parts store, shower rooms, a small theatre for viewing videos, a game room, a laundry room, an express pizza counter, a Western Union desk, fuel, tires, and a full service garage. Diagram 3 (next page) presents the basic layout of the truck stop.

FIGURE IV
THE TRAVEL REST TRUCK STOP
Due to the Travel Rest truck stop's recent renovations, the entire facility was very neat and orderly, and certainly suggested that careful planning was used when designing this truck stop.

I conducted my interviews mostly during the breakfast shift (6:00 to 9:00am Mondays and Wednesdays) on weekdays. This was a time Mr. Halley mentioned as one that would offer many subjects for interviews. I also interviewed twice during dinner time (6:00 to 7:00pm) which was another suggested time from the manager, Mr. Halley.

**Drivers' Homes:** Although I only conducted four interviews in truck drivers' homes, I wanted to at least present some general impressions of the homes I did see. The drivers that I interviewed in their homes were all "family" men. They were married and had the wife and children living within the home. Each of their homes were located in suburban neighborhoods of single family homes that were densely populated neighborhoods. All of the homes were comfortably furnished and well maintained. These homes seemed to suggest a rather stable middle-class life style, despite these suburbs appearing to be well established; these were not new neighborhoods, more likely these were housing developments built in the 1970's. Also of note is that these four truck drivers were all members of a professional driving association, which I will discuss in
more detail later on.

I don't think that these three settings are associated with differences in the responses I got to the interview items. Thus, I will be comparing and contrasting responses of individuals on the basis of work history in order to get at meaningful variations in the responses.

The Interviewing Process:

Because this study involved adults who had been informed by me prior to the interviews that their responses would be kept confidential, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of New Hampshire allowed me to conduct this research with very basic safeguards of anonymity and confidentiality. In most cases I only recorded first names with my interview notes. Last names were only given to me voluntarily by drivers that were interested in my findings.

I conducted interviews lasting anywhere from twenty minutes to two hours in some of the home settings. Most of the time, the length of the interviews varied in accordance with the driver's schedule. The quality of responses also had an influence on the length of the interview. Some respondents were succinct in their responses, while, on the other hand, some needed little urging to speak their mind. The interview guide is found in Appendix B. Because of the open area where many of the interviews were conducted, I did my best to take accurate notes not only of all responses, but the dynamics of
the full discussion that evolved as a result of my initial questions. This was a circumstance that occurred at both loading docks where the interviews were conducted at a public picnic table, and at the truck stop where they were conducted at the lunch counter. Initially, I feared that this open forum would inhibit the responses I would receive from interview subjects. I found this not to be the case. Judging from the candor and quality of the responses, I feel the drivers were very forthcoming. I attribute this to two particularities of the work of truck drivers: 1) the widespread use of the citizen band radio in this occupation which is an open forum; and 2) the transient characteristic of the occupation means the driver is used to never seeing again those around him in any one truck stop or delivery point.

The format of the interview simply used questions that asked the driver for an opinion on an issue related to his work, for example, what do you think about the DOT? These issues were organized to reflect the many different members of the driver's role-set as well as assembling work histories of each driver. In other words, I presented a verbal catalogue of the role-set members I thought might have the most influence on the driver, and then left all questions open for the driver to elaborate on as they saw fit. As the driver responded to the questions I would encourage detailed descriptions, an example, or stories from the drivers, though
I found for many drivers this was not necessary. The isolated aspect of driving alone for hours is encouragement enough for many of these drivers to talk, and again because of the work situation, truck drivers are more accustomed to talking with strangers (though these strangers are usually other truck drivers) than with friends.

Qualitative Analysis of Truck Drivers' Work in America

This study explores, in a qualitative approach, responses made by truck drivers with regard to their perceptions of the attitudes of their various role-set members, and how these perceptions influence the identity of the worker. This study could have been done just as effectively with a survey design based on a statistical model -- and a statistical design might be a good follow up to this study -- but I wanted to explore this occupation using an inductive method. To a certain extent, I am following a pattern of research that Michael Agar calls "humanscape exploration" (1986:12-14).

It is a style less devoted to scientific testing than to patterned learning. It is less concerned with control of the data than with apprehending the controls that operate in the world of others. When the guiding question is "who are those people and how do they live" this research style is most appropriate (Agar, 1986:12).

Humanscape exploration is based on the assumption that if you give the member of a "world" the opportunity to speak, then the texture and character of how this respondent understands
his world will emerge. Though I do impose the framework of
the questions listed in the interview guide, in many cases
this was merely a starting point, and only on rare occassions
was the interview guide used formally as a script or
systematically consulted.

Allowing the subjects this type of latitude allowed my
identity as a researcher to recede into the background.
Interviews generated discussion and commiseration. It was
common for me not to ask many of the questions on the
interview guide, because our discussions would cover the
topics without my direct encouragement. Though this would
create greater challenges for me during the coding process of
the interviews, it fostered a comfortable atmosphere for
addressing issues with the subjects. The final result was
something more akin to participant observation than formal
interviewing. In a few circumstances it mirrored the
participant observation experiences of E.E. LeMasters
(1975:7-8). In his study "Blue-Collar Aristocrats," the
patrons of the "Tavern" LeMasters uses as his field of
observation begin to make friendly comments such as "Hey, Doc,
put this in your book." While observing on the loading docks
I became more aquainted with many of the dock workers as well
as truck drivers. As a result, stories were brought to me
from drivers and dock workers alike. An informal type of
"Hey, you should put this in your book."
Relying on observation not only allowed for much of the data to become self-directed by the subjects, but it also gave me the opportunity to experience the work place first hand in the case of the loading docks, and to some extent the truck stops. It is obvious that the drivers at the loading dock are in their work milieu, but I would argue that for most drivers, the truck stop is equally an important area of their work, a workplace. Truck drivers do not frequent truck stops unless they are in the midst of a run that they are working on. The truck stop not only acts as a place of rest and vehicle maintenance, but it is an office to many drivers as well as a place to locate the next load. These nuances of the truck drivers' work life would not be available in the same level of detail to me through survey data.

On another level, participant observation and the use of a qualitative framework also allows the researcher the opportunity to learn how subjects construct meanings within their world. A question one would ask is: what are the perceptions of truck drivers' as part of their day-to-day work life? This type of question is similar to the ones asked by Liebow (1967), Whyte (1943), LeMasters (1975), Agar (1986), Paules (1991) and many other researchers that get their hands dirty in the field. Participant observation allows me to address the issue of how these truck drivers perceive themselves, their work, and what influences those perceptions.
In the questions that are designed to probe the drivers’ opinions of the members of his role-set, I am specifically interested in what patterns can be seen by comparing different types of responses with different driver work histories. These histories deal with two specific characteristics of the truck driver: (1) Is the driver an independent or a captive of the industry? (2) How long has the driver been working in the industry? Michael Agar (1986) uses a similar framework to investigate a sample of independent truck drivers. Despite his restriction of the sample to independents only, he deals with some of the same questions posed in this research. Probably most central to Agar is the perception of control by the drivers. The researcher observing this group of workers sees a hard to reconcile paradox concerning the perceived concept of independence and the reality of dependence in the trucking industry. Agar comes to the following conclusion:

Independent truck driver is not something you do; it is something you are. By this reasoning the opposite of “independent” is not “controlled” the opposite of “independent” is “alienated.” My guess is that such involvement is generally found among small businesspeople, and like many of them independents may get exhausted, see that the return is not worth the energy, and accept more alienation for more free time (Agar, 1986:166).

The true nature of the truck driver’s work is based on the dependence on shippers, receivers, brokers, lumpers, strangers in strange territories during breakdowns, even state
legislators to some degree. The myth of the trucker as the last American cowboy is diametrically opposed to the reality of working in the industry; hence the attempt of this study to explore the truck driver’s perception of identity within this context of work.

I am also concerned with deciphering the proximity of the various role-set members in relation to the truck driver. By proximity I am referring to the sphere or level of influence each role-set member can exert upon the perceptions of the truck driver. Through the use of this qualitative framework I can better address the subtle differences in the responses about role-set members expressed by the drivers. This can be seen later in chapter V where I look at the responses to the trucking companies by the truck drivers. On first inspection, there appears to be an overall negative response to the companies, yet when splitting the results by captive and independent drivers we see that captive drivers respond negatively due to the pressures they feel as employees. On the other hand, the independent drivers respond negatively to companies due to a climate of unfair competition they believe is fostered by the companies. This also aids in determining which role-set members seemed to elicit the strongest responses from the subjects. This is a further exploration of the issues of proximity as well as offering a valuable starting point for future areas of research.

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A Word About Fieldwork in Occupational Settings

Much of the fieldwork that is done in occupational settings occurs through full participant observation. Classic studies -- such as Gold’s (1964) study of janitors; Henslin’s (1974) study of Cabdriving; Diamond’s (1988) study of Nursing Homes; Haas’ (1972) study of high steel workers; Van Maanen’s (1990) work at Disneyland; and Paules’ (1991) study of waitresses -- all were conducted by researchers who worked within the role or side by side with their subjects. Even though I was allowed access into what is normally seen as a private setting where work was taking place, I was not able to take on the role of truck driver. However, having access to these work areas did have a strong influence on my role as a researcher. I became a routine fixture for the shifts where I was observing, and was treated as such on many occasions. One night, as the shift began, the dock supervisor was announcing the nights assignments to the workers gathered. As he called out names and gave assignments he called my name without hesitation saying, “You I want in the “box” (refrigerator warehouse) tonight.” Though this was passed off by the other workers as not much more than a joke, I understood the situation as a confirmation of my acceptance on the dock: I was not an intruder or a stranger; I was a friend.

Perhaps one of my greatest challenges in the role of researcher was learning the argot associated with truck
driving. Due to the CB radio being such a universally used tool in the industry, much of the language of the truck driver has been coded in terms for use over the radio (e.g. deadheading -- driving home with an empty trailer, thus making no money; reefer -- a refrigerated truck; chicken coops or coops -- DOT checkpoints and weigh stations). Many of these terms are used in all social settings and not exclusively on the radio. I really can’t attest to the origination of much of the language that is particular to this occupation, but I can attest to its widespread use and acceptance as a mode of communication within this industry. I began this research study with a vague understanding of some terms, but would later find many terms that had meanings beyond my knowledge. After asking about some terms and reading about others I was able to overcome this language deficit. The results of this can be found in the Glossary in Appendix A.

Upon entering the field, I initially had the fear that truck drivers would be wary talking to me. At the Fine Foods warehouse, I had the potential of being mistakenly identified as some agent of the warehouse sent to gather information. At the truck stop I might be wrongly seen as a journalist due to recent interest in the topic of truck driving in the media, or as the agent of a regulator seeking evidence for legislative change. I dealt with this potential problem in both settings the same way. As is customary in this research situation, I
introduced myself to subjects and stating my name and that I was a student working on a research project concerning the work of truck drivers, and asked the driver if he was interested in participating I would guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. I also added one other small element which I found very successful in approaching and getting willing subjects. That simple tool was a **business card**. By presenting the subject with a business card showing my University affiliation I was able to dispel any misconceptions about my identity, and this also eliminated many of the apprehensions that these truck drivers might have and might make them unwilling to be interviewed.

Confidentiality and anonymity were assured mostly through recording only first names in my interview and observation notes. Despite this safeguard, some drivers were insistent about giving me their names and addresses. The drivers who did this expressed a desire to find out more about the study results (I will send them a summary of my findings) and in some cases, an invitation for further contact to gather more information.

I realize that I should not underestimate the influence my role as a researcher had on the subjects and setting around me. The researcher does stand out and is understood as being different, an outsider in the social setting. Yet my experience in the field seemed more fluid than forced.
Discussions developed quite easily, and with little discernible conflict between my role as researcher and that of the truck driver as a respondent.

Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined some methodological considerations for this study. I have discussed the methods used for constructing my sample and for data collection, the interviewing process, the qualitative research design, and issues faced by the researcher in the field. Chapter III, the next chapter, considers theories relevant to the study of occupational socialization and the influence of the role-set on worker identity. In the following chapter, I discuss previous studies that use the role-set as a context for understanding occupations and present a review of theories of socialization and identity within organizational settings. Theories of James, Cooley, Mead, Park, Linton, and Simmel will be explored. Chapter III serves as a theoretical context for the analysis of my field-work data later on, an analysis that will be linked with Chapter III and other chapters.
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter I present the theoretical framework for this study. I will be looking at identity creation as a central aspect of social life by looking at theories of the self, social roles, and the use of Merton's concept of the role-set to link self with the structures of society. I will also present a discussion of conflict as a part of occupational socialization by discussing Simmel and the integrative characteristics he attributes to conflict. One of the central questions in this study is: what influences impinge on the individual's process of understanding his occupational identity? In other words, do outside agents have more influence over defining the identity of workers than the workers themselves? Let us consider other aspects of this question:

1. How is identity established for members of an occupation?

2. How do members of the role-set of an occupation influence the process of identity?

The intent of this chapter is to define the process of identity within the context of occupations, to explore how occupational socialization influences identity, and to set the theoretical framework for analyzing micro-level (the worker's)
definitions of identity. The first section of this chapter looks at the social psychological issues concerning identity. The rest of the chapter deals with Merton's role-set, and Simmel's description of conflict as an integrating force in society.

Identity Creation in Society

Theories of the Self

The theoretical basis for the process of occupational socialization that is a central part of this research is dependent on much of the seminal work concerning identity creation. I argue that the identity that is developed by the truck driver is the result of a dynamic process of information from the role-set of the driver and the driver's own interpretation of how the role-set views the occupation. To support this argument I will show how the tradition developed in theories of the self reflect the process I describe in this research. I will also discuss the link connecting theories of self with theories of social roles to show that to understand identity in society we need to consider both of these traditions of theory.

Much of what we now consider to be the theoretical basis for understanding how identity emerges in society began in the seminal work of William James. James's social philosophy expressed in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890:250-350) has a
distinct vision of the identity as a series of "empirical selves." These empirical selves could be thought of as the many facets of the social identity that would come to the fore in different social situations. James's vision of the empirical selves fits well with his philosophy of pragmatism, with the utility he saw as essential to an individual's empirical selves. By "utility" is meant the personal identity that James saw as a stable and continuous notion of the individual seeing himself as an object in space. In other words, individuals themselves see the sameness or continuity in their own identity. Despite this assumed continuity, James pointed out that the self varies from one empirical situation to the next while maintaining unity and stability across social situations.

George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley both show the influence of James's work through their basic notion that the social self is both a stable object and a process for the individual. Cooley emphasized the connection between the individual's ability to see as well as recognize oneself as an object. Cooley added another important element to James's--that the individual sees himself through the gestures and reactions of others in society. This is at the heart of both interaction and the formation of the self. These gestures, or "reflections" as Cooley would come to call them, would be
received by the individual and through his interpretation of these gestures he would assemble his concept of self. This looking glass self, places the individual astride the influences that surround him, and his own interpretations of these influences. This vision of the individual is not static: Cooley’s view of the self is that of a continuous process where frequent glimpses into the looking glass develop a more stable sense of self.

The self must also be an evolutionary process due to the inability of infants and children to fully understand the gestures that would offer cues to the self. Socialization through various agents such as the family, peers, and school begins to impose an order on the various gestures the individual is presented with. Mead would further articulate this as an evolutionary process providing patterns of stable and predictable human behavior through (a) viewing oneself as an object; (b) perceiving the assumptions of others; and (c) taking on the perspective of the broader public. It is these three elements in concert that give us the capacity for living in society. Each element contributes to stable patterns of action and cooperative interaction.

Mead’s work was not only a synthesis of James’s and Cooley’s notions of the self in society, but also a more carefully detailed definition of the self and identity in
society. Central to Mead’s concept of self was the notion that the self is both a transitory image and social structure. As transitory actors, individuals take on different roles within different social contexts so as to derive self-images of themselves in those situations. The self as social structure is meant to describe how individuals have typical or patterned responses because of the individual’s perception of himself as an object. The apparent contradiction in viewing the self, means that attitudes about one’s own identity can have not only consistency, but changeability in reinterpreting and presenting one’s identity in different social contexts. Mead calls this the complete or unified self. The audience an individual is in contact with also influences what aspects of the complete self—or elementary selves—will be revealed by the individual.

The various elementary selves that constitute, or are organized into, a complete self are the various aspects of the structure of that complete self answering to the various aspects of the structure of the social processes as a whole; the structure of the complete self is thus a reflection of the complete social process (Mead, 1934:144).

In other words, the person can paint only that part of the picture of himself that others allow him to do, never the complete picture he desires to present. Contradiction that arises within the social environment can be a source of disunity that could result in difficulty in developing a
complete self. In other words, if the audiences of the individual demand contradictory actions then the individual is faced with contradictory elementary selves. These contradictions will make the development of a unified self-concept very difficult. One of the central foci of this study is to explore the contradictions that arise from the truck drivers' attempts at developing a complete self. According to Mead, audiences are the community surrounding the truck drivers, and these audiences would be the source of contradictions through competing demands or a radical variation of demands on the truck driver. What Mead refers to as audiences is what others such as Park and Linton refer to as social roles. Social roles present actors in society with expectations for patterned behavior that develops out of interactions, e.g. with members of one's role-set. To fully understand how interaction and identity can work toward patterned behavior we must discuss social roles.

**Social Roles**

Social roles and role theory were first developed as a more precise articulation of the conceptual perspective of Mead's work concerning identity and society. Many researchers at the time realized that despite the breakthrough Mead's work represented, these new ideas about identity left some vital questions unanswered. Chief among these questions was how does participation in the structure of society shape
individual conduct, and how does behavior shape the structure of society? Sociologists such as Robert Park and anthropologist Ralph Linton both worked within this line of inquiry that would later be known as role theory. Role theory, as described by these earlier researchers, would become the link between the individual and the larger structures that make up our society. Role is always within a social organization.

Park (1955) was one of the first to point out the important place the concept of social roles held in Mead's theoretical perspective. For Park, the individual is a collection of multiple roles that must be played within society. Each role is connected with a particular position in the structure of society, and to some extent, the role is confined to the expectations of that position. These positions or statuses that people must play is the self emerging. "It is status, i.e., recognition by the community, that confers upon the individual the character of a person, since a person is an individual who has status, not necessarily legal, but social" (Park, 1955:285-86). The link between the self and society is made because roles are connected to positions within the social structure, thus role theory can be seen as shifting the focus from the process of self to the influences on this process by the social structure. This is a key element of the process of
occupational identity creation that is described by this research. By having the designated role of truck driver, these workers have included themselves in a social organization i.e. the transport industry. They way the truck driver understands his occupation is a combination of knowing his role in the organization as well as through the expectations the organization has of that particular role. Linton (1936) would further develop the concept of role in a direction complimentary to this research.

The anthropologist, Ralph Linton, was one of the first to clearly separate the concepts of role, status, and individual from one another to make them more clearly defined variables for research, and more parsimonious concepts for the construction of theory.

Status, as distinct from the individual who may occupy it, is simply a collection of rights and duties...A role represents the dynamic aspects of status. The individual is socially assigned to a status and occupies it in relation to other statuses. When he puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect, he is performing a role. (Linton, 1936:28)

Linton maps out a number of important conceptual relationships through his elaboration of role and status. Probably most significant is his separation of social structure and behavior. In Linton's framework social structure is a system of positions and expectations, and behavior is the role enactment in response to social structure. Hence, for Linton,
the progression of social structure to individual behavior is through a web of social positions, a system of expectations that corresponds to social position, and finally patterned behavior by the individual responding to expectations. This clarification of Mead’s groundwork opens new areas for research by separating the interactionist perspective of society into distinct variables, and this is seen in later elaborations of role and the role-set.

**Merton’s Role-Set**

Merton (1957) has developed a conceptual framework that aids in further understanding of the link between the individual’s identity and the larger social structure. Just as Linton saw society as a network of roles, Merton considered these roles to be based on sets of people that are associated with particular activities. For example, for the role “father” we would expect to find such role-set members as; sons, daughters, a wife, grandchildren, and the like. Now each of these members of the role-set in turn has role-sets, e.g. for the son, his teachers, classmates, neighborhood friends, and so on. Society is then seen as an elaborate network of role-sets, like the roots of trees intertwined with the roots of other trees.

By espousing the use of “middle range theories” (1957:108) for social research, Merton hoped to show that these theories would be more useful because the level of
abstractness is not so far removed from the data gathered in social observation. This is precisely the strength of Merton’s concept of the role-set, of his emphasis on middle range theory:

Theories of the middle range are theories about a delimited range of social phenomena. They can be recognized, in part, by their very labels: one speaks of a theory of reference groups, a theory of prices, or a germ theory of disease...These ideas give rise to a limited number of inferences about the phenomena in question. (Merton, 1957:109)

Merton claims that he is adding a different perspective to Linton’s argument. Merton “begin(s) with the premise that each social status involves not a single associated role, but an array of roles” (Merton, 1957:110), a role-set.

The importance of the role-set comes from the use of this framework to understand how conflict is dealt with by individuals in society. If we follow Merton’s notion that each status has a corresponding role-set, comprised of various institutional as well as individual members, and that each of these members has their own set of expectations about with the status of the individual, then the role-set may be often associated with conflicting expectations for the status-occupant. The problem at hand, as Merton sees it, is “identifying the social mechanisms which serve to articulate the expectations of those in the role-set so that the occupant of a status is confronted with less conflict than (he) would
obtain if these mechanisms were not at work (Merton, 1957:111).

Merton does offer six mechanisms that are used by the status-occupant to control conflicting views of his own role. These mechanisms can be seen at work within the worldview of the trucker driver. The first of Merton's mechanisms is: The Relative importance of various statuses of members of the role-set. That is to say, that the statuses connected to a role constitute a hierarchy whereby some are more important than others and can, in particular circumstances, influence the truck driver more than others. For example, though local law enforcement officers do have some jurisdiction over the interstates that are most heavily traveled by truck drivers, it is the state police and both state and federal departments of transportation that directly regulate the work of the truck driver on the road. Hence, for the truck driver in transit it is more important to locate state police and department of transportation wagons than locating local police. Also, Merton takes into account the importance of these relationships as viewed by the members of the role-set. For example, the work of a state police officer tends to be varied, responding to criminal calls as well as traffic problems and violations. The department of transportation (DOT) officer's primary concern is road safety, with a strong focus on commercial traffic. This makes the relationship
between the DOT officer and the truck driver much more important than that of local law enforcement.

The second mechanism is: Differences of power in the role-set. This is a consequence of the hierarchical structure of the role-set. Often, coalitions of power among members of the role-set to circumscribe the freedom of the status-occupant; at times, competition in power in his role-set may allow him some peace and freedom; at other times, it can be a source for heightened conflict. In the case of the truck driver it is trying to make a living wage in the midst of rampant competition within the industry, especially among large carriers, that acts to limit the driver's freedom to operate in a fair marketplace:

Now people are hauling at less than $.70 a mile. Somehow, by government or businesses it must be subsidized. These people are hauling at a loss! They have to be getting tax breaks or something. Now what you see is a lot of companies going under to the big companies (Interview 2:10, July 15, 95).

Thus, the driver not only recognizes that competition in the industry has created a low paying situation for him, but he also believes that those involved in making the rules -- big companies and the government -- are helping each other out through subsidies or tax breaks. The ability for a driver to make a decent wage is hampered by large carriers with many resources, resources that allow them to operate at lower costs; it is also hampered by organizations that have greater
influence on the entire market, which, of course, includes the government, which has at least one hand in every market of America.

The third mechanism is: **Inequalities of role-activities from observability by members of the role-set.** Interaction of the status-occupant with members of the role-set may be occasional, intermittent, predictable, anticipated. "Privileged information" and "confidential communication" are instrumental in helping the status-occupant to protect himself. The truck driver spends a far greater percentage of time alone in his work of driving than interacting with many of the members of his role-set. So for this mechanism there is not only an inequality in observability, but a low rate of, or even lack of, observability in general. One way for outside agencies to gain greater observability of the truck driver's activities is through the use of logbooks. All drivers are required by law to keep a record of their hours driving and hours resting (this is because they are paid per mile driven not per hour spent, an incentive to lie about hours driving to accumulate more miles in a day, thus more pay). These records (or logbooks) are commonly filled out falsely so that the driver appears to be working the hours allowed by the law (10 hours driving, 5 hours doing non-driving activities, 8 hours sleeping) when in fact, he may be driving 13 hours, unloading for 6 hours, and sleeping 4 hours.
so that he can make his next appointment. Logbooks that are intentionally false are often called "comic" books or "funny" books (Rounds, 1993:146). The true account of the truck drivers' freight run may be kept on a separate book for the employer, it is information that is only available from the truck driver himself thus making the actual account itself a matter of privileged information for the status-occupant, the driver.

Technology has had some influence on the ability of drivers to conceal the true logistics of their road runs. Through the use of on-board computers that record every turn of the truck's tires, and the length of time the truck stands idle, as well as small satellite dishes that track the driver's movement, the trucking industry is quickly finding ways to replace humans with nonhuman technology. But, the driver would still go to great lengths to maintain the secrecy of his driving logistics:

These new computers they have (big companies) can tell them where you are and when you are there. All DOT has to do when they stop you is push a button and your report prints out. Heck, they even have satellite dishes they put up on the cab of the truck. Most guys will just put half a basketball or tin bucket over them then tell the company it's on the blink (Interview 24:123, Aug. 19,95).

The fourth mechanism according to Merton is:

Observability of conflicting demands of members of the role-
set. When this happens, the status-occupant can stand aside, that is, he is afforded breathing space and an opportunity to draw attention to the contradictions he faces. An example of this mechanism can be seen in the recent activities of Parents Against Tired Truckers. As a grassroots organization originating in the state of Maine, the organizers of this group brought before the Maine state legislature a bill proposal for much harsher penalties for trucker drivers involved in accidents due to falling asleep and/or placing false entries into the logbooks. The trucking association of Maine, as well as some nationally based groups representing the trucking industry lobbied heavily to stop this proposal. In the end, the trucking industry was able to stop the bill, but as the conflict unfolded PATT members worked against the trucking industry and vice versa. Truck drivers, in the mean time, allowed these groups to work toward a resolution of the problem. Despite the fate of the bill, both PATT and the organizations of the trucking industry were made aware of a broader variety of the problems and limitations that are a result of being a truck driver in America. Unfortunatly, many of these issues such as: rate discounting, forced dispatch, and low wages to name a few, still haven’t come to the fore as a solution for cutting down the incidence of truckers driving too many hours.

Mechanism five is: **Mutual social support among status-**
occupants. Problems and information become shared, rather than dealt with privately. The occupational group becomes reactivated as a community facing outside hostility and thus keen on protecting itself. This mechanism can be observed through the many resources and outlets for information that are available to the truck driver. There are a number of magazines that are published with the truck driver as the intended audience. Organizations such as the American Trucking Association offer library services and access to a wide variety of data and statistics concerning the industry. Truck stops on this nation's highways are strung like beads on a necklace, each stop offering food, fuel, showers, telephones, fax machines, radio and truck parts, as well as the companionship that comes from other truck drivers. Even as the truck driver travels seemingly isolated down the highway, through the use of the CB radio, he has access to most of the co-workers in a two to five mile radius around his location. All of these elements work to support and sustain a kind of transient community, one based more on the similar work experiences that are shared through conversation than on face-to-face daily familiarity between the members of the community. Though certainly both do exist.

The final mechanism is six: Abridging the role-set. The status-occupant may break off relations with a particular group in his role-set, thus partially truncating his role-set.
The consequence may be closer consensus among the remaining members of the role-set regarding their role-expectations of the status-occupant. This circumstance can happen in any number of situations for a truck driver. For some truck drivers this may not be the complete truncation of a role-set member as much as finding a way to distance or get rid of oppressive role-set members through changes in the work situation. For example, one driver interviewed mentioned that he was an independent driver, but he felt that the demands of doing the driving, and dealing with taxes and insurances among other things, made the job too difficult. As a result he sold his truck and began working for a company that took care of these business details for him (Interview 36: 158, Aug. 28, 95). Even though taxes and insurance still connect to the work of this driver, the relationship that he has with these agencies has been greatly diminished as a result of the driver’s action.

In my interviews with truck drivers, I examine evidence of their use of Merton’s mechanisms to maintain stability within their role-set. If the interview indicates that these mechanisms are indeed being used to diffuse conflict, I attempt to discern whether they are used successfully or not. If the driver’s attempts at using these mechanisms is frustrated, I am then interested in determining what kind of influences this has on the driver’s identity, and whether the
driver's level of occupational socialization can be connected with positive identity and successful management of expectations of the role-set. If the use of these mechanisms is frustrated, I would expect to see evidence of conflict between the role-set members and the workers. I have hypothesized the feedback effects of conflict in this process of occupational socialization actually has a positive effect on drivers by creating higher levels of integration among drivers in the trucking industry. Based on the work of Georg Simmel, the next section of the chapter deals with these areas of conflict and the connection to occupational socialization.

Conflict as Part of Occupational Socialization
Simmel and the Integrative Aspects of Conflict

This study of truck drivers considers conflict a central issue. Despite being centered on identity, this study deals with some integrative influences conflict can have on a group. The work of Georg Simmel forges the link between identity and interaction on the one hand, and the larger structures of society on the other.

In The Web of Group-Affiliations (1955), Simmel conceived of society as a network of groups that form a web of group-affiliations. It is through the progression of society -- social differentiation and increased complexity -- that this
web continues to differentiate and grow. Simmel traces the web from the most primary of group affiliations, the family, the standard for prospective affiliations.

Thus the family comprises a number of different individuals, who are at first entirely dependent on this familial association. However as the development of society progresses, each individual establishes for himself contacts with persons who stand outside this original group-affiliation, but who are “related” to him by virtue of an actual similarity of talents, inclinations, activities, and so on (Simmel, 1955:128).

As family members extend their affiliations into other groups, these groups often experience cohesion on the basis of shared interests, and activities. For Simmel, members of families experience group formation and affiliation on the basis of organic criteria, whereas post-family affiliations tend to be based on rational criteria (Turner, Beeghley, and Powers, 1989:257).

Of what relevance is Simmel’s discussion of group affiliation, those based on meta-organic criteria, relevant to the work of the truck driver? According to Simmel, the level of specialization of an occupation is linked to the time budget at the disposal of its members; the more specialized the occupation, the more time the worker has for non-occupational pursuits (Simmel, 1955:185-186). Even by Simmel’s standards, the case of the truck driver is an exception. As Simmel states: “This...does not apply to those
occupations which absorb all the strength and time of an individual and thereby lead to an atrophy of his entire mental energy" (1955:186, Footnote 11). A full-time, long haul truck driver is required by law to keep a written log of his driving times as well as the time he spends parked, resting; even his days off are logged. Days off are typically spent hundreds of miles from home, and the time off may be spent locating another load. Hence, the web of group-affiliations for the truck driver will not extend beyond groups connected with his immediate occupation.

Conflict is part and parcel of group life. Simmel saw conflict leading not to social breakdown but often to integration through the resolution of differences, the result being not chaos but social order. According to Lewis Coser (1956) who systematized some of Simmel’s basic points, the value of conflict is: (1) that it sharpens the sense of group boundaries and contributes to a feeling of group identity; (2) that leads to a centralization of the internal structure of the group; and (3) that it leads to a search for allies (Collins, 1988:120). We shall apply these 3 aspects to the work of truck drivers.

According to the interviews, there is a twofold response to particular areas of conflict:

Yeah, you see those Shultz or Tracker (both names psuedonyms for trucking company's) drivers on the road you want to get the hell out of the way.
Companies like them have so many trucks, they'll take anyone as a driver, train him a week maybe two then he's on his own. (And later in the same interview) I've heard guys over the CB give Shultz drivers the wrong directions to places, or they'll just talk on and on about what bad drivers they are over the air. You know they hear it all the time (Interview 48:246-247, Sept.5,95).

This driver's frustration is directed towards new and poorly trained company drivers, but much of his frustration is focused on the large companies that create too much competition by have thousands of trucks on the road. The drivers of those trucks become the target; they are viewed by other drivers as being on the periphery of the occupation. In other words, the driver might state that a Shultz or a Tracker driver is not a real truck driver and doesn't deserve the consideration of the rest of us. By this attitude, group identity is strengthened, a hierarchy of worth is constructed, and boundaries are clearly drawn.

The second principle mentioned above, that conflict leads to centralization of the internal structure of the group, can be seen in the way truck drivers are organized: through forming a trade union, particularly that of the Teamsters. Because union support from the drivers has weakened over the past decade, drivers have tended to form professional associations. In one Northeastern state, a professional driving association was organized five years ago. When speaking with the members of this organization I found that
chief among their concerns was improving the image of the truck driver in the eyes of the public. On a national level, the American Trucking Association (ATA) is a centralized resource for support, information, and includes a lobbying group for the trucking industry. Many of the concerns of this organization are the same as the concerns on the local level. In both cases, a pooling of resources has occurred to facilitate active response to external conflict.

Finally, the third principle, that conflict leads to a search for allies, can also be connected to the trucking industry. Not only can we see a trend of centralization within the trucking industry, but a whole network of support services has also emerged. Fuel companies, publishers, and truck manufacturers, all have created alliances with the drivers on different levels. Many of the fuel companies own and support the truck stops that act as oases for the drivers. Publishers have developed a number of magazines that express the views and the interests of the drivers. And the manufacturers of the trucks themselves have even developed pages on the world wide web to offer drivers and companies information of truck specifications, safety issues, and new equipment. Obviously, the rise in these support systems cannot be solely attributed to conflict alone. Simmel was applying conflict to national situations, whereas these examples are derived from organizations that have developed to
do commerce with the truck drivers as well as support them. But in this context we can say that these allies help to diffuse conflict through the support they offer.

Conflict and the web of group-affiliations contribute to occupational socialization. Although, most research in the area of occupational socialization has focused on the process of formal training (Merton, 1957; Becker, 1961; Khleif, 1974, 1975; Dornbusch, 1955) I tend to be guided by Simmel’s ethos of the interrelationships of human activities and their continuity, a continuity of both formal and informal socialization here expressed by Pavalko:

Occupational socialization should be thought of as a continuing, ongoing process imbedded in the very nature of work...learning a job and doing it may be one and the same...Training may amount to nothing more than a tacit and informal agreement that a person in the occupation will "show the ropes" to the newcomer (Pavalko, 1988:105).

**Summary**

The theoretical concerns of this study focus on: (1) examining occupational identity as resulting from the socialization process of truck drivers, a process related to perceptions of their role-set, and (2) exploring group perceptions and the establishment and maintenance of occupational boundaries. On the macro level of exploration I have utilized Simmel’s theories of the web of group-affiliations and the consequences of conflict to explore the
extent to which the perception of conflict external to the occupation has had an integrative influence on truck drivers. On the micro level of examination, I use theories of identity formation and self as developed by James, Cooley, and Mead, as well as theories of role from Park, Linton, and Merton to determine group influences on occupational identity. These group influences can be better understood within a socio-historical context. Hence, chapter IV, the next Chapter, will present a socio-historical analysis of the trucking industry in the United States, an analysis that provides the background for ultimately understanding the trucking industry in 1996. This will also be linked with the analysis of my fieldwork data, to be presented in Chapter V.
CHAPTER IV
A HISTORY OF TRUCKING: A MOVING INDUSTRY

This chapter provides an historical examination of the trucking industry in the United States. It provides an account of the formation of the different groups we now consider to be members of the truck driver's role-set. The sub-topics of this chapter are: the development of the industry; changes in technology; development of regulation; growth of trucking companies; growth and decline of unions; deregulation of the industry; and new types of regulation. The main emphasis of this chapter is how this industry, that started in 1900, reached its current level of regulation, professionalization, and day to day work practices.

A Timeline of The Trucking Industry

The Development of a New Industry:

America has always taken pride in the fact that the US was the birthplace of the automobile, the birthplace of the truck, as well as the trucking or freight transport industry. Mack was the first company to develop a gas powered vehicle with the engine in front of the passengers, and used this design to produce the first bus in 1900. This bus was later converted into the first freight transport vehicle, estimated to have been used for over one million miles of service (Hanson, Overdrive, July 95:62). In that same year, a
prominent sewing machine company, the White Sewing Machine Company, retooled all their factories to produce steam cars and trucks. These two companies -- Mack and White (which has since been sold to Volvo GM) -- that were the first to develop trucks for production and commercial use still control over 23% of the market share of trucks sold in 1995 (Overdrive, January 1996:19). By the end of the decade, gasoline engines replaced steam engines in most heavy duty trucks, the first trip recorders were used to keep track of the miles a truck travels, two trucking magazines (The Commercial Vehicle and Power Wagon) were published, and refrigerated trucks would revolutionize the meat and dairy industries by significantly diminishing the amount of spoiled food delivered.

The next two decades, 1900-1920, would see rapid growth in the number of trucking companies as well as advances in the technology that would be responsible for larger and safer trucks. In 1916 a GMC truck delivered a full load of Carnation evaporated milk from Seattle, Washington to New York City, one of the first transcontinental runs. The 3,710 miles to get from coast to coast took 30 days (Hanson, Overdrive, July 1995:64). Yet by the end of the decade, truck travel would take 2 ½ days less than the fastest freight train to connect the two coasts. The year 1919 marked the first government involvement in the highway business when Oregon
became the first state to tax gasoline sales to help build and maintain roads. This was a trend that would soon spread to all states and include taxes collected by the federal government also. In 1920, the number of trucks operating for commercial purposes would rise from the 100,000 in 1909 to over a million in 1920.

It wasn’t until the 1930's that regulation began to develop for the trucking industry: many of the regulation standards established in the 1930's are still in existence in the industry today. On the state level, Alabama was the first state that placed restrictions on the number of hours a trucker can drive, and Rhode Island set strict standards on the stopping distance for truck brakes -- 50 feet. This fifty foot stopping distance became an industry standard in the manufacture of trucks. On the federal level, in 1932 the first-ever recommendations regarding vehicle weight and size were adopted by the American Association of State Highway Officials. But, it was 1937 and 1938 that established many of the laws that are still on the books today. In 1937 the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) began to take control of the industry by establishing regulations for driver qualifications, driving rules, accident reporting, and safety standards for equipment. These regulations were followed by one of the most controversial moves by the ICC in 1938. It
was in that year that the drive time restriction of 10 hours out of every 24 was established and applied to all trucks nationally. This industry standard still remains 57 years later despite obvious advancements in equipment technology, road conditions (there was no federal highway system in place when the drive time rule was made), and safety standards. The 1930's also saw the development of the first long-haul freight company. Keeshin Transcontinental Freight was the first company to place terminals across the country approximately 200 miles apart. Transcontinental travel now took little more than 9 days, a major technological leap from the 30 days of only ten years before.

The 1940's saw increased production mostly due to the need for large trucks and powerful engines to support the war effort in Europe and in the South Pacific. All of the major truck manufacturers were able to continue developing the equipment to make faster and safer trucks, because their products were already essential to the war effort. Domestically, there was little attention paid to the industry other than allowing it to grow with the increasing need for rapid transport of goods that would find their way overseas. There was little in the way of further regulation, or other forms of government interference.

By the 1950's, the trucking industry was greatly
overshadowing the railroad industry in the US. The Eisenhower administration enacted a plan to subsidize the building of a national highway system, a great help to the car manufacturers, gasoline suppliers, and the trucking industry -- which helped bring about the demise of both passenger trains and freight trains. This also resulted in a congressional investigation concerning “unfair competition.” Those hearings were discontinued when an American Trucking Association spokesperson pointed out that approximately 25,000 communities were not directly served by the railroad, and that these areas relied exclusively on the trucking industry. This marked the beginning of a major decline in the railroad’s ability to compete in the freight hauling business. The trucking industry not only continued to grow, but the technology began to make great leaps in the power and weight of the vehicles. New plastics and fiber-glass began to replace many parts of the truck cabs, and aluminum was more widely used for the trailers, making for faster and more fuel efficient vehicles. Many of these developments continued into the 1960's. The 1960's also marked a renewed interest in the industry by the government. Lyndon Johnson, in his State of the Union address, called for establishment of a Department of Transportation to take more control in the policing of the industry.
The 1970's up to the present are characterized by many of the same industry events. Yet with the rise of the Reagan administration we saw a redefining of much of our transportation industry. Pressure from manufacturers needing to cut cost to compete on the global marketplace looked for a way to save money on their transportation of goods. The Reagan administration supplied the manufacturers with that break by deregulating the trucking industry. By deregulating the trucking industry, hauling companies and independent drivers were given the opportunity to work and compete in all areas of the country, with no exclusive rights and no set minimums for hauling particular pieces of freight. This would be the start of the competition in the trucking industry that I claim has reached a hyper-competitive level. I have coined the term "hyper-competitive" for this study to describe a work atmosphere that is so competitive, that workers are willing to continue in the industry at a loss of revenue while competing for fewer loads than there are trucks to carry these loads. In previous years trucking companies applied for certain trade routes and operating licenses from the ICC, now all routes were open to anyone with a truck, whether that is a company with a fleet of 10,000 or a single gypsy owner-operator. Another result of the deregulation of the industry was a boost in the regulations for the drivers that are on the road.
Weight and safety inspections by the Department of Transportation became more regular; fines for violating drive times became stricter; the "CDL" licensing process was introduced, creating a federal registry of drivers; new computer technology was used to track trucks on the road. In many ways deregulation simplified the work of the large companies by opening up all markets for their expansion to develop unchecked, and eliminating mountains of paperwork and bureaucracy needed to maintain the systems of rights to work in certain areas with certain freight. The result was to shift much of the regulation onto the individual drivers. Now control of the industry was not something done at the company level; with all the operating controls and restrictions gone the only one left for the Department of Transportation to focus regulation on is the truck driver. This is a point that does not go unnoticed by many of the truck drivers on the road today.

**Regulatory Trends in the Trucking Industry:**

There is a great deal of truth to the observation that the trucking industry began in this country as a collection of independent drivers (Agar, 1986:49). Few companies existed, and those that did only had a handful of trucks, certainly not the fleets of ten thousand we see in the hands of the larger companies today. During these early years, as can be seen in
the timeline above, the trucking industry went about its business ignored for the most part, and even encouraged by the railroad companies that at this time saw trucking as an extension of their own services (Childs, 1985: 25-47). Neither the states nor the federal government had any agencies equipped to deal with this rapidly growing industry. Regulation, however, soon developed, and its rationale was a match for the technology of the times -- in other words, because these vehicles lacked the technology to be used for long hauls across many states at this time, these aspects of regulation were controlled by the states and only dealt with hauling within each state. States, noting that trucks had only the capability of local delivery, placed trucking directly under state control during the 1920's. The federal government at the time had control over interstate commerce that was supported by the rail system. The agency overseeing this commercial activity was the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC). The ICC was hesitant to accept state control over trucking, and so made the claim that because some trucks did cross state lines this industry should fall under federal jurisdiction (Childs, 1985:51). In reality, the ICC was making moves to control an industry that really didn't exist yet. Only 7% of the trucks at the time were crossing state lines.
Despite the ICC claiming final authority on regulatory decision making, the 1920's through the 1930's saw little activity on the federal level, but extensive activity on the state level.

Regulatory policies can be split into two distinct types: (1) direct regulations, which control entry into the industry, services offered, and rates, (2) indirect regulations, which limit the physical dimensions of the truck (height, length, width, and weight). Direct regulations decide for the truck driver whether and where he could engage in business, how he would conduct this business, and what he would charge for his service. Indirect regulations do not exclude a trucker from doing business; instead, they restrict his ability to make a profit (Childs, 1985: 51-52). The truck drivers were very vocal in their disagreement with these regulations, and for the most part they were often able to ignore these early attempts at regulation. States did not have an established system of enforcement, and they had little federal backing of the laws. In 1932, this changed when the Supreme Court deemed that these regulatory actions by the states were not unconstitutional; and so upheld the states rights to impose such regulations on this industry. Yet many problems still existed due to the variety of regulations states had established.
By the mid 1930's interstate traffic had increased dramatically from the decade before. Now drivers were faced with trying to keep up with the diverse and often conflicting laws that were in place in each state. Truckers faced conflicting laws in 1933:

If a trucker began a trip in Chicago heading east, he could load a truck and trailer with a total of 39,000 pounds, 20,000 on the truck and 19,000 on the trailer. When he approached the Indiana border, he had to remove 16,000 pounds from the truck and 12,800 pounds from the trailer to meet the Hoosier State's limit of 10,200 pounds. Once in Ohio he could add a total of 7,000 pounds; Pennsylvania allowed an additional 14,000 pounds...Obviously, interstate trucking from Chicago to Philadelphia in the early 1930's was difficult if truckers obeyed the diverse laws (Childs, 1985:52).

This represented only one of the many different regulations that could be applied to truck drivers, that of weight: little wonder that many of these regulations were ignored.

The lack of uniformity in these early regulations has mostly been attributed to simple geographic facts about the states that created them. States with winding, mountainous roads had shorter length restrictions; states with weather extremes, such as intense heat or frost, had restrictions to keep loads lighter to slow down highway damage.

All of this would change in 1935 with the passage of the Motor Carrier Act. Passage of this federal act -- which for all intents and purposes created a vast US trucking cartel --
was hard fought in Congress. The federal government was reluctant to take this fledging and chaotic industry under its wing; the rise of various trucking associations in response to state regulation meant that there was industry opposition also. Despite these obstacles, Joe Eastman, the main architect of the act, was able to rally support from many of the larger trucking organizations. Eastman recognized an important fact. The diversity of the state laws and the response of truck manufacturers to improve equipment were developing into a situation whereby truckers were working below their operating costs. Much of the Motor Carrier Act of 1935 was designed to stabilize the industry and avert a potential economic disaster for truckers. Once again laws were in place, yet there were no real mechanisms of enforcement. The Motor Carrier Act fell under the jurisdiction of the ICC. At this time "the ICC had no staff, no experience, and no budget. The ICC estimated that there were 325,000 for-hire trucks and 200,000 operators... working over a million miles of highway" (Agar, 1986:49). The task of bringing this industry under the jurisdiction of the ICC was an enormous one. The entire process of regulation was a difficult fight, because "methods and results included practices that were normally antithetical to American beliefs -- discrimination in favor of one group over others and the
sanctioning of monopoly practices among businessmen. Such contradictions, however, should have been expected, for the goal of regulation -- to stabilize competition -- was itself a contradiction" (Childs, 1985:143-144).

No sooner had the ICC gotten into the trucking business, World War II broke out, which had a powerful influence on keeping trucking regulations rather loose. The needs of the war economy took precedence over keeping complaining companies from yelling foul concerning their routes and hauling authorities. Companies that were benefiting from the war economy, as well as experiencing the same nationalism that spread through the US, worked to further the war effort with little concern for the new operating regulations. The Office of Defense Transportation (ODT) was established to oversee all freight hauling resources to make the most of the services available. The most difficult problem to reconcile at the time was the need to ration gasoline and rubber for tires. In response to this problem, the ODT issued one of the few regulations that was heavily enforced. Put simply, the ODT said, do whatever it takes, but always run fully loaded. No partial loads or "deadheading" (running empty) would be allowed. A sweeping measure such as this worked against the direct regulations that included where a driver could run and what operating authority he would have.
At the end of World War II, the ICC became increasingly concerned about the lack of direction that regulation had taken during the war years. In an attempt to reaffirm control over the trucking industry, the ICC began to have hearings in 1948 to develop specific regulatory practices. Central to this action was the attention paid to the lease system of drivers and companies. Leasing was the system used to link independent truck drivers and truck owners to specific hauling companies with limited authority to haul certain goods in certain states. During the war years and before regulation, "trip-leasing" was how most of the freight was moved. Trip-leasing meant that the truck driver would sign a lease agreement with the hauler for one run or trip. This allowed any driver to haul any type of freight with the authority for any states that were necessary. After delivery, the lease was over; the driver was no longer contracted to the shipping company. Because it saw trip-leasing as an evil loophole that allowed gypsy drivers to get around the direct regulations concerned with controlling competition and profit, the ICC passed on four recommendations:

1. Leases must be at least thirty days in duration.
2. Lessee has exclusive possession (no subleasing).
3. Leased vehicles cannot be compensated by a percentage of the revenue of the load.
4. The driver of the leased vehicle must be an employee of the carrier (Agar, 1986:50).

Many of the trip-leasing problems were brought on by the
carrying companies themselves. After the war, carriers encouraged the use of trip-leasing so that they could get around the authority requirements set up by the ICC. For example, if a carrier wanted to go into business hauling steel from Pittsburgh to Boston, but didn’t have the authority to haul steel to Boston, he would just lease one of his trucks to a company that did have the authority, and then would take a percentage of the revenue. It was through means such as this that carriers worked toward “deregulating” the industry. Of course the railroads and other carriers not engaged in the practice put pressure on the ICC to change the situation.

Railroads were instrumental in the creation of stricter leasing agreements because they saw that many of the trip-leasing carriers signed on only independent truck drivers who paid for most of the operating costs themselves. This was generally seen as a competitive disadvantage to general carriers who maintained their own trucks, and the railroads who were responsible for their own equipment. Indeed, some carriers involved in trip-leasing did not own a single truck, they just made connections for drivers and got their piece of the revenue.

Leasing regulations, at first, were directed at both carrier problems and the problems of having a pool of independent drivers available for carriers to trip-lease. In
the ICC hearings much of the testimony seemed to be contradictory. For example, independents were said to work for low wages to drive rates down; they were also said to make so much money that the carriers could not get them to sign a more long-term leasing agreement. Even the Teamsters were brought in to testify. The union had its own interests to serve by seeing to it that nonunion carriers and independents would be restricted in their ability to do business through the trip-lease system (Agar, 1986:51). Hearings and court battles continued right up until 1956 when the ICC ruled that drivers must sign a lease that is no shorter than thirty days in duration (recommendation No.1), the other three recommendations made by the ICC in 1948 being either rejected or ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

The final policy accommodated all interests but the independents'. The intention was to reestablish economic regulation for the carriers and safety regulation for the independents; the results were primarily to regulate away the independents' autonomy in the marketplace of regulated freight (Agar, 1986:53).

The future would see little more than minor adjustments until the early 1970's when the tide turned and deregulation began. Perhaps what is most important to note about the development of regulation for the trucking industry is the sources of pressure placed on government agencies such as the
ICC to create a regulated atmosphere. First, the railroad companies sought to limit the threat motor transport had on their own freight industry. Secondly, the larger, more well established carriers saw regulation as an opportunity to control the marketplace as well as the drivers that would be at the center of the industry. Public opinion also had a role in regulation:

Despite the benefits trucking presented to the economy, the public often focused upon the negative aspects of the new business. When confronted with a huge tractor-trailer rig crawling up a mountain pass at five miles an hour, the pleasure car driver was more concerned with the dangers of passing and the time lost than he was with the economic benefits that truck might bring him...the public’s perception was that most truckers were careless or dangerous (Childs, 1985:53).

Years after the dismantling of regulating trucking, public opinion seems not to have changed much regarding the truck driver. A fourth group was also at the forefront of helping the establishment of regulation in the trucking industry: the union.

**Company Growth and Union Involvement in the Trucking Industry**

**The Spread of Company Influence:**

Much of the involvement of the Teamsters in the trucking industry has seemed to straddle the line between driver and company interests. This is due in part to the pool of independent drivers that contract themselves out to companies,
and in many cases do not belong to the union. For the union to do its work as an organizer of labor, it had to embrace a more long term relationship with the carriers. This must have given rise to the situation Agar (1986:91) describes as the owner-operators being viewed as “independent contractors rather than employees and unions are for employees.” This split in the labor pool of truck drivers has tended to place union sympathies with the company drivers, while in the case of the push for regulation, the unions have directly attacked the independents (owner-operators) that threatened union control over the industry.

Yet, it was the union’s support of the companies that would eventually bring about the decline of union power in the trucking industry. If we look at the growth trends of the industry, there is no doubt that trucking, in the near 100 years since its beginning in 1900, has become a keystone industry for national production as well as individual trucker survival. Since the early fifties when regulation of this industry took hold, carrier companies have bloomed from one transcontinental company to the many that presently operate in 1996. The growth of these larger companies has become a great threat to the Teamsters -- in this way these larger companies react to strikes and the bargaining process:

In the early 1950's, most...contracts were negotiated by individual locals or by bargaining
units composed of a relatively few locals in a relatively small geographical area. As long as the companies' operations were not too much larger, this was reasonable, and gave greater potential control over bargaining to the rank and file...when companies grew larger, the position of the Teamsters was endangered. A strike by one local, or even by all the locals in an area such as Southern California, would only shut down a small part of the largest companies operating there...(Friedman, 1978:53-54).

The result was that the larger companies could hold out much longer in the face of strikes, and unless the unions could bring all locals together to support the strike, the union was impotent in effecting company change.

Another element of the larger companies that would undermine union power was the use of multiple terminals in major metropolitan areas. By having satellite terminals available to the large companies they also had a convienient system for threatening workers who were active in the unions. If union activity was on the rise and particularly militant in one terminal of operations, then the company would threaten to shut-down the terminal and shift the business to one of the satellite terminals. These veiled threats could be passed off as the natural pursuit of business on the part of the trucking companies, so it was rarely challenged in court or by union strikes (Friedman, 1978:54-56). In the absence of bargaining units as large as the companies, this form of threat was an effective control of union activity.
During the late fifties, the Teamsters were also subjected to increasing attacks by the government, which wanted to clean up the transportation industry. Friedman (1978) attributes these attacks to three motives on the part of the government:

First, these attacks were the result of a general negative feeling towards unions at the time, which translated into direct opposition in the seats of American power.

Secondly, there was a desire to get rid of organized crimes’ influence on the transportation industry. Companies were reportedly shaken down for money, freight was stolen: both the companies and the US government feared the possibility of an unofficial tariff on all goods moving through the country collected by a powerful and well organized crime syndicate. Many point to the leaders of the Teamsters and other unions as creating this situation through their own personal greed.

Thirdly, as in all political situations, this was a cause to be championed and politicians saw it as an opportunity to make their career by destroying the unions.

The result of this company undermining and government attacks was be the reorganization of the union under a new and charismatic leader, Jimmy Hoffa.
Jimmy Hoffa and the New Teamsters:

Hoffa was already a part of the Teamsters' official bureaucracy when he was chosen to lead the entire union. Hoffa was extraordinary in that he was able to unify the "barons" of the union -- the big city union leaders across the US -- essentially consolidating their power into the new bureaucracy of the union, as well as appealing to the rank and file union members that had now developed a strong distrust for the union leaders. It was in the face of external attacks on the union that Hoffa was successful in shifting the Teamsters from a conglomerate of locals to a single organization with clout and bargaining power.

Jimmy Hoffa also set in motion changes in the structure of the Teamsters union that created a separation of the bureaucracy from the rank and file members, essentially establishing an elite group that would control the union, and hold control over the rank and file, so that the decisions made on the national level of the union's governing body would be upheld, and this could be used as a weapon against the power of the companies. Many of these changes were spelled out in the Master Freight Agreement. This agreement was presented in Washington and established the centralization of the Teamsters' power into a single national bureaucracy.

Unfortunately, the end result of Hoffa's reorganization
of the union was a bureaucracy that "has waxed fat and happy" (Friedman, 1978:61) and a disenfranchised rank and file left with poor contracts and poorer representation. By the 1970's the carriers, the government, and the Teamster bureaucracy were united around the policy of selling out the rank and file and attacking the centers of rank and file militancy and power (Friedman, 1978:61).

In 1996, the Teamsters still exist and are still powerful, though declining as time passes. The disorganization and diffusion of the rank and file membership has left the union looking like a bureaucracy without a constituency; deregulation of the industry has played a major role in the decline of the union by changing the rules of the game.

Deregulation and the New Regulation

The trucking industry has been in a process of deregulation for approximately twenty years. The deregulation that we have seen in the industry has been aimed at the types of Direct Regulation I mentioned earlier. These types of regulation decided for the truck driver whether and where he could engage in business, how he would conduct this business, and what he would charge for his service. This was established through the extensive use of an operating authority system, whereby a trucker or company would apply to
the ICC for the authority to transport a certain type of goods within a particular area, and through a system of uniform rates for all types of freight.

The claims for the benefits of deregulation were mostly centered on basic tenets of capitalism: competition would create improved service and reduced prices in the free market (Agar, 1986:171). In truth, there has been a reduction in the rates, but there has also been a major deconstruction and reconstruction of the industry. For example, of the 30 largest trucking companies in 1979, only 10 were still in operation in 1992. Of the 20 no longer in existence, 17 failed and three merged with other companies (Bartlett and Steele, 1992 cf. Ouellet, 1994:232).

**Deregulation and the Driver:**

There is no doubt that deregulation has had serious effects on the carrier companies, but many would claim it has had the most significant effect on the work of the truck drivers. The changes that deregulation would bring for the drivers depend on the type of driver we are considering: the owner-operator or the company driver.

**The Company Driver:** A driver that is employed by a company is, or so it would seem, in a situation that has an opportunity for longevity and security. Insurance is often
covered by the company, though health benefits and pensions are more difficult to find. The company driver is certainly close to the picture we imagine when we think of the employee of a company. On the company level, without the need for operating authorities, company drivers are more likely to be dispatched anywhere in the US. The only restrictions are the area the company chooses to service and the type of freight that company has chosen to haul. On the industry level, marketplace competition has greatly increased, driving the hauling rates down, and resulting in the lowering of the driver’s wages. In fact, due to competition keeping the the hauling rates so low, many drivers have seen little gain in their wages since deregulation. For the company driver, deregulation has meant a lower wage, tighter schedules, and oftentimes long trips on the road (weeks or a month at a time without seeing home), but for the independent driver, deregulation has even been more difficult.

**Owner-Operators:** The owner-operator or independent truck driver must be looked at differently in the industry because each independent is a business unto himself. Working as an independent contractor, the owner-operator will sign a lease to haul for a particular company either for a long time, or he will move from company to company with short term lease agreements. For the owner-operator, the negative consequences
of deregulation have been twofold. First, just as they have for the company driver, the rates have declined for the independent. Because they work as contractors to the carriers, independents absorb up to 75% of the rate cuts as lost operating costs (Agar, 1986:171). Carriers have also been using the practice of flat-rating more often. Flat-rating is when a company will only offer a certain amount of money, or a flat-rate, instead of the customary percentage for a load of freight. The flat-rate is always less than the customary percentage. Secondly, the ICC regulations and enforcement capabilities that benefited independents have been reduced. After deregulation the ICC offices down-sized significantly, leaving few avenues opened to independents who have disputes with companies, and no ICC personnel available to enforce protections that are in place for independents (Agar, 1986:172).

Put simply, deregulation has given owner-operators lower revenue and less ICC protection. When compared to the larger companies that independents compete with the situation is even bleaker. The whole industry is working in a situation where the operating costs are rising and the rates are being lowered through near cutthroat competition, but the larger carriers are much more well-equipped to deal with this situation. Carriers can buy tires, oil, gas, and other parts in larger
quantities and cheaper prices than the independent. The large carriers are much better equipped to take advantage of operating efficiencies that come with size. The independent must spend part of his work time wading through the burdens of paperwork that companies delegate to other staff. And the carriers have the advantage of being more widely known, giving them greater advantages to gain new accounts and new loads to move.

Disgust, betrayal, and anger all describe the emotions the independent truck driver feels concerning deregulation. The changes in the laws have put the independents at an even greater disadvantage than they experienced during regulation. During the period of regulation, at least their routes and authorities were secured, regardless of what the larger carriers did. Now the independent is in danger of being swallowed whole by the competition.

The "New" Regulations:

Ironically, the trucking industry has returned to the period before the Motor Carrier Act of 1935 in many ways. Many of the regulations that are still on the books are the indirect regulations -- such as weight, height, and length -- that were established before the regulation of the entire industry. States who once had conflicting laws concerning these indirect regulations have taken back their authority, so
despite federal guidelines, states now have conflicting laws once again. Speed limits that once had a federally mandated ceiling have only in the last few months been left open for each state to establish. As a result, we have states such as Montana with speed limit signs the read, "At Your Reasonable Discretion."

Special interest groups such as Parents Against Tired Truckers (PATT) have risen to create grassroots legislation that harkens back to the earlier suspicions of the industry. The truck drivers are looked upon as dangerous and are feared when passenger cars must share the road with them. So, like Paris, as much as things change, they still stay the same.

One of the biggest differences between the period before regulation and the current post-regulation marketplace is the existence of the large companies. Back when the industry first began it was a population of independents, each working his own area. Now there are few independents and many companies. A quote from one of Michael Agar's independent truck drivers sums up the situation in a rather dark fashion:

Independent truckers are like dinosaurs. Many little animals are picking away at them, before the information from all the different sites gets to the dinosaur's brain, it will be dead (Agar, 1986:173).
Summary

This chapter has presented a history of the trucking industry in the United States. The foci of this history were: the development of the industry, the trends of regulation, the role of the union in trucking, and finally the effects of deregulation on the driver. From the perspective of the driver, the history of the industry can best be described as the larger institutions of society: the government, corporations, and unions, working together to protect their interests as an “elite power” (e.g. Mills, 1950) while putting the interests of the driver a distant second. The use of regulation and deregulation has become these institution’s chief tool to insure their control over the industry and its workers.

The next chapter explores the connection between occupational socialization and creation of identity by the long distance truck driver. That chapter presents data collected from the field interviews that may further our understanding of the history presented in this chapter, as well as locating the driver and his worldview within his industry and its embattled history.

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CHAPTER V
ROLE-SET AND THE OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY OF TRUCK DRIVERS

In this chapter, based on the interview data, I explore the influence of the truck driver's role-set on his occupational identity and outlook on life. I try to connect what the driver says about his work history with the way he views his role-set. I will discuss the responses gathered in the field interview process. These responses come from work histories that are the first part of the interview, and interpretations of the role-set, which is the second part of the interview. This chapter presents the connection between different work histories and the perceptions of role-set members.

Since these responses came from open and unstructured interviews the responses vary in number and length. Some subjects would return to a role-set member a few different times for comment, other subjects would give the same role-set member only passing regard. All the driver's in the sample provided at least one response for each of the role-set members that will be explored by this study.

This chapter will present sample responses to role-set members separated by captive and independent types of drivers responding. This will be a direct interpretation of each
member of the role-set. The empirical illustrations presented in this chapter will summarize these responses to act as a backdrop for the quantitative data in the next chapter. Chapter 6 will present frequencies on the basis of captive and independent drivers, and by length of service in the truck driving industry to explore whether answers differ on the basis of the driver's status in the industry and time spent in the industry.

**Interpretations of the Role-Set**

This section will focus on the individual role-set members of the truck driver and the responses drivers gave to questions regarding the role-set member. The basic categories of the responses will be split into captive or company drivers, and independent or owner-operators. The role-set members that will be explored here fall into the following categories: (1) enforcement officers, (2) clients and their supporting staff, (3) hauling companies and their supporting staff, (4) the public, (5) other drivers, (6) the driver's family, and (7) unions.

**Enforcement Officers:**

This category includes a handful of different officers that share the road with the truck driver. Specifically, these enforcement officers are: Department of Transportation (DOT) officers (who may be part of the state enforcement
system, or be one of the few federal officers left in each state), the State Police (who often have the state DOT as a branch of their organization), and police patrolling in the localities that the truck driver passes through. This study is mostly concerned with truckers that do interstate hauling. What this means is that the drivers have little regard for the local police because of their small jurisdiction. Local police are not fully trained to look for trouble with trucks as much as the State Police and the DOT, so their threat to the driver is delays connected with speeding tickets local police are most apt to hand out.

Certainly because of the level of involvement DOT officers have, they can be seen as much more of a threat to the work of the truck driver. Indeed, the equal jurisdiction of the State Police and DOT put them at the same level for the truck driver, and many responses illustrated this shared status.

**DOT and State Police:** No other role-set members receive the kinds of responses that these groups do. For many drivers, these officers are not only seen as a threat, but they are also viewed as being unfair, and prone to harassment of truck drivers (Ouellet, 1994:154-156). This is due to factors that must be taken into consideration with truck drivers. First, trucks are far more visible on the road than the many
passenger cars. And second, commercial trucks are far more regulated than cars or any other type of road vehicle. Despite these obvious differences, truck drivers see much of the regulation as being a type of discrimination toward their livelihood, and as a result, have high resentment for those delivering the discriminatory regulations.

The most frequently mentioned threat to the livelihood of the truck driver could be best summed up by the phrase, "enforcement officers as extortionists." Many drivers view enforcement as a system of tithes collected by the states to allow trucking to take place in their state. The only way these tithes can be collected is to connect them with the everyday work of the driver. Despite, this money being collected as fines, these fines are still viewed as extortion. This can be seen in the responses from independent drivers that follow:

BD: How do you feel about the job done by the DOT? Steve: They suck! They have nothing to do with safety. The only reason they are there is for the money. Revenue for the state. Every truck on the road pays into taxes and registration. $550.00 highway use tax, thousands of dollars to register trucks, and this money is supposed to go for the improvement of roads. We still have highways that are concrete slabs, and a lot of bridges aren't even tall enough for trucks to go through. So after each state spends the money from truck revenue on other things they end up having to raise money some way else, so they do it with DOT and inspections (Interview 1:4, July 5, 95).

In the case of the independent driver there is no company
wage, or company responsibility for the maintenance of the truck, hence, fines come directly from the independent’s wages. This relationship showed it’s influence in the very negative responses from independent drivers.

David: DOT? Most of it is a joke. They have rules that aren’t enforced, then they’re writing tickets just for more money. The logbooks are a joke. People write down whatever they want and when they get home they just rip pages out to get more operating hours (Interview 18: 79, July 22, 95).

Norman: DOT has too much power, the job is legit, they’re (officers) are just too hard-assed. A lot of what they do is bullshit to harass drivers. In Virginia I was put out of service until I could hitch a ride to a store and buy triangle reflectors for the truck! (Interview 25: 112, Aug. 1, 95)

Rob: DOT? They are just one big money scam.
BD: You don’t think they promote safety in the industry?
Rob: You know what the best safety factor for a driver is to be responsible enough to sleep when he’s tired. There’s no way in Hell DOT can check a driver or his truck properly. Everytime a driver stops for DOT they are sticking their own head in a noose...Something that would cost you a fine of $125 in Maine might cost you over $700 in North Carolina. After spending two weeks on the road you could come home with no money after all the fines (Interview 63:340, Oct. 25, 95).

Though independent drivers were more consistently negative in response to the DOT, company drivers seemed more mixed in their responses. Company drivers did voice the view of enforcement as extortion, but they also were more positive concerning the DOT’s role in enforcing safety.

Pat: You gotta look out for DOT. They are good for the industry, but sometimes they take it too far.

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The high fines they have for logbooks are ridiculous (Interview 12:52, July 8, 95).

Bob: They (DOT) don’t give me any trouble. If you drive around enough you know when the coops are open, then I just go around most checkpoints. (Interview 7:32, July 5, 95).

Vean: You have to have them (DOT) to an extent, it’s tough with the logbooks. It might not be right but at least you’re not gonna kill anyone. If they weren’t there trucks would be a mess (Interview 54:261, Sept. 15, 95).

There are certain advantages to working for a company instead of working for yourself. Companies often foot the bill for fines unless it is some flagrant breaking of the law. Probably the most astonishing finding is that many companies will pay logbook fines. Logbook violations are completely within the discretion of the drivers, but companies have been known to over schedule the drivers, leaving the drivers little choice other than to break the drive time regulations. By paying these fines, companies are subsidizing the driver’s lawbreaking practices, mostly because it means profit for the company.

Driving for large companies can also give the driver an advantage at the checkpoints. As you can see from the response of this company driver, name recognition can go a long way at a DOT checkpoint.

Jeff: DOT? They aren’t a problem. My company has always had a good safety record so a lot of times I drive up to the checkpoint and they go “oh, it’s you.” And they just wave me through without
checking anything (Interview 36:163, Aug. 16, 95).

This is a situation that Ouellet (1994) also found in his study.

The police are more likely to single out for inspection owner-operators, out of state truckers, and truckers from small companies than truckers who haul for the large freight carriers. Likewise, drivers believe that state police rarely cite the drivers of major firms, and my experience confirms this observation (Ouellet, 1994:155).

This is a situation that drivers in my study as well as Ouellet's take for granted that this is the system, but the knowledge of this only confirms for the driver that the DOT are a discriminatory enforcement group.

The result is a general disregard for the regulations that these officers enforce. As we have seen in the above responses, even company drivers that concede the necessity of the DOT will often avoid the checkpoints in an attempt to disable the enforcement system. So, for the driver, the relationship with the DOT and other enforcement officers is a contentious one. The more independent the driver -- owner-operator, working for a small company, a single state company, etc. -- the more antagonistic the relationship, as well as the stronger feeling that the practices of enforcement officers are discriminatory. States have the power to levy fines and take money from the drivers. Large trucking companies have the prestige and clout to be excused from fines of road checks.
altogether. To the driver, the enforcement system is designed to benefit the large companies that are swallowing the competition, and the states are in collusion with these companies by making it more difficult for the owner-operators and the small companies to make a profit.

Clients and Their Supporting Staff:

This category is made up of role-set members that are on the customer side of the industry. Put simply, shippers have freight that needs to be moved from one destination to another. At the sending point is the shipper who hires either an independent truck driver or a carrier (company) to move the freight. At the destination for the freight is a receiver, loading dock workers, and lumpers (for hire workers to unload trucks). So the category of clients and their supporting staff would be the shipper, receiver, dock worker, and lumper. Out of these different role-set members, only the lumpers would be seen as occasional members, shippers, receivers, and dock workers come into contact with the truck driver for every run.

These role-set members could be used to explore proximity as an influence on driver’s attitudes. This is mostly due to the responses that drivers gave to these role-set members. Shippers, for example, really had little mention throughout the interviews, whereas, receivers were mentioned more, and
lumpers were discussed frequently. All are part of the customer chain of delivery, but each has a different role in relation to the driver. It is these differences that seem to have a powerful influence on the driver’s perspective of each role-set member.

**Shippers and Receivers:** Due to the infrequent responses or even brevity of responses, it would make little sense to split responses about shippers and receivers by independent and captive drivers. Still, there is something to be said concerning their omission, particularly because they are so crucial a part of the industry. If we were to look at some of the concerns that were voiced about these role-set members we can see their importance.

Brad: I mostly don’t like their attitudes. Attitudes of shippers and receivers. It’s always hurry up and wait (Interview 6:25, July 6,95).

Connie: One big problem is the shippers and receivers ask for too much. They need to have this here at this time, and then they don’t have the help to unload, and you gotta pay out of your pocket... (Interview 43:210, Aug. 29,95).

For company and independent drivers alike, shippers and receivers set the schedule for the driver’s work. The Shippers set the time frame for when freight is to be moved (brokers and carriers do have an influence on this schedule also which will be discussed in the next section) and receivers give the drivers appointments for when the freight
is to be unloaded. The receivers appointments are always made on the time frame established by the shippers. Due to this dynamic of the industry you might expect more negative attention would be paid to shippers and their scheduling practices, but it seems that the importance of getting a load to haul overrides many negative views of the shipper. For the actual work process, the shipper comes at the beginning of each run -- most drivers go directly from one receiver to the next shipper during the work period. Perhaps the problems and frustrations of the run have a tendency to gather toward the completion. This would certainly explain much of the hostility that is brought to the loading dock of the receiver, and yet most of the acrimony falls on the lumpers and other dock workers.

Dock Workers and Lumpers: The responses truck drivers gave to questions about dock workers, lumpers in particular, showed that for the most part, lumpers are seen as a parasite that has attached itself to the industry and is directly responsible for many of the driver's problems. One of the most prevalent problems is money. Because the drivers have to either pay to have the truck unloaded or do it themselves, money becomes a big issue. For most drivers if they unload their own truck they are not paid a cent for this labor. Most drivers are only paid when the wheels of the truck are moving
because they get a certain rate per mile travelled. They might drive ten hours only to have to work the next six unloading their truck for no compensation. The alternative is to hire a lumper to unload the truck. Lumper's rates can vary depending on what type of load is on the truck. If it is a "roll-off" (all on pallets that can be easily moved by a forklift) it might cost $60.00, if it is "on the floor" and has to be "fingerprinted" (all boxes sit on the floor of the trailer and have to be individually moved by hand) then the rate can be up to $180.00.

Other situations influence this relationship also. Some warehouses require that you use a lumper, so the driver is at the mercy of these subcontractors. In other circumstances, the driver's company might pay all the lumping fees, but there may not be a lumper available. Some companies will only pay a portion of the lumping fee, so if the charge is high it comes out of the driver's wages. And then there are the companies that don't pay lumpers at all, and you are expected to unload. Many drivers feel that with the increased attention on how long drivers are on the road during a shift, and the concern for sleepy drivers causing accidents, that the inconsistent policies concerning lumpers by the companies and the receivers is only aggravating the problem of tired and dangerous truck drivers.
Chuck: The lumpers at these warehouses, they’ve gotten so bad the ICC set out a series of rules for lumpers to keep them from gouging drivers (Interview 2:13, July 5, 95).

Andy: lumpers! They’re cock suckers! They make too much money. They make tax free money on the money I pay taxes on...most of the time they’re saying they want $50.00 an hour...Some places you unload they intimidate you to use one. The money just isn’t there to pay lumpers when you figure how cheaply we have to haul the load (Interview 4:22, July 6, 95).

BD: Does your company pay to have you use a lumper? Brad2: Yeah, but it’s not right. If it weren’t for the money we had to pay out to the lumpers the drivers would probably have more money in their pockets. It’s bullshit to get money from the company that way (Interview 26:112, Aug. 1, 95).

This is not a situation that is lost on the lumpers either. They know full well how the drivers think about them, but they are also trying to get a job done and make money.

BD: What’s the hardest part of your job as a lumper?
LUMPER: Asking for the money. Like this guy here. I know he doesn’t want to pay that much to have his truck unloaded. It’s not even his money that he’s spending. The company pays for this guy’s load, but there are a lot of guys that have to pay out of their own pocket. I think these drivers know that if they didn’t have to pay me they would probably be making more money (Interview 8:34, July, 6, 95).

Despite the driver aiming most of his hostility for this situation at the lumper, this is misplaced blame. The lumper is simply the result of agreements made by shippers, receivers, and carrier companies. These groups have decided that freight belongs to the carrier/truck driver once it is
placed in the trailer. Ownership of the freight does not pass into the hands of the receiving party until it is touching the loading dock. This agreement makes it the driver’s responsibility to get it off the truck. In most cases, this saves the receiver money by paying fewer laborers to unload, and it doesn’t have a major effect on the carrier companies because the labor is either unpaid through the driver performing it, or the drivers wages are held lower to retain a percentage of the hauling profit to pay the lumper with. In the end, it is the lumper that has the closest proximity to the driver, and receives the brunt of the hostility. During my observations at the loading dock I observed many situations where drivers verbally mistreated the lumpers, in fact, the name calling quoted above by the driver named Andy was in the presence of two men working as lumpers that night.

Responses to questions about lumpers were much more frequent than responses concerning shippers and receivers, thus they could be separated by captive and independent drivers. Yet, that is an exercise that would yeild little insight. Probably more significant is the consistency of negative responses across both captive and independent groups. I surmise that this consistency is due to the lack of authority the lumper has in the situation. Lumpers do have some ability to negotiate or withhold services from someone.
unwilling to pay the price, but for the driver they are seen more as a tool that is used in the trade, than a source of authority that will influence the driver’s work. This is why I am surprised few connections were made between the shippers, receivers, and carriers to the problems of the lumping system. Drivers seem to think if the lumpers go away, the problem would be solved, when the real problem lies with the companies that hire the drivers.

Hauling Companies and Their Supporting Staff:

This category of the truck driver’s role-set includes the carrier companies (both large and small), freight brokers (who are often considered carriers also though they own no trucks), and dispatchers. Just as the previous category could be considered the customer side of the industry, this category can be seen as the service or administrative side of the industry. The groups described above coordinate the freight between the shippers and the drivers that will haul it.

Brokers and Dispatchers: In the previous section it was pointed out that the shippers set the time frame for when freight will be moved to it’s destination. Despite having this authority it is also shared with the carriers and brokers who line up the drivers to deliver the freight. If we look at the following diagram we can see how these two categories work together to get freight moved as well as how prices are
negotiated for freight.

FIGURE V

The Carrier and Broker Freight Negotiation Process

Rates for hauling freight, which were set at particular levels before deregulation, are negotiated through the process seen above. There is one significant aspect that this process
doesn’t show at first glance. The negotiating process between the broker and carrier can often look like a cat and mouse game of rate discounting. A carrier may hold off committing a truck to a particular load to see if the rates improve. For example, a load of produce has a very short shelf-life, thus as a load gets “older” it becomes more imperative that the load be delivered, and the rates may rise as a result. You would think this would result in a better situation for the driver, but often times it does not.

BD: How does the broker system work? 
Brad: Well, someone like Shaw’s will order product through a broker, the broker will set the appointments for when the freight has to arrive, then they locate the product and open up the business to shippers. Dispatchers then bid on the load the broker is trying to get shipped. If it is an important load that Shaw’s wants right away it could pay well. Dispatchers will then sit on the load to drive up the rate the broker is willing to pay to have it moved. In the meantime the amount of time the driver has to deliver the load gets shorter and shorter until it’s right down to the wire. And then they all scream at the driver when he shows up late for an appointment he never could make in the first place (Interview 6:29-30, July 6,95).

All hauling rates are open for negotiation so this process takes place for practically every load. This quote also illustrates an attitude that is very prevalent concerning dispatchers. Many of the drivers, whether they are captive or independent, view dispatchers as liars that work only for the favor of the company with little regard for the truck drivers.
A quote from the same interview illustrates this point.

Brad: The worst part of it is you have your dispatcher yelling at you to get somewhere, then the appointment you had keeps you waiting to unload. Dispatchers know the schedule, but they won’t tell it to the drivers, they just say be here now. I got to the plant where I was supposed to pick up this load I have now at 10:30, it was supposed to be loaded so I could leave by 12:00. I finally left at 2:30, so now I’m two hours behind, over one hundred miles, and the dispatcher still expects me to be on time (Interview 6:29, July 6,95).

Hauling can sometimes result in a catch 22 situation. If a driver refuses a load because the schedule is too tight, he may lose money, or not get good loads in the future from the dispatcher. If he takes the risky load, he may be fined, lose his license, or even come to physical harm in a crash.

Charlie: Sometimes we can be dispatched to “hot loads.” A hot load is a load that is already so late that it is illegal to dispatch, because it’s illegal for the companies to ask the drivers to break the law. Hot loads are still dispatched all the time though. No one is there to stop them (Interview 47:235, Aug. 29,95).

Some drivers are also subject to “forced dispatch.” This means that they have to take the loads that are offered to them otherwise they are fired from the company they work for. This is more prevalent for company drivera, but owner-operators leased to a single company might also be in this situation.

Norman: Yeah I’m on forced dispatch. And I go when they call if I want to make money. If I’m out of hours too bad, find some way around it (Interview
Overall, the truck drivers view of the dispatcher is one of distrust, and this is a similar sentiment connected with the brokers that work with the dispatchers. Drivers see clearly that brokers and dispatchers are only trying to do their job, but most of the drivers interviewed see themselves as cleaning up the mess leftover from the rate negotiation process. It falls on the driver to keep the tight schedules, to deliver the freight on time, and to be available for the dispatcher to dispatch.

Carrier Companies: Despite the lack of connection drivers make from the lumpers to the company policies that maintain the need for these hired unloaders, drivers do seem more aware of the connection of the dispatcher to the company. To the driver, the dispatcher is the face of the company. Most of the contact with the company that any driver will have is channeled through the dispatcher. Yet, for the driver, the dispatcher is only one part of the company, and these drivers recognize the full extent of the company’s influence.

The carrier companies should be considered on two levels in regards to the driver’s responses. First, there is the company he may understand as his employer, or put simply, the particular company he is working for. Second, there is the view of the company as part of the web of group affiliations.
that make up the entire industry. Hence, responses to
different questions could develop either area of discussion.
When the driver is discussing his own company there is a great
tendency to discuss the benefits of being affiliated with a
company. There are certainly advantages including having most
of the paperwork for the truck done, all licenses, insurances,
and taxes are paid by the company, as well as having all the
maintenance on the truck done and paid for by the company. An
independent leased on with a larger company is, in many cases,
responsible for all of the above operating costs. For the
independent, the company is nothing more than a broker that
locates loads for the driver with little more in amenities.
Hence, the trends seen in the responses are quite simple. The
company drivers were matter of fact about the companies role
of support and protection for his personal work, and the
independent drivers said little more than those supports don’t
exist for them. Any driver would tell you that it is a matter
of choice; the companies are starved for drivers so they will
hire anyone with experience (and some without to go through
their own training programs), and if you have the where with
all, you can finance a truck and start out as an independent.

Making the leap to the industry, and questioning the role
of companies on this level, brings out a much more rich and
varied set of responses concerning companies.
Bill: One thing that I’ve noticed about trucks is how long it takes manufacturers to put in simple improvements that you’ve seen in passenger cars for years…it hasn’t been real long that we’ve had power steering, there are a lot of older trucks on the road that don’t have power steering. Most of it is because of priorities. Companies buy the most trucks for their fleets and they won’t pay for extras that will make the driver’s work easier. Companies are more interested in saving fuel than saving drivers (Interview 60:283, Oct. 9, 95).

Don: Now (since deregulation) people are hauling freight for less than $.70 a mile. Somehow, through the government or businesses it must be subsidized. These people are hauling at a loss! They have to be getting tax breaks or something. Now what you see is a lot of companies going under to the big companies…there is no security in anyone’s job especially truckdrivers (Interview 2:10-11, July 5, 95).

Tim: You have companies out there like J.B. Hunt that are paying low rates and giving low miles. A lot of companies cheat drivers out of miles by measuring the distance in a straight line from point to point instead of by true road miles (Interview 14:61, July 15, 95).

The above quotes are good examples of the kind of variety of responses there are in reference to the companies. The first response speaks of how the needs of the companies are reacted to more often than the needs of drivers, and he uses the example of truck manufacturing to back up his point. In fact, this year is the first year that a truck manufacturer has begun to experiment with airbags as a safety feature for trucks (Overdrive:44,Aug. 95).

The second response hints at a situation that many drivers believe exists. Somehow, whether it is special
considerations from other businesses, or breaks from the government, big companies must be getting a helping hand. The hauling rates have dropped so low because of competition, it seems that subsidies could be the only answer. But, many of these drivers aren’t familiar with the concept of economies of scale, a term that refers to how a large business can run more cheaply than a small one through bulk purchases of oil, tires, and trucks etc. Instead, the general opinion is that the companies are getting favored in the industry, which to a certain extent is true.

Finally, the third response is even more direct about the character of the companies. Here the company is accused of business practices that are bad for the drivers, and also considered to be unethical. This is the company as the cheat. These business practices put the driver at a great disadvantage by negatively influencing his ability to make a profit.

These responses could be looked at as a continuum in regards to how the drivers view the companies that are at the center of the industry. The companies can be controlling of industry trends, the favored representatives of the industry, or simply the cheat that uses drivers for profit without fairly sharing the profits and opportunities.

Company drivers seem to respond negatively to these
industry aspects of companies more so than the independent drivers. This presents a very interesting paradox. The captive driver does point out the protections and benefits of driving for a company, but being immersed in this part of the industry also shows them the ugly side of an industry now controlled by large hauling companies. The independent doesn’t point to the company as directly as the captive drivers. Independent drivers respond more in terms of the competition, which is much more inclusive of the entire industry. Although we can’t deny there may be more attention to the large companies in the minds of the independents -- they realize who has the greater control of the industry -- by looking at the responses the concern is certainly the more loosely defined competition.

Paul: Now there just isn’t enough freight for all the little companies that spring up and go out of business in a couple of years. I haven’t got a return load yet so I may have to dead head it back home. I could wait a day but then I’m losing money (Interview 9:40, July 6,95).

Craig: Everyone thinks this is a glorious job, but it ain’t. I mean, take a look at the pay. The last time we had a rate hike for drivers was 1974. We’re working now what we were working for 18 years ago. The truck I drive is a 1994. The monthly payment on that is $1,875.00. There’s no retirement for independents like me. No workman’s comp either (Interview 42:196, Aug. 17, 95).

Richard: The big problem is the freight drying up. Every backhaul ends up being a loser, so you make money one way with a good load, then lose money taking a shitty backhaul. I’ll dead head back to
Florida before I haul at a loss (Interview 67:344, Oct. 26, 95).

Though there is little direct reference to the companies in these responses, the competition for independents is the companies. Independents have few concerns about how the companies do their work unless it will effect them through competition.

The Public:

As a member of the truck drivers role-set the public has a very indirect connection to the work itself, yet because of the workplace of truck drivers, there is a great deal of time spent visible to the public. These trucks share the same roads as the rest of us, their work is done mostly on the public ways of our nation. This has an influence that travels in both directions. Truck drivers are very aware of the public, and many of us not involved with the trucking industry have an image of who is behind the wheel.

The responses truck drivers gave in regards to the public can be looked at two different ways. First, there is the perception of the public expressed by the drivers. These are responses to how these drivers view the public in light of having to share their working space with the public. The second aspect of the public -- which will be explored further in the next chapter -- is what image does the public have of the truck driver (as understood by the truck driver). This
second aspect speaks much more to the driver’s identity, and not as much as how he sees a role-set member influencing his work.

**Four Wheelers:** When asking the truck drivers about the public one term came up time and time again that says a lot about the way the driver views the public. Even if I asked a question like, “how do like sharing the road with the public?” I was met with a typical response like, “What, the four wheelers...” Every driver asked about the public used the term four wheelers in place of the public. This terminology draws a bold boundary line around those who are truck drivers and those who aren’t. It also tends to illustrate that the connection to the public on the roadways is not a personal one, it is a connection defined by what you are driving not who you are.

*Brad:* The four wheelers need to learn. Most of them obviously don’t know anything about trucks. I see them driving down the highway right beside a truck. If something happens in front of me, you don’t want to be beside me...and sometimes the four wheelers just hold up traffic by blocking the lanes like that. I hate that because when I want to go I want to go. I can’t really speed because there’s a factory set governor on the engine so I can’t go faster then 65, but when I’m on the road it’s all or nothing, hammer down (Interview 6:27, July 6,95).

*Richard:* I think the whole thing is discrimination. If they tested people driving cars as much as they tested us (for a license)? Go to school, learn how to deal with hazard materials, defensive driving. None of them would have a license! None of them!
(Interview 67:343, Oct.26,95).

The response above is typical of the company drivers in the sample. The greatest concerns with four wheelers are safety, and the four wheelers restricting the ability of the drivers to make money. What seems strange is that company drivers are vocal about these concerns than independents. Many of the independents had much more stoic responses. Company drivers are out there to make a living, but through the protection of the companies, they are not risking bankruptcy. Independents, on the other hand, have the whole business on the line with every run. Still, they shrug off the influence of the four wheelers.

BD: How do you feel about the cars you share the road with?
Kevin: Well, everybody's gotta live. I just stay out of trouble, I watch out for all the other drivers (Interview 57:270, Oct. 8,95)

George: Four wheelers are just part of the job. Defensive driving, you just look out for yourself and everyone around you. As a truck driver you have to have 100% concentration. You have to anticipate what they are going to do (Interview 35:157, Aug. 16,95).

The independent driver doesn’t seem to view the four wheelers as an obstacle to his work, instead, they are viewed as just another part of the job. This difference in attitude could be due to the independents feeling less pressure to perform because they are closer to be their own boss (we can’t underestimate the fact that independents are held to the same
difficult schedules as company drivers). Or, perhaps this suggests a different level of professionalization.

Professionalization, or a professional attitude is certainly an important element to many of the drivers I spoke with. Whether it is voiced through attitudes about the public or discussions of work practices, there is a strong sense of pride and professionalism that has an understood hierarchy among the drivers in the industry.

Other Truck Drivers:

Every occupation has its own community of workers. Workers understand that there are shared experiences and values that are connected with being in a particular occupational position. Often times this is played out in work groups that form at the workplace. This is no different for truck drivers, although the circumstances of forming these work relationships is very different. Most of the work of the truck driver is done alone, separated from all other co-workers. Also the travel that is involved brings the driver further away from his company, family, and friends.

Despite these exceptions, truck drivers are very good at establishing work communities. This is done mostly through the use of the citizen band (CB) radio, and through frequenting truck stops during their travels. The CB and truck stops allow truck drivers to have much more contact in a
work situation that would otherwise be very isolating. The best way to describe the work groups that form are transient communities. There is little time on the road or at truckstops for many of these drivers to become deeply personal with another driver, instead, the strongest link is their shared work experiences. Information about work conditions is shared during their time together, and then the community breaks apart only to reform again at another place with different members. These transient communities have a great deal of overlap also, so that an illustration of these connections would probably resemble a web that is constantly being built and destroyed simultaneously.

The character of the responses regarding other truck drivers seems to indicate this strong occupational bond and much weaker personal one. In the end, responses about other drivers reveal the pecking order of the industry. With few ways to differentiate status among all truck drivers, a system has emerged from the drivers themselves. The elements that indicate a driver’s status are separated by generations and by driver affiliations. Generations simply means that there is a respect for the older, more experienced drivers that translates into being in a higher status position. You hear this in responses, and you can see it on the loading dock through the actions of drivers and dock workers. The second
part of status, affiliations, is based on who you are working for. There is less definition at the top of the hierarchy, though the bottom is very clear. Drivers that are affiliated with the biggest companies on the road are the most visible because of the truck logos, and they are treated with the least respect. During the interviews I was told a story about drivers giving incorrect directions to a driver working for one of the big companies. Due to the visibility of these trucks and their drivers (they often have uniforms also) this affiliation can often be seen as the driver’s master status, wiping out any status from being a more experienced driver.

Generations of Truck Drivers: Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the truck driver’s use of age as status in the industry is that the older drivers seem to be connected to a better time -- the romanticized “golden years” -- of the trucking industry. This only adds to the status of the older drivers because they are viewed as being a part of that earlier time, yet they have stuck it out through the more recent industry changes of deregulation. These more experienced drivers have felt the good times and the bad, and they are still at the truck stops, waiting for a load and telling stories about a time when drivers got more respect.

David: Drivers tend to be a helpful community, but not like it used to be. Drivers used to be more willing to stop and help someone stranded in a car, but these younger guys are pushing so hard they
don’t have the time (Interview 18:74, July 22, 95).

Don: I can remember when you could drive down the road with a beer can sitting right on your dashboard...drivers looked out for each other then, now you have to watch your back. Young drivers will pass on the right to try and get through...courtesy, that’s it. There isn’t the courtesy on the road anymore (Interview 53:247, Sept. 15, 95).

And the flip-side of recognizing earlier times, and older drivers is the denigration of younger drivers:

Tom: Young drivers, they think they know it all. I learn something new everyday on the road (Interview 62:289, Sept. 26, 95).

Walt: The new drivers out there are cleaner looking, but most of them don’t know what they’re doing. They’re just Yuppies that steer (Interview 69:345, Nov. 10, 95).

The lack of experience and new ideals of the younger drivers sets them apart from those that have been in the industry. As can be seen in the responses above, there are varying interpretations of who is an older driver versus a younger one. The second quote, from Don indicates what would be later revealed in the interview, that he has been driving since the 1950’s. On the other hand, Walt has been driving 16 years and David has been driving 17 years. All these men remember the better times, and place themselves as a part of that legacy. The only characteristic that seems to have a more powerful defining feature for the truck driver when seen through the eyes of other drivers is company affiliations.

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**Company Affiliations:** Due mostly to hiring practices and training programs that are well known to the drivers, many of the largest trucking companies in the United States are viewed as having the worst drivers on the road. One reason why large companies are suspect is because of their high turn over rate. Many of these large companies own more trucks than they have drivers for, and many of the drivers not affiliated with the companies believe that these companies actively recruit drivers off the street and from foreign countries.

George: I know the big companies get tax incentives. Schneider has a program that’s part of the government where they hire drivers from Ireland and from Russia. I’ve heard these Russian drivers on the CB before, they don’t know how to get anywhere, they can barely speak the language (Interview 35:159, Aug. 16, 95).

Kevin: You know how they train their drivers? They put him in driving with someone with experience for a week. All that week, they split the driving. So the trainer is sleeping while the trainee is driving and then they switch. After one week, he’s off on his own. These new drivers don’t learn a thing (Interview 11:49, July 8, 95).

The result is an industry wide belief that if you are an employee of one of these larger companies, you are both stupid and a very poor driver. These larger companies also have distinctive trucks that are easy to spot driving down the highway. This visibility only aids to the reinforcement of these beliefs, because there are many of these trucks on the road, giving them a higher frequency of contact with other
drivers. In fact, I was told by two drivers directly to avoid the trucks of certain companies when I'm driving because the drivers are probably dangerous.

The strength of these opinions certainly cements the notion of large company drivers as dangerous or inept. This can be seen in responses about the company drivers, and from a company driver.

Norman: Two weeks ago there was a young guy here from J.B. Hunt. He was trying to back his trailer up to the loading dock. He's pulling in and out, in and out. Finally, I went over to his truck, told him to shove over, and I backed the truck in for him. I just could stand to watch him any more. But, that's the problem with these Hunt drivers, they don't get taught anything. Or they get taught the easiest part of the job, holding onto the steering wheel and going down the highway (Interview 25:107, Aug. 1, 95).

Mary: (a driver for Schneider) I don't listen to the CB much because I get tired of being hassled for driving for Schneider. I'm just trying to make a living like everyone else (Interview 29:140, Aug.4,95).

These company affiliations are strong enough to wipe away considerations of age and experience. Mary's response is a good example. Mary, one of only two women I came in contact with in the field, is a grandmother of two and has been driving for Schneider over ten years. She plans to buy her own truck in the Fall so that she can move into the ranks of owner-operators, but until she makes that move she will be looked at as just another Schneider driver, dangerous and
stupid.

The perspectives of other drivers was another category that was consistent among company and independent drivers with the only major difference being those drivers working for larger companies that make a driver a target for ridicule. This ridicule may have less to do with the drivers behind the wheels for Schneider and J.B.Hunt, instead this anger might be a response to the proliferation of large companies such as these. Companies that swallow up the competition and actively drive down hauling rates, are certainly not favorites of the other drivers in the industry, and those that work for them may be seen as traitors to the profession, though this wasn't directly revealed in the responses.

The relationship drivers have with other drivers is the most part supportive and friendly in spite of the differences that are shown through the previous responses. This is probably due to having little other support out on the road. Even the companies can only do so much to support the drivers once they are hundreds of miles from their home. As we well know, humans are social animals, and these truck drivers need contact just as we do in our workplace. Support can typically come from the family also, but as we will see, family support is not easily maintained when your work can keep you away from home for weeks at a time.
Family Life and The Truck Driver:

The work of being a truck driver has kept few of the subjects in this study from trying to pursue a family life. Unfortunately, many of the attempts at being a successful truck driver and having a successful marriage seem to result in dissolution of the marriage. The break up of the family seems to happen a variety of ways; from adultery on the part of either party to simply being tired of being alone. In the end, far more families with truck drivers as one member break up than stay together.

On this issue we also see a definite split along generational lines. The drivers I spoke with who had been in the industry long enough to have full grown children now seemed much more successful at maintaining the family. Drivers with 20+ years of service more often had been married only once and were still active in that marriage. They spoke of how truck driving put their children through college.

Chuck (40 years experience): I have five kids, all grown. Three I’ve seen through college, the other two might someday go.
BD: All from the same marriage?
Chuck: The one and only marriage (Interview 2:13, July 5,95).

Artie (30 years experience): I have 6 kids but they’re all grown up now.
BD: And you’re still married?
Artie: 27 years on the 13th of this month (Interview 13:57, July 15,95).

But, once we look at the younger drivers, the story changes
drastically.


Tom (7 years of service): I have four kids from two marriages. An 18 and 21 year old from the first one and one that’s 17 months and a 5 year old from the second (Interview 62:287, Sept. 26, 95).

Among drivers with less than 15 years service there was a near 100% divorce rate among those who had been married. Only a small number of drivers had not been married at all. In many of the cases, we also see multiple divorces with children usually from the first two marriages, but few beyond this point. Suffice it to say that among younger drivers responses to family were consistently negative whether they were independents or company drivers. Despite this consistency, owner-operators with children were much more likely to discuss strategies for spending time with their children.

Steve: I’m pretty lucky, I get home every week to see my kids. I worked that out...It’s not easy. We miss anniversaries, birthdays, kids ball games (Interview 1:2-3, July 5, 95).

Mike: This past Summer I took my daughter with me and we went all over the US. I tried to take loads that would bring use close to things like amusement parks and attractions, then we’d take a few days off and just have fun (Interview 31:147, Aug. 4, 95).

Independents seem to have just enough autonomy to give them
the freedom to shape their work life to accommodate their family life. Still, this isn’t true in all cases for independents, and work pressure is certainly more aligned against family life than in support of it.

Rob: There’s no doubt about it, divorce is definately an occupational hazard. You know the time away from home is one thing, but some of these young going down the road have one thing on their mind (women) (Interview 63:341, Oct.26,95).

These trends with marriage and divorce are not shocking when considered within the context of the occupation. Drivers that are even on day long shifts will often be asked to put in ten to fifteen hours work when including loading and unloading. Then on the other end of the scale, some drivers are away from home six weeks or more during a work period. Typically, only a few days will be spent at home before returning to the road. One particular story told by a lumper illustrates the difficulty, frustration, and sometimes heartache that can accompany the truck driver.

Lumper2: I remember one night last year we got a call from a company that was trying to track down one of their drivers. He had been driving about ten hours and just pulled into the yard and was waiting for a door. Well, the call was about his teenage son who had been in a really bad car accident. He was alive, but they didn’t expect him to live through the night. This guy had about 6 hours of unloading work ahead of him, then he had to drive home to Chicago. Everyone on the dock unloaded this guys truck, so we cut that time down, but he still had to leave without sleeping and drive all the way to Chicago not knowing if his son would be alive or dead when he got there. I know I
couldn't work like that, that is a hard life (Lumper Interview 2:7, July 15, 95).

There are thousands of truck drivers on the road 365 days a year, though the circumstances may differ, stories like the above are not uncommon.

Unions and the Truck Driver:

Finally, I would like to make some brief observations about truck drivers and the unions. I mention that these will be brief observations due to one fact. The drivers I spoke to were nearly unanimous in their negative responses to the unions. Only one driver out of the seventy interviewed was even in a union, and he was embroiled in a workman's comp suit against his company when his union informed him that they would no longer help with his legal fees, or his medical bills after he had been laid up over a year due to work related injuries. Within the trucking industry, unions have declined in power as well as popularity.

In light of the relationship between carrier companies, the unions, and the government (especially the history of these three agencies working together as seen in the previous chapter) truck drivers believe that the union has sold out the drivers. Some drivers see the union as spurring on deregulation by asking the companies for too much money and benefits. Other drivers seem to think the unions pushed for deregulation in hopes of gaining more power and raising
hauling rates. For most of these drivers, it doesn’t matter which is true, they see no benefit from the unions, and feel that they are just another arm of the other agencies that already regulate their work.

Brad: They (unions) are all attitude. That’s why they aren’t getting anywhere in the industry. They need to learn to just bear it and live with the way things are (Interview 6:26, July 6,95).

John: The unions weren’t doing their job, and then deregulation came along basically to kill the unions (Interview 20:97, July 22,95).

Chuck: I’m not in a union now, but I was. Most shops have been trying to get rid of the unions. Most were successful. It was mostly the government and deregulation that put it all down the tubes. They brought it on themselves (Interview 2:July 5,95).

Without the rise of a charismatic leader on the order of Jimmy Hoffa, the decline of the union will probably continue. One thing is certain, with the attitudes the drivers have toward the union it may take an act of God to turn around the union’s decline in popularity.

Summary

The interview responses show an interesting and sometimes paradoxical pattern to the way truck drivers perceive the members of their role-set. First, drivers express the most consistently negative perceptions towards the role-set members that one might normally see as supportive members of a role-set. These members are: the hauling companies and their

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support staff, brokers and dispatchers, lumpers, and unions. The only exception to this scenario when we are considering within industry proximity is the other other drivers. The possible influences of this overall lack of support from the industry tends to give the truck driver the feeling of being an island in his occupation, certainly this will have a strong influence on occupational socialization and identity management of the driver.

If we turn to the more peripheral role-set members -- the family, the public, DOT officers -- we see mostly the same negative effects, but not as severe as with the industry role-set members. The one exception to these three is DOT officers, who have a high negative score mostly due to the highly antagonistic role they play in the truck driver's work. These findings may tell us more about the power of proximity in regards to identity management and occupational socialization. Does the role-set member have to be central to the work context to exert powerful influences over the drivers perception of identity?

The next chapter is a quantitative presentation of the responses made by the truck drivers. These tables will present the data in terms of the variables (a) industry status, being captive or independent in the industry, and (b) length of service, the number of years a driver has worked.
in the industry. This chapter will further clarify the variations of responses given by the truck drivers, placing the responses in a framework that will also clarify some of the differences in the truck driver’s occupational socialization.

The previous quotes have been presented to aid the reader in understanding some of the more subtle elements of the responses that would otherwise seem flat with only a quantitative presentation. The characteristics of the data presented in chapter V will allow for a much more informed reading of the frequencies presented in chapter VI. Differences and similarities will be explored in these frequencies that will link the previous interpretations of each role-set member.
CHAPTER VI

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS:
TRUCK DRIVERS' PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE-SET

The concern of this chapter is to present the interview responses regarding the role-set of the truck driver in a quantitative framework. I discuss the truck driver's ideas about the occupation they participate in, particularly through responses to the members of their role-set. Here, I present and interpret the tabulated results of truck driver's responses collected during the interview process.

First, I present the overall findings of the sample regarding responses to role-set members. Secondly, I provide the frequencies of responses on the basis of industry status i.e. if the driver is a company driver or an owner operator. Thirdly, results will be presented by length of service of the truck driver to explore whether the amount of time spent in the industry has an influence on the perception of the role-set.

Since the interviews were loosely structured around the interview guide (Appendix A) some drivers provided more than one response to interview items and/or role-set members. Rather than include all responses individually, responses were tabulated to reflect the overall attitudes of the drivers in the sample. For example, one driver who makes three separate negative responses about the DOT is recorded as having an
overall negative response to that role-set member. I feel by including all individual responses I would restrict my ability to make comparisons with variables such as being captive or independent, and the length of service of the truck driver. Using individual responses would inflate some of the categories, and only serve to muddy the waters when making comparisons between these variables.

**Frequencies of Responses to the Role-Set of the Truck Driver: Total Sample**

This section will present and interpret the results of the sample as a whole. Table 4 presents the responses to the role-set for the entire sample of truck drivers.
Table 4:
Perceptions of the Role-Set of Truck Drivers

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<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<td>48/68.57</td>
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<td>11/15.71</td>
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<td>19/27.14</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in Sample</td>
<td>121/19.20</td>
<td>368/58.41</td>
<td>141/22.38</td>
<td>630/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories of role-set members above require some explanation. I will first discuss the role-set members that are matched as pairs: shippers/receivers, and brokers/dispatchers. Then I will look at each member...
individually.

Four of the role-set members were collapsed into single categories. In the table above, these categories are listed by the names of the two role-set members in each. The first category, clients and their supporting staff, includes shippers and receivers. These two role-set members are both client based in that these two members are both involved in hiring the service of the truck driver. Mention of the shippers and receivers was left as an open option for the drivers to comment on; there were no specific questions based on the existence of these two groups. Hence, any responses recorded were completely unsolicited by the interview guide.

The second category is hauling companies and their supporting staff, and this includes the role-set members brokers and dispatchers. Just as shippers and receivers seek to hire the service of the truck driver, brokers and dispatchers seek to offer that service. This was another area of response that was left open to the truck driver. Despite the high "no response" rate for these two groups we can still see a difference between positive and negative responses in these two categories. Negative responses are much more numerous when connected with the hauling companies and their supporting staff (44/62.85%), than the clients and their supporting staff (11/15.71%). In fact, most of the negative
responses are directed toward the areas of the trucking industry that should offer the driver professional support. Role-set members such as; the unions (51/72.85%), carrier companies (58/82.85%), and brokers and dispatchers (44/62.85%). The only role-set member seen as having a greater positive influence, that would also be commonly considered supportive within the industry are the other drivers (42/60% positive).

Two other role-set members were responded to within similar negative levels as the three mentioned above. These are both members that have frequent face to face contact with truck drivers; lumpers (56/80%), and DOT officers (48/68.57%). Lumpers and DOT officers can offer support in some ways, but they are, in general, seen as being an outside element to the industry. Elements that, in both cases, can have a severe restrictive influence on the amount of money a truck driver can earn.

Other role-set members drivers responded to are definately considered to be on the fringe of the industry and the occupation. Family and the public still play a big role in the day to day work of the truck driver, but the responses to these groups were of less concern to the drivers interviewed. In regards to family, it should be made clear that negative responses to this role-set member does not mean
there is any oppressive influence over the truck driver that comes from the family. Negative responses for this category (36/51.42) were much more concerned with the mismatch between family life and the lifestyle of the truck driver. Much of this was expressed with sadness on the part of the drivers interviewed, as well as a matter of fact understanding that it is part of the job, an "occupational hazard" as one driver put it, just another bump in the road.

Responses to the public (39/55.71% negative) seemed to reflect this same theme of being part of the job. Of course, this is not how the public is seen by all drivers, but there is a strong difference between the role-set members that seem to have more proximity to the driver, and the public which is viewed en mass by the truck driver.

The Industry Status of the Truck Driver: Results by Captive or Independent Drivers

To explore the data further, I present the results for each role-set member split by the truck driver's industry status. Industry status is a term derived for this research to indicate whether a truck driver carries the status of being a driver working as an employee of a hauling company, or if the driver owns his truck and leases his services to one or more hauling companies. I have also used the terms captive and independent to describe these two statuses of the truck driver. A captive driver corresponds to the company driver,
and the independent driver corresponds to the owner operator.

Although previous studies have addressed the issues of independent drivers, (Agar, 1986), (Blake, 1974), (Bisanz, 1977), (Ouellet, 1994), few studies have been conducted comparing the differing work situations of captive and independent drivers. The following tables have been derived from the interviews conducted in the field. The category "no response" is a combination of response types. One type is omission. If the truck driver did not mention a particular role-set member than the omission was recorded as having no response. Circumstances where a driver seemed to shrug off the mention of a role-set member, or seemed basically neutral on an issue were recorded as no response. Fortunately, there were few drivers that would be so diplomatic in their responses. Another type of response that could fall under the heading no response occurs when a truck driver doesn't have occasion to use a certain role-set member. For example, not all truck drivers will use lumpers to unload their trailers. As a result of this, a handful of drivers had no opinion concerning lumpers.

The first in this series of tables shows an overall negative attitude toward the DOT officers. This circumstance is particularly acute for the owner operators. We must remember that it is the owner operator who must bear all
responsibility for the fines, repairs, and violations that a DOT officer will issue tickets for. This certainly makes an independent driver more vulnerable to the DOT than any other driver.

Table 5:

Responses to Department of Transportation Officers by the Industry Status of The Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>19/41.30</td>
<td>27/58.69</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>46/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>3/12.5</td>
<td>21/87.5</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>22/31.42</td>
<td>48/68.57</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows that drivers not only have mostly negative responses to DOT officers, but this is a role-set member that evokes strong feelings, positive or negative.

The next table outlines responses directed at two different role-set members. Due to infrequent responses to these items as separate role-set members, I have collapsed the responses here to investigate how the truck drivers view the members of the industry that hire the truck drivers for their service. Hence, we have the shippers and receivers that the
driver must have contact with at the beginning and the end of each run.

Table 6:

Responses to Shippers and Receivers by the Industry Status of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>7/15.21</td>
<td>39/84.78</td>
<td>46/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>3/12.5</td>
<td>4/16.66</td>
<td>17/70.83</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3/4.28</td>
<td>11/15.71</td>
<td>56/80</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this particular table there is a low response rate overall, however there still seems to be more of a negative slant to the few responses. In this instance there are no positive responses from captive drivers. This may be due to captive drivers experiencing less autonomy than the independent driver who is willing to acknowledge positive aspects of these clients. This is a sentiment that quickly changes when we consider the next role-set member, who acts as a bridge between the truck driver and the client.

This worker is called a "lumper" in the industry. A lumper is a person who works through individual agreements
with the truck driver to unload the freight that the driver is delivering. For some older truck drivers lumpers are an essential service provided. Other drivers, on the other hand, view these independent contractors as parasites living off an unfair loophole in industry contracts. This loophole is that the freight a truck driver carries is considered his own property, or the property of the shipper who sent it. The freight does not become the property of the receiving client until it touches the loading dock. This leaves unloading the freight up to the driver. It is within this grey area of ownership that the lumpers steps into to earn money. Drivers who have been on the road for ten hours don’t relish the idea of unloading their own freight, so they negotiate with the lumpers to arrive at a price for the unloading of the freight. If they can agree, the lumper unloads the truck.

Payment for the lumper can come from any number of sources. Some hauling companies pay all lumping fees, no matter what the cost. Others will only pay a certain dollar amount. If this amount is less than what the lumper is asking for, the balance comes out of the driver’s pocket (his wages). Independents, in almost every case, must pay for lumping entirely on their own. And finally, a driver can simply choose to unload his own truck. If the company pays for a lumper, the driver might pocket this fee and do the work
himself.

The general feeling from all truck drivers is that these lumpers do nothing but take advantage of a bad situation that benefits the companies, the receivers, the shippers, and the lumpers at the expense of the drivers. Few of the role-set members listed above pay for the labor of the lumper, and when the company does pay for the lumper, there is a consistent view that the driver is making less so that lumpers can be paid.

Table 7:

Responses to Lumpers by the Industry Status of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>37/80.43</td>
<td>9/19.56</td>
<td>46/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>19/79.16</td>
<td>5/20.83</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>56/80</td>
<td>14/20</td>
<td>170/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The category of no response in Table 7 is attributable to the fact that not all drivers use lumpers. The interesting element of this finding is that the truck drivers focus a lot
of anger at the lumpers, but none of the drivers really seemed to fully realize the connection between the lumpers and the policies of the hauling companies that created this need, or niche for lumpers to exist. Instead, the focus of the anger is directed at the lumpers, and is manifested by open insults (see quote chapter V, page 121), and curt discussions between the lumpers and the drivers. As can be seen in the above table, the result of this relationship is purely antagonistic, and negative in the eyes of the truck driver.

The responses to the role-set members brokers and dispatchers reflects a similar phenomenon that is seen with shippers and receivers. What I am referring to is that these role-set members share the status of being the agents that offer a truck driver’s labor, just as shippers and receivers are the groups that receive the driver’s labor. The frequency of responses to these two groups (brokers and dispatchers) did increase over those of the shippers and receivers. Despite, these frequency differences, it still seems that the response categories are similar. In both cases, owner operators exhibit slightly higher levels of positive responses despite the overall sentiment being negative for these groups.
Table 8:

Responses to Brokers and Dispatchers by the Industry Status
of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>28/60.86</td>
<td>18/39.13</td>
<td>46/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>1/4.16</td>
<td>16/66.66</td>
<td>7/29.16</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1/1.42</td>
<td>44/62.85</td>
<td>25/35.71</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As I mentioned earlier, brokers and dispatchers are viewed by the truck driver as being part of the hauling company system, and many of the opinions about the companies spill over to these more specific role-set members.

Hauling companies (as can be seen in Table 9) have a very different pattern of responses from the truck drivers as compared to brokers and dispatchers. Here we see that negative responses are more frequent overall, yet there is a noticable difference between the responses of company drivers and owner operators. As I discussed in the previous chapter, many of the company drivers see the companies as creating oppressive working conditions with little regard for the driver. Owner operators have a greater tendency to discuss
companies in terms of competition and the effects on the industry as opposed to focusing on working conditions.

Table 9:

Responses to Carrier Companies by the Industry Status of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>3 / 6.52</td>
<td>43 / 93.47</td>
<td>0 / 0</td>
<td>46 / 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>0 / 0</td>
<td>15 / 62.5</td>
<td>9 / 37.5</td>
<td>24 / 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3 / 4.28</td>
<td>58 / 82.85</td>
<td>9 / 12.85</td>
<td>170 / 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few company drivers spoke of the benefits of being an employee instead of an entrepreneur, but it came as a surprise to me that this number would be so low. As employees, truck drivers do experience more protection in the hyper-competitive truck driving industry. Insurances, taxes, licenses, registrations, and maintenance are usually paid by the company. In spite of these supports, the company drivers experience pressure from the demands of the job, and feel that the companies only respond to the needs of the market, not the driver.
Table 10, which presents the responses to the public, shows important differences in the attitudes of the company drivers and owner operators toward those they share the road with.

**Table 10:**

Responses to the Public by the Industry Status of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>13/28.26</td>
<td>32/69.56</td>
<td>1/2.17</td>
<td>46/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>14/58.33</td>
<td>7/29.16</td>
<td>3/12.5</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>27/38.57</td>
<td>39/55.71</td>
<td>4/5.71</td>
<td>170/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this circumstance, company drivers are much more likely to have negative attitudes towards the public than owner operators. This finding has a bit of a paradox connected with it that can be understood when considering industry status. Owner operators have much more at stake with every trip they take to haul freight. By being an owner operator, the truck driver is taking on responsibilities that are much more vulnerable to loss on the market. While, on the other hand, company drivers have protected jobs to a certain
extent, by being part of a trucking company. Yet, it is the company drivers that see the public as a troubling obstacle to their ability to earn a wage. The owner operator sees the public as a part of their worklife, not an impediment to their work.

There may be similar sentiments expressed by company drivers when it comes to truck drivers attitudes toward other truck drivers. Here again we see a major difference between the captive and the independent driver.

**Table 11:**

**Responses to Other Truck Drivers by the Industry Status of the Truck Driver**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>21/45.65</td>
<td>22/47.82</td>
<td>3/6.52</td>
<td>46/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>21/87.5</td>
<td>3/12.5</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>42/60</td>
<td>25/35.71</td>
<td>3/4.28</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent drivers are far more positive to their colleagues than captive drivers. Many of the independent drivers spoke
of other drivers as being a supportive community; a group you could count on if in trouble on the road. Company drivers, on the other hand, spoke of drivers being more concerned with meeting schedules than being able to stop and help another truck driver.

When turning to a role-set member like the family, we see that a consistency of responses returns to be shared by both captive and independent drivers. Considering a group like the family, one might assume that responses would be somewhat positive concerning this most basic group of society. Yet when asked about family, the truck drivers in this study had few positive things to say. Many spoke of multiple divorces, and children living here and there. The occupation of the truck driver seems to be the antithesis of family life because of the long hours, days, and weeks away from home.

Table 12 not only shows this consistency among the two groups, but it also shows the more negative emphasis on the family. Here it should also be pointed out that entries in the no response category reflect the number of single men who have never been married.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>14/30.43</td>
<td>25/54.34</td>
<td>7/15.21</td>
<td>46/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>9/37.50</td>
<td>11/45.83</td>
<td>4/16.66</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>23/32.85</td>
<td>36/51.42</td>
<td>11/15.71</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final role-set member, the unions, can also be said to have fairly consistent responses among captive and independents alike. If we look at Table 13 we can see that there is a predominantly negative view of the unions in the trucking industry. I believe much of this sentiment can be attributed to elements shown in chapter IV concerning the history of the unions. Many of the drivers see the unions as selling out the drivers so that the union officers can reap the rewards from the industry. Others blame deregulation on the unions, believing deregulation was simply a government response to weaken a union that was getting too powerful. Here we also saw some respondents in the no response category. This is mostly due to younger drivers that have little to no
experience with the unions, and see them as having no influence on their lives.

**Table 13:**

*Responses to Unions by the Industry Status of the Truck Driver*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>32/69.56</td>
<td>14/30.43</td>
<td>46/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>19/79.16</td>
<td>5/20.83</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summation of the Variable Industry Status:**

The previous tables begin to show a pattern to the responses from the truck drivers. On first glance, it appears that being captive in the trucking industry does contribute to an overall pattern of negative response to most role-set members. Independent drivers do share much of the same negative response patterns, but these tables have shown that being an independent truck driver may influence some of these responses to develop a more diplomatic response to role-set members on the periphery of the industry, such as: DOT
officers, and the public.

In the next section, the interview data will be explored in terms of the variable years of service to see what patterns may emerge from the use of these variables, and to draw out any possible connections between industry status and years of service.

The Length of Service of the Truck Driver:

Results by the Number of Years in the Industry

The data from this study has also been organized to show what influence the amount of time the driver has been a member of the industry has on that driver’s perspective of the role-set members. It is the cases listed here that will demonstrate different levels of socialization for the truck driver. As we know, socialization is a process within a social role, such as an occupation, that rarely becomes stagnant. Just as identity has elements of structure and process that meet at the crossroads of the individual, so too does socialization share these two elements when investigating specific social roles, e.g. occupations, e.g. truck drivers.

In the following tables, we will specifically be looking at how different levels of socialization influence the way truck drivers understand the role-set members that are connected with his work. Also, by exploring the various
responses we may come closer to understanding which role-set members truck drivers would deem important, and which he would consider to be more on the periphery.

The first role-set member is the Department of Transportation officers that seek to control our highways and the activity on these public roads. As we saw previously, DOT officers are, for the most part, looked upon with very little favor. When we organize the responses by length of service the balance of the responses are negative, but other subtle patterns also emerge. For instance, in the table below, we see that drivers who have only been working 10 years or less have the highest positive responses (11/47.82%). Drivers in the highest bracket (21+ years) also seem to be more tolerant of DOT, though not at the same level as the new drivers in the first category. Why might these responses hit a peak for drivers with 11 to 20 years experience only to diminish for the drivers that have over 20 years experience? This change in responses seems to suggest that drivers with the most experience are more accepting of the role the DOT must play in the industry. For the drivers in the middle category, one could predict that other life patterns might influence this negative response. If it is widely felt that DOT is a form of state run extortion -- as discussed in the previous chapter -- than truck drivers might be responding purely from economic
Table 14:
Responses to Department of Transportation Officers by Length of Service of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td>11/47.82</td>
<td>12/52.17</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td>4/16.66</td>
<td>20/83.33</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td>7/30.43</td>
<td>16/69.56</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>22/31.42</strong></td>
<td><strong>48/68.57</strong></td>
<td><strong>0/0</strong></td>
<td><strong>70/100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

necessity. If the driver has begun this career, and has had children also, the period of 11 to 20 years experience is the most likely time that the driver will incur the more expensive costs of raising children. Mostly likely, this period of his career would coincide with the adolescent or early college years of his children, regardless of whether the driver is still married or not. This intersection of family economics and the obstacles to making a wage may result in the higher negative responses toward the very visible obstacle, the DOT.

As we explore the role-set members that are more directly a part of the drivers work, we see a diversity of responses that sometimes reveal what we might consider the obvious, and in other instances set the stage for paradox. I
am referring to the different responses concerning clients and their supporting staff. Within this category, as we saw early, there are the shippers, receivers, and lumpers. What seems paradoxical is the differences in responses for shippers and receivers, as compared to the lumpers. There were so few responses to the shippers and receivers that I decided to combine these role-set members, and yet, there were so many responses to lumpers, it was necessary to keep this category separate.

Table 15:

Responses to Shippers and Receivers by the Length of Service of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>1/4.34</td>
<td>22/95.65</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td>2/8.33</td>
<td>3/12.5</td>
<td>19/79.16</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td>1/4.34</td>
<td>7/30.43</td>
<td>15/65.21</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3/4.28</td>
<td>11/15.71</td>
<td>56/80</td>
<td>170/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shippers and receivers got little to no response from the truck drivers. The only category that stands out is that the drivers with the most experience had a 30% negative response.
to shippers and receivers. I can only attribute this difference to these drivers being more aware of the influence these agents have on the driver’s day to day work. Shippers and receivers do have the opportunity to influence the driver’s schedule, negatively or positively. Other drivers seem more focused on lumpers as being a negative influence on the industry.

Table 16:

Responses to Lumpers by the Length of Service of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>14/60.86</td>
<td>9/39.13</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>19/79.16</td>
<td>5/20.83</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>23/100</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>56/80</td>
<td>14/20</td>
<td>170/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is little to dispute the feelings truck drivers have for lumpers. These “freelance unloaders” can be seen throughout the industry, but they are most prevalent at

169
grocery store warehouses. When considering the different responses shown in the table above, there are certain elements that might explain the differences due to the number of years of service. The drivers with the most experience, 20+ years, are unanimous and very direct in their negative responses to lumpers. This could be because many of the older drivers are in a position where they have no choice but to use lumpers for unloading their trailers. Older drivers are more likely to have health problems that keep them from unloading their own trucks, thus, older drivers feel that they have no choice but to rely on lumpers. Younger drivers (2 to 10 years) have more neutral responses because many of them do their own lumping, so a percentage of these drivers has no response.

The next category also combines two role-set members while leaving a third separate. This category is carrier companies and their supporting staff. First, we will look at the responses to brokers and dispatchers, and then the responses to the carrier companies themselves.

Dispatchers and brokers are the scheduling network that connects the companies to the shippers. Truck drivers are well aware of this, and the result is the mostly negative responses we see in table 16. When looking at the responses by years of service you see a peak of negative responses for the middle category, 11 to 20 years 22/91.66%, followed by
diminishing responses in the 21+ range, 10/43%. Here again we see two elements of the work life of the truck driver possibly interconnecting through the economy. Brokers and dispatchers both can be seen as obstacles to the driver’s ability to make a good wage, and as I mentioned before, the 11 to 20 year range is likely to correspond to other financial burdens from the family. Brokers ultimately set up the deal between shippers and the companies for a cut of the profit, and dispatchers deliver the details of the hauling contracts to the driver.

Table 17:

Responses to Brokers and Dispatchers by the Length of Service of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td>1/4.34</td>
<td>13/56.52</td>
<td>10/43.47</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>22/91.66</td>
<td>2/8.33</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1/1.42</td>
<td>44/62.85</td>
<td>25/35.71</td>
<td>170/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, with years of service may also come an acceptance of the other role-set members. This would explain the drop in
negative responses for the 20+ years group.

Responses to the companies themselves were much more consistent across all categories of years of service. In this table (table 17) we see responses becoming more negative from the first to the second category, yet for the last category, 20+ years, there is a drop in negative responses and a rise in the no response category.

Table 18:
Responses to Carrier Companies by the Length of Service of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>19/82.60</td>
<td>4/17.39</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td>2/8.33</td>
<td>22/91.66</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td>1/4.34</td>
<td>17/73.91</td>
<td>5/21.73</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3/4.28</td>
<td>58/82.85</td>
<td>9/12.85</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to the public are far more varied than the patterns we have seen for the more industry specific role-set members. Just like those other role-set members, the public cannot be ignored despite the public having only a tacit connection to truck drivers. Because we share the workplace
of the truck drivers on a regular basis -- our highways and streets -- we as drivers are a big consideration of the truck driver.

The drivers with the least experience expressed the strongest negative feelings toward the public (21/91%). Whereas the most experienced drivers were most likely to express positive reactions to sharing the road with the four-wheelers (16/70%).

Table 19:

Responses to the Public by the Length of Service of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td>2/8.69</td>
<td>21/91.30</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td>9/37.5</td>
<td>14/58.33</td>
<td>1/4.16</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td>16/69.56</td>
<td>4/17.39</td>
<td>3/13.04</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>27/38.57</td>
<td>39/55.71</td>
<td>4/5.71</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to the public seems to suggest a progression with years of service that makes the more experienced driver more accepting of the relationship between his work and the needs of the public to share this work space.
The situation seems to reverse itself when we look at the responses truck drivers have about the other drivers they share the road with. In this circumstance, drivers with less experience are very positive towards their fellow drivers (18/78%). During the period of 11 to 20 years of service those sentiments shift (10/41%). This could be attributable to a heightened sense of competition during this time in the driver’s career.

Table 20:
Responses to Other Truck Drivers by the Length of Service of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td>18/78.26</td>
<td>2/8.69</td>
<td>3/13.04</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td>10/41.66</td>
<td>14/58.33</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td>14/60.86</td>
<td>9/39.13</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>42/60</td>
<td>25/35.71</td>
<td>3/4.28</td>
<td>170/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the most experienced drivers there is a strong positive response to other truck drivers, but it is still below that of younger drivers (14/60%). The differences we see for older drivers is something that is detected more easily through interview responses.
Older drivers specifically talk of how younger drivers aren't trained properly, and have little respect for themselves, other drivers, and the public. These sentiments would certainly account for the shift in responses for this category.

When considering the families of truck drivers and the responses that drivers have to questions of the family it is important to note that a negative response does not signal a rejection of the family by the truck driver. Instead, a negative response to family simply indicates the truck driver making a negative connection between his work and the ability to maintain a family relationship. Hence, it is compatibility that is positive and conflict that is negative in the responses of the truck drivers to family. The no response category simply means the driver is single and has never been married.

The drivers that fall in the first two categories show negative orientations to the family (2-10 years, 16/70%; 11-20 years, 16/67%). Yet drivers with over 20 years experience voice very few negative responses to family (4/17%).

One explanation for this difference is that the more experienced drivers were driving before deregulation. They may have had more financial and personal opportunity to establish a strong family during this period of the industry.
These drivers also have had very different experiences that link with family structure. Some of these men spoke of the wife as the worker in the home, taking care of the kids.

**Table 21:**

Responses to Family Life by the Length of Service of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Positive Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Negative Freq./Percent</th>
<th>No Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/8.69</td>
<td>16/69.56</td>
<td>5/21.73</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5/20.83</td>
<td>16/66.66</td>
<td>3/12.5</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16/69.56</td>
<td>4/17.39</td>
<td>3/13.04</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>23/32.85</td>
<td>36/51.42</td>
<td>11/15.71</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the younger drivers mentioned multiple divorces with children in different parts of the United States. These drivers do see family life as a horrible experience when it can only include the father two days every six weeks.

The final role-set member is the union, and the responses for unions takes on a very predictable pattern. As experience increases so does negative responses to unions. This makes perfect sense when you consider the history of unions. Union membership has been on a rapid decline for two decades, and
the history of the unions in America leaves many of the truck
drivers with no trust for this group. Many drivers blame the
unions for deregulation, claiming that deregulation came about
to break the union.

**Table 22:**

**Responses to Unions by the Length of Service of the Truck Driver**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>8/34.78</td>
<td>15/65.21</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>20/83.33</td>
<td>4/16.66</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>23/100</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>51/72.85</td>
<td>19/27.14</td>
<td>70/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to unions are consistently negative, but
that negativity increases with the years of experience. This
is mostly due to the more experienced drivers having previous
connections and relationships with the union. They felt
betrayed by the union first hand, and they see the over all
changes that have occured due to deregulation. The older
drivers know what it was like to be working during that
mythical period before deregulation, these are the “golden
years" of truck driving.

Summation of the Variable Length of Service:

Though it should not be surprising that there would be variations among the responses based on the truck drivers' length of service in the industry. Time spent as a worker in any occupation will tend to have different influences at the different points of time we decide to investigate the worker. Instead, the challenge here is to ask, why do the responses vary? What is unique to the truck driver that influence the variety of responses to the role-set members?

If we consider the negative responses across all role-set members than we can point out that, although the 21+ years category seems to be a period of mellowing, or shifting from negative to more positive responses, the 11 to 20 year period perhaps should be considered the period of climax. It is within this category that negative responses seem most likely to be felt strongly by the driver. As I mentioned earlier this may be attributable more to the lifecourse than the work itself. As I mentioned, this is a time when families may be growing or even sending kids off to college. This may contribute more stress to an already very stressful occupation, and result in the driver feeling more isolated and put upon than usual.
Combining Industry Status and Length of Service

One area that has not been described by the above tables is the pattern that comes from combining the variables of industry status and length of service. This is illustrated in Table 23.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Captive</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-10 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pattern of these variables show that the work experience for the independent driver could be different for the company driver in two ways. The first is that there are fewer new independent drivers coming into the industry as shown by the low number of independents in the 2-10 year group. The start up costs of being an owner operator could make it particularly difficult to enter the field as an independent. Secondly, it would seem that there is less staying power for independents in the industry as seen by the
low number of subjects in the 21+ range. This could be due to the competition that tends to flatten wages resulting in few increases in income for the truck driver. This being the case, independents may eventually be driven out of the industry after struggling to make a living. One thing we can speculate on is whether independents will be able to stay a part of this industry, or will they be forced out, unable to compete with the big companies?

Summary

In this chapter we have further clarified the data that first presented in chapter V. The quantitative framework in this chapter is designed to explore patterns in the responses to the two variables; industry status, and length of service. By separating truck drivers by these two types I am developing a model that explores the differences and similarities between these types of drivers. The patterns of these differences will later be used to explore whether they also influence the drivers' identity and the process of occupational socialization for the truck driver. The next chapter (chapter 7) directly addresses these questions of identity.
CHAPTER VII

THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE TRUCK DRIVER: IDENTITY MANAGEMENT IN A PUBLIC WORKPLACE

This chapter explores the responses made by the truck drivers in regards to their own perspectives of the identity of the truck driver. I will present the driver's ideas about the occupational role we know as the truck driver, and discuss the influence of public image on identity formation.

First, I will present a discussion of some of the cultural artifacts that have, in the past, been a source for public images of the truck driver. Second, by using the research data, I will present the perspective the truck driver has on his own identity, mostly expressed through the driver's understanding of his public image. Finally, I will present the responses of truck drivers to perceptions of public image in terms of the variables; industry status, and length of service to explore what influence -- if any -- these variables might have on personal identity.

Images of the Truck Driver in Popular Culture

The public image of truck drivers is one that has been mythologized in the past through films, songs, and television programs, mostly in the 1970's. The most prominent image is
the "last American Cowboy." The image of a lawless wanderer, willing to be heroic without thanks, and always moving on to the next adventure was depicted in films such as "Smokey and the Bandit," and "Convoy," television's "B.J. and the Bear," and "Movin' On," and hits songs like Red Sovine's "Big Joe and Phantom 309" and "Teddy Bear." In each of these examples, the truck driver is presented as a modest, noble, honest, down to earth, hard working American Everyman. Despite these noble characteristics, truck drivers were also shown to have a wild side -- the connection to the untamed wanderer of the West, the myth of the cowboy -- and sometimes depicted as being on the edge. Still, this image generally remained a positive one.

The popularity truck drivers gained in the media during the 1970's would spread into other areas also. The citizen's band radio became a more popular item, and many non-truck driving individuals began using the open airwaves for entertainment. This put more individuals in touch with truck drivers because the CB radio was still one of the primary tools of the industry.

As we have moved into the 80's and 90's that same image of the last American Cowboy from a decade before has transformed from being the noble wanderer to the dangerous redneck. No longer are truck drivers excused for living on
the edge, and breaking the occasional law. Images of the truck driver have shifted from the central focus also. No longer are there songs specifically about the driver, or films that show the rough-edged hero. Instead, the driver becomes more of an extension of the truck, and just by sheer size, the truck is a technology to be feared. This is how trucks are depicted in the film "Maximum Overdrive." In this film, a truckstop is tormented by trucks that come to life, and even though it is all manner of trucks that come to life, they are all lead by an evil eighteen wheeled truck. All of the trucks in the film have darkened windows to suggest that there is no driver, yet driverless is how we often see trucks on the road. The cab design makes it nearly impossible to see the driver from an average car running down the highway. These new depictions are much less frequent than the positive ones we saw in the 1970's, but they have had their impact. Drivers have gone from wanderering heros to being uncontrollable and menacing on the highway. This transformation is something that the driver is well aware of also.

The most recent depictions of the truck driver no longer rely on fictional images that would continue to mythologize the truck driver. Instead, the shift of attention has been to news stories and programs that present the public with "true life" images of the truck driver. Earlier this year a
nationallly broadcast news magazine, "Dateline" on NBC, presented a two part report on the trucking industry. This report focused on a single driver who allowed the cameras to follow him on a cross country run. During this run, the driver broke many state and federal regulations to deliver his load on time. When he reached his home in Maine after the run, he was fired because he failed a random drug test. This report certainly did nothing to improve the public's image of the truck driver. Because the driver presented was from Maine, I was able to interview other drivers who knew him, and had talked with him since the Dateline report. They seemed to indicate that the more negative aspects of the truck driver was highlighted by the Dateline report, and little attention was paid to the shipping company that required the driver to deliver his load in six days; an impossible task without breaking the law.

The media has also kept the attention of the public on the issue of truck drivers driving tired. When drive time regulations are broken, this usually means that a truck driver is working when he should be resting. Recent accidents that have been attributed to truck drivers falling asleep at the wheel has put even more pressure on the industry. A group of Maine parents who lost their children in an accident with a truck driver have responded to the tired trucker issue by
founding a grassroots organization, Parents Against Tired Truckers (PATT). This organization has been doing everything from lobbying congress to tighten regulations on drivers, to producing television commercials with warnings about trucks and driving while fatigued.

The prominent imagery we see connected with truck drivers no longer contains the nobility of earlier years. With more traffic on the nations highways than ever before, and the increased use of trucking for the transportation of goods, the number of accidents involving truck drivers has increased. But when the public is shown this problem in the context of killer trucks, the end result can be nothing but negative. As the reporter on Dateline presented it, “our nation’s highways are the killing fields for truck drivers.” This seems to make a subtle connection between interstate trucking and genocide. How would we expect the individual to react to this kind of definition of his work?

Truck Driver’s Responses to Public Images of the Profession

If we turn to the interview responses on the truck driver’s public image we find that few drivers are happy with the popular depictions of the occupation. Many of the drivers are well aware of the images that are held in the minds of the
individuals not involved in the industry, just as they are
aware of the images that once were associated with the truck
driver. As one subject put it, "There was a time when America
had a lot of respect for us. It was kind of farmers, truckers, and Jesus, but that time is over for truckers and
farmers" (Interview 1:3, July 5, 95). Now the typical
response is that drivers are heavy drug users, reckless,
filthy, dishonest, sexist, and crude in their behavior. The
cowboy image has still stuck with the driver also, but with a
new twist. In 1996 the cowboy as symbolic of a particular way
of life is more denigrated than revered. Many of the
qualities of the cowboy image of the truck driver have
followed this pattern. Instead of the heroic characteristics
being emphasized, now it is the wild and uneducated image of
men isolated from mainstream society. These cowboys of the
trucking industry are seen as backward country bumpkins
lacking the wherewithall to be true professionals within an
industry. The last American cowboy has transformed into a
parody of itself when linked with the truck driver.

This recognition of the changing image of the truck
driver is not an isolated response either. Many drivers, with
or without long years of service, refer back to a time when
truck driving was a highly respected occupation.

John: Most people just think we are all bad
drivers. We used to get a lot more respect for
what we do, but not now. The new breed of drivers out there make a bad name for the rest of us (Interview 37:171, Aug. 16,95).

When looking at the variety of answers concerning the public’s image of the truck driver, the driver responds most often on two levels: first, would be to deal with the image itself, to answer the question what is a truck driver? Secondly, the driver will point out the false claims that the public makes against the truck driver. In this case, the driver is usually responding to a larger authority than personal opinion. For example, the truck driver defending his occupation against an agent of the mass media.

David: Take a look at USA Today. They always show these graphs and shit of how many truck crashes there are in a day. The information is bad because they include everything from 18 wheelers to pick-up trucks. Then they holler about how the people are injured. Well, most of the time the crashes are not the trucker’s fault, and of course more people in cars will be injured. That’s just common sense when you have a vehicle over 40,000 pounds hitting a car that weighs about 4,000 (Interview 27:129, Aug. 8,95).

The first level of response takes on the character of reacting to micro pressures, or more personal interpretations of what non-truck drivers think of the truck driver. These are opinions and perceptions that are based on stereotypes that the public has created for the truck driver. The second level
the truck driver responds to concerning his image involves macro agents of socialization such as: newspapers, television, government, and organizations (PATT). In the next two sections I will look at these two levels specifically; first, the micro level of personal response, and second, the macro level of institutional response.

Micro Responses to Public Image:

When asked the question; “what do you think of the image the public has of truck drivers?” none of the truck drivers had very positive responses. In fact, many drivers who were fairly neutral about their own opinion of the public still felt that the public had nothing short of contempt for the drivers. Most of the images truck drivers described as being part of the public’s popular opinion were very basic, personal stereotypes. To some degree, I see this as a type of “name-calling” that has developed because of the lack of direct contact between the public and the truck driver.

Steve: Most of the time they treat you like shit. The public, huh? Most of them see us as druggie, killer, sleazballs...(Interview 1:3, July 5,95).

Cam: Everybody treats drivers like another piece of equipement. I moved into this profession because I wanted to travel, but I still take it very seriously. There are plenty of professional drivers and they need to be treated that way (Interview 65:342, Oct. 26, 95).
And as a potential source for the stereotypes drivers feel plagued by:

Kevin: The image is definately not good because of two crashes. Then we had like 6 or 7 crashes in one week all involving out of state trucks. Now you have people like Barbara Walters going on TV and calling us terrorists, rapists, and thieves (Interview 11:51, July 6,95).

The images these truck drivers perceive are some of the most outlandish images that could be connected with an occupation: druggie, sleazeball, terrorist, rapist, and thief. These are images we might envision if we were to ask prison inmates for their opinions on how the public views them, certainly not the types of images we would expect from a legal occupation. As one driver pointed out “to a certain extent, every trade is seen as a villain” (Interview 2:10, July 5,95), but what explains the truck driver’s high level of villainous perception?

The answer is in earlier cultural images of the truck driver gone bad. A mere decade or two before this interview the truck driver was working with the image of the “last American cowboy” yet, the interpretation of this image was a positive one. The exciting and noble characteristics of this cowboy image were the ones that were once galvinized in public opinion. If we take another look at the above list of images -- druggie, sleazeball, terrorist, rapist, and thief -- it is possible to make connections from each of these images to the
popular image of the "bad" cowboy. American society has always held the image of the cowboy to a mythic status in society. Whether propagandized through Hollywood motion pictures, or the many heroic tales that would develop during the settlement of the West, the cowboy will always remain as an American myth.

A myth is a communication from a society to its members: the social concepts and attitudes determined by the history and institutions of a society are communicated to its members through its myths. Like any communication, a myth must be heard (or viewed) and interpreted correctly; this means myth must have structure, like the grammar of language, that is used and understood automatically and through which meaning is communicated (Wright, 1977:16).

The American truck driver has always been viewed as having a close connection to the myth of the cowboy; what I would point out is how the characteristics of the myth have changed without having to redefine this basic analogy of the truckdriver as cowboy. The myth of the cowboy has always contained two sides: the hero and the villan. The villan is part druggie (alcoholic), sleazeball, terrorist, rapist, and thief, and the hero and villan usually share qualities of strength, freedom, power, and independence. In other words, the structure of the image of the truck driver -- or myth -- has seen little change, instead, it has been shifts between positive and negative imagery based on the same identity type. It is through the use of myth that the public is able to
understand the worklife of an isolated occupation such as the truck driver, and it is the imprecision of the myth that becomes problematic for the individual described by the myth:

The social meanings of myth may become identified with the fundamental organization of understanding by which the mind knows itself and its world. For this reason, it is apparent that if we are fully to understand and explain specific human actions, we must be able to relate those actions to the social narratives or myths of the society to which the actor belongs. It is at least partly through these myths that he makes sense of his world, and thus the meaning of his actions -- both to himself and his society -- can only be grasped through the knowledge of the structure and meaning of myth (Wright, 1977:194).

Steve: You know what it reminds me of? Cattle drivers. Remember the old cattle drivers that would be gone for months? They worked hard, got dirty, and didn’t look pretty. Drivers are like that. We may show up at a truckstop with grease and dirt all over us, but that’s part of the job. You can’t judge us because we look that way because it is our job, but people do it all the time (Interview 1:3-4, July 5,95).

Macro Responses to Public Image:

Another type of response to questions about the public image of the truck driver spoke of image as a macro social construct. In other words, instead of relying on imagery directed at individuals, the truck drivers discussed more large scale characteristics of the industry. These broader responses not only spread imagery across the industry, but they often
took a very defensive tone, as if to say, "you may think it is that way for the truck driver, but there is a reason for your belief." You’ll notice from the above statement that it is not a dichotomous situation of if not one than the other. Instead, the truck driver explains the contingencies that create the public’s misunderstanding:

Chuck: Well, if you look at that news show “Dateline”. They did a story on a truck driver, but they seemed to look at one of the worst ones out there. There are mostly good drivers on the road, not many bad ones. But, the bad ones are the only ones that the public notices, they’re the only ones that people will remember (Interview 3:15, July 5, 95).

Paul: Most of the time it is over reaction. They want to cut the hours of service because they hear about accidents on TV.
BD: Did you want to add anything? Paul: Just something about killer trucks you see reported on TV. They talk about all the trouble they have with trucks, and present it as reality when the problems could be a five minute routine adjustment or a light out (Interview 9:42, July 6, 1995).

Sarge: The biggest problem with our image is you hear a lot of shit from people who don’t know much about it, people that aren’t even part of the industry, they think they know everything about the work (Interview 61:286, Oct. 9, 95).

None of these responses goes so far as to completely defend the industry. There are no “true believers.” Instead, we see an emphasis the industry being mostly positive; drivers admit to an element of “the villain” in their work, but this is an occupation, not organized crime. The villain shouldn’t
emerge as the most popular image of the truck driver held by the public. Unfortunately this image has become central, and the drivers know this.

Another typical response by the truck drivers was an appeal to the value of their industry to the continuation of our contemporary society. Perhaps one of the most troubling aspects of the public the truck driver experiences is not the name-calling we have seen in previous quotes. Instead, it is the belief that the public has no idea how vital this industry is to their day-to-day lives. Along with this is also the lack of understanding on the part of the public of the many obstacles and hardships the driver must overcome to do his work:

Nick: I think a lot of the public doesn’t realize that if truck drivers went away, if we stopped bringing food into their super markets they’d all starve. They just want to come into the grocery store every morning and find it full of food, they don’t think about the driver who’s dead tired and has the load that has to be there at 1:00 in the morning (Interview 5:20, July 6, 95).

Steve: But, you can ask anyone of these guys around here (gestures to the other drivers milling around the loading dock area) or ask yourself...name one article of clothing, food, anything, name one article that was not moved by a truck so it could get to you. You’ll find there isn’t anything. There’s nothing in this country that wasn’t moved by a truck at some point. Most of the public has no realization of this. How else are you gonna get Washington apples before they are rotten? Some guy drove all night so they could be here for you. And it’s not easy. We miss anniversaries, birthdays, kids ballgames. People don’t think about what we
go through for them (Interview 1:3, July 5, 95).

Connie: The public judges us all by the few animals that are out there. We aren’t all animals. I’d just like to see us get back our good name, when we meant something to people. We were important for food and clothes (Interview 16:68, July 17, 95).

Again, the theme of the trucker’s lost status in the eyes of the public resurfaces in connection with the lack of appreciation for the labor of the truck driver. Though this particular image of the public’s perception appears to have distance from the personal identity of the truck driver’s, I would argue that this is one of the most damaging perceptions to the truck driver. If we think of it in terms of work, not all rewards of working are strictly monetary. Work builds self-esteem, and confidence. It is an element of our social selves that links directly to our pride and our sense of worth in society. If the public we serve were to threaten our perception of that worth, or not acknowledge the worth of our labor, then we can assume that this would be damaging to our personal understanding of our identity, and our perception of the occupation as a whole.

This is a model that seems to be working within the occupation of the truck driver. Think of placing any other occupational group in the same circumstances. How rewarding would teaching on the college level be if the public never
acknowledged its importance, and the general opinion was that college teachers are all filthy, drugged-up, and dangerous anyway? These aspects of identity are not easily swept away by the truck driver, they are a part of his work experience every day.

A Quantitative Look at Public Image and Truck Driver’s Perceptions

This section organizes the responses of the truck drivers in a quantitative framework similar to the one used in chapter VI. The data organized here is the drivers’ perceptions of the public’s image of the truck driver and his work. The variables in question here are: industry status, and length of service. By taking a more precise look at the pattern of responses for different types of drivers, I hope to clarify the assumptions made by the qualitative analysis in the first sections of this chapter.

The response categories will indicate whether the truck driver has a micro or macro perception of his public image. There will also be a third category for drivers who express both micro and macro responses. Due to public image being a central issue to this study, this is a question that was asked of all drivers and responded to by all drivers, hence there is no “no response” category.

Public Image and Industry Status:

The first table compares responses to public image by
whether the truck driver is a company driver or an independent driver in the hauling industry. Recall that one of the early responses dealt with was how the truck driver views the public that they must share their roads with. The results seen in this earlier aspect of the data seem to reflect the pattern we see in Table 22:

**Table 24:**

**Responses to Truck Driver Public Image by Industry Status of the Truck Driver**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Status</th>
<th>Micro Response</th>
<th>Macro Response</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td>Freq./Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Driver</td>
<td>21/45.65</td>
<td>17/36.95</td>
<td>8/17.39</td>
<td>46/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Operator</td>
<td>7/29.16</td>
<td>12/50</td>
<td>5/20.83</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>28/40</strong></td>
<td><strong>29/41.42</strong></td>
<td><strong>13/18.57</strong></td>
<td><strong>70/100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as the company driver was more prone to respond negatively to the public, much of the company driver’s perception of his public image includes the more personal, “name-calling” micro perceptions of the truck driver’s public image (21/45.65% micro). The independent drivers, on the other hand, were more likely to understand their public image.
in terms of more macro critiques of the industry (12/50% macro). Despite these differences, these numbers are still rather close, even when we consider drivers who expressed both micro and macro perceptions (captive, 8/17.39%; independent, 5/20.83%).

**Public Image and Length of Service:**

The second table organizes the data by the length of service of the truck driver. In this framework, the pattern we saw in Table 22, above, seems to be even further clarified. By looking at the different categories of the "years of service" we can see a definite pattern that changes with the time spent within the industry (see Table 23, next page). As the truck driver spends more time working in the industry he seems to develop or more keen sense of the occupation as an industry, and not an isolated job which he happens to hold. Perhaps the differences we are seeing in these two tables are based on the truck driver understanding his work as a job versus a career. In circumstances where a worker is more career minded he is more likely to have a broader vision of the occupation so that he can be more involved as well as
Table 25:
Responses to Truck Driver Public Image by Length
of Service of the Truck Driver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Micro Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Macro Response Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Both Freq./Percent</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-10 Years</td>
<td>14/60.86</td>
<td>7/30.43</td>
<td>2/8.69</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td>9/37.5</td>
<td>10/41.66</td>
<td>5/20.83</td>
<td>24/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ Years</td>
<td>5/3.14</td>
<td>12/52.17</td>
<td>6/26.08</td>
<td>23/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>28/40</strong></td>
<td><strong>29/41.42</strong></td>
<td><strong>13/18.57</strong></td>
<td><strong>170/100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

looking for ways to be more productive in an industry.

Another possible indicator we could connect to the differences we see in these two tables is how resistant types of drivers are to certain external definitions of their identity. These two tables together paint a pattern that would suggest inexperienced, captive drivers are more sensitive to the micro definitions that are often targeted at individual personality types. Drivers that have more freedom in the industry, thus more autonomy (independent drivers see the public definitions of their work as being more macro definitions, or directed at the industry, often coming from other industries such as the mass media.
Summary

In this chapter I present some of the contradictory interpretations of the truck driver's identity through past evidence of the public's perception of the driver, and through current perceptions truck drivers have of their own public image. By organizing the data from the interviews with truck drivers by industry status and length of service, I have been able to show that occupational socialization does have an influence on how identity is created for the worker. Just as socialization is a continuous process, so too is the development of the truck driver's ability to protect himself from negative personal imagery.
CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this chapter, I review the problems addressed by this dissertation, including a summary of the method used to collect the data. Secondly, I discuss findings based on using Merton’s concept of the role-set (1957) in investigating the world view of the truck driver and the extent to which Simmel’s notion of conflict may be applied to the work situation of the truck driver. And finally, I present suggestions for further research that hopefully would build on the conclusions of this study and perhaps develop new methods for understanding and researching occupations.

The following propositions were used as central questions:

Proposition 1: A driver’s perceived level of autonomy (as well as the importance he places on this autonomy) is dependent on his length of service in the industry. This relationship will also be influenced by the intervening attribute of the driver being “captive” (working for a company) or “independent” (working for himself) within the industry.

Proposition 2: A driver working in the industry as captive will perceive less conflict among members of his role-set than the perceived role-set conflict of the independent driver. By
role-set is meant all people who actually or potentially exert influence on the driver’s work.

**Proposition 3**: A driver’s understanding of his professional and public identity varies with his length of service and whether he is captive or independent in the industry.

**Proposition 4**: Conflict experienced by the driver will influence his level of integration within the industry, and is dependent on whether he is captive or independent in the industry.

In this exploratory study, I examine the connection between a worker’s level of involvement in an occupation, and the worker’s own perceptions of identity, and of the occupation itself. The goal of the analysis is to determine how truck drivers view the agencies, or role-set members, involved with their work (federal regulators, local law enforcement, unions, hauling companies, the public, other drivers...) in terms of the influence these agencies can exert on the competing expectations of the truck driver.

This study is also an exploration of the influence of the various, and often competing, agents of socialization, that is, people who have a say about one’s work, of people one must consider in one’s work. In this regard, I examine how workers
shape their own occupational identity by either accepting or rejecting the interpretations of others, both within and outside of the particular occupation. My primary concern is to see how identity is constructed by long distance, freight-hauling truck drivers.

Other researchers such as Blake (1974), Ouellet (1994), and Agar (1986) also incorporate different elements of identity in their studies of truck drivers. Each of these studies looks at a particular facet of the truck driver’s identity, yet none of them connect identity to other influences, such as the role-set, to investigate how occupational identity is formed for the truck driver. Instead, what we can glean from these earlier studies is the connections each of these studies make to their own particular facets of identity.

For example, Blake presents us with an excellent analysis of the "mythical characterizations" that have been connected with the occupation of truck driver. Here Blake is looking at many of the mythical and romantic notions of the worklife of the truck driver that were popular at the time of his study. Linking Blake’s study to the period of time it was completed in is very important due to the changing public opinion of the truck driver since the 1970's. Many of the characterizations Blake wrote about have been distorted into negative images of the truck driver in the 1990's. One of the most popular
images, discussed in the previous chapter, is that of the truck driver as the last American cowboy. Blake's depiction of this characterization describes the driver as having a modest and heroic nature. Evidence from my interviews places this characterization as a negative stereotype of the driver as a lawless renegade, or the cowboy with the black hat. Because of these differences, I see my study as updating the work of Blake. Instead of focusing just on these mythical characterizations, I have tried to broaden the data to include more mundane aspects of the driver's identity while also including characterizations similar to Blake's.

Myth is a similar theme developed by Agar, who compares the myth of the open-range cowboy to the independent truck driver as well as comparing the myth of independence in the truck driving industry with the high level of control expressed by his interview subjects. Agar points to a mismatch between the way the public and many of the drivers understand the independent nature of the driver's work, and the reality of the strength and number of control mechanisms that impinge on the driver's independence. Agar also incorporates aspects of the role-set to clarify the control mechanisms he sees in the industry, but the scope of his study is fairly limited. His sample is only 9 drivers and he is focused specifically on owner operators. As I mentioned earlier, approximately 9% of the over 2,000,000 drivers in the
industry today are owner operators. Although, Agar's concern is more closely linked to the independent driver -- he wanted to explore just how independent they really were -- he really has left out a major portion of the industry that my study includes in the analysis.

Ouellet's study, much like Agar's, delves into the day-to-day worklife of the truck driver, but mostly through experiences Ouellet had while working as a truck driver himself and observing and interviewing other drivers on the job. Ouellet study asks some very basic questions about the motivation and behaviors of blue collar workers on the job. Ouellet believes earlier studies of blue collar workers focus too closely on coercion of the companies, and don't delve into the minds of the workers to find a more complete picture of why people work hard when it won't bring more reward to the worker. While many of Ouellet's connections between work, motivation, and behaviors are useful they may not be applicable to the sample I have used for this dissertation. Ouellet's sample is of day trip drivers. They haul during the day, and go home every night. This means that they are usually staying local so they do not have to maintain logbooks for their operating hours, and they get a salary or price per ton of haulage instead of being paid by the mile. Although a few day trip drivers did make it into my sample, all of these drivers were doing a single haul trip of 600 to 800 miles a
day, and they were paid by the mile. Here again, this study has been designed to include a segment of truck drivers that have never really been directly addressed in a case study.

The main corpus of information for this study came from seventy six interviews of persons involved in the industry of truck driving. Of these seventy six persons, seventy were drivers (though one was no longer working because of a permanent disability). The interviews were conducted at a warehouse loading dock (the frozen foods dock, and the dry goods dock), in the homes of drivers, at a truckstop; also, one driver was interviewed in his truck on an overnight run, and a driving school instructor at the school while supervising a driving class.

The sample for this study is a snowball design. Within each of the settings I listed above I used no other criteria for choosing subjects other than who was available and willing to talk. Some may argue that gathering a sample in this manner -- interviewing the "willing" subject -- would result in a biased account of the situation. I would perhaps tend to agree with that assessment if I were confronted with many refusals to be interviewed, suggesting a self-selecting population. When combining all settings, I had no more than two refusals where the subject said they didn't want to be interviewed, and five more refusals due to time constraints and the need for the driver to leave the setting. Besides,
this is an explanatory study intended to generate hypotheses and interpretations, not a statistical survey of a region.

Although I conducted interviews in these various settings, and there could perhaps be some differences in responses between settings, I am not suggesting that these settings bear any significance to the responses given. I do assert, however, that there are essentially qualitative differences in responses based upon such characteristics as whether a driver is an independent or a captive of the industry, and the length of service of the driver.

Another important aspect of the sample distribution was whether the truck driver was a “captive” (company driver) or “independent” (self-employed driver) within the industry. Though I did try to control for the differences in these groups when I began interviewing in the truck stop, the numbers for this distribution reflect a fundamental aspect of the industry. Simply put, there are many more company (captive) drivers than there are independent drivers (approximately 2,586,000 captive and 275,000 independent). In the competitive atmosphere of the trucking industry, companies have more success putting large numbers of drivers on the road and cutting the hauling rates down as low as possible. This atmosphere is difficult for the independent to survive in.

At the beginning of this research I considered also separating the sample according to race and gender.
Unfortunately, these numbers would prove to be very insignificant as well as being not very descriptive. If my interviews are a fair reflection of the industry, then it is dominated by white males. In all settings I only spoke with two women and four African American males -- though I sought out these individuals in all settings. I should also mention that despite the fact that I conducted the interviews in only a few settings, due to the nature of the work of truck drivers, my sample reflects many regions in the country. The subjects I interviewed lived in homes ranging as far West as Texas and Colorado, South as far as Florida, and North as far as Canada. In the end, the work of the truck drivers greatly enhanced at least the regional diversity of my sample.

**Role-Set and Truck Driver Identity**

Herewith, I summarize the conclusions from my field work with long haul truck drivers. Specifically, this research reveals that the identity of workers and the worker’s perception of his occupation are mediated through what he perceives to be the views and pressures of members of his role-set. In other words, occupational identity is a dynamic social process based on a Gestalt of role-set interpretations by the worker combined with the public’s image of the occupation, an image that is often based on stereotyped conceptions. Other variables, such as industry status, and length of service, intervene in the process of identity
creation, and often shape drivers' responses to his role-set members.

These aspects of identity formation and occupational socialization are anchored in our cultural notions of occupational roles. In other words, for every occupation there are particular expectations the public has of what the worker in that occupation should be. Yet, not all public images of an occupation are accurate. Inaccuracies are felt by the worker, in this case the driver, and addressed through his own conception of his identity. It is this process of identity management that I explore through the use of Merton's mechanisms of the role-set, and Simmel's concept of conflict.

The role-set or, "the complement of role relationships in which persons are involved by virtue of occupying a particular social status" (Merton, 1957:110) is used as the foundation for a structural functional analysis of our society. I argue that it can also be used as a context for developing social psychological analyses of the individual in society. Identity is a product of society; a cumulative result of established cultural patterns and expectations, as well as the interactions we have with significant and non-significant "others" on a day-to-day basis. The role-set, as described by Merton, is an organized analysis of the "others" that surround the individual in society, and is also an attempt at
explaining how the individual manages the many expectations that come from the role-set. This approach may be applied to individuals in any social setting with the near impossible exception of a person entirely isolated from the rest of society, completely truncating any role-set. The context in which Merton's framework is used is an exploration of the work and worldview of the long haul truck driver.

(1) Findings

(1) The industry status of a truck driver (captive or independent) does have an influence on how the truck driver perceives his role-set. As we have seen in earlier chapters, responses by the independent drivers are, on average, less negative than responses by captive drivers. We can see this especially in responses to the public (pg. 163) and to other truck drivers (pg.164). Many of the other categories are less clear-cut than these two, but the over-all negative trend for the captive drivers is quite clear.

(2) The length of service of a truck driver does have an influence on the truck driver’s perception of his role-set. When separating the different truck driver responses by the length of service we see that the middle category of 11 to 20 years also has higher and more consistent negative responses to role-set members than the 2 to 10 year category and the 21+ year category. It is also apparent that the 2 to 10 year category of length of service has the most consistent positive
responses. This over-all pattern of responses could be due to younger drivers still possessing the optimism of entering a new profession. The oldest category could represent those drivers that have accepted the structure of the industry -- or at the very least tolerate it -- and have been successful at making truck driving a career. The middle category seems to be fraught with added stress. The drivers that tend to be in this age group (28-38 years old) are most likely to have a family they are trying to support or they may be experiencing a break up of the family.

(3) Opposing interpretations of occupational identity between truck drivers and their role-set does result in conflict. Evidence of conflict is expressed through many of the responses from the truck drivers. Quotes from the interviews show that the majority of the truck drivers in this study understand their role-set as a number of groups who would either identify truck drivers as hateful and evil persons, or they are groups that do nothing other than make the work of the truck driver more difficult. The truck drivers studied experience feelings of being maligned and used by the public for lower consumer prices, and by the industry to make money for the many carrier companies. This negativity is one half of conflict as described by Simmel (1955), the other half, integration, is described in the next finding.

(4) Conflict experienced by truck drivers does increase
the level of integration in the industry. According to Simmel (1955), integration is the result of heightened conflict between groups. Integration can be described as group cohesion.

When we consider an occupation like the truck driver it would seem that there would be little chance for cohesive relations to occur. The truck driver spends most of his working career sitting alone in the cab of his tractor with only the CB radio as his connection to fellow workers and the rest of the world. For the truck driver, it is not the personal relationships that develop in the work place that draw truck drivers together as a group. Group identity, and cohesiveness of truck drivers as a group is rooted in the more general label of “truck driver” than in the personal characteristics of each driver. Each driver holds tightly to the title of truck driver, including the characteristics of being a professional driver as only another truck driver would fully recognize. Occupational identity alone can have a strong cohesive nature for the workers that have chosen to be a part of that group, but I argue truck drivers have a more unique experience than most occupations in our culture.

Current attitudes towards truck drivers, according to the drivers themselves, (see chapters V, VI, and VII) are negative; regarding the truck driver as reckless, dirty, a law-breaker, and unintelligent. Drivers that are new to the
industry are socialized into the work milieu with these negative views as an understood part of the work situation. Older drivers remember when truck drivers were generally treated with more respect, and drivers were viewed and treated as professionals. The source of the negative imagery I am presenting here is primarily from the role-set members of the truck drivers. Conflict is the result of the mismatch between the drivers' self-perceptions and the role-set members' perceptions and expectations of the truck driver.

Conflict, as defined by Simmel, is an important integrative element for the truck drivers, especially due to the loose personal relations that the drivers are able to maintain because of the structure of the work. A unified identity of being a truck driver in the face of the role-sets' various expectations of what the truck driver should be, allows the formation of boundaries we would expect to see in other occupational categories and types. In Chapter VI, the data is indicative of this greater cohesion on the part of the drivers.

Of all response categories, drivers are most positive towards each other in regards to their opinions. This is in spite of the current competition in the industry that tends to be so fierce that it pits company against company and driver against driver where the only differences are who is willing to cut their hauling rates to the bone. Yet, evidence of
group cohesion can be seen in responses from both categories of industry status and length of service. Of all role-set categories, the one with the most positive responses is when truck drivers were asked about other truck drivers in the industry. This high level of positive response was surprising in light of the high level of competition between drivers. Many drivers compete for the few loads that are available, and some will take very low pay to stay working. But this doesn’t seem to matter to the drivers. They see themselves as unified against the other groups in the industry that create the competitive atmosphere.

(5) The process of occupational socialization is a dynamic negotiation between the worker and the worker’s role-set. This final finding is really a more broad-based hypothesis that could be used for future case studies of other occupations. The evidence I have collected on long haul truck drivers does support the above finding, but this is limited in scope. This research was done on a circumscribed group within an occupation. To be able to state the above finding with more confidence, it should be used as a hypothesis to develop other areas of research.

(2) Conclusions

Truck driving will always remain an occupation of isolation. The drivers will spend the majority of their
working hours sitting alone behind the wheel of the tractor trailer. As members of the public, we see them without meeting them, we share the road with them without talking with them, and, to a great extent, they support our lives without us realizing this fact. It is this lack of positive attention, coupled with a high level of negative attention, that has the most troubling influence on the truck driver's identity. Few rewards of working in the industry were mentioned in the interviews other than monetary rewards, and even these responses took on the character of "it's a living," instead of "I am successful."

Overall the driver's attitudes are negative to most members of the role-set. As we saw in the findings, these negative feelings do vary with variables that describe their industry status: captive or independent drivers, and length of service. The isolation of the truck drivers from the other audiences they occasionally come in contact with means that these members of the role-set must generalize their experiences to understand the population of truck drivers, and the truck drivers must do the same to form opinions of how their role-set thinks. Truck drivers perceive these messages from the role-set as negative stereotypes of the driver personally and professionally. Certainly, only a small portion of the population spends much time thinking about truckers on a daily basis, yet the drivers are cognizant and
concerned about the stereotypes that are associated with their work.

Although truck driving is a special case, we do have other stigmatized occupations. Having categories of favorable and prestigious jobs as well as menial and stigmatized jobs is what organizes occupations into a hierarchy. Unfortunately, the worth of an occupation is usually measured in terms of this hierarchy and not by the contribution the occupation makes to society. It is this fundamental fact of our working world that has placed truck driving at a very low level of the hierarchy.

Despite these conflicts within the industry, and the high level of control through legislation and enforcement, drivers will mention autonomy as one positive reason for being a truck driver. Even with all the controlling mechanisms that are inherent in the industry, because a supervisor isn’t with the driver to direct and watch the driver’s actions, this is translated into a high level of autonomy for the driver. This perception of autonomy, as understood by the driver, allows the driver to hold something above all the negative stereotypes that come from the role-set. The freedom of the truck driver is a stereotype held by many people, but what makes it different is that freedom is desired by all. Through the myth of autonomy, truck drivers can say they have something many of the rest of us want in our occupations,
freedom.

Still, this is a small victory in comparison with the more pragmatic aspects of the drivers work. By assembling this case study of long haul truck drivers I hope to show that it is not necessary to create a negative and oppressive atmosphere for work so that a certain level of free market competition can be maintained. Truck driving is a difficult enough task without negatively stereotyping the workers as well. For example, a positive change that would improve safety in the industry as well as release some of the pressures that are placed on the drivers is to no longer pay drivers by the mile. Instead, paying a fair wage for the tonnage hauled would stop drivers from trying to drive as long as possible, or, in many cases, never make a fair wage.

My hope would be that this study will help to inform different members of the truck driver’s role-set to improve the image and treatment of drivers. This could be done through public education programs such as driver’s education classes. Expanded support for programs such as the Road Teams, which are drivers who volunteer to teach driving safety as it pertains to trucks through the public school system. Submitting this research to legislators might also influence the creation of more equitable laws that protect the truck drivers and their livelihood, as well as the public. Right now laws seem to protect the companies first, the public
second, and drivers last.

In a more general application, I would hope that this research would better inform other labor researchers to help shift the ideology away from jobs being judged by prestige and instead begin to value work for the contribution each occupation brings to our society.

(3) Some Suggestions for Future Research

Having completed this exploratory study of the work of the long haul truck driver I feel that I have only scratched the surface of a complex occupational culture that includes thousands of participants. One area that is of particular interest to me is the family life of the truck drivers. Through my interviews I found that many of the drivers had divorced at some point or were currently in the process. Some drivers had even spoke of multiple divorces, most of them attributed to the difficult schedules that must be maintained as a truck driver. Finding a way to include other family members in the interview process would help to mine this area further, though locating these family members would take much more leg work in the field than talking with just the drivers. A study of this nature might help to suggest what elements lead to successful marriages for truck drivers, and what types of drivers as most likely to find marriage a difficult relationship to maintain.

Another interesting addition to this study would be to
investigate how the structure of an occupation influences the workers in that occupation to commit acts of deviance. In the case of the truck drivers, many pointed out that to survive in the trucking industry it was now necessary to find ways to "foil" the regulatory laws that are on the books. As a result truckers drive longer hours and faster than the law would allow. For this study I might ask questions to find out whether the drivers even consider their actions as deviant, or what their own definitions of deviance within the trucking industry might be? Some of these issues were discussed in the interviews for this study, but not in the depth necessary to support analysis.

Reapproaching this study from the role-set point of view might also give us deeper insights into the conflicting pressures on the truck driver from the various role-set members. Using this study as a starting point, I would probably focus my attention on the Department of Transportation, state trucking lobbying associations, hauling company officials, and the Teamsters union. These investigations would include organizational analyses to look at the structure and authority each group has and what tools each group has to administer its authority.

Other variables that were difficult to include such as race, gender, and age would also allow some expansion of the responses I was able to collect in this study. To
successfully include these variables it would probably be necessary to use a survey design with an expanded sample. My experience in the field presented few opportunities to interview women and racial minorities so they may have a low representation in this occupation.

A limitation of this study was the haphazard random collection of interview subjects. I would like to see this study expanded to include a larger sample, and using a survey design. All drivers, company or independent, are registered because they must register their trucks. Drivers are also members of many associations, clubs, and sometimes union that would have accessible lists of all types of drivers. A study of this design would be a nice expansion to the data I have already collected, and would help in the verification process of the findings from this study.

Final Comments

The findings of this study indicate that occupational roles -- and the inherent expectations connected to those roles -- can be mismatched with the reality of the behaviors of the persons occupying those roles. Therefore, greater awareness of occupations and occupational roles would foster more positive imagery connected with low status work. For the truck driver, this could be done quite easily by including a thorough unit on the trucking industry as a part of driver’s education classes. For other low status work situations the
challenges would be very different.

Programs such as "bring your daughter to work day" would contribute as long as parents from all socio-economic classes participated. Service and industrial jobs are the most abundant in the job market, and they are often the jobs where a parent would not be encouraged to bring the children to the place of work. Different attitudes and sets of rules for the different occupational positions we have in society is simply a reflection of the occupational hierarchy that is part of our social structure. We have little hope of changing the hierarchy of jobs from professionals down to lower status jobs, but we need to understand that lower status jobs are not of lessor importance to our society by default. I think truck drivers are a perfect example of an undervalued occupation. It would seem that only they realize the importance of their work. They know, as we should know, that truck drivers are the pillars of our economy.

The importance of the research I have conducted, I feel, is that it reveals the contradictions that can emerge as part of the structure of an occupation, and how these contradictions influence the worldview of the workers. It also reveals that conflict within an occupation can be managed and used to strengthen the boundaries of the occupation. Although the solidarity that comes from conflict might be construed as a benefit to the occupation, this is not a strong
enough argument to allow the workers to continue without hope of any change in their day to day work activities. Few occupations of the overworld sustain the negative perceptions and attitudes that truck drivers must endure. The job itself is no great reward due to the long hours and low pay. The public, as well as the other members of the role-set investigated by this study, must play a part in improving the conditions under which truck drivers must work, and the attitudes linked to the truck drivers’ negative image. Until these issues are dealt with, other attempts at making our roads safer to share with truck drivers will be met with little success.

As a contribution to the sociology of work, I see this research as another piece of the puzzle that began with the Chicago School’s studies of occupations. As a study of a particular occupational role, that of the truck driver’s, this research can add to the corpus of occupational ethnographies compiled by sociologists and anthropologists. Eventually, comparisons can be made between ethnographies of occupational roles within American society itself, as well as with those of other societies. These comparisons would highlight the general truths of life in contemporary American society and beyond it. From these comparisons sociologists could develop theories grounded in everyday experience.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The follow is a number of example questions used for the interviews.

**Background Information**

The interview began by developing a background sketch of the driver. This background was necessary to understand the truck driver's position in the industry.

1. How long have you been driving?
2. Are you an independent (owner and operator of the truck), a member of a fleet, or a hired driver (no ownership and no affiliation with a single fleet)?
3. Are you a member of a union (teamsters), or any other professional organizations?
4. Do you have an immediate family your driving supports?
5. What is the current run you are working on (where did the trip the driver is on now begin from and where will it end)? How many hours have you been on the road?
6. What type of truck do your normally drive?
7. What is the greatest distance from your home you have had to travel on a run?

**Professionalism**

The following questions are meant to introduce topics that would reveal more of the driver's work identity and
identification with the industry.

1. How did you become a driver? Did you attend a tractor trailer school, work up through the ranks of a fleet, or begin with buying a truck?
2. Would you say that many of the friends you spend non-working hours with are truckers also?
3. What do you like about this type of work? What don't you like about this type of work?
4. Do you use the CB radio for information concerning the road ahead of you, as a way of passing the time talking or listening to other drivers, or as a way to get help and support from drivers in your immediate area?
5. If given the choice to work for the same income at a job where you work closely with others, are more closely supervised, and can work close to your home would you want to do this?

Role-set

Questions concerning the truck driver's role-set are meant to introduce topics concerning those outside influences that must be dealt with by the driver through the course of his work.

1. How do you feel about having to deal with the police and state Department of Transportation (DOT) officers as
a regular part of your work? Do you feel that you are treated differently than (unfairly compared to) other people traveling the highways?
2. Do you spend time at the truckstops often on a run? What do you use the truckstops for; food, bathroom, shower, sleep (in truck), phone, fuel, supplies, and/or companionship?
3. Do you feel concern for how regulations on trucking are developed by the state and federal government? Who do you see regulations affecting the most; drivers, owner-operators, fleet owners, hauling companies, and/or clients?
4. How do you feel about non-commercial motorists you must share the highway with? Are they a problem for your work, or just another part of the job?
5. Are other truckers usually helpful and offer support to you when you are on the job? What do you like about the truckers you meet, what don't you like about the truckers you meet?
6. How do you feel about grass-roots organizations -- such as Parents Against Tired Truckers in Maine -- working toward stricter regulations and penalties against truck drivers?
7. Do you feel the clients you haul freight for are aware
of the abilities of truckdrivers and the problems they may face during a run? What kind of, and how much, contact do you have with clients?

**Work**

Work questions are designed to reveal themes that deal with the mundane, day-to-day aspects of the truck driver's work.

1. On average, how many days a week are you on the road? How often do you take vacation time?
2. What types of loads have you hauled in the past? Have you hauled hazardous materials (hazmat)? Are you required to do the unloading at any of your stops? Do you often have to wait at destinations to unload?
3. What is your current run schedule? Do you have to call into a dispatcher to get your next assignment or are you headed home?
4. What slows you down the most when you are on a run?
5. What kinds of things do you do to pass the time while driving? Listen to the radio or TV? Talk on and listen to the CB?
6. What is the most boring part of a run? What is the most exciting?
APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY

The Following Glossary is a collection of terms that may be heard by listening to truck drivers speak over the citizen Band radio. Many of these terms are also used in their everyday language on the job. Most of these terms were collected during interviews in the field, other terms are from articles in magazines such as "Overdrive" and "Heavy Duty Trucking," both well known magazines in the industry.

Advertising A marked police car with lights on.

A Four Roger Yes; O.K. Message received.

All Clean No police in the area.

Back Door Last CB vehicle in a group of 2 or more.

Back Door Closed Last Cber in convoy will notify if police are sighted.

Back Off On The Hammer Slow down, reduce speed.

Bear Any policeman.

Bear Bait A speeding car without a CB.

Bear in The Bushes Speed trap ahead. Police are hiding.

Bear in the Sky Airborne police. Plane or helicopter.

Beaver Any woman.

Between the Sheets Going to bed.

Big 10-4 Enthusiastic acknowledgment.
Blew My Doors Off  Vehicle passed truck at a great speed.

Blocking the Channel  CB interference.

Bobtailing  Driving a tractor with no trailer attached.

Break  Permission to use a CB channel.

Break For A Smokey Report  Permission to use CB channel to report police locations.

Bring it on  No police, everything is O.K. come up here.

Brush Your Teeth and Comb Your Hair  Police ahead, slow down.

Bucket Mouth  Cber who talks too much.

Bucket of Bolts  Tractor trailer.

Bumper Lane  Passing lane.

Bye-Bye  Through transmitting on the CB.

Cactus Juice  Liquor.

Camera  Police radar unit.

Cash Register  Toll booth.

Catch ya' on the: Backslide; Backstroke; Bounce-Around; Flip; ol' Flip-Flop  Talk to you on the return trip through this area.

Check The Seat Covers; Seat Covers  4 wheeler driven by pretty woman with skirt raised on the leg, or check pretty woman out.

Chicken Coops; Coops  Weigh stations.

Clean; Clean Shot To...  No police in the area you are headed.

Come Back; Come On  Return my transmission, Speak to me.

Country Cadillac  Pick-up truck.

Deadhead; Deadheading Home  Driving a distance with an empty trailer, making no money.
D.O.T. Department of Transportation

**Double Nickel** 55 mile per hour speed limit.
**Drop the Hammer** Accelerate to full speed.

**Ears; Got Your Ears On** CB radio; are you listening to your CB.

**Eighteen Wheeler** Big rig with 18 wheels.

**Evil Knievel** Motorcycle police.

**Fat Load** More weight on the truck than the law allows.

**Feds** FCC inspector.

**Finger Print Load** A load where every item must be moved by hand.

**Flatbed** Truck with flatbed trailer.

**Four-wheeler** Passenger vehicle with 4 wheels, car.

**Front Door** Lead vehicle in a convoy.

**Fuzz Buster** Radar detecting devices.

**Gear Jammers** Truck drivers.

**Go Ahead** Return my radio transmission.

**Go Breaker** Giving permission to talk on a CB channel.

**Go Juice** Fuel.

**Got a Copy?** Do you hear me?

**Green and Clean** Highway clear of police.

**Hammer** Accelerator.

**Hammer Down** Driving fast, running full speed.

**Hammer Lane** The highway passing lane.

**Handle** Name used by Cbers to remain anonymous when talking on the CB.

**Home 20** Cber’s home location.
Honey Bear  Police woman.

How am I Hitting you; How Do You Read Me?  How are you receiving me on your CB?

Junkyard  Truckers’ place of employment.

Keep’em Between the Ditches; Keep the Bears Off Your Back and The Beavers on Your Lap; Keep the Shiny Side Up and the Dirty Side Down; Keep the Wheels Spinning and the Beavers Grinning Drive safely, keep the women happy.

Let The Hammer Down  No police in sight, drive full speed.

Lumper  A private contractor that is paid to unload trucks.

Motion Lotion  Fuel

Motor Mouth  Non-stop talker.

Negatory  No.

Out; Over  Done transmitting.

Over Your Shoulder  Behind you.

Parking Lot  Congested road conditions, traffic jam.

Pedal To The Medal  Full speed.

Picture Taker; Polaroid  Police radar.

Piggy Bank  Tollbooth.

Plain Wrapper  Unmarked police car.

Portable Chicken Coop  Portable weigh station.

Pulling The Plug  Signing off from the CB.

Radio Check  Cber checking his radio signal.

Reefer  Refrigerated truck.

Seatcovers  Attractive woman in a vehicle.

Shotgun  Police radar gun.
Six Wheeler Car pulling a trailer.
Smoke'em Up Bear; Smokey State police.
Smokey Report Police location report.
Smokey With Ears State police with a mobile CB radio.
Stepped On Transmission interrupted.
Super Slab Expressway.
Super Trooper State police.
Sweet Thing Woman CBer.
Swindle Sheet Trucker’s Log Sheet.
Tijuana Taxi Well marked police car.
Trailer Trucking Truckers’ term for driving a rig.
Truck'em Easy Drive safely.
Truck'em Up Stop Truck stop.
Two Wheeler Motorcycle.
Walked All Over Overpowered by a more powerful signal.
Wall to Wall Bears Police all over the place with radar.
We're Pedaling As Fast As We Can Accelerating at full speed.
Wrapper Unmarked police car.
X-ray Police radar.

Your Phone Is Ringing CBer telling another CBer someone is trying to contact them.
APPENDIX C

SAMPLE INTERVIEW

Field: Frozen Foods Warehouse
Interview

Kevin

BD: How long have you been driving?
KEVIN: Since 1972 (23 years).

BD: How did you get started driving?
KEVIN: My dad drove for 42 years. I just learned from him. He let me drive his truck.

BD: Do you support a family with your driving?
KEVIN: My dad sure did, we were a family of 9. Me, I got three kids.

BD: And this is your first marriage?
KEVIN: (laughing) No, no...I been married three times.

BD: Do you think the pressures of the job had an affect on your marriage?
KEVIN: Oh yes. It was the job that did it. All the times out for weeks. That did it everytime.

BD: How long are you out on a typical run?
KEVIN: I’m out sometimes 4 to 6 weeks. I been out three on this one.

BD: Are you a company driver or an owner operator?
KEVIN: Owner operator.

BD: When will you be home again?
KEVIN: I’ll probably be home...maybe a couple weeks from tomorrow. That’s to stay a few days. If I stay in this area a few days I might get home for a little while. But I don’t know, I got three stops in the next two days.

BD: Where is home for you?

BD: Who are you driving for?
KEVIN: I go through Sargent’s truck brokers. They find the loads for me and dispatch me.

BD: Do you have any benefits or insurance through Sargents?
KEVIN: No, no benefits. I pay my own insurance.

BD: And maintenance on your truck?
KEVIN: I pay for all of that. The only thing Sargents does for me is find the loads and set up appointments. For that they get an 8 to 10% finders fee that comes out of what I make on the load.

BD: How far will you travel on a run?
KEVIN: I go Maine to Florida a lot. Or Maine to South Dakota. I haul mostly produce. After I
leave here I’ll go north to pick up broccoli. I haul what’s in season to the places they want.

BD: What do you think of the DOT?
KEVIN: DOT? They’re doing their job. Most of the time they’re fair. They’ve never shut me down before. They can over do it sometimes. I was trying to get home one night, and from Wells to Holton they stopped me 6 times! At two weigh stations then 4 other times just to check up on me. I was around July 4th but still, that’s a lot of wasted time.

BD: How do you feel about the four-wheelers?
KEVIN: Well, everybody’s gotta live. I just stay out of trouble, I watch out for all the other drivers.

BD: Do you use truck stops often?
KEVIN: Yeah.

BD: What would you say you use them the most for?
KEVIN: Just fuel and food. I try to find other places to sleep. The truckstops are too noisy for me to sleep.

BD: Have you had any accidents?
KEVIN: Back in 1972. I lost the steering box on my truck and hit the upright of a bridge head on. I
haven’t had an accident since.

BD: How do you feel about the use of logbooks?
KEVIN: Well, you’ve got to fill them out.
BD: Do you think they work...?
KEVIN: No, no. They don’t do the job they are used for. Anybody can lie in them.
BD: What do you enjoy the most about driving?
KEVIN: I’m only in it for the money. It’s a job.
BD: Well, what would you say you like the least about driving?
KEVIN: Being away from home. Everybody likes to relax at home, and I don’t get to do that much.
BD: Would you take a job in an office or a factory if it paid the same?
KEVIN: Oh no. I tried that once. I had an inside job for a few months. It just didn’t work. You know, everybody thinks this is a glorious job, but it ain’t. I mean, take a look at the pay. The last time there was a rate hike for drivers was 1974. We’re working now for what we were 18 years ago. The truck I drive is a 1994. The monthly payment on that is $1,875. There’s no retirement for independents like me. No workman’s comp. No, it’s not a glorious job.
BD: Do you use the CB? What do you use it for the most?
KEVIN: I listen to what’s going on, what weigh stations are open, what the traffic is like, but I don’t do much talking.
BD: How do you feel about the way legislation is made in the trucking industry?
KEVIN: Everybody wants more and more legislation, but it’s not warranted. All the legislation is just some one trying to stick it to us.
BD: How do you feel about the current image the public has of truck drivers?
KEVIN: The image is definatly not good because of two crashes. Then we had like 6 or 7 crashes in one week all involving old out of state trucks. Now you have people like Barbara Walters going on TV calling us terrorists, rapists, and theives. They pick a dump of a driver to follow around and he gave her the story she wanted. It’s ridiculous!
BD: Do you unload your own trucks or do you use lumpers?
KEVIN: I use lumpers most of the time. I don’t like it though, because the fees come out of us drivers. The fees are generally unfair too. I
will get charged to unload watermelons something like $275 and broccoli will be $75. Both are in cases on pallets. What’s the difference? These groups that are fighting for more legislation against drivers like PATT (parents against tired truckers) should look into the unloading policies if they really want to do some good. These drivers could be sleeping instead of unloading. Half the time they help to load it so they don’t get behind schedule, and then get stuck unloading it on the other end. It’s double the work for little money. 

BD: Are there any other issues that I haven’t mentioned that you think are important to the industry?

KEVIN: Well... the biggest thing is just the cost of doing the job. Guys will keep driving old unsafe trucks because the taxes on a new truck will kill you. Most of these guys are putting 100,000 to 125,000 miles on their trucks per year. So they get stuck with low trade in values. Tire prices keep going up, feul prices keep going up, but there are no hauling rate increases. For a lot of people there isn’t much choice. Where I live you either farm, log, or drive a truck. There is nothing
else.