Conference or Workshop Item

Title: Well that's just the ambulance job: a phenomenological exploration of how fire fighters experience emotion and feeling

Creator: McAllister, L.


Version: Presented version

http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/8201/
‘Well that’s just the ambulance job’;
A Phenomenological Exploration of How Firefighters 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, women's 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
‘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)
B: I mean 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)
‘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)
‘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)
'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), can’t 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**
Contact Details

Lauren.ward@northampton.ac.uk

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