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The Individual in the Fire Service: a study of the changing context of the white male heterosexual firefighter in the fire service, exploring gender, culture new forms of institutional control and effects on self-identity.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores changing ideas on constructing the self. In particular it focuses on the construction of the masculine self and demonstrates this tradition has been an integral part of firefighters' identity. The changing institution of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) means that firefighters' self-identity is under challenge and this paper argues that in general there are problems to be reconciled for the male self within the context of new institutional demands and change. The conclusions it draws demonstrate a recognition of how the systems and objectives of change affect the individual firefighters' self-identity, which may be in a state of 'identity crisis'. This claim is substantiated by exploring concepts which suggest that the firefighter is trying to reconcile traditional configurations of 'self' with institutional objectives geared towards the emergence of a 'new individual'. Within this context it may not be possible for the firefighter to orchestrate his life narrative as was traditionally possible. The combined pressures to reconcile traditional articulations of 'watch' culture and new formal agendas may induce a polarised distortion within the firefighter who may find himself relying increasingly on 'impression management' in relation to formal agendas. The conclusion also argues that two different typologies of character/identity formation co-exist simultaneously within the firefighter and as such may not 'fit in' with the fashioning of the new individual. Equally it is argued that the fire service may need to employ an alternative strategy to 'dilute' previous articulations of fire service masculinities to provide an environment for 'authentic' change to occur, promoting new perceptions of masculinity as a lever for change.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The concept of the individual in the fire service serves as an interesting model through which to evaluate and apply changing notions of theoretical types of self and their relationship to the institution in the formation and the personal/individual sustaining of identity. This dissertation seeks to explore the contrast between the emergence of the 'new individual' in society, the 'traditional individual' as constructed within the fire-service and the new model of the type of individual the government and chief officers are trying to ¹employ and ²fashion. This new model challenges traditional fire service cultures, masculinities, and existing strongholds of power, at both institutional and individual levels.

An attempt is made to highlight the correlation between the new image, the re-invention of the Fire and Rescue Service and the newly introduced Integrated Personal Development Strategy (IPDS) and its intended objectives. This may have a direct bearing on the individual in as much as it seeks to develop the individual³ within the fire service to reflect a more diverse occupational role and test competency in all areas of work. Within the post modern setting it is argued that the individual is in greater control of their own life narrative, but what may be happening is that new controls are emerging, which are invisible and purposeful and which heighten scrutiny of the individual firefighter.

The overall purpose of the exploration of the collective themes of culture, masculinity and new forms of power, is to put forward an argument that the traditional white, male, heterosexual, fire-fighter is more than in a state of gender crisis, (see Connell 2002). He may find himself in a state of disorientation and at odds with competing forms of power and paradoxical choices when trying to re-invent or sustain his self-identity (see Sennett, 1998). It can also be argued that he may find himself relying on the use of a more accentuated and conscious form of symbolic interactionism, (see Goffman 1959). This may arguably be introduced to stage 'a front' in relation to the new ethos to fulfil a cultural necessity of 'fitting in', (see Baigent, 2001) to an organisational vision that requires a certain type of individual. Conversely, it may

¹ The fire service is seeking to employ women and ethnic minorities to reflect the diversity in today's society.

² New roles, and a new range of skills and competencies are required by the individual. It will no longer be the case that a single role (firefighting) will be able to fulfil them all.

³ Within this context the individual may exist in a more autonomous and individualised way which may challenge and provide a way to negate previous conceptions of individuality as sublimated within the group norms and values.

also signal new forms of resistance and solidarity, and a strengthening of existing individual cultural values which make it harder for management to develop a greater flexibility and reflexivity of the individual within the fire service.

CHAPTER 2: EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Morrison (2002) suggests Marx used the term 'individual' to describe a social and political entity who emerged in civil society at the end of the eighteenth century resulting from historical and political changes. Marx saw the individual as;

‘A legal construct denoting a social person who is the bearer of certain rights and freedoms, while at the same time as being separate from society’. (ibid) (p.317).

Marx argued the development of the individual began with the process of the break-up of the old political bodies of estate, caste and guild, resulting in the individual becoming a 'sphere of autonomous social and economic action'. Marx also thought that labour was the ultimate category of being, self-definition and existence. Labouring becomes a priority to human well being and self-realisation and occurs in three stages. Firstly, by exerting control over nature⁴, and secondly, by producing material necessities such as food and shelter they sustain their physical needs, and thirdly, by individuals controlling their circumstance, labour provides self-definition and a feeling of being confirmed in their activity. However, Marx also identified the concept of 'alienation' which describes feelings of estrangement experienced by workers under industrial capitalism. According to Blauner (1964) in Bilton (2002), within the post modern context alienation has four dimensions: powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and self-estrangement. This refers to the individuals who feel powerless when they feel they cannot control their actions or conditions of work and when that work does not contribute to the creation of a secure self in a meaningful world.

Looking at the concept of the individual from a more historical perspective Hall (1997) suggests the modern age gave rise to a new and decisive form of individualism, centred around a new concept of the individual subject and its identity. By the 18th century within the processes of modern life there was a new belief in progress through knowledge which centred upon the individual and a growth towards

⁴ Whereby individuals feel themselves to be active rather than passive in history.

rationality⁵. Modern societies became more complex taking on a more collective and social form, alongside the class formations of modern capitalism.

‘The individual citizen became enmeshed in the bureaucratic administrative machinery’s of the modern state’. (Hall, 1997, p.281).

Hall (ibid) also suggests a more social conception of the individual emerged and came to be seen as more ‘located’ and ‘placed’ within the supporting structures and formations of modern society. Sociology provided a critique of the ‘rational individualism’ of the ⁶Cartesian subject. At the centre of the mind, Descartes placed the individual subject constituted by its capacity to reason and think ‘I think therefore I am’. However, sociology located the individual in group processes and collective norms, and explored the relationship between individuals. This developed an alternative view of how individuals are subjectively formed through their association and interaction in wider social relationships arguing that processes and structures are sustained by the roles which individuals play within them.

Goffman (1959) in his ‘Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life’ emphasises the way ‘the self ‘ is presented in different social situations, and how the conflicts between these different social roles are negotiated. Goffman in Giddens, 1997, suggests the individual can be seen to be divided into two basic parts; he is viewed as a ‘performer’ who conveys impressions through staging a performance and a ‘character’ or a figure, which typically constitutes noble qualities which the performance was designed to convey.

‘Since the reality that the individual is concerned with is unperceivable at the moment, appearances must be relied upon in its stead. Paradoxically the more the individual is concerned with the reality that is not available to perception, the more must he concentrate his attention on appearances.’ (Goffman (1959) in Lemert and Branaman,1997, p52).

⁵ Rationality is a preoccupation with calculating the most efficient means to achieve one’s goals, (Bilton et al, 2002, p.31).

⁶ The Cartesian subject was the re-focusing of the great dualism between mind and matter.

Ensuing interaction on behalf of each individual can be viewed as a performance influenced by environment and audience. The performance is constructed in order to create impressions in accordance with the desired goals of the actor. Therefore the process of establishing a social identity closely allies to the concept of the 'front'⁷. The actions of the individual during this process may operate either at a conscious or subconscious level, which suggests that social actors engage in impression management throughout social interaction even if they are not aware of it. This allows others to understand the individual through the choice of projected character traits that have normative meaning to the audience. A consequence of this is that the audience imputes a 'self' to the performed character and the self becomes a product of the scene, and the crucial element of character is under surveillance to be credited or discredited.

Within the process of establishing a coherent social identity the concept of the 'front' acts as 'the vehicle of standardisation', (see Goffman in Lamert and Branaman 1999, p.22), which allows others to understand the individual from projected character traits that have normative meanings. However, the social actor and his bodily person is not the means of producing and maintaining the self, the means are often bolted down in social establishments combining a front and backstage;

'There will be a back region with its tools for shaping the body, and a front region with its fixed props. There will be a team of persons whose activity on stage in conjunction with available props will constitute the scene from which the performed character's self will emerge, and another team the audience, whose interpretative activity will be necessary for this emergence. The self is a product of all these arrangements, and in all of its parts bears the marks of this genesis'. (Goffman in Giddens, 1997, p37).

Goffman (1959) also explores group dynamics and interaction between the performance of the 'team' and the 'audience'. He looks at how teams co-operate in performance to achieve goals sanctioned by the group. The individual assumes a 'front' that is seen to enhance group performance and this requires each individual to maintain his front in order to promote team performance. The individual performer feels a strong pressure to conform to the desired front as any deviation destroys credibility of the entire

⁷ performance which functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for observers.

team performance. Goffman's theory suggests that team performance and audience can be described in terms of 'region' perceived in terms of 'front' 'back' and 'outside' the stage. The official stance of the team is represented in the 'frontstage' presentation while 'backstage' the presentation may be contradicted showing a more honest type of performance and a place where conflict and difference can be explored. The segregation of the audience represents 'outside' the stage and different team presentations may be given to different audiences, which allows the team, the individual, and the audience to maintain a socially acceptable relationship that the institution requires. (<http://www.hewett.norfolk.sch.uk/curric/soc/goffman.htm>).

Contemporary theorists have argued that in modernity individuals constructed the 'self' through traditional institutional locations of family, work and gender. Conversely, for the individual in late modernity the boundaries between private and public spheres of life become less clear. For example Giddens (1991) suggests that late modern individuals have no choice but to make a multiplicity of lifestyle choices and have to 'find' themselves in the absence of traditional guidelines. Giddens argues;

'Modernity must be understood on an institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self. (Giddens, 1991, p.1).

Giddens continues to suggest that in late-modernity 'self-identity becomes a reflexive project of self-sustaining coherent and continuously revised biographical narratives in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems' (p.5). Self-identity is 'focused through the internally referential systems of self and body', (p.225) therefore 'self' and 'body' become sites of new lifestyle options. The notion of lifestyle is of particular significance as tradition loses its hold on individuals. The project of the 'self' remains one of control, guided by a morality of 'authenticity'. The rise of capitalism has made it possible for individuals to make alternative lifestyle choices outside previous traditional guidelines. There has been a move towards political engagement concerning 'life politics', which is concerned with human self-actualisation emanating 'from the shadow which emancipatory politics has cast', (ibid. p.9).

The ability for the individual to make multiple lifestyle choices promotes reflexivity within the individual which some would argue is a central feature of late modernity (see Howard in Branaman, 2001). This rising concept of reflexivity could be seen to merge symbolic interactionism with rising levels of intense subjectivity. Rose (2000) argues that our personalities, subjectivities and relationships are not private matters, he suggests they are intensely governed and that historically, they have been governed by social conventions, community scrutiny, familial obligations and legal norms. However for the contemporary self, Rose argues they are managed in three distinct and different respects. Firstly the personal and subjective capacities of citizens have been amalgamated into the scope and objectives of public powers. Secondly, there has been a distinct shift towards prioritising the management of subjectivity in the modern organisation which has come to fill the space between the private life of citizens and the public concerns of rulers. Rose argues all public institutions and private organisations involve the calculated management of human forces and powers in order to pursue the objectives of the institution. Thirdly, we have witnessed the emergence of a new form of expertise focusing on the management of subjectivity sustained by the emergence of a variety of new professional groups. Rose views this as having the potential to multiply powers within organisations which consequentially may have the capacity to 'engineer the human soul' which manifests something profoundly novel in relation to authority over the self. New ways of thinking and acting do not just concern the authorities, they affect each of us; 'our personal beliefs, wishes and aspirations and our ethics' (p.4).

'Such a subject is not to be dominated in the interests of power, but to be educated and solicited into a kind of alliance between personal objectives and ambitions and institutionally or socially prized goals or activities' (Rose, 2000, p.4).

Similarly Sennett (1998) talks of new networks of power and control and uses the term 'flexible capitalism' which argues there is a new system emerging within capitalism that places higher emphasis on the concept of flexibility. Sennett suggests the 'new systems' are the forces behind 'bending' people to change. With added emphasis on risk, it is assumed this new flexibility gives people more freedom to shape their lives. Employees are constantly being asked to;

‘Behave nimbly, be open to change at short notice, and continually take risks to become more independent from regulation and formal procedure.’ (Sennett, 1998, p.9).

Sennett suggests that in the revolt against the routine of everyday work and in the belief that the individual is more in control to pursue freedom, there lies an unwitting, deceptive force. He suggests that although individuals have been unchained from the iron cage of the past and tradition, (see Weber, 1971) they are now subjected to new top down controls and surveillance and the self is orientated by implementing a newly faceted organisation of time that also pursues flexibility. He argues;

‘In our own time, the new political economy betrays this personal desire for freedom. Revulsion against bureaucratic routine and pursuit of flexibility has produced new structures of power and control, rather than created conditions that have set us free’. (Sennett, 1998, p.47).

Sennett’s theory contrasts with Whyte’s (1956) theoretical model in Holstein and Gubrium (2000), which theorises a model of the ‘organisational man’ who accentuates the difference between the conformist self to the individual self;

‘Man exists as a unit of society. Of himself, he is isolated, meaningless, only as he collaborates with others does he become worthwhile, *for by sublimating himself in the group*, he helps produce a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. There should be, then, no conflict between man and society.... Society’s needs and the needs of the individual are one of the same’. (Whyte, 1956, in Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p.45).

Whyte suggests the existence of the ‘organisational’ man is formulated in the character who puts the group or organisation’s interests above individual goals and priorities. Whyte suggests the organisational man sacrifices too much in the way of individuality, creativity and genius. He gives up too much of the individual self. The Organisation Man’s self is a virtual mirror image of its social surroundings. This carries notions that the bad outweighs the good where the social self is concerned. Its dark side emerges as the ‘homogenisation of the corporate middle class’ where individuality

vanishes with the decline of entrepreneurship and genius. Whyte suggests that conformity and belongingness offer the warmth and security of a tight knit group but this comes at a cost.

‘Conformity is not a problem in itself but it becomes an affliction when one cedes oneself to the group mentality, gives in to the need for alikeness. (ibid. p.46).

Whyte terms the influence and power of the group as a ‘jealous master’, which encourages and demands participation of its own kind, he argues;

‘The better integrated with it a member becomes, the less free he is to express himself in other ways. Surrendering to the group requires the member to relinquish the distinctive individual self. The group becomes simultaneously the ‘tyrant’ and ‘friend’. The **conformist self** is socially cultivated and affirmed while at the same time the **individual self** is intimidated by normalcy. (Whyte, in Holstein and Gubrium (2000) p.41).

However the possibility to conform and belong can become more complex when considering effects of gender, status and class within social systems and their effect on social identity. Howard in Branaman (2001) suggests classic sociological definitions of ‘self’ stress two components, I, and Me, (subject and object), see Mead (1934). Although social psychologists treat, unify and parallel, subject and object aspects of self within any given individual, other traditions have theorised ways in which positions in social systems ascribe a **subject position to some individuals**, an **object position** to others. For example, De Beauvoir (1976) suggests that the adult white middle-class male is the archetypal subject, whereas children, non-whites and those in the economically disadvantaged grouping, and women, are objects, in most social systems. Therefore for the individual in society, gender relations plays an important part in the defining and life experiences of the post modern individual.

All societies organise responsibility for particular activities by the division of male and female into distinct groups. Physical characteristics attributed to being male and female in all societies are also combined, drawn into, and made use of in social life and given social, cultural and political meaning. All societies divide gender by anatomy and power, social status and wealth, but this is not distributed

evenly between the male and female groupings due to the existence of patriarchy⁸, (see Walby, 1989). Connell (2000) suggests that there is no one pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere, rather there exist multiple masculinities within different cultures, and different periods in history construct gender differently. Connell further suggests that the patterns and definitions of masculinity conducted in our society may be seen in the lives of individuals but they also have an existence beyond the individual. Masculinities are defined collectively in culture and are sustained in institutions;

‘Masculinities are configurations of practice within gender relations, a structure that includes large-scale institutions and economic relations as well as face-to face relationships and sexuality. Masculinity is institutionalised in this structure as well as being an aspect of individual character or personality. (Connell, 2000, p.29).

Connell (2000) is critical of using essentialist⁹, positivist,¹⁰ normative¹¹ and semiotic¹² approaches to define masculinity, rather he believes the individual should focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women articulate their lives. He suggests;

‘Masculinity’ to the extent that the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture’. (Connell, *ibid.* p.71).

When we refer to masculinity and femininity we are talking about configurations of gender practice, which should be viewed as gender projects. Connell suggests the gender projects should be viewed as;

⁸ A feminist term used to describe a system of male dominance including the dominance of senior men over junior men as well as over women.

⁹ Essentialists chose features that define masculinity, for example; ‘risk-taking’ and ‘aggression’, this is thought to describe men’s lives according to the descriptive features.

¹⁰ Defines masculinity as that which men actually are including the male/female scale in psychology and ethnographic studies, which describes the pattern that appears which is thought to represent men’s lives and this pattern is called masculinity.

¹¹ Offers a standard for what men ought to be like.

¹² Defines masculinity through symbolic difference of masculinity and femininity, and masculinity is defined as that which is not feminine.

‘Processes of configuring practice through time, which transform their starting points in gender structures’. (Connell, *ibid.* p.72).

These projects can be examined and analysed in three distinct units in society, power relations,¹³ production relations¹⁴ and cathexis¹⁵. This must be analysed in conjunction with other social structures which have a direct bearing to other social structures such as race and class. Connell argues white masculinity is connected with institutional power and class, for example working class masculinities depend on class as much as the do gender relations. There is also a cultural dynamic at work within masculinity referred to as hegemonic masculinity Connell explains;

‘Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’. (Connell, *ibid.* p.77).

Within the gender relations framework there is evidence of specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men e.g. heterosexual over homosexual. Although few men are actively engaged in maintaining the hegemony, most men do however gain from its existence as it maintains an overall advantage to men in the subordination of women. Marginalisation may also occur in a broader sense, which looks at the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups, and is relative to the authorisation of the dominant group’s masculinity.

Canaan quoting Connell (1993) in Mac An Ghail (2000) argues;

‘For working class men industrialisation provided the basis for their hegemonic form of masculinity. This form emphasised physical strength, and solidarity forged through struggles against managers and the patriarchal organisation of the home which was consequently

¹³ The subordination of women and the domination of men in effect ‘patriarchy’.

¹⁴ Referring to the gender division of labour and its consequences.

¹⁵ The gendered character of sexual desire, and the practices that shape that desire which are an aspect of the gender order.

challenged by post-Fordist work practices, which saw a decrease in full-time male workers and an increase in part time female workers. (ibid. p.42).

Subsequently, men 'chose' new forms of masculinity. This was significantly shaped by educational achievement. Academically successful men chose high status subject areas, and those less successful ¹⁶were channelled into low-level vocational practical arenas of work. Within the latter example existing cultures reflected the masculine world of manual labour which emphasised chauvinism, toughness and machismo, (ibid, p.42). These forms of masculinity were unequal and middle class young men who had obtained higher educational qualifications were eventually able to exert power within institutions. Their masculinity could therefore be wielded on a broader scale than working class men whose power was affirmed in more physical attributes and sexual prowess. Collinson and Hearne in Mac An Ghail (2000) further suggest that research has shown that men are pre-occupied with creating and maintaining various masculine identities within organisations, and argues that;

'Men's search to construct these identities often draws upon a whole variety of organisational resources, discourses and practices, and appear to be a never ending ongoing project characterised by ambiguity, tension and uncertainty. Like all identities masculinities have to consistently be constructed, negotiated and reconstructed in routine social interaction in the workplace and elsewhere through processes of identification and differentiation. Masculine identities are threatened by unemployment, feminism, equal opportunities, class and status divided by sex'. Collinson and Hearne in Mac An Ghail, 2000, p.72).

CHAPTER 3: EXPLORING SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE FIREFIGHTER.

¹⁶ Baigent (1996) suggests that firefighters have a disdain for academia and traditionally firefighters lack formal qualifications (p.7).

Firefighters have traditionally been supported by the general public who acclaim the attributes associated with the connotation of the 'working class firefighter'. This is fundamental to firefighters' resistance¹⁷ to change and their gender construction¹⁸ and the long-standing historical archetypal impression that firefighters' are masculine and a type of male, which carries notions of aesthetic overtones. Although the 'body' and 'self' are two separate entities and in Western tradition a strong distinction is drawn between the material and the ethereal, Benson in Woodward (2002) suggests that

'It is through managing the flesh that we make visible to ourselves and others our intentions, capacities and dispositions. The body is in other words the medium through which messages about identity are transmitted. (Benson in Woodward, 2002, p122).

Equally Woodward (2002) suggests that the body carries symbolic values, and the 'instrumental body' of the working class can be seen in the muscular male bodies which are valued in certain types of manual labour. Equally, because firefighting is a manual job the necessity to keep up fitness levels and body management also adds to the image and carries symbolic values within the working environment and the wider general public.

Public perception is an important dimension of the construction of the firefighter and is less complicated in the political arena, as the concept of fighting fire may be viewed as battling against forces of nature, and in this way firefighters representations can be kept 'pure'. Firefighting could be viewed as the stereotypical battle of good against evil, a reconstruction of the knight-errant, the firefighter possessing qualities such as bravery and strength,¹⁹ men of honour deploying 'legitimate male power'. Further connotations of heroicism may be linked to ethereal overtones in association with the individual firefighter in that by fighting fire, an uncontrollable force, and 'getting in' at a fire to 'save' people, carries undeniable overtones of spiritual imagery. This is further accentuated by the way that firefighters view themselves. Through their job firefighters are able to articulate their own configurations of gender practice and reinforce their own sense of masculinity, individually and throughout 'watch' behaviour and group norms. Baigent (2001) suggests firefighters also have the

¹⁷ To change implemented by Chief Officers

¹⁸ relating to assumed notions of masculinity

propensity to believe that their particular type of masculinity is something 'different' and 'special' that other men do not achieve. Like Calvinists they may go out to prove their calling (p.2), and it may be suggested that entwined in their purpose for living, is a kind of pseudo-salvation to achieve the highest peak of a special masculinity. The firefighters' utopia and point of self-realisation is found in passing the test of 'being seen as a good firefighter' which sets them apart from 'others'.

'It (the training college) has provided the trainees with the practical skills to become fire fighters and at the same time it has instilled in them the image that the fire service is a **special job** done by **special people**.' (Baigent with Rolph, 2002, p.28).

Baigent suggests that firefighters' dividends are not just economic, these dividends run alongside their task as a firefighter (seen as a test) which allows them to construct, reproduce and police their masculinity. Firefighters' maintain a distance to officers by making clear boundaries between operational and non-operational duties leading to 'us' and 'them' perceptions. Firefighters resist changes that officers try to make in their behaviour and job specification as they believe this could remove one of the means by which they prove themselves, (see Baigent 2001, p.21). Baigent suggests that with the move to incorporate equal opportunities into the fire service, the almost 'exclusively white, working class male group'²⁰, has felt its masculinity under threat by officers forcing 'others', particularly women, on them as fire fighters.

Baigent, (2002) suggests within the Fire and Rescue Service (from this point on referred to as FRS) there exist two co-existing cultures, firstly the 'official' culture organised by chief officers, and secondly the 'unofficial' cultures which are unofficially organised by individual groups of firefighters. Fire Service 'values' and concept of 'efficiency' are interpreted in different ways by senior officers, then modified and interpreted by each officer lower down the hierarchy. Firefighters collectively and individually believe that their particular values are common, right and natural and 'their' discussion of 'their' efficiency within the working environment is *the fire service culture*, which makes it increasingly hard to change the groups views (ibid. p.1). Furthermore, anyone who tries to challenge their view may be seen as a traitor to common values. Therefore the firefighter is

²⁰ For recent FRS ethnicity and gender figures see appendix 1.

influenced by interpretations of values of various different fire service cultures which are articulated throughout each watch which generates its own values and interpretations associated with the concept of 'efficiency'. A consequence of this variation has been that some individuals in the FRS 'question the ability of black, female or gay firefighters to do 'The Job'. The concept of the 'other' is thought to lie outside group norms and may be seen to attack values of masculinity. However, when previously marginalised individuals have become integrated within the group, the watch may claim ownership of that particular person and talk in terms of 'their black fire fighter' implying the individual has been accepted. This does not mean that marginalised groups constructed as the 'other' have disappeared. They are still constructed within the firefighters' mind as unlikely to meet the criteria to produce what they see as a good firefighter. This can also be reflected in the experience of women at Petersfield Training Centre where some have felt they have been picked on, expected to fail and unfairly treated, (p.9), (see appendix 2).

Baigent with Rolph (2002) suggests that when individuals join the FRS they are willing to fit 'their own ambitions and goals in with those of the organisation they are joining', (p.3). It may be argued that the type of person likely to be attracted to the job will want to base their identity on pre-conceived perceptions of firefighting ²¹. Connell (2002) argues that people respond to the gender order and claim their place in it, to articulate a sense of self. This may limit the number of applications from women, ethnic minorities and men who are less hegemonic;

'One intervention may be that the fire service would benefit from employing those who currently do not apply because they believe they cannot do the job. This group would include those who believe they will have to give up too much of their **individuality** to become a fire fighter; and do not have the special qualities that firefighters require.' (Baigent with Rolph, 2002, p.30).

Hashem, 2003, suggests that there are perceived barriers to ethnic minority recruitment such as; religious restrictions and cultural difference, but the real barriers are rooted in areas such as; lack of

²¹ Baigent's (2002) research sample identified that most recruits were realising a lifelong ambition, but all wanted to serve the public in a 'hands on' physical job where they could test themselves every day, (p.5).

role models combined with the poor reputation of the uniformed services and the fear of racism, (see appendix 3, p.2). Furthermore, Baigent with Rolph (2002) suggest that watches are resistant to the implementation of equality and diversity objectives and visions for the fire service, due to the very entrenched existence of a white working class heterosexual male fire service, (p.2).

If Giddens (1998) 'structuration theory' is applied on the premise that the repetitive actions and behaviour of individuals within the FRS are reproducing the structures, it is feasible that marginalised groups may feel they are unlikely to 'fit in' with the existing cultures and masculinities that sustain the structures of the fire service as an institution. Giddens (1998) argues;

'Society only has form, and that form only has effects on people in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do' (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, p.77).

It may also be argued that if perceptions of institutions fit with chosen articulations of 'self' then consequently some individuals may be attracted to the FRS by the perceptions of masculinity it offers.

Drawing on the work of Goffman (1959) learnt values and norms are used as a template for the individual to structure him/herself within a given social context. Adherence to social norms within the FRS setting, may enable the firefighter to feel a part of his location restricting reflexivity and expressions of individuality outside cultural norms which do not 'fit in'. This would encourage the use of a 'front' to give the desired impression. Therefore identity for the fire fighter is more to do with a generalised sense of belonging within which are sets of symbols, and the projection of symbols that are thought to represent 'otherness' are likely to be avoided. Those individuals who choose to apply for a job in the fire service may be seeking to present and express themselves in a way that fits with the firefighting image and used as a way of more widely presenting themselves in both public and private spheres of social life.

CHAPTER FOUR: MASCULINITY AND FIRE SERVICE CULTURE

It may be suggested fire service cultures are sustained through the existence of hegemonic masculinity built around notions of masculinity centred on authority, physical toughness and strength, heterosexuality and paid work. This constitutes a place at the top of Connell's (1995) concept of a

gender hierarchy²². Connell (1995) further argues that gender relations are not 'fixed' rather they are an ongoing process where hegemonic masculinity is open to challenge. As a result, it is possible for 'gender crisis' to take place within the gender order. For the working class firefighter a part of the way that masculinities are formulated is the overriding emphasis on physical strength and body image and the solidarity forged against officers wishing to implement change upon the informal watch culture. Furthermore identity and masculinity are formulated by firefighters' own form of social interaction and protocols which Baigent (2001) argues is inherently sexist, racist and homophobic.

Baigent, (ibid) also suggests that the imagery and characteristics of masculinity attributed to firefighters can be likened to the 'paternalistic protector without the savagery of the military'. They can also be seen to encompass characteristics attributed to the heroic figure of the sportsman portraying 'an example of the masculine standards of aggressive heterosexuality²³, physical and mental strength and stoic discipline' (p.19). The dual perceptions of public image and self imposed constructions of firefighters' based on, 'the job', 'getting in', and 'fitting in' sustain, reinforce and impact on reaffirming firefighters' self -identity. Baigent (2001) suggests;

'Firefighters' masculinity is a social construction and has a central feature that fire-fighters achieve by passing the test of being seen as a good fire-fighter'. (Baigent, 2001, p.130).

Many firefighters believe that masculinity is pre-given and not a social construction and the fire fighters peer group, the 'watch', use the Foucaultian gaze²⁴ to empower them and their colleagues to achieve and reproduce their masculinity. This is also bound up in the evaluation of their performance of operational duties and continued at the station within an informal setting during 'stand-down'. The

²² Connell's (1995) concept of the gender order constitutes a sliding scale of culturally dominant masculinity. At the top of the hierarchy is hegemonic masculinity, followed by complicit masculinity (which is an ideal few men achieve), then subordinate masculinity in which homosexual masculinity is placed, then femininities. All of these constitute a gender hierarchy, which form a basis for gender relations.

²³ According to Baigent (2001) firemen have always been portrayed as sexually available and some women looking for a sexual adventure are predisposed to actively seek their company. Firefighters trade on their sexualised imagery, (p.111).

²⁴ Refers to omnipresence of surveillance.

existence of the informal hierarchy develops in the individual's mind and within the group consciousness, in part through a resistance to a bureaucratic and authoritarian hierarchy²⁵.

'Firefighters' resistance is probably more to do with the action of group workers acting conservatively to defend the way they prove their masculinities *against* officers who may wish to prevent this; a situation which improves firefighters' ability to resist their officers. Because firefighters believe they are only proving what is given; (part of their uniform so to speak); a belief that becomes real in its consequences. However firefighters' masculinity and the metaphorical uniform they wear to 'prove' it, is similar to the Emperor's new suit, *an illusion*'. (Baigent, 2001, p.2).

Articulations of masculinity for 'Officers' can be seen in the way they exert their authority and power over the operational firefighter. Likewise, a configuration of masculinity for firefighters can be realised through their resistance to the authority and power that the officers hold. Baigent (2001) further explores the complexity of this issue; Fire Service masculinity is reinforced through Fire Service culture and reflected in a mirror like fashion back to conforming individuals;

'Fire Service culture has no physical presence, it is not hands on, and cannot be seen, touched or smelt. Fire service culture is a phenomenon, existing only in the mind of those *individual* firefighters who believe in it. Nonetheless when individual firefighters come together this phenomenon appears to have authority over them'. (Baigent and Rolph (2002) p.1).

This suggests that group behaviour dictates individual behaviour, which reflects the standing culture of any particular watch. Baigent and Rolph (2002) argue that to focus only on fire service culture as a way of apportioning blame for group behaviour has provided a means to diminish individual responsibility.

²⁵ Baigent, 2001, suggests this may be reflective of proletariat economic disadvantage and a result of how different class masculinities resist power, (p.34). Furthermore, Canaan's discourse in Mac An Ghail (2000) suggests that different classes manifest masculinities in different ways.

‘Firefighters can choose to follow cultural values or not, it is up to them. However the conditions under which firefighters make those choices can appear restrictive. Choice for (individual) firefighters can be limited by the formal and informal structures around them’. (Baigent with Rolph, 2002, p.1).

It may also be argued that firefighters resistance operates at a deeper level and it may be suggested that ‘watch’ cultures are victims of ‘groupthink’²⁶ (see Drummond, 2000), which is another pressure for group conformity. The fear of upsetting the status quo discourages individuals from engaging in analysis and debate. This is not a deliberate suppression of judgement, it only occurs at a subconscious level and has eight distinct properties which can be indicative of ‘watch mentality’, (see appendix 4).

Research has suggested that training centres are influential in facilitating to what extent the individual believes him/herself to be able to exercise the power of choice;

‘The constant emphasis on working together can allow the group dynamic to increasingly influence, if not **overwhelm some individuals**. Once this point is reached, fitting in with the instructor or the group can become more important than the actual work at hand; a situation that becomes increasingly negative if the **(individual) trainee cannot differentiate between official and unofficial agendas being offered** by the hierarchy they join. Men and increasingly women already know about masculine hierarchies. Moreover most of those with no understanding of **male hierarchies** quickly learn that it is often easier to **comply** with the group than to resist it.’ (ibid. p.27).

Furthermore it is interesting to explore how trainers view the concept of being an individual within the context of the Fire Service;

‘**They arrive as individuals but they need to be a team to be effective.** They can remain individual and everybody has different needs and different wants and different lifestyles and that should be respected within the group, **but that should not interfere with the team goal**

²⁶ According to (Janis, 1972 and Janis ad Mann, 1977) ‘groupthink’ has eight symptoms and consequences, (see appendix 4).

so people can be themselves you know. We are not trying to create robots we are trying to create individual people who can perform their role', (Baigent et al 2003, p.32).

This suggests that individualism is limited within the team in order to realise team goals. Additionally research has suggested that 'training centres create reliance in trainees that make them vulnerable to peer group pressure at the station' (ibid. p.48 & Baigent with Rolph, p.10). This suggests that firefighters find it hard to sustain any sense of individuality that sets itself against the cultural norms. Equally there was also evidence suggesting that although the trainers may articulate the existence of 'an individual' within the fire service setting, the training centre not only creates an environment where peer group pressure demands compliance, but also a sense of vulnerability, (Baigent with Rolph, 2002, p.3). Therefore 'individuals are restricted in their ability to develop individual diversity which the FRS needs for the dynamics of the cultures to change' (ibid p.3).

CHAPTER FIVE: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIREFIGHTER AND THE INSTITUTION

Recent developments and political intervention in the FRS following on from the 2003 strike require a different role to be carried out by the firefighter where firefighting will only be a part of 'the job' and this is discussed in the next chapter.

The traditional model of the firefighter demonstrates significant similarities to Whyte's evaluation (1956) in Holstein (2000) of the 'tradition led' individual encapsulated in the 'organisational man'. Traditionally, firefighters have not wanted to pursue their career past the 'middle man' stage, and the operational firefighter is still trying to retain an unchanged virtual mirror of his traditional social surroundings. For the firefighter compliance²⁷, conformity and belongingness found in the shared cultures, values, and norms of 'the watch' a tightly knit group comes at a price. The dividend of conformity may be thought to secure 'fitting in', which may significantly reduce the means to show any sign of diversity within the individual²⁸. Subsequently, 'fitting in' develops and sustains the power of group mentality because of the overriding need for likeness, which produces a sustaining 'self'.

This may have been pre-determined by the type of individual that the fire service attracts at recruitment²⁹ (see Baigent with Rolph, 2002, p.9). The group's norms and values can be seen to be a power base acting in Holstein's terminology as the 'jealous master' which demands the fire service's own particular form of masculinity. The individual fire fighter may think he has no choice but to conform (see Baigent with Rolph, 2002) to enable him to sustain the subject position within society and within the fire service. It may be suggested the more the fire fighter conforms, the more his distinctive self is compromised. Baigent (2002) argues that research suggests that;

'Nothing yet has been successful in diverting the authority that individuals and the groups they form give to their fire service culture', (Baigent with Rolph, 2002, p2).

Similarly Turner (2001) suggests the 'institutional self' and the 'locus impulsive self', two different archetypal individuals, find their individuality in different ways. The traditional firefighter may arguably mirror the 'institutional man' as he sees himself anchored within the institution in acts of volition and in institutional frameworks. The self is not to be discovered like the 'locus impulsive' man but realised through the job. Throughout Baigent's (1999, 2001, 2002, 2003) work, firefighters

²⁷ Baigent's (2002) research suggests that at the training centre 'all learnt it was easier to comply than resist', (p.14).

²⁸ Baigent (2003) suggests that at the training centre 'training has denied their ability to be individuals, except to the point of differences that need to be corrected for the good of the team', (p.3)

²⁹ All wanted a 'hands on physical job' and most were realising a life-long ambition to become a firefighter.

mirror the institutional man who is conscientious and accepting of group obligations and the presence of undivided loyalty, and as Turner suggests 'the real self has assumed control and overcome alien forces of impulse' (p.244). The real self is something attained, created and achieved when the individual is in control of his faculties and behaviours. This archetype is in opposition to the 'impulsive self' where the real self is realised when he does something because he 'wants to' and is spontaneous. The self is yet to be discovered, driven by his impulse, he is not driven by good, noble, courageous or self-sacrificing motives. Yet the impulsive locus self may arguably portray the new type of individual the FRS are trying to encourage and fashion, and closely fits in with Giddens's concept of the individual who is constantly trying to find himself in the absence of traditional guidelines.

Lyng's (1990) paper on the concept of 'edgework' brings up some interesting points that may also be applied to the type of individual that the fire service employs and who is already operational within the institution. The individuals that edgework refers to; are those who are attracted to risk³⁰, and undertake activity which threatens death or injury combined with the attraction to create an environment which would provide an adrenaline rush and sense of excitement. These individuals possess certain psychological personality types. Edgework involves the exercise of particular skills or performances including being able to focus on what is most important for survival. Lyng also suggests that in human nature risk taking and the need for an adrenaline rush, sits comfortably with notions of masculinity and 'ladettes'. This fits with the image of the FRS as Baigent with Rolph (2002) suggest 'the image of the FRS is masculine, dirty and dangerous' (p.36). Further comparisons to firefighting are apparent as Lyng argues;

'Participants describe the experience in terms of self-realisation 'a purified and magnified sense of self', typical emotions include initial fear, replaced by exhilaration and omnipotence. Perceptions become highly focused, time passes in unusual ways, participants feel at one with their machines or equipment or environment, the experience can seem more real than everyday life'. (<http://www.arasite.org/kclyng.html> accessed 04/11/2005).

³⁰ This also relates to essentialist ideas of masculinity.

Firefighting can be seen as a risk taking job and parallels can be drawn with the experience of 'getting in' at a fire and the use of breathing apparatus³¹ where the individual feels at one with his machine. Equally, because firefighting is a hands-on, physical, and in many ways a technical job, the firefighter is reliant upon many appliances in order to perform his job without which his efforts would be futile. Firefighters' also have the propensity to take risks under certain circumstances. Baigent (2001) argues that the Health and Safety Executive (1984) acknowledged that firefighters would take risk to do their job and a legal requirement was placed upon brigades to improve safety procedures. The fire service responded in 1988 by issuing new rules and Dynamic Risk Assessment. In spite of taking risks firefighters play down their heroic image (ibid. p.59) but research has suggested that the younger inexperienced firefighters are more likely to take risks than older more experienced individuals who presumably would claim greater mastery as a consequence of their longer experience. Furthermore what is interesting is that within the context of placing the type of individual who would want to experience 'risk' into an individual categorisation, Lyng suggests that this type of individual belongs to Turner's impulsive type rather than institutional type. Firefighters' representing social action in line of duty can develop an 'illusion of control' and believe skills can overcome chance and this creates an opportunity to sustain a heroic self in a simple world of risk and challenge;

'The good fire man, the emphasis is on the operational, active individual who can remain calm and sensible under pressure, and the dominant view of what a fireman's identity involves. He is defined by the type of work he does, dangerous, demanding, operational tasks rather than such non-operational features of work as Fire Prevention and admin. Hart (1982, p239-240, in Baigent, 2001, p.47).

Therefore if being seen as a 'good firefighter' is central to their construction in the fire service then it is not surprising that there has been hesitation in wholeheartedly accepting the Government's new agenda for the Fire Service;

'Fire fighters are almost uncomfortable with the Government's agenda for firefighters' to become more active in the community to prevent fires before they start. To an extent, both

³¹ Baigent, 2001, suggests following research findings that although strict rules apply to BA firefighters do break the BA rules.the watch sometimes compramise BA rules, p107.

of these new agendas are linked because they challenge the view by many fire fighters that **their job and identity is about proving yourself in the action side of ‘The Job’**; little to do with equality or community fire safety’, (Baigent, 2002, p.2).

Clearly there are tensions between the FRS’s new organisational objectives and the extent to which the new roles and competencies are at odds with the traditional construction of the firefighter and his self-identity. The means by which the FRS are trying to implement change will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: RECENT POLITICAL INTERVENTIONS; REINVENTION OF THE FIRE SERVICE, NEW ROLES DEFINED AND THE INTRODUCTION OF IPDS

Political and economic intervention in the 1970’s marked a turning point for the fire service due to the decline in the British economy. Politicians looked to impose financial restrictions on the fire service and although initially resisted by nearly all uniformed officers it created an environment where we have seen a subsequent division between firefighters and senior officers and politicians;

‘There is almost a horizontal division between the fire fighters who want to retain a fire service based on a traditional model of efficiency equating to fastest and best service delivery and the officers who increasingly prioritise other agendas and cut back on the fire service to meet economic boundaries’. (Baigent ,2001, p.5).

Baigent goes on to suggest that the dynamics of this division may have had a direct impact on fire fighters and may well have encouraged a more pronounced solidarity among them effecting an ever more widening gap between firefighters and their officers to resist cuts. This solidarity and resistance may also be seen as a defence mechanism against the way in which they understand themselves and through which they construct their identity/ masculinity.

The current political context of the Fire Service following the *‘Independent Review of the Fire Service (2002)’* has seen an overwhelming and sudden move towards ‘modernisation’ and change, which has been a high priority on political agendas over the past fifteen years. This change has introduced Integrated Personal Development Strategy (IPDS) as a form of regulation and control which enforces the development and monitoring of firefighters within existing and new roles. This was a part of the pay deal following on from the 2003 strike. The present Labour government is following through the introduction of New Public Management ideologies driven by the pursuit of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and continues to attack bureaucracy and blind routine and encourage a more entrepreneurial style of working conditions. In the *Fire and Rescue National Framework (FRNF) 2005/06* it states;

‘The aim is for frontline staff to have available funds to do their job even better, and that the bureaucracy that may get in their way will be removed. The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that maximum use is made of increased investment’. (p.60).

This may suggest viable signs of ‘flexible capitalism’ at work in this context. With the emphasis on efficiency by maximum use of increased investment the focus is on efficient use of capital and an ongoing attack on bureaucratic structure that may obstruct quality of investment. *The Independent Review of the Fire Service (IRFS) 2002*, identifies resistance to past political efforts at modernisation

and has gone as far as to suggest that funding would be restricted unless the Fire Service phased in the new modernisation agenda. There was to be a new role for the Fire Service:

‘This new role will require a new range of skills and competencies, coupled with the cultural changes necessary to allow the service to reflect the diversity of today’s society.... it will no longer be the case that a single role (firefighting) will be able to fulfil them all.’ (IRFS, 2002, p.5).

New roles, competencies and skills strongly suggest increasing demands for flexibility on the part of the firefighters who were expected to undertake a new shared vision within the organisation. In the past the fire service was a re-active organisation but now the government expects pro-activity. The Fire Service is expected to implement and demonstrate radical change and there is increasing focus on the individual to acquire, maintain and develop skills through IPDS. Sennett (1998) would see this as a distinct break from the past, effecting a sense of discontinuity by the newly defined roles and challenging previous public perceptions, negating concepts of the traditional imagery of the ‘firefighter’ as its single and leading focus. This will have a profound effect on the collective identity of fire fighters and their prevailing culture. The traditional culture that resides within the fire service has already been under considerable scrutiny both from political circles and academics, Baigent, (2001) argues;

‘Apart from fire-fighters being mostly men, the organisation in which they work is also predominantly white, working class, heterosexual, able-bodied and pseudo/para-military. The fire service is also institutionally sexist, racist and homophobic and institutionally conservative.’ (Baigent, 2001, p.1).

Equally Baigent (ibid.) suggests firefighters construct their whole identity through these words;

‘How they subjectively judge they expect to be seen, by themselves, their peer group and the public. In so doing they set themselves apart from the ‘others’ who cannot meet (often because firefighters will not let them) their expectations’. (Baigent, 2001, p.127).

Persistent attempts are being made to break this institutional and cultural behaviour and create an environment where the diversity of today's society is reflected in institutional order. O'Brien (2004) suggests that the new values are constantly put into practice and the FRS is now moving in a new direction. Values within the fire service include the new vision for the public services breaking with traditions, overhauling culture and looking forward to realising equality and diversity, (see appendix 5).

IPDS will seek to 'develop existing skills and understanding to meet required standards' and 'build on existing skills' rendering the individual more flexible within the organisation. This has been implemented to shift the emphasis from firefighting to a more diverse range of roles with community fire safety and prevention being the main political focus. If reforms must take place one must question if the strategies employed by IPDS will successfully deliver the desired outcome with its move towards a new flexible and efficient organisation. It is arguable that for the individual in the fire service this may subsequently increase levels of anxiety, erode self-identity and induce an identity crisis. The present individuals will be challenged to cope with this new state of what Sennett terms 'drift' which may cause a sense of disorientation and a loss of control which may cause a sense of disorientation and a loss of control that might override management and political incentives. For the firefighter this is further accentuated by the loss of confidence in the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) following the outcome of the 2003 strike, which had traditionally been a means to orchestrate their voice to management. We may see resistance to the new changes with firefighters' compliance reduced to a new bureaucratic level and an increased lack of goodwill gestures (where they volunteered their time at charitable events), which previously enhanced community relations.

If, according to Baigent (2003), the vision placed on the 21st century fire fighter is based upon; 'someone who has the ability to be a team player one minute and an individual the next', (ibid. p.49), one could question how these interchangeable roles could be achieved without causing some kind of polarised distortion within the identity of the firefighter himself. Furthermore, an individual who is perceived to be an asset to the fire service is;

'A fire fighter who can kick down doors, but who will mostly aim at opening doors to the community.' (Baigent, 2003, p.49).

This carries notions of simultaneous multi-tasked individualistic and collectivistic goals, which may further enhance a sense of disorientation within the firefighter who has to reconcile traditional team values with the contemporary individualistic image. This is further explored by what seems to be a paradoxical vision and term 'independent firefighter' (Baigent, 2003, p27) 'who knows when to question, and how to take responsibility for his own development.' (ibid.). The emphasis on taking responsibility for 'themselves' suggests that through IPDS the individual is set free to orchestrate his/her job pathway; but as Sennett suggests this may not necessarily be the case.

Equally, Rose's (2000), argument that personal and subjective capacities of citizens have been amalgamated into the scope of public powers is clearly demonstrated by the governments' agenda filtering through the higher echelons of the fire service to re-organise the operational fire fighter. The Fire Service College argues;

'IPDS is an ethical, outcomes based programme that values people for the individual and collective contribution they are able to make to the Service. It is founded on the concept of developing organisations through developing their people. **It is about much more than training; instead, the structured development of individuals to help organisations achieve their strategic objectives is the key objective of the system**'. (Ozimkowski, J. undated Fire and Fire International Supplement: IPDS from the Fire Service College).

This may arguably be trying to promote and prioritise the management of subjectivity by challenging previous cultures and task performance. This move towards the implementation of IPDS may involve the 'calculated management of human forces and powers to achieve the objectives of the institution'. Rose continues to suggest that the new concepts being introduced wield a power base not of a traditional top down domineering kind but rather orchestrated through education, encouraging reflexivity in order to manage subjectivity and personal ambition in line with institutionally defined goals.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND EVALUATIONS.

The public services have seen a distinct shift in policy since Thatcher's government in 1979 and within this context visible signs of 'New Flexible Capitalism' may arguably be at work within modern day Fire and Rescue Service, realised through the modernisation agenda of 2004/5 implemented through IPDS. However, more significant to the individual, is the governmental pledge that it will no longer be the case that a single role 'firefighting' will be able to fulfil the new institutional vision of the firefighter. This new vision places emphasis on the ability to be 'flexible', which could be seen as infringing on previous ways of traditionally constructing 'the self' within the organisation. If the fire fighter constructs himself 'as his job' aspiring to achieve

the label 'good firefighter' rather than merely 'in his job', the concept of the individual finding self-realisation through his work parallels Marxist ideology where labour provides a self definition and a means to reach self-realisation. It is feasible that feelings of alienation may develop under the system of flexible capitalism and also under the new FRS's conditions and vision.

It may be necessary to question the consequences of the new vision of institutional objectives if firefighters' construct their identity through 'the job' and 'getting in' at a fire, which is additionally influenced by the cultural value of 'fitting in'. Consequently, the means by which the traditional fire fighter previously constructed his self-identity is under attack and previous strategies of identity formation are being challenged suggesting a possible identity crisis. The impact of this challenge is being realised by the majority of fire fighters who may have their subject position displaced by the introduction of equality and diversity policies which seek to challenge the chemistry of the workplace. The extent to which hegemonic masculinity is sustained throughout the fire service is considerable (see Baigent, 1999, 2001), and could be an example of Giddens' (1979) structuration theory with the existence of repetitive hegemonic behaviour reproducing and sustaining the social structures within the institution. Traditionally the firefighter may have been able to auto-biograph his life narrative, and in some cases come significantly close to Maslow's (1943) self-realisation concept, but the new vision projects a sense of discontinuity of the traditional life narrative. Failure for the individual to come to terms with redefining job specification and reconfiguring and adjusting to the new organisational identity and not moving within the organisation may consequently be seen as a sign of failure. The individual may see himself entering the condition of 'drift', unsure of destination and as someone who is trying to articulate a sense of being and 'who has to be a team player one minute and an individual the next' (see Baigent with Rolph 2002, p.49). This may result in a polarised distortion of 'self'. Parallels can also be drawn with Giddens (1991) concept of the 'reflexive project of the self' where the individual firefighter may find himself constantly having to revise biographical narratives in order to sustain a sense of self.

The effects of Rose's (2000) concept of the management of human forces combined with Sennett's (1998) new invisible and arbitrary controls on the fire service individual may impair self-

orientation, limit control of life narrative, and attack previous notions of self-identity. It may create a type of false consciousness, with the engine of change driven by the calculated management of human subjectivity, which may not be consciously understood by the fire service individual. Therefore it is not just about a change of direction for the FRS, it could be seen as an example of a contemporary way of governing not only thinking, action, behaviour and aspirations, but also the very concept of 'the self'.

If, as Baigent (2002) suggests, IPDS is not popular among firefighters, it may be argued that these changes could be contested in the form of backlash. Strategies may be employed that consist of a re-grouping of 'watch' resistance, taking the organisation to a bureaucratic extreme resisting flexible capitalism at its core. Furthermore, the new networks of power may also be used as a means to raise levels of job expectancy placing more responsibility and focus on the individual. Under these new controls and conditions individual surveillance is heightened and subject to increasing scrutiny thereby effecting a more Foucaultian gaze upon the individual. However the new controls may also be perceived as a way of achieving a more effective and efficient use of public money. Paradoxically these 'bourgeoisie strategies' are seen by Sennett to disorientate action, loosen bonds of trust and commitment and divorce will from behaviour. Through IPDS the individual is constantly entering stages of developmental transition, a consequence of which may be to erode commitment as the individual is constantly drifting through the system to an unknown destination. The fire service individual may find he has to adapt previous traditional values, which may seriously challenge the formal fire service values in the 2004/5 framework.

With new roles incorporated into their job specification, and a political emphasis on Fire Prevention, the individual may be in a state of trying to wrestle with powers of control, and also be under threat of displacement from their subject position. Institutional objectives such as equality and diversity agendas may be seen as an attack on fire service masculinities and culture which may be resisted by the full force of existing male power.

The firefighter may find himself disorientated within the institution when trying to reconcile notions of organisational modernisation and the entry of those who have historically and culturally

been less powerful in the gender hierarchy from subordinated masculinities and femininities groupings and ethnic minorities, (see Connell, 1995). Therefore, for some firefighters, modernisation may involve a perception of 'forced' acceptance of the socially constructed 'other' (see Baigent, 2001, p.21), and may be seen to emasculate the very notion of 'the self' realised through 'the job', which challenges previous traditional firefighting constructions. The 'jealous master' (see Whyte in Holstein and Guberman, 2000) who demands conformity is unlikely to relinquish his power and group solidarity may be strengthened. It may be argued that new notions of individuality under these conditions is unlikely to survive, or may mutate into a more deceptive guise. This may be realised through an increased reliance on impression management (see Goffman, 1959), an already well documented skill firefighters use in the presence of senior officers, (see Baigent, 2001, p33).

At first glance the archetype of Whyte's organisational man appears to run parallel with how firefighters have constructed and managed their identity in the past. The idea that the individual firefighter sublimates himself within the group in order to articulate a whole sense of 'self' fashioned and chosen in the mirror like image of his surroundings appears to contain certain similarities. The fire fighter may be seen as the conformist self and equally the archetype of Turner's institutional self, where the real self is found within the institution in acts of volition and frameworks of institutions. This may be sustained by the process of structuration as described by Giddens (1979). Firefighters individually and collectively surrender to the group norms and values surrendering the distinctive individual self. The behaviour and action of the individual firefighters' and use of impression management is constantly recreating the structures. This is sustained by the working out of firefighters' masculinities which is policed by humour and watch conformity. For the fire fighter the 'front', that is, the manipulated desired impression relating to masculinity and culture, acts as the 'vehicle of standardisation' and is further enhanced by cultural dialectic interaction and task performance (see Goffman 1959). It is highly significant that the individual firefighter achieves the label 'good firefighter'. For the firefighter the self is not to be discovered but is found in assumed control and careful manipulation in the presentation of self as mirrored in group conformity, having overcome alien forces of impulse.

The new self-concept mirroring institutional objectives operating under flexible capitalism may resemble the locus impulsive type who is entering a journey within the organisation trying to discover himself. The locus impulsive self may not necessarily be identifiable with the traditional concept of the firefighter. However if we look at Lyng's (1990) idea of 'edgework' where certain personality types are attracted to 'risk', paralleling Turners' (2001) impulsive self, we may see that within the context of 'the job' then 'the self' the individual self is magnified. This may suggest that a heightened sense of individual self may co-exist with the 'institutional' and 'organisational' character types. Two polarised typologies may co-exist at one time within the identity of the firefighter. This may challenge Whyte and Turners' sole concepts of identity within an organisation suggesting that the categorisation of the individual seen in the context of an either/or typology, as fixed, may not be the only way of constructing self-identity. In conjunction with this it may also be necessary to examine more closely the concept of the individual within the team under these conditions. If within the firefighting context the individual has a magnified sense of self in relation to each synchronised team member, then each firefighter's magnified self when 'getting in' at a fire could represent a single magnified sum of total team parts. In other words the sense of 'self' experienced as a single unit and a team member is concurrently increased in a dual action.

The combination of Turners 'institutional' man and Lyng's 'edgework' model seem a perfect balance to attain self-realisation through the job. The 'nature of the beast' so to speak that attracts new recruits and exists within the fire service may not be predisposed to the fashioning of the 'new individual'. It may be argued that the existing articulation of self identity for the late modern firefighter under the operation of the new controls and IPDS may therefore remain unshaken but will not go unchallenged. This may also lead to new signs of a more mutable 'front' under the eyes of senior officers, but in effect the collective objective of each 'watch' may be to retain and reproduce existing culture and retain existing configurations of gender practice.

If firefighters 'primary product' (Burke, 2002) is to defend their masculinity then it may be argued that it may be used as a lever to instigate change within the FRS. Therefore, if the FRS are able to find a strategy to 'dilute' existing configurations of masculinity, and empower the individual to

develop and understand new articulations of gender practice and incorporate these into the new roles, this may enable the individual to reconfigure his sense of 'self', (see appendix 6).

The debate within this paper, argues that in the context of the contemporary FRS in order for 'effective' and 'authentic' change to take place the FRS may need to explore existing strategies of resistance by firefighters and the effects of change in relation to the firefighters' self-identity. Focusing solely on the 'development' of individuals to achieve institutional objectives may not necessarily parallel compliance. This may be an area worthy of further research, which may lead to reconciling the tensions and mechanisms behind the traditionally constructed individual, the emergence of the 'new individual' and the FRS as an institution.

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