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Conference or Workshop Item

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A background image showing four firefighters in full protective gear, including helmets and oxygen tanks, standing in front of a large, intense fire at night. The fire is bright orange and yellow, with thick smoke rising. The firefighters are positioned in a line, facing the fire. The scene is dramatic and highlights the dangerous nature of firefighting.

***‘Well that’s just the ambulance
job’;***

**A Phenomenological Exploration of
How Fire fighters Experience
Emotion and Feeling**

Lauren Ward

Aims and Background:

Previous research:

- Exploring how emotion was constructed within the military, using interviews and analysing recruitment campaigns.

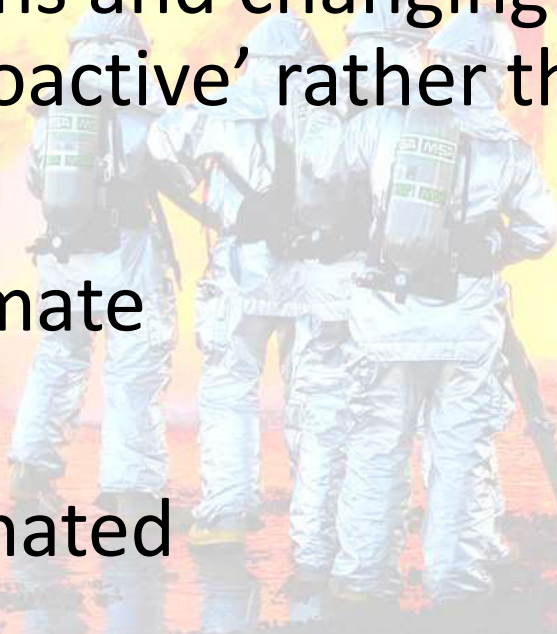
Current research:

- To explore the essential characteristics of being a 'good firefighter' *
- To explore how constructions of emotion and feeling are understood in the context of doing the job*

**note, these have changed; demonstrates rawness, changeability of research*

The Fire Service; Background and Context

- Disciplined, regimented, closed yet open organisation
- Shift Patterns and changing nature of the fire service; 'proactive' rather than just 'reactive'
- Political climate
- Male dominated



The Fire Service; Research Focus

- **Fire Fighting and Mental Health** (e.g. stress, burnout, PTSD, depression etc.)
- **Fire Fighting and Gender** (e.g. gender constructions, womens integration etc.)

Beyond these constructions, what is it like to be a Fire Fighter?

Methodology

- Recruitment Pathways
- Interview Schedule
- Interviews
- Phenomenological inquiry

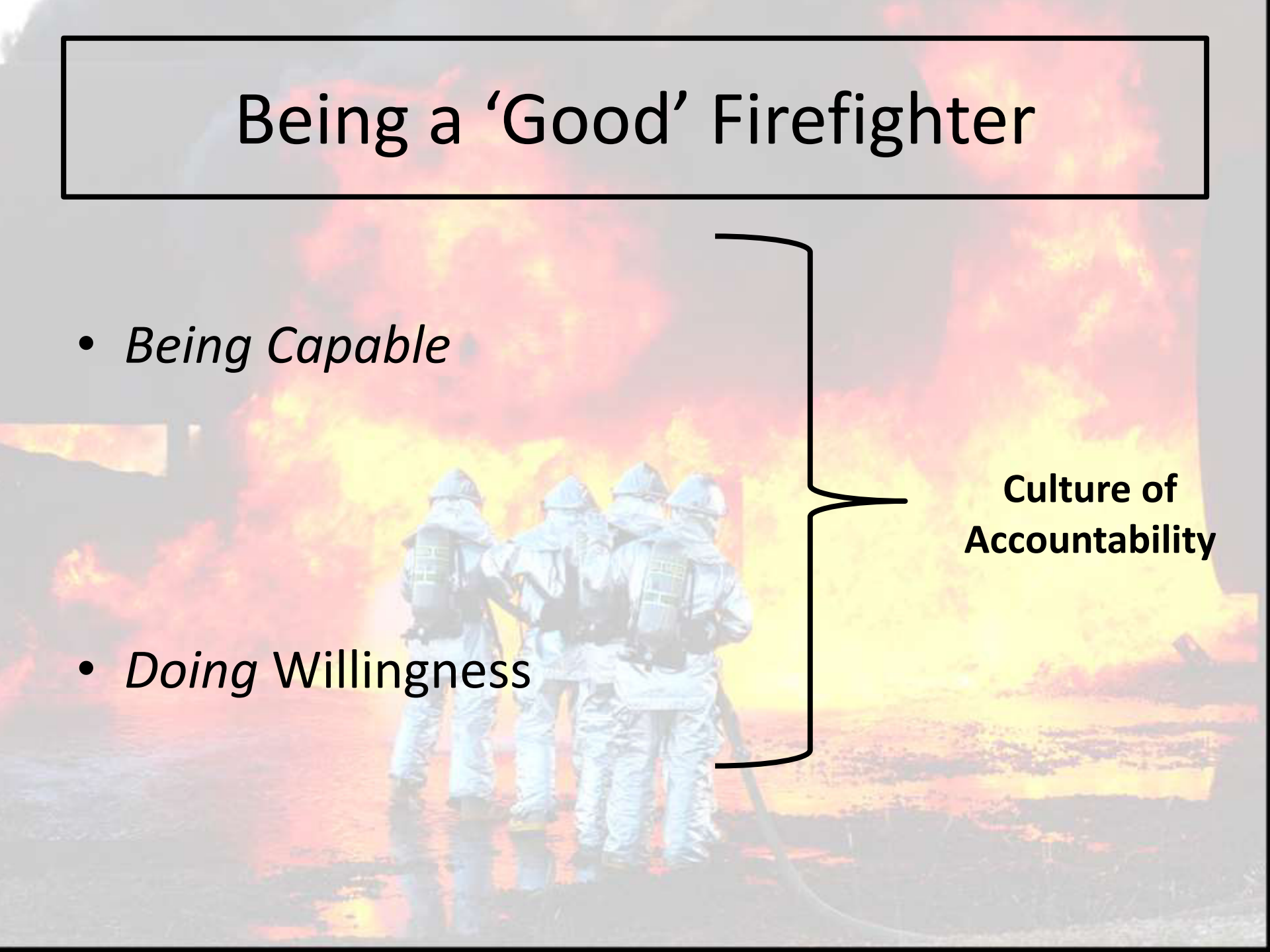


Being a 'Good' Firefighter

- *Being Capable*

- *Doing Willingness*

**Culture of
Accountability**



'Not our Job'

Culture of
Accountability

'Good'
Firefighter



Care as a Skill

*'B: you know, where's my husband, ooh he's in the ambulance or whatever, we never, **we would never go as far as to tell somebody...***

I: :Right, yeah.

*B: you know what had happened, **that wouldn't be our job, 'cos we're not trained to do that..'***

(Brent)

Care as a Skill

I: Yeah.

*B: I mean **some people some people are naturally better at it than others...***

I: Yeah.

*B: erm, er, **but I've done it and I've dealt with it and I think I've done alright.***

I: Mmm.

*B: but I, **I've never gone back and asked the lady, man how did I speak to you...***

(Brent)

Feeling as a Distraction

*‘you know I could end up with somebody who
doesn’t really care or has had a bad day or
something and **brings their home life to work** or
something like that...’*

(Kris)



Feeling as Spatially Bound

*'B: Doing **the job completely overrides that situation** ...the job's first. It needs to be done. If I don't do it then it can be a worser situation than it already is so **you kind of remove that side for the time being.***

*I: So by removing yourself do you mean like,
you...=*

*B: I'll deal, **I'll deal with it afterwards.***

(Billy)

But...

‘I think **you**’ve gotta be able to keep work at work and when you’re at home, have a home life. ‘

(Mitcho)



Humour as Transformative

*'Certainly when you've been to incidents that erm where we lost....**we ended up cracking a joke** about it in that sort of...*

I: Mmm.

*J: **that's your counsel as such and that's your release mechanism...***

I: Yeah.

*J: and that's your and **that's the way you deal with it** you laugh about it and **then you've moved on.**'*

(John)

Conclusions

- **Removing the self from care**

The 'felt self' bound to certain spaces (i.e. the 'pump' and home), cant let problems 'get the better of you'.

- **Emotion/Feeling Challenge to overcome**

Feeling not consistent with being a FF, 'mental challenge' to manage it and do the role.

- **Culture of accountability as a Facilitator**

Fire work as embodied and performative.

- **Impact? Lack of space to feel beyond FF construction**

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Please contact me for any questions about my work, or for my reference list.

