



**Tradition Under Fire: Values, Role Regulation and  
Work Identity within the Fire and Rescue Service**

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# **Abstract**

The Fire and Rescue Service is characterised by a strong culture, reinforced by positive esteem. But the role of the Firefighter in society is changing by design, and as a reaction to changing demand and a need to diversify, beyond that of a traditional model.

This is a qualitative study, which gets to the heart of what it means to be a Firefighter. This provides us with a fascinating insight from the front line of the Fire and Rescue Service during a significant period of change, to consider how this is, or will affect what it means to be a Firefighter.

By focussing on identity during this period of flux, this study considers how Firefighters renegotiate self-images and work orientations in response to their changing environment. This raises the importance of how Firefighter values and identity influence organisational perspectives regarding strategic direction, mission determination, visioning, and ultimately performance outcomes within a County Council Fire and Rescue Service.

The present study offers a privileged personal account, which is uniquely viewed through an insider's appreciation, providing a rare and fascinating insight into their worlds. This provides us the opportunity to look behind the scenes into what it means to be a Firefighter, making it unusual and interesting compared to other organisational studies in this area.

## **Dedication**

Firefighters train together, work together, face the risk, and often have to deal with some of the worst days in people's lives, together. As one of the Firefighters said, 'our aim is to make someone's day that little bit better'.

As a fellow Firefighter, it was fascinating to hear their personal stories of how important it is for them to be part of the Firefighter family. But the Firefighter family does not just involve those who work within the Service, when a Firefighter joins the job, so clearly does their family.

Although so obviously proud, the support the families give to our Firefighters cannot be understated, often sharing in the stories of rescues, the excitement of large fires, and positive public appreciation for the role they play. But families also provide the silent support to help Firefighters deal with what they see and do that is so important.

This research is dedicated to the families of our Firefighters, the silent backbone of our emergency services, helping our Firefighters deal with those difficult days.

# Acknowledgements

It is rare for the Fire Service to support academic research at this level, particularly from an insider's perspective. I would like to acknowledge the support I have received from Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, not only from the Chief Fire Officer for sponsoring this research and investing in my personal development, but my fellow Firefighters in being so open, sharing their stories, their personal journey, the struggles and the celebrations. Through my 25 year career, I feel this is the first time I truly understand what it means to be a Firefighter.

Any research, particularly done by senior fire officers in their own organisation may generate a certain amount of scepticism. I would like to acknowledge the support provided by the Fire Brigades Unions (FBU), Retained Firefighters Union (RFU), Association of Principal Fire Officers (APFO) and the Fire Officers Association (FOA). By the trade unions encouraging involvement and participation in the research activities, it enabled an open and inclusive approach to the study, which would have been difficult without their support.

I would also like to thank the University of Northampton, the business school and my DBA colleagues. The professional doctorate brings together academics and professionals, bridging that gap between academic research and practice. Without the patience and support of Professor Peter Lawrence, my supervisor, or the support from my DBA colleagues, this would have been a totally different experience. The professional doctorate

programme has not only developed me as an individual, but will contribute to making communities much safer as a result.

On a personal note, I must acknowledge my wife, Amanda and my sons, Matthew and Jason, for their patience, understanding, at times tolerance, and for all their support, not only through this research but also during my career in the Service. The decision to undertake a doctorate was a difficult one for me; it is surrounded with a sense of sacrifice, time lost and needs to be managed against competing pressures. You do not do it alone; you cannot help sharing what you are thinking about and what you have learnt. Without them, I wouldn't be the person I am today.

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## **CHAPTER 1: Introduction**

The Fire and Rescue Service is characterised by a strong culture that is reinforced by positive esteem. It is an organisation that is bound by tradition, which operates within a structured and disciplined environment to protect life, property and the environment. It is a service that is uniquely well regarded by the public, presenting a positive self-image that is the most important part of what it means to be a Firefighter. This provides Firefighters a privileged position in the eyes of others, something that cannot be said of many other professions, offering a unique opportunity and interesting context for this study.

There is a real tendency for people who do studies of organisational groups to put the concept of role in the foreground; although this is not unimportant, the present study focuses on identity, making it unusual compared to other organisational studies. In studying the regulation of identity, at a significant period of change, it considers how Firefighters are enjoined to develop self-images and work orientations that are considered congruent with political, organisational and managerially defined objectives to diversify and to collaborate.

Viewed from an insider's<sup>1</sup> perspective, empirical data is used to consider how managerial actions, more or less intentionally and effectively influence the employee's self-construction in terms of coherence, distinctiveness and commitment. The processual nature of such control is explored, arguing that it exists in the tension between other intra and extra-organisational claims upon employee's sense of identity, stimulating the notion of who they are, who they are not, who they aspire to be, strive to become or dread becoming.

I argue that becoming a Firefighter is bound by the need to be accepted, based on hidden rules and behaviours, and exists in the tension between the 'ideal selves' and 'ought selves'. By unpicking their motivations, and exploring their understanding of what it means to be a Firefighter, this study revolves around identity work, not only in the organisational setting for identity construction, but how it runs in parallel as a journey through life's choices.

We discover how multiple aspects of self compete in salience, influencing choice, decisions and compromise, in defining ever evolving multiple versions of self, that are enacted within a specific context, sympathetically aligned to a situation, determining how Firefighters respond to community

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<sup>1</sup> The researcher is currently the Assistant Chief Fire Officer for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, and is responsible for the day to day running of the Service. He has served over 25 years, all of which have been within Northamptonshire.

risk. It is a reflection of who they are in the present, ever-changing, fluid, a sense of duty, community, empathy, that influences choice within fixed roles and structures.

This identity is reinforced inextricably through the legitimisation of shared beliefs, an aspirational connection within a traditional culture, and a sense of family; although the desire to be recognised by peers is described as a struggle to prove yourself, to compromise, to be accepted and to comply.

The concept of being accepted, self-acceptance and willingness to change correlates with who am I now, and who I desire to be, but is strongly rooted in past selves, hindering future selves, and the organisation's desire to diversify.

### **Forces for change**

Recent incidents have highlighted a change in the demands placed on Fire and Rescue Services and the changing role of the responders. Since the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers<sup>2</sup> in New York on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, national resilience, and the ability for Services to respond to an ever-changing threat has been there. After the attacks in London<sup>3</sup> on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005, the role of the Emergency Services, and particularly how they work

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<sup>2</sup> Twin Towers – Terrorist attacks on the world trade center in New York saw 2977 victims killed. 412 were emergency workers (342 Firefighters, 2 Firefighter-Paramedics, 37 Police Officers, 8 Emergency Medical Technicians)

<sup>3</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005, London Bombings, also known as 7/7, a series of terrorist suicide attacks in London detonated three bombs in quick succession aboard London Underground trains killing 52 people, injuring 300.

more closely together has seen changes in doctrine, decision-making and command structures as part of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP<sup>4</sup>).

Environmental changes like the Gloucester Floods in 2007 have seen Services having to respond on a national level to protect national infrastructure (Power stations, Water Treatment plants), or the Buncefield Oil terminal fire in 2005, which saw international interest and potential lifetime environmental and social impact.

More recently, the Grenfell Tower fire on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017, where 72 people lost their lives, with the Fire Service and other emergency responders rescuing 223 people from the building, highlighted the increased importance of Fire Protection standards and the role of the Service moving forward. It is interesting that although such a devastating incident, with a huge loss of life, the crews involved were still publicly applauded for their work under those extreme conditions.

But although these high profile, national and international events have highlighted the importance of the Service, incident numbers have continued to be driven down. Since the introduction of the Fire and Rescue Services Act (2004), the sector saw a shift in strategy from a reactive Act (Fire and

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<sup>4</sup> JESIP – Is principally about improving the way Police, Fire and Ambulance services work together when responding to major multi agency incidents. This was as a direct result of learning from the attacks around the world, particularly London in 2005.

Rescue Service Act, 1947) to a more preventative approach with 670,000 Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC<sup>5</sup>) delivered each year. As a consequence of increased preventative work, Fire Services have contributed to a 40% reduction (Knight 2013) of fire-related incidents over the last decade. This has also resulted in the severity and number of casualties now at an all-time low, reducing the impact and cost to society.

As a result of increasing demographic pressure, there is growing support from the National Health Service and other agencies to build on the Service's brand and record in delivering HFSCs to support wider community benefits through Safe and Well visits. These now include identifying and acting upon a wider range of risks beyond that of the traditional Fire Service role, such as fall risk assessments, health and wellbeing issues, fuel poverty and crime, all leading to wider social benefit, potentially changing the role of the Service in the public and organisation's eyes.

In response to increasing demands on the ambulance service<sup>6</sup>, Fire and Rescue Services are now not only providing an additional response to life

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<sup>5</sup> HFSC – Home Fire Safety Check, this involves ensuring the public is safe from fire in the home. Giving fire safety advice, promoting smoke alarm ownership, bedtime routines and escape plans. Services target the most vulnerable members of the community from fire, including the elderly, disabled, those with mental health issues, alongside providing general advice to the public. This is supported by direct engagement, knocking on doors and wider use of marketing materials.

<sup>6</sup> Increase in Ambulance Demand - according to the National Audit Office report on NHS Ambulance Services 2017, there has been a 6% year on year increase since 2011-12.

critical incidents through co-responding<sup>7</sup> but within more rural areas of the country they are transporting casualties to hospital.

In June 2016 the Home Secretary announced her plans for reform of the Fire and Rescue Service along the same lines as the previous Police reform agenda. The Fire Service reform agenda covers three broad areas, described as the pillars of reform:

- Efficiency and Collaboration
- Workforce Reform
- Accountability and Transparency

Efficiency and Collaboration have seen amendments to the Policing and Crime Act coming into force in 2017 to place a statutory duty on the three emergency services to collaborate, this also enables the Police and Crime Commissioners to take on the statutory duty of the Fire and Rescue Service in addition to the Police Force.

Workforce reform has been included based on a number of studies into the Fire and Rescue Service, identifying issues around culture and trust, bullying and harassment, the changing role, diversification and need to reform (Thomas 2015). Reviews such as those carried out in Essex (Lucas 2015) highlighted how the culture was having a detrimental effect on the organisation, its employees and the communities it serves.

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<sup>7</sup> Co-responding – Providing an emergency medical response to life risk incidents as requested by the Ambulance Service. Although this does not replace the ambulance response, it often provides a quicker response time that leads to improved patient outcomes.

The third pillar of reform, accountability and transparency, now sees the introduction of a new inspection regime, achieved by the expansion of the Home Office Inspectors of Constabulary to now include the Fire and Rescue Service – HMICFRS<sup>8</sup>. The Fire Sector is currently under significant review and reform, impacting on the staff involved in this change.

## **Research Justification**

This is a significant time of change for Fire and Rescue Services, which Northamptonshire is at the heart of. Northamptonshire's county profile is also significantly changing which is increasing financial pressures on public services through increasing demands on Children and Adult Social Care. Northamptonshire emergency services have also established a collaborative programme to develop joint initiatives, like sharing stations, providing joint response vehicles, joint teams, joint community plans, alongside wider partnership working.

The Fire and Rescue Service is one of a proud tradition, a long history and a culture that revolves around the public and the Firefighter's expectations of their role in society, but this is changing, by design as a reaction to changing demand and a need to diversify beyond that of a traditional model to improve community safety.

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<sup>8</sup> HMICFRS – Home Office Inspector of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Service. Previous assessment process involved peer assessments by another Fire and Rescue Service.

The timing and positionality of the researcher, from an insider's perspective, provides a privileged and rare opportunity, at a significant time of change to consider how this is affecting, or will affect, what it means to be a Firefighter.

## **Aims and Objectives**

As a professional doctorate, this research not only aims to provide a contribution to theory but also a contribution to practice. As a serving Fire Officer, the findings of this research may be used to influence change across the sector, ultimately contributing to safer communities as a result.

The aim of this study is to explore the following dilemmas:

1. The changing role of Firefighters and the relationship between their identity and how that identity is formed. The influence of shared beliefs, basic values and underlying assumptions (Schein 2010, Hatch and Cunliffe 2006) in response to the changing environment (Ravasi and Schultz 2006).
2. The association between organisational change strategy and the collective beliefs concerning what a Firefighter stands for, takes pride in and holds as intrinsic worth (Rokeach 2008, Schein 2010), and how this influences organisational performance and community outcomes as a result.

## **Research Questions**

This study translates these two dilemmas into the following research questions:

1. Do Firefighters renegotiate self-images and work orientations in response to the changing environment, which are considered

congruent with political, organisational and managerial defined objectives to diversify? If so how?

2. Do Firefighter values and identity influence organisational perspectives regarding strategic direction, mission determination, visioning and ultimately performance outcomes within a County Council Fire and Rescue Service? If so How?

### **Research Objectives**

These research questions are underpinned by the following general research objectives:

1. To understand how Firefighters are enjoined to develop self-images and work orientations that are considered congruent with political, organisational and managerial defined objectives for the Service.
2. To understand how managerial actions, more or less intentionally and in/effectively influence employees' self-constructions in terms of coherence, distinctiveness and commitment.
3. To describe how internal culture influences what it means to be a Firefighter.
4. To understand how the desire to diversify the Firefighter's role and to collaborate with other emergency services may be influencing Firefighter identity.
5. To consider what it means to be a Firefighter at different stages in people's lives and careers.
6. To understand the relationship between the external, societal view of what a Firefighter is and how this influences opportunities for change.

## CHAPTER 2: Background

### Historical Background<sup>9</sup>

What we know of the 'Modern' Fire and Rescue Service in the UK, is something that has evolved over many years. Organised fire fighting is claimed to have begun in ancient Rome in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century, there is also evidence of fire fighting in use in Ancient Egypt.

The Roman leader Marcus Licinius Crassus is claimed to have established the first actual fire brigade, comprising some 500 Firefighters. Although they were willing to rush into burning buildings when needed, they would barter with the property owner to determine price before extinguishing the fire! If an agreement were not possible, the property would be left to burn.

This research considers the effects of collaboration across the emergency services, but evidence of the Fire Service and the Police force working together also goes back to these Roman times! Firefighters in AD 60 under the Emperor Nero patrolled the streets looking for fires, at the same time serving as the Police force, extinguishing fires by lining up and throwing buckets of water onto the fire.

It was not until AD43 when the Romans invaded, that Britain saw the first real organised Fire Service, although still only with buckets of water and

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<sup>9</sup> Historical background provided courtesy of the Firefighter Foundation.

mostly timber built properties, its effect was limited, resulting in most buildings burning down. Although some parishes did establish their own brigades, there was no legislation or standards at this time.

This changed significantly in 1666 following The Great Fire of London, helping set the foundations for standardised fire fighting. Nicholas Barbon established The Fire Office, the first fire insurance company, later sparking similar smaller companies to protect properties. This went on until around the 1800s, each company issuing their own badge or fire mark to identify the properties they protected. In the event of a fire, if you did not display their badge (have insurance) then they would simply let the building burn down until the right company would turn up. Later in 1896, following the merger of these small companies, eventually, one insurance company emerged, initially called 'the Contributors for Insuring Houses, Chambers or Rooms from Loss by Fire, by Amicable Contribution', now known as the Hand in Hand Fire & Life Insurance Society, superseding The Fire Office.

Although at the time dominated by males, it is interesting that the first recorded female Firefighter was Molly Williams in 1818, who apparently took her place alongside the men, pulling a fire water pump through the deep snow during a blizzard.

James Braidwood in 1824 established the first recorded municipal fire brigade in Edinburgh, the Edinburgh Fire Engine Establishment, later setting up the 'London Fire Engine Establishment' after his move to London in 1833.

Before 1938, in Britain there were around 1400 – 1500 small municipal fire brigades run by local councils. In 1938 the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) was created, which was superseded by the National Fire Service, ensuring uniformity during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Based on the actions of the AFS during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, they were referred to by Sir Winston Churchill as ‘Angels with Grimy Faces’<sup>10</sup>.

There has always been a long-standing connection between the Navy and the Fire Brigade. Many sailors were enlisted or would volunteer for the Fire Service as they were seen as disciplined, reliable and used to the watch system, something that is still evident in training drills, discipline, structure and uniform today.

Post-war this led to the Fire Services Act 1947 and the standardisation of the Service, where the National Fire Service was devolved to local county authorities. This resulted in 148 County Council and County Boroughs running their own Fire Brigades. In 1974, following local government re-organisation, many brigades were amalgamated into what we have today.

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<sup>10</sup> Angels with Grimy Faces - Winston Churchill, Britain’s Prime Minister during the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war, described the Firefighters of London as ‘Angels with Grimy Faces’ as a result of their response to the bombings on the capital.

The Fire Services Act 2004 now replaces the 1947 legislation, setting the foundation for the modern, 21<sup>st</sup> century Fire and Rescue Service, establishing three main themes of prevention<sup>11</sup>, protection<sup>12</sup>, and response<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Fire Prevention – Fire Services actively work with communities to reduce the risk from fires and other accidents. Aimed at preventing the incidents from occurring in the first place, this involves educating people on the dangers of fires (and other emergencies) and the precautions they can take to prevent it from happening. This often involves targeting vulnerable members of society, or educating young children through school visits.

<sup>12</sup> Fire Protection – Fire Services enforce, along with other regulations, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Protection standards ensure premises are built in a way to protect their occupants from fire.

<sup>13</sup> Response – This is the operational side of the Service, providing an immediate and reactive response to incidents, to protect life, property and the environment.

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fire and Rescue Service

As a crisis management organisation, Fire and Rescue Services operate predominantly across two phases (CCA 2004), pre-impact phase (preventing and protecting communities) and reactive phase (response to and recovery from an incident).

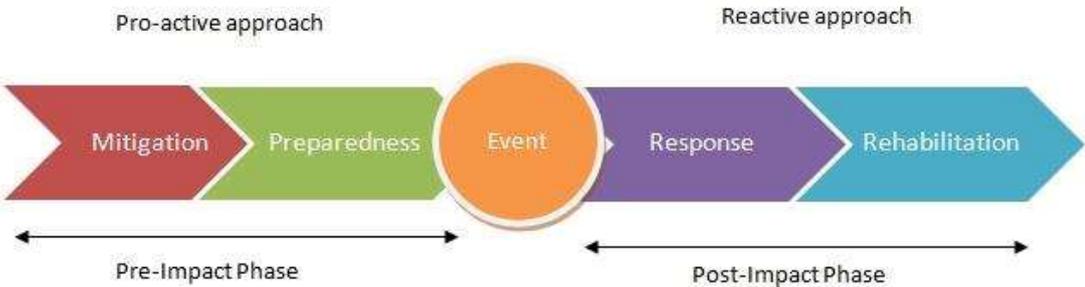


Figure 1 - Emergency Response Phases (Created by the author: Hallam 2018)

Today Fire and Rescue services (Services) in England are comprised of 45 fire and rescue authorities of different sizes and structures, promoting fire safety (Prevention), enforcement of regulations (Protection), fire-fighting provision (Response), national resilience<sup>14</sup> and response to special services<sup>15</sup> (DCLG 2012).

There are currently 15 County Council Fire Authorities, of which Northamptonshire is one, and is the focus of this study. There are 25

<sup>14</sup> National risks of such a scale and/or complexity that local resources would be insufficient.

<sup>15</sup> Road Traffic Collisions, rescue from height, water rescues, and others incidents such as chemical releases or animal rescues.

Combined Fire Authorities and 7 Metropolitan Services. Wales is split into three Services; Northern Ireland is a single Service. Scotland is now a single organisation; the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, following the merger of 7 separate authorities in 2013 (Appendix 1).

Protecting a combined population of over 65million people (Cipfa 2015), In England alone, the Fire and Rescue Service attended over ½ million incidents (n=558,963) in 2016-17 according to the Government's fire statistics monitor (Home Office, Statistical Bulletin NO:08/2018), for the first time attending more non-fire incidents than fires.

Services have contributed proactively towards a reduction in demand through targeted prevention campaigns, behavioural changes, technological advancements and increased smoke alarm ownership. The role of the Service is now less response orientated and more prevention driven as a result.

They operate from 1392 fire stations, employing approximately 42,300 FTE<sup>16</sup> Fire and Rescue Staff, of which 34,400 FTE are of Firefighter rank (Appendix 2). According to the Home Office (2016), in England, Firefighters are predominantly white (96%), males (95%) and aged 36 or older (73%). Therefore only around 5% of Firefighters are women. It is also interesting that only 1270 (3.8%) of Firefighters stated as being from an ethnic group.

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<sup>16</sup> FTE – Full Time Equivalent

### **Alternative Fire and Rescue Service Models**

Within the Military, the Defence Fire Risk Management Organisation (DFRMO) was formed in 2006, bringing together all Fire and Rescue aspects of the military under one organisation; providing fire cover to 300,000 MOD<sup>17</sup> employees, across 4,600 sites, and a self-insured estate of 45,000 buildings worth over £100billion (Government 2018).

Although some private sector Fire Services do exist, providing resilience arrangements or specialist responses, e.g. Fire Safety events management, the predominant civil arrangements are provided through the local authority under the Fire Services Act 2004.

In contrast to the RNLI<sup>18</sup> or Mountain Rescue Services, the Fire and Rescue Service is a paid profession; although some voluntary Fire Services do exist, they do not primarily provide fire cover, but support community impact as part of local resilience arrangements under the Civil Contingencies Act. (2004).

### **Structure**

Pay and conditions for all operational roles are set and negotiated nationally through the National Joint Council (NJC<sup>19</sup>), within a defined role structure

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<sup>17</sup> MOD – Ministry of Defense

<sup>18</sup> RNLI – Royal National Life Boat Institution

<sup>19</sup> NJC – National Joint Council

from Firefighter to Chief Fire Officer (Appendix 2), working to agreed role maps that outline the roles and responsibilities for each specific function.

Although Services have control operators (those answering and deploying resources to 999 calls), the operational structure generally comprises:

- Whole-time Duty System (WDS<sup>20</sup>)
- Retained Duty System (RDS<sup>21</sup>)
- Variable Crewing Staff and Officers<sup>22</sup>

There are various combinations of WDS and RDS sections working together, e.g. Variable Crewing (WDS staff providing RDS cover during evenings and weekends) and stations that have both an RDS and WDS section (two fire appliances).

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<sup>20</sup> WDS – Whole-time Duty staff are primarily employed by the Service, providing 24/7 cover based on a locally agreed rota system in line with the NJC agreed terms and conditions. Generally, this includes working as part of a small group of Firefighters (6/7) on a watch, working two days, then two nights and then having 4 days rest. There are 4 watches on each station, Red, Green, Blue and White and rotate accordingly. Across the country, there are various versions of this duty system negotiated locally based on local need, but principally follow the same model, with the exception of self-rostering models currently being used in Kent.

<sup>21</sup> RDS – Retained Duty System, comprises of staff who have a primary job in the community and respond via an alerter or pager to the Fire Station when required. They provide a range of operational cover around their normal life pattern, generally live in the local community and attend the Fire Station for training once a week. They operate within the same role maps and training requirements.

<sup>22</sup> Officers - (Station Manager (SM) to Chief Fire Officer (CFO)) are normally flexi officers, in addition to providing managerial hours and operational response, they provide an additional response based on an agreed rota from home and receive a 20% enhancement for these arrangements. Officers provide the incident command function for the more complex and serious of incidents as well as holding a management function within the organisation according to their role.

Each RDS Section or WDS Watch comprises a Watch Manager (WM), Crew Manager (CM) and a number of Firefighters to crew the appliance when mobilised. The fire engine generally is crewed by an incident commander (WM or CM), a driver (Firefighter) and 2 or 3 additional Firefighters.

All Firefighters have general prevention and protection training, Services also employ specialist staff trained in preventative work (Community Fire Safety) or protective work (Enforcement of Fire Safety legislation – built environment).

## **The Study Group - Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service**

The focus of this study is Northamptonshire<sup>23</sup> Fire and Rescue Service, which is currently a County Council Fire and Rescue Service. It was formed following the amalgamation of Northamptonshire Fire Brigade and Northampton Borough Fire Brigade in 1974, which established the Fire Authority as the County Council.

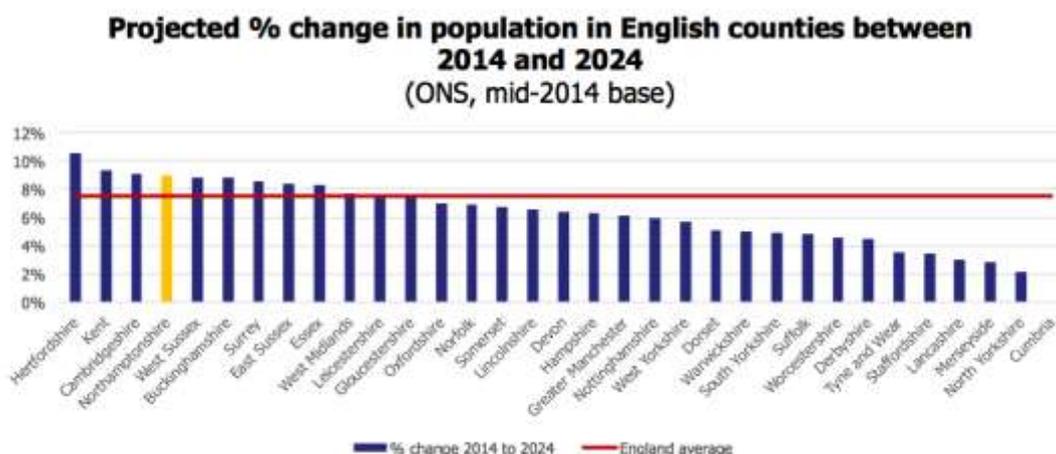
In October 2017 a non-contested business case was submitted to the Police and Fire Minister to consider moving governance from the local authority to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Appendix 3 provides an

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<sup>23</sup> Northamptonshire is centrally located in England, It has an estimated Population of 723,026 (2015 Estimate), 327,455 Households (Address Base, 2017) 25,168 Commercial properties (AddressBase, 2017), protecting a regional gross value added of (£million) £16,270 (ONS, 2017) with the population in the county expected to increase by 62,000 in the next ten years (2017-2027) (ONS, 2016).

overview of the current collaborative programme, that is now well developed, demonstrating the close working now being developed between the two emergency services.

The population of Northamptonshire has increased by 4.5% since the 2011 Census (to mid-2015), above the national average growth (3.4%), and is projected to continue to grow at an above-average rate of 9% (versus 7.5% national average). As seen in the graph below, Northamptonshire is one of the highest growing places in the country.



<sup>24</sup> (Source: Northamptonshire County Council, internal finance report, 2017)

**Graph 1 - Change in population English Counties 2014 - 2024**

The over 60s make up a high proportion of the Northamptonshire population (157,345 people, 21.7% of the total population), indicative of an ageing population and the potential for increasing demand on wider support services.

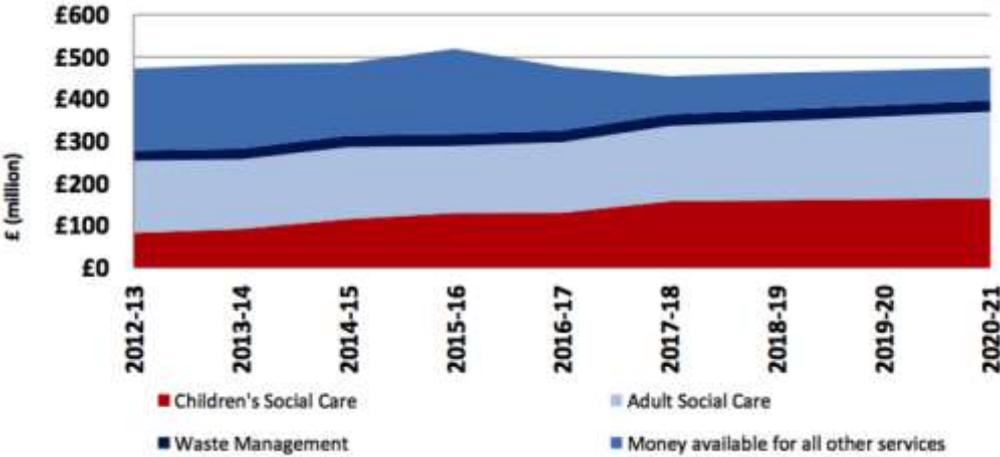
<sup>24</sup> Note - Excludes unitary authorities

At present 27,481 (3.8 %) of the population of Northamptonshire are over the age of 80, a figure that is predicted to rise by 56.25% over the next ten years (2017-2027). This is likely to have a profound impact on many public services, including the Fire Service (ONS, 2016) as this group is not only vulnerable from a fire but places a high demand on other public services.

The predicted spend on Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care continues to increase financial pressures on the money available to other Services as demonstrated below within the County Council predicted financial forecast; highlighting not just the financial pressure placed on the Fire Service but the increased reliance on partnership working and asset utilisation in making Northamptonshire safer. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) are currently trialling Safe and Well visits to explore the benefits of expanding HFSCs<sup>25</sup> to include wider social issues, like slips trips and falls, crime prevention and fuel poverty.

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<sup>25</sup> HFSC – Home Fire Safety Check

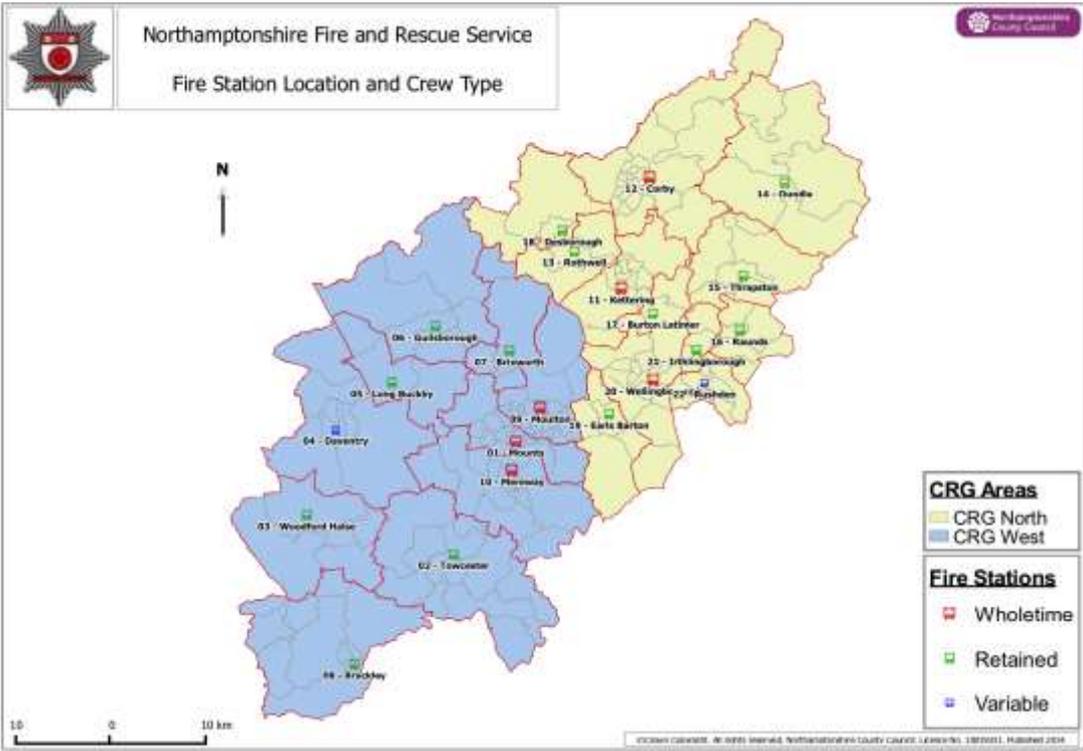


(Source: Northamptonshire County Council, internal corporate finance report, 2017)

Graph 2 - Funding Outlook for Northamptonshire County Council

The Service has 22 Fire Stations (6 WDS, 14 RDS, 2 Variable Crewing), spread geographically across the county, providing 28 Fire Appliances and a range of specialist response vehicles and services. The Service utilises two management groups – Community Risk Group (CRG<sup>26</sup>) North and West.

<sup>26</sup> CRG – Community Risk Group



(Source: Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, internal information, 2018)

**Figure 2 - Fire Station Location and Crew Type**

Staffing figures have significantly reduced over the last ten years due to financial pressures as demonstrated below (Table 1).

Incident demand has also significantly reduced over the same period, with the exception of co-responding (providing a medical response for the Ambulance Service), which has consistently grown in demand (Table 2).

Table 1 - NFRS Staffing Numbers

	<b>2006/7</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Whole time Firefighters	287	259
Fire Control	19	14
Support Services	83	43
On Call (RDS)	270	241

Table 2 - NFRS Incident Demand

	<b>2006/7</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
All Fires	4465	1898
RTCs	653	541
Other Emergencies	1,036	3192 (2,337 Co responding)
False Alarms	2903	729
Hoax Calls	227	58
Total Incidents not including Co Responding	10133	5052

(Sources: Created by the Author based on NFRS internal Data)

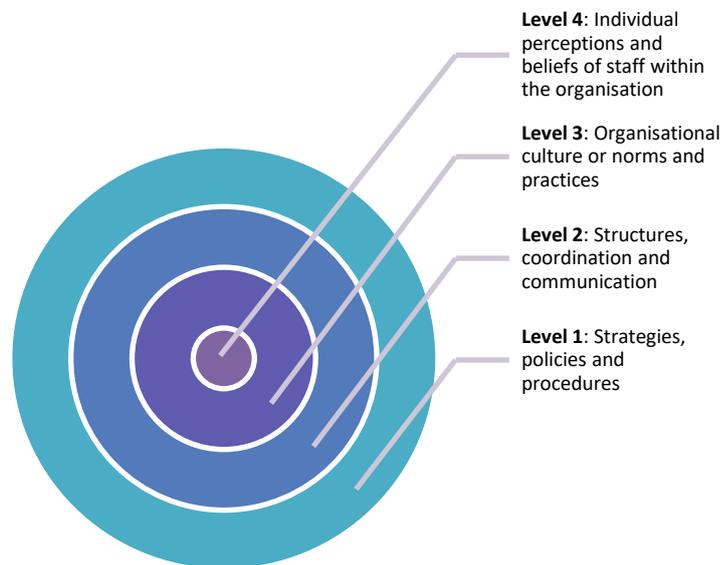
This chapter not only provided a brief history, and an insight into the evolution of Fire and Rescue Services in the United Kingdom, it provided some background knowledge to how the Fire Service functions, which may enable the reader to understand the structure and operating environment in which the Service operates.

By providing the context to this study (Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service), hopefully, it illuminates the benefits of the study group to consider the research questions. In the next chapter, I intend to review the relevant literature in this area to support further understanding as part of this study.

## CHAPTER 3: Literature Review

Crisis-prepared organisations quickly adapt to a changing environment by changing their behaviours and structures, argued by Pauchant & Mitroff (1992), as having four layers within their Onion model of Crisis

Management:



**Figure 3 - Onion Model of Crisis Management** (Pauchant and Mitroff, 1992, p.172)

Pollock & Coles (2015) outline that to understand Levels 1 & 2 these two superficial layers need to be stripped away to reveal the hidden, unseen layers and deep structures (Gersick 1991) that really motivate the organisation in levels 3 & 4.

Identifying the organisation as a 'jigsaw' of constructs, each multidimensional, separate, interrelated and interlinked (Allaire and Firsirotu 1984) organisational culture coexists at multiple levels; a reflection of

values, climate, something that can be measured and directly associated with organisational performance (Westwood and Clegg 2003).

Dauber, Fink & Yolles (2012) would argue it is this structural coupling between the dominant task environment (Sagiv and Schwartz 2007) and the legitimisation of shared beliefs, basic values and underlying assumptions (Schein 2010, Hatch and Cunliffe 2006) that guides mutual interpretation and response to their environment (Ravasi and Schultz 2006).

Schein (1996) suggests, that for an organisation to be healthy, it must have:

A sense of identity, purpose or mission, a capacity on the part of the system to adapt and maintain itself in the face of internal and external changes, a capacity to perceive and test reality and some degree of internal integration and alignment of the sub-systems that make up the total system. (Schein, 1996, p.4)

Identity regulation is argued to be a core management strategy (Karreman and Alvesson 2004) although, as Gotsi et al., (2010, p.784) highlights, 'specific strategies of identity regulation are rarely examined in research.' In fact, according to Brown and Toyoki (2013, p.875), 'identity work is an intrinsic (though often overlooked) process of organising'.

### **But what do we mean by Identity?**

Identity is such a powerful phenomenon, guiding us through life and the decisions we make (Kroger 2007). It attempts to answer the question, 'Who are you?' But is it that simple? There are many versions of 'You', not just the singular, a father, a son, or a Firefighter (Goossens 2001).

Identity is not just limited to self, it includes the association with significant others, our roles in society, small groups and wider social categories that are influenced by the social relationships and activities of everyday life (Burkitt 2004). It comprises many different combinations of groups, pairs of individuals, or larger social categories, we are emergency responders, Firefighters, fathers, parents, or British citizens (Tajfel and Turner 1986). In other words, identity does not just influence how we give things meaning (Marcia 1966, Schwartz 2001), but how we act within wider social settings, as individuals or within groups (Reicher 2000, Butler 2011, Baumeister 2012). It is not just about 'who you think you are' but also 'who you act as being' or aspire to become (Thornborrow and Brown 2009).

Identity is also not just defined by the social aspects of our relationships with others, it can include artefacts, 'our possessions are a major contributor to and reflection of our identities' (Belk 1988, p.139), things we buy (Mittal 2006), even the places we go or have lived (Proshansky et al.1983).

But do we have a single 'unitary identity' (Erikson 1993) or as Rattansi and Phoenix (2005) describe, multiple identities? It is clear that different aspects of individual identities become more salient within different situations, or social contexts (Turner and Onorato 1999). A Firefighter is a Firefighter during an operational incident or community engagement activity, but when they get home are they still a Firefighter, or a Firefighter who is a father or mother, or a parent who fights fires? Clearly identities are not independent of each other, they must overlap or intermingle (Amiot et al. 2007).

Goossens (2001, p.681) describes people as having a single identity with 'multiple and separable domains or components.' Within Social Identity Theory, Tajfel and Turner (1986), describe individuals as having multiple group identities that shift in salience depending on context. This raises the question, do we have one identity, multiple identities or multiple aspects of 'who I am?'

Answering this question is so complex; it relates to the aspects of you as an individual, your personal identity and is built on those self-definitions that are so personal and subjective. These could be your goals, values, and beliefs (Marcia 1966, Waterman 1999) your religion or spiritual beliefs (MacDonald 2000), how you expect people to behave and the way you make your personal choices (Atkins et al. 2005, Hardy and Carlo 2005), how you consider yourself, or even your self-esteem and self-evaluation (Kernis, Lakey and Heppner 2008, Sedikides and Gregg 2008).

During this research, the concept of 'Who I am?' not only raises the question about who you are in the present, but your future selves (Markus and Nurius 1986), in who you desire to be or you fear to become. As McAdams (2006) describes it is your life story, of past, present and future. A journey through life's choices by constantly discovering, creating your sense of self and your own identity (Cote and Levine 2014) through conscious, purposeful, and reasoned choices (Berzonsky and Papini 2014, Kroger 2007, Marcia 1966, Luyckx et al. 2007) that are influenced and guided by our interactions with significant others like family and close friends (Marshall et al. 2006, Schachter and Ventura 2008). This often occurs within a sociological and

historical environment that is influenced by the available discourses, making them 'meaningful, accessible and appealing or unappealing' (Watson 2008, p.129), which reinforces potential stereotypes for different occupational roles or social groups. For example gender appropriateness or inequality (Acker 1990) and religious beliefs (Beckford 1983).

But it is the difference between Social Identities, as Watson (2008, p.131) describes 'cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be' that are 'worked on' through their membership of groups, organisations or social categories (Tracy 2000, Coupland 2001, Tracy and Clifton 2006) and self-identity, which is 'the individual's own notion of who and what they are' (Watson 2008, p.124) that is interesting in this study.

### **Looking through a theoretical lens**

In looking at this research through a theoretical lens, there is an obvious relevance to group membership, the roles people perform and the choices people make. This indicates the importance of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1974) as a tool to consider social identity in the terms of group membership, Self Categorisation Theory (Turner et al. 1987) in considering choice and personal fit, and Identity Theory (Stryker 1987) relating to the relevance of roles in defining the self-concept.

### **Social Identity Theory**

Social identity theory (Tajfel 1974) highlighted the concept of a collective identity in defining who you are by your group memberships, that provides a

real sense of pride and self-esteem, through belonging and positive affiliation within the social world. This allows people to draw strength as part of a collective identity, through their positive affiliation with the group (Schildkraut 2007).

The concept of a collective identity, and collective action (Van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears 2008), refers to how an individual relates to, and identifies with a group, and the other social groups and categories they belong to. Subsequently influencing their thoughts, understanding, and the feelings they have, based on the meanings they associate with these social groups or categories.

But this is also relevant for smaller, more familiar groups, for example, social groups, families or as interested here, work groups; concerning the self-categorisation and social identity process that influences motivation and behaviour of individuals and groups at work (Ellemers, De Gilder and Haslam 2004).

For example, gender, and the impact of masculinity in the Fire Service has been subject to much research. Baigent (2001) concluded that 'fitting in' revolved around their masculinity and is demonstrated through being seen as a 'good Firefighter', a label they test themselves against when they 'get in' to fight a fire, suggesting that Firefighters form their masculinity by acting at work in the way they subjectively judge that they are seen, by themselves, their peer group and the public.

It is interesting how approaches to examining collective identity often focus on the inter-group contexts that shape self-conceptions, influencing people to view themselves less as individuals but more as a group (Turner et al. 1987), although collective identities can often mean different things for different individuals within the group. (Rodriguez et al. 2010)

It is through our need to support a positive self-image that encourages us to enhance the status of the groups to which we belong. Adversely, to increase our self-image, according to Tajfel (1974), we discriminate, or hold prejudicial views against the groups we are not associated with.

In the wider context, collective groups could comprise different ethnicities (Taylor 1997), nationality (Schildkraut 2007), religion (Cohen et al. 2005), or gender (Bussey and Bandura 1999). Although these differences can explain an element of conflict, and destructive behaviours, as seen against opposing ethnic, cultural, or national groups (De Fina 2007), or even explaining acts of terrorism (Schwartz, Dunkel and Waterman 2009).

Tajfel (1974) describes this as a process of self-categorisation, defining 'them' and 'us', therefore social identity theory focuses around a central hypothesis that divides the world into the in-group and out-group. In the search for positive self-esteem, the in-group members will naturally look for negative aspects of the out-group, thus reinforcing their self-image in the process. Tajfel (1974, p.66) highlights this as 'a natural cognitive process', in doing so exaggerating the differences between groups and similarities of things in the same groups. This provides an interesting insight into group

membership and potential conflict during collaboration, highlighting where self-esteem could be compromised through joint working initiatives with the Police and Ambulance Services, at the same time illuminating similarities that could be considered as part of wider integration, enhancing the self-esteem of emergency responders through a natural fit.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed that there are three mental processes that are enacted in a particular order to determine in-group and out-group membership. The first is social categorisation; in the same way we categorise objects, we categorise people to understand their social environment. Secondly, through social identification we adopt the identity of the group we have categorised our selves to belong to. The final stage is social comparison; once we have self-categorised ourselves to a group, we compare ourselves to other groups. As we are always looking for positive self-esteem, our group membership needs to compare favourably to other groups. Group cohesiveness is conceptualised in terms of interpersonal attraction based on mutual goal satisfaction (Lott and Lott 1965)

### **Self Categorisation Theory**

But people clearly have choice, particularly around their group membership. Self-Categorisation Theory (Turner et al. 1987) focuses on the nature of this self-categorisation. By self-categorising yourself as a group member, you clearly start to see yourself as similar to other in-group members as defined by the group. This is termed depersonalisation, self-stereotyping and seeing yourself through the experience of being part of the group and not by unique individual characteristics.

Although similar to Social Identity Theory, within Self Categorisation theory, social categories are always part of a hierarchical order as a function of their level of inclusiveness. They are categorised by varying levels of abstraction and inclusiveness, ranging from seeing yourself as an individual, 'a Firefighter', the social self, a member of a team, 'Blue Watch Kettering', a member of an organisation, 'The Fire Service', or in more broader terms of abstraction, 'A member of the Emergency Services'. This can also be evident within groups, for example, Firefighters may be members of a watch, but they may have served different lengths of time, been to different incidents, or have different specialist skills, hence creating division within the group and an informal hierarchy.

As it is argued that social categories form the basis of the social world, membership is selected through the process of accentuation, exposing the differences and similarities between social categories, allowing the perceiver to interact with greater confidence (Turner et al. 1994). This stereotypic accentuation effect reflects the degree to which judged stimuli share the same social category membership as the stereotyper (Haslam and Turner 1992), reinforcing positive affiliation to certain groups, but potential disassociation from others. Regarding the levels of abstraction, it is clear that the levels of accentuation become more generic the more abstracted the association becomes. For example, a Firefighter will see themselves as an Emergency Responder, but may not see themselves associated with a different Service, or performing the role of that Service.

Self Categorisation Theory expands the notion of social identity as being defined by group membership, and includes the variables of accessibility and fit (Turner et al. 1987).

Accessibility revolves around the individual's readiness to use a given set of categories as part of their social identification; this revolves around their past experience, their expectations, motives, values, goals and needs. In relation to fit, this includes an element of comparative fit, and normative fit.

Comparative fit refers to the potential differences between social categories, which may influence the salience of a self-identity within a specific context.

For example, within a social setting that is made up of emergency responders, due to the perceived differences between the different professions, the Firefighters may self-identify with being a Firefighter.

Alternatively, if within the same social setting the division of gender, rather than profession was more pronounced, then the Firefighters may identify more with being male or female. Turner (1985) refers to this as a process of meta-contrast.

In contrast, normative fit revolves around the stereotypical expectations associated with a particular category, and the way they are expected to behave. For example, a Firefighter is expected to enter burning buildings, but if they start to arrest people this may be inconsistent with the normative fit, and expectations of the role. Where behaviour is adopted that is inconsistent with the normal expectations of the social group, then identification is reduced. Where behaviour is more common amongst group

members, this can support greater alignment to the social-category. This is an interesting consideration for this study, as it has the potential to reinforce a dominant ideology of oughtness in how it is perceived by group members - how the group should be, or should act.

### **Identity Theory (Roles)**

Alternatively, within Identity Theory, it is argued we all occupy roles within society, and that our constructed sense of self is anchored to the discrete roles one plays in society (Stets and Burke 2000), either as a child, parent, husband/wife or occupational roles, Firefighter, teacher, or academic.

Although supporting the concept of group identities, Identity theory emphasises the importance of roles in defining the self-concept.

The term role is derived from the theatre, and refers to a part played by an actor (Thomas and Biddle 1966), the 'role', a parchment, wrapped around a wooden dowel, providing the lines to which any actor could pick up to perform. This ensures uniformity of performance by different actors, setting consistent boundaries and meaning. In this study, the concept of a role boundary is important, as it delimits the perimeter and scope of the role.

Identity theory (Stryker 1980) emerged from symbolic interactionism origins, which assert that your sense of self is grounded in the perceptions of others, and our relationships with others determining what these roles mean. This is defined as the interpersonal space (Chen et al. 2006, Bamberg 2004), either within the working space (Thatcher and Zhu 2006) or in the family setting (Manzi et al. 2006). As Burke (1991) and Stryker (1987) argue, a

stable sense of self is how you become to see yourself through the eyes of others, a balance between social interaction and the internalisation of values, the meanings you give to things and the standards you expect.

But nothing remains static; in the studies conducted by Ashforth (2000), he highlights how, within the institutionalised nature of organisations, role transitions are bound by space and time, crossing boundaries through a physical change in space, e.g. commuting to work and a change of location, or time, as part of career choices, time in your life or period in time. This indicates a sense of flexibility around role boundaries that could be explored as part of this study. But, as Epstein points out, 'people become invested in boundaries because their sense of self, their security and their dignity, are all tied to particular boundary distinctions' (Epstein 1989, p.576), signifying an element of resistance, to sustain the norm, that protects a sense of liveability<sup>27</sup>.

This study explores the functionalist perspective of what a Firefighter's role is in society, and how this can be developed to improve community outcomes, but highlights how it may exist in tension with the symbolic interactionists view in what they stand for. This merger of role, and identity,

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<sup>27</sup> Liveability – refers to how compatible the structural elements of our employment meets our personal needs. For example how a particular duty system is compatible with family life around start times, shift patterns, or supports an element of flexibility to meet personal needs. Additionally liveability also relates to our identity and the social context in who we are and how others could perceive us, particularly as a consequence of our employment, emphasising the relationship between identity and our self-esteem and wellbeing.

role-identity, creates an interesting concept. Ashforth defines role-identity as:

... the goals, values, beliefs, norms, interaction styles, and time horizons that are typically associated with a role. A role identity provides a definition of self-in-role, a persona that one may enact. A role's boundaries facilitate the articulation of a role identity by circumscribing the domain of the role by demarking what activities belong to the role and what belongs to other roles.

(Ashforth, 2000, p.6)

Identity theory also highlights how we are all made up of multiple identities, arrayed in a hierarchy of salience, having a readiness to be acted out based on the relevance to a situation (Stryker 1987). Although Stryker implies the person, and not the situation predicates the salience, an alternative view is that salience is a function of personal and situational factors (McCall and Simmons 1978) implying a person's reaction to a situation could be considered a reflection of who they are, at that particular time and in that situation. It also implies that multiple identities compete in salience throughout people's lives, influencing how they act based on the importance, and range of roles that form their self-concept. In considering time as an influencing factor that supports an element of flexibility around role boundaries, this study needs to look at people at different stages of their life, and career, to consider if this is a factor.

Both social identity theory and identity theory view the self as socially defined; as such for this study, irrespective of context, any given aspect of identity can be explored on an individual, relational and collective approach.

This implies that identity cannot exist on its own; it is influenced by how you believe you should play out a role, and the recognition of others within a social setting (Swann 2005). This also implies that social and personal identities are inextricably linked with the individual's personal understanding of the meanings placed on different roles, or their associations with particular groups, relying on the recognition of the social audience if they are to feel secure. This is achieved by adhering to their understanding of particular traits and characteristics that they understand (Reid and Deaux 1996), linking the memory people attribute to the different groups to which they belong and how they behave.

### **Identity as a Social Interaction**

Fire and Rescue, Police and Ambulance identities have strong links between 'internal self identities' and 'external social identities' as such, their identity can be considered a negotiation between the self and the social (Keenoy et al. 2009).

Identity is described as the cognitive connection between the person's self-concept and the connection with the construed external image (Dutton and Dukerich 1991), which can lead to organisational identification (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail 1994). This connection with who they are, or perceived to be, if positive, is likely to instil pride through association

(Carmeli 2004, Helm 2013), leading to job satisfaction and improved performance through pride in membership and their perceived external reputation (Helm 2013). Understanding this relationship between how Firefighters believe they are viewed, or are actually viewed is an interesting part of this study.

Brown (2014) suggests identity is central to understanding an organisation, defining it as 'the meanings that individuals attach reflexively to themselves, and [which are] developed and sustained through processes of social interaction as they seek to address the question 'who am I?'' (Brown, 2014, p.23)

Although occupational identity provides an element of individual mobility, it is bound, according to Hughes by 'loaded value words in descriptions of occupations' (Hughes 1951, p.313), implying job duties that taint the post holder. Termed 'Dirty Work', Hughes (1951, p.314) refers to those jobs that are likely to be viewed as disgusting, degrading, or morally insulting.

Emerson and Pollner (1976), through their studies with mental health workers further developed this concept to highlight aspects of jobs that could be perceived shameful, disliked, or serve to challenge the image of the worker. This concept of being tainted by your employment, or socially stigmatised is an important factor when considering identity regulation as part of organisational change.

By the very nature of danger, contact with death, bodily fluids, noxious substances, being a Firefighter has already been regarded as 'Dirty Work' (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Kaprow 1991).

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) categorised 'Dirty Work' into three main groups, those that are physically tainted, socially tainted, or morally tainted. Physically tainted occupations are associated with dirt, garbage, sewage, death, bodily fluids, or dangerous conditions (Ackroyd and Crowdy 1990, Perry and Russell 1998).

Socially tainted occupations revolve more around a servile relationship with others, such as maids, cleaners, or general domestic duties (Anderson 2000), or those occupations that by their very nature taint people through association with those people who are stigmatised, for example social workers or prison officers (Tracy 2004).

The third and most stigmatised according to Ashforth & Kreiner are those that have a moral taint, such as pawnbrokers or strippers, tending to be seen as more evil than necessary (Ashforth and Kreiner 2014), constituting a more significant identity threat to occupational members.

It is this level of dirtiness and the perception of society that can determine an occupation as 'dirty work', as such those individuals that occupy these roles are 'dirty workers' (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Hughes 1962).

### **The implications for change**

As individuals, we all want to consider ourselves positively, especially in the eyes of others, with motivations of self-enhancement, self-verification, and

self-expanding being rooted in people's concerns around social approval and acceptance. As Leary claims 'self-conscious emotions arise in response to events that have a real or imagined implications for others' judgments of the individual' (Leary, 2007, p.317).

Obodaru (2012) defines this self-concept across two perspectives of self-representations: Self-definitions (present selves) and Self-comparisons (past selves, possible selves, ideal selves, ought selves or dreaded selves).

Aspirational identity can be guided by the factors that influence and shape the repertoire of possibilities, self-construction of provisional selves (Ibarra 1999), influencing possible selves, or the ideal selves that one would like to become (Markus and Nurius 1986). Within an organisational context, it is this relationship between social and self that defines two distinct images, how employees see the organisation and how they believe this is viewed from the outside (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail 1994).

This close relationship between the services provided (either operational or community engagement), personal connection and emotional impact, affects how knowledge is formed, either positive, instilling pride (Carmeli 2004) or negative, causing embarrassment, demotivation or disassociation (Cable and Turban 2003, Helm 2013).

This highlights a real concern during collaboration, particularly where certain occupations could be socially recognised as dirty work, like the Police Force, Ambulance Service and Fire Service. Courtesy stigma (Goffman 1990) may be experienced as a severe identity threat (Petriglieri 2011),

either positive by 'reflected glory', tainted 'by the reflected deficiencies of others' (Snyder et al. 1986, p.386) or socially tainted through association with individuals who are themselves stigmatised in some way.

As Services with strong traditions and values that are inextricably linked to social expectations this could lead to resistance in the face of organisational change. This can generate an imbalance between community expectation and capability, as what one is capable of doing (or expected to be able to do) frames whom one 'is' (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.630).

### **Overcoming stigma**

When it comes to physical stigma, there is clearly more of a common response based on a natural reaction to danger, dirt and noxious conditions, stimulating a response of disgust or fear where the individual's physical wellbeing could be affected, a reaction to stimuli that is based on a more evolutionary perspective and automatic (Öhman and Mineka 2001). As a consequence most people recoil at the thought of the smells associated with dustbin men, or the dangers associated with firefighting (Ashforth and Kreiner 2014).

In contrast, Social and Moral stigma are more symbolic as opposed to physically threatening, socially constructed, therefore influenced by culture, the significance of location and place (Tyler 2011) and the historical context (Ashenburg 2010).

But occupations also receive a certain amount of prestige, according to Treiman allowing occupations to be ranked, a hierarchy of social honor

graded by occupational status (Treiman 2013), based on complexity, educational requirements, salary or relative power.

Some occupations, like Firefighters, are offered a sort of 'status shield', as where other physically or socially tainted jobs are offered a 'necessity shield' independent of prestige, a protection as their jobs are recognised as necessary for society, and regarded a 'necessary evil' (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, p.413).

Society overcomes the physical stigma by legitimating dirty work through discourses of masculinity, self-sacrifice, heroism, performing a critical service, high achievement or excellence (Ashforth and Kreiner 2013).

According to Trice (1993, p.19), this reinforces an occupational ideology of 'oughtness' in how people should act, a view that if shared widely becomes taken for granted, the norm, a set of occupational facts that could be resistant to 'disconfirmation and change' (Wicks 2002, p.308).

In contrast Cole et al. (2008) claims that morally stigmatised occupations could be considered more evil than necessary, as such intolerable to society.

Ideologies for physically tainted work often focus on self-sacrifice and heroism (Ashforth and Kreiner 2014), reinforcing a stereotypical identity of masculinity (Baigent 2001), strong, courageous and daring (Hosoda and Stone 2000). In contrast socially tainted occupational roles could be considered dominated by women, revolving around care giving, nurturing or serving, reinforcing a discourse of femininity. Either way, as Tracy and Scott

(2006) points out this could restrict or alienate particular recruits based on a gender ideology.

For Firefighters, according to Tracy and Clifton (2006, p.19), they convert this taint, by highlighting the dangers, heroic acts, allowing them to transform the dirtiest parts of their job into a 'badge of honor', a tactic which Ashford and Kreiner (1999, p.418) called 'infusing', increasing the prestige of the role.

Although for the Police this can be very symbolic, they may be resented or despised in the use of their authority or regarded as defenders rather than repressors, as such their prestige is subjective and less consistent (Treiman 2013).

As Mitchel (1986) discovered during his research into stress related jobs and PTSD<sup>28</sup>, Firefighter's personality characteristics revolved around being attentive to detail, control orientated, histrionic (a need to be needed), action orientated, a risk taker, highly dedicated, family orientated, having high expectations and a strong rescue oriented mind set. As a consequence McEvoy categorised Firefighters as 'Adrenalin Junkies' (McEvoy 2002, p.47), explaining that Firefighters tend to enjoy experiences that get their adrenaline flowing, in contrast to 90% of the population that do not like high stress situations. More importantly, studies carried out in the military (Brænder 2016, p.3) highlighted that people's tolerance, and excitement to

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<sup>28</sup> PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

stressful situations was 'pushed upward' by being exposed to danger, further reinforcing personal characteristics and behaviour as 'adrenalin junkies'.

In considering what attracts people to become Firefighters, there is clearly an element of attraction, personal fit and reinforcement by activity, as such this study needs to consider what attracts people to the job in the first place in addition to what the job means to them now.

### **Is Identity Fixed or constantly changing?**

Identity work is described as how people manoeuvre through these available discourses in order to reaffirm, reassess, revise or formulate new narratives of self which promote liveability (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Watson 2008). Identity work is legitimised through social processes to ensure a collective acceptance, particularly within an organisational context as 'desirable, proper and appropriate' (Suchman 1995, p.575).

In fact studies on legitimacy (Brown and Toyoki 2013), have indicated how identity work can be considered internal legitimacy work, contributing to how organisations can be considered legitimate themselves. As individuals continually reinvent their organisational selves, they are actively engaging in legitimacy work, although, as Brown and Toyoki (2013) found out during their study of prisoners, surprisingly it was the act of self-narration of the prisoners and their own self-reflection that governed how they legitimised the organisational control over their identity, not the other way around.

But people's ethics, morals and values vary. Schwartz (2011) defines value orientations as principles that indicate what goals and end states people strive to attain, whereas identity-processing styles reflect how individuals attempt to attain and accomplish their goals strategically. Berzonsky et al. (2011) found that stylistic differences in how individuals deal with issues of identity formation were uniquely associated with different value orientations.

Berzonsky (2014) identifies three identity-processing styles: a rational informational style, a normative style and a procrastinating diffused-avoidant style.

Informational identity style citizens are responsive to explore identity options, through self-relevant information, applying a sense of criticality and mental effort, being sceptical of self-views and responsive to opposing views.

Normative identity style citizens respond to conflicts of value orientations by internalising and adhering to the goals of significant others, highlighting the importance and impact of friends, families or social groups and their value orientations (Duriez and Soenens 2006). In relation to achieving organisational goals, this highlights how social relationships influence identity formation and values.

Diffused-avoidant style citizens are unlikely to take action or confront problems, procrastinating until such a point that they are forced to renegotiate goals (Berzonsky and Ferrari 2009).

The view that identity is 'fixed' is clearly subject to challenge (Watson, 2008). Who we aspire to be (our aspirational identity) can be guided by the factors that influence and shape the repertoire of possibilities, self-construction of 'provisional selves' (Ibarra 1999, p.764), influencing 'possible selves', or 'the ideal selves that one would like to become' (Markus and Nurius 1986, p.954).

Gibson (2003) argues that people reinvent their perspectives of self by actively experimenting, (re)inventing themselves through diversification of roles and occupational identities. It is through this constant renegotiation of similarity and difference (Czarniawska-Joerges 1997, Watson 2008, Gotsi et al. 2010), although often within conflicting demands, described as the 'limbo land' of employment (Fraher and Gabriel 2014, p.938), that individuals respond to organisational uncertainty and change without losing their sense of self (Hoyer and Steyaert 2015). At the same time they are expected to show loyalty with organisational identification and cultural scripts (Fraher and Gabriel 2014).

Where tensions between social-identities develop, fragmentation and contradiction can emerge (Brown 2014), as well as instability created by 'mutually antagonistic discursive resources' (Clarke 2009, p.788).

Hybridisation of identities draws on these new and existing cultural practices (Hutnyk 2005) and recombines them to produce a new identity (Anthias 2001), drawing on the best parts (Essers and Benschop 2007), and their attractiveness (Alvesson 2010). This highlights the importance of the

dominant social identities drawn upon during hybridisation, particularly at a time of collaboration. Hybridisation, in this context, exists in a tension between the notion of a 'focal', or dominant identity of Firefighter, or the 'secondary selves' (Jain, George and Maltarich 2009, p.922), the collaborative identity, and the 'degree of conformity' to the dominant discourse (Essers and Benschop 2007, p.49).

It is clear that the concept of identity is linked inextricably to the sense of self, self-esteem and wellbeing through a collective identity and a sense of collective esteem that strongly links personal wellbeing and self-esteem to the notion of a collective identity. As Taylor and Usbourne say 'When I know who 'we' are, I can be me' (Taylor and Usborne, 2010, p.93).

Identity also provides a sense of meaning and purpose in life, something that has been associated with positive mental and physical health (Thoits 2012). Following Thoits' further studies around volunteers she indicated that role enactment is also important to maintaining a sense of wellbeing (Thoits 2013). This is an interesting point regarding this study and a concern for the organisation, in considering the importance of Firefighter Identity, against a backdrop of reduced fire calls and incident numbers.

## Literature Review Findings

Identity is a vast, complex and multi-faceted social phenomenon. This literature review has highlighted the significance of identity, not only as part of self-image, but the importance to self-esteem, a sense of belonging and a source of motivation.

But it is the difference between Social Identities, as Watson (2008, p.131) describes 'cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be' that are 'worked on' through their membership of groups, organisations or social categories (Tracy 2000, Coupland 2001, Tracy, Clifton 2006) and self-identity, which is 'the individual's own notion of who and what they are' (Watson 2008, p.124) that is especially interesting in this study.

It is implied that identity cannot exist on its own; it is influenced by how you believe you should play out a role, and the recognition of others within a social setting (Swann 2005). This also implies that social and personal identities are inextricably linked with the individuals personal understanding of the meanings placed on different roles, or their associations with particular groups, relying on the recognition of the social audience if they are to be secure. People adhere to their understanding of particular traits and characteristics they understand (Reid and Deaux 1996), linking the memory people attribute to the different groups to which they belong.

This provides an interesting insight into group membership and potential conflict during collaboration, highlighting where self-esteem could be

compromised through joint working initiatives with the Police and Ambulance Services, but also illuminating similarities that could be considered as part of wider integration, enhancing the self-esteem of emergency responders through a natural fit.

By deconstructing the activities undertaken by responders to make sense of themselves and their organisation (Davies and Thomas 2008) and reconstructing similarity and difference, identity can be renegotiated to permit reflection on existing practices and development of new methods, grouped into those that focus upon the employee, action orientation, social relation and the scene (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Both social identity theory and identity theory view the self as socially defined, as such for this study, irrespective of context, any given aspect of identity can be explored on an individual, relational and collective basis.

In considering time as an influencing factor that supports an element of flexibility around role boundaries, this study needs to look at people at different stages of their life and career to consider if this is a factor.

This study will explore what motivates people to become a Firefighter, although for the individual, these motivations are clearly constructed through the interpretations of others 'I am what I think you think I am' (Jones, Bradbury and Le Boutier 2011, p105). It is this relationship between social and self that defines two distinct images, how employees see the organisation and how they believe this is viewed from the outside (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail 1994). As such this study will focus from an insider's

perspective; it will draw on the perceptions of Firefighters in how they view themselves, and how they believe they are viewed by society.

## CHAPTER 4: Research Design

### Methodology

The preceding literature review highlighted how identity can be so personal, constantly changing, contextual and symbolic. The discussion around dirty work indicates an interesting area of study when considering collaboration across the emergency services, reinforcing the notion of what it means to be a Firefighter, in defining who they are and particularly, who they are not.

The methodology applied to this study not only aims to explore identity construction within the organisational setting, but also needs to take advantage of, and work with, the researcher's insider perspective, their contribution, and their obvious influence on knowledge construction. It also needs to maximise the unique access provided as a result of their positionality (particularly regarding organisational data), and overcome any sensitivities<sup>29</sup> around contribution at this politically charged period of change.

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<sup>29</sup> Collaboration of emergency services, and particularly changing the role of emergency responders is a sensitive issue, particularly with representative bodies such as the Fire Brigades Union, highlighting the difficulties around perception of role, negotiation of terms and conditions and need to diversify beyond that of a traditional model. Role boundaries are clearly a tension when it comes to diversification to improve community outcomes.

### **Ontology and Epistemology**

As this research is concerned with the processes of identity as a contextually situated self-narrated construction (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Keenoy et al. 2009), a social constructionist paradigm is appropriate, focusing on the meanings and experiences of human action (Fossey et al. 2002). But the constructionist's view that knowledge and understanding is created and not discovered by the mind (Schwandt 2000) is challenged by Berger and Luckman, who believe that society exists as both a subjective and objective reality (Berger and Luckmann 1991). Interestingly Steedman (1991) claims that groups or individuals through their interaction with the social world define reality. According to Berger and Luckmann (1991), knowledge can become institutionalised by society to form object reality that influences future generations by being continually reaffirmed through their interactions with others, often resulting in routinisation and habitualisation.

As Burr (2003) suggests our identity does not only originate from within the person but from the social realm, this supports a sense of realism, that concepts are constructed based on, and corresponding to, something real in the world, in this case the organisation. So in emphasising epistemologically the interpretations and narratives of the research participants, there is no desire to argue that these interpretations exist in isolation.

This implies a qualitative approach to uncover how people negotiate their sense of self within an organisational and social context, placing greater emphasis on face-to-face interviews that are supported by focus groups and

organisational data to illuminate the multiple aspects of their professional lives.

According to the social identity viewpoint, you can consider identity from an individual point of view, including the personal or relational characteristics, and the collective, social categorisation or group membership position; although, according to Tajfel and Turner (1986), both are influenced by the social context.

In considering methodological fit, some discursive approaches to identity suggest that individuals basically construct their identities as they go along during social interactions, as such, according to Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.110) identity is only a 'discursive device that people can use to help themselves accomplish interactional goals'. By arguing that identity is temporal, continually fluid based on the context in which it operates, social-psychological and discursive approaches to identity often focus on short-term contextual fluctuations in identity (Tajfel and Turner 1986), which is not what is being explored here.

In comparison to an ethnographic approach, which tends to think in terms of culture, we are looking for the overarching patterns of what is going on, placing less emphasis on the individual perceptions but aiming to improve on existing theory that explains the psychosocial processes, relating to the interrelation of social factors, individual thought and behaviour to determine the patterns that can be applied, or moderated in the wider context.

Discourse analysis centers on linguistics, and is more descriptive, but does not address the areas of interest, which include looking from an organisational position, rather than an individual point of view, to consider the practices that influence change and identity.

The research questions focus on how Firefighters renegotiate self-images and work orientations, and how their values and identity influence organisational perspectives regarding strategic direction and mission determination. As such, in contrast to other research in this area that tends to focus on individual and social points of view, this research is concerned with understanding process, and so will be informed by a grounded theory approach.

This approach also supports the researcher's insider position, and maximises the unique and rare access to organisational data as part of this study. As Glaser states, all is data:

'All is data' is a well known Glaser dictum. What does it mean? It means exactly what is going on in the research scene is the data, whatever the source, whether interview, observations, documents, in whatever combination. It is not only what is being told, how it is being told and the conditions of its being told, but also all the data surrounding what is being told (Glaser, 2001, p.145).

### **A Grounded Theory Approach**

The use of grounded theory is subject to much debate as a methodological tool, as such this research does not claim to be true grounded theory, but adopts a grounded theory approach.

In considering its use as a methodological tool, it was observed as part of the literature review that similar studies carried out in this area, particularly from a professional point of view, and insider research, used a grounded theory approach (Baigent 2001, Thornborrow and Brown 2009).

Glaser and Strauss's seminal work, often regarded as true grounded theory, argued that theory can be discovered (Glaser and Strauss 1967), built from concepts, derived, developed and integrated based on the data. This seminal work fitted within a post positivist paradigm and objectivist epistemology, and a critical realist ontology (Annells 1997), implying the need for rigour, precision, logical reasoning and attention to evidence, although not confined to what can be physically observed (Crossan 2003). In 'true grounded theory' the researcher must maintain a stance of objectivity, external to the process, rather than a creator (Charmaz 2014) or participant (Corbin and Strauss 2014), allowing theory to 'organically emerge' (Glaser 1978, p 57). In this study this is impossible to achieve as the researcher forms part of the study group, and cannot take a stance of objectivity, unlearn their experiences, or knowledge of the study area.

In contrast to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) positivist, or Corbin and Strauss's (2014) interpretivist approaches, Charmaz would argue that the

researcher's observations are shaped by the phenomenon and social influences, fitting within a constructionist paradigm, ontological critical realism with epistemological subjectivism (Levers 2013). Knowledge is constructed rather than discovered, mutually created through interaction (Crotty 1998) of the researcher and participant, tested and reconstructed based on the researcher's interpretations of meanings (Charmaz 2014).

This study cannot ignore the influence of the researcher, and as such it recognises and values their subjectivity, experience and knowledge of the Service, providing a unique insight into the phenomenon being studied. As a serving Fire Officer, the researcher's aspects of self, philosophies, experience, professional background and interest not only influence how data is interpreted, but the choice of topic, approach to analysis and where emphasis is placed. The final theory will naturally be a representation of participants and the researcher.

In comparison to what is viewed as true grounded theory, where the researcher remains external to the process (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and has no previous knowledge of the subject, in this case knowledge is constructed rather than discovered, mutually created through interaction (Crotty 1998) of the researcher and participant. This is then tested and reconstructed based on the researcher's interpretations of meanings (Charmaz 2013), emphasising the importance of the researcher as part of the process. Constructivist grounded theory recognises that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed (Charmaz 2000). The researcher then, according to Charmaz, is part of

what is viewed rather than separated from it, shaping what they define, measure, and analyse; reinforcing the value of this approach in accepting, valuing and embracing the subjectivity of the researcher as part of this process.

Charmaz describes this approach as 'Constructivist Grounded Theory' (Charmaz 2013, p.13), to acknowledge the subjectivity and the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data. Since she developed this approach, Charmaz now claims her position has become more aligned to advances in social constructionism.

Through inquiry to discovery, a constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2013) methodology will be used to focus on generating theoretical ideas (or hypotheses) from the data.

Theory gives meaning, beyond that of descriptive techniques, tying action and interaction with response to changing conditions, explaining how events occur.

The use of grounded theory highlights the following main points:

1. Conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously.
2. Analyse actions and processes rather than themes and structures.
3. Use comparative methods.
4. Draw on data in developing new conceptual categories.
5. Develop inductive abstract analytic categories through systematic data analysis.

6. Emphasise theory construction rather than description or application of current theories.
7. Engage in theoretical sampling.
8. Search for variation in the studied categories or process.
9. Pursue developing a category rather than covering a specific empirical topic.

(Charmaz, 2014, p.15)

Figure 4 below provides a visual representation of the methodology as described by Charmaz (2014, p.18).

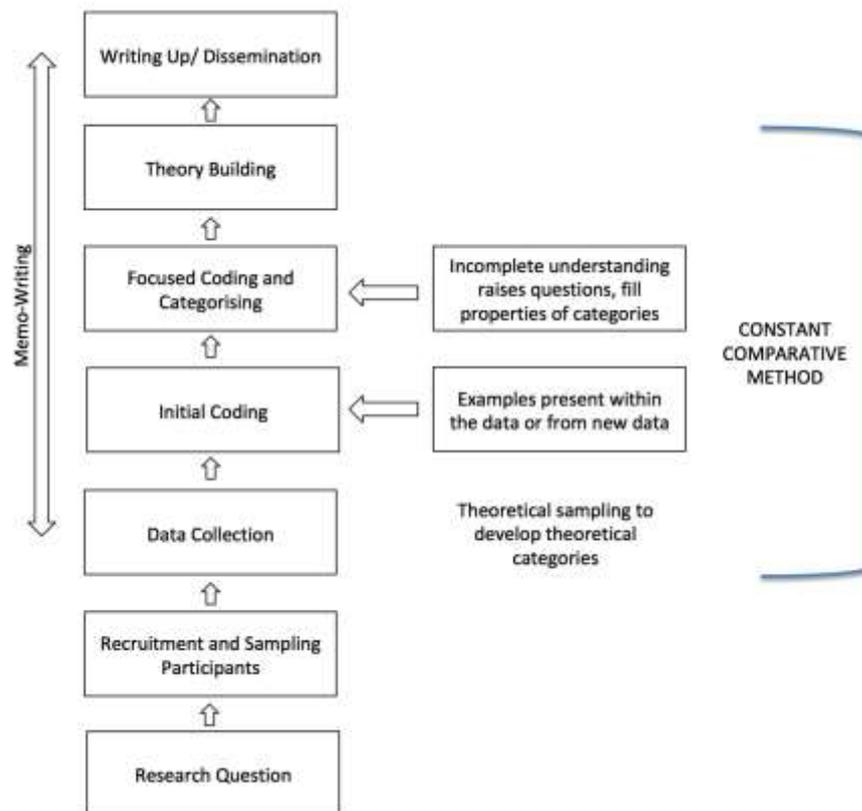


Figure 4 - A visual representation of grounded theory. (Charmaz, 2014, p.18)

This methodological strategy can now be expanded to provide a realistic framework for data capture, analysis, constant comparison and theoretical sampling, that maximises the researcher’s insider perspective and access to organisational data. The following figure, modified from Charmaz (2014, p.88), further expands this model to provide an illustrative guide to how data collection and analysis will proceed simultaneously, initially focussing on interview data and later incorporating organisational data as part of theoretical sampling and the constant comparative method.

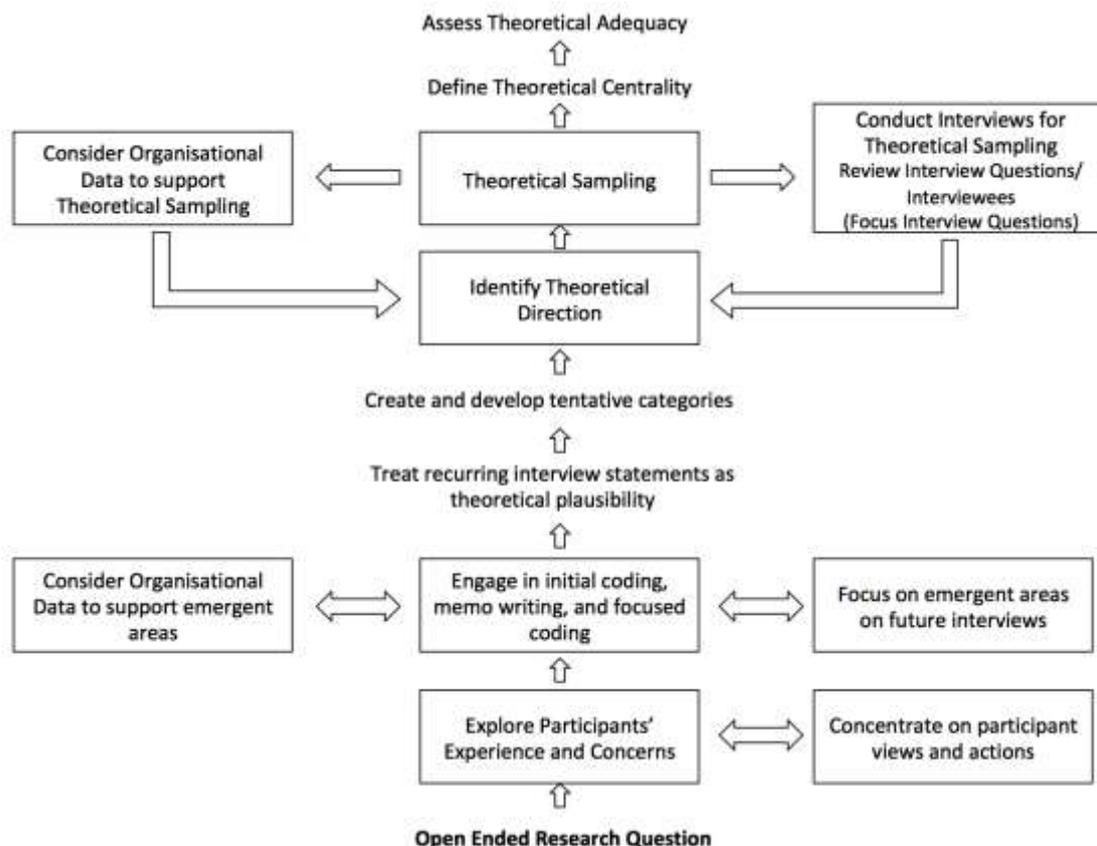


Figure 5 - Data collection and analysis strategy (Modified by author from Charmaz, 2014, p.88)

## Method

Firefighters use stories to describe themselves to others, recounting situations or events, being contextually situated, and a self narrated construction (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003) of their role within the organisation and society. By focussing on their stories, this provides an opportunity for Firefighters to recollect their role in terms of unity and purpose (Keenoy et al. 2009).

This particular study focuses on the recollection of events or experiences; as such the primary data collection method and the starting point for the study will be interviews, supported by local focus groups as required to explore the emerging themes.

Interviews are the most prevalent method of data collection, Gubrium & Holstein referring to 'we live in an interview society' (Gubrium and Holstein 2002, p.10), implying that interviews are the most familiar data collection tool for researchers and participants. Kvale describes this as a 'professional discussion' (Kvale 2008, p.51), although they can take different styles according to differing methodological approaches.

Interactionism would imply that participants are viewed as experiencing subjects who actively build their social worlds (Silverman 2014, Jones, Bradbury and Le Boutier 2011), so authentic data collection needs to give insight into these experiences and interpretations.

Although semi-structured interviews are the dominant type of interview in qualitative studies (Braun and Clarke 2013), Grounded theorists (Charmaz

2014, Corbin and Strauss 2014) promote unstructured or intensive interviews, as the richest source for theory building. The interview is very participant led, a gently guided one-sided conversation (Charmaz 2014), exploring the participant's perspective and experiences, complying to, or resisting the definition of the research context.

Although many forms of virtual (online, Skype, telephone) interviews exist, each having their own strengths and weaknesses (Sturges and Hanrahan 2004), they are considered an extension of the traditional method rather than a substitute (Braun and Clarke 2013). Face-to-face is deemed the traditional 'gold standard' (Novick 2008, p.394), providing rich and detailed accounts that support smaller studies, allowing flexibility and responsiveness, ideal for sensitive issues or vulnerable groups. But face-to-face interviews can also be time consuming, with a lack of anonymity, potentially disempowering the participants through face-to-face contact, which has the potential to create a barrier to disclosure (Braun and Clarke 2013).

This face-to-face approach captures an instance of identity work within the social occasion of the interview (Kelly 2008), providing the environment to explore accounts or events in more detail. By exploring the interplay between motives, emotions and moralities (Keenoy et al. 2009), this offers a window not only into self-identity but also the resources and interpretative repertoires which individuals select, discard and struggle with, how and why they are constructed, and the social functions they fulfill (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009).

As participants often say one thing and do another, or have an inability to articulate the intricacies of their exchanges with others, observations provide a valuable tool, through creative fieldwork to place the researcher into the center of the action. This enables the researcher to use all his or her senses to experience and to obtain creative insights by their direct involvement in the setting (Patton 2002) and to hear what people say or observe (Corbin and Strauss 2014, Charmaz 2014, Braun and Clarke 2013). But this places a reliance on the researcher to decipher the situation, which may lead to misinterpretations of behaviour and become misleading or biased, which may require later confirmation from the participants (Patton 2002). As such, in addition to interviews and focus groups, field notes will be captured as part of organisational life, capturing observations that are relevant to this study. These field notes will be used to support primary data in developing ideas and concepts. As ideas emerge, theoretical sampling will be used to pull from the range of available data to develop theoretical ideas that direct data collection as part of the simultaneous act of data collection and analysis.

The use of memos is a fundamental tool in developing theory as part of this methodology. They will be used not only to manage the bias of the researcher, but also to capture the developing ideas as they emerge. As categories start to take shape, the emerging concepts will help drive further data collection to further develop, or discard theoretical ideas. Memos will

be captured electronically using Apple notes<sup>30</sup>, to allow easy access and constant review (see Appendix 17a).

### **Data Collection - Interview guide**

Although intensive interviewing does not require the specific detail of more structured interview techniques, Loftland et al. (2006) stresses the importance of the interview guide to frame the encounter, explaining the nature or purpose of the research, providing assurance, context and terms that create a relationship to promote discussion.

For the purpose of this study, an intensive face-to-face interview strategy is used to support data collection, allowing the participant to talk through their experiences, with the researcher opening an interactional space that allows the participant to relate their experiences (Charmaz 2014).

The initial interview question is intentionally broad, setting the context for the discussion, providing a relaxed environment that enables the interviewee to engage with the interview act. In this instance we are interested in how Firefighters develop their notion of being a Firefighter, from wanting to be a Firefighter to what it means to them now.

The whole interview is framed around their story, focusing on the initial research question, supported by an interview guide to help prompt wider

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<sup>30</sup> Apple Notes – Apple Mac application, available on all devices used by the researcher to enable constant review and capture of notes or observations. This will be further supported by Nvivo 11 and Xthoughts (mapping Software) as part of the analysis tools.

understanding of how Firefighters negotiate who they are, and who they are not.

The initial question is:

Q1 – Talk me through your career in the Fire Service.

This question is an intentionally open to create a relaxed environment to encourage participation and familiarity with the topic.

### **Interview Guide - Domains of Inquiry**

Within grounded theory, broad, open ended, non-judgemental questions are used to invite detailed discussion around a topic to encourage unanticipated statements or stories to emerge (Corbin and Strauss 2014, Charmaz 2014).

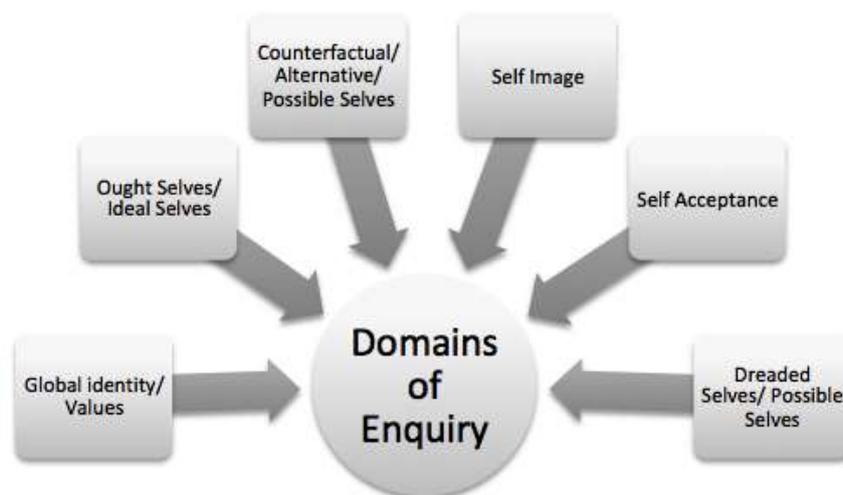
The interview guide needs to allow flexibility and be responsive to the unplanned issues, enabling the exploration of emerging concepts through unplanned questions (Braun and Clarke 2013). The use of an interview guide is a technique supported by many ethnographers in minimizing the influence of the researcher, allowing an open expression of the participant's view of the world (Hammersley 2007).

Establishing the domains of inquiry is far more than a methodological process in identifying research questions; it is about trying to clarify the motives and ambitions of the work (Karp 2009). In this instance the domains of enquiry provide the researcher with an opportunity to explore areas of identity construction that are not covered in the opening question. It

also allows the researcher to expand these areas based on emergent topics as part of the constant comparison and analytical process.

Data collection is built around Obodaru's (2012) work, to not only answer the questions 'Who am I?' (self definitions) but to explore the meaning of self-definitions and value orientations (Schwartz 2011) through self comparison of: past selves, 'how am I compared to the way I was?', desired possible selves 'how close am I to the person I aspire to become?', feared possible selves 'how close I am to the person I dread becoming?', ideal selves 'how close am I to the person I would ideally like to be?', and ought selves 'how close am I to the person I should be?'.

These are translated into the following domains of enquiry (Figure 6), to explore the various aspects of who they are, why they joined the job, an element of personal fit and aspirations for who they may become, all of which are particularly relevant at this time of change.



**Figure 6 - Domains of Enquiry** (Created by the author: Hallam 2018)

### **Interview Guide - Questions**

In constructing the questions, reflective questions have been used to prompt discussion, enhancing theoretical sensitivity of the data (Charmaz 2014), sequenced in the intermediate and ending sections of the interview guide.

In translating the domains of enquiry into potential prompts to be used throughout the interview, the primary discussion around 'talk me through your career in the Fire Service' will be supported by the following questions (Table 3).

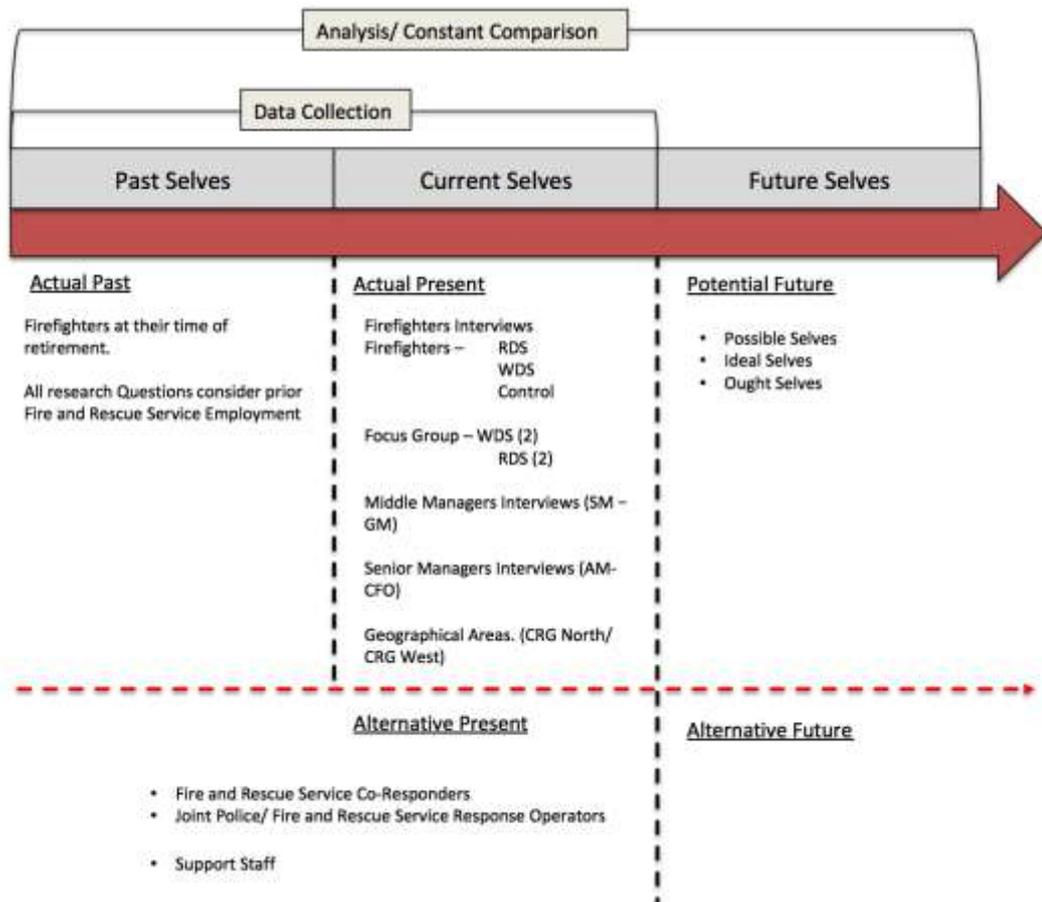
It is important to note that these questions will not be directly asked if they are covered in the initial response, but as a sort of prompt to create flow in the interview process. This allows these prompts to be altered or refined as part of the simultaneous data collection and analysis approach, allowing emerging ideas to be explored to enhance theoretical sensitivity.

**Table 3 - Research Questions** (Created by the author: Hallam 2018)

<p>Primary research question:</p> <p>Talk me through your career in the Fire Service.</p>	
<b>Potential supporting questions</b>	<b>Domain of Enquiry</b>
<p>What did you do before you joined?</p> <p>Why did you join?</p> <p>Why the change at that time?</p>	(Global identity/ Values)
<p>What has been the best time in the service, and why?</p> <p>What has been the most challenging time?</p>	(Ought Selves/Ideals Selves)
<p>If you could go back and do something differently what would you do?</p> <p>Any regrets?</p>	(Counterfactual Selves/Alternative Selves/Possible Selves)
<p>When meeting someone at a party, and they ask what you do, what do you say?</p>	(Self Image)
<p>When did you first consider yourself a Firefighter?</p>	Self Acceptance
<p>Using an example, how would you describe the role of the Fire Service?</p>	(Self Narrative/ideal selves, Social identity)
<p>What do you think the future looks like?</p>	(Dreaded and possible selves)

**Interview Strategy - Purposeful Sampling**

The domains of enquiry highlights the importance of time, differences in role, the period in their life, time served, the role they perform, or who they work with. This approach will be embedded within the interview strategy as outlined in Figure 7.



**Figure 7 - Interview Strategy** (Created by the author: Hallam 2018)

### **Interview Guide - Pre-Amble**

To provide confidence to the researcher and the participant, the interview is structured with a clear sequence of initial, intermediate and ending questions. It is the introductory words by the researcher that frame the encounter and determines the interview type and subsequent responses, in this case intensive un-structured to promote more flexible responses (Charmaz 2014, Corbin and Strauss 2014).

The importance of the introduction and pre-amble to the interview is a well-studied area (Braun and Clarke 2013, Creswell 2013a, Creswell 2013b, Hammersley 2007). Appendix 5 outlines the approach used during this study, based on Lofland et al (2006), covering the research topic, rules, assurances, establishing rapport, promoting confidence and managing expectations.

### **Interview Guide - Interview Process**

In preparing for the interview, the room will be informally arranged to promote a relaxed environment. Consent will be agreed prior to the meeting with notice given to allow suitable time to explore the research topic in detail without interruptions. Chairs will be positioned without obstruction and an open body language style adopted to build a rapport with the participant.

Two data voice recorders will be used (1 primary, 1 backup) along with active listening and probing techniques, looking for emerging themes and exploring their relationship with the research question.

In considering the impact of the researcher on the interview process, the interviewees will determine the location for the interview and the appropriate time. It is anticipated that Fire Service premises will be used, although within a private office to maintain confidentiality and provide familiarity, hopefully creating a relaxed environment for the discussion.

Consideration will be given to the influence of the researcher and their position<sup>31</sup> in the organisation. Where appropriate, uniform will not be worn, removing any thought of position or rank that may influence their contribution.

### **Analysis Strategy**

Within a grounded theory methodology, data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously, the analytical process employed being inductive, prompting theory discovery and development rather than verification of pre-existing theories (Charmaz 2014, Corbin and Strauss 2014, Glaser and Strauss 1967, Glaser 1978). As data analysis begins to develop theories (explanations), it identifies further cases to sample, involves comparison of people, places, events, conditions, and settings, to discover social & social psychological processes.

In contrast to other data analysis techniques, such as the widely used but rarely acknowledged thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998, Roulston 2001, Braun and Clarke 2008), used to describe rich detail through patterns,

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<sup>31</sup> The researcher is a senior fire officer, holding the rank of Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

meanings and themes within the data, grounded theorists focus on analysis and coding techniques, the researcher an actor in the process, exploring the differing interpretations, intervening, manipulating and conceptualising the data and its meaning to the developing theory (Walker and Myrick 2006). Decisions and thought processes are recorded through memos as part of the analysis function, capturing the evolving process where concepts are renegotiated with new incoming data (Corbin and Strauss 2014).

Initial coding is the first step in the coding process, part 1 of substantive coding (Glaser 1978) or a phased approach (Corbin and Strauss 2014). It allows the researcher to 'get into the data' (Charmaz 2014, p.113) to look at what is happening (Glaser 1978), looking at actions and processes, being described as the 'sociology of gerunds', the doing words and processes (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.105).

Applying codes to the text is labelling the phenomena, avoiding mere description (Corbin and Strauss 2014), being more analytical. Line by line coding will be initially used to explore the data, a heuristic device to learn about the world being researched (Charmaz 2014). Glaser believes that theoretical sensitivity can be enhanced through the constant comparison of memos and codes (Walker and Myrick 2006), where Corbin and Strauss argue that it is achieved through specific analytical tools (Corbin and Strauss 2014). Line by line coding helps build the structure of the conceptual data model, either through line-by-line, word-by-word or more broader sentence, paragraphs or chapters, the aim being to build concepts and categories.

Once initial line-by-line coding is complete, focus coding will be used to sift, sort, synthesise, and analyse large amounts of the data (Charmaz 2013); making decisions about which of the initial codes make the most analytical sense, categorising the data incisively and completely. Focus coding enables large amounts of data to be pulled together to enhance theoretical understanding. Through the use of memos, focus codes, and initial coding, theoretical categories will be developed, the aim being to identify a core category that reflects the phenomenon.

Categories, group concepts that relate to the same phenomenon, identifying and deciding what it is about. This is particularly important if following a Corbin and Strauss school where codes and categories have dimensions like colour, properties - hue, tone, shade, intensity, frequency, duration and time, they all mean the same thing but have different aspects (Corbin and Strauss 2014).

Constant comparison is used to ensure codes have been consistently applied, maintaining the connection between the data and the codes, elaborating theoretical understanding through the use of memos. The aim is to achieve theoretical saturation, where there are no new concepts, no new relevant data, and relationships are well established.

In developing a core category, true grounded theorists consider that there can be only one central phenomenon that can emerge from the data (Glaser 1978), where more recent theorist indicate that a few may emerge (Strauss 2015, Charmaz 2014).

Grounded theory supports analysis and data collection as a simultaneous process (Charmaz 2014, Corbin and Strauss 2014, Glaser 1978), as such this will be a continuous process that develops wider understanding of the research topic. As a dynamic and responsive methodology, theoretical ideas will be developed based on the emergence of concepts and ideas. Where there is a need for further theoretical sampling, this will be explored in further interviews or through the access provided to organisational data at this particular time of change.

### **Summary of Data Collected and Analysed**

Data was collected over a 12-month period. Primary research data was obtained through 15 intensive interviews with members of staff (Operational and Support). Interviewees were enlisted based on their role in the Service; time served and exposure to collaborative working with the Police and Ambulance service (Appendix 9). Each interview on average lasted 1 hour and was conducted at the interviewees chosen location (normally local Fire Station), audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher directly into Nvivo 11.

All interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis with the opportunity to withdraw up to 4 weeks after the interview, however no persons subsequently chose to withdraw after their interview.

Each candidate was given an outline of the study prior to agreeing to take part, providing indicative questions of what would be covered. Interviewees ranged from the Chief Fire Officer to new Firefighters still under

development and covered WDS<sup>32</sup> staff, Flexi Officers<sup>33</sup>, RDS<sup>34</sup> Staff, Dual Contract Staff<sup>35</sup>, Control Staff<sup>36</sup> and Non-Operational Staff. Candidates were specifically drawn from people at different stages of their career, either just joined, newly promoted, change in role, or change in career. It also included three candidates who were about to retire.

As part of the study it included a father and son who were on the same watch, with the father just about to retire, and a Watch Manager who had served over 40 years and had recently been recognised in the Queens honours receiving an MBE<sup>37</sup> for their service to the community.

In total, 16.5hrs [990minutes] of audio was transcribed [152,163 words]. The interviewees reflected on their experiences from working within Northamptonshire, Royal Berkshire, London, and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services. 8 of the interviewees had previously, or were currently working the RDS system and 7 had been or were currently involved in provided medical response for the Ambulance Service [Co-Responding].

During the same period the Service was involved in a significant change programme, including a public consultation period focussing on the strategic

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<sup>32</sup> WDS – Wholetime Duty System

<sup>33</sup> Flexi Officer – Station Manager or above providing 24hr cover

<sup>34</sup> RDS – Retained Duty System

<sup>35</sup> Dual Contract – Staff Providing WDS and RDS cover

<sup>36</sup> Control Staff – Operational Staff working in Fire Control answering 999 Calls

<sup>37</sup> MBE – Member of the British Empire Medal

direction (Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-2020), exploring specific views from stakeholder's (including Fire Service personnel and the Public) opinion on greater collaboration with the Police Force.

The Police and Crime Bill 2017 received royal assent (Jan 2017), allowing the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to become the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and become the decision making body for the Fire Service. This resulted in the development of an outline business case that focussed around 4 potential options regarding the change of governance for the Fire and Rescue Service in Northamptonshire. These options included:

**Option 1:** Do Nothing

**Option 2:** Police and Crime Commissioner take a place on the Fire Authority

**Option 3:** The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner take on the governance of the Fire and Rescue Service.

**Option 4:** A single organisational model is created with the Police/OPCC<sup>38</sup> and Fire and Rescue Service.

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<sup>38</sup> OPCC – Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. A police and crime commissioner (PCC) is an elected official in England and Wales charged with securing efficient and effective policing of a police area. Commissioners replaced the now-abolished police authorities. The first incumbents were elected on 15 November 2012 to serve for three-and-a-half years, but subsequent Commissioners are to be elected for four-year terms. The most recent elections took place in May 2016.

Following development of a comprehensive business case with Northamptonshire County Council (NCC<sup>39</sup>), the Police and Crime Commissioner carried out an 8 week public consultation which resulted in the preferred Option 3 being submitted to the Home Office for consideration of the change of governance. Ministers agreed this in April 2018.

During the same period Senior Officers (Including the researcher) known locally as the Fire Executive Group<sup>40</sup> (FEG) conducted leadership focus groups with all members of staff (Non-Operational and Operational) across the county. This comprised 53 meetings (Appendix 10), reaching all Retained Duty System Staff, Whole-time Duty System Staff, Control Staff and support staff over a 4-month period. Each meeting lasted approximately 2 hours, focussing on the Fire Service Reform agenda, collaboration and governance change, change projects including change to duty systems and the financial landscape. Meeting notes were captured by the researcher and included in the study to analyse the Service's views regarding change and direction.

It should be noted that these organisational focus groups replaced planned focus groups as they covered the same area of interest and fully involved the researcher in the process, reaching all areas of the Service. This

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<sup>39</sup> NCC Northamptonshire County Council

<sup>40</sup> FEG – Fire Executive Group [Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, 4 x Area Managers]

enabled the researcher to maximise his access to organisational data as part of the process.

A specific area that emerged from the data was around the importance of the watch-based system in the Whole-time Duty System. As part of the IRMP<sup>41</sup> 2017-2020 year 1 action plan, the Service had initiated a project to review the current duty system and was engaging with the workforce to consider removing the watch system in favour of a self-rostering<sup>42</sup> system that had been utilised in other Services. As a result secondary organisational data was captured from 4 of these engagement sessions lasting approximately 3hrs each and involving approximately 65 members of WDS staff to capture local opinion and concerns around potentially removing the watches (Appendix 11).

To support the duty system focus groups, the organisation conducted a staff survey aimed at WDS staff to consider potential changes to shift start times and the proposed rostering system. Although this data was not coded as part of the analysis, its findings were considered as part of developing the emerging theory and understanding of the significance of the watch based culture.

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<sup>41</sup> IRMP – Integrated Risk Management Plan

<sup>42</sup> Self-Rostering – A duty system that removes the needs for watches (groups of Firefighters who always work together) to allow more flexibility in the use of resources. It allows Firefighters to self-roster when they work as long as there is sufficient people and skills for the appliance to be available, and they work an agreed number of shifts per year. Examples included Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

The survey (produced by NFRS project team) was conducted by using Survey Monkey<sup>43</sup> (Appendix 11a). 160 responses were received from WDS staff, providing an interesting insight into organisational feelings around change that can be considered as part of this study. A qualitative and quantitative approach was used, with narrative comments providing the richest data as part of this study.

In summary, primary data was obtained from 15 intensive interviews with staff across all areas of the Service, at different times in their career and who had served for different lengths of time. As a result of emerging categories from these interviews, the importance of the current organisational change programme to this study, timing and the access provided, this afforded an ideal opportunity to include wider data through normal management change activity that supported areas of interest. To ensure the appropriate use of organisational data that is available within the Service, ethical approval has been received from the Fire Brigades Union, Retained Firefighters Union and Chief Fire Officer. Consultation data is publicly available even though captured through the researchers primary role as Area Manager Business Services. This unique insider's viewpoint and access to organisational information and primary interview transcripts provides a comprehensive range of empirical data to negate the need for further interviews or focus groups as originally intended.

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<sup>43</sup> Survey Monkey - is an Internet based tool that allows users to create their own surveys using question format templates.

Nvivo 11<sup>44</sup> was used to transcribe and analyse the data (see Appendix 17b). Following a grounded theory approach, line-by-line coding was utilised to generate open codes, grouped together to produce focus codes, which then illuminated 3 categories. Memos were used extensively to develop tentative categories and theory development (see Appendix 17a), highlighting one core category.

### **Methodology Conclusion**

The methodology applied to this study not only aims to explore identity construction within the organisational setting, but also takes advantage of, and works with, the researcher's unique insider's perspective, his contribution, and his obvious influence on knowledge construction. It also maximises the unique access provided as a result of his positionality (particularly regarding organisational data), and overcomes any sensitivities around contribution at this politically charged period of change.

As this research is concerned with the processes of identity as a contextually situated self-narrated construction (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Keenoy et al. 2009), a social constructionist paradigm is appropriate,

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<sup>44</sup> Nvivo 11 – Is a qualitative analysis tool that provides a place to organize, store and retrieve your data so you can work more efficiently, save time and rigorously back up findings with evidence. Import data from virtually any source – text, audio, video, emails, images, spread sheets, online surveys, social and web content and more. With advanced data management, query and visualization tools, Nvivo lets you ask complex questions of your data to help answer research questions. How Nvivo was used is further explained in Appendix 17b.

focusing on the meanings and experiences of human action (Fossey et al. 2002). But the constructionist's view that knowledge and understanding is created and not discovered by the mind (Schwandt 2000) is challenged by Berger and Luckman, who believe that society exists as both a subjective and objective reality (Berger and Luckmann 1991). Interestingly Steedman (1991) claims that groups or individuals through their interaction with the social world define reality. According to Berger and Luckmann (1991), knowledge can become institutionalised by society to form object reality that influences future generations by being continually reaffirmed through their interactions with others, often resulting in routinisation and habitualisation.

As Burr (2003) suggests our identity does not only originate from within the person but from the social realm and this supports a sense of realism, that concepts are constructed based on, and corresponding to, something real in the world, in this case the organisation. So in emphasising epistemologically the interpretations and narratives of the research participants, there is no desire to argue that these interpretations exist in isolation.

The study adopts a realist ontology alongside a social constructionist epistemology (Levers 2013), accepting that knowledge could be discovered beyond that of recounting experiences, or even the awareness of those involved. This provides an opportunity to explore the interrelated elements and processes that come together to inform individual action, whether or not they may be aware of, or could be said to have knowledge of them (Sayer 1999, Watson 2011). As such these claims could be considered

generalizable to theory, and not to individuals or populations (Buchanan and Bryman 2011, Yin 2013).

The domains of enquiry provide insights into how Firefighters renegotiate self-images and work orientations, and how their values and identity influence organisational perspectives regarding strategic direction and mission determination. As such, in contrast to other research in this area that tends to focus on individual, social points of view, this research is concerned with understanding about process, looking for the overarching patterns of what is going on. By adopting this approach it places less emphasis on the individual perspectives but aims to create a theory that explains the psychosocial processes, relating to the interrelation of social factors, individual thought and behaviour to determine the patterns that can be applied, or moderated in the wider context. As such a Grounded Theory approach has been helpful.

The methodology applied to this research has been pulled from a range of qualitative data to explore what it means to be a Firefighter. In the following chapter the findings are underpinned and discussed, highlighting significant considerations for practice as well as contributions to theory, and offers a fascinating insight into the Fire Service world.

## CHAPTER 5: The Study

What stimulates people to become Firefighters, who they are, who they are not, what do they aspire to be, strive to become or dread becoming. This is the essence of the present study.

By unpicking these motivations, exploring shared understanding of role and how these translate into constructions of self and what it means to be a Firefighter, I posit that this study revolves around identity work, not only in the organisational setting for identity construction, but how it runs in parallel as a journey through life's choices.

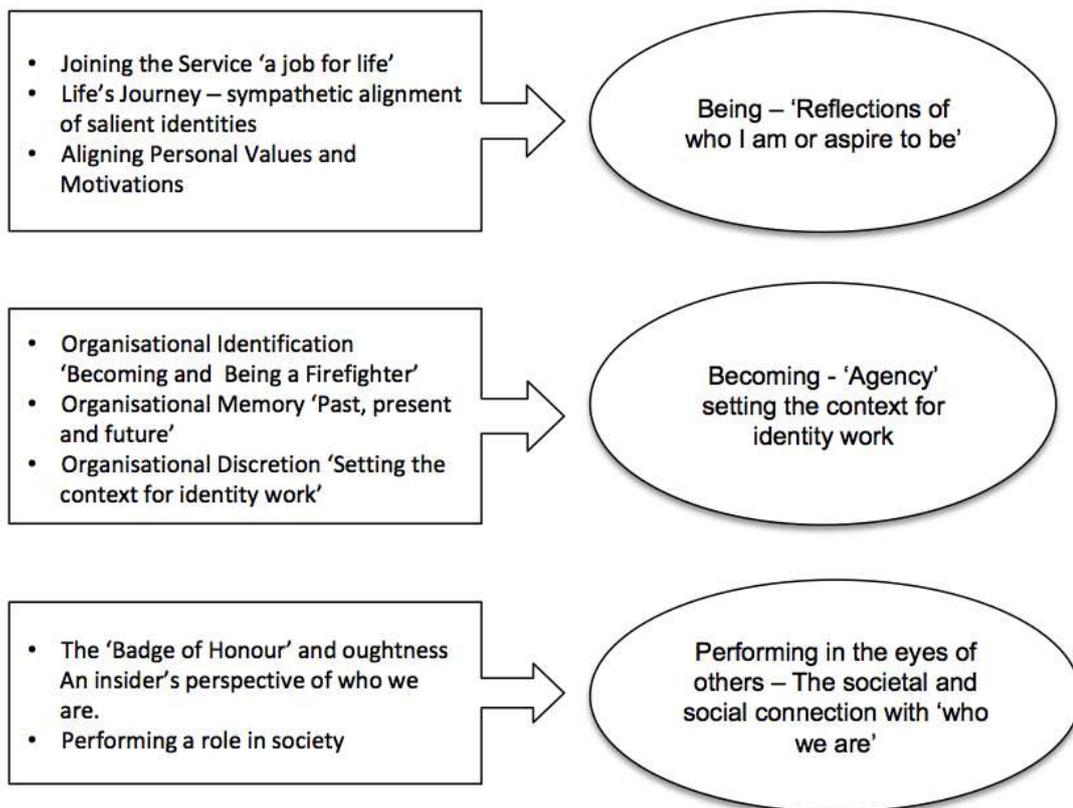
I look at how multiple aspects of self compete in salience, influencing choice, decisions and compromise in defining ever evolving multiple versions of self. Firefighter identity that is inextricably reinforced through social interactions, community knowledge, preconceptions, experiences, history and tradition, defining the Service's role in society.

Through the legitimisation of shared beliefs, it has an aspirational connection with a traditional culture and a sense of family, which is perceived as a moral and ethical profession to protect the community, infrastructure and environment. The desire to be accepted by your peers, yourself and also socially is described as a struggle to prove yourself, to compromise, to be accepted and to comply.

Time has become a significant factor in this study, not only by time served and experience but the influence of the period of time, the stage in your life

and your changing values over time. The concept of being accepted, self-acceptance and willingness to change correlates with ‘who am I, now’ and ‘who I desire to be’, but is strongly rooted in ‘past selves’, hindering ‘future selves’ and the organisation’s desire to diversify.

This study has illuminated three distinct dimensions, that are summarised in Figure 8; Being - ‘Reflections of who I am or aspire to be’, Becoming - ‘Agency’ in setting the context for identity work and ‘Performing in the eyes of others’ - the societal and social connection with who we are.



**Figure 8 - Categories** (Created by the author: Hallam 2018)

The relationship between these three categories has highlighted how the several aspects of self come together, converge, sympathetically align

within a specific context, or are pushed apart, diverge, thus highlighting who I am not, who I do not want to be, or dread becoming.

In the following sections, I cover these three main categories, and try to bring it all together in a discussion highlighting the consequences for change, what this means for Firefighter identity, considerations for practice as well as a contribution to theory.

## **Being - Reflections of who I am or aspire to be**

The term Firefighter is multi-faceted, contextually functional but symbolic by definition. The majority of interviewees considered themselves Firefighters irrespective of role, rank or position. Used in the same way as someone describing themselves as an engineer or a farmer, a broad term to group themselves, a connection, to categorise a certain type of person, providing easy recognition and understanding by others, defining who they are, that is used as an element of prestige or modesty within a social setting.

When reflecting on why they joined the Service it was interesting that the majority of respondents focussed on 'being' a Firefighter rather than on describing what drew them to apply for the job. Although the reasons why were teased out it was not the dominant focus of their responses. Many described previous jobs, experiences, or connections that attracted them to a lifestyle, status, recognition or moral vocation.

It was clear that when people reflected on why they joined, this became a reflection of now, rather than then, being influenced by the length of service, experiences and age.

In the following sections, I explore the relationship with being a Firefighter and 'Life's Journey' as what it is to be a Firefighter is something that is learnt, developed, a hybrid of multiple aspects of self that are constantly changing and being developed over time.

Clearly being a Firefighter had a significant impact on their decision to join the Service. This is explored further across three particular areas:

- Joining the Service ‘a job for life’
- Life’s Journey – sympathetic alignment to salient identities
- Aligning personal values and motivations

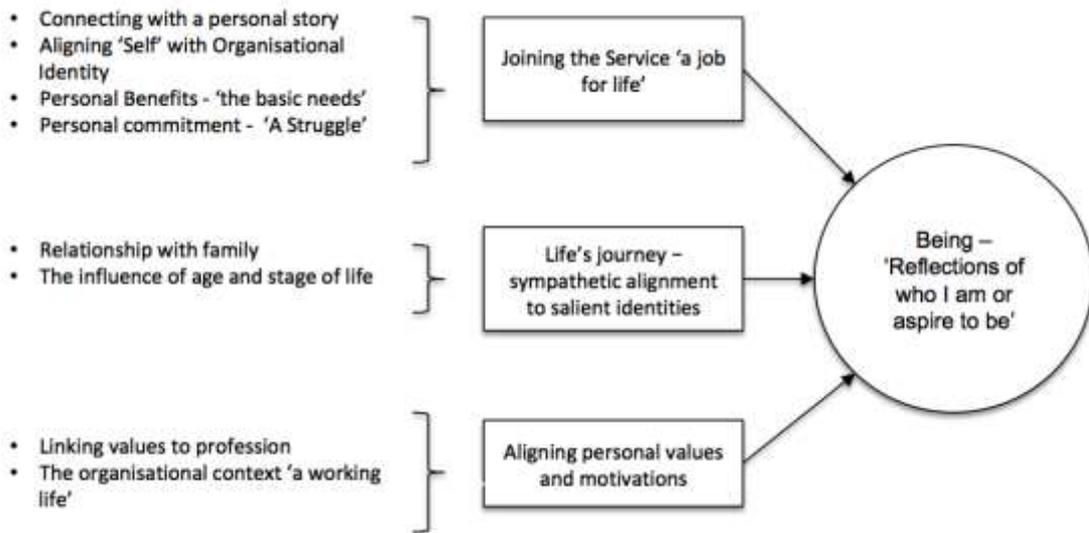


Figure 9 – Being – Reflections of who I am or aspire to be (Created by the author: Hallam 2018)

**Joining the Service ‘a job for life’**

Operational activity dominated the reason for joining the Service, although as interviewee George alludes, this reason changes over time:

... and I think first and foremost people were motivated to do this job to actually go and do that stuff, go on big fire engines, squirt water, cut people out of cars, get people off buildings, get people wherever, trapped animals, that is actually what they did. And um I’m not so sure, I think all the other stuff that is going on, people do not feel that

is the primary reason that they're still here. (Watch Manager (WM<sup>45</sup>) George)

All of the interviewees joined the Service at a young age, as Michael describes it, being a Firefighter is more about personal discovery than vocational commitment:

... I wanted to get into the job, I wanted to be a fireman, without really understanding why, but then you develop and you understand why, it is a journey about finding out about yourself, not about finding out about your job, it is finding out about what you want to do, what you want to be and can you help anybody, can you make their life a little bit better, not all the time, you get a little bit of disappointment, but wow do you learn every day you learn, and erm ... it makes you, I think it makes you a better person. (WM Michael)

This highlights the fact that wanting to be a Firefighter, performing the role, is very different from being a Firefighter. Developing, becoming and understanding what it is to be a Firefighter is something that is learned, not known at the time of application, as such 'being' dominated reasons for becoming.

As Michael mentions it is more about personal discovery and reflection. Understanding how you react, what is important to you, how you respond to

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<sup>45</sup> WM – Watch Manager, a supervisory manager that is responsible for a group of Firefighters (Watch), rides on the Fire Appliance and is the initial incident commander.

the various situations. Personal growth is built around people's reactions, empathy, personal rewards, fears, success or failures. More fluid than stable, so personal yet shared, experiences that continually influence who you are and how you respond as an individual.

But then why do people join the Fire and Rescue Service, why do they become Firefighters, expose themselves to the dangers or events that other people avoid if they do not know what the job is about? What draws people to such a profession, a job that they may not fully understand when they join, something they later learn?

### **Connecting with a personal story**

In describing why they joined the Service, many highlighted positive characteristics, such as an ethical vocation, highlighting a reflection of who they wanted to be. Others provided a personal story of who they were then, and who they are now.

Being a Firefighter was described as aspirational, something 'I had always wanted to do, being active, enjoy helping people' (Firefighter (FF<sup>46</sup>) Brian), a caring vocation 'I joined to help people' (WM Jason), having an ethical

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<sup>46</sup> FF – Firefighter, this can be a Whole Time Duty System (WDS) or Retained Duty System (RDS) Firefighter. Firefighters generally drive the appliance, wear Breathing Apparatus Sets (BA) to enter burning buildings, and perform general Firefighting duties. All current operational staff started their careers as Firefighters. Although some two tier models do exist across the country, allowing officers to enter at more senior levels, within Northamptonshire this is not currently available.

commitment to 'serve the community' (Area Manager (AM<sup>47</sup>) Mike) that is built on a personal trait around community service, 'I've always had an element of volunteering in the sectors that help people' (FF Matthew).

In choosing to join the Service, there was an element of self-reflection, self-awareness, experiences, learnt values and motivations. Most had undertaken previous work, paid or voluntary, that encouraged them to reflect on their current career based on what was important to them. This revolved around changes not only to personal benefits, including reduced travelling, pay, and leave, but also around what was important to them, what they could commit to, what made them happy. In the case of Tim, something he discovered after volunteering for the RNLI<sup>48</sup> and being exposed to some traumatic rescues:

... and I thought crikey, and I thought yeh that was what I want to do, I want to save lives, and hence I truly did over the years in RNLI um.. and then I suppose I thought that the Fire Brigade was a next progression to do that all be it, paying and get a career out of it. I think that is, deep down that is why I joined. That, that is my story really. (WM Tim)

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<sup>47</sup> AM – Area Manager, a Senior Officer who manages an area of the business. Who is also a strategic manager who is responsible for the more serious of incidents.

<sup>48</sup> RNLI – Royal National Lifeboat Institution

FF Matthew had a similar story, previously volunteering for the Red Cross and undertaking disaster, medic and rescue recovery work in some complex environments, later choosing a paid profession that provided the same stimulation or commitment.

It is clear that personal events can spark an interest in the Fire Service. FF Adam refers to witnessing two significant fires whilst on holiday 'that sort of sparked a little interest in the Fire Brigade I guess that always sort of rumbled' (FF Adam). In the case of WM Jason he reinforces this connection through a family story, even though it was before he was born, linking a vocational commitment with how he may be viewed by others, in this case, his family:

... my nan died in a house fire, well it was when my mum was twelve, way before I was born. But that set my path of life if you like from that moment, so it was something I felt quite strongly about....So it was something I wanted to do and give back so... (WM Jason)

This concept of vocation, personal values and commitment were reinforced by stories of why they selected the Service. WM Jason highlighted the aspirational connection with Firefighters in society, a unique and privileged position in the eyes of others and a key motivator for whom one wishes to become. As indicated by Jason who grew up opposite the local Fire Station:

I always wanted to be a Fireman since I was a kid because I lived across from the Fire Station... we used to go down, a few of us used to go there on a Saturday morning and we'd play football or volleyball

with them and have a crack with them and have some juice and stuff, it was good, I always looked up to them, it was what I always wanted to do. (WM Jason)

This aspirational connection with how Firefighters are viewed was reinforced by stories of being motivated by a sense of pride and status, connecting oneself with who one aspires to be.

### **Aligning 'Self' with Organisational Identity**

What the organisation stands for, the lifestyle it offers clearly influenced people's choice, either through sport, physical fitness 'a career that you had to keep yourself fit for' (AM Mike), or the practical side of the job 'although you are tested academically it is not the be all and end all, the Fire Service looks for practical people' (FF Matthew), indicating an element of personal fit.

An organisation that would support your lifestyle and what was important for you, offering additional benefits and a sense of prestige 'I wanted to be a Firefighter, but there is a glamour around that, when I was that much younger' (WM Michael). Something Amanda highlighted as a motivator during her time in the Police prior to the Service 'The glamorous side with the OSU<sup>49</sup>, we had dog teams err bodyguards, firearms PSU<sup>50</sup>, helicopter,

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<sup>49</sup> Operational Support Unit – Police Resource

<sup>50</sup> Police Support Unit

all the support mechanisms in the control room' (Station Manager (SM<sup>51</sup>) Amanda).

The opportunity of 'riding the big red fire engine and the uniform' (WM Michael) particularly at a young age is an appealing image the Service offers and attracts some to the role. This was identified as a benefit that draws people to these types of professions, as Daniel describes 'I ended up boiling it down to, join the Navy, join the Police, join the Fire Service' (Brigade Manager (BM<sup>52</sup>) Daniel).

Motivated by comparison with current and future lifestyle choices, Daniel compared himself to others and his then chosen career as an engineer:

... I looked at the people I was working with and thought, they were all in their sort of late 50s and early 60s and thought I do not want to be here in my late 50s and early 60s I want to do something different.

(BM Daniel)

It is this reflection of who you are in the present and who you dread becoming, which emphasises the positive perception of the role of the individual. By considering alternative selves, or dreaded selves, it reinforces the positive association and choice in joining the Service, something that

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<sup>51</sup> SM - Station Manager, Officer. In this case a Station Manager in Control, although these are normally responding officers who provide incident command functions at medium sized incidents, for example House Fires or Road Traffic Collision.

<sup>52</sup> BM - Brigade Manager. These include the ranks of Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Chief Fire Officer. The most senior positions in the organisation and on the incident ground.

offers a unique, exciting and variable future compared to others. This implies that being a Firefighter supports an element of glamour, or prestige that is potentially offered by other similar disciplined Services.

**Personal Benefits - ‘the basic needs’**

Basic needs were often compromised through a sense of self-sacrifice, demonstrating a real desire to become a Firefighter at all costs. As George says:

... it is true that pretty much everyone that I worked with took a pay drop and incredibly I was one of few that took a pay increase. So for me I had died and gone to heaven because I was joining this great club, it was action men, I liked it and I got a pay rise. (WM George)

For most, they took a pay drop. The only person who actively joined for more conventional personal reasons was Steve, to be closer to home: interestingly he is a non-operational Protection Officer. For many it was the realisation that being a Firefighter was a paid profession, implying it was not all about money. It should be recognised that all joined young when commitments were less demanding.

In relation to the Whole-time Duty System (WDS<sup>53</sup>) it was clear that the duty system is a significant factor in wanting to join the WDS, promoted as family

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<sup>53</sup> WDS – Whole-time Duty staff are primarily employed by the Service, providing 24/7 cover based on a locally agreed rota system in line with the NJC agreed terms and conditions. Generally, this includes working as part of a small group of Firefighters (6/7) on a watch, working two days, then two nights and then having 4 days rest. There are 4 watches on each

friendly, 'The recent recruitment drive was targeted at specific groups and quoted as being a family-friendly service' (Stn X Focus Group), something reinforced by Service members as a key benefit when motivating people to join:

... Crikey listen, 2 days, 2 Nights & 4 days off... what can go wrong with that, why would you turn down that job, I'll tell you why I said that now, is that really why people want to join this job, you work 2 days, 2 nights and get 4 days off. I think he even said to me and you can work on those 4 days off. (AM Richard)

In this case, Richard was being persuaded to join the Service based on the personal benefits the job gave him, emphasising the potential uniqueness as a positive comparison to other professions. Being less of a job, more of a way of life.

The shift system is clearly an important factor, ensuring personal fit with competing pressures and roles outside of the organisation. Providing structure 'Taking away my set hours (knowing exactly when I'm working) will remove my personal home life flexibility' (Stn Z Focus Group), particularly family life, reinforcing this concept of personal fit and competing identities. A point particularly highlighted during recent reviews of the duty system, which

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station, Red, Green, Blue and White and rotate accordingly. Across the country, there are various versions of this duty system negotiated locally based on local need, but principally follow the same model, with the exception of self-rostering models currently being used in Kent.

proposed changes to shift patterns, start time and working groups, highlighting the benefits of flexibility and family life:

... I currently always ensure I have saved enough leave at the end of the year for things like school sports day, unexpected doctor/hospital appointments, other school events etc. Taking away short leave will directly impact this. (Stn X Focus Group)

Providing stability and structure to other parts of your life 'Having set hours is part of having a job – this gives me flexibility in my own life' (Stn Y Focus Group), being family friendly and supporting childcare arrangements. Changing these benefits raised concern 'will completely destroy my home life' (Stn Z Focus Group) even having a detrimental effect in improving diversity into the workforce:

... Moving to 12-hour shifts will have an impact on childcare and will impact on the number of women wanting to join the service.

(Stn Y Focus Group).

The relationship between personal benefits and organisational design is evident when this is challenged as people organise their life around this structure 'people adapted their lives, their home life to the current shift system' (Stn Z Focus Group), highlighting the relationship between what the organisation offers and how this supports wider personal benefits in managing life. How people adapt and compromise, something that runs in parallel that if not balanced 'would potentially need to leave' (Stn X Focus

Group). This highlights that in lifelong career professions, organisational design exists in tension with competing lifestyle choices and pressures.

In contrast, the benefits to the Retained Duty System (RDS<sup>54</sup>) were significantly different as they provide 'on-call' availability, being focused on community service, community connection, being known and seen within the local community. This leads to the salience of being affiliated to the local Fire Station e.g. 'Burton Fire Brigade' (The local Fire Station) as FF Adam describes, rather than Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service. This demonstrated not only the connection with the Service, in being a Firefighter but also a local connection, being seen as a local Firefighter. A distraction, that provides an 'escape from the day job.' Local recognition that led to a struggle to get in, described as 'is literally dead men's shoes' (FF Adam). Although for some the RDS is considered a bridge gap to get into the WDS, a compromise 'In total I did 4 years at Guilsborough before I was successful in applying to Wholetime in 2003 and I've been here ever since' (FF Matthew).

Joining the Service as a means to an end, is linked to wider personal benefits, either based on competing pressures such as family, personal fulfilment, local recognition, escapism or an opportunity to explore further

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<sup>54</sup> RDS – Retained Duty System, comprises of staff who have a primary job in the community and respond via an alerter or pager to the Fire Station when required. They provide a range of operational cover around their normal life pattern, generally live in the local community and attend the Fire Station for training once a week. They operate within the same role maps and training requirements.

options. The reasons for joining seem to change in line with changing personal circumstances, as a reflection of now rather than then, highlighting the fact that reasons for staying are always under review against salient needs; are contextual, fluid, a constant struggle and negotiation of what is important to you at a particular time.

### **Personal commitment - A 'Struggle'**

Many described their level of commitment and success in getting into the job, recounting the number of applicants and number of vacancies or the number of Services they had applied to, an element of competition, having to wait for 'dead men's shoes', to prove yourself, and not being easy.

Demonstrating an element of rite, a shared experience, achievement, and success above all in proving themselves as part of the selection process, highlighting a sense of elitism, a bond, and a sense of belonging. SM

Barney claims 'I think it was about 3000 applied for about 30 posts', WM Tim mentions that he applied for 5 brigades, although his uncle who was in the Service summed this up:

... Because, I was told by my uncle that do not, um just tunnel vision yourself to one brigade, you know get into one, get into anyone, do a couple of years and transfer where ever you like. But you know there are, there are tens of thousands of people who apply. (WM Tim)

This struggle and commitment highlights the desire to join the Service at a cost and is used as an element of acceptance as part of a shared struggle, strong competition and shared success. Michael seems to compare this

struggle to a rite of passage in demonstrating the commitment needed to get the job done, implying the character required to do the job:

... We had a girl on one of the stations that erm ... did not get into the job, she tried up and down the country 7 or 8 times, she was determined to get in, it was like her 12th application or something like that. Erm, she had the determination, it is that determination which gets the job done. (WM Michael)

This recollection of repeat applications and strong competition, demonstrating struggle and commitment was common amongst all and was used as a positive story in demonstrating to others their determination and a rite to be considered a Firefighter. Through strong competition to be a Firefighter they are bound together, imbuing a sense of elitism and belonging.

### **Life's Journey - sympathetic alignment to salient identities**

But occupational roles, such as being a Firefighter, must run in parallel with life's competing demands which enable people to respond to changing personal circumstances, as FF Adam describes in relation to the level of RDS cover 'what they can give [cover] changes as you go through life, does not it' (FF Adam). Or in WM Jason's case, getting divorced 'so circumstances changed a few years later, got divorced so ended up having to leave' (WM Jason), being restricted by the need to be located in the local response area. Personal choice can be a struggle, or compromise against

competing family pressures as in Steve's case a sense of regret, due to having a family:

... the only regret, I started, I was about to start the Fire Engineering degree, then family came along and there was a lot going on, and I kind of think I wish I sort of stuck with it. (Steve)

Although this commitment to competing pressures can highlight opportunities, in the cases of BM Daniel and FF John, moving closer to home, to be closer to the family. The Fire Service role is transferable across Services, supporting changing circumstances, for example, having a family and the need to move to a nearer station or geographical area, enabling flexibility and choice against competing demands.

### **Relationship with family**

Family heavily influenced why people join the Service, either through a family tradition, a family connection with the emergency services or in relation to how the family perceived the job.

Firefighters often describe the organisation as a family, one they are proud to be part of, as Michael says 'it is an honour, it is a privilege to get in, even nowadays' (WM Michael). Something Jason felt immediately when joining the Service:

So I felt part of the family from that moment of putting the uniform on. Felt part, part of the fire-fighting family. (WM Jason)

It was also interesting that being a member of the Service did not end there; the family provided an incredible supporting framework as a result of the work undertaken, heavily involving them in the role, and a connection to what they do. At a recent pass out parade, during the Chief Fire Officer's speech, inducting the new Firefighters into the Service, he made specific mention of how all the families there, were also 'joining the Service, part of this family, like it or not' (BM Daniel)

Being a member of the Service, part of the Firefighter family, was often through tradition, and a strong family connection:

... a lot of it is tradition, historically that is what you have had in the retained Service, you know it would be sort of, you know, Granddad's son, son, it was a family type thing. (FF Adam)

Having another family member in the Service clearly influenced decisions or understanding of the Service, FF Brian describes how he:

... Nipped in the station to go and see him [dad], being around it, obviously with him being on night shifts and stuff, just obviously knowing what it is all about. (FF Brian)

Or the encouragement by a family member, as SM Barney describes:

My brother-in-law was a Firefighter in Sheffield, erm... and he always said to me you would be perfect for the Fire Service. (SM Barney)

Although in this case, suggesting a conflict in which Service (Police or Fire), highlighting a family loyalty struggle:

I do not, I can not, because my dad was a Policeman, and his dad was a Policeman, and so I think it was an expectation that I... (SM Barney).

Something that is common in the emergency services, as indicated by Amanda, who previously worked in the Police service, this family tradition is incredibly important, particularly to her father who had worked in the Police Force:

And my dad said you'll last there 18months, biggest mistake of your life, leaving the police force, he said big mistake.... Because his Granddad was a copper. And I think he was proud of the fact that his daughter was in the job, and I think he hoped that eventually, I would put a uniform on. Take up the mantel. (SM Amanda)

This family connection that even shocked George, highlighting the surprise of not being influenced by family:

I tell you interestingly enough right, I had not thought about the Fire Service whatsoever at all, never even in my head, even with a Police Officer Granddad that spent 30 odd years as a Police Officer in London. (WM George)

Being a member of the emergency services and especially a member of the Fire Service is something that relates not only to considerations of who you are but is linked to how family perceives you, and your achievements. As Mike explains, something he did not realise until after his pass out parade from training school:

Not actually appreciating that others would go wow! You're doing that, you should be really proud. Or should I? That was not my motivation for doing it. (AM Mike)

This indicates these close relationships with doing a worthwhile profession, something to be proud of, especially in the eyes those who are most dear to you, as so important.

The majority of interviewees had some connection either to a strong family tradition within the emergency services and especially the Fire Service, and where there was not this connection they referred to a wider family response of support, or in FF John's case, encouragement from his wife:

... Mrs sort of said why don't you think about it, um and then within 2 weeks, the post came through the door, an application form that she'd done for me, so I signed up, um and then went from there. (FF John)

Doing something that is meaningful, something you could be proud of, reaffirmed by those closest to you, reinforced a commitment, pride in membership and a sense of family.

Although FF Adam raises concern that the current changes are affecting this:

... it was a family type thing and that is now petering away and it is almost becoming, it is becoming perhaps what I thought it was, it is

becoming the workplace, working a duty system rather than a way of life, is that perhaps a word to describe it. (FF Adam)

It is interesting that FF Adam is working the RDS model, where certain changes in response to declining RDS availability have been organisationally driven rather than culturally driven. This relationship with commitment and family highlights the importance of local culture, a sense of ownership, local connection, the family values that potentially are being demonstrated in commitment and performance.

But the support from family was also identified as significantly important. In considering some of the incidents the interviewees had attended; clearly, the job did not finish when they got back to the station. The stresses and impact of what they had been involved in or had seen reinforced the family as a supporting framework. Michael describes how important it was for his wife to understand what he had been involved in and the support she gave:

They are a special kind of breed, you know a woman, ... got to be a special kind of breed that will put up with all the crap you get, for want of a better kind of word, that will put up with all the moods when you probably lost someone in a car crash or whatever, who will then lift you again, they have got to be special. (WM Michael)

This illuminates that pride in membership extends beyond organisational boundaries, incorporating family and friends through association and support which provides a supporting network that reinforces the family setting as part of the fire-fighting family.

### **The influence of age and stage of life**

The age when you joined, and a sense of growing up in the Service affected who you were, with whom you socialised, and how you acted. Many referred to these early years as the best time in the Service, highlighting the social aspects of being a member of the Service. All at the same stage in their lives:

... there were 5 or 6 guys all of the same age as me or around that sort of age they were all at the stage in our lives if you like, it was pre sort of girlfriends and living with people and marriage and that type of stuff, so we had bit of a blast, and so it really, what you were doing, we just enjoyed doing really. (BM Daniel)

Clearly going through life's journey together, something Amanda reflects on as the best time in the Service:

That might be because we are all older and wiser now and we do not go out as much as we used to. But I think that was probably the best time. (SM Amanda)

The age when you joined, your time of life, clearly influenced how people reacted, as Daniel mentions, pre girlfriends, and pre marriage. Having time to socialise with each other, having something in common. But this has to change:

... and we were travelling down, in fact when I was travelling down to Dagenham is when we had [name removed], so we had a baby at the

time, and then you start to notice how much you are away from home when you are in London. (BM Daniel)

Growing up in the Service is something that Adam and Michael both referred to if we look back at the initial quote that Michael made:

... it is a journey about finding out about yourself, not about finding out about your job, it is finding out about what you want to do, what you want to be and can you help anybody, can you make their life a little bit better, not all the time, you get a little bit of disappointment, but wow do you learn every day you learn, and erm .. it makes you, I think it makes you a better person. (WM Michael)

Within the Service, people develop a wider understanding of what is important to them, either as part of shared experiences, reflections of incidents or as Adam refers to, becoming a parent:

... you know in a lot of jobs we say this, and we say that, or whatever, but someone to be that personal I think perhaps you would not appreciate that until you are a parent. (FF Adam)

The influence of having children, the competing pressures of being a parent, the context of where multiple aspects of self, being a Firefighter and a parent overlap, result in compromise, a struggle, a realignment of values and priorities. In Daniel's case moving closer to home, taking promotion for greater income, swapping socialising with responsibilities.

Tim refers to this as having to end, you have to grow up, and things needing to change due to competing pressures. A reflection of where you are and who you want to be:

I thought right; you know I'm not getting any younger.... I thought yes I fancy doing this profession...Would I do anything differently? ...I might have gone for promotion early on HaHa. Because it might have been... (WM Tim)

Mike referred to this as a personal sacrifice, taking the promotion route, compromising, investing in their [the families] future, not always with an immediate return, but a commitment, not all about money, but time together:

... well we will just make things happen in terms of job and give stuff up and .. I never had a part-time job as such, Alley [his wife] worked; the extra money would be helpful, although I would actually lose out more with travelling than promotion. (AM Mike)

All the interviewees highlighted how competing pressures required an element of compromise with age, through the addition of responsibility, supporting the willingness to break from the social groupings, to grow up, to move closer to home because you have children, time to go for promotion because of additional responsibilities, and a time to let go. Highlighting how multiple versions of self compete in salience, influencing choice and compromise around career options that have a direct influence on the wider aspects of your life.

## **Aligning Personal Values and Motivations**

### **Linking values to the profession**

It is interesting that most of our interviewees concentrated on pride in operational response, making people's days a little bit better, providing a service, meeting expectations; only a few made reference to prevention or protection work. All focussed on operational incidents, this dominated their views of pride and membership. The task environment of 'blue light responding' focussed their reasons for being and what motivated them. But as described in the background, the context of this study is placed against a backdrop of falling incident numbers, an increased focus on preventative work, not just for Fire related issues but broader welfare support.

But Firefighters have strong values, to support and help people:

I think traditional values does not mean doing things the same, because the value, you can have the same set of values doing an Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC<sup>55</sup>) as you do putting out a fire.

(BM Daniel)

It is interesting that only one person, a new Firefighter highlighted initially it was about caring, following a connection he made with a previous caring profession:

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<sup>55</sup> HFSC – Home Fire Safety Check

... I enjoy helping people a lot, I will always put people before myself I think, this job allows you do that in every way, if you are just communicating to people or actually rescuing someone, giving someone first aid, it is everything I want in a job sort of thing, that is why I went for it. (FF Brian)

Although all demonstrated a sense of caring in how they described how they respond to incidents, it was described as the essence of the culture, why people are there, what they take pride in, although often not overtly mentioned. As SM Barney says:

I suppose it is the getting on with, from an individual point of view, it is the getting on with the job and not expecting anything back.

(SM Barney)

In considering the wider responses to questions and the dominance of an operational ideology, it is evident that discourses of operational activity cloak underlying values of caring, due to the potential sentiment of masculinity as identified in the literature review.

### **The Organisational context 'A Working Life'**

What motivated people in the context of 'a working life', doing the job was more straightforward, Firefighters love to be busy, they enjoy a challenge, they love variety, and responding to the unexpected.

Clearly, some preferred to go 'where the action was' (WB Jason), but being busy did not just mean responding to incidents, it embraced being busy generally, as John describes:

... able to do the decontamination boxes, being able to do a fire project um.. so I was quite busy. So I like to be busy, I like to be doing different things. (FF John)

But when people are not busy this can cause problems, as FF Matthew jokes 'I would probably kill myself being on a single station on an island like that'; sometimes not being busy can have a detrimental effect. As AM Mike describes, often looking for additional projects to fill the gap:

So I always enjoyed the additional work and the pace of work in those other environments, and for me, it was about being a better manager, learning new things about the organisation. (AM Mike)

The challenge of doing the job, together with the variety really motivates people. Strangely enough, the challenge of operational incidents only received a little reference, the majority focussed on personal challenges, challenging situations, managing people, or the variety of the job, doing community safety, 'Welephant'<sup>56</sup> (Community safety mascot) and charity work.

Oh crikey, so err .. strangely enough, I liked, happy to say that, proper liked it, liked doing it, liked the challenged of course, I would that is me, so I proper, loved the challenge. (WM George)

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<sup>56</sup> Welephant – a community safety mascot used by the Service to promote preventative messages, especially to young children. Required a Firefighter to dress up in a Firefighter themed elephant suit.

It is the charity stuff, you know it is the stuff like that that makes it.

(FF Adam)

... you were happy to approach anything, you skilled up on your BA<sup>57</sup>, and just bring it on really. And um yeh I took a lot of thought, I was always keen to do standby's um and I always used to put my hand up to do Welephant. (AM Mike)

Firefighters in the organisation are people that thrive on variety, personal challenges, work they can take pride in, and keeping themselves busy. It was also noticed that if they were not kept busy they would make themselves busy:

I was writing up an FP<sup>58</sup> file and he had got a volleyball in his hand and if I did not play and the teams were uneven it was like 'come on you can do that later when we are eating, come and play volleyball instead' and that was my Sub [Sub Officer] telling me I should stop doing the work so I could play volleyball with everyone else. (AM Mike)

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<sup>57</sup> BA - Breathing Apparatus, wearing a compressed air breathing set to enter a smoke filled building and fight fires or carry out rescues. The potentially most dangerous part of fire fighting. These are also used in chemical incidents to protect the wearer.

<sup>58</sup> FP File – Fire Protection File, containing building plans, Fire risk assessments and correspondence regarding particular buildings.

**Summary of 'Being' and relevance to study**

Within this section, we have discussed what draws people to become Firefighters and that wanting to be a Firefighter dominates reasons for becoming. People aspire to be a Firefighter based on the positive perception of others, a vocation that compares positively to other paid professions, although what it means to be a Firefighter is learnt over time and not known at time of application.

Joining was a reflection of lifelong career choices that promote liveability, meaning and purpose. Although as identified, organisational design exists in tension with competing lifestyle choices and pressures, occasionally providing a sense of escapism from 'normal life', it was evident that being a Firefighter was a job that is transferable across Services, enabling flexibility and choice against competing demands.

Through strong competition to be a Firefighter they are bound together, imbuing a sense of elitism and belonging. Pride in membership extends beyond organisational boundaries, incorporating family and friends through association and support. Discourses of operational activity cloaks underlying values of caring, reinforcing a sentiment of masculinity.

This section provides us with a general overview of being a Firefighter. In the next section, we look at 'Agency' in setting the context for identity work. We look at the transition from wanting to be a Firefighter to becoming a Firefighter, the influence of culture and organisational memory and how organisational discretion influences identity work.

***Summary of points identified:***

- Wanting to be a Firefighter dominates reasons for becoming a Firefighter.
- Becoming a Firefighter is something that is learnt over time and not known at time of application.
- Being a Firefighter is a paid profession to help people.
- People aspire to become a Firefighter based on the positive perception of others.
- Being a Firefighter compares positively to other paid professions.
- Being a Firefighter is a reflection of lifelong career choices, which promotes livability, meaning and purpose.
- In lifelong career professions, organisational design exists in tension with competing lifestyle choices and pressures.
- Being a Firefighter provides a sense of escapism from 'normal life'.
- Reasons for being a Firefighter are continually under review against competing demands and motivations.
- Through strong competition to be a Firefighter they are bound together, imbuing a sense of elitism and belonging.
- Being a Firefighter is transferable across Services, enabling flexibility and choice against competing demands.
- Pride in membership extends beyond organisational boundaries, incorporating family and friends through association and support.
- Discourses of operational activity cloaks underlying values of caring.

- Being busy, variety and the need to be challenged motivate Firefighters.

## **Becoming - 'Agency' setting the context for identity work**

In the previous section it was evident that wanting to be a Firefighter dominated reasons for joining the Service, in this category we discover that becoming a Firefighter is more complex. Framed within a traditional culture, group dynamics, strong organisational memory, the need to be accepted and to be recognised, becoming a Firefighter is a rite of passage, something that has to be earned and proven 'in the eyes of others'.

It is a culture that revolves around a dominant task environment of operational response, an occupational ideology of oughtness in how people should act, the norm, a set of occupational facts that drives culture, affiliation, support and resistance in the face of organisational change.

'Agency' is defined as 'a business or organisation providing a particular service on behalf of another business, person, or group' (Oxford English Dictionary), but in this study, agency does not only reflect the service provided to the community, it also includes the service it provides to the Firefighters. In this context agency refers to the organisational discretion taken around structure, duty systems, resources, policies, and rules, and its influence on the culture of the organisation, the behaviours of people, and its effect on a Firefighters journey in becoming and being a Firefighter.

Becoming a Firefighter is created within a socio-historical context and organisational memory, influenced by the available discourses of others, making them 'meaningful, accessible and appealing or unappealing'

reinforcing a stereotypical identity of a Firefighter, part of the family, within a Watch or Section, as described later, a reflection of now and then.

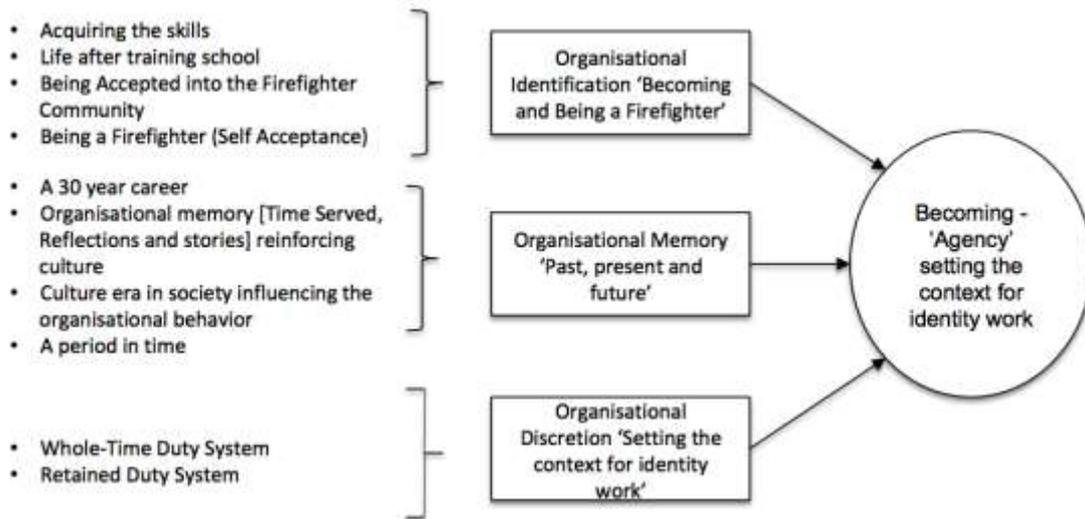
Social Identity and group membership dominates this category, in considering 'Agency' as providing the context for culture, a sense of belonging and influencing positive and negative behaviour.

In listening to all the interviewees, at times it was difficult as a fellow Firefighter and especially now a Senior Officer, to hear their stories of being accepted into the Service, the things they went through, the behaviours of others, how the culture inducted them into the Firefighter family. Fond memories were recollected, stories of risk, bravery and rescues, providing an emotional connection with the past through a recollection of a period in time, and how it still influences who they are now.

Not all stories were positive, highlighting a struggle, a sense of vulnerability, conformity, being tested, challenging and something to be endured.

Agency has a significant impact in setting the context for identity work. This is explored further across three specific areas:

- Organisational Identification 'Becoming and Being a Firefighter'
- Organisational Memory 'Past, present and future'
- Organisational Discretion 'Setting the context for identity work'



**Figure 10 – Becoming - 'Agency' setting the context for identity work**

(Created by the author: Hallam 2018)

**Organisational Identification 'Becoming and Being a Firefighter'**

Becoming and being a Firefighter seem to be two different things. In the first category 'being', prior to entry into the Service dominated reasons for joining, but being in this context is considered as in the eyes of others, your fellow Firefighters, to be accepted as a Firefighter, by others and yourself. The concept of 'Being', when in the Service was something significantly different.

Becoming a Firefighter could be described from an organisational context as acquiring the skills, by attending training school, completing a probationary period, passing exams, and wearing the uniform. From a cultural perspective, being a Firefighter was something you had to earn, learnt from others through shared experiences, tacit knowledge, as Matthew puts it, is:

Competence ... is the acceptance of others in that you know what you are doing. (FF Matthew)

Identity work is described as how people manoeuvre through these available discourses in order to reaffirm, reassess, revise or formulate new narratives of self which 'promote liveability' that is legitimised through social processes to ensure a collective acceptance, particularly within an organisational context.

Becoming a Firefighter, revolves not only around how the organisation supports your development, but how others develop you, how you are inducted into the Service from within, how you become part of the culture,

comply, struggle to be accepted, an element of self acceptance and a sense of belonging.

Becoming a Firefighter is far different from performing the role or being taught, it is a hierarchy, an unwritten status, a currency of value and prestige, which promotes affiliation and behaviour. It defines 'who we are', the in-group and 'who we are not', the out-group.

Over the following sections, we consider how 'Agency' sets the context for organisational identification, how an individual is inducted into the Service, is trained to perform a role, to become competent. But as we progress we see the influence of culture in becoming a Firefighter.

### **Acquiring the skills**

Many Firefighters join the Service at an early age, and being at training school<sup>59</sup> (13 week residential) was often the first time they have been away from home:

... and that sort of sense of being at training school and away from home for 5 days. Yeh and sort of that and for me there was an element of growing up because I would be 18 although I had been

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<sup>59</sup> Training School – Whole-time Firefighters generally attend a residential course for a 13 week period, returning home a weekends. Once the course is completed they celebrate with a pass out parade, similar to the military, performed in front of their friends and family. For the Retained Firefighters, this is broken down into smaller modules of 2 weeks, delivered in their local Service, to minimise disruption to their primary employment. RDS do not generally attend residential courses.

away from home, a sense of growing up and that independence. (AM Mike)

In Mike's situation, physically changing as a result of attending residential training school ' I remember my mum saying things, blimey look at the size of your shoulders and just things like how you've been growing' (AM Mike) having not seen him for a number of weeks. On the same situation FF Simon recounts:

... and er the training school when I was at Coventry. And that was a real eye-opener. Um as a youngster the first time I had been away from family, ... had my 21st I think whilst I was there and so homesickness came into it. (WM Simon)

Having to attend a residential training course, or the need to work within the local community where you provide fire cover, aligned to the young age at which most people started in the Service, often resulted in this being the first time they left home as indicated by Daniel:

I was living in Northampton and had to go down to Reading, stay in a B & B for three days, that was the first time I had left home. (BM Daniel)

This significant point in Firefighter's lives (leaving home) reinforced a family Service, where people grow up in the Service, creating a parental relationship with their peers, who provide a support mechanism at this difficult time. This is discussed later where we look at Service culture, being accepted, induction processes, going to training school, your first watch, and

learning to cook and so on. This is really important in relation to this study, as it highlights the role the Service has in supporting peoples life's choices, how they grow up in the Service, the influence it has, the relationships people develop, the closeness, reliance on each other, and a sense of family.

Attending training school was a significant event in people's lives, meeting different people from different backgrounds, working together, supporting each other, and being part of a team, to establish discipline, the structure and values needed within the Service. As SM Barney describes it:

If you were at the bottom end of the course you got picked on, if you were at the top end you got sort of [left alone], the easiest path straight down the middle. (SM Barney)

Imparting discipline in this way by creating a sense of fear was common amongst respondents, as Simon mentions, perhaps not the best way of imparting skills, and/or knowledge:

I just thought this is not the best way to draw things out of people and you do not, you do not knock the stuffing out of people to see if they really want to do it either. (WM Simon)

Highly intensive, a test, through repetition of drills, imparting knowledge that stays with people for many years:

I talk to people who have been to training school and even officers, you know I must have told you, [name removed], you know he's not

been a Firefighter for years yet he still remembers stuff and I can only assume that it was drilled into him you know he still remembers it.

(WM Jason)

All Firefighters go through training school, either through a residential course, or through modular training, experiences varied, some highlighting real positives 'brilliant, met some really nice guys' (WM Tim), others highlighting a sense of achievement, surviving, being tough, disciplined, highlighting robust behaviour by instructors, pushing, testing, in Barney's words 'being picked on'. Having it 'drilled into you' (WM Jason) was an environment familiar to those who had previously served in the military, likened to a game:

... and it was actually down to a number of guys that were there, had done part retained, and part military and stuff like that as well, look Simon this is basically a game, it was not really until um.. I had got past the first three weeks and then I think it was probably week 9 I then really realised what it was all about. (WM Simon)

These experiences at training school stay with people for years, setting the standards in how to behave, what it is like to be a Firefighter, what is expected, 'drilled in', for some at an early age, at a particularly impressionable time in people's lives, their first experience after leaving home.

Firefighters are inducted at a vulnerable stage in their lives and mature within a structured and disciplined setting that revolves around a dominant operational environment.

### **Life after training school**

Many described how confident they were when leaving training school, but quickly realised that there was more to being a Firefighter than completing the initial training course, often a shock, a self realisation, and a sense of vulnerability:

So it was um thinking you know a bit at training school and then turning up proper realising that you knew absolutely nothing. I just did not feel I knew anything once you got on watch you felt quite vulnerable really. (FF Brian)

This personal vulnerability, a realisation of what the job was about, something that had clearly driven them to join the Service, being a Firefighter, an emergency Service, and having to deal with those difficult situations, to enact the training, to make a difference, the reliance on you by others was a shock to some:

But because you are constantly training for that scenario, you know you get to that point, when you just do not even think Oh my God I've got to try and save someone's life, I suppose it sounds quite big headed. But it did not even occur to me that was what I was doing.

(SM Amanda)

The importance of gaining experience, continuous learning, was so important:

Every time the bells went down<sup>60</sup>, stuff that you now take for granted that was, you realised that you just had to learn constantly.

(WM George)

Learning as you went along, was key to people's development, pulling the experience and knowledge from others, working with others, the influence of older hands:

I could be thinking who was, who was here, quite a lot of older hands were here when I joined and I think they perhaps almost, a father figure type relationships to new boys. (FF Adam)

Highlighting the significance of others, and the influence of others, in supporting their development, particularly at their stage of life, demonstrating the parental relationship they have. Becoming a Firefighter, as FF Brian explains, training does not even compare to real life:

Does not even compare sort of thing when you first see something or deal with an actual fire or put a search procedure in place or cutting someone out. (FF Brian)

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<sup>60</sup> When the bells go down – refers to when a Fire Station receives a fire call. A siren sounds on the station, the lights turn on and the appliance bay doors automatically opens. The term 'Bells' relates to when they used to ring a station bell to alert the firefighters that there was a fire call.

Becoming a Firefighter was being part of a team, performing together, and relying on each other, learnt on the job, something far different to what could be experienced at training school:

It is not like being in training school when they open a door and they kick you in ... and build the fire up as much as they can ... err, to actually go out into the job and actually do it, I think from that point on I felt like I was part of the team and part of the Service. (SM Barney)

Learning from others is clearly so important, something 'freely given' (WM George), that speeds up people's development:

With guys having that information. Moving forwards, most definitely certainly cut down on my time, my learning time, I know it took 3 1/2 years, it certainly cut it down. (WM George)

This close relationship between acquiring the skills, performing with others, being supported by others, is something that cannot be taught on a course, has to be experienced through real life situations, highlighting a sense of vulnerability, a relationship, as discussed later a 'rite of passage'. New Firefighters overcome this sense of vulnerability by applying new skills in practice, through the parental support of their peers.

In considering all the responses around this topic, all interviewees focussed on operational capability, incidents they had attended, the expectations of others in how they would perform, and the relationship and support from others in their development. No one used examples of prevention or protection work. This reinforces the sentiment of an operationally focussed

organisation, and that becoming a Firefighter is something that needs to be proven operationally, that others take great pride in supporting. Being a Firefighter tends to focus around an operational ability; unless you can perform in that environment, then can you be recognised as a member of the Service?

### **Being Accepted into the Firefighter Community**

Being accepted into the Firefighter community is about creating relationships, sharing experiences, an element of personal exposure, strongly influenced by the people you work with, attending challenging incidents together, continuous assessment, proving to others and an element of self acceptance.

The best time in the Service was described as 'once I got established' (WM Tim), implying a struggle, challenging, although once accepted focussing on the wider social aspects of the Service, 'cooking on stations, camaraderie on stations' (WM Tim).

Life in the Service is strongly influenced by others, older hands, peers or local managers, by passing on knowledge, and setting the standards:

I learnt a lot from him, an awful lot. And I think that was a good first stint, it gave me a good grounding. (WM Jason)

Providing support, friendship and empathy, in AM Mikes case a very personal level of support, which is built around trust and respect:

... and that is because he was an individual, he was my senior, he was somebody I respected, trusted, he was somebody who I had always got the upmost respect for him and he provided some mentorship for me and he guided me through some challenging times. (AM Mike)

But the most influential was the first watch, the first section they worked with, the team, the people around them during those initial stages. Setting the standards to follow, to define, enforce and develop them into being a Firefighter:

But I had some great people around me, they taught me the trade, they taught me so well.... I had some good examples to follow really.

(WM Michael)

Described as 'interesting characters' (AM Mike), people who were respected (WM George), something to aspire to become:

I remember saying to myself it is not about leadership, I actually said to myself the day he left, if, I thought, if I leave in 30 years and people think about me half as much as they think about him I would have done well, that was a real thought. (WM George)

Being accepted within the group is incredibly important to becoming a Firefighter, as Daniel warns:

As soon as you got that acceptance you felt part of that group to be honest with you, I think is quite important. I've seen to be honest with

you, people not get that acceptance, but you do see people not get that acceptance, it is that old thing again that old fitting in thing. (BM Daniel)

This relies on passing on the knowledge, 'being shown the ropes' (FF Adam), an element of support, 'this is how you deal with it, this is what from his own personal experience dealing with fires on a continual basis throughout all those years' (FF John), being the biggest influence, 'taking the good points from everybody that I have worked with, and the bad points that they have made' (FF Matthew), passing on experience through mutual support.

Being accepted is key to achieving the competence in doing the job, the sharing of tacit knowledge, from peers and contextualises basic training by providing a sense of reality.

Being accepted provided a sense of togetherness, looking out for each other, being treated as equals:

An amazing togetherness, we think of each other, it has not always been that way, but we think of each other really, we actually put each other, not first but we actually put each other on the same level as ourselves. (WM George)

Being accepted was about establishing a role in the group, the pecking order 'So in terms of his pecking order he was, he was sort of below them' (AM Mike), an informal hierarchy, informal leadership that influences behaviour.

A 'Pecking order' that revolves around experience:

You've got the informal leaders in terms of experienced Firefighters. And um so like [name removed] he was probably one of the most experienced and certainly from a sort of pecking order how he was viewed with high regard. (AM Mike)

Something that changed depending on who was on duty, a fluid informal structure, status, and a sense of prestige, position that had influence:

The station it sort of leant itself at times to different conversations going on and so there were times where it would be changing depending on who was actually on duty. So it would be quite fluid the pecking order. (FF Matthew)

The pecking order was often described in relation to time served, time to retirement, incidents they had attended, used as a sort of currency, attributes that had value that determines role within the group, influences behaviour and status.

It was interesting regarding the question, when did you feel first accepted? Often the response was after a few years, after they had attended a number of incidents, their first Breathing Apparatus (BA) job, significant house fire or Road Traffic Collision, their first fatality or rescue:

Whether that is acceptance and respect end up being closely aligned, as a Firefighter when I first started it was probably after my first BA<sup>61</sup> job and probably my first RTC<sup>62</sup> so actually you are doing something that, your peers are going I do that and now you are doing that so you did that well and I can trust you to do that. And so for me, there were elements of that. (FF Matthew)

There seemed this synergy between being accepted and earning respect, the respect from others that you can do the job, prove yourself, repeatedly across a range of different incidents, an element of achievement, and having done the same as others. Time served was used as a currency of experience, a reflection of incidents attended, used to inform who you were, how you fit in, and something that can be measured against others.

In relation to Richard, this was different; he believed he was accepted straight away. Richard referred to an incident within the first few shifts that involved a rescue of a fellow Firefighter, a response vehicle that had crashed and required the local crew to rescue a member from their own station. It was also interesting that a couple of others made reference to this particular event. In considering the comparison of accumulated experience it was clear that this particular rescue (involving a fellow Firefighter) had an element of prestige. In terms of currency had 'greater value'. In considering

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<sup>61</sup> BA – Breathing Apparatus

<sup>62</sup> RTC – Road Traffic Collision

how others referred to this event, the significance of certain incidents, or the accumulation of a range of general incidents supports individuals in being accepted. It was rare to see someone be accepted so quickly, although when considering the nature of the rescue, it was clear that others also claimed their involvement, it formed part of their story, had value to them, so for them to claim it, for it to be important to them, they had to give it the same value to Richard, resulting in him becoming accepted as a result.

Fire Service culture is based on an informal hierarchy around experience gained through operational incidents, that reinforces time served or significant events as currency in the 'pecking order'.

Having to prove yourself dominates the topic of acceptance, and others having the confidence in your ability:

Where you're trusted to go off and do something without someone sort of saying are you ok doing that? Do you want someone to show you? I think you sort of accepted you're, they've accepted you can do the job. (FF Adam)

Performing the role, especially in the eyes of others, was often within very difficult and risky situations, proving yourself:

I had spotted flames and that rolling, the next thing the window went in and there was this curl of steam and that came down, you must have heard the expression chewing the carpet oh my god I was screaming in this mask and that, I went round the other side to find [name removed] and went back as this second wave came down as I

was there and glass came down and went down the back of my glove and that, and then the next thing I went to the bedroom door and I could not get out of it, I went to the bedroom door and there was [names removed ] who was at the door and they went 'what are you doing' and I said where were you, and they said get out, get out of here. (WM Simon)

Doing the job, dealing with the difficult situations, the tragic events '12 year old boy' (SM Amanda), the fatalities, or as Simon describes above, risky situations, it is a sense of a rite of passage, something that Firefighters accept as the rules, the need to prove themselves, a compromise, and do what they need to do. The culture of the Service is about being tested by others, the journey of becoming is about attitude, measured by your peers. The rules of being accepted:

... there was a dog brought out and they got me to do mouth to mouth on the bloody dog, you know what I mean, the dog was obviously dead, but you almost like went along with it and you thought, well actually I thought that was part of that acceptance thing and you thought I'm actually being accepted, that was the time you started to feel like you were part of the whole thing. (BM Daniel)

Being accepted also included the use of 'banter', described by one as 'playful jesting', having a laugh. In fact being included in banter was considered part of being accepted, an achievement, and recognition 'that you're competent and likewise you start to be involved in a bit of banter and

stuff like that' (FF Adam), willing to 'give it back'. Earning your spurs, as George describes:

... you had to take the banter, you had to take the flack, not all banter was good, aggressive it was whatever, whatever the reason you would earn those spurs. (WM George)

A test of attitude, a test of who you were, your personal robustness, as stated to Simon during his probation:

... all I got was this guy leaning out of the crew cab, 'if this is what you are going to be like you need not bother' right. (WM Simon)

So 'banter' could be considered oppressive, but in the case of those interviewed it was considered something to be endured, a measure of being accepted, sort of a test. By being included in 'banter' was considered positive, part of becoming a Firefighter. Earning the rite to respond was evidence of being accepted, becoming part of the crew, and becoming a Firefighter.

Earning your spurs, as described, revolved around the operational environment, proving you can do it, having the right attitude, and could fit in. This was something all were familiar with, something that everyone else had endured and passed on. Earning your spurs was considered an element of tradition, familiarity, and the way it is.

This rite of passage, endurance, attitude, and accumulation of operational incidents, and proving yourself in front of others and being tested and

accepted as part of the group, all focuses around becoming an operational Firefighter. By proving your ability, in the face of others, to do the job, it presents a culture that reinforces traditional rituals that test character, and operational suitability.

But what happens if you are not operational? Three of the interviewees worked within the Fire Protection department. Two of them at times were non-operational Station Officers, the other a non-operational Fire Protection officer and the first uniformed male member of staff who was non-operational.

Being described as the 'Shiny Trouser Brigade' (SM Barney), Fire Protection Officers met a certain level of resistance. Daniel refers to this as a result of lone working, and the nature of the work, and a sense of isolation from others, but for others it was perceived as more discriminatory. As SM Barney describes it:

Unfortunately Fire Safety was not particularly well viewed in South Yorkshire, referred to us at one officer's seminar as the Shiny Trouser Brigade. (SM Barney)

The role of the Fire Protection Officer was often not operational, which could have a detrimental effect on potential career progression, as the sentiment of a Protection Station Manager, as in this case was not well viewed, holding him back:

Again I was a bit miffed at that stage, having 'A' being a Station Officer and being knocked back down to a Watch Manager

effectively, but then being held back until they could get the people they wanted in post, then again yes again being in Fire Safety did not help at that stage because again it was not well viewed. (SM Barney)

Even when SM Barney was temporarily promoted, he refers to not being used as a response officer when a call came in 'they tended not to use you if you know what I mean.' (SM Barney)

Being operational, or the perception of not being operational, clearly had a detrimental effect on how others perceived you, how they accepted you as part of the organisation, limiting opportunities for progression, and being considered the 'right type of person'. A subsequent interview with Steve, the first male, uniformed protection officer (no operational commitment) highlighted this issue further.

On his first day, questions were asked 'how will you think about wearing the uniform and people thinking you are a Firefighter, a fireman at the time', being introduced to others as a 'gay and homosexual', discussions being held in front of him like 'I was sitting there working, and he said, you know [Name Removed], we made such a big mistake in bringing non operational people into FP' without reason'. (Mngr Steve)

At the time the Service already had a number of females in uniform, although as Steve states the issue was being a male, the first non-operational male in uniform:

The reason it is, I think where historically where CFS<sup>63</sup> were 99%, I can not think of a male CFS officer. Because of their heavy involvement in stations they were kind of more used to it, again when a FPO went on, there was that perception, again a male in a white shirt, taking the stereo typically the service is white males. (Steve)

This highlights a potential dominant male discourse around the operational environment, linked with an element of status associated with responding, heroic acts, a 'badge of honor', a masculine environment, in contrast to a more feminine, servile perception, socially stigmatised role of community safety and protection. This highlighted that acceptance was linked to gender appropriateness, evidenced by comments like 'gay and homosexual'.

This resulted in barriers being created, poor treatment, negative behaviour from others in the Service. As described below, a 'fingers up':

So I started the course and literally as soon as I finished the course the old extinguisher course, the kids went in and he [a Firefighter] shut the shutter down so I was stuck outside. It was like a real, 'fingers up', I thought that was a bit ... it was a real sort of that is it, you know what I mean. (Mngr Steve)

As described by all three Protection Officers, the relationship with not operating in a traditional operational role reduced opportunities for

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<sup>63</sup> CFS – Community Fire Safety

promotion, resulted in poor behaviour, harassment, a reluctance to being accepted, because 'you are not competent and it is unlikely you could ever be because you have not had the [operational experience].' (Mngr Steve). An element of visibility, being recognised for who you are, not, who you are not:

... am I invisible ... so I told someone and they said, 'they thought you were operational, you should take that as a pat on the back'. And it is a little bit, no no I think you have missed the point as well of what I'm getting at. (Mngr Steve)

Mike referred to an occasion where a senior officer's operational capability was questioned, resulting in him having to prove himself to his peers. Later in life when he challenged the particular officer at a retirement party, was told:

... he had been a DO [Divisional Officer] in charge of technical [non operational] the old man, [Chief Fire Officer] had never spoken to him. So he had literally not had a conversation with him at all, so he felt quite marginalised and out on a limb. (AM Mike)

This was later rationalised by Mike as not being able to fit in, which can lead to them reaffirming their identity, and manifesting as a symptom of isolation:

It is interesting at different times in your career and different cultures that you come across you think you're the problem but all you are picking up are the symptoms of someone else's problem and how it can manifest itself and can create anx. (AM Mike)

So in considering being accepted, it highlights a dominant operational ideology that creates prejudicial cultural barriers and reinforces a stereotypical masculine culture of oughtness.

It is interesting that during the Grenfell Tower fire and management meetings, the salience of the Fire Protection officer came to the forefront as an 'operational' position. During the interview with Steve he raised concern that Operational Managers would not engage with him or consider the protection team supporting operational risk assessments. But as a result of this particular incident, suddenly these barriers were broken down, Protection was the new Operations, it was now observed that due to the demands on protection and the impact of the cladding and associated national campaign around inspections and enforcement, the link to such a high profile 'fire', the salience of being a protection officer came out. It was amazing to observe people confirming their protection skills, previously they had kept silent, and some operational staff being excluded all together because they did not have any previous protection experience. This was similar to the way protection officers had been marginalised previously due to their lack of operational experience, signifying their operational currency had no value in this situation.

This indicated that the salience of identity is dictated by circumstance, the social relationship and the importance of the event. It highlights how a repertoire of possible selves, i.e. having a broad range of identities that can be enacted within different social and organisational settings, can be accepted or rejected based on the appropriateness of the situation. This

also highlights the importance of career choices, diversity of roles and the link with acceptance from others.

For protection officers this repertoire is limited to non-operational roles, hence often the salience within an operational group leads them to feel oppressed, i.e. highlighting sensitivities about the term operational. Operational is more common, basic, embedded within the culture of acceptance, where protection is more specific, functions in the background, but when called upon can become dominant.

But if we have multiple identities, context brings a common identity out that raises the salience of a particular identity within a group setting, and builds a common group identity that supports group cohesion and response. If the individual does not have this identity to pull from then fitting in is difficult, creating a temporal in-group and out-group situation that revolves around context, or a sustained division around a dominant culture.

If an individual has a dominant identity that is perceived as not common for others (Protection Officers in this case) then this also reaffirms the common 'anti-identity' targeting the individual, creating a sense of isolation or rejection until such a time as the context changes. In the majority of cases this context revolves around the dominant task environment of operational response and is demonstrated as a struggle amongst Protection Officers, who are often perceived as the out-group and treated as such.

So being accepted revolves around context, in this case, the common context being one of an operational environment, but context can change. In

the literature it was clear people have multiple identities, which become more salient in different circumstances. But being accepted is noticed here as the synergy between a salient identity and the context. Where there is a conflict, as in the case of Protection Officers and a dominant operational environment (context) then being accepted is difficult. When the context changes, then so do the dynamics of group and acceptance, the relevance of multiple identities converge in response to the changing circumstance (Grenfell). This highlights that being accepted is wider than personal acceptance. It is a synergy between who you are and the dominant context at a particular time, supporting that acceptance can be fluid, temporal, circumstantial, a convergence of common identities that have a relevance to the situation.

### **Being a Firefighter (Self Acceptance)**

When people believed they had become a Firefighter and that sense of self-acceptance changed as they moved through their career. This was when they first started in the organisation, or when they first wore the uniform. This changed later as they gained wider experience, when they passed out from training school, or they had dealt with their first incident or experienced the same as others.

Crafting their concept of self image, self-acceptance in being a Firefighter revolved around competence, a sense of achievement, experiences, a reflection of past employment and who they are now, making a difference, a sense of self worth.

Wearing the uniform was clearly an important factor, a physical sign of being part of the group, but self-acceptance was dominated by social acceptance, being treated as an equal, being recognised as yourself and a sense of belonging.

We have already discussed the challenges associated with Steve's particular circumstances, but being accepted, the point in which he believed he was accepted was a simple thing, a cup of tea:

When the Chief offered to make me a cup of tea when I needed to brief him on a prohibition, that was a big changing point for that level of, there is no way to explain to anybody, that element that would develop that feeling and that change. (Steve)

The sense of self-acceptance is when you have been socially accepted, being treated for who you are, being recognised for who you are, 'the views and opinions of other people because of who I am and where I have come from' (FF John), a realisation that goes beyond performing, but fitting in, as Daniel describes:

The fact that you had done something, you had done your job if you like, that you had sort of trained to do, and the people around you, they were all a lot older as well, I was like ... they were all well in the 30s and I thought well actually I do sort of fit in here, it feels quite good. (BM Daniel)

A sense of self-achievement, something that is earned, proven, self-pride, 'I like to feel that I've got where I am because of who I am and not because of what I am [Female]'. (SM Amanda)

Performing the job, a reflection of shared experiences with others, an understanding and realisation what the job is all about:

I think until that point you do not feel part of the team because you have not experienced the same as everyone else has, because everyone else was 15 year men, I did not feel I was part of that until I had experienced that, you know been to a fire with a BA set on and done some firefighting, I think from that point onwards then I thought right that is it, I know what I'm doing now, I've experienced it.

(SM Barney)

As such, self-acceptance is continually under review, based on who you are in the present and how you compare yourself to others.

### **Organisational Memory 'Past, present and future'**

Becoming a Firefighter is something that is framed in tradition, a reflection of the past, who you aspire to be, who you are measured against, how you are expected to behave, a reflection of a period in time, society, technology or age.

Time has been one of those common dynamics that have been raised during each interview, either referring to a specific time in people's lives, time in society or a time period within an organisational context.

### **A 30 year career**

The Service culture is dominated by a 30-year career. Bound by a pension that requires a commitment to stay, a lifespan that sees people grow up together, share life's experiences, as Steve puts it, enter a countdown phase:

I see it here, when people join the Service, they put a date on the calendar, flick through 30 years and put a date on when they are leaving. I thought that is really weird, you are working on that date 5 years before you go, you are already working to a date. (Steve)

The decision to join the Service, providing a sense of security, an investment, support for competing pressures like family commitments, attracts people to a Firefighter career:

There were several things that attracted me to the Fire Service, and when I look back at it these days and I go, how was I so astute to that at that age, because I was a dad at 17. One was the pension, what the hell was I thinking about the pension for at 17 for God's sake.

(WM Simon)

In 2015, following Government proposals to change the pension, now introduced (although currently subject to appeal), a national dispute resulted in the Fire Service striking to protect their current pension conditions. The outcome now sees Firefighters who previously had a 30-year career, having to work a further 10 years (40-year career). This alongside changes to the duty system or personal decisions around promotion enables a sense of

reflection, highlighting some of the reasons why people joined the Service in the first place:

If I knew what I know now, would I have joined? Maybe, because I do not do now what I used to do, the 2 days 2 nights 4 days off, I know the pension is not there, you know, would I join and what reasons would I join for, that would be an interesting question. (AM Richard)

This is clearly a reflection of the change, the personal impact, a response to his changing circumstances and an element of reflection. SM Barney was interviewed on his last day of duty, the day he officially retired after 30 years service:

I mean the fact that people have got to work for 40 years and the pension is not as good now compared to what it was, there will still be no shortage of people wanting to join. (SM Barney)

Clearly, the pension is not the only reason why people join the Service but it does bind people together for a significant period of time. The impact being that people will change, they will have different priorities along this journey. The organisation will need to respond or accommodate to these changes as they are to be anticipated, to be accepted and to be maximised. Although the pension is not the focus of this study it does provide a framework for holding people's commitment, to support other lifestyle choices. It is a motivator by time served, a countdown, providing a sense of security, as well as being a de-motivator, placing restriction of movement, binding

people by personal benefits, a commitment to be endured, and being bound into a lifelong profession through the pension.

**Organisational Memory [Time Served, Reflections and Stories]  
reinforcing culture**

Being bound together through a 30-year career, shared learning and reflections of the past reinforces the process of becoming a Firefighter and 'accepting the baton'. As discussed within the previous section, it is this passing on of knowledge, standards, how to behave, that is tested and proven that influences if you are accepted, or not, into the Service.

But how people are inducted, accepted, is a reflection of the current Firefighters, the culture, by passing on their experience, which was influenced by how they were treated, how they were inducted and who inducted them at that particular time. The process has become cyclical, firmly rooting the culture in the past, the previous generation, by the reproduction of what it was like to be a Firefighter then, when they joined.

Passing on knowledge, supporting people, as John mentions 'So they had a vested interest in me as well' (FF John), being mutually beneficial, not only supporting others, but reaffirming themselves.

Fortified by repetitive drills, set procedures, similar experiences, family tradition, stories of incidents, and a reflection of a period in time, reinforces images of the past:

They were very, very keen to show you the ropes. Very keen to and it was show you the ropes, very keen to sort of impart knowledge, a lot

of traditional drilling done at that time which I think made you more part of the group quicker, possibly. (FF Adam)

So passing on tradition is not only part of developing someone, supporting them through shared knowledge to become a better Firefighter, it is about being part of the group, settling in, being accepted, and part of becoming a Firefighter. As Mike puts it, an element 'institutional embeddedness', that will hinder change, and something people will struggle with:

I think those people who have been in for a number of years, joined within a paradigm in their mind of response, even pre 2004 [Fire Services Act] will really struggle with that, unless they are adaptors, and those who joined post 2004, they will still struggle with that because of the culture they are living with, and some of the stories they are listening to, they are actually having that institutional embeddedness of how it used to be. (AM Mike)

How it used to be, establishes a hierarchy of belonging and who you are, a justification that is based on memories and stories that are used as currency. A process of self-justification and a reflection of a period in time, in being busier in the past 'of course 20 years ago it was busier than it is today' (WM Tim), reaffirming greater operational competence, and a different type of person, with greater operational focus, and enhanced credibility:

Er so, so the problem they have now is we had less kit to play with then and we were not tested in the same way. We had the time then, we were allowed to play with it and we had leaders that were

practically good and we did play with it. That was our key priority was to be good at that. That was our focus. (WM George)

An operational focus that reaffirms their competence, status, providing a narrative of being a 'proper Firefighter', a different type of person than now, the old breed. This was highlighted when George described his son, who is also a Firefighter, comparing him to what he believes is the ideal:

... he's like a Firefighter 30 years ago, he just absolutely does not care what he's asked to do he just wants to do it. (WM George)

A traditional view, and a reflection of who George was, that period in his past that describes who he was and who he is, how he expects people to act, the type of character needed, and the importance of discipline, commitment and operational focus.

Although these points highlight the difference between then and now, it also reinforces how Firefighters reaffirm themselves, compare themselves, maintain their currency and hierarchy amongst others especially when dealing with incidents.

The culture has a hold over people, limits progression, is restrictive, has an element of standardisation, that potentially hinders change or freedom of thought. As Daniel describes here regarding taking the exams:

.... and pretty early on in my career I had some advice from a guy called [Name removed] who was a DO, he was our District Commander and he said 'what ever you do, do all your promotion

exams early while you are still keen.. you know what I mean, before you get the enthusiasm bashed out of you by people that you work with. (BM Daniel)

So becoming a Firefighter is bound by rules and behaviours, shared experiences of others, that are embedded in the past, based on being accepted within a traditional culture, with high expectations and behaviours that are passed on, cyclical, binding the culture to the past, and a sense of belonging.

Firefighters reinforce images of the past to maintain currency of their identity, anchoring the culture to traditional views of what it is to be a Firefighter, underpinning status and belonging, restricting choice and opportunities for organisational change.

### **Cultural era in society influencing organisational behaviour**

But culture runs in parallel with society, national culture, and a particular period in time. Adam emphasises this through the example of a National Service, how it implied militaristic standards, something others described as needing to polish things, standing to attention, militaristic. Adam makes reference to the people who inducted him into the Service at that time, them being a product of this period having a strong influence on the organisation at that particular time:

... It was the end of the people that had done National Service perhaps even then. You know so you'd got a slightly different culture, certainly more militaristic um...perhaps not a bad thing. (FF Adam)

Michael describes this as 'very old school', having to 'paint things to death', influencing management styles and expectations:

I look back, going back to the old days when we used to paint things to death, but we had [Name Removed] rock up one year. [Name Removed] was very old school, you know he'd keep ferreting to find some dust with me. Even if it was right on top of the truck he'd find it. But he drew down into every last nut and bolt and he made it work.  
(WM Michael)

The influences of these periods are still evident today, within culture and practice, although external pressures, such as changes to technology, new procedures and equipment, are placing increased pressure in maintaining competence:

And the amount of time I feel I have to keep people skilled and professional with the ever-increasing demand, because it is the ridiculous amount of competency it is now compared to what it was 30 years ago. I have a lot less time now than I did. (WM George)

The Service recognises the need to change, that things are changing but the culture is resistant to change, to let go of what they know, who they are. How they reaffirm themselves to self and others. A sense of being, belonging, an element of vulnerability that could be considered resistant to change as Adam says:

The worlds, the worlds changing and its changing incredibly rapidly.  
And we are clinging on with our fingertips trying not to change and  
we've got to. (FF Adam)

The modern Fire Service is rooted in the dominant national culture at its time of inception, reinforcing echoes of a period in time, that exists in tension with advances in technology or the desire to change.

### **A period in time**

In considering the future, the majority of those interviewed reflected on the past, and a previous period in time.

Talking about how morale was better, they were busier, a strong sense of 'the good old days' when considering the current challenges facing the Service. By reflecting on the past they positively highlighted concerns about the future, a change from the norm, what they knew. Dismissive of change, referring to it as a cycle, something they had experienced before, nothing new, creating a sense that normality will return eventually:

I have probably seen it probably go full circle to be honest, because when I first joined, because everything goes in circles does not it, because before I joined there was Whole-time retained, there were people who did used to do both and then it stopped, erm .. so in years when I first joined, and now it has come back again. (FF Adam)

In response to the drive for increased prevention, questions were raised over the current benefits, a negative comparison of now, compared to a positive reflection of the past, further reinforcing the sense of a status quo,

going back to tradition, holding onto the past. This lead to a resistance to acknowledge the need for change:

... if they have been in any length of time, the common thread will always be, you know, we can, if we went back another 10 years, 15 years what we were doing then, we were keeping our communities far safer than what we are doing now. Just not all about firefighting ...

(WM Michael)

The sense of poor morale, the period of change from 'the good old days' is indirectly referenced to the period of industrial action<sup>64</sup> which, in addition to contractual changes, has also created a sense of division between Firefighters (the majority RDS) who worked during the strikes, and others who were on strike (the majority WDS). Although this is not the focus of this study, as Amanda mentions:

And then we had that strike and things started to change, we've never actually got back to where we were. (SM Amanda)

In considering Amanda's words, getting back to where we were, seems to be the culture's response to change, something to endure, temporary, will return to normal, and goes in cycles.

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<sup>64</sup> Industrial Action - Fire Service went through a national dispute in 2002-2003 over pay, a further dispute in 2015 over pensions. Although resulting in changes to pay scales, this also saw an element of workforce reform, changes to the development processes, and a shift from a 30-year pension to 40 years.

Organisational memory reinforces the notion that change is temporary, something to be endured, and that normality will return, breaking the commitment and potential success of change initiatives.

### **Organisational Discretion 'Setting the constructs for identity work'**

It is clear that the structure, working arrangements and culture strongly influence what it means to be a Firefighter, who they are or how they should act.

Where the Service has discretion is particularly important in setting the environment for identity work. The two main areas identified here are the different duty systems, the whole-time duty system (WDS) and retained duty system (RDS).

#### **Whole-time Duty System**

Proposed changes to the WDS duty system highlighted the importance of the watches.

Empirical data was captured during a number of managerial meetings with staff, discussing changes to the WDS duty system and a proposed self-rostering rota as used in other Services. This allows Firefighters discretion on the days they work (within clear parameters) and who they work with. This was further supported by the Fire Executive Group, in which each FEG member met with all watches across the county to further discuss these issues. Alongside interview data, this has highlighted the significance of watch membership, watch identity and group behaviour. Emphasising a sense of fear and concern if the watches were to be taken away:

We do not know people's skills/experience, we go into burning buildings. We are the one's at risk and can die. (Stn 10)

Implying a family culture, 'Watch is like a family... supportive' (Stn 11), living and working together and sharing special occasions, 'Christmas Day working Etc.' (Stn 20). The social aspects of the group reinforcing a group approach 'Team members will become close... individuals more solo' (Stn 12), supporting each other, a way of coping 'After a particularly messy job, we sit down as a team afterwards and talk about things – it is extremely supportive and valuable' (Stn 10), that if removed will create anxiety and stress:

This will contribute towards increased stress and anxiety, we already do not know what we'll be going out to deal with on a daily basis, but we do have the stability and confidence that we'll be working as a close knit team to support one another. If that level of uncertainty is removed, it will increase stress and anxiety. Some will cope with this, but many will not. (Stn 11)

Watch identity, and in-group reflection reinforced the watch system and their membership of it, manifesting in resistance to proposed changes and reinforcement of the watch based culture. A sense of teamwork 'It is far safer to train with people you work with all the time', how knowing each other's strengths and weaknesses supports operational competence 'We all know each other's strengths and weaknesses. We look out for each other' (Stn 12). Individually vulnerable, but together they are safer and more

effective, 'The more our team is gelled together, the better we perform and the safer we are' (Stn 11).

There is this strong reliance on each other, and a recognition in which they will potentially operate within, they need to be reassured, and confident in the person they work with, 'At the end of the day, my watch keeps me safe'. This reliance on each other underpins positive in-group affiliation and watch identity, which reinforces the dependency they have on each other. Each watch alluded to themselves as the 'best watch' demonstrating a sense of loyalty 'loyalty to the watch keeps us going', even referring to themselves as specialist 'we are a specialist unit, and you need to be able to trust the person/people you're with in dangerous situations'.

The watch based duty system reinforces operational ideology and groupthink, reducing individuality and performance. So responses to managerial proposals to change the duty system received a significant amount of resistance, highlighting the importance of the watch based system in providing an element of security to individuals 'Terrifying - breaking the watch' (Stn 22), but a sense of collective resistance to change:

Feels like this is an attack on the watches – it is like management are looking to break down the watch units to be able to better target individuals with imposed changes. (Stn 10)

The WDS reinforces this elitist attitude, particularly by comparison with the RDS through the availability of time, the ability for additional training, or the exposure to more incidents:

Yes, because I was not a Fireman in the Retained, and that was one comment when I went to training school, I came back and I was asked the question about err... training school and everything, my comment was that I can not believe you put me on a fire engine with two weeks training, erm ... after I've been to where I've been for 13 weeks and learnt what I've learnt. (FF Matthew)

But along with a more privileged position, in comparison to the RDS, the WDS contract is more of a job, which breeds its own responses to work load and commitment:

And I think some of the negative side of the whole time is that I hear a lot of people moan, you get a job [incident] and there will be some people go F\*\*\*ing hell, bells going again, you think hold on a minute that is what we are here for! That is, that is our bread and butter. Um and that annoys me because that is what we are here for. You know and that is our main role. Its when the bells go is to go out of that door and help whoever needs help. But you do not hear that on retained. I can honestly put my hand on my heart and say I do not think I've ever heard someone go oh the alerters have gone off. Their attitude is the alerters have gone off and they want to go. (WM Jason)

The review of the WDS focussed on ensuring a more efficient use of time and personnel, but it also highlighted how the duty system supported wider

opportunities for Firefighters, and their individual lifestyle choices, in this case, the ability to undertake secondary employment:

Um and at the same time [Name removed] was holding down 2 or 3 jobs, he'd fall asleep on a Sunday afternoon um and I used to sit and study and go up in the quiet room and do some study. And he would sit there snoring in front of the television. (AM Mike)

The WDS duty system clearly not only provides an element of reassurance, but also reinforces a group culture that is defended by the perceived risks of operational incidents. But when you look more carefully, there is also an element of individual benefits, relaxed attitude, and comfort, which reinforces personal benefits, and a more self orientated mind-set that affects performance.

### **Retained Duty System**

There is clearly a divide between the RDS and the WDS in how they perceive each other:

I think there is...what the people will always think of the whole time as being perhaps the pinnacle of being a Firefighter and again that probably peoples misconceptions of how our system works. (FF Adam)

The RDS being described more as a vocation, a way of life, and ideology around commitment, community connection that is less motivated by

money. Although as Adam describes, views from the WDS are often misconceptions, a lack of understanding built around a comparison of training time, exposure to incidents and historical division caused by strikes.

Following the introduction of Dual Contracts, (WDS doing RDS contracts in their local area), and RDS staff having temporary WDS contracts, there is now greater fertilization of knowledge and understanding between the two specific areas, although Firefighter identity is still characterised by WDS and RDS division. As George describes, a perception that is created through a lack of understanding that he learnt when taking on an RDS contract in addition to his WDS role:

The thing that surprised me is that I thought there will not be anything, it will never go off, it drove me mad [alerter] it was going off all the time. I thought how on earth do people do this, I do not know how they do it, but I think my first night I ever had a bleeper, it went off twice, I just thought Christ, it is a bit of a pain in the arse really. But I enjoyed the, I enjoyed working with them, it was good fun. I enjoyed the opportunity to support them and develop them, I think I developed them.

(WM George)

Although it is interesting to note that George still refers to the RDS as 'them', and still acknowledges himself as WDS, supporting the RDS, and developing them. Reinforcing this sense of division and elitist view of the WDS:

I think people [WDS] are a bit peed off because the people that are coming from the retained and getting whole time jobs are not up to standard but they're doing it because they are a bod [a Firefighter on the appliance]. (WM Jason)

The principle of a Firefighter is a Firefighter is clearly still under review. But organisational discretion to have RDS staff on temporary WDS contracts and vice versa is starting to bridge this gap, although potentially reiterating the WDS as more prestigious:

But I think I personally believe having these short term contracts, whatever having retained staff on whole time stations, I think personally its built a lot of bridges and its making people realise that actually the retained are not just, I think one of the words was a 'plastic fireman' I heard once. Erm but I think it has helped close that divide a lot more. (FF John)

Clearly a Firefighter is not a Firefighter if they are divided by design.

Firefighters continually compare themselves positively to others to improve their self-esteem and sense of self.

**Summary of 'Becoming' and relevance to study**

This section was dominated by culture, how people are inducted into the Service, and the significance of the operational environment in how people act, rely upon, and support each other.

We saw that Firefighters are inducted at a vulnerable stage in their lives and mature within a structured and disciplined setting, overcoming a sense of vulnerability in applying new skills in practice through the 'parental' support of their peers.

Being accepted is key to achieving the competence in doing the job, through the sharing of tacit knowledge, from peers, contextualising basic training by providing a sense of reality. A culture based on an informal hierarchy around experience gained through operational incidents, that reinforces time served or significant events as currency in the 'pecking order', is underpinned by traditional rituals that test character and operational suitability. A dominant operational ideology exists that creates prejudicial cultural barriers that reinforce a stereotypical masculine culture.

Self-acceptance is continually under review, based on who you are in the present and how you compare yourself to others.

Firefighters are bound into a lifelong profession through the pension, reinforcing images of the past to maintain currency of their identity and position. This anchors the culture to traditional views of what it is to be a Firefighter, that underpins their status and belonging.

The modern Fire Service is rooted in the past, influenced by the national culture at that time, and exists in tension with advances in technology or the desire to change. Organisational memory reinforces the notion that change is temporary, something to be endured, and that normality will return, breaking the commitment and potential success of change initiatives.

The watch based duty system reinforces operational ideology and groupthink, reducing individuality and performance. A Firefighter is not a Firefighter if they are divided by design. Firefighters continually compare themselves positively to others to improve their self-esteem and sense of self, reinforcing the sense of same, or difference.

In the next section, we look at the social and societal connection with who they are, and particularly who they are not. We look at what it means to be a Firefighter and what this means at this particular time of change.

***Summary of points identified***

- Firefighters are inducted at a vulnerable stage in their lives and mature within a structured and disciplined setting that revolves around a dominant operational environment.
- New Firefighters overcome a sense of vulnerability in applying new skills in practice through the parental support of peers.
- Being accepted is key to achieving the competence in doing the job, through the sharing of tacit knowledge, from peers, and helps contextualise basic training by providing a sense of reality.

- Fire Service culture is based on an informal hierarchy around experience gained through operational incidents, that reinforces time served or significant events as currency in the 'pecking order'.
- Firefighter culture reinforces traditional rituals that test character and operational suitability.
- A dominant operational ideology creates prejudicial cultural barriers and reinforces a stereotypical masculine culture of oughtness.
- Acceptance can be fluid, temporal, circumstantial, a convergence of common identities that have a relevance to the situation.
- Self-acceptance is continually under review, based on who you are in the present and how you compare yourself to others.
- Firefighters are bound into a lifelong profession through the pension.
- Firefighters reinforce images of the past to maintain currency of their identity, anchoring the culture to traditional views of what it is to be a Firefighter, underpinning status and belonging.
- The modern Fire Service is rooted in the dominant national culture at its time of inception. Being a reflection of a period of time that exists in tension with advances in technology or the desire to change.
- Organisational memory reinforces the notion that change is temporary, something to be endured, and that normality will return, breaking the commitment and potential success of change initiatives.
- The watch based duty system reinforces operational ideology and groupthink, reducing individuality and performance.

- A Firefighter is not a Firefighter if they are divided by design.  
Firefighters continually compare themselves positively to others to improve their self-esteem and sense of self.

## **‘Performing in the eyes of others’ – The societal and social connection with ‘who we are’**

In the previous section it was evident that becoming a Firefighter is framed within a traditional culture, group dynamics, strong organisational memory, and the need to be accepted and to be recognised. Becoming a Firefighter is a rite of passage, something that has to be earned and proven ‘in the eyes of others’.

In this section we now extend the notion of ‘Agency’ as setting the context for identity work, to include the wider social and societal aspects of who they are, who they should be, and consider what this means for Firefighter Identity at this time of change.

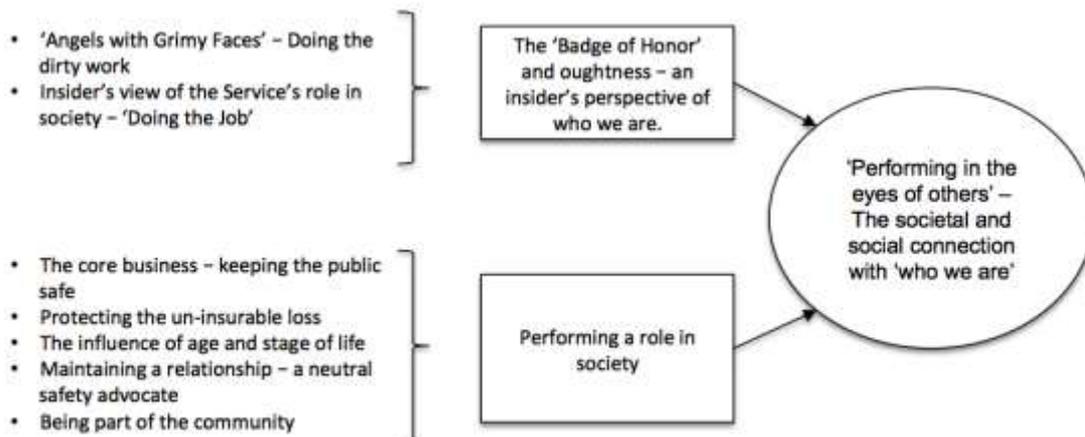
The previous two sections highlighted the importance of wanting to be a Firefighter and the struggles of becoming a Firefighter within a traditional culture. But as a public entity, the Service has a clear role to play in society, which in turn implies a sense of ‘oughtness’ in who they are, and how they should act, in turn reinforced by a societal perception of who they are expected to be, and the role they should play.

At this particular time of change, it is this perception of who they are, or expected to be that is potentially challenged by the changing financial landscape, diversification of role and political ideology to collaborate with emergency Services that highlights potential opportunities, or conflict in purpose.

'Performing in the eyes of others', highlights the social and societal connection with 'who we are'. This is explored further across two specific areas:

- The 'Badge of Honour' and oughtness – an insider's perspective of who we are.
- Performing a role in society, the functionalist perspective of who we are expected to be.

It should be noted that this is intentionally viewed from an insider's perspective, concerned with how Firefighters believe they are viewed, and how they should act in the eyes of others. This is to illuminate the context in which they situate themselves and their reaction to changing circumstances.



**Figure 11 – 'Performing in the eyes of others' – The societal and social connection with 'who we are'** (Created by the author: Hallam 2018)

**The ‘Badge of Honour’ and oughtness – an insider’s perspective of who we are**

Firefighters describe the nature of their work, emphasising dirty work through the use of war stories<sup>65</sup>, used as currency, a badge of honour to justify their behaviour, a test of character that reinforces reliability, a bond, trust, and a sense of belonging.

The task environment of operational incidents dominated stories of culture and acceptance. But this internal perception of who they are, how they react with each other and how they negotiate the organisational terrain around acceptance and belonging is shadowed by an external perception of the role. This is something that drove some to join the Service, to be a Firefighter, and highlighting this not only defines who they are but how they should act.

There is this inextricable link between the public’s perception of the Service, the privileged position they are given, that creates an unwritten contract, determining public expectation and reward. But this ‘badge of honour’ comes at a cost, and directly links with unique opportunities for improving community safety. It is this synergy of public sentiment and expectation that is of concern to Firefighters during collaboration.

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<sup>65</sup> War Stories – stories of incidents they have attended, heroic acts or significant events based around the operational environment. Often highlighting rescues, large fires or traumatic extrications.

### **'Angels with Grimy Faces' - Doing the Dirty Work**

The term dirty work in this context refers to those jobs that society needs to be done; they have their place for society to function, but can be seen as less desirable by others. As described by SM Barney, being a Firefighter involves an element of selfless commitment:

... I think that it is probably indicative of what I think being in the Fire Service is about, about doing the job, putting yourself at risk sometimes for the benefit of others. (SM Barney)

An element of risk taking, putting others' safety before your own, as Michael mentions, not wanting anything in return:

One who just gives everything, does not want anything back ... (WM Michael)

Carefully taking calculated risk, which you would not normally expect to take in other industries. As FF John explains during a trench collapse, needing to operate with limited equipment to carry out a rescue:

Trench collapse ... we put a certain amount of safe systems that work in that they protect us to a certain state, but then for all those other little bits and pieces we do not have the resources to be able to do all that sort of stuff. (FF John)

A job that is surrounded with personal cost, the incidents they have seen, the sights, smells and memories:

The smells, it is most definitely the smells. Um I think, yeh, you do remember each face. One for me that will always brings me back is one on the A14 um... the 2 young, young couple that were driving and they'd been to university, they were driving home. Mercedes driving the other way trying to commit suicide, turned all his lights off, came down the wrong way on the A14 and boom, we are first pump in attendance and I remember turning up all you saw was them both literally squashed in half. Whenever I see people, girls with their feet on the dash, because that is how she had her feet on the dash, it just transports me straight there. (WM Jason)

Living with those memories is something many described, especially those that involved young children. As Michael describes, you never forget the ones you lose. The acknowledgement that the job involves dirty work, there will be lose of life, it will be difficult, but it is something the can be managed, has to be overcome and to be accepted:

Challenging is ... erm ... same for you [researcher], is dealing with the child you have not saved, you can remember all the ones that you have not saved, you never remember the ones you have saved, but each one is a disappointment, because you know we get on with it, you get on the horse and ride the horse, get back on the bike, once you fall of you get back on, that was the job. So yes, regret, cannot save everyone, but we have had some great jobs, had some great times, with the crew. (WM Michael)

It is understandable that dirty work in this context is rewarded with a sense of a badge of honour by acknowledging losses of life as it is important to accept this element of the job, it cannot be controlled, it happens, and without accepting death then people would not be able to continue. For there to be rescues, for people to survive, there has to be death. Dealing with these difficult incidents provides an element of motivation. An emphasis to protect life, to share experiences and to learn from what they have seen, reinforces positive prevention activity:

Yes it is a role, in that the prevention side erm ... of the work that we as Firefighters are employed to do, erm ... so the prevention, education side, water awareness, road safety, and everything we are involved in, that our experiences of in the big wide world can educate people.

(FF Adam)

Although accepted by role, the link between prevention, protection and response is something reinforced by personal stories, the personal impact. The shared experiences and understanding that supports the Firefighter's role in protecting the community maintains this connection to a common purpose:

I think it is about preventing fires, preventing emergencies from happening, it is about protecting people. (AM Mike)

A learnt skill that links the key themes together, based on experience, time served, rationalising a sense of personal cost and the ability to direct energy towards saving more lives. Opening their eyes as WM Tim describes:

... we were doing these checks, tyre checks on these cars and I learnt quite a bit from it, what difference it makes, just 1.6mm. What difference 5mm makes, it is certainly between life and death. And it opened my eyes to it and it opened the public eyes to it and I thought that is probably going to save a life somewhere in the country, someone will pick that up on the back of that, they'll get their tyres done. Where I used to be, I'll be alright its down to minimum you know it fails you on a Mot but it is more important than that. (WM Tim)

In considering the impact of dirty work, this highlights the family culture and parental approach to support. As Michael puts it, not only caring of the work you do but of the people you work with:

But yeh that is what the job is about caring, care of your work, care of the people you work with, and care of the, you know, people that you are trying to help. (WM Michael)

To do the right thing, without expecting any thing in return:

I suppose it is the getting on with, from an individual point of view, it is the getting on with the job and not expecting anything back.

(SM Barney)

The realisation that community prevention saves lives seems to be something that is learnt, developed, based on a reflection of operational experience, in Mike's case, a reflection that takes time:

... actually recognising the jobs we had been to, the incidents we had dealt with, fires and rescues and all the rest of it and then going out and doing a school visit, probably appreciating I had probably saved more peoples lives in an hour on a school visit than I had in the previous nine months. (AM Mike)

This connection with the role of the Service in preventing as well as responding to incidents 'It has been massive, it has been a huge journey, to get acceptance of that' (AM Richard), highlights the dominance of a operational perspective even though there is a self realisation over time that more lives are saved through this activity. This reinforces the idea of a salient operational identity, in the public's and the Firefighter's eyes, that only changes through shared experiences and reflection.

So the cost of operational incidents reinforces the importance and impact of preventative activities and is used as a coping strategy for many Firefighters.

### **Insider's view of the Service's role in society – Doing the Job**

Doing the job is surrounded by a sense of pride, being proud of what they do, the relationship they have with the public and a sense of responsibility.

Pride in membership was either by being able to tell people 'When you say it is working for the Fire Service it is that great big sense of pride' (Mngr

Steve) or being recognised as joining a long list of people who have done the role before you:

I have got a degree of pride in saying that I have been in, it is a big old list now of people out there, but you know, I think to sort of, when people say to you, are you still in the Fire Brigade, you still in the Fire Brigade, you still doing it. (FF Adam)

There is not only a strong sense of pride through membership but also through the recognition by others. But as Amanda says, being proud is not everything:

Do not get me wrong, I'm completely and utterly proud of what I do, but there is an element of that is not what I do it for. (SM Amanda)

Mike describes this as having pride in being prepared; going the extra mile to ensure your readiness, being able to act, fulfil a role, to respond:

I used to do a lot of reading around incidents, previous fires, emergencies and I thought that actually, that I was well placed to be able to deal with different challenges that came my way with the different skills I had got and I thought I could bring people together and I could share that knowledge, create teams and I was, I was really fascinated by that, and yeh, that spurred me on that motivated me.

(AM Mike)

Motivations split between, working with others on the station, 'getting out and seeing people in the community' (FF Adam), having pride in your work and being prepared, performing a meaningful role, and being recognised. The importance of being accepted for who you are, what you have achieved supported pride in membership:

I think that is when people know [Name Removed] and they see me at jobs more and stuff like that, so I think that is when it clicked I suppose... (FF Brian)

Working for the Service is seen as a privilege, something that is closely connected with how the Service is viewed by the public, a sense of satisfaction, recognition and prestige. As Steve describes it, the Service is one of the top three organisations to work for:

Without over-egging it, almost a privilege, to be part of one of the top three brands in this county. (Steve)

A sense of pride in how others see you as a member of the Service links nicely to the societal and social connection with who we are, and particularly who we are not.

It is clear that all have an emotional connection to being a Firefighter, and an element of the excitement of the job. As SM Barney puts it 'we used to be busy, we were always out on shouts, BA<sup>66</sup> all the time', The excitement

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<sup>66</sup> BA – Breathing apparatus.

of the unknown 'I like getting out of bed and coming to work and truthfully not knowing what might happen. That is so exciting' (WM George), something that is sustained, you never get bored of:

I have enjoyed it all, I still enjoy it as much now as I did, which sounds very, a little bit kiddish and childish, no matter how many times you have done it there is a fun element of driving up here and seeing what you have got, there is still an element of driving somewhere and erm ... (WM George)

Regularly having an impact on what they do:

That when you go out and you make a difference to someone's life, which we do probably on a shiftly basis. Whether it be as simple as getting someone out of a lift or whether it is as simple as someone's got poorly and we have gone out and we have just turned up, you know from a co-responding point of view. (WM Jason)

Personally rewarding, not just the big and exciting jobs, but also the smaller ones, the ones that you can connect with and make a real difference:

And yes it is fun and dramatic [large fires] and it looks impressive but to me, there are the smaller jobs, can be far, far, far more rewarding.

(FF Adam)

Motivations revolved around, as WM Simon states 'the whole appeal of just helping people', pride revolves around being prepared, being motivated by things you believe in, having professional pride, as Mike states:

I do not make the emergencies happen, I thought I was a good person, good leader, good manager to be able then to help those people who were going to be faced with those difficult times. So that was one of the things that motivated me. (AM Mike)

Pride was a sense of commitment, how you act, 'doing it in a positive way', a sense of achievement, being prepared, training, personal fitness and standards. Having empathy to those affected, performing a role in society, being held in high esteem and meeting expectations signifies how pride in membership and commitment is reinforced through public image.

### **Performing a role in society**

The Fire and Rescue Service Act (2004) along with other Civil

Contingencies legislation defines the role the Service has to play in society:

- It has boundaries, providing an element of assurance and accountability.
- It is written down and fixed, prescribed, determining consistent action and responsibility that multiple 'actors' can pick up and perform.
- It is defined by legislation, role maps, standard operating procedures, job descriptions, pay scales and rank structures.
- It provides the basis of structure, replication, agreement, bargaining, conflict and restriction of practice.
- That is reinforced by a perceived societal view that revolves around a fixed understanding of role that emphasises an expectation of being

there, an insurance policy, reinforcing a dominant response orientated role.

But how Firefighters see themselves was less restricted by rules, it was more fluid, linked to personal values, beliefs, and motivations that are associated with the social and societal view as neutral community advocates. This indicates that Firefighters have multiple identities that are acted out in different settings, events and social groups. How they believe they are seen or how they should act was wider than that defined by policy, legislation or job description. It was a role built around public and personal expectation of how a Firefighter is viewed or should act.

### **The core business - Keeping the public safe**

'The role of the Service is ultimately to keep the public safe' (WM Tim) but how this is achieved received mixed views that focussed on operational incidents, prevention and protection. Mike articulates the role of the Service as 'preventing fires, preventing emergencies from happening, it is about protecting people', collectively described by Daniel as community protection:

I think the role of the Service in very, very general terms is to protect the community, so whether that is through operational response, or whether that is through prevention work that is obviously grown, ultimately it is about people's days better than what it was before we turned up if you like, whichever way we do that, so that sort of community protection is the thing is in a nut shell ... (BM Daniel)

Being multi-faceted, contextual, inextricably linked to community expectations, as WM Simon describes 'you have got to wear different hats here, whether it is community related or incident related' (WM Simon), mutually respected, either through community engagement 'and the respect that you get from it', or achieving the public's expectations operationally:

I would say that to me is the Fire Service, is a little bit of chaos at the start [...] but that to me is how we are perceived within the public's eye, everybody just gets stuck in and, within chaos, calmed and provided reassurance. (WM Simon)

Michael refers to this as 'making their day a little bit better by being there' (WM Michael), or an element of selfless commitment 'from an individual point of view. It is the getting on with the job and not expecting anything back' (SM Barney), recognising the potential impact and reacting:

... it was coming out like a flame thrower and was going straight on an acetylene cylinder that was just sat there and it was one of those moments when you think if I do not move that now that is going to blow and everybody's going to be in trouble. (SM Barney)

Keeping the public safe is far more than responding to incidents, it is about meeting the public's and your own expectations, as John says:

... we are the go to people when something happens to somebody and it is the worst moment in their life that anything that can happen in regards to a fire or a car crash, you know, a predicament they have been put in and it is like, we are the first face they see. (FF John)

Clearly performing in the public's eyes, trusted, mutually respected, an appreciation that is developed and understood, that involves standing by for the action, and providing an 'insurance policy':

There has always got to be that element of emergency response, that is never, that is never going to go away. And there is going to be that element of waiting for that response. But I think the, the time in-between we've got to start finding some more productive stuff to do.

(FF Adam)

### **Protecting the Un-insurable loss**

Being there and making a difference was a key motivator for all, reinforcing the ideology of a caring culture and values that revolved around helping people, dominated reasons for joining the Service, framed around a dominant operational task environment and being there at their time of need:

... it is not always good news when you are dealing with people. And you have perhaps only got that, that one moment to make a bit of difference to someone, and if you can do it in a way that is as nice as can be they are going to perhaps remember that really, it does not always need to be the big dramatic job does it, it is the little things sometimes. (FF Adam)

How Firefighters react to situations and their relationship with those affected was a positive attribute reinforced by a sentiment of 'making their day a little bit better' (WM Michael). This showed an element of acceptance that they

were there to support people in their hour of need, 'the core business is an insurance policy when people are in trouble' (WM George), described by White 01 during a FEG visit as 'we are like the white blood cells circulating the body, waiting for an infection to break out and to react.' (FEG W01). Something much greater than the tactical side of performing a rescue or extinguishing a fire, it is an insurance policy that directly relates to the impact on those involved, empathetic to the situation and an understanding of the positive impact they can make to peoples lives at their lowest possible time.

The social value, value for money, an incomparable resource that is always there:

... they think they have got this fantastic, and they do not know it, cheap insurance policy, for their lives and their loved ones in this county, and their property ... they do not know the value they are getting for 38 quid [£38] a year or something, they pay that every month on their mobile phone but they do not appreciate what they get for their livelihood and their life, people see it as that really great organisation, when it requires it puts out, quite literally. And yeh, I think that is why the public quite generically see the Fire Service, it delivers, when you call that number there is not that delay. (Mngr Steve)

Insurance policy was also used as a 'guarantee to be there' (SM Barney), taken for granted by the community, and personal expectations of

responders, reinforcing this close connection between role in society and identity.

Being a Firefighter was given an element of prestige within the community, although at a high cost, high expectation, through informal mutual agreement and reward.

This concept of an insurance policy was also a barrier to organisational change, being used to justify standing by, a defence to declining incident demand and competing financial pressures to reform as discussed.

Declining operational demand is defended by a sentiment of insurance policy and community expectations, continuing to reinforce a dominant operational ideology.

But change in personal circumstances does not just affect your career choices as mentioned previously, they reflect who you are, how you act within different circumstances.

In an example provided by FF Adam, he referred to a house fire that he attended. Although a significant fire that was affecting the whole house and all the property within, he recalled saving a scan photo of two twins and giving it to the mother, something that cannot be replaced, the un-insurable loss:

... you can rebuild any of that, you can move out and can have the house rebuilt, but you can never, never get back, that one thing in the

room that you could not ever get back and that to me is doing the job.

(FF Adam)

Doing the job in this case highlighted the sympathetic alignment of multiple identities, being a father, 'something I would have wanted' (FF Adam) and having empathy with what was, or would have been important to him as a father, an indication of his stage of life, learnt values, where multiple identities overlap or converge. Suddenly FF Adam was no longer a Firefighter but a family man who could take action to protect the un-insurable loss, the sense of self-overcoming role, boundaries becoming blurred, no longer fixed but a representation of personal choice, a reflection of multiple selves and mutual understanding, a deliberation of similarity and differences. Where salience in identity moved from Firefighter to family values, this highlighted the multiple aspects of Self and how they inform action and reaction in differing circumstances, in this case not something that is singular, i.e. he was a parent or a Firefighter, but a convergence. Hence, a Firefighter's response to a situation is a reflection of organisational duties and a convergence of multiple aspects of self at that particular time.

### **Maintaining a relationship – 'a neutral safety advocate'**

Many described how important it is for the Service to remain neutral as a community safety advocate that provides a real opportunity to engage with hard to reach members of society. Something they feared may change through association with the Police:

... yeh ... I think as a, as it is, I think as I said before, you start getting involved in conflict somebodies got to .. It is, it is very difficult to wear two hats, when I am talking about two hats, one being there to aid people at a time of difficulties and help out there, and the next thing you could be arresting that person. (WM Simon)

This impartiality enables the Service to function, to do its job and to help people. As described here during a Station focus group, by comparing the way the Service helps the public similar to that of a doctor treating a drug addict:

... It is like a doctor treating a drug addict, they need to remain impartial, neutral, non judgemental, if the doctor is to understand and treat the drug addict, to prescribe methadone, to make a difference. (FEG W01)

Not holding judgement, being there when things go wrong, 'more humanitarian and impartial', as Matthew describes similar to the Ambulance Service:

The role of the Fire Service is to provide a humanitarian service, erm .. to people that needs us with our skill sets that we have, or how we can adapt our skill sets to help, erm .. and do not hold judgement in who and how we help people. (FF Matthew)

The concept of neutrality reinforced greater synergy with the Ambulance Service. Described as natural partners 'we would perhaps be a more natural partner with them because it is customer focussed and it is, it is making a

difference' (FF Adam), highlights the role of the Fire Service in being community centric, working with the community, based on their needs and wishes. In contrast to the Police, who, although still community focussed, has a requirement to enforce, or protect, sometimes against the wishes of those they work with.

Working with the Ambulance Service was considered more of a natural progression for the Fire Services role, supported by similar models in America, and the fact that First Aid training had always been a core competence in being a Firefighter:

Well in 19, 1980s I was the first aid instructor for the Brigade, along with other instructor roles, and I was trauma trained, you know putting pipes down the nose, you know putting the pipes down the nose and protecting the airways, trained to a high degree and then it fell away after that, I was always looking at the American role, as being the best role, the best way to do it. People out there do not care ... (WM Michael)

Being there for the community, 'just by turning up with a big green bag walking through that front door, I see the look on peoples faces, it is a look of relief' (WM Jason). Emphasises activity that is personally rewarding though making a difference, reinforces reasons why Firefighters join the job, 'I have probably done more personally rewarding things ... it is about making that little bit of difference, and I think that is why you joined the job. (FF Adam).

There was a split between those who were currently undertaking co-responding activity and those who were not. All those interviewed supported a sense of synergy with working with the Ambulance Service. Those who were co-responding reinforced the idea through positive stories and personally rewarding experiences that emphasised the reasons why they had joined the Fire Service in the first place. Resistance to taking up co-responding in the Service was challenged by those undertaking the role evidence of the acceptance for change being internally driven, legitimised through the experiences of those taking part. This supports the idea of a culturally driven change initiative that is based around personal values, acceptance of role and a personal sense of satisfaction and reward.

Neutrality as an asset, is something to be protected according to Simon, as the public's respect that is earned, can be lost if we need to 'pick sides'. An issue highlighted by the close working relationship with the Police, implying a conflict with 'being there to aid people at a time of difficulties and help out there and the next thing you could be arresting that person' (WM Simon). This reinforces the idea of a neutral position that supports the Service in being held in high regard 'we are there in high stead' (FF Matthew), and an identity that enlists a relationship with the public that is built around trust and understanding relating to role and powers, that harbour opportunity of access, positive public opinion and personal satisfaction. This was described as an 'empathy that we can show that makes it a fantastic job' (WM Michael) that could be lost through association with the Police. Trust that gives the Fire Service a unique ability to engage with the public on

community safety initiatives through their strong brand and role recognition as neutral safety advocates:

I've just done the big thing that Fire Service can do, which is get invited into someone's home and impact their sense of safety or their physical safety. (Mnge Steve)

An identity that builds trust, and has the ability to protect the vulnerable and support those most at risk within the community. As Michael describes, the ability to change lives:

... rehabilitation of that boy, a diversion from playing with fire, a 12 year old, he was not born bad, but he has seen such behaviours from his father but he thinks he can copy them. His dad was an abuser, total abuser, we are going to be part of changing that boy, changing him turning him around and a good example. (WM Michael)

A community role that is understood and enacted, a consideration, a wider aspect of community safety greater than response, an understanding, a duty, with an expectation to protect:

... but I have been to incidents where you know little 4 year old Annie got a black eye, the old man's drunk and I thought oh actually ... flag this up to.... (WM Tim)

Providing comfort, even after the fire is out 'putting an arm around that person and say 'at least you are alive', you know you can replace that [...] we can not replace you' (WM Michael)

Public perception as a neutral safety advocate not only supports Firefighters' self-esteem but also provides organisational benefits to engage with difficult members of society:

There are not many places, that you can knock on someone's door and automatically get in, I want to see you, I want to have a chat, stop you in your street, actually feel confident to stop you in the street.

(Mngr Steve)

### **Being part of the community**

Firefighters who work within their local community are often recognised as local Firefighters. By connecting with the geographical location, and having strong community knowledge, this supports a sense of commitment to the local area. The organisational need to work within the area, especially for the RDS, is clearly a real asset to the Service.

This is evidenced by the sense of commitment in being part of the local community and having a local connection, as FF Adam says:

Never leave Burton before I finish this world, you should know that ... People would and again this is probably the... the local thing is if they spot you out they all know who you are, I think there is an element of pride in the town, I think the town look on us as being their Fire Brigade. (FF Adam)

Something Firefighters generally look for, the sense of community, getting involved, being able to contribute:

... when I was in London, the estate that I lived on I was part of the community...what is the best way of putting it, community I suppose is the best way, so we all did everything within the estate and organised events and all that sort of stuff and it was something I wanted to bring with me when I came up here so retained looked like a good idea.

(FF John)

Although WDS Firefighters often commuted, this was not always possible, Services often required that people lived in the local area:

... and I tried different, Derbyshire, West Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, so around the area, because South Yorkshire was not, were not recruiting at that time, but the majority of brigades said you had to live in the area to apply. (SM Barney)

Although for some, being a Firefighter within your local community, or the community you strongly connect with is often an ambition. As Daniel explains:

... having originally come from London and having a family in London and having spent a lot of time in London, it was always a bit of an ambition of mine to work in London anyway. (BM Daniel)

Local knowledge plays an important part in fulfilling the role of a Firefighter, especially the retained, as they generally live in the local area:

30 years ago with the town being smaller, you could almost guarantee that every job you went to someone on the truck would have known that person. (FF Adam)

Sometimes the locality where they worked was linked to personal motivations, in Michael's case being busy:

... you are wasting your time here, get to Corby where there is a challenge, where there are more people, more jobs, so I went downstairs and I applied to Corby and I got it. (WM Michael)

Again this highlights the importance of Firefighters connecting with the local community, either through their local knowledge, being part of the local community and being recognised for whom they are, and the association with providing a community service.

Through a strong local connection, and understanding of local risk, Firefighters take responsibility for supporting and responding to their communities needs.

This highlights potential differences between, in this case, WDS and RDS staff. WDS being more career focussed, having less of a local connection, where RDS staff are firmly rooted in the community, generally have grown up there, and are known as 'local' Firefighters rather than part of a wider Fire Service.

**Summary of 'Performing in the eyes of others' and relevance to study**

This section highlighted the importance of the role Firefighters play in society and how the relationship with who they are expected to be, frames who they are. Pride in membership is reinforced through a strong public image, a connection to the local community and a sense of duty.

It has been interesting in this category that the personal cost of operational incidents, through their experiences, reinforces the importance and impact of preventative activities. In some cases this is used as a coping strategy for many Firefighters by channeling those experiences to educate others about community safety initiatives that are underpinned by their personal experience.

Declining operational demand is defended by a sentiment of an insurance policy and strong community expectations. The sense of duty, and public appreciation for being there when things go wrong, continues to reinforce a dominant operational ideology, even though incident numbers have declined.

In the last section it was clear how Firefighters grow up in the Service; this was also evident here, influencing their choice of career and how they responded to incidents, particularly when they become parents and empathise with the impact of certain incidents like house fires. This was described as protecting the un-insurable loss, highlighting that a Firefighter's response to a situation is not just a reflection of organisational duties, but

also a convergence of multiple aspects of who they are at that particular time.

Public perception is such an important part in this study, particularly at this time of change. Sensitivities were identified around working closely with the Police and potential tension with community and Service expectations of role, indicating a potentially negative influence on organisational performance, where working with the Ambulance Service was seen as a more natural partnership. The role of the Service was seen as a neutral safety advocate that not only supports Firefighter's self-esteem but also provides organisational benefits to engage with difficult members of society.

#### **Summary of points identified**

- The cost of operational incidents reinforces the importance and impact of preventative activities and is used as a coping strategy for many Firefighters.
- Pride in membership and commitment is reinforced through public image.
- Declining operational demand is defended by a sentiment of insurance policy and community expectations, reinforcing a dominant operational ideology.
- Multiple versions of self compete in salience, influencing choice and compromise around career options.
- A Firefighter's response to a situation is a reflection of organisational duties and a convergence of multiple aspects of self at that particular time.

- Public perception as a neutral safety advocate not only supports Firefighter's self-esteem but also provides organisational benefits to engage with difficult members of society.

### **Analysis section conclusion**

This analysis section has brought together a wide range of empirical data to consider what it means to be a Firefighter, how this is formed, who they are, who they are not, and what it means during this significant period of change. The findings have been broken down across three specific categories, Being, Becoming and Performing.

This Analysis section has been exhausting, and exhaustive, providing an insight into Firefighter identity, culture, and the organisation's response to change. Significant points have been illuminated under each section, providing an insight into the Fire Service that have a significant contribution to practice on their own merit. This is summarised in Appendix 18.

In the next section, the main points identified are debated against the current phenomena facing the Service, to consider how these findings support the research aims and objectives.

## CHAPTER 6: Discussion

Within the preceding analysis chapter, three defining categories were discussed, Being, Becoming and Performing. This illuminated the significance of wanting to be a Firefighter and what it means to them individually. It identified how being a Firefighter runs in parallel as part of life's journey, providing a sense of security and positive self-esteem that not only provides structure, but also enables flexibility to support life's competing demands.

Being a Firefighter is surrounded by a sense of pride that is strengthened by personal experiences, reinforcing positive affiliation and a vocation that compares positively to many other professions. It provides a unique standing that reinforces a stereotypical image of being a Firefighter, imbuing a sense of elitism and belonging, that supports a Firefighter image that extends beyond organisational boundaries, incorporating family and friends through association and support.

Being a Firefighter is considered a lifelong career choice, which promotes liveability, meaning and purpose. Often joining the Service at a young age, it was interesting to see how Firefighters tend to grow up in the Service. This emphasises the significance of the organisational culture in supporting their development, not only in the roles they perform, but also as part of their personal growth. This provides a sense of parental support to young Firefighters that strengthens a hierarchical culture, that is framed around experience, time served and age.

By interviewing people at different stages in their careers and age highlighted how a Firefighter's response to a situation changed over time based on the available repertoire of selves. This demonstrated that multiple aspects of self compete in salience, influencing choice, decisions and compromise, in defining ever evolving multiple versions of self that are enacted within a specific context, sympathetically aligned to a situation, influencing how Firefighters respond to community risk. How they act is a reflection of who they are in the present, ever changing, fluid, a sense of duty, community, empathy, that influences choice within fixed roles and structures. The notion of multiple identities converging and sympathetically aligning to determine a person's response to a situation, we like to suggest provides an interesting contribution to Identity theory.

But becoming a Firefighter was described as a struggle in having to prove yourself to others, to be tested, a reflection of tradition and a period in time. This highlighted how traditional rituals were used to test character and operational suitability, and ultimately to be accepted as a Firefighter.

Operational ideology dominates how Firefighters are inducted, how they are accepted and how they should act. At the same time it creates prejudicial cultural barriers that sustain a traditional view in what a Firefighter is.

Echoes of the past maintain currency of their identity, anchoring the culture to traditional views of what it is to be a Firefighter, underpinning Firefighter status and belonging. This secures the culture in a period in time and a

reflection of the past, that could exist in tension with advances in technology and the desire to change.

In performing the role, there was a strong sense of pride in membership and commitment that was reinforced through positive perception and public image. Declining operational demand was reinforced by a sentiment of insurance policy and community expectations, further underlining a sentiment of a dominant operational ideology. In fact there was a strong sense of who they are and definitely who they are not, particularly around closer working with the Police.

Public perception as a neutrality safety advocate not only supported Firefighter's self-esteem but also was emphasised as a key asset to community engagement and their ability to do their job. But closer working with the Police raised concern that this could be lost, breaking the societal expectation in who they were, what they stood for, and the unique position they occupied. In contrast, working with the Ambulance Service was considered more favourably, highlighting a closer synergy of public perception and role.

But it is difficult to ignore the dominance of the operational ideology, its influence on culture and the public sentiment around identity. Throughout the analysis section there was an overarching theme of vulnerability, not only in the way Firefighters respond to risk, but their personal vulnerability, their need to secure a lifestyle that provides an element of liveability, security and reward.

Vulnerability was also relevant to public perception, and the societal need to feel secure, to be safe, that acknowledges the realistic dangers from fires and other emergencies, and ultimately their safety. This highlights the symbiotic relationship between Firefighters and society, which revolves around a central, foreseeable threat, and the need to feel secure. This is something uncontested, real, that is reinforced through stories, images and experience.

### **Core category - Vulnerability**

Vulnerability in this context is not considered negative, it is used to legitimise the physical stigma associated with the role in reinforcing who they are. This is particularly important to this study as it underpins the Firefighter's status within society, the culture and their personal vulnerability. Vulnerability can be argued as the reason why an operational ideology dominates Fire Service Identity, providing such a privileged and unique position in the eyes of the public.

Tracy and Scott (2006) describe the physical stigma associated with the role as 'taint', although equally this could be considered as a way of managing their personal vulnerability. For Firefighters, according to Tracy and Clifton (2006, p.206), they convert this taint by highlighting the dangers, heroic acts, allowing them to transform the dirtiest parts of their job into a 'badge of honor', a tactic which Ashford and Kreiner (1999, p.418) called 'infusing', increasing the prestige of the role. By illuminating their vulnerability it reinforces what they do, and their unique position in society. Vulnerability in

this context underpins who they are, without it, the essence of who they are would be under threat.

It is clear that Firefighters emphasise their own vulnerability as part of the process of acceptance, placing greater focus on testing people as part of their induction, having to prove themselves to others through operational experience, and the importance of maintaining this currency to prove their ability to respond. Through vulnerability, they highlight the reliance each Firefighter places on each other, that if proven, provides reassurance and a sense of security. This underpins the culture through the vested interest they have, reinforcing the need to support the development of others and having confidence in their ability to perform.

This came out in the discussions around changing the WDS duty system and potentially splitting up the watches, indicating the need to know who they worked with, their skills, who they could depend on, who they could trust. Hence keeping the watches together provided a sense of security, more fluid watches presented an element of unknown risk.

But occupations also receive a certain amount of prestige, according to Treiman allowing occupations to be ranked, a hierarchy of social honour graded by occupational status (Treiman 2013), based on complexity, educational requirements, and salary or relative power.

High prestige dirty occupations, like Firefighters, are offered a sort of 'status shield', where as other physically or socially tainted jobs are offered a 'necessity shield' independent of prestige, a protection as their jobs are

recognised as necessary for society, and regarded a 'necessary evil' (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, p.413). Within the literature, society overcomes the physical stigma by legitimating dirty work through discourses of masculinity, self-sacrifice, heroism, performing a critical service, high achievement or excellence (Ashforth and Kreiner 2013).

During discussion around preventative activity, it was evident that Firefighters placed a high value on their own operational experience to reinforce public safety messages. Although providing a realistic context, through this process they reaffirm their own vulnerability through authentic stories taken from the operational environment. Consequently it was also evident that channeling these experiences to reinforce preventative messages was not only a coping strategy, but reinforced the importance of preventative work to the Firefighters themselves based on their experiences, signifying that at its heart, being a Firefighter is a caring profession, although somewhat cloaked by a sentiment of masculinity.

Prevention could be considered as having two effects. Firstly they are highlighting the vulnerability of the community, to encourage a reaction, stressing real dangers to them through practical examples to encourage a change in behaviour and acknowledge their own vulnerability. Secondly, they are subconsciously reinforcing their own vulnerability, their importance, exposing themselves to this type of risk in protecting the public. So preventative activity not only leads to improved community safety by exposing the risk of others, it also reinforces the sentiment of prestige around the Firefighter's role.

According to Trice (1993), this reinforces an occupational ideology of 'oughtness' in how people should act, a view that if shared widely becomes taken for granted, the norm, a set of occupational facts that could be resistant to 'disconfirmation and change' (Wicks 2002, p.308), something evident here when considering the struggles people went through as part of the process of becoming.

So vulnerability within this context is a symbiotic relationship between the public and the Firefighters. For the public to feel safe and secure, they must acknowledge that the risk is present and that the Firefighters will be there, perform their role, protect them, take risk, and be heroic to protect their families, lives, property, and their way of life. For Firefighters to perform their role they need to emphasise the dangers they face, their role in society and an element of shared vulnerability. So dirty work highlights the vulnerability of Firefighters, and the community, that is a symbiotic relationship between the risk Firefighters take and the need for community safety. As such Firefighters are rewarded with a sense of prestige that underpins a sense of oughtness in how a Firefighter should act or should be.

As individuals, we all want to consider ourselves positively, especially in the eyes of others, with motivations of self-enhancement, self-verification, and self-expanding being rooted in people's concerns around social approval and acceptance; as Leary claims 'self-conscious emotions arise in response to events that have a real or imagined implications for others 'judgments of the individual' (Leary 2007, p.317).

This highlights a real concern during collaboration, particularly where certain occupations are socially recognised as dirty workers, like the Police, Ambulance Service and Fire Service. Courtesy stigma (Goffman 1990) may be experienced as a severe identity threat (Petriglieri 2011), either positive by 'reflected glory' or tainted 'by the reflected deficiencies of others' (Snyder, Lassegard and Ford 1986, p.386) or socially tainted through association with individuals who are themselves stigmatised in some way.

The concept of neutrality reinforced greater synergy with the Ambulance Service. Described as natural partners, working with the Ambulance Service was considered more of a natural progression for the Fire Services role, supported by similar models in America, and the fact that First Aid training had always been a core competence in being a Firefighter. Equally described as more community centric, working with the community, based on their needs and wishes. This was in contrast to the Police, who, although still community focussed, has a requirement to enforce, or protect, sometimes against the wishes of those they worked with.

Neutrality was also something that also extended beyond organisational boundaries, that if challenged would negatively affect family and friends through association. Many described the Police as only socializing within the Police, keeping their identity private or within safe groups, in contrast to the Fire Service identity which was more widely accepted and something to be celebrated openly.

The relationship the Fire Service has with society can be considered equipollent, holding equal significance around the need to feel safe and secure to the Firefighters and Society, supporting a symbiotic relationship that removes conflict and aligns purpose. This presents the Service in a neutral position, that provides opportunity to engage with the public through positive satisfaction and reward. For the Police this can be very symbolic, they may be resented or despised in the use of their authority or regarded as defenders rather than repressors, as such their prestige is subjective and less consistent (Treiman 2013).

As Services with strong traditions and values that are inextricably linked to social expectations this could lead to resistance in the face of organisational change. This could generate an imbalance between community expectation and capability, as what one is capable of doing (or expected to be able to do) frames whom one 'is' (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, p.630). The concept of wearing two hats (Police and Fire) was of concern, highlighting the need for authentic neutrality to achieve positive engagement, which could be lost through association. Neutrality is a resource that supports wider community and organisational benefits that should be valued as an organisational asset as part of change initiatives.

There is clearly a line between supporting the community to make their own decisions and enforcing organisational, political or legal objectives. The Fire Service is ideally placed to expand this function through collaboration, especially within the preventative and health roles, but should be careful in maintaining an unprejudiced view that works with the community.

## **CHAPTER 7: Reflexivity**

### **Reflexivity Methodology**

In contrast to reflection, reflexivity critically examines the researcher's aspects of self, biases, theoretical tendencies, philosophies, experience, professional background and interest, not only influencing how data is interpreted, but the choice of topic, approach to analysis and where emphasis is placed. This provides a way of analytically examining the approach to the research, developing greater self-conscious awareness as researchers (Engward and Davis 2015). Alvesson and Skoldberg's four-stage model has been applied to consider the researcher's thinking and actions through this process (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2009).

#### **Reflexivity - Application of the model**

Before fully embarking in the research process, trial interviews and analysis were completed. This was hugely beneficial in testing the interview process, the analytical approach, and understanding of the resources and time needed to complete the research. 6 Interviews were initially trialled, highlighting the importance of the initial question and subsequent prompts. It was clear that although the domains of enquiry would be very relevant, the prompt questions would be subject to change based on the analysis and findings as part of the process.

My supervisor observed three of the initial interviews and discussed the findings, this provided confidence in subsequent interviews and a common understanding when discussing further data.

In considering an intensive, un-structured interview, greater emphasis was placed on explaining the context of the study to encourage the participant to discuss freely around their experiences, by listening to, and interpreting data as part of the process, looking for similarities, contradictions or gaps in the narration.

Asking people to talk about their career in the Fire Service was extremely powerful, not only creating a simple starting point that encouraged participation, but also demonstrated the importance and relevance of their involvement. It was clear that Firefighters are really happy to talk about themselves, often not needing a prompt for at least 30 minutes, providing reassurance and confidence in the initial question. The question provided structure to the discussion, a point of reference that allowed further domains of enquiry to be explored. This also provided me with the opportunity to relax, to listen and absorb what was being said, instead of concentrating on questions, providing a more authentic experience that opened up a positive dialogue.

As part of the participant information sheet, candidates were asked to consider 'a workplace occasion or event, which you feel, captures your own understanding of your organisational role and why it is important to you'. Although for some this was useful, the majority struggled with this question and distracted them from their story in the Fire Service.

The initial intention was to conduct watch based and station based focus groups to support the interview data. Due to the timing and access to a wide

range of organisational data this was not required. The research was strongly influenced by naturally occurring organisational data that supported a wider theoretical sampling opportunity. It was extremely opportunistic that the Service would conduct station focus groups and duty system focus groups during the data capture period. This allowed the consideration of a wider range of data, all relevant to the categories that had started to emerge.

The use of a sampling strategy, targeting people at different stages of their career and within different roles proved effective in highlighting areas to which I was previously blind. This was particularly interesting around organisational culture and understanding, the need to be accepted, and in uncovering who you are, changes over time and how this influences people to act within fixed roles.

In considering the use of grounded theory, it has an element of personal fit in how theoretical concepts are developed, through the use of mapping/coding and structure. But the process is exhausting, and can send you in many directions. The use of theoretical sampling adds real value to the methodology in developing theory, especially with the addition of memos. But as theory emerges, you need to ensure you are answering the research question. As this is based on a phenomenon, you need to ensure that you consciously remain within the scope of the research topic. This is a natural and organic approach that really supported theory discovery. I found the findings a real surprise, even though having worked in the sector for

over 25 years. As such demonstrates that the research has enlightened knowledge in this area.

The consideration of a realist ontology, accepting that concepts are constructed based on, and corresponding to, something real in the world, in this case the organisation, is evident within appendix 18, providing a real insight that can be applied in practice.

### **Reflexivity - Engagement with the interpretive act**

Analysis is where perspectives, biases and assumptions have their greatest effect, through the meaning given to data, the concepts used to stand for that meaning, the questions that are asked or comparisons made (Charmaz 2014, Corbin and Strauss 2014, Levers 2013). The methodology provides a level of control of biases; either through analytical strategies, coding, constant comparison, where emerging theory is matched against the data, not only for similarities and differences but consistency, highlighting the ability to 'wave the red flag' when bias is slipping in. The use of memos was really useful in supporting methodological control and grounding the data (see Appendix 17a).

In contrast to the subjectivist approach adopted here, objectivist grounded theory accepts more positivist assumptions. It assumes that different observers would discover and describe their research in a similar way.

Although grounded, another researcher may place different emphasis on meaning and construct a different theory as 'to ensure a strong research design, researchers must choose a research paradigm that is congruent

with their beliefs about the nature of reality' (Mills, Bonner and Francis 2008). In this instance it has been difficult to ignore the influence of myself as the researcher, particularly during the analysis section. This was highlighted during transcription.

With the exception of a couple of interviews, I transcribed all of the interviews directly into Nvivo 11. With each interview lasting approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours, they took 4 times as long to transcribe, each took approximately 4 hours to write up. To assist with the process my wife offered to do a couple of transcriptions. It was not until she explained to me that she was shocked by what was being said, and how graphic it was on occasions, regarding their descriptions of some of the incidents they had attended, particularly Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs), did I realise how blind I was to this fact during the interview process, clearly not giving this any significance and being accepted as normal, ignoring what was being said and why.

This was a stark reminder to what I was blind to, tainted by my own knowledge, position, experience and embeddedness in the culture of the organisation. During the methodology section it was clear that my positionality was a positive contribution to the research, valuing my subjectivity as an asset to the research. In contrast, little effort was made to consider my prejudices or limitations regarding impartiality.

This shift from being unconsciously blind to being consciously blind was a significant step in the analysis section. Line-by-line coding provided a

methodological tool, although exhausting, to break down what was said and identify what was going on, coding action and not interpretation. This provided a systematic approach to managing this bias and supported an unblinkered approach to the analysis.

One of the interviewees offered to interview me, in recognising that I had followed the same journey and had a similar story. In hindsight this would have been an effective tool in capturing my experience, bias and positionality that could affect the findings of the research. Although this was not formally captured, the findings have been considered against my personal reflections and experiences.

The use of memos further managed this bias, personally capturing questions, thoughts and developments as part of the process, providing a personal dialogue, reasoned and grounded, to test a sense of reality. This resulted in the end product representing a reliance on quotes to underpin the developing theory, used to reaffirm impartiality and to ground the findings to the data. Although in parts descriptive, the overarching findings provided a theoretical understanding to the research area.

### **Reflexivity - Clarification of the political-ideological context**

This research is perfectly placed to support collaboration of Emergency Services moving forward and ultimately leading to safer communities.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2018, the Home Office announced that the governance of the Fire and Rescue Service in Northamptonshire will move across to the Police and Crime Commissioner in Autumn of the 2018.

The findings of this report have provided a holistic insight into Fire Service culture and identity that can be considered where organisations have discretion to act. A big part of the background was around Fire reform, cultural reform, and the need to change. This research provides an insight into answering why, why does the culture behave the way it does, why is Firefighter identity so important, why does the community hold the Service in such high esteem and how does this influence organisational change and performance.

Previous studies on the Fire Service have been more descriptive around culture, representing the challenges and opportunities, without unpicking the processes, without getting underneath the superficial layers of structure and strategies, to explore what drives organisational culture, the norms and practices. By looking at it through identity lenses, this provides a unique insight into the individual perceptions and beliefs of staff within the organisation in defining who they are, that has illuminated significant insights that should be considered as part of organisational change. In contrast to other research that has focussed on the Fire Service, I believe this is the first time it has been attempted to understand why things happen the way they do. Much research has been done around cultural reform, and diversity, that is evident in the political drive for reform; the findings of this study now provide an interesting insight to illuminate wider understanding of this phenomenon as a result of looking through an identity lens.

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**Reflexivity - Consideration of questions of representation and authority.**

The report represents a structured approach to qualitative enquiry around a constructivist grounded theory approach. Capturing and analysing the data, and disseminating the findings can become complex and confusing. The use of coding diagrams and memos was extremely useful in grounding the analytical approach into a meaningful theory that represents the data in a structured way (see Appendix 17a).

To have impact, this research needs credibility, to be authentic, and be accepted by the Fire Sector. Through design, this research recognised and accepted sensitivities around this research. In viewing this research from a Fire Service perspective, it not only positioned myself in a neutral position with the interview subject, it valued their contribution by creating a neutral environment to explore this phenomena.

It is obvious that participants and the Trade Unions would be sceptical about research at this particular time, by framing this in this way it has removed potential conflict and reinforced its value and likely acceptance as a result.

Through the wide range of empirical data, use of a grounded theory methodology, and a research design that focuses from a Fire Service perspective, the findings can be easily understood and disseminated, supporting wider impact in making communities safer as a result.

## **CHAPTER 8: Conclusion**

This research provides a fascinating insight into the Fire Service, uniquely positioned from an insider's perspective, providing a privileged opportunity to explore what it truly means to be a Firefighter.

Empirical data was used to consider how managerial actions, more or less intentionally and in/effectively influence employee's self-construction in terms of coherence, distinctiveness and commitment. The processual nature of such control was explored, arguing that it exists in the tension between other intra and extra-organisational claims upon employees' sense of identity, stimulating the notion of who they are, who they are not, what they aspire to be, strive to become or dread becoming.

The Fire and Rescue Service is characterised by a strong culture that is reinforced by positive esteem. It is an organisation that is bound by tradition, which operates within a structured and disciplined environment to protect life, property and the environment. It is a Service that is uniquely well regarded by the public, presenting a positive self-image that is the most important part of what it means to be a Firefighter. This provides a privileged position in the eyes of others, something that cannot be said of some other professions, offering a unique opportunity and interesting context for this study compared to other research carried out in this area.

In looking at how Firefighter values and identity influence organisational perspectives regarding strategic direction, mission determination, visioning

and ultimately performance outcomes within a County Council Fire and Rescue Service, it is evident that these are linked inextricably.

The dominance of an operational ideology and a sense of prestige highlighted a central notion of the symbiotic relationship between Firefighters and society that revolves around a common feeling of vulnerability, not only reinforcing cultural norms, but emphasises the benefits of neutrality.

I argued that becoming a Firefighter is bound by the need to be accepted, a reflection of hidden rules and behaviours, and exists in the tension between the ideal selves and ought selves, that is framed by an operational ideology and a common need for security. The concept of being accepted, self-acceptance and willingness to change correlates with 'who am I, now' and 'who I desire to be', but is strongly rooted in 'past selves', hindering 'future selves' and the organisation's desire to diversify.

I discovered how multiple aspects of self compete in salience, influencing choice, decisions and compromise, in defining ever evolving multiple versions of self, that are enacted within a specific context, sympathetically aligned to a situation, determining how Firefighters respond to community risk. This highlights how being a Firefighter is a reflection of who they are in the present, ever changing, fluid, a sense of duty, community, empathy, that influences choice within fixed roles and structures.

The association between organisational change strategy and the collective beliefs concerning what a Firefighter stands for, takes pride in and holds as

intrinsic worth (Rokeach 2008, Schein 2010), clearly influences organisational performance and community outcomes, but is an important factor during collaboration and diversification of roles.

This study highlighted how working with the Ambulance Service reinforced common cultural values and societal expectations as a neutral safety advocate, but illuminated challenges to be expected through closer working with the Police. The Fire Service is ideally placed to expand its function through collaboration, especially within the preventative and health roles, but should be careful in maintaining an unprejudiced view that works with the community rather than enforcing opinion.

As a professional doctorate, this research hopefully provides not only a contribution to theory by illuminating how multiple versions of self, contextually, sympathetically align to determine how Firefighters respond to incidents. It also provides a significant contribution to practice and to policy that will lead to safer communities.

## Suggestions for Future Research

This research was intentionally viewed from the Fire Service's perspective. Clearly this period of change has a significant impact on other Services and the community. To further expand knowledge in this area, it would benefit from further research to consider:

- The impact of collaboration on Police Identity
- The impact of collaboration on Ambulance Identity.
- The Societal view of emergency service identity as a result of collaboration.

As this is intentionally framed during a significant period of change, it is evident that this will settle over time supporting a return to this study at a later stage to see how this affects the concept of identity as a result. So I would consider:

- Supporting a wider, longitudinal study of emergency service identity to see the impact of change and how this leads to improved community outcomes.
- To review how the findings of this study have been used in practice and consider the benefits to community safety achieved.

The concept of a Firefighter is a Firefighter was clearly something to be questioned in this study. Differences between duty systems clearly created division of labour and who they were. The sector would benefit from further research to consider:

- How different duty systems (primarily Whole-time Duty System and Retained Duty Systems) create different Firefighter Identities, and to consider what are the implications for organisational performance.

Life's journey was an interesting concept, identifying how people change, respond to competing demands, and compromise who they are to provide liveability. This study illuminated the importance of different roles as part of the process of moving through their careers. As a result this area would warrant further research, considering:

- How social bonds restrict change, creating a struggle to break the norm, to develop an alternative self that is more aligned to wider competing selves.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Fire Authorities

### COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITIES

- Cornwall
- Cumbria
- Gloucestershire
- Hertfordshire
- Isle of Wight
- Lincolnshire
- Norfolk
- Northamptonshire
- Northumberland
- Oxfordshire
- Suffolk
- Surrey
- Warwickshire
- West Sussex
- Isles of Scilly

### COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITIES

- Avon
- Bedfordshire
- Berkshire
- Buckinghamshire
- Cambridgeshire
- Cheshire

- Cleveland
- Derbyshire
- Devon and Somerset
- Dorset and Wiltshire
- Dorset
- Durham
- East Sussex
- Essex
- Hampshire
- Hereford and Worcester
- Humberside
- Kent
- Lancashire
- Leicestershire
- North Yorkshire
- Nottinghamshire
- Shropshire
- Staffordshire
- Wiltshire

#### **METROPOLITAN FRSSs**

- Greater Manchester
- Merseyside
- South Yorkshire
- Tyne and Wear
- West Midlands
- West Yorkshire
- London (LFEPA)

## **WALES**

- Mid and West Wales
- North Wales
- South Wales
- Scotland (SFRS)
- Northern Ireland

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## Appendix 2 - List of Abbreviations

### **Structure** (in order of hierarchy from FF – CFO)

FF	Firefighter
CM	Crew Manager
WM	Watch Manager
SM	Station Manager
GM	Group Manager
AM	Area Manager
BM	Brigade Manager
DCFO	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
CFO	Chief Fire Officer

### **Duty Systems**

RDS	Retained Duty System
WDS	Whole time Duty System
Variable Crewing	Operational Staff operating WDS during the day then providing RDS during the evening.
Flexi Officer	Station Officer providing 24hr cover

**Capabilities**

CFR	Community First Responding – Medical response for the Ambulance Service. Provided by Fire and Rescue Staff and community volunteers.
EFR	Emergency Fire Response - Enhanced medical response for the Ambulance Service. Blue Light response from the Fire and Rescue Service.
RTC	Road Traffic Collision
IIV	Initial Intervention Vehicle. Crewed by a Watch Manager, providing an initial response capability for Rural RTCs
RIV	Rural Intervention Vehicle – As IIV but crewed by Police and Fire Staff to provide a joint response to local issues.

**Organisations**

NFRS	Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
OPCC	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
NCC	Northamptonshire County Council
LGSS	Local Government Shared Services

NP Northants Police Force

EMAS East Midlands Ambulance Service

## **Appendix 3 – NFRS, EMAS and Northants Police**

### **Collaboration**

Below are examples of just some of the ways in which Northants Police, East Midlands Ambulance Service and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service are working collaboratively. Providing the context to this study, particularly from a individual perspective.

#### **Shared Estates/Co-Location Projects**

As a result of a collaborative approach, a single estates strategy is now being developed that enables Police, Fire and Ambulance Services to work from a single location. This also enables greater shared learning and closer working at a local level between responders.

#### ***Open Station Access***

Since late 2015, all locality based Police Officers (Safer Communities Teams) have been given access to all Fire Stations in the county for Police officers (Safer Community Teams) – this was primarily for welfare purposes, although officers do now also have the facility to ‘hot-desk’ should they wish to with use of guest wifi and office space. This not only promotes positive relationship building between the two services, but also subtly reinforces the message of integration and movement towards a single organisation.

### ***Shared Headquarters***

During 2013 the Fire and Rescue chief officer team relocated to Northamptonshire Police's Headquarters at



**Image 1 - Joint Headquarters**

Wootton Hall, Northampton, to

establish a shared base for all senior officers from both organisations and enable closer working at a senior level. Both organisations are continuing to work closely to develop future proofed plans for further share estates at a strategic and operational level. In addition, provision of office accommodation has been made for the regional management teams from EMAS to work from Wootton Hall. The Programme team are working on multi-agency branding generally across the site, which includes signage both inside and outside. This will greatly help reinforce the message of collaborative working and shared identity.

### ***Thrapston Station***

In August 2013, The county's first combined police and fire station was formally opened in



**Image 2 - Thrapston Police/ Fire Station**

Thrapston, East

Northamptonshire. This

development relocated local community police officers to the town's fire station.

Thrapston Station is regularly used by East Midland Ambulance Service crews, as a strategic base for deployment and general hot-desking as required.

### ***Mereway Station***

One of the key projects within the Northamptonshire Interoperability Programme was the facilitation of shared accommodation for both



**Image 3 - Mereway Joint Station**

Police and NFRS at the existing Mereway Fire Station. Essentially, the project aimed to provide improved facilities for already existing station users and incorporate additional/shared working and welfare facilities for the Police's Northampton South West Safer Community Team. The Mereway project was to follow on the success of the shared retained station at Thrapston, and would become the first and largest whole time (24/7) shared operational base in the country. Agreement was made to progress with the project in early 2014 and funding allocated from both Police 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Estates budget and some match funding provision through the NFRS transformation grant award.

The primary objective for the project was to provide shared operational and welfare accommodation at Mereway station for existing NFRS crews and the Police Northampton South West SCT. Key drivers for this move were to increase operational effectiveness and efficiency through closer cross-organisational working as well to help facilitate the planned decant of Police estates at Wootton Hall. However, there was also a significant cultural element to the project – with the vision to bring the two organisations closer together, this project was deemed important in taking some of those important first steps in building closer relationships and further developing collaborative working in an organic and holistic way.

The station was formally opened on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 by the Rt Hon. Mike Penning MP and included senior officers from both organisations.

***Rushden Tri-Service Station***

**Fire, police and ambulance now all under one roof in Rushden**

Following the success of the Thrapston and Mereway sites, another project initiated within the programme was the facilitation of shared



**Image 4 - Rushden Tri-Service Station**

accommodation for both Police,

NFRS and EMAS at the existing Rushden Fire Station. Essentially, the project aimed to provide improved facilities for already existing station users and incorporate additional/shared working and welfare facilities for the Police's East Northants South Safer Community Team as well as the local EMAS team. As with the Mereway project, agreement was made to progress with the project in early 2014 and funding allocated from both Police 21<sup>st</sup> Century Estates budget and some match funding provision though the NFRS transformation grant award.

#### **Joint Rural Intervention Vehicles**

The Rural Intervention Vehicle (RIV) was introduced in October 2014 initially as a 12-month trial. The town of Oundle and its



**Image 5 - Rural Intervention Vehicle (Police/ Fire)**

surrounding villages in East Northamptonshire were chosen for the first phase of the trial with instruction for 'ground up' development – i.e. officers on the ground (within the vehicle) working with their local communities to best utilise their combined skills based on need, both in a preventative and response based approach. The vehicle is staffed by a police officer and a Firefighter who work alongside local colleagues to promote community

safety, increase visibility in rural areas, develop even closer links with the community and identify and resolve local issues. More recently a second RIV has been established in the South of the county.

As part of their role, the RIV officers carry out a number of tasks in support of day-to-day policing and fire prevention in the area. These include dealing with ongoing local issues, gathering intelligence and identifying potential crime and fire risks.



Image 6 - Joint medical training (Police/ Fire)

They also assess and support incidents such as minor fires and road traffic collisions, and carry out high-visibility patrols in crime hotspot areas. In addition to this, they give fire and personal safety talks to schools and community groups and visit farms and local businesses to discuss concerns and offer crime and fire prevention advice.

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## **Combined Teams**

### ***Joint Operations Team (JOT)***

Historically, Northamptonshire Police Emergency Preparedness Unit (EPU) had a core role in planning and managing multi-agency contingency and associated areas of work. The Operations Department of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) also performed a reciprocal role, with both departments performing additional wider support functions of similarity. A significant amount of joint working between the two organisations was already established prior to the Blue Light/Interoperability Programme being established, largely in regard to work led by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The principles of the Joint Operations/Emergency Planning have been embedded within each department for some time, but steps towards creating a single cohesive department were subsequently forward with the setting up of a dedicated project within the Interoperability Programme.

### ***Fleet and Supplies Team (FaST) – Fleet, Stores and Engineering***

A joint fleet and stores service for both police and fire has been established and is known as the Blue Light Fleet and Supplies Team (FaST). The two organisations have been sharing maintenance services for some time and the new team brings together the full fleet and transport function, along with the stores function, into a single, combined department. As such, a single Stores & Supplies Manager has been appointed, with associated systems and process enhancements. In addition, implementation of shared fuel bunkers across numerous sites, and also shared postal and joint stores delivery services have been implemented. Both services now share the

expertise of specialist Blue Light Vehicle Technicians (BLVTs), which involves cross training and use of existing police and fire workshops.

### **Other Key Projects**

#### ***Joint Command Unit (JCU) Vehicle***

In April 2015, NFRS were awarded funding from the DCLG<sup>67</sup> Transformation Fund, following a successful bid to develop a shared command unit vehicle between Northamptonshire Police and the Fire and Rescue Service. The aim of the initiative was to provide a single shared resource, capable of being crewed by Northants Police and Fire and Rescue Service, either together or as a stand-alone unit. The advantages include:

- To support the JESIP<sup>68</sup> principles into command and control processes and procedures for both organisations.
- To provide an on scene control and command capability for Police and Fire & Rescue, and also to act as a capability to host an on scene Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG) with where required.
- Increased on-scene management capability of larger police incidents.
- Increased flexibility – design and build of a vehicle which can be used by either Fire, Police, both plus any other relevant partner agency (such as EMAS).
- To replace the existing NFRS ICU capability – to map current capability needs against future requirement.

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<sup>67</sup> DCLG – Department for Communities and Local Government

<sup>68</sup> JESIP – Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme



Image 7 - Joint Command Vehicle

### **Training and Development**

For some time now, both Northamptonshire Police and Fire and Rescue Service have been working together to make better utilisation of shared training opportunities. As part of the Interoperability Programme, this has now been formalised in an integrated Training and Development Programme, which is continuously being reviewed and updated, based on the changing needs of the services as they begin to work more cohesively.

Joint training and development has been established in a number of areas, including leadership, driver training, safeguarding, coaching and immediate emergency care. There is also shared use of facilities, such as the use of the Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Command Development Centre in Daventry for critical incident training. Combined leadership training has also been a key area for development and a number of officers and staff from

both Police and Fire and Rescue have now completed the joint initial leadership programme.

### **Emergency Services Cadet Scheme**

Northamptonshire Emergency Services Cadets Scheme was founded in 2015 by The Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire. This now includes Fire Cadets, to provide the first joint cadet scheme across the emergency services.

They were brought together by a common belief that interoperability between the Emergency Services could provide a unique opportunity for a more diverse range of young people to access meaningful cadet services.



Image 8 - Emergency Service Cadets

The scheme has been setup for young people aged 13-18, designed to deliver a unique youth provision, helping young people to take part in practical training in the work of the emergency services.

The benefit of this scheme embeds collaborative principles whilst positively contributing to society. It allows young people to develop skills that enable them to participate in society as independent, mature and responsible individuals, whilst building their confidence and resilience. Following a five-year accredited curriculum, cadets learn skills including first aid, basic law and officer safety training and basic firefighting techniques.

## **Appendix 4 – Participant Information Sheet**

**Study Title: Tradition Under Fire: Values, Role Regulation and Work Identity within the Fire and Rescue Service**

### **Purpose of the research**

The Fire and Rescue Service is a highly regarded organisation with a long history, a proud tradition of public service, strong values and a powerful public identity. However the Service is facing challenges such as a reduction in incident numbers, new threats, greater need for prevention particularly around the health and wellbeing of the community, a new duty to collaborate with other emergency services to improve efficiency and effectiveness, all within significant financial challenges.

As a result the Firefighters need to adapt to these challenges. This study focuses on how Firefighters perceive their role and the challenges facing them, and seeks to identify the values that they consider important in carrying out their role.

The research questions look at what Firefighters consider as important about their role, what underpins these considerations and how the organisation can build on these values in meeting the challenges moving forward?

**Who the researcher is?**

The researcher is Shaun Hallam, a Firefighter who has worked for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service since 1993 and is currently completing his Doctorate in Business Administration at The University of Northampton.

He is currently employed as the Area Manager responsible for Business Services in Northamptonshire, an operational Fire Officer with over 23 years experience.

He currently lives in Barton Seagrave with his wife and two children.

Email: [shallam@northantsfire.gov.uk](mailto:shallam@northantsfire.gov.uk)

Mobile: [Removed]

Home Phone Number [Removed]

**What the study involves:**

The study involves talking to current and retired Firefighters regarding why they joined the Fire and Rescue Service and how they would describe their role as a Firefighter.

Participants will be asked to describe:

- What did you do before you joined the Fire and Rescue Service?
- Why did you join the Fire and Rescue Service?

- Describe a workplace occasion or event, which you feel, captures your own understanding of your organisational role and why it is important to you.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

The intent is that this is a relaxed and pleasurable experience that should take no more than an hour.

You will be asked to provide written consent to ensure that you are happy to participate with the study.

You will have a relaxed discussion with the researcher. The discussion will be taped and then transcribed.

All your responses will be anonymised and kept completely confidential. The final report will not even be attributed to Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service.

You will be invited to see the final findings of the study and how your contribution has been utilised within the study.

### **What are the risks?**

There are no risks in you taking part within the study. All representative bodies and management are supporting this study. You must provide your consent before the interview. Nothing will be done with your responses during the first 4 weeks following your interview, if during this time you would like to withdraw your consent, please notify Shaun Hallam who will make sure this is deleted from the study. Unfortunately after 4 weeks withdrawal

will not be possible, but please be assured that anonymity will still be maintained.

**What happens if I say something I should not?**

The researcher is very concerned that he is a senior officer within the service. All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and have no bearing on your career within the service. You have intentionally been given the questions before hand to prepare for the discussion. Although he may ask further questions to gain greater clarity, they will be around your story.

It should be noted that if you raise something that could incriminate yourself or disclose a matter that needs to be addressed then the researcher has a moral, legal and ethical responsibility to escalate this accordingly. Research questions have been given before hand, so this should not be the case.

**Have the unions agreed to this?**

All the representative bodies support this research. Copies of written support are held by the researcher and will be provided upon request.

**What will happen to the information?**

Information given will be stored securely on private servers and locked drives; the only person who will have access to this information is the researcher. He will use to information to support the development of the final research in answering the problems outlined above. Your personal details will be anonymised throughout the process to protect all those involved.

Once the research is completed all your information will be destroyed. No information will be given to any third party.

Your contribution will not be disclosable under the freedom of information request.

**Not sure about participating? Or Do I have to take part?**

You do not have to take part and it is completely voluntary. You can still withdraw up to 4 weeks after your interview.

**Can I bring someone with me?**

Yes, this is a relaxed conversation about you. If you would like to bring a colleague or friend with you (or representative) then please do. Although the researcher is really keen on this being your perspective.

**What happens if I'm not happy during the discussion, can I complain?**

Yes, if you feel that the researcher has not followed this brief or acted inappropriately please contact NFRS Service Information team on 01604 797000 and make a formal complaint. This will be taken very seriously.

**What do I do next?**

If you wish to participate in the research then please contact Shaun Hallam on the email address above. He will send you a consent form and make arrangements to meet you.

Thank you for your interest and support. Remember this is your Fire and Rescue service.

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## **Appendix 5 – Interview Guide, Preamble**

**Study Title: Tradition Under Fire: Values, Role Regulation and Work Identity within the Fire and Rescue Service**

### **Introduction**

Aim – to create a relaxed environment, promote confidence and manage expectations.

Thank them for volunteering. Re-emphasise that their contribution is voluntary and will be anonymised.

Explain this is to support my DBA thesis, explain what the DBA is.

I am really interested in looking at it from your perspective.

### **Check**

1. Have you read or have any questions relating to the participant information sheet or any other questions before we start?

Promote assurance as outlined in the participant information sheet.

- What the study involves:
- What will happen to me if I take part?
- What are the risks?
- What happens if I say something I should not?
- Have the unions agreed to this?
- What will happen to the information?
- Not sure about participating? Or do I have to take part?

- Can I bring someone with me?
- What happens if I'm not happy during the discussion, can I complain?

### **Start Interview**

#### **Check**

1. Are you happy to proceed?
2. Any question?
3. Get consent form signed.
4. Turn on both recorders. (Explain voice recorders started) – check they are working (battery levels)
5. Give them the first question.

### **End of Interview**

#### **Check**

1. Thank them for their contribution
2. Reinforce their anonymity
3. Reinforce ability to withdraw within 4 weeks
4. Check for any further questions or concerns before departing.
5. Keep pen and paper handy for any further comments post Dictaphone being turned off.
6. Ensure all resources secured before leaving.
7. Write reflective notes of interview in memos.

## Appendix 6 – Interview Questions

<p>Primary research question:</p> <p>Talk me through your career in the Fire Service.</p>	
<b>Potential supporting questions</b>	<b>Domain of Enquiry</b>
<p>What did you do before you joined?</p> <p>Why did you join?</p> <p>Why the change at that time?</p>	(Global identity/ Values)
<p>What has been the best time in the service, and why?</p> <p>What has been the most challenging time?</p>	(Ought Selves/Ideals Selves)
<p>If you could go back and do something differently what would you do?</p> <p>Any regrets?</p>	(Counterfactual Selves/Alternative Selves/Possible Selves)
<p>When meeting someone at a party, and they ask what you do, what do you say?</p>	(Self Image)
<p>When did you first consider yourself a Firefighter?</p>	Self Acceptance
<p>Using an example, how would you describe the role of the Fire Service?</p>	(Self Narrative/ideal selves, Social identity)
<p>What do you think the future looks?</p>	(Dreaded and possible selves)

## Appendix 7 – Participant Consent Form

**Full title of Project:** Tradition Under Fire: Values, Role Regulation and Work Identity within the Fire and Rescue Service

**Name, position and contact address of Researcher:**

Name Shaun Hallam  
 Email: [shallam@northantsfire.org.uk](mailto:shallam@northantsfire.org.uk)  
 Address: [Removed]

Telephone: [Removed]

		Please Tick Accordingly	
		Yes	No
1	I have read the information sheet and had the opportunity to ask any questions.		
2	I agree to be interviewed/participate in a discussion group (whichever is relevant) and agree to the interview being audio recorded and transcribed.		
3	I understand that if I wish to withdraw my contribution to the study within the first 4 weeks following the interview/focus group (whichever is relevant) I must notify Shaun Hallam.		
4	I understand that after 4 weeks of the interview/participation, my contribution cannot be removed from the study.		
4	I agree to the use of my anonymised quotes being used in publications.		
5	I agreed to take part in the above study.		

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Participant  
 Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Researcher  
 Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

## Appendix 9 – Interviewees

The following table provides some background information from those who participated in individual interviews.

Note: All names have been removed to ensuring anonymity as agreed as part of the consent agreement and ethical considerations.

3 Senior Managers	<p>Chief Fire Officer - Had previously worked in three other Services [Royal Berkshire/London and Northamptonshire], had held the majority of roles within the Service.</p> <p>Area Manager Service Delivery, previously not retained. In charge of prevention, protection and response.</p> <p>Area Manager Support Services had previously worked RDS<sup>69</sup>.</p>	<p>29 years service</p> <p>Was previously a protection Officer in London, has never worked he RDS System.</p> <p>30 years service, about to retire.</p> <p>20 years service, Ex-Military background, newly promoted.</p>
1 X Station Manager	Station Manager who had served in two Services [South Yorkshire and Northamptonshire], Protection Officer.	30 years service, interviewed on day of retirement.
4 x Watch	All four Watch Managers had previously, or were currently	

<sup>69</sup> RDS - Retained Duty System

<p>Managers</p>	<p>supporting the Retained Duty System</p> <p>1 was the father of a Firefighter on his watch and about to retire.</p> <p>2 others had been actively involved in the Police Fire Collaborations through the RIV <sup>70</sup>trials.</p> <p>1 Watch Manager who is married to a Control Room Manager. Currently a IIV<sup>71</sup> Watch Manager but is not connected to Police collaboration programme.</p>	<p>30 years service</p> <p>&gt;20 years service</p> <p>&gt;10 years service</p> <p>&gt; 20 years service, previously volunteered for the RNLI <sup>72</sup>Lifeboats.</p>
<p>4 x Firefighters</p>	<p>1 Dedicated Retained members of Staff</p> <p>1 WDS Firefighter, had previously worked RDS.</p> <p>1 RDS Firefighter who had undertaken various secondments onto the WDS stations and supported specific projects across the Service.</p> <p>1 x WDS Firefighter, FBU<sup>73</sup> Chair. No</p>	<p>20 years service at the same station. Was chair of the Retained Firefighters Union [RFU<sup>74</sup>]</p> <p>Served 3 years, whose father was his Watch Manager.</p> <p>&lt;10 years service</p>

<sup>70</sup> RIV – Rural Intervention Vehicle

<sup>71</sup> IIV – Initial Intervention Vehicle

<sup>72</sup> RNLI – Royal National Lifeboat Institution

	RDS or Co-responding experience.	<20 years service
Control Staff	The only Female Station Manager, who has served in Fire Control.	>20 years service.
Non-Operational Staff	<p>Protection Manager, responsible for the enforcement of protection standards. Manages a mixed team of operational staff and Police staff.</p> <p>1 Watch Manager, retired and re-employed as the Arson Task Force manager, working in a combined Police/Fire Team.</p>	<p>&lt;20 years service. The first non-operational member of staff to be employed and wore a uniform.</p> <p>&gt;40 years service, received MBE for contribution to society.</p>

<sup>73</sup> FBU - Fire Brigades Union

<sup>74</sup> RFU – Retained Firefighters Union

## Appendix 10 – Organisational Focus Groups

Date	Time	Station		Location
19-Jun	13:00-15:00	Mereway	White	Mereway
19-Jun	19:00-21:00	Brixworth (RDS)		Brixworth
		Guilsborough (RDS)		
20-Jun	19:00-21:00	Irthlingborough (RDS)		Wellingborough
		Wellingborough (WDS)	White	
		Wellingborough (RDS)		
20-Jun	11:00 - 13:00	Moulton	Red	Moulton
20-Jun	19:00-21:00	Kettering	Red	Kettering
		Kettering (RDS)		
21-Jun	18:30-20:30	Oundle (RDS)		Thrapston
		Raunds (RDS)		
		Thrapston (RDS)		
22-Jun	09:30-11:30	Wellingborough	Green	Wellingborough
23-Jun	14:00-16:00	Mounts	Green	Mounts
23-Jun	14:30-16:30	Fire Control	Green	Daventry
23-Jun	11:00-13:00	Moulton	Green	Moulton
26-Jun	18:30-20:30	Desborough (RDS)		Desborough
26-Jun	14:00-16:00	Mounts	White	Mounts
27-Jun	13:30-15:30	Corby	White	Corby
27-Jun	18:30-20:30	Woodford Halse (RDS)		Woodford Halse
28-Jun	19:00-21:00	Brackley (RDS)		Towcester
		Towcester (RDS)		
28-Jun	19:00-21:00	Earls Barton (RDS)		Moulton
		Moulton (WDS)	White	
		Rothwell		
29-Jun	14:30-16:30	Mounts	Red	Mounts
30-Jun	14:30-16:00	Corby	Green	Corby
03-Jul	10:30-12:30	Moulton	Blue	Moulton
03-Jul	09:30-11:30	Mereway	Blue	Mereway
		JOT Wootton Hall		
03-Jul	19:00-21:00	Mereway	Green	Mereway
03-Jul	11:00-13:00	Mounts	Blue	Mounts

04-Jul	09:30-11:30	Kettering	White	Kettering
05-Jul	14:30-16:30	Fire Control	White	Daventry
06-Jul	10:00-12:00	Mereway	Red	Mereway
06-Jul	19:30-21:30	Daventry (VCS)		Daventry
		Control	Red	
		Long Buckby		
06-Jul	19:30-21:30	Burton Latimer		Burton Latimer
06-Jul	11:00-12:30	Mounts	Red	Mounts
07-Jul	09:30-11:30	Wellingborough	Red	Wellingborough
10-Jul	14:00-16:00	Fire Control	Blue	Daventry
11-Jul	09:30-11:30	Kettering	Blue	Kettering
		Headlands		
11-Jul	14:00-16:00	Wellingborough	Blue	Wellingborough
11-Jul	09:30-11:30	Corby	Blue	Corby
12-Jul	19:00-21:00	Raunds (RDS)		Thrapston
		Thrapston (RDS)		
		Oundle (RDS)		
12-Jul	19:00-21:00	Rushden		Rushden
14-Jul	09:30-11:30	Moulton	Red	Moulton
17-Jul	13:30-15:30	Kettering	Green	Kettering
17-Jul	19:00-21:00	Corby	Red	Corby
17-Jul	19:00-21:00	Brixworth (RDS)		Brixworth
		Guilsborough (RDS)		
18-Jul	19:00-21:00	Irthlingborough (RDS)		Wellingborough
		Wellingborough (RDS)		
19-Jul	19:15-21:00	Mounts	Green	Mounts
20-Jul	14:00-16:00	Mereway	White	Mereway
21-Jul	14:00-16:00	MLC/WH		MLC Conference Room
21-Jul	09:30-11:30	Corby	White	Corby
24-Jul	09:30-11:30	Wellingborough	Green	Wellingborough
24-Jul	19:00-21:00	Fire Control	Red	Daventry

24-Jul	09:30-11:30	Moulton	Green	Moulton
25-Jul	19:00-21:00	Kettering	Red	Kettering
		Kettering RDS		
25-Jul	19:00-21:00	Mereway	Red	Mereway
26-Jul	19:00-21:00	Fire Control	Green	Daventry
28-Jul	09:30-11:30	Wellingborough	White	Wellingborough
21-Aug	13:00-15:00	Fire Control	White	Daventry
21-Aug	09:30 - 11:30	Moulton	White	Moulton

## Appendix 11 – Whole-time Duty System Review, Focus

### Groups

Date	Time	Location	Attendance
19 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	18:00 – 21:00	Wellingborough Fire Station	10 x WDS Firefighters  (1 Female)  1 Station Manager
21 <sup>st</sup> June 2017	18:00 – 21:00	The Mounts Fire Station	10 Male WDS Staff
28 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	15:30 -17:30	Mereway Fire Station	19 WDS Staff (18 Male, 1 Female)
5 <sup>th</sup> July 2017	14:30 – 17:00	Kettering Fire Station	25 WDS Staff (22 Male, 3 Female)

Transcriptions of these meetings were captured and included as organisational data. Coded within Nvivo 11, and included as part of the study.

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**Appendix 11a – Staff Survey (Working Hours)**

To support the duty system focus groups, the organisation conducted a staff survey aimed at WDS staff to consider potential changes to shift start times and rostering systems. Although this data was not coded as part of the analysis, its findings were considered as part of developing the emerging theory and understanding of the significance of the watch based culture.

The survey was conducted by using Survey Monkey. 160 responses were received from WDS staff, providing an interesting insight into organisational feelings around change that can be considered as part of this study.

A qualitative and quantitative approach was used, with narrative comments providing the richest data as part of this study.

The questions included:

1. Taking into account the need to split a 24 hour period into two shifts of equal 12 hour duration, please indicate your most preferred start/finish times.
  - a. Please provide comments.
  
2. What are the key influences/reasons that best fits with why you made your selection?

(Options – Personal preference, Family commitment, Health and wellbeing, other)

- a. Please provide comments.

3. Please select how long you have worked with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service.

(Options – 0-5years, 6-10 years, 11-20years, 21-30 years, 31+ years)

4. Please indicate your type of employment (WDS/RDS/VCS/NCC Local/ Other)
5. Please fee free to add any other comments or suggestions relevant to shift start/finish times.

**Appendix 12 – Risk Assessment**

Risk	Inherent Risk	Control Measure	Residual Risk
Senior Leadership Team do not approve research	Amber	Service sponsorship Communications Strategy Draft proposal supported Signed consent	Green
Staff do not engage due to negative perception of representative bodies with research.	Red	Firefighter Perspective Early engagement with representative bodies. Signed consent by all representative bodies. Alternative Fire Authority used.	Amber
No one volunteers to support research	Amber	Consultation Strategy Alternative option to contact other fire and rescue service	Green
Negative Press Interest	Green	Communication and	Green

		Media Sign off. Consultation Strategy Private Research	
Participants do not engage due to researchers organisational role.	Amber	Communication strategy Early engagement with rep bodies. Signed consent from all rep bodies.	Green
Research not deliverable within timescales	Amber	Project methodology applied Milestone tracking by project manager. Supervisory team. Scope of research limited/ based on supervisory advice.	Green
Researcher losing primary employment or	Green	Courses paid in full.	Green

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changes role		Access can be developed within other Fire and Rescue Services.	
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Key

- Red – High Risk - further control measures required
- Amber – Medium Risk, further control measures if possible.
- Green – Low Risk.

### Appendix 13 – Resource Requirements

Resource Required	Provided by.
Email Account	Private Email account established through NFRS IT Department.
Contact Phone Numbers	Researcher Home Phone (Private Funding)  Mobile Phone Number (NFRS Funded)
Business Cards/Contact details	NFRS Business Cards (NFRS Budget)
Stationary/Printing	NFRS Budget/Photo copying and administrative support.
Secure Data Storage	NFRS Server (Provided)
Voice Recording	NFRS Encrypted data voice recorders
Transcription	Transcribed by researcher
IT Support (Laptop/computer/software)	Researcher personal computer.  Privately funded.  Nvivo 10 – University of Northampton corporate account.

	(Qualitative Analysis)
Conferences and accommodation	Sponsor support or private funded.
Training	Sponsor support or privately funded.  University of Northampton postgraduate training.
Postage/stamps	Researcher private funded.
Researcher time.	Managed in line with core responsibilities. It is anticipated the majority of data collection will be done out of normal working hrs at no cost to the organisation.
Travel and transport	NFRS Service Vehicle provided.
Employee time to participate	Agreed by SLT, no additional payment to be received.
Proof reading	Privately funded or within retained course fees.
Course fees.	Paid in full from sponsor.
Discretionary budget	Any discretionary spend will be covered by the researcher.

## **Appendix 14 - Ethical Considerations Data Collection**

The Code and Conduct of the University of Northampton will be followed.

The researcher will also adhere to the Core Values of the Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and operate in line with the rules of the Northamptonshire County Council constitution.

Due to the sensitivity and close relationship between employer, staff and representative bodies, this study is being executed with their consent.

The research methodology has been intentionally developed to reduce bias by the researcher and to minimise the implications of being a senior officer within the local Fire and Rescue Service.

These ethical considerations will be reviewed throughout the process to ensure their suitability and robustness during the study period. The principle strategy for managing ethical considerations will be to ensure an open approach to the study, participants recruited through willing informed consent, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity through data collection, analysis and final reporting. Participants will be allowed 4 weeks to reflect on their responses after the interview or focus group, during which time they will be allowed to fully withdraw their involvement. After 4 weeks, withdrawal will not be possible, although anonymity will still be maintained.

Data Collection	Ethical Considerations
Access & Recruitment	<p data-bbox="619 409 1398 443"><u>Organisational permission for reviewing Internal report</u></p> <ul data-bbox="671 510 1481 1720" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="671 510 1481 696">• Organisational consent for accessing internal reports will be obtained from NFRS Senior Leadership Team. This will form part of the organisational consent form.</li> <li data-bbox="671 734 1481 1061">• As the researcher has full access to all organisational data and reports, use of data will be in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and overseen by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer to ensure organisational consent is maintained throughout.</li> <li data-bbox="671 1099 1481 1285">• It is anticipated that any internal reports or data used will also be publicly available so limiting the need for consent or sensitivity.</li> <li data-bbox="671 1323 1481 1720">• Where non public data or reports are used, specific consent will be requested through the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, explaining the benefit of the data to support the study and how compliance with the data protection act (1998) and anonymity will be maintained.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="619 1865 1102 1899"><u>Participant Involvement (General)</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written consent will be obtained prior to meeting.</li> <li>• Questions will be provided prior to the meeting, although exploratory questions will be used.</li> <li>• Participants will be allowed 4 weeks to reflect on their responses during which time they will be allowed to fully withdraw their involvement. After 4 weeks withdrawal will not be possible, although anonymity will still be maintained.</li> <li>• Information will be provided and advertised prior to data collection.</li> <li>• Communication strategy will be developed, built on ethical considerations to support open and transparent process.</li> </ul> <p><u>Current Employees</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SLT &amp; Rep Body Approval obtained.</li> <li>• Recruitment of participants will be on voluntary basis.</li> <li>• Study Group will be aged 18 to 60 years at different stages of their career and of operational fitness.</li> <li>• Communication strategy will be developed, built on ethical considerations to support open and transparent process.</li> <li>• Participants will be offered a choice of local venues to</li> </ul>
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	<p>protect wishes around anonymity.</p>
<p>Audio Recordings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permission and consent will be obtained from the participants.</li> <li>• Recording will be deleted if participant withdraws from interview process.</li> <li>• Copies of the 1-2-1 interviews will be made available to the participant upon request. Focus group recordings will not be released unless the complete group give consent.</li> <li>• No video recordings will be required.</li> <li>• Interviews will be transcribed, names removed to provide anonymity.</li> </ul>
<p>Storage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data will be secured in line with Data Protection Act (1998).</li> <li>• Although some data will be stored on the researcher's private computer during analysis, all data will be primarily held on NFRS secure server, remotely accessed by the researcher through a secure portal.</li> <li>• No access will be provided beyond the researcher.</li> <li>• All data will be password protected or encrypted.</li> <li>• Hard copy data will be secured within locked cupboard within locked office within Fire and Rescue Service premises.</li> <li>• It is anticipated that all data will be deleted once the</li> </ul>

	<p>final thesis is approved. If there is a subsequent requirement to maintain the data, consent will be obtained from the participants in the study.</p>
<p>Data Analysis and Reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participants' details will be held confidentially and securely and anonymised in reporting by the researcher including the name of the institutions/ organisations unless permission obtained to reveal names.</li> <li>• No persons will be named.</li> <li>• The provisions of the Data Protection Act (1998) will be observed.</li> <li>• All data will be exempt from Freedom of Information requests.</li> </ul>

**Appendix 15 - Ethical Considerations for participant involvement**

Issues	Strategies
<p>Preliminary papers and authority</p>	<p>Personal Identification will be provided to confirm identity as a University of Northampton Student and NFRS Employee.</p> <p>All NFRS employees are subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks. As an employee of NFRS this has been completed on behalf of the researcher.</p> <p>Participant engagement is very much dependent of agreed authority across multiple stakeholders. Confirmation will be provided to ensure organisational and agency support for the study is maintained. This will be shown to participants prior to engaging with the study.</p>
<p>Choice/recruitment of participants</p>	<p>A communications plan will be developed in line with the ethical and health and safety considerations outlined within this report. This will include advertising the study/methodology and potential implications for the findings to supervisory, middle and senior manager.</p> <p>Recruitment will be on a voluntary basis, either through local</p>

	<p>advertisement or direct advertisement by the researcher at a local level, either on stations or within departments, to raise awareness and to promote involvement.</p> <p>A private email account will be setup for responders to acknowledge the willingness for involvement. Anonymity will be maintained.</p> <p>Participants will be &gt; 18years. Local health and safety needs will be managed in conjunction with local leaders and facilities.</p> <p>As previously mentioned, consent will be obtained and signed as appropriate.</p> <p>No direct incentives will be offered to participants.</p>
<p>Training</p>	<p>The University of Northampton Ethics training (Mandatory and Optional) has been completed.</p>
<p>Involvement</p>	<p>As the researcher is a senior member of the Fire and Rescue Service and has served within the local authority for over 23years, he is very conscious to ensure participant involvement is on a voluntary basis, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.</p> <p>It is clear that participants will be concerned about potential</p>

	<p>repercussions from responses, as such may be selective in the involvement or responses. Interview topics have been intentionally selected to reduce risk in this area by using story elicitation through semi structure interviews. This not only being conducted as part of a group or through 1-2-1 interviews.</p> <p>All respondents will have the questions before the interview allowing them time to prepare or decide to be involved or not.</p> <p>Data capture will be overt in nature.</p> <p>Internal interviews will be on Fire and Rescue Service Premises, although alternative venues will be made available to the participants if required to support anonymity.</p> <p>No coercion or reward will be offered to recruit participants.</p> <p>Participants can have a friend/colleague or representative with them at any time.</p> <p>Participants will be allowed 4 weeks to reflect on their responses during which time they will be allowed to fully withdraw their involvement. After 4 weeks withdrawal will not be possible, although anonymity will still be maintained.</p>
<p>Rights, safety and wellbeing of</p>	<p>An Assessment of risk to self and participants has been carried out; this will be under constant review.</p>

<p>participant and researcher</p>	<p>Interviews and focus groups will be on NFRS premises and covered within local health and safety risk assessment and familiar to local study group.</p> <p>The researcher is the strategic lead for Health and Safety for NFRS and is naturally aware of local health and safety risk assessment and reporting frameworks around accidents, near misses and first aid procedures.</p> <p>In considering the potential for discovery of traumatic or critical stories that affect the participants, Wellbeing Support Team members will be available through normal reporting mechanism to support critical incident diffusion.</p> <p>The researcher has the ability to refer participants to Occupational Health Provider or mental health support to mitigate any discovered conditions as part of the discussion.</p> <p>In the event of first aid being required, the researcher is trained as a Community First Responder and carries first aid equipment.</p> <p>The Health and Safety Risk assessment will be reviewed for external focus groups in line with the local community group facilitator to ensure any local considerations are covered.</p>
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Suitability of premises	<p>All NFRS premises provide easy access for all disabilities.</p> <p>Risk assessments will be reviewed in line with the local arrangements.</p>
Method of interview	<p>Research questions given prior to the meeting.</p>
Method of recording data	<p>During interviews and focus groups, data will be recorded through the use of two audio recorders.</p> <p>Security of data will be as detailed above.</p> <p>Consent will be obtained as detailed above.</p>
Interviewers	<p>The Researcher alone will conduct the entire interview.</p> <p>The local Fire and Rescue Service primarily employ the researcher. Data capture may be done during employed time or in off duty periods, hence may be paid or un-paid through the process.</p>
Transcribers	<p>Transcription will be done by the researcher.</p> <p>Security of data and anonymity will be maintained as per pervious section.</p> <p>Copies of the transcriptions will be presented to the participants if there is doubt over the accuracy or the</p>

	<p>participant specifically requests it.</p>
Translators	N/A
Attendees	<p>All participants will attend on voluntary basis or be conducted within their normal working hours.</p> <p>No additional incentive will be provided to conduct the research.</p>
Consent	<p>All data gathered will be through an open approach. Ensuring transparency and openness of the approach.</p> <p>Written consent will be obtained from all participants ahead of data capture, through the use of willing volunteers and informed consent.</p> <p>Participants will be allowed 4 weeks to reflect on their responses during which time they will be allowed to fully withdraw their involvement. After 4 weeks withdrawal will not be possible, although anonymity will still be maintained.</p>
Confidentiality and Anonymity	<p>All participants' details will be held confidentially and securely and anonymised in reporting by the researcher including the name of the institutions/organisations unless permission obtained to reveal names.</p>

	<p>The Data Protection Act (1998) will be observed.</p> <p>Any data will be exempt from Freedom on information requests.</p>
<p>Issues arising from the activity</p>	<p>The researcher can refer health and wellbeing issues that may arise through the Wellbeing Support Team. Occupational Health referrals or employee assist contracts.</p> <p>Managerial issues can be referred to the local management structure. (Note the researcher is a senior member of the service and can take managerial action if appropriate during this process)</p> <p>In the event of criminal disclosure of potential disciplinary action the researcher has a moral, legal and professional duty to take appropriate action. This will be in the information pack given to participants.</p> <p>Participants will be allowed to bring a friend, employee, representative body or carer with them if required.</p> <p>For wider issues raised that are outside of the scope of the research the researcher will take a professional decision to ensure appropriate action is taken. It is noted that the researcher is a professional member of the service and will act according to his conditions of service and policy framework.</p>

<p>Feedback</p>	<p>All participants will be given an information pack before signing consent to participate.</p> <p>Contact details will be provided to all participants to address any subsequent concerns or issues that may arise after the interview/focus group.</p> <p>A complaints number will be provided (Service Information Team) for participants to escalate any issues they feel should be reported. This will be managed independently by the employer in line with local procedures and subject to code of conduct, core values and expected standards. The employer will reserve the right to escalate any complaints to The University of Northampton.</p> <p>The researcher will invite all participants to a seminar, presenting the findings of the report.</p>
<p>Power Dynamics between researcher and the participants.</p>	<p>Specific hazards have been identified during the risk assessment that consider –</p> <p>Grievance raised by participant against researcher.</p> <p>Inappropriate use of authority.</p> <p>Rank pressure to participant causing stress and anxiety of</p>

	<p>participants.</p> <p>Participant involvement having a negative or positive impact on promotion prospects or contract of employment.</p> <p>Control measures include –</p> <p>NFRS Complaints Procedure.</p> <p>Alternative locations available, to be discussed as appropriate with volunteers.</p> <p>Rep Body Consent Form.</p> <p>Information Sheet given prior to interview.</p> <p>Research methodology.</p> <p>Personal Consent Form</p> <p>Confidentiality maintained.</p> <p>Ability to withdraw up to 4 weeks after the interview or focus group.</p> <p>Private email &amp; phone contact with researcher.</p> <p>NFRS Policy framework</p> <p>Wellbeing Support Team/Occupational Health contract/Kind Minds Contract/Employee assist.</p>
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	<p>NFRS Complaints procedure.</p> <p>NFRS Grievance and discipline policy.</p> <p>As the researcher may be involved in recruitment/discipline or promotion panels at a later stage, a declaration of interest will be given to peers in the event of a conflict of interest during the period of research.</p>
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## **Appendix 16 – Health and Safety Considerations**

The researcher is the senior lead for Health and Safety within Northamptonshire fire and Rescue Service and is NEBOSH qualified to conduct any risk assessments. He is also an emergency first responder, manual handling assessor and operational fire officer. This also extends to managing occupational health contracts and strategic lead for wellbeing and mental health within the service.

Appendix 16a outlines the Health and Safety Risk assessment for the research. This will also be reviewed throughout the research study, particularly during the data collection stage.

**Appendix 16a – Health and Safety Risk Assessments**

 <b>THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON</b>		<b>Risk Assessment</b>	
<b>Activity:</b>	DBA Research  Title: <b>Tradition Under Fire:</b> Values, Role Regulation and Work Identity within the Fire and Rescue Service  Qualitative Study, involving 1-2-1 semi-structured interviews and focus groups.  Study Group >18years of age. Internal Fire and Rescue Service personnel and support staff.	<b>Reference No:</b>	shv1.0
		<b>Assessed By:</b>	Shaun Hallam
<b>Location:</b>	Venues will be Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) stations and administration buildings.	<b>Date:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Sept 2017
		<b>Revision Due:</b>	Continually under review through data collection phase.

Hazard	Who might be harmed and how	Existing Control Measures (What are you already doing already to manage the risks?)	Additional Control Measures (Are additional control measures required to bring the risk down to an acceptable level? If so these should be detailed here)	Person for Action	Action Due By	Complete?	Risk Level
<p><b>Internal Staff Interviews (1-2-1)</b></p> <p>Slips/ Trips and Falls – muscular skeletal injury</p> <p>Negative perception of staff involved in the research resulting in exclusion, bullying and harassment.</p> <p>Stress and anxiety.</p> <p>Wellbeing issues identified during the interview based on post incident trauma.</p>	<p><b>A:</b> WDS /RDS</p> <p><b>C:</b> Officers <b>G:</b> Support Staff</p>	<p>NFRS Venues Used (Local Risk Assessments and Health and safety policy framework)</p> <p>Familiar location (Inductions)</p> <p>Alternative locations available, to be discussed as appropriate with volunteers.</p> <p>Communication Strategy</p> <p>Rep Body Consent Form.</p> <p>Information Sheet</p> <p>Personal Consent Form</p> <p>First Aid Provision</p> <p>Confidentiality maintained.</p> <p>Ability to withdraw at any time.</p> <p>Private email &amp; phone contact with researcher.</p> <p>NFRS Policy framework</p> <p>Wellbeing Support Team/Occupational Health contract/Kind Minds Contract/</p>	<p>Wellbeing Support Team member to be briefed about interview process to cover escalation if required.</p>	<p>Shaun Hallam (SH)</p>	<p>July 2016</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>2</p>

		<p>Employee assist.</p> <p>NFRS Complaints procedure.</p> <p>UoN Ethics approval before data collection.</p>					
<p><b>Internal Focus Groups (Fire and Rescue Personal)</b></p> <p>Slips/Trips and Falls – muscular skeletal injury</p> <p>Negative perception of staff involved in the research resulting in exclusion, bullying and harassment.</p> <p>Wellbeing issues identified during the focus group based on post incident trauma.</p> <p>Peer pressure from Watch Group/Department – difficulty in maintaining confidentiality.</p>	<p><b>A:</b> WDS /RDS</p> <p><b>C:</b> Officers <b>G:</b> Support Staff</p>	<p>NFRS Venues Used (Local Risk Assessments and Health and safety policy framework)</p> <p>Familiar location (Inductions)</p> <p>Communication Strategy</p> <p>Rep Body Consent Form.</p> <p>Information Sheet</p> <p>Personal Consent Form</p> <p>First Aid Provision</p> <p>Confidentiality maintained.</p> <p>Ability to withdraw at any time.</p> <p>Private email &amp; phone contact with researcher.</p> <p>NFRS Policy framework</p> <p>Wellbeing Support Team/Occupational Health contract/Kind Minds Contract/ Employee assist.</p> <p>Supervisory Manager Structure.</p> <p>Complaints Procedure</p>	<p>Wellbeing Support Team member to be briefed about interview process to cover escalation if required.</p> <p>Support mechanism reiterated to Watch/ Crew Manager post focus group session.</p>	SH	July 2016	Y	2

<p><b>Researcher</b></p> <p>Additional workload causing stress/anxiety.</p> <p>Physical/mental abuse.</p>	<p><b>C:</b> Officers</p>	<p>NFRS Senior Leadership Sponsorship</p> <p>Stakeholder consent</p> <p>NFRS PADP Process</p> <p>Supervisory Team Support</p> <p>Project Management</p> <p>Officer Duty System</p> <p>NFRS Policy Framework</p> <p>MIND Resilience Training</p> <p>Wellbeing Support Team.</p> <p>KindMinds Contract</p>	<p>To be closely monitored.</p>	<p>SH/Line Manager</p>			<p>2</p>
<p><b>Breach of Confidentiality</b></p> <p>Breach of Data Protection Legislation</p> <p>Stress/Anxiety of Participants and Researcher</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>Data security protocols (Ethics)</p> <p>Encrypted and password protected data.</p> <p>Data storage (Security)</p> <p>Anonymity of stored data.</p>	<p>To be closely monitored</p>				<p>2</p>
<p><b>Power Dynamics between researcher and the participants.</b></p> <p>Grievance raised by</p>	<p><b>A:</b> WDS</p> <p>/RDS</p> <p><b>C:</b> Officers</p> <p><b>G:</b> Support Staff</p>	<p>NFRS Complaints Procedure.</p> <p>Alternative locations available, to be discussed as appropriate with volunteers.</p> <p>Rep Body Consent Form.</p>	<p>To be monitored based on volunteers responses.</p> <p>Declaration of interest during potential recruitment/ discipline</p>	<p>SH/Line Manager</p>	<p>As required.</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>4</p>

<p>participant against researcher.</p> <p>In appropriate use of authority.</p> <p>Rank pressure to participant causing stress and anxiety of participants.</p> <p>Participant involvement having a negative/ or positive impact on promotion prospects.</p>		<p>Information Sheet given prior to interview.</p> <p>Research methodology.</p> <p>Personal Consent Form</p> <p>Confidentiality maintained.</p> <p>Ability to withdraw at any time.</p> <p>Private email &amp; phone contact with researcher.</p> <p>NFRS Policy framework</p> <p>Wellbeing Support Team/ Occupational Health contract/ Kind Minds Contract/ Employee assist.</p> <p>NFRS Complaints procedure.</p> <p>UoN Ethics approval before data collection.</p> <p>NFRS Grievance and Discipline policy.</p>	<p>panels to peers.</p>				
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**A:** Wholetime (WDS), Retained Duty System (RDS)

**C:** Officers **G:** Support Staff **H:** Public **I:** Other Agencies

**RISK MATRIX**

RISK				
Severity	3	3	6	9
	2	2	4	6
	1	1	2	3
		1	2	3
		Likelihood		

SEVERITY	
3	Major injury
2	Minor injury
1	Negligible impact

LIKELIHOOD	
3	Highly Likely
2	Possible
1	Improbable

The aim is to reduce the risk by prevention or control measures so far as is reasonably practicable.

**Explanatory Note:**

**Risk**

6-9	High
3-4	Medium
1-2	Low

**Likelihood**

Highly Likely	Self explanatory
Possible	Has the potential to occur
Improbable	Occurrence is extremely unlikely

**Severity**

Major injury	Reportable incident under RIDDOR such as fracture of bones, dislocation, amputation, occupational diseases (e.g. asthma, dermatitis), loss of sight.
Minor injury	First aid administered. This would include minor, cuts, bruising, abrasions and strains or sprains of ligaments, tendons, muscles
Negligible impact	Self explanatory

## **Appendix 17 – An operational perspective in the use of Memos and Nvivo**

Appendices 17a and 17b have been produced to provide a realistic overview of how I applied the use of Memos (17a) and Nvivo (17b) throughout my research in a practical sense. The intention is to help other researchers that are embarking on a Grounded Theory approach to be able to get a sense of how this can be applied in practice.

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### **Appendix 17a – The use of Memos**

The use of memos is a fundamental tool in developing theory as part of Grounded Theory methodology. I found they helped:

- To manage my bias as the researcher by enabling me to capture my thoughts, my influence, and even what I was blind of.
- Within a Grounded Theory methodology, data capture and analysis is carried out concurrently. By keeping one's memos readily available it enables me to capture my thoughts around the emerging concepts and ideas. This further developed the theoretical sensitivity of these memos and uncovered some interesting connections between codes and categories around which I eventually built my theory.
- My Memos were originally very descriptive, more like field notes that later developed into more of an analytical tool as I got more immersed into the subject and my data. Personally I never edited my memos, or shared them, but was surprised in how they developed into quite a strong analytical tool.
- These memos allowed decisions and thought processes to be recorded as part of the analysis function, capturing the evolving process where concepts are renegotiated with new incoming data.
- Nvivo enables you to capture memos within the system. I found this very clunky and restrictive. Having greater flexibility (through the use of Apple Notes) helped me to really develop my own thoughts and ideas.
- I found Glaser's view that theoretical sensitivity can be enhanced through the constant comparison of memos and codes (Walker and Myrick 2006) to be very relevant, linking my coding work using Nvivo with the development of my ideas and theoretical understanding through the use of Memos.

Below is an example of one of my memos I created to understand how time was an influence. You will see how I used this as part of a discussion with myself and developed the idea of time as an influencing factor. It also highlights how I linked emerging ideas to inform further interviews.

I found the use of memos so powerful that I continue to use them today in my daily work.

## Example Memo – Time

### Memo - Time

Emerging thoughts around time,

It looks like the organisational culture is linked to societal culture at the time, i.e. National Service in the 50's and 60's, this militaristic style of standards impacts on the organisation and how it is run. Does this all link to the demands at the time and what the organisation stands for, i.e. dominant operational role.

It is also interesting that [Named Removed] refers to how we compare with other organisations, i.e. we used to be the only organisation that worked over Christmas hence we got a lot of public support, but now due to changes in working practices we are not the only ones, i.e. Tesco's etc. This impacts on the salience of identity from a public opinion, changing over time in line with comparative social practices.

Does this close link to societal standards, organisational role at the time also link to the 30+ years of the Service and the concept of acceptance. Time served is often the first thing that people respond with, it is like a currency that also frames a particular period and expectation of behaviour, standards and what it all means. This cycle clearly impacts on how the organisation changes - or evolves

I could describe this as 'a child of our times', as they are inextricably linked, [Name Removed] also links this to how this relates to the previous generation.

This also raises the question, who was I then, what was expected, who were those influential characters, why and how does it compare to now. Who am 'I' in this dilemma, am I someone who sits in the past 'when I was accepted' or someone who changes with the time.

This reluctance to change, if that is the case, seems to link to 'the good old days' or a period in your life which had different meaning.

Good old days seems to link to this being validated, i.e. being accepted by others, as such ties the individual to a previous period only allowing incremental cultural changes based on the ties with significant others.

### Values changing over time

I also see what you want to get out of work is a compromise against competing pressures, namely those other things that are going on in your life. The values change over time as different aspects of the job change based on experience and salience. I.e. when you first join it is about confirming yourself as a firefighter, negotiating meaning from previous expectations of what you believe the job was all about and being accepted in the group as a firefighter. This seems to highlight certain criteria for being accepted around jobs attended, not capability but enactment in the face of others. There are two incidents that contradict this, [Name Removed] and [Name Removed] accident, it looks like through this association, others gave this greater salience and so it elevated [Name Removed] to the same level quickly, as without recognising it for him they couldn't recognise it for themselves. This also highlights how tacit knowledge can be considered generic, where it becomes more specific and more widely attributed to others, the greater salience it has to individuals as 'currency'. In [Name Removed] case he refers to being on a watch that everyone had served the same period, he describes this as one of the best times as, in my view, there was no 'pecking order', just working together. He also describes an occasion where a senior officer didn't accept him, but needed to comply with the group dynamics of senior management team at the time and proving himself as being operational again - potentially leading to oppressive behaviour towards [Name removed]. This implies that being accepted is a cyclical thing and happens within every group depending on the dominant view of the group. It is interesting if we reverse the role in Protection team, [Name Removed] highlighted how others responded to him when he started as a fire safety person, but what if a 'operational' member of staff with no FP background entered the Protection team, how would that dynamics play out, would it be the same but in reverse.

Need to look at the reverse model during interviews.

### Personal Values

A description of 'doing the job' tends to change in line with your personal life's journey. Both [Name Removed] and [Name Removed] (long serving) explain how what was important in 'doing the job' changes, i.e. in the early days it was very much about what you wanted out of it, i.e. going to jobs etc. but when challenged around what was important they refer to making a difference. There was a strong emotional connection here to what they believed what was important (at their time in life) and what was important to those they were helping. The examples made reference to 'as a father myself' and 'they came from a bad family', saving the 'scan photos' or providing that role model was an element of self reflection of importance. Hence we are an insurance policy in the public's eye, but in the firefighters eye's this view changes with age, maturity, your own personal circumstances and values.

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## **Appendix 17b – The use of Nvivo**

I used Nvivo 11 (The Mac Version) to transcribe and analyse all my data.

### **1. Importing audio files and transcribing**

Transcribing all your own interviews is important; it enables you to immerse yourself into the data and develop a wider understanding as you work with the transcript. Nvivo is easy to use, although I found the process very slow. The advantage for me in capturing the data in this way was that it enabled all my data to be in one place. It also links the audio with the typed transcript that enables you to easily go back to that point at a future time. Others (fellow students) who had their audios transcribed outside of Nvivo didn't have this benefit.

### **2. Open coding – line by line coding**

Open coding is the first stage of coding your data. Although 'line-by-line coding' is very slow at the beginning, it does speed up as you start to develop your understanding. This is where I found descriptive codes slipping in until I developed my wider theoretical understanding. You need to keep focussing on the 'Gerunds' as Glaser describes, the doing words to ensure you are focussing on what is going on.

One creates a lot of codes! You make duplications! You forget where you have coded everything, and it becomes very messy. I found this to be the most frustrating part of the coding, but you need to allow yourself to be organic, 'embrace the chaos', because it grounds your codes to the data and uncovers the surprises to which you were previously blind.

### **3. Focus Coding**

Focus coding enabled me to group together large numbers of open codes under meaningful headings. This is where you start to put structure to your codes. The 'chaos' I had previously experienced during open coding now started to make sense as it started to consolidate groups that could explain what was going on more clearly.

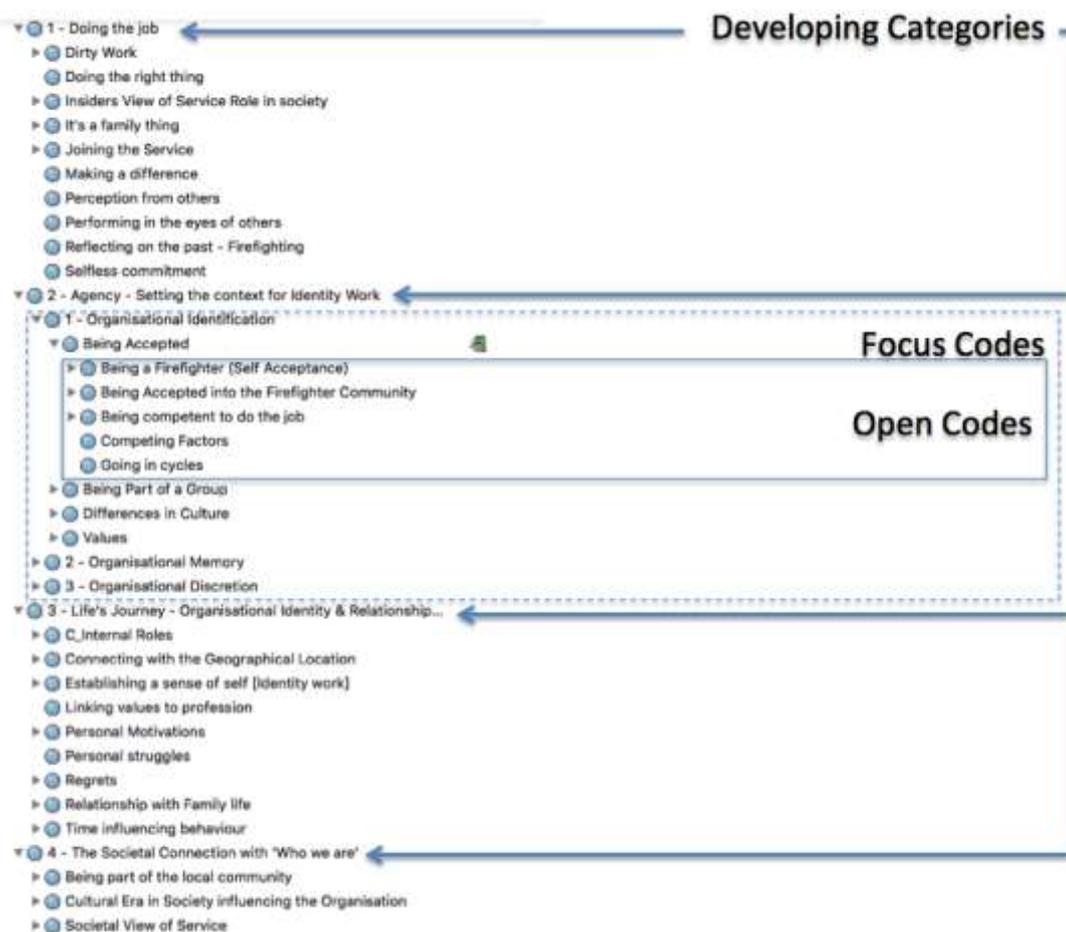
Focus codes for me was where memos became more relevant as they pulled together all the wider dimensions.

### **4. Creating Categories**

I only created three main categories, with one core category. I spent a lot of time restructuring my focus codes, exporting them into mind-mapping software (Application: xthoughts) and trying to make sense of what I had. Mapping my data gave me a holistic view of what I had, and enabled me to manipulate the coding structure more freely. I then went back into Nvivo and re-arranged my coding structure. (Note: the latest version of Nvivo now allows mapping your codes to be done within the software)

Memos were used to capture all my decisions and thoughts around the connections I had made between my categories. The following example provides a brief overview and explanation of how this looks within Nvivo. Note – the categories changed as I developed my thesis.

**Example – Coding Framework**



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## Appendix 18 – Summary of key points identified

### Category - Being

- **Observation 1:** Wanting to be a Firefighter dominates reasons for becoming a Firefighter.
- **Observation 2:** Becoming a Firefighter is something that is learnt over time and not known at time of application.
- **Observation 3:** Being a Firefighter is a paid profession to help people.
- **Observation 4:** People aspire to become a Firefighter based on the positive perception of others.
- **Observation 5:** Being a Firefighter compares positively to other paid professions.
- **Observation 6:** Being a Firefighter is a reflection of lifelong career choices, that promotes liveability, meaning and purpose.
- **Observation 7:** In lifelong career professions, organisational design exists in tension with competing lifestyle choices and pressures.
- **Observation 8:** Being a Firefighter provides a sense of escapism from normal life.
- **Observation 9:** Reasons for being a Firefighter are continually under review against competing demands and motivations.
- **Observation 10:** Through strong competition to be a Firefighter they are bound together, imbuing a sense of elitism and belonging.
- **Observation 11:** Being a Firefighter is transferable across Services, enabling flexibility and choice against competing demands.

- **Observation 12:** Pride in membership extends beyond organisational boundaries, incorporating family and friends through association and support.
- **Observation 13:** Discourses of operational activity cloaks underlying values of caring.
- **Observation 14:** Firefighters are motivated by being busy, variety and the need to be challenged.

**Category - Becoming**

- **Observation 15:** Firefighters are inducted at a vulnerable stage in their lives and mature within a structured and disciplined setting that revolves around a dominant operational environment.
- **Observation 16:** New Firefighters overcome a sense of vulnerability in applying new skills in practice through the parental support of peers.
- **Observation 17:** Being accepted is key to achieving the competence in doing the job, the sharing of tacit knowledge, from peers, contextualises basic training by providing a sense of reality.
- **Observation 18:** Fire Service culture is based on an informal hierarchy around experience gained through operational incidents, that reinforces time served or significant events as currency in the 'pecking order'.
- **Observation 19:** Firefighter culture reinforces traditional rituals that test character and operational suitability.
- **Observation 20:** A dominant operational ideology creates prejudicial cultural barriers and reinforces a stereotypical masculine culture of oughtness.

- **Observation 21:** Acceptance can be fluid, temporal, circumstantial, a convergence of common identities that have a relevance to the situation.
- **Observation 22:** Self-acceptance is continually under review, based on who you are in the present and how you compare yourself to others.
- **Observation 23:** Firefighters are bound into a lifelong profession through the pension.
- **Observation 24:** Firefighters reinforce images of the past to maintain currency of their identity, anchoring the culture to traditional views of what it is to be a Firefighter, underpinning status and belonging.
- **Observation 25:** The modern Fire Service is rooted in the dominant national culture at its time of inception. Being a reflection of a period of time that exists in tension with advances in technology or the desire to change.
- **Observation 26:** Organisational memory reinforces the notion that change is temporary, something to be endured, and that normality will return, breaking the commitment and potential success of change initiatives.
- **Observation 27:** The watch based duty system reinforces operational ideology and groupthink, reducing individuality and performance.
- **Observation 28:** A Firefighter is not a Firefighter if they are divided by design. Firefighters continually compare themselves positively to others to improve their self-esteem and sense of self.

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**Category - Performing**

- **Observation 29:** The cost of operational incidents reinforces the importance and impact of preventative activities and is used as a coping strategy for many Firefighters.
- **Observation 30:** Pride in membership and commitment is reinforced through public image.
- **Observation 31:** Declining operational demand is defended by a sentiment of insurance policy and community expectations, reinforcing a dominant operational ideology.
- **Observation 32:** Multiple versions of self compete in salience, influencing choice and compromise around career options.
- **Observation 33:** A Firefighters response to a situation is a reflection of organisational duties and a convergence of multiple aspects of self at that particular time.
- **Observation 34:** Public perception as a neutral safety advocate not only supports Firefighters self-esteem but also provides organisational benefits to engage with difficult members of society.

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