Maintaining Male Dominance in the Workplace:
Firefighters in an Australian Metropolitan Fire Service

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that:

1) This thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university.

2) To the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, are clearly acknowledged.



Tamika Alana Perrott

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the construction and negotiation of masculinities in an Australian metropolitan fire service. Drawing on the method of short-term ethnography, including interviews with thirty-three male firefighters, this thesis explores the ways that firefighters conceive of their occupational role and how this is maintained through workplace performances. Rather than defining their occupational identity in relation to the ability to fight fires or experience physical risk, firefighters consistently conceptualise the ideal firefighter as someone who is able to fit within the culture of the service. Fitting into the culture not only requires subscription to certain hegemonic masculine dispositions, but also embodiment of the perceived public perception of firefighters as heroic 'good guys'. The data illustrate how downtime at firefighter workstations, including activities involving recreational exercise and cooking, are significant in reinforcing and policing this occupational masculinity. The same hegemonic order also produces hostility towards non-operational firefighters and those perceived as lacking masculine authority. Constructing and maintaining a particular version of hegemonic masculinity also results in the indirect othering of women through the marginalisation of femininity, which is demonstrated through a remarkable strand of hostility towards myself as a woman researcher. As a result, this thesis points to the need to appreciate multiple masculinities in male-dominated workplaces as well as the performative ways in which hegemonic masculinity is reinforced through tensions between men in these workplaces.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Researching Male Dominance in the Workplace

This thesis is about masculinities in the male-dominated occupation of firefighting and shows the effort and strategies involved in sustaining them by exploring how men negotiate male-gendered power relations during working hours. Much needed attention is given to the negotiations of multiple masculinities, specifically looking at how these are policed and managed in relation to the complex male work cultures in the highly male-dominated occupation of firefighting in Western fire services. The objective of this chapter is to show the distinctive characteristics of firefighting and the socio-cultural and historical context of the occupation in order to better understand why significant gender reform has not yet been achieved.

It is clear that women's participation in the workforce has been central to debates of gender equality and gender reform, and remains an issue subject to growing academic and public concern (Germain et al., 2012, Smith, 2013, Ridgeway, 2014, Caven and Nachmias, 2018). The lack of racial and gender reform has consequently become key issues in studies of gender, work and workplaces. Indeed, since the 1970s, studies of gender, work and workplaces have shown an enduring focus on numerical domination as one of the main consequences of gender inequality in highly male-dominated workplaces (Kanter, 1977a, Britton, 1999, Denissen and Saguy, 2014, Powell and Sang, 2015, Wright, 2016).

At present, women still do not occupy equal leadership positions (Brownson, 2014, Burton, 2014, Abalkhail, 2017), nor have they made in-roads into a range of male-dominated occupations, such as the military, policing and firefighting (Grube-Farrell, 2002, Brown, 2012, Woodfield, 2015, Natarajan, 2016). Scholars have theorised multiple reasons why women rarely make in-roads to these occupations, ranging from organisational support (Lewis, 2004a, p. 22-24, Ghislieri et al., 2017) to more systemic issues of gender conceptualisation in society (Acker, 1990, Miller, 2016) and within the workplace (Remeikis, 2014). However, while numerical dominance in the workplace is important to consider (see Yoder, 1991, p. 188), it does not necessarily equate to gender inequality in the workplace. Nevertheless, it can result in gendered

power relations that institutionalise sex-stereotyped understandings of certain occupations over time (Huppatz and Goodwin, 2013, Burton, 2014, Ridgeway, 2014, p. 10).

Occupations dominated by women for instance, such as aged care (Palmer and Eveline, 2012), typically offer inferior wages (Leuze and Strauß, 2016) when compared to male-dominated occupations such as engineering and dentistry (Cech et al., 2011, Kitchener and Mertz, 2012). The pay inequality across sex-stereotyped occupations shows how numerical domination in the workplace does not necessarily translate to increased power and privilege, as female-dominated occupations consistently offer lower wages and less career mobility (Kanter, 1977a, Britton, 1997). The importance of considering the intersection of gender relations, numerical domination and power relations has thus become important in contemporary studies of gender, work and workplaces over the past few decades (Halrynjo, 2009, Castilla and Benard, 2010, Denissen, 2010b, Alegria and Branch, 2015, Eden, 2017). Although the impact of minority status is still regularly mobilised as the central focus (Lupton, 2006, Watts, 2009, Burton, 2014, Haas et al., 2016).

Even though a great deal of attention has been paid to gender inequality in the workplace (McDowell, 2011, Simpson et al., 2016, Abendroth et al., 2017, Caven and Nachmias, 2018, Natarajan, 2018), male dominance persists whether men are numerically dominant or not. The impact of male gendered power relations indicates that workplace cultures need to be studied beyond narrowly defined gender relations. The hidden advantages for men in female-dominated occupations (for example, gendered assumptions about men's leadership and authority in nursing) exemplify the importance of considering work culture and gender relations simultaneously (see Simpson, 2004).

The strengths of studying work cultures beyond narrowly defined gender relations is evidenced in research literature that explores the tensions and contradictions of men's gender negotiations at work (see McDowell, 2001, Collinson, 2003, Bridges and Pascoe, 2014). Great advances have been made to our understanding of power and gender in workplaces by exploring how multiple masculinities are negotiated between groups of men (Hearn and Parkin, 1993, Collinson and Hearn, 1996b, McDowell,

2001). Additionally, studies on men and masculinities frequently suggest that the intersection of race, sexuality, class and gender mean that multiple masculinities exist and that not all male gendered performances are dominant (Coles, 2009, Connell, 2010, McDowell, 2015). While some men will benefit from the broader gender order, which assumes that men are better suited to leadership and managerial roles (Simpson, 2004, p. 356), men in racial and sexual minority groups will rarely accrue the same privilege afforded to white, heterosexual masculinities (Williams, 2015, p. 390),

Studies of gender, work and workplaces for instance show that gay men experience varying degrees of gender based, HIV-based and sexuality based discrimination (Embrick et al., 2007, Giuffre et al., 2008, Tiemeyer, 2013). Similarly, the omnipresence of racial inequality in various workplaces, which include instances of social exclusion (Yoder and Berendsen, 2001) and occupational segregation (Goldberg, 2017), show the importance of considering the intersection of workplace cultures, power, class, sexuality, race and gender. Research that acknowledges the multiplicity of masculinities in male-dominated workplaces has a strong potential to create avenues for change and could build on current gender reform policies. Furthermore, moving beyond binary approaches would allow us to comprehend how masculinities are sustained and male gendered power negotiated in male-dominated workplaces.

Recognising the gender relations amongst men, as men, will be integral to answering how men negotiate the work culture of male-dominated workplaces (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). As Connell (2011, p. 16) argues, by neglecting men from the conversation of gender equality I face two potential dilemmas. Firstly, I reiterate old discourses and fallacies of men's biological nature; for example 'boys will be boys'. Moreover, I neglect the multiplicity of masculinities and the variations of diversity across the entire spectrum of genders (McDowell, 2001, Collinson, 2003, Coles, 2009, Ainsworth et al., 2014).

As one of the most male-dominated occupations in the West, Western fire services provide a crucial platform for examining the construction of multiple masculinities and occupational identities in male-dominated workplaces. The service's systemic

problems of misconduct (see Allison, 2014, Remeikis, 2014) coupled with the long standing historical exclusion of women and racial minorities (Bag, 1995, Baigent, 2001, See Childs, 2012, p. 1, Ainsworth et al., 2014, Goldberg, 2017), mark it as an extreme case study for exploring the ways in which masculinities are negotiated and policed by men during working hours. Moreover, it has distinctive characteristics that link it to a specific archetype of white, working-class masculinity in a paramilitary heroic role.

Firefighting has historically been dominated by white men and remains one of the most male-dominated occupations in Western industrialised countries (Childs, 2006, Hulett et al., 2008b, Eriksen et al., 2016). Although women's historical involvement in Australian fire brigades dates back to 1941, with the Women's Fire Auxiliary, it was not until the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 that Australian fire services saw women recruited into professional positions within the service (Childs, 2012, p. 1). The socio-cultural and historical context of firefighting in the West also points to a long history of racial exclusion and discrimination (see Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, O'Brien, 2003, McWilliams, 2007, Goldberg, 2017).

Artistic representations of the occupation dating back to the nineteenth century also illustrate how white men have been culturally depicted as normative and heroic in Western fire services. These histories show how men of colour were portrayed as incompetent and women as fragile. Moreover, the artwork shows how a specific depiction of working-class sacrifice, rooted in white, heterosexual masculinity, was celebrated. Three well-known paintings from this period are 'The Recue' by John Everett Millais (1855), 'American Firefighter: Prompt to the Rescue' (1858) by Currier and Ives and 'Saved' by Charles Vigor (1890) (See Appendix A). These paintings carry domestic undertones about gender relations in moments of crisis and danger, whereby white men carry white women and children out of burning residential homes. They also symbolically communicate the failure of fathers to protect their wives and children whilst simultaneously elevating the role of firefighters as the ultimate protectors of the family (see Cooper, 1986). In contrast, Currier and Ives' (1891) colour lithograph 'The Darktown Fire Brigade – Saved!' serves as a striking example of the middle-class racial attitudes of the time. African

American firefighters were depicted as buffoons in contrast to the idolised, white working-class firefighters (Cooper, 1986).

The image of the idolised, white working-class firefighter continued into the twenty-first century through popular film and television. During the twentieth century in particular, a very specific archetype of white, working-class masculinity was linked to firefighting (see Howard, 1991, Semler, 1998, Russell, 2004, Kendrick, 2008, Brandt and Haas, 2012). This archetype relied on the same heroic idealisation of sacrifice produced in the nineteenth century. However, this heroic idealisation became embedded in sexual symbolism, elevated by the fetishised physicality of the heterosexual saviour. As Baigent (2005, p. 45) argues, 'manliness and heterosexuality are implied occupational requirements' in Western fire services. Furthermore, the introduction of firefighter calendars in Western industrialised societies portrayed firefighters as altruistic, compassionate and empathetic. The photographs within these calendars often place children and dogs in fictitious perilous situations, depicting firefighters as representative of a specific form of respectable working-class masculinity in the West.

More recently, the portrayal of the idealised heroic firefighter in the United States was elevated after the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Shortly after the attack, firefighters were used to create a symbol of solidarity through emotionally charged images and various discourses of sacrifice and brotherhood (Collins, 2004). Similarly, the historic fires across Victoria and South Australia, aptly named Black Friday (1939), Ash Wednesday (1983) and Black Saturday (2009), have informed the risk management culture shaped by Australia's landscape (Williams, 2011). The destruction to home and life by these fires has resulted in bravery and heroism becoming synonymous with the occupation (Ferrier, 2014, Murphy and Greenhalgh, 2018, p. 147).

The male domination of Western fire services has gained public and academic attention in the last few decades as women and racial minorities struggle to make in-roads into the occupation (Rosell et al., 1995, Baigent, 2001, Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, Lewis, 2004a, Batty and Burchielli, 2011, Ainsworth et al., 2014, Goldberg, 2017). Research on fire services in Western industrialised countries suggest that

women experience disadvantageous work segregation (Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997, Grube-Farrell, 2002), discrimination (Branch-Smith and Pooley, 2010, Hulett et al., 2008b), tokenism (Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997) and sexual harassment (McLennan and Birch, 2006, Hulett et al., 2008a, Hulett et al., 2008b). Furthermore, studies of Western metropolitan fire services consistently show patterns of resistance towards the inclusion of women and racial minorities in these services (Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, Lewis, 2004a, Goldberg, 2017).

Examination of Australian fire service annual reports, for instance, reveal that statistics on gender are often unreliable and conflated, suggesting that the dominance of men in these services may be higher than what is reported. For example, while the Northern Territory annual report states that 11 percent of the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service staff are women (NTPFES, 2013, p. 64), separate information provided via email correspondence with NTPFES indicates that there are only four full-time, career female firefighters compared to 202 male firefighters, making women's representation less than 2 percent (Wales, G 2014, pers. Comm., 30 Jan). Indeed, available data from a national cross-section of fire service annual reports reveals that on average, men make up more than 95 percent of the career firefighters within Australian fire services (JACS, 2012, P. 161, DCS, 2013, DFES, 2013, FRNSW, 2013, p. 120, MFB, 2013, p. 24, NTPFES, 2013, p. 64, SAMFS, 2013, p. 74, TFS, 2013), suggesting that metropolitan fire services in Australian are more male-dominated than other industries, such as mining (WGEA, 2014, p. 2).

Although Western fire-fighters lack the level of economic advantage and occupational prestige typical of other competitive occupations (Drew et al., 2007), such as the legal profession (Walsh, 2012, Pringle et al., 2017) and academia (Nielsen, 2017), it has nonetheless become a highly competitive career. The competitive nature of the physical recruitment process (Hitchens, 2002, Back, 2017) and the physical demands of the work they perform (Goldberg, 2017) are often used to excuse the dominance of white men in these services, who are believed to be naturally suited to the occupation.

While fire services generally have a large surplus of applicants in each recruitment process, recent intakes have seen these numbers increase dramatically (Homfray, 2015). Within Australia, the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service (SAMFS)

holds a particular reputation for having low acceptance rates. As Owen (2006) reports, only 50 out of 614 applicants have been awarded a career in firefighting in past recruitments and women continue to represent less than five percent of the operational staff (SAMFS, 2016, p. 53). These acceptance rates have since dropped even further, from eight percent in 2006 to a mere one percent in 2015. Latest recruitments saw a conservative intake of only 18 applicants, including famous Australian footballer Kane Cornes or 'Champ Kane Cornes' as he has been publicised (Homfray, 2015). However, while the acceptance rates have dropped, the number of individuals applying has jumped from 614 in 2006 (Owen, 2006, p. 1) to 1300 in 2015 (Fedorowytsch, 2015, p. 1), showing how the occupation has increased in popularity over the past decade.

Despite the increased number of individuals applying to become firefighters, these services rarely see significant shifts in the diversity of successful applicants. Indeed, the topic of policy implementation aimed at increasing diversity in these services continues to fuel public debates (see Carroll, 2011). For example, the gender quota implemented by Fire and Rescue New South Wales (Costello, 2017) is one of the few initiatives in Australia which has resulted in higher gender diversity in the service. Recruits were separated into two binary gender streams, which allowed 50 percent of the top scoring women to be successfully recruited into the service. However, the gender quota has resulted in backlash, with hopeful male recruits arguing that affirmative action unfairly privileges women and discriminates against men (Back, 2017). However, women already employed in Fire and Rescue New South Wales have also joined the resistance towards women joining the ranks, believing that gender quotas trivialise the gains that women have made in Western fire services (Costello, 2017).

Rationale

Despite organisational efforts to increase diversity in firefighting (see Costello, 2017), most Western fire services remain unreformed in relation to race (white) and gender (men) (Branch-Smith and Pooley, 2010, Baigent, 2016, Goldberg, 2017). Moreover, Australian metropolitan fire services have distinctive characteristics that link them to a specific archetype of white, working-class masculinity in a paramilitary

heroic role. This positions firefighting as an exemplary case for exploring the ways in which multiple masculinities are negotiated in male-dominated workplaces.

It is notable that the current project is informed by previous research with firefighters in the same service. In 2012, I researched the experiences of women, looking at how their minority status impacted their working lives (see Perrott, 2016). I developed a deep fascination with the occupation, experiencing a conflicting loyalty to the service (as the daughter of a metropolitan firefighter) while simultaneously recognising the incongruent relationship it appeared to hold in relation to power and gender minorities. Many of the women encountered contradictory experiences at work, including tokenism, exclusion, harassment, acceptance and mateship (Perrott, 2016). During the time of that study, no women held leadership positions within the service. While this has since changed, the number of women in positions of leadership in the service has remained relatively low.

My previous academic involvement with this service drew my attention to the methodological possibilities of exploring these work cultures during working hours, rather than observing from a distance in order to better understand the tensions in the men's experiences with these workplaces. It became evident that a nuanced understanding of the different work cultures and their impact on gender relations in this highly male-dominated occupation was needed. I wanted to understand whether problematic workplace cultures and gender inequality were a problem specific to women, or if men's experiences in the same service could shed light onto the male gendered power relations that problematise gender reform in these workplaces. The findings from the first study helped identify some of the tensions operating in the service relating to women's inclusion, but the gender negotiations of men were not a feature of the study.

Research Approach

Focusing specifically on the negotiation of multiple masculinities (Hearn and Parkin, 1993, Collinson and Hearn, 1996b, McDowell, 2001, Simpson, 2004, Lupton, 2006, Coles, 2009), this research project is concerned with dominance, power and interactions in the workplace from the perspectives of the workers. Moreover, this

study extends our knowledge of masculinities in male-dominated workplaces, offering suggestions for future research in male-dominated occupations. The research question that this thesis asks is:

> In what ways do men negotiate masculinities in male-dominated workplace cultures within Australian metropolitan fire services?

In order to explore how men negotiate male-gendered power relations between men at work, I conducted fieldwork and in-depth interviews with thirty-three full-time, paid firefighters working in a metropolitan fire service in Australia. The methodology utilised in this study is short-term ethnography (Pink, 2009, Pink and Morgan, 2013), which is inductive and opportunistic in nature. Fieldwork observations were employed in order to capture the interactions that occur in relation to the firefighters' working lives. Fieldwork, interviews and embodied experiences were subsequently used as data and were further examined using thematic analysis (Stirling, 2001, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The data extends our knowledge of masculinities in male-dominated workplaces by showing the various tensions and hostilities that occur between and within groups of men, specifically in relation to varying forms of legitimacy practiced in the workplace. The word 'legitimacy' is used to comprehend the power relations surrounding the 'making' of authority, where certain practices of masculinity are made legitimate and dominant, while others are marginalised (see Nousiainen et al., 2013, p. 45).

Additionally, the data show that dominant practices of masculinities in this service have consequences for men whose practices of masculinity are delegitimised in the gender order. Hegemonic masculinity is offered as a useful concept for unpacking the gender relations between and within groups of men, suggesting that while the men in this sample may lack the level of economic advantage and social prestige typical of hegemonic masculinity, they do represent a working-class version of Connell's hegemonic variant (Connell, 1987, 1995).

Thesis Structure

This research project has been prepared in seven chapters, including this introductory chapter. The theoretical and methodological approaches utilised in this study

contribute to our knowledge of masculinities in male-dominated occupations, shedding light on the tensions and hostilities that occur during men's experiences at work. This thesis is sociologically informed. As well as drawing on the sociology of work and employment literature, I utilise insights from gender studies and cultural sociology, particularly around the political significance of leisure and the performative dimensions of social life (Goffman, 1959, Douglas, 1966, Collins, 2004, Alexander, 2011).

Chapter Two looks at the ways in which studies of gender, work and workplaces understand numerical dominance in highly sex-stereotyped occupations, as well as issues surrounding gender inequality (Kanter, 1977a, Acker, 1991, Britton, 1997, Williams, 2000, Ridgeway, 2014). The review of literature undertaken in this chapter has two important functions in relation to the current research project. To begin, the review traces the cultural and historical context of organisational and workplace studies (Lockwood, 1960, Weil, 1973, Marx, 1890, Webb and Webb, 1896, Marx and Engels, 2008), which identifies the strengths in research that examines men's experiences in male-dominated workplaces, on which this thesis builds. Additionally, the review offers theoretical approaches to the study of gender relations in work and workplace studies (Connell, 1987, Bird, 1996, Cheng, 1999, Coles, 2009), such as the 'doing gender' approach (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). These approaches are discussed in order to unpack how multiple masculinities are conceptualised and understood within the broader gender order.

Consideration is given to the research on gender, work and workplaces from Western industrialised societies (Game and Pringle, 1983, See Acker, 1990, Williams, 2000, Simpson, 2004, Fine, 2006, Connell, 2010) and its relevance to the current research project and its findings. Chapter Two considers the arguments which attempt to explain gender inequality, such as tokenism (Kanter, 1977a, Yoder, 2002), ruling relations (Smith, 2005, Prodinger and Turner, 2013) and gender disadvantage at work (Rabe-Hemp, 2009, Denissen, 2010b, Walker and Bopp, 2010, Germain et al., 2012, Denissen and Saguy, 2014). This chapter argues that while the focus on enduring forms of numerical dominance have proven useful in identifying the conceptualisation of the ideal worker in Western workplaces (Game and Pringle, 1983, Williams, 2000),

it also has limitations that this thesis aims to move beyond. Drawing on studies of men in female-dominated workplaces (Masters, 1997, Lupton, 2000, Simpson, 2004, Pullen and Simpson, 2009), the review illuminates the problem of this deployment, suggesting that men often benefit from their minority status in sex-stereotyped occupations. This thesis thus builds on the male-dominated workplace literature by looking at workplace cultures as they are reflected and established through the interactions of workers. The second half of Chapter Two reviews research on emergency first responder occupations, which is an emerging field to which this thesis makes its contribution. The limitations of the research literature are shown as I argue that the paradigm often overlooks the nuanced differences between and within these occupations. The socio-cultural and historical context of firefighting is consequently discussed, describing the nature of work performed by Australian metropolitan firefighters.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology adopted as the most appropriate for this research in order to show why the current research project is situated in workplace ethnographic research. The recent advances in studies of work and workplaces explain the usefulness of contemporary short-term approaches (see Cook, 2005b, Smith, 2005, Murthy, 2008, Neyland, 2008). The hostilities, resistance and gatekeeping experienced during early interactions with the service are then discussed to underline the tensions of conducting research in male-dominated workplaces as a female researcher (see also Gurney, 2003). These experiences are used to further establish the need for inductive and opportunistic ethnographic approaches that help advance the knowledge gained in workplaces. These experiences also illuminate the issues that were encountered which prevented long-term fieldwork. This thesis relies on methodology discussed in the ethnographic literature which utilises short-term ethnography (Pink, 2012, Pink and Morgan, 2013). In doing so, this thesis examines the taken-for-granted elements of the participants' lived work experiences.

The role of men as actors themselves in negotiating male-dominated workplaces is established in Chapter Two, suggesting that more research is needed on the often overlooked, taken-for-granted interactions between men. Chapter Three details the consequences of observing these taken-for-granted interactions and the complexities that arise for a female researcher observing male-dominated workplaces. This chapter

contributes to the small body of literature focused on the taken-for-granted gender relations in contemporary research methodologies (Gurney, 2003, See Figenschou, 2010, Parker, 2016) which suggest that women researchers frequently excuse experiences of sexual harassment during ethnographic fieldwork.

Chapters Four to Six explore the gender negotiations of thirty-three men working in a metropolitan fire service in Australia across four different stations. Moreover, these chapters point to the three major boundary setting strategies used by the firefighters to maintain a specific form of working-class hegemony in these workplaces. These include: preserving a heroic image of the occupation; reproducing a culture of mockery; and managing interactions between men.

Chapter Four uses the theoretical framework established in Chapter Two to look at the negotiation of power and legitimacy. The chapter shows the ways in which men attempt to preserve the heroic image of firefighting, which they believe is cultivated through the public's perception of their occupation. A contribution to male-dominated workplace literature is made through the discovery that the interactions at the station help form the firefighters' occupational identities; especially during downtime where risk is removed from the work they perform. Moreover, the chapter shows distinctive forms of masculinity being played out, whereby 'fitting in' and getting along are prioritised above the ability to perform the job well.

Chapter Five looks at how men negotiate boundaries between firefighters in these workplaces. Focusing on humour, mockery and recruitment, this chapter shows how language and performances are used to manage the hegemony of a specific form of working-class masculinity (Billig, 2001, Schnurr, 2008, Charman, 2013, Westwood and Rhodes, 2013). By exploring the use of humour and its deployment inside a culture of mockery, this chapter shows the intersection of legitimacy and gender relations in policing power thorough masculine performances of heterosexual humour. The intersection of power, legitimacy and gender relations is then explored in relation to recruitment, which is used by the participants to establish boundaries between firefighters and potential firefighters. In doing so, this chapter examines how workplace cultures are policed and managed through sophomoric humour, which positions women and gay masculinities lower down the gender order. Rather than

focusing on racial and gender minorities as a defining feature of inequality in the service (see also Yoder, 1991), Chapter Five focuses on the strategies that are used by the men to resist changes to their workplace cultures.

Chapter Six builds on Chapters Four and Five by exploring how boundaries are constructed between men in these stations in ways that maintain the ideal conceptualisation of the heroic firefighter. Additionally, this chapter further examines the everyday embodiment of firefighting and the consequences for workers who fail to adhere to the dominant practices of masculinity valued in this service. The focus of this chapter is on power relations and the legitimising of certain forms of dominance between and within groups of men. Furthermore, this chapter illuminates the way managers and certain workers were treated as spectators of the male culture due to their positionality in the gender order, as a consequence of their assumed lack of physicality. Focusing on power relations allows for a complex analysis of the gender order by exploring the intersection of gender, race, class, rank and age in the hierarchy of masculinities. The construction of the hierarchy of masculinities is discussed in Chapters Four to Six as demonstrated by the continual policing and management of masculinities. The methodological strengths of short-term ethnography are shown in the ethnographic insights provided throughout this research project, which contributes to a better understanding of the maintenance of male domination in Australian metropolitan fire services

Chapter Seven presents the key findings produced through this research project, suggesting that the making of masculinities in these workplaces feeds into workplace cultures that resist femaleness and femininity, and which also have consequences for male workers who challenge the different dominant masculinities practiced in the service. I also discuss potential avenues for future research that consider the impact of workplace cultures in male-dominated occupations. In this final chapter, I discuss how the findings contribute new knowledge to the literature on male-dominated workplace and address the limitations of the study. This thesis finishes by discussing potential avenues for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: WORK AND GENDER RELATIONS

Advances to gender and racial equality have been made in certain male-dominated occupations over the past few decades. While these advances are noticeable in policing (Lander, 2013, Natarajan, 2018) and engineering (Buse et al., 2013), the continued racialising and gendering of these occupations is clearly evidenced in the research literature on gender, work and workplaces (Gill et al., 2008, Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017, Paul and Birzer, 2017). Other male-dominated occupations, such as construction (Worrall, 2012), firefighting (Goldberg, 2017, Baigent, 2016) and mining (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013, Mayes et al., 2014, Johansson and Ringblom, 2017), have been particularly slow to change the gender and racial diversity of their staff. While mining and construction continue to receive attention in workplace studies due to their contemporary status as masculinised industries (see Bagilhole et al., 2004, Mercier and Gier, 2007, Johansson and Ringblom, 2017), the persistent forms of resistance towards diversity in strongly male-dominated occupations requires further investigation to explore the intersection of power relations, gender and workplace cultures.

The first section of this chapter considers the key theories on gender, detailing how these theories are deployed in contemporary studies of gender, work and workplaces. Within this discussion, hegemonic masculinity is identified as a useful concept for appreciating the growing acknowledgement of the multiplicity of masculinities (see also Hearn and Parkin, 1993, Collinson and Hearn, 1996b, McDowell, 2001, Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), which is crucial to understanding how men negotiate masculinities in male-dominated work cultures. I argue that hegemonic masculinity makes it possible to see the complexities of bodily performances and interactions in ways that reveal insights into the making and remaking of multiple masculinities in the workplace.

The research literature on gender relations and the workplace is then reviewed to show the central assumptions in organisational studies and workplace studies. The review shows that while organisational studies appreciate organisational structures

and processes, workplace studies are better suited to micro-interactional studies that consider the socio-cultural and historical context of different workplaces.

The studies included in this chapter examine the performance of masculinities (Simpson, 2004, Lupton, 2006) and how these performances have been understood in highly sex-stereotyped occupations. The binary approach of studying gender, such as studying women in male-dominated workplaces and men in female-dominated workplaces (Rimalt, 2007, Ainsworth et al., 2014, Williams, 2015), is identified as a common tactic in studies that examine sex-stereotyped workplaces. This approach, while useful in identifying male gendered power relations, does not always account for the multiplicity of masculinities and the tensions in male gendered power relations. I identify the need for research that accounts for the social, historical and cultural contexts within the workplace in order to analyse what ways men negotiate multiple masculinities in male-dominated work cultures (Collinson and Hearn, 1996b, McDowell, 2001, Hearn, 2014).

The final section reviews a unique cluster of jobs called first responder occupations, which includes the work of metropolitan firefighters. I argue that the everyday mundane working practices that legitimise specific forms of Western masculinity in these fire services are often overlooked in emergency first responder literature, which tends to treat firefighting as part of a broader paradigm that includes the work of ambulance officers and police. Moreover, while emergency first responder literature has strengthened our understanding of risk and trauma in Western fire services (Kales et al., 2007, Yip et al., 2015, Stanley et al., 2017), it does not always consider the diversity between workplaces and the diversity of masculinities practiced within them. By placing firefighting under the broader umbrella of emergency first responder occupations, I argue that we run the risk of neglecting the socio-cultural and historical context of the occupation.

Gender Relations and Work

The contemporary research literature relevant to gender relations and work illuminates the centrality of male gendered power relations. This section details the growing awareness that gender is not static but is instead a process embedded in different historical and social contexts that are inseparable from broader power

relations (Gherardi and Poggio, 2007, Powell and Sang, 2015, Hunt, 2016). It is notable that the research literature on gender relations discussed in this section can be divided into two methodological and theoretical camps, either 'gender is performative' or 'gender is performed'. Alternatively, gender is something that can either be 'done' or 'done to us' – to borrow these phrases from West and Zimmerman (1987) and Butler (2004). 'Gender is performative' has been influenced by post-structural social theory while 'gender is performed' is rooted in social constructivism and performance studies, which this thesis borrows from. I explore the different assumptions in this research literature examining how different approaches address the multiplicity of gender, which is a central concern for this thesis.

In the 1970s the revolutionary idea that sex was biological and gender was learnt or social greatly influenced the way researchers of workplaces conceptualised gender relations. The idea that gender was social meant that men and women were not biologically limited to certain roles, and that women were not biologically or 'naturally' subordinate to men in the workplace. The implication of gender as socially constructed meant that the situation could be changed. Oakley (1972, p. 86) detailed the disadvantage she believed that women face in the workplace due to the pressures of fulfilling what she called the 'adult female role', which demanded that women excel academically at school but demonstrate subordinate academic achievement when competing with men. While sex and gender are regarded to be more overlapping than Oakley (1972, p. 158) first suggested, the argument that power relations and gender relations could be socialised sparked promising debates on the social construction of genders, sexualities and identities. The ways in which gender is understood and conceptualised in workplace studies remains an ongoing area of contention among contemporary feminist theorists, as there are multiple and opposing theories of gender relations.

Building on the growing research and attention to gender relations, West and Zimmerman (1987, p. 137) first articulated their conceptualisation of 'doing gender' by arguing that gender can be actively accomplished, done and performed. They moved away from Goffman's (1976, p. 71) suggestion that social actors could choose their 'gender display' by highlighting the complex relational context of gender and performance in everyday interactions. Goffman's understanding of performance,

which is notably inspired by Stanislavski's system, suggests a flexible model of gender in which actors present their preferred self, depending on the social context of the interaction. West and Zimmerman (1987, p. 130) challenged the assumptions of Goffman's dramaturgical model, which proposed that actors could freely choose how they displayed their gender. They subsequently built on his work by arguing that gender is relational, contextual and, most importantly, a product of interaction. Additionally, West and Zimmerman argued that gender is something that can be done, rather than something we are simply born with. The idea that we 'do gender' in our everyday lives argues that we are not docile bodies determined by structure or biology, but rather individuals with agency who can achieve gender by reproducing or contesting normative performances of gender through shared cultural exchanges. The concept of doing gender remains a popular theoretical lens in sociological studies (see Martin, 2003, Rabe-Hemp, 2009, Holgersson, 2013, Nentwich and Kelan, 2014) and is frequently used in contemporary studies of gender, work and workplaces (Davies, 2003, Charles, 2014, Adapa et al., 2016).

Conversely, the influence of post-structuralist theorising (Foucault, 1978, Grosz, 1989, Derrida, 1999, See Czarniawska, 2006, Kelan, 2010) provided an alternative framework to the doing gender perspective, which offered a less binary conceptualisation of gender (see also Butler, 1993). The move away from binary conceptualisations of gender strengthened debates relating to the concept of gender fluidity (Kondo, 1990). For example, Pyke and Johnson (2003) argue that there is no defining femininity or masculinity, rather, fragmented expressions of both that exist through gender relations. Post-structural theorising questioned earlier social constructivist understandings of gender (see West and Zimmerman, 1987) by providing the argument that the very nature of gender is not stable (Butler, 1990).

Post-structuralist theorising provided social theorists of workplace studies with a useful framework for understanding how gender could be undone and troubled among workers (Collinson, 2003, Somerville, 2005, Pilgeram, 2007, Kelan, 2010). Buzzanell et al. (2015) explored the role of mentorship for women of colour working in engineering in the United States. Their study shows the drawbacks of mentorship which assumes a grand narrative that can be applied to all women. Indeed, the three women in the Buzzanell et al. study had different experiences with mentoring,

describing the disenchantment of feeling the double bind of race and gender while also feeling nurtured by the same organisational culture, which at other times felt isolating. The Buzzanell et al. study shows the strengths of post-structural theorising in addressing the hybridity of gender relations.

While Butler and other post-structuralist theorists have been widely influential in America and across Europe, Australian gender theorist Raewyn Connell also significantly impacted the way gender relations were conceptualised. Connell (1987) argues that gender relations are created and recreated through the gender order, gendered practices and bodily performances. However, as she astutely cautions, certain performances – or constructions of masculinity – are culturally favoured over others, making certain bodily performances of gender vulnerable when they fail to adhere to the current accepted strategy. In an attempt to make sense of diverse expressions of masculinity, she constructed the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell et al., 1982). In this concept, she illuminates the hierarchy of masculinities, which produce gendered power and create inequality. Connell's (1987) argument asserts that femininity and certain practices of masculinity are problematised in certain cultures and made subordinate through hierarchical power systems. She elaborates on the idea that gender can be performed by arguing that masculinities/femininities can be constructed and performed (see Connell, 1987, 1995, 2005).

The rationale for this thesis is underscored by Connell's (1995, p. 44) framing of masculinities as 'configurations of practice structured by gender relations. They are inherently historical; and their making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change'. She argues that the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' are part of a configuration of practice that is part of a larger institutionalisation of gender relations, whereby institutions become substantively gendered. Connell (1995, p. 72) argues that these configurations of practice are not innate, natural or biological - as some psychologists have suggested – but are instead a product of history. In doing so, she argues that these configurations are largely built on the notion of difference and power, that is to say that masculinity is understood in its opposition to our continued understanding of femininity.

Through this understanding of gender relations, what has been made feminised in society through configurations of practice and power relations then becomes marginalised and resisted due to the broader gender order. Through these configurations of practice, alternative masculinities, such as gay masculinities (Nardi, 2000, Pascoe, 2005, Tiemeyer, 2013), not only become marginalised, but place the social actor at an increased risk of violence and intimidation through the actions of others (See Connell, 1995, p. 155).

One of the most influential yet often misinterpreted theories from Connell is her conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity, where she borrows the term 'hegemony' from Antonio Gramsci (Connell et al., 1982). Inspired by the work of Marx, it is significant to note that Gramsci was concerned with class relations, rather than gender relations (Boothman, 2008, p. 201), though Connell (1977) often argues that both are intersected. In this regard, Gramsci focused on how the bourgeoisie maintained control over the proletariat through class based power relations. As Fontana (1993, p. 140) argues 'to Gramsci, reality is perceived and knowledge is acquired, through moral, cultural, and ideological "prisms" or "filters" by means of which society acquires form and meaning, hegemony necessarily implies the creation of a particular structure of knowledge and a particular system of values.' Connell, however, conceptualises class as an inseparable product of broader gendered power and production relations. Connell (1995, p. 77), uses the term 'hegemony' to analyse how masculine authority is sustained through institutional power relations and cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, she argues that gender forms part of a larger structuring of social practices which cannot be understood in isolation from race and class.

Hegemony is seen as flexible and relational to the historical and cultural context of the time. Hegemonic masculinity does not represent an archetype of 'male behaviour' (although this is a common misinterpretation). Instead, it represents 'a currently accepted strategy' (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Connell argues that hegemony can be challenged, dominance can be changed, and the power of certain performances can deteriorate or be actively eroded over time. The concept suggests that not all men will directly benefit from hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), as diverse masculinities become marginalised within the hierarchy of masculinities. The

concept of hegemonic masculinity extends beyond the doing gender perspective by looking at the interaction between race, class and gender in a broader social structuring in order to examine how dominance is maintained, and to analyse what conditions facilitate resistance towards hegemonic masculinity.

The issue of power is central to broader debates on gender relations and the workplace. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that, at its very core, the subject of power in gender relations relates to our understanding of dominance and legitimacy in society. The distribution of power in the gender order is crucial to understanding the construction of legitimacy (Nousiainen et al., 2013), status (Ridgeway, 2014), gendered capital (Skeggs, 1997, Lovell, 2000, Huppatz, 2009) and privilege (Halrynjo, 2009, Doering and Thébaud, 2017) as they help unpack who has workplace authority. The gendered power relations operating in the workplace are now thought to inform the experiences of all workers as they situate certain practices as dominant, while other practices are made subordinate and marginalised (Belle Rose, 1997, Devault, 2013, Nousiainen et al., 2013, Simpson et al., 2013, Gilmore and Kenny, 2015, Krook, 2015).

A key strength of Connell's conceptualisation of gender relations is the utilisation and acknowledgement of masculinities, which accounts for variations between and within genders (see also Collinson and Hearn, 1994, McDowell, 2001, Hearn, 2007, Bridges and Pascoe, 2014). The acknowledgement that men negotiate gender between groups of men has been useful in workplace studies. Roberts (2013) for instance used Connell's conceptualisation of gender relations to examine how working-class men in southeast England's retail sector create intra-class distinctions between other men. The findings suggest that men reconcile their masculinity and working-class identities in non-traditional work in ways that trouble the assumptions commonly built into the image of working-class masculinity. The men in Roberts' study found value in their work. They positively framed their experiences in the workplace and placed less attention and importance on performing culturally validated masculinities in these workplaces. Roberts illustrates the need to analyse gender relations empirically due to the social nature of work and the relevance of culture in reproducing power in contemporary workplaces. The Roberts study also points to the necessity of examining both gender and class relations within work cultures.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is useful in understanding male gendered power relations and the reproduction of discriminatory practices in the workplace though dominance and subordination (Courtenay, 2000, Green et al., 2010, Oliffe and Han, 2014). According to Connell (1995), dominance is achieved through three factors: power relations, production relations and cathexis. Men continue to hold dominant positions in society through what is commonly referred to as patriarchy, which in turn intersects with the continued sexual division of labour and gendered nature of the capitalist economy. Both power relations and production relations are connected with cathexis (Connell, 1995, p. 74), which describes how social practices operate on the notion that heterosexual desire is normative. The basis of cathexis is informed by Connell's (2005) fascination with Existential Psychoanalysis, which is largely inspired by the works of Sigmund Freud and Jean-Paul Sartre (Wedgwood, 2009).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity helps to explain how socially constructed categories of difference and power intersect, as evidenced by the high rates of gender-based and sexuality-based discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex adults (Bostwick et al., 2014, Brewster et al., 2014, Mayes et al., 2014, Barak, 2016, p. 107, Köllen, 2016). As Tiemeyer (2013) explains, gay male flight attendants in the United States are not afforded the same privileges typically assumed of white, heterosexual men in male sex-stereotyped workplaces as they face gender based, HIV-based and sexuality based discrimination (see also Connell, 2000). Hegemonic masculinity helps to analyse how dominant practices of heterosexual masculinities historically subordinate certain masculinities due to the broader gender order and power relations between men (Embrick et al., 2007, Giuffre et al., 2008, Tiemeyer, 2013).

The conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity has divided many social theorists. While some scholars have rejected the concept and highlighted its many limitations (see Demetriou, 2001, Beasley, 2008, Beasley, 2013), others have argued that social theorists misinterpret hegemonic masculinity as explaining an archetype of masculinity (Connell, 1995, p. 76, 2005, Anderson, 2009, p. 30). Demetriou (2001, p. 340) for instance argues that 'men do not constitute a homogenous, internally

coherent bloc'. He instead suggests that the idea of hegemonic masculinities and non-hegemonic masculinities create a dualism that does not consider the hybridity of masculinities. Demetriou (2001, p. 341) argues that hegemonic masculinity argues for two distinct forms of hegemony: 'hegemony over women' and 'hegemony over subordinate masculinities'. He refers to the hegemony over women as external hegemony and the subordination of masculinities as internal hegemony, concluding that Connell's theory of gender relations is too dualistic in its conceptualisation.

Demetriou suggests that non-hegemonic masculinities can affect hegemony in significant ways. He uses the increased visibility of gay masculinities in contemporary Western countries to demonstrate his notion of 'hegemonic masculine bloc', which he argues challenges the dualism proposed by Connell's theory. He argues that gay masculinities challenge the current accepted strategy in the West, particularly in relation to the institution of heterosexuality, which works towards the reproduction of broader patriarchy. Both Demetriou and Connell conceptualise gay masculinities as non-hegemonic in the sense that they have become marginalised in relation to the broader gender order as gay masculinities trouble heterosexuality as a normative practice.

Another key argument is that it is the hybridity of gender relations, rather than the dualism proposed by Connell that has allowed straight men in the West to appropriate elements of gay masculinities over the past few decades. Such an example can be seen in straight men's use of 'drag' culture, which Demetriou (2001, p. 353) argues has become a 'symbol of heterosexual manhood' in the West. The appropriation of gay aesthetics in fashion in the early twenty-first century also illustrates how the term 'metrosexual' has been adopted in popular Western vernacular in ways that blur the binary opposition of straight and gay men (Shugart, 2008, p. 282, Rinallo, 2011). However, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 844) later addressed Demetriou's critique of hegemonic masculinity. They cautioned that increased visibility of alternative or non-hegemonic masculinities does not necessarily equate to a challenge to hegemony. Conversely, the appropriation of gay masculinities illuminates how white masculinities maintain power by asserting heterosexuality as a form of masculine dominance. Furthermore, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 845) argue that straight men appropriating elements of gay men's style does not give gay

masculinities or gay men more power and agency in society, as the existing gender order does not allow multiple masculinities to dominate at once. They conclude by suggesting that visibility and numerical representation does not equate to equal power and equal treatment.

This section has explored the assumptions in the academic and research literature on gender relations, considering the different ways in which the doing of gender is conceptualised. It also explored how workplace studies have utilised these theories and unpacked the assumptions that surround them. The importance of acknowledging socio-cultural and historical perspectives and the multiplicity of masculinities in workplace studies was also detailed. As will be explored in Chapter Six, the socio-cultural and historical context of firefighting is key to comprehending generational conflict and competing masculinities in the Australian metropolitan fire services.

From Studying 'Organisations' to 'Workplaces'

This section identifies the assumptions in early studies of work and workplaces in order to place this research in a historical context and trace the temporal dimensions for analysis. The need to trace these temporal dimensions is necessitated by the central concerns of this thesis, which include dominance, power and interactions in the workplace from the perspectives of the workers. I point to the distinctive characteristics of organisational studies and workplace studies, showing the different ways in which the research literature has approached gender relations and work cultures. The review shows how workplace studies give particular consideration to the multiplicity of workplaces, which moves beyond the machine metaphor commonly deployed in organisational studies.

The focus on organisations in studies of work in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century meant that workplaces were presumed by scholars to be rationally organised, gender-neutral locations that functioned *within* organisations, which were previously conceptualised primarily as technical production systems (see Breeze, 1985, p. 45). The influence of the rationalist paradigm led to the perspective that workers were self-governing individuals who navigate social interactions based on 'cost-benefit' analysis, which additionally saw organisations through the metaphor of a machine (Shultz, 1994, p. 14). Early Western contributors to the study of

organisations include Karl Marx, Max Weber, Adam Smith and Vilfredo Pareto (March, 2007). These theoretical contributions led the way for European influences such as that by Henry Fayol in the 1920s, who saw organisations defined as complex work systems, a trend that continued through the 1920s and 1930s (Breeze, 1985, p. 45). Then, in the 1940s, the English translation of Max Weber's work saw a resurgence of interest in organisational studies. Due to the influence and bias of Weberian theorising in this resurgence, sociological researchers often adopted functionalist and quantitative perspectives.

The influence of the functionalist paradigm in organisation studies has resulted in multiple background assumptions about gender; mainly that sex differences are real and necessary for social order (See Hearn and Parkin, 1983, Erickson, 2005). Hearn and Parkin (1983, p. 222) caution that most of the early functionalist research literature, particularly in the field of organisational sociology, positioned 'gender as no more than a variable of which account should be taken'. In doing so, organisations have predominantly been understood as gender-neutral locations wherein men have historically been conceptualised as the 'ideal worker' (see Williams, 2000, p. 56, Davies and Frink, 2014, Reid, 2015).

The construction of the ideal worker has traditionally discriminated against women of childbearing age, although it impacts women of all ages who are unable to commit to full-time work arrangements (see also Charlesworth and Whittenbury, 2007). The ideal worker embodies commitment to work, minimal care duties, career mobility and minimal leave requirements, and is often assumed to be male (Game and Pringle, 1983, Williams, 2000). In the construction of the ideal worker, men benefit from the flow of family work, which maintains sex differentiation in the household (Oakley, 1972, p. 194) and allows men to occupy high paying occupations (Williams, 2000, p. 65, Angelov et al., 2016, Hoffman and Averett, 2016).

The labelling of occupations as 'men's' or 'women's' work, which has been normalised for a large portion of industrial history, is informed by the image of workplaces as gender-neutral. Though, contemporary research in industrialised societies now acknowledges a strong correlation between gender relations, occupational segregation and career outcomes (Reskin and Bielby, 2005, Huppatz and

Goodwin, 2013, DeCastro et al., 2014, Doering and Thébaud, 2017). However, it was not until feminists started to unpack the nuances of organisational processes during second wave feminism that sociological literature started to question the long held belief that differences in the labour force were natural (see Tax, 1980, Game and Pringle, 1983). Efforts by feminist scholars (see Game and Pringle, 1983) to challenge the assumption that workplaces were gender-neutral continued as a consequence of World War II, which saw the mobilisation of women in the labour force (Milkman, 1987), and in non-combat military services and Western fire brigades (Childs, 2012). The feminist movements similarly drew attention to the gendering of organisations while demanding equal rights for women both inside and outside domestic life (Kanter, 1977a, Game and Pringle, 1983, Acker, 1990, Williams, 2000). Feminist scholarship during the 1960s and 1970s additionally questioned the assumptions operating in male-dominated and female-dominated work. This gave rise to the term 'pink-collar workers' (Howe, 1977, England, 1993, Freeman, 2000), which was coined in an attempt to draw attention to women's unequal pay and the undervaluation of service work over other blue-collar and white-collar occupations.

Although contemporary studies of gender, work and workplaces in the West now acknowledge the significance of gender, sociality and workplace cultures (see Halford and Leonard, 2006, Schilt and Connell, 2007, Gill et al., 2008, Faulkner, 2009, Harding, 2013, Woodfield, 2015), the gender-blind epistemology of earlier organisational studies continues to underscore contemporary research on organisations. Indeed, the machine metaphor utilised in early organisational studies is still deployed (see Kiffin-Petersen and Cordery, 2003, Dennis and Margaret, 2005) and while this metaphor is useful in exploring organisational effectiveness, it is less useful in examining the multiplicity of identities and cultures in organisations.

The multiplicity of workplaces and work identities is important to consider as this informs the hybridity of gendered power relations at work. For instance, workplace studies tend to start their inquiry from the perspective of the workers, considering the nuanced differences between workplaces and workplace selves (Fine, 2006, Doering and Thébaud, 2017, Khan et al., 2017, Caven and Nachmias, 2018). While organisational effectiveness is still a feature of workplace studies, this research literature tends to focus more specifically on the importance of culture and

performance in policing power relations at work. I argue that workplace studies, rather than organisational studies take into account the multiplicity of workplaces and work identities and their role in reproducing gendered power relations at work.

Gendered Power Relations in Workplace Studies

This section examines the research literature on gender, work and workplaces in highly sex-stereotyped occupations, exposing pathways to explore the reproduction of diverse masculinities and workplace cultures through the gender negotiations of men employed in male-dominated work. It highlights how workplace studies of male-dominated occupations have a tendency to overemphasise the role that numerical gender representation plays in the construction of gendering practices at work. As this section will show, this is a consequence of the view that minority status is a defining feature and central problem in male-dominated and female-dominated work (Kanter, 1977a, Lupton, 2006, Watts, 2009, Burton, 2014). While these workplace studies have strengthened our understanding of male dominance in these workplaces and linked this with structures of inequality, they have tended to pay less attention to the ways in which these work cultures are reproduced through the plurality and contestation of masculine cultures. Moreover, while women's experiences of the workplace are often thought to shed light on gendered power relations, 'Men are implicitly present as background' in broader conversations of gender relations (Connell, 2003, p. 11, Caven and Nachmias, 2018). Men are consequently assumed to represent the norm in Western workplaces (Williams, 2000). This section thus points to the possibilities of research that focuses both on the multiplicity of work cultures and the multiplicity of masculinities in male-dominated workplaces.

It was Rosabeth Kanter who critiqued the assumed naturalness of gender discrimination in the workplace and put a name to the experiences of women who found themselves consistently underrepresented in the corporate world (Britton, 2000). Kanter (1997) contributed significantly to studies of male-dominated work and assisted the developing critique of power and gender relations in studies of work and workplaces. In her seminal text 'Men and Women of the Corporation', Kanter constructs a theory of tokenism which argues that minority groups occupying less than fifteen percent of a workplace are vulnerable to acquiring a 'token' status. The token status of women in corporations is argued to increase the likelihood that women

will not report instances of harassment and discrimination. As each token is highly visible as a symbolic outsider to the dominant group, they feel additional pressure that their individual actions may adversely affect other members within their token group or their own careers (see also Chetkovich, 2004). While Kanter acknowledges tokenism as an underlying issue within workplaces, she argues that it is the male gendered power relations at play that makes the underrepresentation of women in male-dominated work problematic. She argues that powerlessness is an experience that women face as a consequence of gendered power, an argument that continues to influence contemporary studies of male-dominated work (Allen and Wall, 1987, Yoder, 2002, Bratton, 2005, Perrott, 2016).

As with other countries in the West, Australia has a well-established history of institutionalised practices that reinforce gendered working conditions, where men have benefited from Australia's industrial understandings of needs based, basic wages (see Ryan and Conlon, 1975). These understandings from the early twentieth century continue to disadvantage women in contemporary workplaces in relation to pay, work flexibility and superannuation (Pocock, 1999, Olsberg, 2005, Charlesworth and Baird, 2007, Kaine, 2016). As Dabscheck (1986) argues, both William Jethro Brown and Mr Justice Higgins played crucial roles in the normalisation and institutionalisation of pay inequality between the sexes in the early twentieth century. Mr Justice Higgins' 1907 Harvester judgement proposed that men needed to financially support themselves, their wife and their children. Furthermore, Higgins proposed that a woman's basic wage need only support the living situation of the woman (Pocock, 1999), who was seen as an individual. The disadvantage to working women in Australia extends beyond the economic disadvantage from the basic wage but also to the structure of work. Access to flexible work arrangements (Pocock, 2005, Adapa et al., 2016, Skinner et al., 2016), such as part-time work (Charlesworth and Whittenbury, 2007), would otherwise support caring responsibilities outside the labour force, such as caring work/duties for young children.

The abundance of research on gender, work and workplaces since the 1970s argues that workplaces still structure their employment and institutional practices around the sexual division of labour, which privilege particular gendered dispositions (Acker, 1990, Britton, 1997, Franzway, 2001, Hearn and Parkin, 2001, Reskin and Bielby,

2005, Acker, 2012a, Pocock, 2012, Huppatz and Goodwin, 2013). However, institutional practices have consequences for both men and women who work inside these workplaces and navigate these social institutions. Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organisations, which remains one of the most widely cited theories in studies of work and workplaces (Sayce, 2012), attempted to expose the assumptions embedded in studies of gender, work and workplaces. She changed the conversation around gender-neutral organisations into a reframed examination of the existing inequalities and gendered processes occurring in organisations, which contributed to what is commonly referred to as Acker's theory of gendered organisations (see Britton, 1997, Britton, 1999, Weigt, 2006, Price, 2008, Hart, 2016). Acker concluded by arguing that sex was rarely addressed in sociological studies that analysed social structures and social stratification, despite the economic, social and political inequalities that regularly result from gender stratification (Acker, 1973). Acker's work is significant in that it pays attention to the gendering of organisations, even where women are not working.

By deconstructing the conventional image of the gender neutral workplace, feminist scholars have been able to reimagine how studies of work should be accomplished (see Britton, 1997). Troubling the perceived gender neutrality of work relations has ultimately shaped contemporary debates around harassment and power relations in contemporary Western workplaces (Schilt and Connell, 2007, Giuffre et al., 2008, KPMG, 2010, Willis, 2012, Williamson, 2015). The theory of gendered organisations argues that organisations are gendered through the structure of work, which unfairly privileges male workers and masculine bodies over women and perceived feminine bodies (Acker, 2012b, p. 208). The continued dominance of white men in leadership and high paid positions in the work force is not seen within this framework as a natural phenomenon; rather, it is part of a larger institutionalisation of practices that are gendered and related to broader power relations. While the theory of gendered organisations has provided insights into the social and political inequalities that regularly result from gender stratification, its focus on broader organisational structures means that it is rarely used to unpack the micro and conversational interactions between groups of men in male-dominated workplaces.

Workplace studies that examine male gendered power relations in highly sex-stereotyped occupations have resulted in a wealth of research, specifically related to the experiences of workers. Similarly, the exploration of men's experiences and interactions in female-dominated workplaces has offered insights into how the gender hierarchy is constructed in various workplaces, whereby men often fit the qualification of the ideal worker (Game and Pringle, 1983, Williams, 2000). Contemporary examples of studies of male-dominated work in Australia include mining (Mercier and Gier, 2007, O'Faircheallaigh, 2013, Mayes et al., 2014), information technology (Smith, 2013), engineering (Faulkner, 2009, Gupta, 2012, Ayre et al., 2013), sports (Walker and Bopp, 2010, Burton, 2014, Corboz et al., 2016) and fishing (Crowder, 2002). Contemporary examples of female-dominated workplaces in Australia include primary school teaching (Simpson, 2004, Pullen and Simpson, 2009, Deneen, 2011), nursing (Masters, 1997, Kellett et al., 2014, Stanley et al., 2016) and retail trades (Broadbridge, 2007, Johansson, 2016).

The purpose of many of these workplace studies is to expose the significance of male gendered power, even in workplaces where men are not numerically dominant. As Chapter One detailed, contemporary scholarship argues that women in industrialised societies face damaging consequences in male-dominated work (see Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997, Rimalt, 2007, Denissen, 2010b, Powell and Sang, 2015). In a significant contrast, men from industrial societies who enter similarly non-traditional, female-dominated workplaces, such as primary school teaching and nursing, do not always suffer the same negative consequences as women who enter male-dominated workplaces (Henson and Rogers, 2001, Simpson, 2004, Lupton, 2006, Halrynjo, 2009, Cottingham et al., 2015).

Simpson (2004), for instance, found that the visibility of being a minority could actually work in men's favour, which suggests that token disadvantage does not provide a holistic framework for unpacking the issues of gender inequality associated with highly sex-stereotyped work. Through her exploration of cabin crew, librarians, primary school teachers and nurses, Simpson found that heterosexual men were able to benefit from their minority status due to gendered assumptions about men's leadership and authority. In contrast to women who are devalued and othered in highly sex-stereotyped work (Williams, 2000, McDonald et al., 2004, Howe-Walsh

and Turnbull, 2016, Wright, 2016), men are able to use this status to position themselves as role models in situations of authority through an 'assumed authority effect', which places men as better suited to leadership than women (Simpson, 2004, p. 356). While Simpson's study showed that men do not always deliberately capitalise on the advantages that their gender affords them, the results still indicate that these advantages exist.

The masculine stereotypes more broadly associated with the ideal worker (Game and Pringle, 1983, Williams, 2000, Reid, 2015) assume that workers prioritise work over other family/care duties. However, as feminist scholars have argued, not all forms of work are always paid, acknowledged or even made visible in capitalist societies (Franzway, 2001, Connerly, 2015). Devault (1991) for instance took the taken-for-granted tasks of shopping, cooking and feeding the family and placed these tasks within a broader social context. In doing so, Devault contributed to feminist scholarship that explores the ways in which these daily, often-invisible practices are embedded in unequal caring practices of unpaid labour in domestic life. The gender disadvantage in these caring practices and domestic tasks, which Devault argues are primarily undertaken by women, were used to show how the giving and receiving of care is actually constructed through gendered narratives and performatives (Sullivan, 1996, Johnson, 2010). Consistently, research on gender, work and workplaces suggest that lack of work flexibility is one of the main contributors to why women choose to leave male-dominated workplaces (Frome et al., 2006, McLennan and Birch, 2006, Woodfield, 2007, Ayre et al., 2013, Smith, 2013). The research literature indicates that gendered barriers not only occur at the level of policy, which privilege men, but also through informal and unofficial policies and practices that do not take the sexual division of domestic labour into account (Frome et al., 2006).

The research literature that focuses on the lived experiences of women suggests that women can be particularly disadvantaged in male-dominated workplaces, where they negotiate daily gender discrimination by adopting a range of strategies, including practicing masculine language and behaviour to ensure that their colleagues do not see them as a threat (Holmes, 1999, Holmes et al., 2001, Sanders, 2004, Elsesser and Peplau, 2006, Mills et al., 2006, Schnurr, 2008, Denissen, 2010a, Irigaray and Vergara, 2011). Additionally, studies of gender, work and workplaces suggest that

there remain substantial differences between men's and women's experiences in the workforce, including the problems of sexual harassment, as well as unequal social mobility, career opportunities and work segregation and pay (Dainty et al., 2000, Yoder, 2002, Halrynjo, 2009, Mayes et al., 2014). By asking women to reflect on their working life experiences, scholars have been able to better understand gendered subjectivity in male-dominated work (Powell et al., 2009, Rabe-Hemp, 2009, Hatmaker, 2013, Smith, 2013).

As Connell (2005) argues, all genders play a significant role in changing the current accepted strategies of the existing gender order. This is particularly the case for those who are in positions of power within the gender hierarchy, given that they are often the 'gatekeepers for gender equality' (Connell, 2005, p. 1802). The workplace studies discussed in this section suggest that workplace experiences are often constructed through a hegemonic masculine gender regime that values certain practices of masculinity whilst marginalising other practices (see Simpson, 2004, Connell, 2010). The focus on analysing interactions between and within groups of men, which the Simpson study does well, is key to better understanding how men negotiate the gender order in sex-stereotyped occupations.

Although the research literature has established that men and women have different experiences in the workplace, it is common for studies of gender, work and workplaces to explore identities operating on either side of the spectrum of gender, race and sexuality (Rumens, 2008, Tiemeyer, 2013, Goldberg, 2017). In studies of male-dominated workplaces, white, heterosexual men often operate in the background, typifying the normalised worker in these occupations (Hearn and Parkin, 1993). However, as Hearn (2014, p. 415) argues, this background frame does not account for the varying patterns of dominance, subordination and marginalisation experienced as a result of class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, gender and age.

The consideration of the multiplicity of masculinities in the workplace in the past few decades (Hearn and Parkin, 1993, Connell, 1995, Collinson and Hearn, 1996b, Coles, 2009, Bridges and Pascoe, 2014) has greatly advanced studies of gender, work and workplaces, accounting for the tensions and contradictions in men's relationships. Similarly, the awareness of multiple work cultures in the workplace (McDowell,

2001, Fine, 2006) points to the possibility of unpacking how men negotiate gender alongside work cultures. As Fine (2006) argues, every workplace consists of multiple cultures that inform the interactions and power relations operating at work. Shared meaning and patterns of interaction help form the dynamics of these cultures, which are produced and reproduced during working hours. The utilisation of multiple masculinities in workplace studies also shows the complex navigations that can occur between groups of men, showing how men can dominate and be subordinate in different settings due to the shared values and meaning of power and legitimacy at work (Collinson and Hearn, 1996b, McDowell, 2001, Eichler, 2014). As McDowell (2001, p. 186) argues, 'While the dominant culture and practices of an organisation may be based on the collective power of men, this clearly does not rule out differentiation and tensions amongst men.'

This section has presented some of the main arguments discussed in the research literature of gender, work and workplaces, focusing more specifically on sex-stereotyped occupations and the ways in which they have been explored. The arguments identified in the research literature suggest that men are often found to benefit from gendered assumptions in the workplaces, even in workplaces that are female-dominated and sex-stereotyped, such as nursing. It was also shown that while men might be disadvantaged in male homosocial relationships outside of the workplace, studies of gender, work and workplaces indicate that men experience distinct economic and social advantages inside these female-dominated occupations (Lupton, 2000, Simpson, 2004). This suggests that minority or token status is too narrow a lens to explore the complexity of gender relations in workplaces. The central focus in much of the research on men and women in non-traditional work relies on the assumption that one gender benefits while the other is made subordinate (for an exception, See Broadbridge, 2007, p. 967). Furthermore, this section has argued that although studies of gender relations and the workplace do pay attention to how gender is negotiated at work, this is rarely examined in relation to the ways in which men negotiate gender relations and workplace cultures simultaneously.

The shift in appreciation and utilisation of the concept of masculinities (Collinson and Hearn, 1996b) and work cultures (Fine, 2006) in workplace studies leaves us with potential avenues for exploring the making and remaking of masculinities and

workplace cultures in male-dominated work. Such an approach allows us to examine how diversity within the gender hierarchy plays out among men across different worksites in male-dominated workplaces. Similarly, this approach would give consideration to the diversity of gender patterns among men in male-dominated work and how these patterns might create tensions specific to different work cultures. Finally, I argue that taking the multiplicity of masculinities into account allows us to explore the different forms of legitimacy practiced through workplace cultures and the consequences of these practices for the gender practices of men at work.

Emergency First Responders

Firefighting is one of the most male-dominated occupations in Western industrialised countries (Childs, 2006, Hulett et al., 2008a, Eriksen et al., 2016) and has distinctive characteristics (see Chapter One) that link it to a specific archetype of white, working-class masculinity in a paramilitary heroic role. Firefighting differs from most occupations since it demands that workers are always ready to respond to emergencies across 24 hours of each day of the year (Paley and Tepas, 1994, Baigent, 2001). Firefighters are also required to stay in radio contact during 10-14-hour shifts, which means that firefighters have to negotiate the demands of eating, resting, cooking and cleaning at the workplace.

To consider how to analyse the distinctive characteristics of metropolitan fire services in this section I utilise emergency first responder literature, which refers to a very specific set of work occupations within the literature on workplaces. The emergency first responder literature has been selected for review as it has the potential to begin appreciating the paramilitary workplace cultures of firefighting. The historical context of emergency service work is detailed including military services literature in order to show how firefighting work cultures have been discussed in these research literatures. Finally, the distinctive characteristics of metropolitan firefighting in Australia are identified as a useful platform for exploring the gender negotiations of men working in highly competitive, highly sex-stereotyped male-dominated workplaces.

First responders include police officers (Houte, 2012, Weiss and Davis, 2014, Natarajan, 2018), firefighters (Capoziello, 2014) and ambulance personnel such as paramedics (Campbell and Ellington, 2016). However, the broad nature of this term

could also describe other personnel, such as emergency room nurses, doctors and park rangers (Adriaenssens et al., 2015). As Haugen et al. (2012, p. 371) note, 'first responders can be conceptualized as a fuzzy set where those at the margins are less prototypic than those in the center'. For the purpose of this thesis, first responders are defined as personnel who respond to trauma at the site of an emergency outside of a controlled environment. This distinction separates the work of nurses and doctors at a hospital from firefighters and paramedics working in city streets and suburbs. Emergency first responder occupations are deeply rooted in disaster discourses, which helps to explain why research into these workplaces often emerges in emergency and risk management literature (Marshall, 2003, Archbold, 2004, Dunn, 2011, Toelken and Shaw, 2012). Additionally, the strong links between disaster and gender relations in emergency first responder occupations has fuelled recent academic interest into the gender relations occurring in these workplaces (see Mock and Hazeleger, 2013, Eriksen, 2014).

The link between emergency and risk management and broader gender relations is evidenced in the event of natural disasters. Emergency and risk management literature suggest that women and children are the most vulnerable to recovering from and surviving the financial, physical and emotional impact of disasters such as floods, earthquakes and fires (Fothergill, 1996, 2004, Enarson and Meyreles, 2004, Neumayer and Plümper, 2007, Mock and Hazeleger, 2013, Nakhaei et al., 2015, Parida, 2015, Enarson and Pease, 2016). As Neumayer and Plümper (2007, p. 8) argue, the mortality rates of women in the aftermath of natural disasters reflect broader systemic socio-economic gender disadvantage, as well as role behaviour and social norms. The links between bushfire disasters and masculinities have also been identified in risk management literature, with studies suggesting that gendered expectations often play out during disasters (Tyler and Fairbrother, 2013, Eriksen, 2014).

The ways in which gendered expectations play out during disasters are often used to justify why men are better suited to firefighting (Baigent, 2001). Eriksen (2014) for instance, argues that women typically negotiate caring responsibilities, clean up and domestic tasks, while men are often expected to brave the danger of these fires. These gendered expectations reinforce the value placed on physicality and male sacrifice in

response to natural disasters (Tyler and Fairbrother, 2013, Eriksen, 2014, Zara et al., 2016). The gendered expectations embedded in these role behaviours and social norms are similarly used to resist gender diversity in Western fire services through the suggestion that female firefighters are ineffective at best and, at worst, put lives at risk (see Hitchens, 2002, Peyser, 2013).

However, not all potential change is resisted. Thus, while resistance towards racial and gender diversity is enduring in Western fire services (Childs, 2006, Baigent, 2010), new technologies are frequently embraced in first responder occupations (Owen et al., 2013, p. 41, ABC News, 2016). These occupations similarly embrace organisational changes, such as the implementation of tri-services that incorporate the police force, fire and rescue and emergency services (see NTPFES, 2013). Additionally, the trial of the 'concept Technical Rescue Vehicle' aimed at enhancing the emergency response in South Australia was similarly embraced and celebrated by the service (SAMFS, 2014, p. 49). These examples show how only certain changes are resisted within first responder occupations, suggesting that resistance to change based on tradition does not encapsulate the complexity of gender-based resistance.

As Chapter One argued, the implementation of tri-services overestimates the gains in diversity across metropolitan fire services, which remain skewed in relation to race and gender (Branch-Smith and Pooley, 2010, Baigent, 2016, Goldberg, 2017). The move to conceptualise police, fire and rescue and emergency services under the same 'emergency first responder' umbrella overlooks the complexities and differences between these services. It also ignores the work cultures that reproduce gender-based and race-based inequalities, which are informed by the nuanced histories of these occupations.

It is significant to note that while studies of firefighters and policing have been conducted for several decades, the title of 'first responder occupations' is still relatively new. Though emergency first responder literature refers to several occupations, the research literature tends to generalise first responders as a distinct category, which is linked to the objective of conceptualising these occupations as a paradigm. As previously discussed, Australia has increasingly incorporated police force, fire and rescue and emergency services into one group (see NTPFES, 2013).

Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFRS) for instance has been made a division of the Queensland Department of Community Safety (DSC), which also incorporates Queensland Corrective Services (QCS), the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ). Similarly, Western Australia's fire service now forms part of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES, 2017). While there are notable similarities between these services, the assumption that these services represent a distinct category in emergency first responder literature ignores the nuanced differences between these work cultures. As Chapter One argued, the aggregation of data from these services conflates the representation of minority groups thus making it difficult to examine how workplace cultures are being reproduced in these specific services.

Within the social sciences, the term 'first responders' gained popularity shortly after 2001. The popularity of this term corresponds with the increased militarisation of the police and emergency services during this time as a result of the World Trade Center attack in New York on September 11 (Steinhäusler and Edwards, 2004). During this time, there was a shift back to traditional Western masculinities, which saw firefighters depicted as the heroes of Western culture (Maddern et al., 2007, Rice, 2013). Other politically motivated attacks on civilian populations, such as those in Oklahoma City and on the Tokyo subway, resulted in an acknowledgment that other services outside of the traditional armed forces were needed in the event of trauma and emergency (Steinhäusler and Edwards, 2004, p. xiii), although attacks in the Middle East are often seen differently (see Sørli et al., 2005). The widespread geographical nature of politically motivated attacks across the world generated a mass fear among civilians that consequently resulted in first responders being regarded as workers that the state could rely on and needed (Enarson and Pease, 2016).

Prior to 2001 very few studies discussed police officers, firefighters and ambulance officers using the lens of 'first responders'. Since 2001, studies of these occupations have largely focused on the trauma that staff would encounter during their work. Literature on first responders has seen a rapid increase, with studies being published in Africa (Sun and Wallis, 2011), Japan (Toyokuni et al., 2013), Sweden (Harrison, 2015) and India (Hossain et al., 2016), as well as the United States of America (Dorfman and Walker, 2007, Flannery, 2015) and Australia (Winship et al., 2014,

Gray and Collie, 2017). The increased attention given to these occupations and workplaces within the literature of male-dominated work aligns with an increased social concern about globalisation, counter-terrorism and the militarisation of emergency services.

In the United Kingdom, the term 'militarised uniformed services' would be appropriate to describe firefighters' work, given the strong historical concentration of the military within this occupation (Thurnell-Read and Parker, 2008, p. 128). Conversely, in Australian, the term 'emergency services' would be appropriate given the merging of fire and emergency services over the past decade (FESA, 2012, DFES, 2013, NTPFES, 2013). However, neither of these terms completely captures the traumatic nature of firefighting, paramedic work and police work with the same precision as 'first responder'. The very term 'first responder' provides a powerful lens for examining the traditional notions of masculinity that the workers are expected to display (Enarson and Pease, 2016). However, it also overlooks the characteristics that make this occupation distinctive from other first responder occupations.

Broadly speaking, the arguments presented on policing and firefighting belong to two dominant ways of understanding these occupations. One trend looks at these occupations as part of the 'militarised uniformed services'. This research literature commonly suggests that there is a link between status, visibility of 'role' and respectability (Peoples, 2013, Tynan, 2013, Weiss and Davis, 2014). Studies of militarised uniformed services focus on the role of ranks, hierarchy, uniforms and the interplay between structure and agency of the workers. The workers, while a feature of these studies, are often seen through a cultural lens that emphasises the role of workplace cultures in constructing normative modes of interactions. This focus allows for the exploration of the interplay between uniforms and the interactions and power within these cultures. The newer forms of inquiry instead view these occupations as 'emergency services'. This literature focuses on the psychological impact of trauma on workers and civilians (Marmar et al., 2006, Chopko and Schwartz, 2009, Sun and Wallis, 2011), as well as an increased need for staff to have sensitivity and specialised training in abnormal psychology, or psychological first aid (Dorfman and Walker, 2007).

The focus on ‘emergency services’ does acknowledge the role of masculinities within these occupations, although the emphasis is usually on the stoic configurations of masculinity in these workplaces and the potential risks for psychological distress in the workplace (Chopko and Schwartz, 2009, Caddick et al., 2015, Shields et al., 2017). The focus on occupational risks and the health and welfare of fire service personnel captures a great deal of the research literature on these occupations (Paley and Tepas, 1994, Kales et al., 2009, Carey et al., 2011, Aisbett et al., 2012). For this reason, emergency service research literature focuses less on workplace cultures than the militarised uniformed services research literature, which instead acknowledges the historical and relational context of the occupation outside of the emergency first responder paradigm. Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses, however this dissertation is concerned with the micro-interactional aspects of work culture and gender. I propose that the militarised uniformed services lens focuses on the cultural dynamics of the workplace rather than the risks of these occupations, such as burn injuries (Rabbitts et al., 2004) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Haugen et al., 2012). The militarised uniform service literature thus includes armed services that are not typical of first responder occupations, which is relevant to consider for this study as the socio-cultural historical context of Western fire services is situated in paramilitary cultures (see Hathaway, 1894, Baigent, 2001).

Given that first responder occupations are often employed by the state, the links between firefighting and other militarised uniform services such as the Army are unsurprising. Several studies of militarised uniform services argue that the resulting workplace cultures exert control over staff, placing a high emphasis on discipline, vertical hierarchies, rank, uniforms and conformity (Schulte, 2003, Halbe, 2011, Friesen et al., 2014, Wylie, 2014). Cliff Cheng (1996) for instance argues that the uniform plays a significant role in the gender relations of militarised masculinities. Cheng’s (1998) study of the United Air Force Auxiliary/Civil Air Patrol (CAP) draws attention to the significance of work uniforms as a form of material culture and symbolism in displaying rank, status and superiority. He found that the uniform fulfilled several key functions. Cheng (1998, p. 25) argues that ‘uniforms evoke hegemonically masculine emotions of patriotism, duty, and honor – linking individual to organisation and the state, of which both are instruments.’ Another function of the

uniform is that it establishes workers as part of a broader collective membership in order to generate a uniform identity amongst the group.

Although the broad focus on rank and uniforms in the research literature tells us a great deal about hierarchy (King, 2003, Halbe, 2011, Reed, 2015), the literature has not appreciated the hierarchy of masculinities in relation to workplace cultures. For instance, Cheng's study implies that the uniform generates an unchanging identity among the group, which, in many ways, denies the interactional dynamics of those that might oppose, challenge or resist the identity of the group. The assumption implicit in these arguments is that all men within this context are satisfied with the status quo or are benefiting from this group identity, which overlooks the nuanced differences within these workplaces and assumes that they are uncomplicated and without contradiction.

The research literature of first responder occupations and militarised services similarly assume that power relations are configured through rank and hierarchy (Siebold, 2007, Teeter, 2010, Halbe, 2011, Settles et al., 2012), with most scholars arguing that rank influences even the most basic speech acts, separating superiors and subordinates through the use of language. Unsurprisingly, these studies also suggest that an individual's rank intersects with race and gender (see Halbe, 2011). The arguments that are frequently presented in this research literature suggest that positive human interactions are often prevented due to the servant-master dynamics that can occur as a result of rank and the nature of work performed (Carter, 2007, Yuan et al., 2011, Russell et al., 2015). Less focus however has been given to the nuanced ways in which management is resisted in relation to the gender order.

The intersection of power, class, race and gender relations have been central to contemporary scholarship on first responder occupations (Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, Baigent, 2016, Goldberg, 2017). Studies of men in first responder occupations argue that while race and gender play a significant role in experiences of sexual harassment, rank can mitigate these experiences for men who occupy higher ranks (Manolakes, 2002, Settles et al., 2012, Stoermer et al., 2017). The military authority of rank may in some cases protect individuals who do not belong to the hegemony due to the institutional hierarchy of some workplaces. While rank and military authority are often discussed in these studies, the research literature does not always

value the complexities of work cultures between workplaces as deeply as gender, work and workplaces literature.

The relationships between rank, power and uniform are significant in that they communicate, through symbolic exchange, the value of the individual and their social position within a workplace. Signifiers of rank are often visibly displayed on the sleeve or shoulder of the uniform (Cameron, 1992, p. 24, Cheng, 1998, Houte, 2012, Capoziello, 2014). While fire services have different characteristics from other military services, such as the Army, Baigent (2001, p. 16) argues that firefighters often believe that they 'operate as self -disciplined military style units'. The ability to function as part of a team is essential in the ever-changing environments that firefighters are exposed to, demanding that firefighters follow the instructions of their superiors, be prepared for potential hazards and rely on their co-workers during major incidents (see Desmond, 2008). An example of the fire service's link to para-military culture can be seen in the significance of their uniform. In Fire and Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW) for instance, senior firefighters with 15 years' service or more are distinguishable from qualified firefighters with less experience by the number of stripes on their uniform. The stripes used on Western fire service uniforms also signify the occupation's lineage to militarism (see also Hathaway, 1894).

In her study of militarised masculinities, Eichler (2014) argues that the historical lineage of 'the soldier' influences the ways we have come to symbolically link military authority with the performance of masculinities. Snyder (1999) also argues that there is a relationship between gender stereotyping and military services through history, and that our notion of the manly citizen-soldier is entrenched in the politics of gender and war. Eichler (2014) argues that it is in this politics of gender and war that women are seen as weakening military effectiveness due to the historical and cultural symbolism of the solider as being uniquely male. Snyder (1999, p. 151) argues that

> … this type of *armed masculinity* created through the use of misogynistic and homophobic hazing defines itself as *hostile* towards what it perceives as the homoerotic and the feminine. This type of *armed masculinity* not only yields a hatred and fear of (all) women and gay men, but also requires that soldiers strongly repress the "feminine" parts of themselves as well as any homoerotic desire they might feel.

This line of argument is supported by other studies, which argue that the inclusion of women in male-dominated workplaces does not prevent the continuation of sexual harassment. For example, Zurbriggen (2010, p. 540) argues that hegemonic masculinity underlies the construction of both war and rape as it represents dominance, control and aggression in systemic processes that dehumanise and delegitimise women.

The question of researching men and masculinities has been undertaken with rigor in the men's violence research literature (Loy, 1995, Curtin and Litke, 1999, Vaughan, 1999, Gusterson, 2007, Wadham, 2013). While the literature on men's violence towards other men does well to illuminate overt forms of violence, such as bastardisation, bullying and sexual assault (see Wadham, 2017), less overt forms of violence are rarely addressed in any great depth. Symbolic violence for instance better conceptualises the ways in which power relations are "exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 167), which is a useful concept for exploring violence in workplaces not culturally and historically associated with war and violence. Research literature that instead conceptualises violence as a product of performance, interaction and culture has strong potential to advance our knowledge of the less overt forms of violence and their role in reproducing gendered power relations in male-dominated workplaces (Douglas, 1966, Kanter, 1977a, Adkins, 2004).

The historical links between Western fire services and militarism, which inform firefighters' interactions at work (see Baigent, 2001, p. 39), are significant to note as this lineage is often overlooked in contemporary emergency first responder literature. Moreover, the underlying assumption that men represent the ideal worker in contemporary Western workplaces and the emphasis on 'first responders' as quasi-soldiers often positions women in these occupations as 'women' first and firefighters second (Ainsworth et al., 2014). The historical and cultural context of the soldier as uniquely male in first responder occupations helps – in part – to explain the resistance towards women's inclusion in these workplaces. Studies also suggest that an ongoing commitment to the maintenance of male homosocial relationships could explain why gender reforms and affirmative action are heavily contested in these workplaces (Connell, 1997, Cheng, 1998, Kramar, 1998, Kalev et al., 2006, Persson, 2011, Coate

and Howson, 2016). Alternative explanations have been offered, suggesting that the continued resistance to gender equality within the workplace might relate to what has been coined as a 'crisis of masculinity' (McDowell, 2000, 2003, Ashcraft and Flores, 2003, Craine and Aitken, 2004), resulting in a moral panic that men in industrialised Western societies are failing to cope with increasing changes to work resulting from second wave feminism.

The changing economic, political and social environment in the West over the past few decades has resulted in an increased focus on equality for all races, genders and sexualities (McDowell, 2003). Furthermore, these changing environments have challenged the ways in which white working-class masculinities have come to be defined. A consequence of this 'crisis' has led some researchers to believe that 'the position of man has started to be endangered' (Matlak, 2014, p. 368). The ongoing discourse of the 'crisis of masculinity' has led to studies analysing masculinities in relation to the economy (Matlak, 2014), youth and working-class dynamics (McDowell, 2000), as well as the portrayal of a specific form of masculinity in films such as *Fight Club* (Ashcraft and Flores, 2003, Craine and Aitken, 2004).

Studies frequently suggest that the crisis of masculinity in Western industrialised societies is based on the perceived vulnerability of men's position within society (Craine and Aitken, 2004), which Ashcraft and Flores (2003) argue has resulted in the resurgence of a white working-class 'primitive masculinity' that can be seen in contemporary films. Linda McDowell (2000) provides an alternative explanation, suggesting that the crisis is part of a larger response to the changing ways in which work is constructed within industrialised Western societies, which relates to broader class and gender relations (see also McDowell, 2003). In this sense, workplaces that offer an escape from the changing political and social landscape of gender relations could be seen as a refuge to those who are resistant to broader social change.

In many ways, Western fire services offer an escape from the changing social and political landscape that has seen an increase in job insecurities and the casualisation of the work force (Keuskamp et al., 2013, Watson, 2013, Taylor et al., 2016, McKenzie, 2017, Goldberg, 2017). The de-industrialisation of manufacturing and processing jobs in Australia has also resulted in the redundancy of thousands of working-class men, as evidenced in the closures of Holden and Toyota over the past few years (Wills, 2014,

Clarke, 2017). In contrast, firefighting has remained a stable career in the West, offering workers 10 to 14-hour shifts with four days on and four days off. In South Australia, typical day shifts (Monday to Friday) start at 8am and finish at 6pm, while night shifts start at 6pm and finish at 8am, although these hours differ on weekends. Firefighting as an occupation also provides superior wages and, in many cases, job prestige, relative to education.

In Australia, an adult first year apprentice electrician is paid a minimum salary of $18.78 per hour (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2017a, p. 12), while an adult first year apprentice plumber will start on a salary of $19.74 per hour (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2017c, p. 30). Comparatively, a recruit firefighter is paid $19.72 per hour for the first 12 weeks before receiving $28.34 per hour at firefighter level 1 (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2017b, p. 2). While economics are important to consider, economics do not capture the cultural status of Australian metropolitan firefighters. For instance, recent enterprise bargaining agreements in Victoria have awarded firefighters the ability to claim up to 196 days of leave annually as well as a 19 per cent pay increase over five years (see Hutchinson, 2018). Australian metropolitan firefighters are also employed by the state, which affords them a greater level of job security comparable to the broader labour force. Moreover, the lack of racial and gender diversity in these services provides uncontested space to recuperate white working-class masculinities (see Goldberg, 2017).

The emphasis on physicality and physical risk in firefighting is often used to justify the lack of diversity in Western fire services. Conversely, risk is often assumed to be a central feature of Western firefighters' everyday working lives (see Hathaway, 1894). Risk can refer to physically 'risky situations', such as the case with wildland fires in the United States (Desmond, 2008, Lewis et al., 2011) or bushfires for Australia's volunteer and metropolitan firefighters (McLennan and Birch, 2005, Reisen et al., 2011). Risk is also a key feature of public discourse in Australia, specifically around risk management strategies aimed at creating greater public awareness of prevention strategies during Australia's bushfire seasons (see McCaffrey and Rhodes, 2009, McLennan et al., 2013, Eriksen, 2014). Moreover, risk refers to the physiological impact of dealing with trauma on the job (Harvey et al., 2016, Skeffington et al., 2017, Stanley et al., 2017).

Risk is one of the most common justifications for the lack of diversity in Western fire services and is often used to defend against affirmative action through the suggestion that lowering the recruitment standards to accommodate women will put firefighters and the general public at risk (see Daily Mail Reporter, 2011, Edelman, 2015, Toscano and Schneiders, 2016); although male homosociality is also deployed as a common strategy for defending the lack of gender reform. Studies of men and masculinities suggest that male homosocial relationships situated in everyday workplace contexts play a significant role in contemporary debates on gender and power relations in Western industrialised societies (Bird, 1996, Connell, 2011). These studies suggest that militaristic training programs, such as those undertaken by firefighters in Western fire services, encourage male homosociality in training processes (Baigent, 2001). These training processes take place primarily through embodied practices whereby the body becomes an arena where competition and performances are enacted (Baigent, 2001, Manolakes, 2002, Hall et al., 2007, Desmond, 2008). These embodied practices, which are exacerbated by professional motivations to experience 'excitement, freedom and adrenaline kicks', solidify social bonds and create a rationale for the differences between men's and women's bodies and capabilities (Lander, 2013, p. 48).

The importance of male homosociality in military service literature results in women's and men's bodies being viewed as intrinsically different, with women's bodies viewed as 'lacking' (Lander, 2013, p. 46). Consequently, workers confirm their pre-existing dominant impression of the worksite, which – in the case of the police force – requires heroism, courage and physical strength over other qualities such as compassion (Lander, 2013). Similarly, Cheng's (1996, p. 54-74) study of an all-male paramilitary college found that the cadets often discuss the idea of women joining the college with a great deal of anger, arguing that such inclusion would ultimately compromise the college's culture, which is again based on traditional militarism of dominance, power and opposition to women. The belief that women lack both the physical and psychological capacity to undertake military roles has also been deployed to justify the absence of gender diversity within the Australian Defence Force (Bridges, 2016, p. 147).

The research literature suggests that the sense of 'tradition', could also explain the anger and hostility towards proposed changes to militaristic uniformed service sex compositions. The compromising nature of women's involvement in these first responder occupations is often spurred by the view that men function better in groups of men (Baigent, 2010, 2016). This view, positioning women as unwelcome distractions and destructive of so-called traditional gender roles, suggests a strong, deeply rooted belief system that requires vigilant policing and management of the existing workplace culture.

The idea that Western fire services have the same 'tradition' in emergency first responder and military service literature ignores the historical, cultural and interactional contexts operating across different workplaces. For instance, firefighting in Australia is informed by its climate, which is often dry and hot. This climate possesses particular risks to certain states where bushfires are more likely. Volunteer and country fire services are more likely to attend small and large-scale bushfires, rural incidents and hazmat incidents (SACFS, 2014, NSWRFS, 2016). Conversely, metropolitan fire services attend a broader range of incidents due to the quantity and diversity of appliances (trucks) available. Common incidents for metropolitan firefighters include vehicle and structural fires, fire alarms, rescues and dangerous substance incidents, such as gas explosions. During major incidents however, both country and metropolitan services work together to reduce the risk to the public. For example, Western Australia has a high amount of urban and rural fires. Some regions of Perth, such as the Lower South West, have 122 volunteer brigades and no metropolitan fire and rescue stations (FESA, 2012, p. 14). In contrast, the Melbourne Fire Brigade is considered a predominantly metropolitan fire service consisting of five districts and 47 fire stations. The difference between these services shows the importance of conceptualising fire service work cultures away from the broader emergency service paradigm.

Despite the differences between different fire services, great effort has been exerted to keep racial and gender minorities out of Western fire services. Indeed, Western fire services have a long history of gender disadvantage (Cooper, 1986), which has seen the occupation become synonymous with white men (Baigent, 2001, Braedley, 2009, Childs, 2012, Goldberg, 2017). While resistance towards diversity has been justified

by firefighters using several strategies, such as male homosociality and physicality, Western fire services often engage in other forms of resistance which maintain the dominance of white men. Such an example can be seen in the United States of America, where the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) were found guilty of 'utilizing an illegal, discriminatory hiring process that disproportionately excluded Black and Latino applicants from securing jobs with the department' (Goldberg, 2017, p. 4). Resistance towards racial and gender diversity in Australia also remains persistent and strong (See Baigent, 2010, Back, 2017), with claims surfacing about broader bullying workplace cultures and hostile work environments (see alsoGalloway and Johnston, 2017, Willingham and Preiss, 2017). Similarly, studies of fire services across America, Australia and England increasingly suggest that fire services have historical and cultural apathy towards harassment and bullying cultures (Baigent, 2001, Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, Lewis, 2004a, O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017).

The lack of gender and racial reform in Western fire services often means that women and racial minorities are discussed when analysing workplace disadvantage (Woodfield, 2015, Goldberg, 2017). However, some studies are starting to find that certain groups of men are also subject to workplace hostilities in Western fire services (Hulett et al., 2008b, p. 193). More research is needed on fire services and how men negotiate masculinities and work cultures during working hours, which is a central focus for this thesis. Moreover, while Western metropolitan fire services emphasise the necessity of harmony and respectful communication between workers, they simultaneously produce workplace cultures that are at odds with these imperatives (Rosell et al., 1995, Yarnal et al., 2004, O'Rourke, 2014a).

The role of firefighters in providing public safety and protection for public property in industrialised Western societies traditionally made firefighters somewhat untouchable in terms of criticism given how vigilantly they are defended both within and outside of these services (Braedley, 2009), although this is changing (see McKenzie et al., 2018). While it is significant that social research has focused on militaristic first responder occupations and their relation to violence, power and the state, more knowledge is needed on paramilitary and emergency first responder occupations where risk is disconnected from violence. Moreover, the assumption that risk is a

central feature of Western firefighters' everyday working lives often overshadows the mundane elements of firefighters' day-to-day roles.

This section has argued that neither the emergency first responder literature nor the militarised services literature captures the interactional dimensions of firefighters' everyday working lives during their downtime. This would help explain which ways men negotiate masculinities in work cultures within Australian metropolitan fire services. Experiences of risk and trauma are consequently prioritised in emergency first responder literature (Yuan et al., 2011, Braswell and Kushner, 2012, Flannery, 2015), leaving little information on the mundane everyday duties such as station cleaning and environs maintenance, which are undertaken before the completion of each shift. Such examples include cleaning urinals, lockers, television screens, exhaust fans and ovens, as well as vacuuming and mopping the floors. Furthermore, the navigation of shared spaces such as kitchens, bedrooms and gym facilities in metropolitan fire services are rarely detailed.

Summary

Given the widespread policies and practices that aim to reduce gender division across all occupations, the continued dominance of white men in Western fire services is a useful platform for exploring how genders are regulated and managed in male-dominated work cultures. This chapter showed the different assumptions in the research literature on gender relations, exploring how the 'doing' of gender (see Martin, 2003, Rabe-Hemp, 2009, Holgersson, 2013, Nentwich and Kelan, 2014) and its 'undoing' (Pilgeram, 2007, Connell, 2010, Kelan, 2010, Buzzanell et al., 2015) is theorised in workplace studies. The strengths of organisation studies were discussed, mainly observing that they account for the broader organisational structures that institutionalise gender disadvantage at work. Conversely, the micro and interactional focus in workplace studies was shown to be suitable for this research project, which draws on the conversational interactions between groups of men in male-dominated workplaces.

The emergency first responder literature, which is often used to discuss the work of firefighters, was limited in its ability to show the cultural and historical context of firefighting. Indeed, despite the strengths in the emergency first responder literature,

which otherwise improves our comprehension of risk, trauma and men's dominance in these occupations, less attention is given to the ways in which men negotiate gender in work cultures at times where risk is removed from the nature of work they perform. Similarly, I argued that the emergency first responder literature does not account for the socio-cultural and historical context of firefighting that can be better understood, in some respects, through military service literature. The literature on first responder occupations and military services shows the potential benefit of empirical research into power and gender relations, particularly when exploring the complexities and tensions in the hierarchy of masculinities at work. I suggest that what is needed is a deeper exploration into how masculinities are treated and policed in these workplaces during work hours at the site of these interactions.

This chapter also suggests that the research literature does not always effectively discuss the power relations between and within groups of men, whose persistent dominance in the fire service is often rationalised through the sex-stereotyping of the occupation (Eriksen et al., 2016). Furthermore, the marginalisation of certain gender practices in the workplace are infrequently analysed unless they represent a deviation from white heterosexual men, such is the case with race, gender and sexuality (see Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997, Bernstein and Kostelac, 2002, Miller et al., 2003, Perrott, 2016, Goldberg, 2017). In doing so, men's relationships with other men in these occupations are often overlooked. This chapter thus addresses the need for research that acknowledges and analyses the tensions, insecurities and fragilities of masculinities in Western fire services.

The following chapter offers a methodological framework that allows for a better understanding of how practices of masculinity are accepted and challenged in workplaces during working hours. Short-term ethnography (Pink, 2012) is utilised in order to explore the everyday nuanced configurations of practice across four stations in an Australian metropolitan fire service. Short-term ethnography is used to illuminate the multiplicity of workplaces as well as the power relations embedded in men's working lives (Pink and Morgan, 2013).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter Two identified Western metropolitan fire services as a useful platform for exploring the gender negotiations of men working in highly competitive, highly sex-stereotyped male-dominated workplaces. It established the utility of studying male-dominated work cultures and male interactions, as evidenced in studies on gender, work and workplaces (Hearn and Parkin, 1993, Collinson and Hearn, 1996b, McDowell, 2001, Fine, 2006). To explore the ways in which men negotiate masculinities in male-dominated workplace cultures within Australian metropolitan fire services, this thesis employs short-term ethnography, which incorporates interviews that focus on interactions, power relations and occupational identity. In doing so, this thesis examines how work cultures operate inside these male-dominated workplaces rather than as a reflection of an archetypical dominant form of masculinity in society or as a reflection of risk in their occupation (Desmond, 2008, Reisen et al., 2011, Skeffington et al., 2017).

This chapter first explores the utilisation of ethnography in understating culture and identity. The centrality of performance and place in short-term ethnography is then discussed, identifying the usefulness of this method in exploring the experiences and interactions of thirty-three male firefighters working across four diverse worksites in a metropolitan fire service in Australia. It is important to acknowledge that each station has its own culture that is bound by interactions between various workers. Short-term ethnography is offered as a method due to its appreciation for the multiplicity of identities and worksites. I argue that such a method acknowledges the historical and socio-cultural context of identity construction and the significance of place in constructing meaning at work (Pink, 2012, Pink and Morgan, 2013), which are central to this research project.

The research approach deployed in this thesis uses a combination of interviews and observations. Given that firefighters spend large portions of their working hours at their home station, interviews and observations at these workplaces are imperative. The interactions inside these stations play an important part in how men negotiate their masculinities in male-dominated work cultures and are consequently observed

during downtime, in moments where risk is removed from the nature of work firefighters perform, such as attending high-risk fires (SAMFS, 2017, p. 6) and gas explosions (MFB, 2017, p. 16).

The final section of this chapter discusses the processes involved in negotiating organisational access into male-dominated workplaces, as well as the approaches taken to analyse the data, which prioritises performance and interaction in the construction of culture. The current study strengthens our understanding of male-dominated occupations by analysing the ways in which men negotiate their masculinities in male-dominated work cultures, and observing interactions in recreational rooms, kitchens and trucks during firefighters' downtime within these stations. This project was approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee, protocol number: 0000032971.

The Ethnographic Approach

This thesis looks at how men mediate interactions with other men in different workspaces, which requires attention to the ways in which men contest and reaffirm boundaries through speech practices (Cashman, 2008, Ericsson, 2011). The ability to observe workers' everyday lives is crucial to ethnographic approaches in workplace studies and is central to the research objectives of this thesis. I argue that short-term ethnography offers both focus and intentionality in the exploration of culture and interaction in contemporary workplaces from the perspectives of the workers (Pink, 2009, Pink and Morgan, 2013).

Ethnography has a long history and interdisciplinary appeal, popularised in the early twentieth century and influential across organisational psychology (Dipboye and Flanagan, 1979), education studies (Becker, 1977, Zinn, 1979) and migration research (Philpott, 1973, Rosaldo et al., 1974). It also has historical and cultural roots in earlier anthropological ethnographic studies, such as Franz Boas' *Kwakiutl Ethnography* (as utilised by Suttles, 1970), Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (as utilised by Gifford, 1923) and Margaret Mead's (1943) *Coming of Age in Samoa.* While ethnography was common in workplace studies in the early twentieth century, social scientists showed growing disinterest in the methodology due to the increased influence of statistical research methodologies during this time (Zickar and Carter,

2010, p. 311). Recently however, the strengths of ethnography have been revised in workplace studies due to the ability of ethnography to explore how workplace cultures are structured and understood by workers (McGibbon et al., 2010, Sinding, 2010, MacKinnon, 2012, Melon et al., 2013, Moll et al., 2013, Prodinger and Turner, 2013).

The main function of ethnography in the early twentieth century was to allow for immersive and descriptive accounts of different social worlds. Additionally, the purpose of ethnography has historically involved delivering nuanced accounts of the interactions and observations collected by the researcher, who lived among subjects and their various environments during fieldwork (see Mead, 1943). While the length of time of ethnographic research will be largely shaped by the discipline in which the project takes place, it is often assumed that ethnographic research will involve long residency and prolonged exposure to the cultures studied. In this regard, it is not unusual for researchers to spend a minimum of one year engaged in fieldwork (Pink and Morgan, 2013, p. 352). Contemporary ethnographies in sociology, however, are increasingly less concerned with the length of residency. Focus is now primarily given to the quality of exposure and depth of knowledge attained during fieldwork (Smith, 2005, Pink, 2012).

Dorothy Smith's (1987) method of institutional ethnography, for instance, has been popular in studies of gender, work and workplaces due to the depth of knowledge attained during observations in the workplace (McGibbon et al., 2010, Sinding, 2010, Prodinger and Turner, 2013). This method was developed by Smith in an attempt to bring awareness to working women's oppression by arguing that knowledge is socially organised through relations of ruling, which 'are those forms that we know as bureaucracy, administration, management, professional organization, and the media' (Smith, 2006, p. 17). She argues that while these systems of power frame our understanding of the world, their power relations are not always obvious to those experiencing them.

Institutional ethnography as a method explores how institutional relations shape workers' everyday experiences (MacKinnon, 2012, p. 261, Prodinger and Turner, 2013, p. 359), as well as the impact of gender relations in shaping the social construction of workplaces (McGibbon et al., 2010, p. 1353). The role of the

institutional ethnographer is to analyse the meaning of local everyday experiences from the participants' subjective standpoints and map them onto larger 'extra' or 'trans' local settings in which they are located (Prodinger and Turner, 2013, p. 359). This method has been used to explore the intensification of nurses' work in rural and regional hospitals, showing how the intensification of nurses' work can result in increased stress and unpaid work (McGibbon et al., 2010, p. 263, MacKinnon, 2012). While institutional ethnography has some similarities to other contemporary ethnographic methods, such as short-term ethnography (Pink and Morgan, 2013) and performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003), it focuses on work processes and how they are managed, rather than the power relations operating at an interactional level, which is a central concern for this thesis.

In contrast, short-term ethnography is concerned with the micro-interactional everyday performance of practices (Pink, 2012, p. 40), which requires participant observation, semi-structured interviews and re-engagement with the ethnographic encounters through the re-viewing of audio-visual or visual material. Moreover, short-term ethnography considers how beliefs, experience and emotional responses are tied to different performances of practice that are situated in specific socio-cultural and historical contexts. In doing so, short-term ethnography as a method explores the use of non-verbal gestures and the positioning of bodies during interactions, which helps contextualise how meaning, performance and power are communicated in various places (Pink and Morgan, 2013).

The importance of place and social interaction is evidenced in short-term ethnography (Pink and Morgan, 2013), which appreciates the importance of material cultures and other forms of visual data in informing everyday practices (Pink, 2008). While long-term ethnography allows researchers to view interactions as they naturally occur, short-term ethnography instead requires that researchers interfere with the workers' routines by asking them to engage with material cultures outside of their natural sequence, such as asking participants to describe and show how certain material cultures are used and understood. This strategy is adopted in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of these material cultures and their meaning to the participants in shorter timeframes (Pink, 2009, Pink and Morgan, 2013). The main aim of short-term ethnography is to engage with the participants' working lives more purposefully

than observing from a distance by understanding the intersection of embodiment, place making and meaning (Pink and Morgan, 2013, p. 355). Short-term ethnography thus offers intentionality and focus, which is crucial for research where organisational resistance and time restraints make long-term fieldwork unsuitable (Gurney, 2003).

The ability to interact with the participants and their meaning making practices in shorter timeframes with purpose is a key strength of short-term ethnography. Indeed, contemporary ethnographies that make use of rapid methods, such as short-term ethnography, are well suited to studies on gender, work and workplaces as they can accommodate the difficulties unique to conducting research in complex workplaces (Gurney, 2003, Brockmann, 2011). Increasingly, and especially in cases where researchers are reliant on gaining organisational access to workplaces, the process of ethics approval can often stifle the possibility of conducting long-term fieldwork (Taber, 2010). The methodological challenges and possibilities of observing participants in their work environments, which have been well documented (Zickar and Carter, 2010, Pink and Morgan, 2013), are particularly pronounced in contemporary workplaces where time and resources can often be limited (See Walford, 1991, Campbell and Gregor, 2004, p. 352, Pink and Morgan, 2013).

Short-term ethnography has contributed to the emerging methods that aim to generate rich data in shorter timeframes. The increasing need to have shorter timeframes for research of institutions and workplaces, as well as the hostilities towards the disruption of workers' daily lives, has resulted in an increase in rapid ethnographic approaches and compressed ethnographies (Walford, 1991, Pink and Morgan, 2013, p. 352). These approaches include rapid assessment (Scrimshaw and Hurtado, 1987), rapid ethnography (Millen, 2000), short-term ethnographies (Pink and Morgan, 2013) and quick ethnography (Handwerker, 2001). These various contemporary approaches to ethnography, while similar in epistemology, differ significantly in application.

The development of workplace ethnographies that utilise rapid approaches in sociology has allowed researchers to maximise the amount of data obtained in smaller timeframes than traditional methodologies have allowed, consequently revolutionising what it means to be 'ethnographic'. As Taplin et al. (2002) argue, stakeholders and organisations can often be hostile to research, which requires new ways of

understanding ethnographic approaches in contemporary workplace studies. While some studies collect data over a five month timeframe and analyse survey data and face-to-face interviews (Quintero Romero et al., 2006), other studies complete data collection over a matter of weeks, using case study approaches (Baines and Cunningham, 2013, p. 77).

Not all rapid ethnographic approaches are suitable for studying the interactional context of male-dominated workplaces however, as many of these approaches focus on the work processes that inform interaction. Rapid assessment, for instance, is commonly adopted in public health research (Manderson and Aaby, 1992, Franchi and Swart, 2003), although it is notable that rapid assessment techniques have also been used in non-ethnographic contexts (Abate, 1992, p. 488), such as conservation research. While rapid ethnographic assessment draws on expert interviews and semi-structured interviews, the main principle of rapid assessment is the use of multiple researchers, who work as a team to provide faster data collection (Taplin et al., 2002, p. 81). While rapid assessment, rapid ethnography and quick ethnography provide useful tools for conducting research in shorter timeframes, these approaches do not focus on performance and interactions as their starting point. This thesis aims to account for the nuanced differences between the workers' experiences and their gender negotiations in male-dominated workplaces. For this reason, short-term ethnography is an appropriate fit for the purpose of this thesis.

This section has detailed the strengths of short-term ethnography in addressing the rationale for this research. The centrality of performances, places and practices in short-term ethnography acknowledges the interconnected nature of interactions and cultures. Additionally, the benefit of this method in providing immersive, focused, and concentrated observations in shorter timeframes was also detailed. This section has thus argued that short-term ethnography is useful in workplaces where time is limited but observations of interactions are essential to understanding how interactions are policed and managed. The following section details the approaches undertaken in the current research project, which makes use of short-term ethnography.

Research Design

This research uses short-term ethnography, which includes observations and interviews with thirty-three male firefighters. The thirty-three participants are positioned in different ranks in the organisation, including firefighters, senior firefighters, station officers, peer support officers and commanders. The paramilitary pyramid structure of Australian metropolitan fire services often means that higher ranked station officers and commanders will typically have longer experience in the service than lower ranked firefighters. It was important to have a range of ranks involved in the study to ensure a mix of service lengths and experiences as military services literature suggests that experience and rank impact broader power relations (Manolakes, 2002, Settles et al., 2012).

The United Firefighters Union was first approached to negotiate the parameters of the research project in October 2014. It is notable, however, that the two union representatives expressed concerns over future negotiations with high-ranking firefighters in the service, which took place the following month. They believed that the service would likely hide certain stations and attempt to control the visibility of the issues they believed were operating in the service, such as harassment and sexism. While the union gave their consent, the majority of negotiations occurred inside the fire service through upper-level management and the Human Resources department. The research project was then negotiated through the Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer who supported the research (See Appendix C for Rank and Position Description). Despite their support, they did express concerns over the word ‘gender’ in the title of the study. They believed that the study of gender would lead to potential legal ramifications in light of sexual harassment claims from women working in Australian metropolitan fire services (see Allison, 2014). The officers were comforted when I explained that ‘gender’ also related to how men manage their relationships with other men. Upper-level management (commanders) were then contacted and the project was further negotiated through middle management (station officers) who showed varying levels of support. This meant that the research project was presented to firefighters and senior firefighters by colleagues at commander and station officer level, which generated some distrust at the beginning stages of the research project

due to the ways in which the role of managers was framed and understood in the service.

A purposive sampling technique was used in order to select participants who shared specific characteristics (Seale et al., 2004, p. 418). This technique was also used during station visits to ensure that relieving firefighters stationed across various worksites fit the desired characteristics. While purposive sampling can be executed in a variety of ways (maximum variation, typical case, extreme, homogenous, etc.), the most appropriate sampling type for the purpose of this short-term ethnography is homogenous sampling (Bowers et al., 2011, p. 57). Homogenous sampling is suitable for research on a group of people sharing similar characteristics or traits, such as those shared by the firefighters in the current study. The criteria were to be salaried, metropolitan firefighters, currently working in the fire service that was being studied. The participants' work experiences in the service ranged from five to thirty-three years of service (See Table 1).

The identity of the metropolitan fire service involved in this study has been intentionally concealed. While this concealment is necessary to protect the participants in the current study, it is also necessary to protect the identities of the women who participated in the initial research project in 2012 (Perrott, 2016). The four metropolitan stations observed in this study are not disclosed and pseudonyms have been devised for the participants. The Chief Officer, Deputy Chief and Human Resource department selected all four stations and only one of these stations had a female firefighter. Participation in the study was voluntary and this woman chose not to engage in the study, although it is notable that there are so few women that most stations were unlikely to have women. Stations are coded based on the ways in which the participants described their working environments: The Busy Bees, The Youth Squad, The Outstation and The Retirement Home (See Table 1). While 'The Busy Bees' and 'The Youth Squad' are both a play on the descriptions provided by the participants, it is notable that 'The Outstation' and 'The Retirement Home' are the station nicknames provided by the participants. However, several stations are categorised as outstations and retirement homes within this particular service. Ethnicity was not addressed in this study, but has been discussed in male-dominated

workplace literature (Berdahl and Moore, 2006, Yoder and Aniakudo, 1996). It was not raised during interviews.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Names	Rank	Station	Years in Service	Income Range	Previous Occupation
Aaron	Senior Firefighter	Busy Bee	32	<$67,000	Storeman
Blair	Senior Firefighter	Busy Bee	22	<$67,000	(Undisclosed)
Damien	Station Officer	Busy Bee	27	$74,500-$82,000	Machinist
Ashley	Senior Firefighter	Busy Bee	15	<$67,000	Tradesperson
Ian	Senior Firefighter	Busy Bee	6	<$67,000	(Undisclosed)
Francis	Firefighter	Busy Bee	5	$57,700-$63,200	Army and Police
Alex	Station Officer	Busy Bee	28	$74,500-$82,000	Construction
Hayden	Station Officer	Busy Bee	17	$74,500-$82,000	Volunteer Fire Service (Completed Generalist University Degree)
Jayden	Senior Firefighter	Busy Bee	14	<$67,000	Sales Marketing
Liam	Station Officer	Busy Bee	11	$74,500-$82,000	Incomplete University Degree

Milo	Commander	Busy Bee	26	$88,700-$93,500	Army
Oliver	Senior Firefighter	Busy Bee	8	<$67,000	Banking
Philip	Senior Firefighter	Busy Bee	30	<$67,000	In-between jobs
Randal	Senior Firefighter	Busy Bee	11	<$67,000	Completed University Degree (Computer Science)
Seth	Senior Firefighter	Busy Bee	10	<$67,000	(Undisclosed)
Shannon	Senior Firefighter	Youth Squad	9	<$67,000	Police
William	Senior Firefighter	Youth Squad	10	<$67,000	Tradesperson (Jeweller)
Zach	Firefighter	Youth Squad	5	$57,700-$63,200	Store Person (Incomplete Generalist University Degree)
Victor	Senior Firefighter	Youth Squad	8	<$67,000	Customer Service - Night fill (Supermarket Chain)
Trevor	Senior Firefighter	Youth Squad	11	<$67,000	Swimming Instructor
Reese	Senior Firefighter	Youth Squad	6	<$67,000	Carpenter

Quinn	Station Officer	Youth Squad	37	$74,500-$82,000	Police
Marty	Station Officer	Youth Squad	20	$74,500-$82,000	(Undisclosed)
Neil	Senior Firefighter - Peer Support Officer	The Outstation	31	<$67,000	Maintenance Fitter
Lance	Senior Firefighter	The Outstation	14	<$67,000	Electrician
Kasper	Station Officer	The Outstation	28	<$67,000	Butcher
Ben	Senior Firefighter	The Outstation	6	<$67,000	Factory Job
Benson	Senior Firefighter	The Outstation	9	<$67,000	Paramedic and Police
Ethan	Station Officer - Relief Staff	The Outstation	12	$74,500-$82,000	Professional Athlete
Geoffrey	Station Officer	The Retirement Home	33	$74,500-$82,000	Labourer
Bill	Senior Firefighter	The Retirement Home	26	<$67,000	Police
Darryl	Senior Firefighter	The Retirement Home	33	<$67,000	State Government
Gavin	Senior Firefighter	The Retirement Home	28	<$67,000	Telecommunication

Given the differences between and sometimes within each station, it was crucial to employ fieldwork and observations in order to gain familiarity with the everyday practices occurring at each site (See Table 2). Diligent field notes and potential codes were written immediately after observations occurred (Strauss, 1987, p. 27). The field notes also allowed the taken-for-granted aspects of the work environment, such as lighting, colours and use of space to be recorded. While each station could appear physically similar, the nuanced differences between the stations changed the cultural spheres of interaction (Pratt and Dutton, 2000). For example, The Busy Bees and The Youth Squad stations allowed for immersive ethnographic observations. Space was provided in order to watch participants carry out their regular duties. Additionally, I was able to collect data on the firefighters' material cultures by driving inside their trucks, wearing their turnout gear (Personal Protective Equipment) and sharing in their meals. However, in The Outstation and The Retirement Home no space was provided for unobtrusive ethnographic observations and the participants described their participation in the study as somewhat of a chore. The stations ranged from 20 to 40 FTE staff on a rotating roster.

Table 2. Ethnographic Log

Station Code	Shift Information	Research Sites	List of Activities
The Busy Bee	Sunday (day shift) 8:00am-6:00pm Visit time: 7 hours	Commander's office, meeting room, recreational rooms, bedrooms, gym, firefighter mess, station officer's mess, fire truck, training area, reception	Morning tea, lunch, tour of bedrooms, equipment check, truck ride, tour of recruit circuit, practise on aerial lift with training firefighter, fifteen interviews
The Youth Squad	Wednesday (two night shifts) 6:00pm-8:00am	Main office, meeting room, firefighter mess,	Tour of the station, fitted with firefighter uniform, 2 x dinners,

	Visit #1 time: 2 hours and 20 minutes Visit #2 time: 4 hours and 20 minutes	kitchen, fire truck, reception, fire yard	equipment check, eight interviews
The Outstation	Thursday (day shift) 8:00am-6:00pm Visit time: 3 hours and 20 minutes	Main office, firefighter mess, kitchen	Coffee in firefighter mess, no tour provided, six interviews
The Retirement Home	Friday (night shift) 6:00pm-8:00am Visit time: 1 hour and 50 minutes	Main office, firefighter mess, kitchen	Dinner, tour of recreational room, four interviews

It was originally anticipated that interviews would start on August 1st 2014, however the first collection of interviews were not conducted until mid-April 2015. Email correspondence with one of the chief officers commenced on May 7th of 2014 and an initial meeting was arranged mid-August 2014. Contact was then made again on the 25th of September to organise a possible timeline for the study. However, due to the conflicting work commitments of the officers in charge of supporting the study, another meeting was scheduled in mid-October 2014 to discuss timelines. The officer in charge then disclosed that the study would not be able to take place until after January 2015 due to some organisational changes that were occurring, reiterating that the service was too busy to negotiate station visits at that time. A further meeting was then scheduled for the 30th January 2015 to finalise the plans for the study. As a consequence, the interview process did not start until April 2015, resulting in a seven-month delay in data collection. In Australia, bushfire season occurs across the summer months of December, January and February, as the hot, dry weather conditions increase the potential that fires will spread across southern states (Bureau of Meteorology, 2013). The combination of bushfire season, Christmas and school summer holidays also delayed this process. The complexity of balancing ethical

considerations, organisational restrictions and university research deadlines resulted in the need for flexible methods that accommodated these factors.

The first fifteen interviews were conducted at The Busy Bees station in early April. Eleven of the fifteen interviews were conducted one-on-one, while a group of four men asked to be involved collectively at the beginning of the day. The next eight interviews were conducted at The Youth Squad, which was visited twice due to the crew being excused from the station as a result of an incident part way through the first night shift. The next six interviews were conducted at The Outstation. These interviews were conducted in mid-May and were considerably more rushed than the previous station visits.

I was made aware during this visit that the station was made 'KO' (knockout) due to my presence. The term KO in boxing and martial arts refers to head trauma that results in a loss of consciousness and lack of mobility (Buse, 2006, Hutchison et al., 2014). For the fire station, KO meant that the crew at the station were prevented from receiving fire calls during my visit. This resulted in a second set of staff sitting in for this crew, or as the station officer put it: to 'babysit the station' during interviews. He commented that upper-level management had requested that the firefighters from the station not attend any incidents until the interviews were completed. The station officer remarked 'someone must be benefiting from this to let you do that. It's a big deal'. The station officer said that this was unprecedented and that the disruption to his everyday work routine was unwelcome.

The 'KO' resulted in a more hostile attitude by the potential participants towards the project and myself as researcher. As Fonow and Cook (2005, p. 2228) argue, it is not always possible to conduct lengthy in-depth interviews with participants, especially when these interviews result in what is commonly referred to as 'subject burden'. Similarly, Taber (2010) argues that restrictions to organisational access can often generate unforeseen issues relating to rapport building and prolonged fieldwork. While efforts were made to reduce subject burden by conducting interviews at the participants' place of work, the burden of research on subjects' everyday working lives was exacerbated by management's decision to prevent the firefighters from attending fires and completing their daily station activity schedule (See Table 3).

Table 3. Station Schedule

Time	Task	Task Description
(Day Shift) 8:00am-6pm (The Outstation and The Busy Bee)	Parade/muster	Duty Officer checks uniforms and staffing levels prior to commencing shift duties
Beginning of shift	Appliance/equipment checks	- Firefighters check the BA (Breathing Apparatus) - Clean PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) - Conduct appliance check
Morning tea 10am-10:15am	Station activities (as scheduled)	(List of potential activities) - Lectures - HAZMAT drills - Computer training - Aerial training - Driver training - Public relations - Public fire safety information - Physical training (pre-arranged by Physical Training Officer or Station Officer)
Lunch 12:00pm-1pm	Station administration	(List of potential administrative tasks) - Follow-up faults - Maintain security of keys - Promote station safety awareness - Hazard/risk identification - Back up computer data records - Maintain filing system for station record

Afternoon Tea 3:15pm-3:30pm	Cleaning and environs maintenance	(Thursday schedule – The Outstation) - Cut lawns, do edging - Change mattress covers - General garden tidying up - Spray weeds/remove (Sunday schedule – The Busy Bee) - Clean as required
Shift change 5pm- 6pm	Handover	- Officers are required to forward coming shift duty staff to the Logistics District Officer
(Night shift) 6:00pm-8:00am (The Youth Squad and The Retirement Home)	Parade/muster	Duty Officer checks uniforms and staffing levels prior to commencing shift duties
Beginning of shift	Appliance/equipment checks	- Firefighters check the BA (Breathing Apparatus) - Clean PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) - Conduct appliance check
Dinner (Time depends on station culture/fire alarm disruptions)	Station activities (as scheduled)	(List of potential activities cont.) - Check BA (Breathing Apparatus) - Basic core skills - Pump operations - Hose drills - First aid - Ventilation - Ropes and knots - Map reading - Topography

	Station administration (as scheduled)	(List of potential administrative tasks cont.) - Follow-up faults - Maintain security of keys - Promote station safety awareness - Hazard/risk identification - Back up computer data records - Maintain filing system for station records
	Cleaning and environs maintenance	(Wednesday Schedule – The Youth Squad) - Vacuum floors - Clean windows and screens - Clean TV, video and weights - Dust ledges (Friday Schedule – The Retirement Home) - Clean wheels and tyres on appliance - Check tyre pressure and wheel nut security - Report any anomalies
Shift change – 7am-8am	Handover	- Officers are required to forward coming shift duty staff to the Logistics District Officer

Most of the firefighters in The Outstation agreed to be involved in the study despite their obvious apprehension about the study and its possible consequences for their daily work routine. One firefighter at this station however told the station officer that he had no interest in the study and would rather work out in the gym. The station officer then suggested that I ask one of the relieving full-time, professional firefighters if they would like to be involved in the study. While this firefighter was not part of this specific shift and was not ordinarily located at this station, he was included in the study sample as he fit the characteristics specified in the purposive sample. It is common practice in these stations to have relieving firefighters stationed across various worksites when permanent members of the crew are unable to work. The inclusion of this firefighter is not only indicative of everyday workplace practices in this service, but also reflects the flexibility of place within the service. The final four interviews occurred at The Retirement Home, where hostilities were again observed and included as data.

Given that there is little known about the interactions occurring on a daily basis within Australian metropolitan fire services, observational research and participation in these cultures is essential to deepening our understanding of how these male-dominated workplace cultures might be reproduced through performance and interaction. The participants in the study are from a relatively closed community in the sense that station visits for the public are often restricted. Similarly, training areas used during the recruitment process have restricted access. For these reasons, even short bursts of fieldwork observations that allow for informal tours of these areas are quite rare.

An important, yet seldom discussed feature of metropolitan service work is the seemingly mundane routine activities, such as the consumption and preparation of food in the workplace. During an average day shift (see Table 3), Australian metropolitan firefighters will participate in morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. Similarly, during a night shift, firefighters will coordinate one dinner. Given the everyday occurrence of these mealtime schedules and the range of ranks operating in these living quarters, the exploration of how firefighters manage these interactions in these social spaces is thus important (Pink, 2008, 2012), especially in exposing the paradoxical nature of work performed by metropolitan firefighters (see Chapter Two).

Semi-structured interviews were used to engage with the participants' *Lebenswelt* or 'lifeworld' (Rogers, 1983). This qualitative method has proven to be useful in the exploration of occupations (Fine, 1996) and identities (Spillman, 2002, p. 79) and is commonly adopted in qualitative research that explores worker's lived experiences (Lewis, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, Charlesworth and Whittenbury, 2007, Batty and Burchielli, 2011). The choice to conduct individual interviews was based on the ethical implications of the power and influence that rank might play in limiting some of the firefighters' comments and stories. For instance, the pyramid hierarchical structure of the organisation assumes that station officers will have more power within the service than a recruit firefighter, who might not yet feel comfortable expressing their 'dislikes of the job' in front of a peer who holds a higher rank.

Although group interviews were not originally considered as a method, one group interview was conducted opportunistically when a group of four firefighters suggested that this arrangement would be more convenient for them, which revealed the benefit

of individual and group interviews. As Benschop et al. (2013, p. 705) argue, group interviews and focus groups allow for participants to interrupt narratives, add to each other's stories, raise additional questions and find meaning in each other's narratives. Encouraging the firefighters to discuss their experiences in a group setting allowed for a greater insight into how men interacted with other men in these workplaces. Similarly, the inductive nature of short-term ethnography allowed for flexibility with interviews. To some extent, participants can predict the intentions of the research during interviews and perform accordingly. For this reason, it was crucial to conduct interviews as well as observations. Observations allowed for moments where the firefighters were not performing for the purpose of the research. The combination of the two methods allowed for a more nuanced understanding of how the firefighters presented themselves and performed in different social interactions, which showed how the men contested and reaffirmed boundaries through speech practices.

All participants, irrespective of rank, were asked seven questions during interviews:

- Can you tell me about the experiences that led you to becoming a firefighter?
- Could you run me through a typical day at the fire station?
- Can you tell me a bit about how your work schedule affects your life outside work?
- What do you like most/least about your job?
- How would you describe the level of support that you feel from your managers/co-workers?
- Can you describe the type of firefighter who is valued around here?
- Could you describe the type of person who would not be suited to the career of firefighting?

It was envisaged that asking all participants the same questions, despite length of service and rank, would better capture the male gendered power relations in the service. These types of 'open questions' are often used to try and involve individuals who might be more apprehensive about being interviewed (Simons, 2009, p. 49). These questions also encouraged the participants to draw on their previous experiences, which is a common strategy of contemporary everyday ethnographies

(Campbell and Gregor, 2004, Fetterman, 2010, Pink, 2012). These research questions emerged from the research literature on gender, work and workplace, which focuses on the lived experience and work/life balance (Connell, 1995, Watts, 2009, Wiersma and Chesser, 2011, Pocock, 2012). The purpose of these questions was to gain a better understanding of the interactional context of the firefighters' working lives. Previous lived experiences are fundamental to our conceptualisation of the self, which is socially constructed and reflexive in nature (Goffman, 1959, Connell, 1995). These questions also focused on the power relations between ranks (Cheng and Tracy, 2014, Stoermer et al., 2017) and the social value placed on certain performances of gender (Skeggs, 1997, Baigent, 2016), which are central concerns in gender, work and workplace studies. There were, however, some issues with this approach, in that certain participants did not feel comfortable discussing their working lives, or their lives outside of work during interviews.

The interviews ranged from ten to forty-four minutes in duration. Shorter interviews typically occurred with individuals who were apprehensive about the study or were concerned that the interview process would take too long, thus keeping them from doing their work. Shorter interviews were still included as data in order to communicate the various forms of resistance that were observed, especially in relation to hostile engagement with the study. While it is possible that a change of location might have allowed for longer interviews, it was an imperative of this study that interviews occurred at the participants' place of work during working hours in order to capture how firefighters interact within these male-dominated work cultures.

The fieldwork involved participant observation and field notes were written sporadically during each station visit. As Fetterman (2010) argues, it is important to ensure that field notes are written during the events to ensure that the details of the occasions can be recalled with confidence. For this reason, notes were taken in bathrooms, during waiting periods between interviews, and during call-outs where the participants would leave the station for periods of fifteen minutes or longer.

Every opportunity was made to ensure that notes were taken as close to the observations as possible, either as written notes or audio recorded upon leaving the station, followed by shorthand notes. It was vital that the participants did not feel as

though their actions were being monitored, so notes were always made at a comfortable distance from the participants' view (Campbell and Gregor, 2004). Visual data included the material social spaces of kitchens and appliances. It also included interactions between the groups of men as well as my interactions with the participants (Emmison et al., 2012). Fieldwork observations are commonly adopted in the research of male-dominated workplaces (Lewis, 2004a, Batty and Burchielli, 2011, Desmond, 2011) and are often utilised as a technique for inspecting larger interactions in group settings (Seale et al., 2004, p. 206, Watson, 2012).

Documentary research was used to examine station activity schedules, enterprise agreements and annual reports (Smith, 2005). Documentary research is used in institutional ethnography in order to make sense of entry-level data such as field notes and interviews. These texts are often referred to as 'extant text' (Charmaz, 2006, p. 37) or 'higher order' institutional texts (Prodinger and Turner, 2013, p. 359). While documentary research was used as a method, the text was used to conceptualise the current research project. This approach to examining texts differs from institutional ethnography, which uses these higher order texts to better understand how workers coordinate work processes (Campbell and Gregor, 2004). For instance, annual reports helped inform the lack of gender and racial reform in Australian metropolitan fire services (see Chapter One), while enterprise agreements and station activity schedules provided a base understanding of the firefighters' work conditions rather than providing a point of entry into the associated work processes.

It is notable that the process of documentary research was somewhat stifled, not only by the lack of transparency within annual report documents (see Chapter One) but also through the service's apprehensiveness about providing non-public documents pertaining to gender relations within station cultures, such as demographic information about the recruitment process. Similarly, the confidential nature of the email correspondence with the service could not be included as data in later chapters, though it is mentioned in this chapter.

Negotiating Access in Male-dominated Work

This section addresses the hostilities that were encountered while negotiating access in male-dominated work and the considerations that were made to account for them.

While some of these hostilities related to the participants wanting to keep elements of their working lives private, other forms of hostility included gender-based hostility due to my position as a female researcher exploring male-dominated workplaces (Gurney, 2003, Figenschou, 2010).

It is important to address my subject position as both a woman and a feminist within this research context, which acknowledges that people move through the world with different standpoints, histories, experiences, motivations and access to power (Harding, 1992). The significance of these subject positions are notable in that they are both understood as lacking authoritative capital within masculine cultures (Baigent, 2005, p. 45, Ericson, 2014, p. 180) and social settings due to the 'feminist stigma' (Anastosopoulos and Desmarais, 2015, p. 227) in which feminism is viewed as an unfavourable social position to hold due to negative stereotypes associated with the label. The lack of authoritative capital (Gurney, 1985) assigned to these subject positions usually results in resistance to female researchers who enter male-dominated cultures and workplaces (Gurney, 2003). What this section will address however, is not how my position as a female researcher hindered the data collection process, but how it might have ironically given me greater access, due to the way in which I was framed by the participants and by management.

Within ethnographic studies, the standpoints of the researchers and those being researched are of vital significance (Charmaz, 2006). The term 'insider' for instance has a problematic history, as the term is commonly used to assert authenticity and through the binary understanding of the 'native' and the 'insider' (Butz, 2010, p. 149). I use the terms 'insider' and 'quasi-insider' in this chapter to help demonstrate the boundaries within which I was placed and subsequently occupied, rather than as claims to authenticity. It is important to acknowledge the interactions between the researcher and the interviewees, as well as the standpoint and characteristics of the researcher, which are often ignored as though they play no part in the collection and analysis of data (Oakley, 1972, Franzway, 2001, McDowell, 2010, p. 158).

The participants and upper level management frequently framed me as either the 'woman researcher' or 'a fireman's daughter', though this positionality is discussed later (see Chapter Six). The second subject frame located me as an almost-insider and

in need of assistance and guidance. The 'fireman's daughter' frame allowed me to be seen as both non-threatening and in need of protection. The issue of my father's connection to the fire service was often addressed by the participants as a way of reiterating my acceptance as a quasi-insider. My social position as the 'fireman's daughter' resulted in other firefighters assuming that I had cultural and symbolic capital within this field due to my upbringing around the culture. This was indeed a risk to the research, as I could take the work cultures for granted due to my level of familiarity with these workplaces. During the interview process the participants would often say 'but you would know all about that', suggesting that I was aware of their daily work experiences:

> 'I've sort of grown up with it in my family, like you have and sort of know what being a firefighter is about.'
>
> (Oliver – Senior Firefighter, 8 years experience)

> 'But I was aware probably like yourself, um, you know what goes on.'
>
> (Marty – Station Officer, 20 years experience)

The firefighters assumed that my quasi-insider status meant that I would understand and accept their work culture. However, further prompting was required when I was unaware what they were alluding to, as was the case when acronyms or managerial jargon was used. This quasi-insider status was challenged when I announced my dietary requirements as a vegetarian (see Chapter Six). In order to participate in shared meals with the men, meat was either pushed to the side or I would employ self-deprecating humour. Self-deprecating humour was used in The Retirement Home to exacerbate my difference in order to establish intergroup relations by acknowledging my position as an outsider (Ellithorpe et al., 2014, Cann and Matson, 2014), saying phrases such as, 'I know, I'm a weirdo'. As Dynel (2009, p. 1295) argues, this type of humour constitutes 'pre-conceived self-presentation politics' in which the speaker shows an awareness of their transgression and thus comforts the audience by showing that the speaker knows their place in the interactional context.

Other researchers investigating fire service cultures have also raised the issue of access and insider status. Baigent (2001), for instance, found that his social position as

a previous firefighter allowed him insider status during his investigation of UK fire services. Similarly, Desmond (2008) used his insider status as a firefighter to explore the taken-for-granted interactions of American wildland firefighters. This insider status afforded Baigent and Desmond critical access into otherwise guarded communities. However, as Baigent (2001, p. 28) explains, this access and insider status was also limited by gatekeepers who wanted to maintain the masculinist cultures within the UK fire services.

What is interesting about both Baigent's and Desmond's work is that while their positions as firefighters gave them the first point of access, it did not necessarily give them full access to these fire services. This supports the claim that insider status does not guarantee access but rather reveals the boundary setting and power relations that exist between social actors and audiences (Butz, 2010). While Baigent and Desmond both maintain that their rapport with the interviewees was assisted by their position within the services (and, I note, invariably through gendered power relations and sexual politics), access and defensiveness from management were still prominent issues for them.

Organisational barriers were encountered in the current study. However, the quasi-insider status that I occupied allowed greater access than what might have been given without my subject position and the power relations that existed because of my framing as a 'fireman's daughter'. Experiences of hostile organised silence were, however, quite powerful, making for complex and often contradictory experiences in the service. A striking example of organised silence can be read in the first interaction I had with operational firefighters at The Busy Bee station, although multiple examples occurred. What follows is a condensed account derived from the fieldnotes collected on the first station visit for this study. This account follows from an address I made to a large group of firefighters immediately after the acting commander requested the participants' attention:

During my address, several men continued their conversations but shifted their bodies closer towards each other, while others started completely new conversations. The lack of eye contact was both uncomfortable and unsettling and it became quite apparent that I was unable to command their full attention; this was later supported

when one man, jokingly asked, 'So what did you say the study was about before? I wasn't really listening'. During my address, one man looked at me for a brief moment before quickly looking away with a stern expression. Once I had finished my address, the commander stepped forward again and asked, 'Who would be willing to be involved?' The space fell completely silent. Some men had folded arms while others casually leaned back on poles and surrounding structures while shifting their gaze. As the seconds passed, some of the men's lips started to pull, forming a slight smirk. As the lapse in time increased, the amount of smirks in the space swelled, with the men now tracing the room with their eyes as if to challenge the men to continue the now compounding, uncomfortable silence. The tension in this space was uncomfortable, confronting and isolating – this was largely the point of these performances.

(Day Shift, mid-April 2015, 08:30 hours)

This cluster of interactions shows the power of insider discourses and the authority that this group of men had to frame individuals as outsiders in the gender order. While this cluster of interactions may not – at least on first glance – seem significant, it was also the first sign that the firefighters were resistant towards both the study and management (see Chapter Six). While it is common for researchers to encounter hostility when examining highly chaotic or dangerous research sites (Nilan, 2002, Dickson-Swift et al., 2007), particularly in crime and prison research (Ferrell and Hamm, 1998, Jamieson, 2002, Drake and Harvey, 2014), the hostilities I encountered occurred during the firefighters' downtime at their stations – away from the field. These hostilities cannot therefore be accounted for through the risky situations that firefighters were facing, as these interactions occurred during the firefighters' downtime. As Figenschou (2010) argues, it is important to address the gatekeeping, hostilities and censorship that women encounter in their research of patriarchal workplaces. By addressing these experiences we can 'increase methodological awareness' about the power relations that exist within these interactions (Figenschou, 2010, p. 913).

Data Analysis

This study used a combination of manual (Marshall and Rossman, 2011) and Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) using NVivo (See

Welsh, 2002). While NVivo was used, its purpose was primarily to organise the observations and audiotaped data. In this sense, NVivo made the process of analysis more transparent, thus assisting manual analysis rather than supplementing it (See also Zamawe, 2015). Once the observations and audiotapes were transcribed and made re-identifiable, the data were entered into NVivo and manually coded. Coding in qualitative analysis refers to the process that allows codes to be methodically ordered in order to profile potential clusters that are similar in their segmentation (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Basic codes were derived from the data and required further manual coding to better understand the complexity of interconnected themes.

It was imperative to identify potential themes early on in order to maximise the possibility of addressing their relationships in subsequent interviews and fieldwork, as reinterviewing participants was unlikely given the disruption to the participants' working life and the hostilities experienced during fieldwork. For these reasons, the process of data collection, transcription and data analysis had some overlap, which allowed for insights to become clear throughout the collection process.

Thematic patterns of interaction were analysed to identify the ways in which firefighters mediated and policed boundaries of legitimacy (Tuckett, 2005). These interactions were analysed through thematic analysis to acknowledge that 'code-switching, in addition to other verbal and non-verbal acts, serves both to transgress and to mark group boundaries, to challenge and to reinforce concepts', such as race and gender (Cashman, 2008, p. 292). Performance and identity were central to this analysis, whereby interactions are seen as informing self-presentation politics where identity and power are either affirmed or contested through conversation (see Stokoe, 2006, Ericsson, 2011). The semantic and pragmatic types of humour used in turn-based interaction for instance can show how interpersonal relationships between men are managed.

Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein's (1997) qualitative guide was used to structure field notes, which requires researchers using an ethnographic approach to engage with their physical surroundings in order to understand how space influences social relations. For instance, when participants would form groups and discuss topics such as humour or mockery, the prevalence and importance of these topics became more pronounced

than in private interviews. Group interactions would often occur during informal discussions that would happen outside recreational rooms in the stations, as well as in the firefighters' mess during lunches and dinners. Short-term ethnography makes visible the conditions and nature of work performed by firefighters during their working lives. These types of interactions also revealed tensions between the participants, allowing for further understanding of why some participants might have been more apprehensive or instead, more willing to speak privately.

The culture of mockery discussed in Chapter Five often occurred in a pattern of correspondence, meaning that multiple forms of mockery were coded in relation to the types of humour that were performed in these interactions. In this sense, themes were not seen as closed analytic codes, but rather layers of interconnected social realities. For this reason, more interrelated codes were derived as the process progressed through thematic analysis. It is notable that thematic analysis is primarily concerned with the subjective experiences of research participants (Strauss, 1987, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). CAQDAS was used to display the data while a manual analysis of source material revealed the meaningful connections between the themes that were identified (Stirling, 2001).

Participants were informed that the principle researcher would be solely responsible for the transcription of the data before interviews were recorded. Transcriptions included more than simple verbal communication (Cencini, 2002). Indeed, much of our everyday spoken words are contained within an interactional field that consists of subtext, micro expressions and non-verbal gestures (as evidenced in Chapter Six), which encapsulate interactions as a form of visual data. The centrality of power relations in this research made it essential that I transcribe the visual and audiotaped data in order to reflect on the complexities of the observations and nuances of the interactions. After interviews and observations were transcribed, audiotapes were replayed in full. Audiotapes were replayed to ensure that the emotional expressions and silence of the participants' demeanour were properly captured in the written text.

Photos of everyday work equipment and 'messes' were also revisited to reignite sensory and embodied memories of the material culture (Emmison et al., 2012), which is central to short-term ethnography (Pink, 2009, Pink and Morgan, 2013). The

analysis of the observational and audio data is rooted in the sociology of gender, work and workplaces, which focuses primarily on power and gender relations in sustaining gender disadvantage. Due to the sensitive nature of this research project, the visual data of the firefighters' workplaces have not been included as it could identify participants and their places of work.

To summarise my methodological approach, in this chapter I discussed the strengths of short-term ethnography in its ability to show the interactions operating within these workplaces. This thesis is concerned with the mediation and policing of masculinities in male-dominated work cultures and the boundaries that manage these gender negotiations. Short-term ethnography offers routes of knowing that are particularly useful in studying the cultures and interactions in male-dominated work cultures from the perspectives of the workers. This thesis deploys a research methodology that focuses on the practices and performances that inform male gendered power relations in these workplaces, utilising interviews and observations in order to capture the tensions in the masculinities performed at work.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE IDEAL IMAGE OF THE RESPECTABLE FIREFIGHTER

This chapter explores the ways in which firefighters conceive and legitimise their occupation. In order to look at the efforts exerted to construct the ideal image of the respectable firefighter, I analyse the homely and domestic elements of firefighters' working lives in their stations, showing how they negotiate and make sense of meal breaks and station duties, which range from appliance checks to cooking. In this section I outline how the fire stations provide a liminal space where binaries between home and work blur, which will be examined in greater detail in the next two data chapters. This chapter examines how the firefighters, through their everyday interactions, make sense of their work culture while at these stations, rather than in times of action. I explore the ways in which men negotiate masculinities in male-dominated workplace cultures, showing the different identities which they draw upon in order to sustain the ideal image of the respectable firefighter.

I first explore how the firefighters conceive of an ideal firefighter, looking at the connection between being seen as 'good men' and being seen as heroic. It is notable that heroism is embedded in ethical notions of goodness and righteousness, suggesting that 'Doing the right thing is the basis for acts of heroism and laudable accomplishment but often involves personal sacrifice' (Schlenker et al., 2008, p. 323). I argue that heroism for firefighters does not relate to the adoption of a set role, but is mediated through workplace variables, such as interpersonal behaviour. The link between moral acts, which couple self-sacrifice with notions of nobility, duty and masculinity (Lee and Olshfski, 2002, Jeffries et al., 2006, Kurzban et al., 2015, Ericson, 2014), and physical risk is then explored to show how the firefighters make sense of their occupational identity when physical risk is removed from the nature of the work they perform.

Certain forms of legitimacy are constructed through what the firefighters believe to be a collective occupational identity. This involves being community minded, likable and moral men, which relates in this context to a specific performance of respectability.

As Chapter Two argued, the word ‘legitimacy’ is utilised to capture the power relations embedded in the ‘making’ of authority (Nousiainen et al., 2013, p. 45). Legitimacy is therefore viewed in this thesis as a practice, which can be made and unmade in various contexts, producing multiple masculinities, some of which are dominant and some which are not.

Finally, the ways in which the firefighters conceive of their occupational identity is discussed, detailing how physical risk is understood by the firefighters. Physical risk is often assumed to be an inseparable and significant component of firefighters’ everyday working lives (Maddern et al., 2007, Keyte et al., 2013) as firefighters are required to be prepared for disaster across 24 hours, including public holidays and weekends (See Chapter Two). However, the findings show that firefighters perceive and construct their workplaces as mundane, describing them as homely. The downplaying of physical risk is addressed to illuminate the significance of the mundane in constructing meaning, legitimacy and power in these workplaces.

Workplaces as Homely

Australian metropolitan firefighters work relatively long shifts (see Table 3), which require that workers are always prepared, even though there may be periods of infrequent call-outs. These working conditions mean that firefighters are likely to spend long hours interacting with each other at these stations since firefighters are required to stay in radio communication at all times. These stations are designed to accommodate these aspects of work, which have been made possible through union/management negotiations over the last few decades. In this section I outline the different strategies the men in this study adopted to justify their occupational downtime. The findings suggest that firefighters experience these workplaces as contradictory spaces and are less secure in their occupational role than we might assume. On the one hand, they described their workplaces as a home away from home where getting along with others is of crucial importance. However, they also described these workplaces as potential breading grounds for hostility due to the multiple masculinities being negotiated in these spaces, which they attempt to justify in a variety of ways.

The firefighters described their workplaces as homely, which is unsurprising given the physical layout and facilities at each of the four stations. While each station had different physical layouts, all participants in this study shared living quarters at work. Each station had gym facilities, toilets, a recreational TV room, offices, shared kitchens and sleeping quarters, while larger stations had additional facilities such as saunas, basketball courts and squash courts. Despite the differences among stations, the firefighters described their workplaces as a home away from home:

> 'It's a live-in job … yeah. It's like a second home really.'
>
> (Neil – Senior Firefighter/Peer Support Officer, 31 years experience)

> 'It's not a typical work environment. It's a bit of a family or home environment as well.'
>
> (Victor – Senior Firefighter, 8 years experience)

> 'Well, is that it? I've got to get back to cooking the roast. Got to get back to my home.'
>
> (Darryl – Senior Firefighter, 33 years experience)

These homely descriptions were particularly pronounced for those who were divorced and had lost their family home as a consequence, with Neil remarking that his station was his 'second home'. As well as job prestige (see also Hulett et al., 2008b, p. 189) and time off, the firefighters also benefited from working conditions that allowed them adequate space and time to prepare and eat meals as well as watch TV in their downtime, which is rare for first responder occupations (Evans, 2010, Westbrook et al., 2011). Each station established their own informal schedule for preparing meals and doing dishes and firefighters shared the cost of meals. Darryl's comment shows the importance the participants placed on cooking meals in the kitchen as a way of constructing these spaces as homely.

During fieldwork, I was able to share in meals with the participants and, in less hospitable circumstances, at a minimum share a quick coffee in the firefighter mess. It became noticeable that while the men spent time in these stations and had leisure facilities, they did not necessarily feel alienated in these spaces. The connection to the

workspace was not necessarily related to the amount of time the firefighters spent at these workstations but that these workspaces provided a site for performing certain roles. Tours of the stations showed the significance of these work cultures and the importance of upholding bonds between men outside of how they relate to the job.

The participants at The Busy Bee station and The Youth Squad station took me on a tour of the station, while the smaller Outstation and Retirement Home only pointed out the general direction of specific rooms. Smaller stations with relatively few call-outs, such as The Retirement Home and The Outstation, required less appliances (trucks) and therefore had less staff. They also completed less training during their shifts due to the lack of versatile equipment used/needed at their station, though there were some small stations that were known for being busy. Conversely, larger stations, such as The Busy Bee and The Youth Squad, often had more appliances due to the proximity of these stations to potential sites where call-outs were common, which meant that they had more staff and training facilities.

Firefighters at The Youth Squad station, for instance, ate dinner together, rotated their cooking and cleaning schedules and offered relatively nutrient-rich foods to which the firefighters often contributed more money. During their dinners, the men sat around the television and watched the news before deciding to watch a renovation show. These firefighters were often described by firefighters at other stations as more forward thinking, progressive and metrosexual, largely due to the ages of some Youth Squad station members. They were conscious that their eating practices were largely at odds with the 'steak and three veg' meal that was routinely consumed in other stations:

> 'I remember I tried … because none of these guys are vegetarian, but a while ago I tried [a vegetarian pasta] and they've sort of eaten it away and then they say, "is there any meat in here?" … "No, it's vegetarian" and they said, "WHAT! Look, it's good, but don't ever do that again!" It was quite funny.'
>
> (Trevor – Senior Firefighter, 11 years experience)

The expectation that men would be 'team players' and accept the work culture also extended to food choices in the kitchen. It was commonly seen as rude and antisocial

for firefighters to prepare their own meals or reject shared food. In doing so, the acceptance of the workplace was reproduced in ways that would otherwise marginalise those who did not conform to the eating practices of the men already employed in the service. Kitchens were often described as social spaces that generated social bonding and informal interactions, with firefighters suggesting that eating a meal together was a way of establishing a peaceful work environment (see also Baigent, 2001, Kniffin et al., 2015). Trevor suggested that the fire service encouraged big, cheap meals, instead of what he believed should be smaller, quality meals at work, arguing, 'cooking is one of the scariest things in our job, if you stuff it up then you'll know about it for a long time'. In this sense, the kitchen facilitated the imperatives of teamwork and comradery, which were essential to the construction of the firefighters' occupational identity. This comment also shows how physical risk is downplayed by the firefighters, jokingly commenting that the scariest part of their working life is the relational context of having meals accepted by other firefighters. Moreover, it shows the social pressures to conform to the broader gender order and power relations operating in the service. This requires an acceptance of the work culture, which includes food consumption and getting along with other men.

The significance of kitchens in these workplaces were rarely embedded in the mechanical function of providing meals and were instead embedded in cultural practices of offering, sharing and accepting food as a group. As Pink (2008, p. 192) argues, ethnographers can become attuned to the participants' world by participating in their everyday eating practices and gaining an understanding of the bodily practices this involves. The topic of vegetarianism and the men's diet was discussed in great detail in The Youth Squad station as a consequence of my dietary requirements, which were catered for by the men (see Chapter Three). At dinner, the men mentioned that while they have eaten vegetarian dinners on rare occasions, they usually chose meat-based dishes. Despite their routine consumption of meat, the participants showed a willingness to include me by offering a meal that could be shared by everyone.

The ability to function as part of a team, which also translated to functioning as part of a quasi-family unit, directly related to the firefighters feeling as though their workplace was a 'home away from home'. Given that male homosociality is often

offered as a justification for the resistance to racial and gender diversity in militarised workplaces (Cheng, 1996, Flood, 2008, Wadham, 2013), it is unsurprising that the strength of the homosocial bonds in these stations are valued, as homosocial bonds between men maintained these workplaces as male-dominated. However, the data also show that these homosocial bonds are not only forged through leadership skills and bravery, which are common in militarised workplaces, but are instead forged through 'soft' skills, such as teamwork, collaboration, empathy and strong communication when not directly performing their job as it relates to risk (see Fletcher, 2004).

The demands of working around the clock on-site for 10 to 14-hour shifts impacted on their engagement with the material cultures in these 'para-domestic spaces' (see Carroll, 2011, p. 63). Kitchen cupboards at The Youth Squad for instance were covered with postcards, magnets and photos of the firefighters' personal travels (Miller, 2010). The firefighters would often reiterate the need to make their workplaces feel like home. Take, for example, the following comment by Milo:

> 'Theoretically, this is my home station. So the southern command is really my home per se, it just happens that I reside here and my office is here, but I spend a fair bit of time on the road.'
>
> (Milo – Commander, 26 years experience)

Due to his middle-management role as a commander, Milo would often travel between stations to complete operational checks and did not have the opportunity to establish a home station in the same way lower ranked firefighters did, as he was often absent from the station. Despite the continuous travel to various stations, Milo mentioned that he made a conscious effort to solidify The Busy Bee station as his 'home station', which he believed contributed to getting along with other firefighters who shared the same space. While this was done in part to mitigate the potential resistance he would face from not being 'operational' (see Chapter Six), it also helped establish a place of familiarity. Milo believed that the operational functionality of the firefighters was directly impacted by the social organisation of firefighters during working hours, which meant that getting along at the station prevented hostilities that could impact on work performances during call-outs:

> ‘If they don’t work well with others then straight away that’s going to create a problem down the stream and things fester even worse [at the] station, you’re living in such close proximity.’
>
> (Milo – Commander, 26 years experience)

The relevance of domesticity was discussed at The Busy Bee station, though it was often at the forefront of many conversations at the other three stations where space was not distributed as liberally. The tension between leisure time and the ideal image of firefighting as highly physical and full of excitement (see Baigent, 2001) is also at times a challenge to firefighters’ identity that they attempt to justify in various ways. Firefighters would often discuss their work experience at previous stations during interviews, to highlight the nuanced differences between the workplaces in the service. These conversations often revealed the complexities of the firefighters’ daily working lives and the importance of getting along at the station. There is an intimacy in resting in the same quarters, cooking meals with their co-workers, working out at the same facilities and working together for extended shifts, and these represented daily negotiations between groups of men. The importance of these daily interactions supports the long-held cultural assumption that eating together and sharing food creates harmony (Devault, 1991, Wright et al., 2006, Brannen et al., 2013, Julier, 2013, Duruz and Khoo, 2014).

During a day visit to The Busy Bee station, a commander showed me the different sections, including the squash courts, gym facilities, basketball courts, recreational television rooms and recreational dart rooms. As we walked down the hallway close to the dorms, we ventured past an open room. The room was occupied by two firefighters who were reclining on thick black chairs facing a large television, which lit up the otherwise pitch-black recreational space. I was jokingly told by the commander, ‘ignore the lazy firefighters’. Later, after morning tea in the large kitchen, I observed several firefighters enter yet another recreational room to play darts.

Although the use of these recreational spaces was significant, their experiences of leisure were rarely discussed in any great detail. However, these spaces were easily observed during observational work (Pink, 2009, Pink and Morgan, 2013). The

firefighters responded with a mix of humour and defensiveness about these examples of how they occupied their downtime at work. For instance, the commander who commented on the lazy firefighters, immediately mentioned that firefighters need time to rest due to the physical demands of the occupation. The visibility of the firefighters' experiences of leisure were most observable at The Busy Bee, where they were playing darts and watching television in recreations rooms.

The surveillance and monitoring of social interactions in these spaces was significant during fieldwork and is discussed in greater detail in the following two data chapters. While kitchens were often described as social spaces that generated bonding, they were also interpreted as spaces that required monitoring and policing, to ensure that social bonds remained strong. Firefighters who expressed positive working relationships often described mealtimes as a form of bonding. Conversely, firefighters who expressed disunity between colleagues, believed that there was no need to eat together given their constant contact with each other during shifts. This disunity was most notable in The Retirement Home where firefighters commented that they were not 'hip pocket friends'.

Bill worked at The Retirement Home and believed that social cohesion at work was part of what made firefighting an enjoyable career. However, Bill claimed that bullying had caused disunity amongst the men at his station, commenting that his previous station officer was a 'pig of a man'. Geoffrey, the current station officer, similarly commented that he was forewarned about the impact of harassment on the morale of his soon-to-be crew. Despite the forewarning about the problematic group dynamics at the station, Geoffrey believed that sharing social spaces and food had helped alleviate some of these workplace tensions:

> 'We always have our lunches and our dinners together, yeah, the boys cook and I wash because I can't cook, so that's all worked out. So it's all good team work, nah we always have dinner together'.
>
> (Geoffrey – Station Officer, 33 years experience)

Station officers would often use shared meals to affirm their collective identity as team players, using this as a sign of solidarity and brotherhood. However, Geoffrey's

image of uniformity and solidarity at his station was contradicted later that evening, when two of the firefighters mentioned that meals are often eaten separately and at different times. During my dinner at The Retirement Home station the firefighters mentioned that it was actually rare for them all to be sitting together at the same time. While eating separately might appear to be valuable in workstations where less room is available, eating meals together was seen as a way of sustaining harmony. The station officer's comments show the value placed on eating together in this service. The need for social bonding at work was particularly pronounced in smaller stations, where firefighters had less room to distance themselves from colleagues. Firefighters frequently commented on the difficulties of escaping unpleasant home stations where space is simply not available:

> 'There are so many in [this station], you have to get on with people, [that's] probably more polarised at an outstation. If I don't get on with you, then you've got to work with the bloke for a while and you can't escape. Whereas, in [this station], you can escape.'
>
> (Aaron – Senior Firefighter, 32 years experience)

The idea of escaping, as Aaron put it, did not just relate to escaping the social interaction, but to the contamination of toxic workplace cultures. Firefighters spoke of this toxicity at lunches and dinners as if the mere presence of one symbolically polluted station officer could destroy group solidarity and render a workstation uninhabitable for the workers (see Douglas, 1966, Drew et al., 2007). The inability to get along with workers at the station was interpreted as a show of disrespect to the broader power relations that necessitated the homosociality of men.

The relational context of these para-domestic spaces (see Carroll, 2011, p. 63) created tensions between the practices of militarised masculinities (Eichler, 2014). Though they emphasised the strong sense of loyalty, compassion and brotherhood practiced during their downtime, they also described their daily routines as mundane. In order to account for the tensions in the heroic ideal of their occupational role and their experience of leisure at work, the men categorised firefighting as a para-military

occupation, offering workers a sense of structured routine and discipline. The following comments show how firefighters make sense of their downtime, often prompted by the question, 'what do you like most about your job?':

> 'Some people call us – I'll say lazy, because they think that we just sit around playing cards and drinking coffee all day. As I just explained, we've got a lot of routine.'
>
> (William – Senior Firefighter, 10 years experience)

> 'There's sort of a routine that most people sort of try and stick by.'
>
> (Lance – Senior Firefighter, 14 years experience)

> 'Typically our job is fairly well routine and you learn processes regardless of what the job is.'
>
> (Benson – Senior Firefighter 9 years experience)

> 'There's a lot of routine based stuff that you do.'
>
> (Ethan – Station Officer, 12 years experience)

William described this routine in relation to fitness and training, which he believed gave a certain structure to his day (see Appendix C). Similarly, other participants would draw on routine and discipline to attempt to justify the challenge that leisure at times posed to their occupational identity. For Benson, being disciplined, doing drills and structuring his day around a routine was a way of defending the suggestion that firefighters have too much time for leisure. William also discussed this routine in relation to attending primary schools and doing fire safety training with children (see Table 3). He mentioned that he loved riding in the trucks and attending call-outs, but commented that not everyone in the public appreciates the routine involved in firefighters' everyday working lives. The difficulties of night shifts and the broken sleep that firefighters endure as a consequence of shift work were also believed to be sacrifices that were hidden from the public's view. Take for instance Neil's defensive comment about shift work:

> 'People don't quite understand what shift work entails … "Saturday night?

> What do you mean you're at work Saturday night?", "well, that's my shift. I've got to go to work Saturday night" … and that's just part of the professionalism.'
>
> (Neil – Senior Firefighter/Peer Support Officer, 31 years experience)

Interestingly, even though he was not on-duty, he relied on the demands of working across 24-hour shifts to justify how he negotiated his time outside the service, as though he was prepared to respond to risk even on his days off. He also believed that people judged this work negatively due to a lack of awareness about the nature of shift work, though shift work is common in Australia, with 1 in 5 Australians participating in some form of paid shift work (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

Participants often suggested that most of the negative reactions from the public would occur when people became aware of the relatively high levels of downtime, which allowed them time and space to play darts, watch movies, get coffees and work out. The tension between the ideal of firefighting and the men's experience of leisure and downtime at work helps explain the necessity of policing the public's perception of the occupation. Friends were often surprised by the infrequent call-outs, questioning how the firefighters spent their downtime. The firefighters also noted that friends were unaware of their working conditions, which include working two day shifts and two consecutive night shifts followed by four days off. William was not the only participant who appeared to be defensive about the suggestion from the public that firefighters do nothing. During a group interview with four men at The Busy Bee station, one participant mentioned the sleeping arrangements at the station and the recreational rooms available to staff. Damien joked that the other participants at the station were making the job seem too cosy during a ride in one of their trucks, saying 'don't make it sound too good'. Shortly after making this comment, Damien and the other men started to defend their occupational role:

> Damien: 'I say to people who say, "you guys don't do much" I said, "you'd rather us be doing nothing". It's like an insurance policy, if we're doing nothing it means that everyone else is okay, if we're busy it means that everyone …'
>
> (Senior Firefighter, 27 years experience)

Aaron: ‘It’s like the Army.’

(Senior Firefighter, 32 years experience)

This conversation shows how occupational downtime was justified by comparing firefighters’ work culture to the Army, suggesting that if the Army are ‘doing nothing’ then there is not a war or disaster. In addition, downtime was justified through discussions of the disciplinary practices of their active bodies at work (see also Connell, 1995, p. 50). These types of justifications were often given soon after firefighters would jokingly boast about their work flexibility, such as Damien’s comment ‘don’t make it sound too good’.

In summary, this section has shown how men defend their occupational role in spaces normally marked as feminine. It also shows how the men talk about these spaces and their interactions within them as normative, despite these associations, though the emphasis on meat consumption is arguably masculine (Buerkle, 2009, Nath, 2011, Rothgerber, 2013). While eating was seen as a routine, mundane activity, the practice of preparing and cooking food was actually shown to be a way of constituting these spaces as homely. The relational and spatial dynamics of cooking and eating together – or not in some instances – allowed for contradictory cultures to emerge. The first work culture emphasised and encouraged homosociality, bonding and brotherhood. The second existed in conflict, where men ate separately and at different times. It also showed the different strategies the men in this study adopted to justify their occupational downtime, such as the emphasis on routine and discipline. Other strategies included drawing on the demands of their work and the need to prepare for disasters, even in their absence. The following section analyses how the firefighters emphasise relational skills and perform respectability to the public in order to affirm their occupational legitimacy.

Being The Good Guys Who Do Good Things

This section argues that the firefighters affirm their occupational legitimacy by adopting several strategies that include identifying as community minded, performing as team players and being good fathers. It also shows how the men use interactions

with the public as evidence to confirm their belief that firefighters are a bunch of 'good blokes'. The emphasis is often placed on relational skills, which create work cultures that value teamwork, collaboration and performances of respectability to the public (see Fletcher, 2004). The men's attraction to this occupation is also discussed, which shows that community mindedness is much more complicated than it first appears. As this chapter will argue, the findings show the surprising focus on personal characteristics in constituting the ideal firefighter, rather than risk or one's ability to fight fires.

Identifying as community minded created a sense of solidarity between the men and was also believed to be a pillar of legitimacy in the service. This was particularly the case for participants at The Busy Bee station who also described themselves as being at the heart of the service. They perceived their station as the most active, which they suggested made them one of the most influential stations in the service due to their level of interaction with the public on a daily basis. While doing good meant engaging in the physicality and performance of being a firefighter, such as wearing the uniform, using various pieces of equipment and working with and enjoying working-class activities, such as driving trucks (Metzler–Brennan et al., 1985, Kane, 2006, Eastman et al., 2013), it also meant affirming the ideal that firefighters are good men who serve the community. The belief that firefighters embodied a community minded respectability was shared across all four stations and was consistent across the senior firefighter and station officer ranks. See the following comments, which show how participants use their interactions with the public as evidence to confirm their belief that they are respected in their community:

> '[We're] in the public eye and just sort of I guess setting a good example, so yeah. Firey's do have a fairly good reputation in the general public.'
>
> (William – Senior Firefighter, 10 years experience)

> 'You know we're the good guys, kids love us.'
>
> (Quinn – Station Officer, 37 years experience)

> 'You'll have people come out and, because the sirens are going the red truck is in their street and they are sort of sticky-beaking. Everyone loves Firey's,

> yeah. I don't know, it's just a really nice work environment and the guys that I work with are awesome as well.'
>
> (Ian – Senior Firefighter, 6 years experience)

The data show that a significant portion of the participants' occupational identity is tied to their understanding of how the public perceives firefighters, who they often view as being heroic and community minded. Furthermore, within the comments in the sample was the belief that firefighters need to be relatively homogenous during working hours in order to maintain the ideal that firefighters are community minded and adept at solving problems. Differences in the men's personalities, desires and goals were often seen as conflicting with the perceived collective harmony of the men in the service, which required that firefighters adjust to the way of life inside the service. As a consequence, the men often discussed the similar personalities, characteristics and values they believed firefighters have, which worked towards reinforcing a perceived ideal:

> 'Pretty much well most of the guys are pretty much from the same milk. They get along well, they socialise, they are problem solvers, they are thinkers … so generally, we are much for muchness, so yeah.'
>
> (Bill – Senior Firefighter, 26 years experience)

With his use of a striking metaphor 'from the same milk', Bill's comment illustrates how solidarity is reliant on a group of common positive characteristics. He drew on his 26 years of experience across different stations to rationalise his belief. The comment suggests not only an assumption about unity, friendship and rationality amongst the men, but also the belief that firefighters require a certain level of conformity and rejection of individualism. It is notable however that the interactional dynamics discussed earlier in this chapter trouble Bill's comment that the men at The Retirement Home all socialise and get along well.

Other participants voiced similar beliefs to Bill, saying 'we're generally good blokes', 'we're good guys' and 'firefighters all get along well with others'. The firefighters often made sense of their solidarity by suggesting that firefighters share a collective occupational identity, which often involved being easy going, working hard and being

generally likable and was clearly predicated upon being male. It was evident in the men's comments that masculinity and maleness was often assumed in the ideal of firefighting.

Operational firefighters would draw on their perceived high moral status in the community to legitimise their position as moral men. For Marty, a station officer at The Youth Squad, the public's perception was one of the biggest 'perks' of his career. Marty was a generational firefighter whose father had described the type of lifestyle and environment the fire service would provide. In discussing his motivation for joining the service, Marty talked about how he and his brother looked at three different career options: the military, the police force and firefighting. Marty described being particularly drawn to firefighting after hearing about the job flexibility, the perceived job prestige and the community engagement. He said that one of the biggest joys of his career was the workplace culture and the social interactions it affords:

> 'When you say you're a firey you can see their faces or their attitudes change, everyone knows a firey, and somehow the firey's, we've all done a good job, we're all pretty good guys, so yeah it's definitely good, that's a good part of it.'
>
> (Marty – Station Officer, 20 years experience)

Firefighters frequently sought the validation of the public to help affirm their legitimacy as moral, community minded men at work, as evidenced in Marty's comment. Like many of the other participants in The Youth Squad station, he believed that the broader public perceived his work positively. This belief was also shared by participants in The Busy Bee station who listed multiple positive interactions they had had with the public. Being community minded meant performing a specific occupational identity that relied on the power embedded in the performance of working-class respectability. Doing a 'good job' in this sense did not refer to the nature of work firefighters perform, such as self-reported heroic acts, but instead relied on having post-heroic 'soft' relational skills such as being cooperative and supportive (Barrett and Davidson, 2006, Binns and Kerfoot, 2011, Riggio and Tan, 2014).

Marty reaffirmed his solidarity and friendship with the larger operational firefighter cohort by suggesting that all firefighters embody the same characteristics irrespective of geographical location. It was evident that while Marty believed firefighters were good blokes, he was not sure how this 'goodness' was achieved, 'somehow the firey's we've all done a good job'. Similarly, firefighters at The Busy Bee station showed that part of the work culture required the performance of humility, with several participants making similar self-questioning remarks, 'I guess we do good things.'

It is notable that the nature of work performed by metropolitan firefighters has historically been understood through discourses of personal sacrifice and heroism (see Hathaway, 1894, p. 152, Desmond, 2008) that require solidarity and a sense of community mindedness (Baigent, 2001). However, during one of my observations after lunch at The Busy Bee station, I sat in the firefighter mess at a large table and while the room was empty I could often hear conversations occurring across the hallway just outside of the adjoining kitchen area. One of the senior firefighters I had interviewed was questioned by another firefighter, 'so what type of questions is she asking?' The senior firefighter replied, 'oh, just like why did you join? And stuff like that. It's not too bad.' He was then asked, 'what did you say?' to which the participant replied, 'oh I told her it was because of the community'. Both men laughed while the other firefighter replied, 'oh, what a load of crap!'

This exchange does not discredit the participants' earlier comments about being community minded, nor does it suggest a deceitful self-portrayal during the interview process. Rather, it shows the conflicting gender practises and perceived expectations of social interactions by the participant. The interaction shows a balancing of the two imperatives of being a man who 'talks shit' with the boys and the gender practises that are accomplishable outside of interactions with men. It also reveals the strong contradiction between being heroic, which facilitates a socio-cultural and historical sense of working-class respectability (Cooper, 1986, Baigent, 2001), and negotiating the power relations in the hierarchy of masculinities (Connell, 1995), which require an emotional distance from the kindness, compassion and sensitivity required of community minded, post-heroic leadership (Riggio and Tan, 2014).

Earlier that day at The Busy Bee station I had interviewed several firefighters who similarly problematised the idea that firefighters are motivated by community mindedness and a sense of moral duty. One of these interviews occurred on a routine truck drive with three firefighters and a station officer. After discussing his previous work experience, Ashley discussed his motivation for joining the service with Damien:

Ashley: 'I was a tradie [tradesperson] and I wanted to do nothing and I thought that firey's did nothing and that's the honest truth of why I joined. Well, if you have to be honest, that's the truth, but after I had been here I discovered that I am passionate about what I do and I am passionate about helping people and things like that. It's ended up being okay. I joined for completely the wrong reasons.'

(Senior Firefighter, 15 years experience)

Damien: 'It probably changed you, it was probably there already, you just ...*'*

(Station Officer, 27 years experience)

Ashley: '… yeah.'

(Senior Firefighter, 15 years experience)

Larger group interactions provide insight into how the firefighters used conversation and turn taking to reinforce the imperatives of constructing an image of community minded respectability (Skeggs, 1997, Braedley, 2009, Binns and Kerfoot, 2011). The interaction also suggested that an alternative public perception exists in which firefighters are believed to do 'nothing' in contrast to doing 'good'. Prior to Ashley's comment, the other three participants were laughing in the truck. Once Ashley commented, 'I thought that firey's did nothing', the tone and energy in the truck changed. While the participants initially gave nervous laughs at Ashley's comment, they stopped when he said, 'Well, if you have to be honest, that's the truth'. Soon after Ashley had finished speaking, Damien interjected with the comment, 'it was probably already there', suggesting that you need to already possess a community mindset to ultimately be shaped by the occupation. In doing so, Damien suggested

that Ashley's initial desire to do nothing was not a reflection on his occupational identity and instead insinuated that the occupation relies on a public service.

Performing as a team player was also central for maintaining status and value inside these work cultures and was believed to feed into the ideal of the respectable firefighter. Maintaining this ideal required constant surveillance and close policing of workplace interactions, like the one aforementioned. Take, for example, the following comment about the tensions of conforming to the team mentality which followed a discussion about what Jayden likes most about his job:

> 'It is a brotherhood that you take care of each other and you know each other intimately. Virtually we are living with each other so umm, you do know way more about each other than any other workplace you'd ever know, which is good. I like it [laughing] but it does also have its flipside. If you fall outside of that or if you don't key in with them, it would be a really hard place to work, yeah.'
>
> (Jayden – Senior Firefighter, 14 years experience)

This excerpt illuminates the tensions in developing deep feelings of belonging and support and the necessity of constructing friendships that better aligned with the gender practices of men in male-dominated work. It also shows the significance of social cohesion at the station as it relates to the field, where communication and trust is a necessity. His comments hint at the consequences of 'falling outside' the normative practices in the work culture by virtue of not getting along with other firefighters and failing to acquire these relational skills. His comment demonstrates that he is aware of the social costs of not fitting in to the work culture and so subscribes to the brotherhood mentality in order to be seen as a team player. The firefighters often discussed legitimacy in relation to specific forms of masculinity that related to the acquisition of a brotherhood mentality, intimating that they were able to adhere to the hegemony they believed was enacted in their workplaces by navigating these complex relations:

> 'You've got to have someone who is self-motivated, self-reliant and prepared to act and be independent who is also collaborative and inclusive and team

> orientated. So it's a real sort [juxtaposition], I don't know how it goes. You need people who are prepared to go out on a limb, but at the same time still work within a team environment. So anyone who is not an alpha male but at the same time … but not a sheep. That's what works, little bit of leadership but at the same time not a dictator.'
>
> (Jayden – Senior Firefighter, 15 years experience)

> 'They need to be able to work independently, autonomously at times, so they're not reliant on someone supervising and telling them to do this and that … to a certain degree but at the same time they need to make sure that they can quite easily get on with other people and obviously aren't going to fragment groups and that type of thing. If that makes sense?'
>
> (Milo – Commander, 26 years experience)

These comments show the complexity involved in the work based relations the firefighters perform. Jayden's description of these working conditions and the performances needed to meet these demands shows a level of tension that resulted in him saying, 'I don't know how it goes'. Both Jayden and Milo's comments show the belief that firefighters need to be independence and team orientated. Similarly, they need to have leadership skills but not be authoritarians. In this context, being an alpha male – being dominant and asserting masculine authority – was not a desirable construction of masculine identity. Jayden's comment 'so anyone who is not an alpha' reflects a rejection of heroic leadership styles (Fletcher, 2004) typical in military services (Halbe, 2011, Wadham, 2013, p. 220, Reed, 2015) and competitive masculinities in management (Collinson and Hearn, 1996a, p. 17). Instead, these comments hint at the need for collaboration, communication and teamwork. However, both firefighters believed that a balance was needed, where a certain level of autonomy was required. Milo believed that firefighters had to think for themselves without constant instruction and influence from their peers. These comments reflect the complexities of navigating relationships at the station, which requires firefighters to balance the imperatives of being team players who can also work autonomously.

Interestingly, the firefighters also believed that their work rosters of two night shifts and two day shifts allowed them to be good fathers and thus good guys. During

fieldwork at The Youth Squad, one participant mentioned an encounter he had with a mother when picking up his child from school one day. The mother asked him how he was able to pick up his child at 3pm on a weekday, claiming, 'most men would be at work now.' He thought this was funny and said that a lot of parents at the school assumed he was unemployed because he was 'always there.' He perceived that the shift work gave him more time to spend with his children than other fathers who work traditional nine-to-five working hours. Neil made similar remarks, commenting that family friends assumed he was unemployed because he was 'always home':

> 'People say to you, "oh, I thought you were unemployed. I always see you at home", well… no, I'll probably come and kick down your window at 3 o'clock, so yeah. So if you don't have a second job and you're at home and your wife is at work or whatever you tend to be seen at home a lot and people just assume that you don't work.'
>
> (Neil – Senior Firefighter/Peer Support Officer, 31 years experience)

Neil was a peer support officer at The Outstation and was one of the oldest workers in the service, being over 60. He was frustrated at the suggestion that the nature of shift work translated to being unemployed. Though, he did not defend the unpaid labour of domestic life as legitimate or meaningful work (See Devault, 1991). It is important to note that firefighters relied on their respectability as fathers when they felt as though their occupational identity as respectable firefighters was challenged. As Coakley (2006) argues, the construction of the 'good father' in Western industrial societies has largely been accomplished through the construction of a specific form of masculinity that translates to economic authority through being the breadwinner. However, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the shifting meaning of 'provider' from economic provider to caring provider has resulted in changes to this depiction of fatherhood (Gillis, 2000, Henwood and Procter, 2003, Williams, 2008, Dermott, 2014). For the firefighters, being a good father equated to being a good guy who undertook valuable work.

The participants frequently correlated their occupational identity with their ability to be good parents, believing that they had 'sacrificed' their time for the sake of their children. In this sense, doing shift work was used to elevate the participants'

conceptualisation of their subject position not only as good guys but also as good fathers. This was frequently discussed when participants were asked to share how their work schedule affected their life outside of work:

> ‘You’ve got that much more free time, to see the kids – my daughter and son. [I] saw them a lot more of them than the bloke that goes to work nine to five and, you know? Really good quality time with the … the little kids.’
>
> (Quinn – Station Officer, 37 years experience)

> ‘It gives me two days to go, yeah, and with kids as well. Dropping them off at school. On night shifts, you can drop them off and pick them up from school. So pretty much two out of eight days, the only days you don’t get to school drop offs, the rest of it you’re available for, so it’s good.’
>
> (Elijah – Senior Firefighter, 6 years experience)

Several firefighters explained that working two day shifts and two night shifts left them with 6 days free to juggle the responsibilities of caring for their children with their wives. While studies suggest that unemployment is tied to Western normative assumptions about the male’s role to be the main breadwinner (Demantas and Myers 2015), the men counter this assumption by contrasting their commitment to their family as well as their flexibility in relation to other men working 9am to 5pm hours. Defensiveness relating to activities performed outside of high-risk incidents, such as cooking and watching TV, were usually met with the firefighters stating their commitment to and flexibility with their children, which all worked towards reinstating their position as servers of the community and their families.

The notion of the ‘good mother’ has shifted in Australia (Goodwin and Huppatz, 2010), to include working mothers, although the women themselves often receive inadequate organisational support (Weiner, 2003, Stone and Hernandez, 2013, Cahusac and Kanji, 2014). In contrast, this analysis shows male firefighters drawing on the family man discourse to frame the good father as a desirable worker, who is committed and team oriented. The reconstruction of fatherhood and the emerging dominant forms of masculinity that support nurturing and caring for children have

changed what it means to be committed in these workplaces (Berit and Elin, 1998, Henwood and Procter, 2003, Williams, 2008).

Constructing legitimate masculinities also proved to be complex due to the nature of work the firefighters performed. Participants who were not questioned on their work ethic by the public for instance had very different accounts relating to their families. Surprisingly, lost time with children and marriage break-ups did not result in the men believing that they were 'bad fathers'. For these men, their misfortunes were believed to be a part of the job that they signed up for, suggesting their reliance on discourses of sacrifice for their occupation accounted for any perceived failures in their lives outside of work. These examples show how different types of risk were socially constructed by the firefighters and implemented in relation to discourses of sacrifice and friendship rather than traditional physical risks. In these instances, the participants suggested that their marriage break-ups resulted in a lack of leisure away from their work. The belief was that childcare responsibilities increased during divorces, where caring responsibilities had to be divided between partners. These men often expressed frustration, based on their belief that their ex-wives did not understand the stresses involved in trying to navigate work and family commitments. Some participants however, suggested that the requirements of shift work allowed them to escape family commitment. The flexibility of their shift work allowed them to escape the demands of their immediate family:

> 'I reckon it's good because if I'm at work and she's at home then she gets the night to herself and she can watch her trashy tele [vision] or whatever. Same thing, if she's at work I can be at home and do whatever I want to do. So you don't get sick of each other as much, I think.'
>
> (Zach – Firefighter, 5 years experience)

> 'If it's maybe you don't want to see your family at one time, "oh I happen to be working this weekend. I can't make it" and you go, "oh, sorry". So it works that way too.'
>
> (Trevor – Senior Firefighter, 11 years experience)

These comments show the contradictions in the ways in which the job was used to make sense of their lives away from work. An interesting tension played out where the men believed that their job allowed them more time with their families but was contradictorily used as a reason for the breakdown of their relationships due to the demands of shift work. At other times however, the job was used as an excuse to escape family commitments. While the men defended their occupational identity through discourses of sacrifice, they also talked about their desires to withdraw from their home lives and family responsibilities, which included spending time with their wives and relatives. The men used the nature of shift work in these instances to justify their absence from their everyday lives, instead escaping into their home away from home.

The data show how firefighters affirm their occupational identity by drawing on an elusive ideal of respectability, which they conceive as being community minded and performing as a team player. Other strategies involved positioning themselves as 'good fathers', which worked towards establishing firefighters as moral servers in the community and in the home. The firefighters use their interactions with the public to maintain their perceived high social status by drawing on qualities that they believe legitimise their occupational identity, such as being rational, hard-working and universally likeable blokes. Being seen as a legitimate firefighter is often described by the participants as being likeable, sociable and showing an ability to get along with other workers. As Chapters Five and Six will show, firefighters who were seen as conflicting with the conceptualisation of the ideal firefighter are consequently delegitimised at work and their performance perceived as lacking value.

The following section further examines how the idealisation of the occupation plays itself out, showing that firefighters are less secure in their masculine occupational role than we might assume. Community mindedness is revealed to be more complicated than it first appears, as many firefighters do not join for this reason but are socialised into this discourse once they are accepted in order to preserve the image of firefighting as a respectable working-class occupation. In particular, their downtime is a point of ambiguity, which they attempt to justify in a variety of ways.

Socialising Firefighters into the Ideal: The Absence of Physical Risk in Occupational Identity

This section discusses how firefighters justify their masculine occupational role in order to sustain forms of legitimacy rooted in working-class respectability, and examines the role of risk as it was observed and discussed during fieldwork. Particularly, I discuss the men's attraction to this occupation, showing that community mindedness is more complicated than it first appears. The findings show the surprising focus on personal characteristics in constituting the ideal firefighter, rather than risk or one's ability to fight fires. I discuss how firefighters downplay leadership, dominance and risk-taking behaviours and instead cement other aspects of their working identities. Additionally, I show how personal characteristics are privileged, such as their ability to engage with the brotherhood, enjoy downtime and seek a good lifestyle. In doing so, I show the ways in which firefighters conceive of their occupational identity as a way of escaping broader changes in the labour market.

As the previous section argued, identifying as community minded and performing as a team player was necessary in establishing workplace authority as moral men. However, informal conversations at stations suggested that firefighters were rarely motivated to join the service based on community engagement alone. Rather, they were socialised into this discourse once they were accepted in order to preserve the image of firefighting as a respectable working-class occupation. As Table 1 (Chapter Three) shows, the firefighters in the current study were often employed in other male-dominated workplaces prior to entering the fire service. These occupations included policing, the Army and carpentry. Similarly, the majority of the firefighters' previous occupations required minimal formal education. While some participants had attempted university, very few men in the current sample wanted an occupation that required higher education, with many pursuing firefighting due to its appeal relative to other entry-level jobs:

> 'I was originally at [university] doing chemical engineering and I ended up dropping out of that just because I sort of changed my mind on where I wanted to go. I just had an epiphany one morning and saw the ad in the paper and decided that that was what I was going to do, and here I am.'

(Liam – Senior Firefighter, 11 years experience)

> ‘I didn’t want to be a cop and someone said “well how about a firey?” and I thought “well that sounds really good”. It’s the only job I’ve [ever] been happy to go to everyday and not whinge about it.’
>
> (Damien – Senior Firefighter, 27 years experience)

> ‘When you’ve become a cop and a paramedic you qualify for nothing. It’s good experiences but yeah … it’s pretty easy to slip into another emergency service.’
>
> (Benson – Senior Firefighter, 9 years experience)

These comments show that while community mindedness was often used to affirm the firefighters’ occupational identity as moral men who serve the community, the intrinsic appeal of the occupation is related to the broader labour market. The firefighters across the four stations believed that their previous work experiences offered little income relative to the hours they worked. Those who had worked in other emergency service jobs, such as policing, had particularly pronounced complaints. The ability to have a secure, state funded job that offered career mobility and downtime at work was often boasted about as a motivator for joining the service, with the firefighters commenting that the added bonus of its community focus made it a perfect fit for them.

The desirability of firefighting was directly contrasted with other occupations, such as working as a storeman or as a police officer. Participants frequently noted these contrasts as unfair, arguing that other first responders are treated completely differently. Ian, for instance went into great detail about his previous history as a police officer, detailing some of the negative experiences he had had with the public, which included the risk of violence from offenders. Ian commented on his decision to leave policing and become a firefighter:

> ‘[In policing], any person you deal with you have to start on the back foot because a lot of police are resented and I guess because of the work that they do, people are in trouble anytime you have an interaction. Whereas with the

> fire service, you can bash down someone's door or damage their property while you're doing your job and they still love you, they want to have photos with you or just driving around in the truck, parents and kids. People just stop and wave and it's like you're a demi-celebrity and it's really nice.'
>
> (Ian – Senior Firefighter, 6 years experience)

This excerpt shows the idealisation of firefighting as an occupation and the importance firefighters place on maintaining a positive public image. Similarly, being a firefighter meant that he could escape the resentment he felt from the public when he was a police officer. Indeed, it is common for first responder occupations, such as emergency service work and policing, to be conceptualised through the lens of 'dirty work' due to the social taint of working with offenders (Tracy and Scott, 2006). However, firefighting often avoids this label (Drew et al., 2007). Dirty work is commonly understood as work that exposes workers to social, physical and moral taint (Hughes, 1958). While firefighting can be seen as socially and physically tainted through associations with arsonists (Muller and Stebbins, 2007, p. 3), debris (Fireman et al., 2004, Phillips et al., 2012, Organtini et al., 2014) and soot (Hansen, 1990), it is rarely conceptualised as morally tainted for this sample. Furthermore, various studies have shown that the strong sense of moral duty and community mindedness associated with firefighting is used to offset the occupation's perceived social and physical taint (Maddern et al., 2007, Keyte et al., 2013, Rice, 2013). The following accounts show how participants explain the contradiction between what they believe to be the everyday realities of their work and the public's perception:

> 'What other job can you drive fast on the wrong side of the road and squirt water around, break someone's front door down, squirt water inside their house and they're actually thankful that you're there?'
>
> (William – Senior Firefighter, 10 years experience)

> 'So you know quite often you'll speak, particularly out north and the police force in the northern suburbs they just get a hard time. Whereas we tend to … as a fire service tend to get … everyone likes to see a firey and so it's good.'
>
> (Bill – Senior Firefighter, 26 years experience)

Being a police officer, for Bill, meant interacting with undesirable members of the community in the outer suburbs in the north, where violence, house robberies and arson attacks were common. As Drew et al. (2007, p. 169) suggest, police work is often interpreted as being symbolically tainted. Bill drew on a widespread negative view of the city's northern suburbs, which reflects Bill's understanding of the class realities within his state. Bill believed that being a firefighter was no more respectable than being a police officer. However, the social taint he associated with police work, as well as the moral prestige he saw in fire service work, made firefighting a more desirable career path. Interestingly, firefighters across the four stations were often prompted to join the service after talking to people who were already employed in the service. When asked, 'can you tell me a bit about the experiences that led you to become a firefighter?' many of the participants responded by discussing the desirability of the lifestyle and the mateship, which was often presented to them by generational firefighters or friends in football clubs and surf life saving clubs:

> 'Got to talking to different people and the shift sounded really good … the lifestyle sounded really good and I thought I would pursue it when I got back so that's pretty well how it all started.'
>
> (William – Senior Firefighter, 10 years experience)

> 'My dad was a fireman for 34 years or whatever. So from when I was this big that's what I wanted to do.'
>
> (Reese – Senior Firefighter, 6 years experience)

> 'My dad was a fireman in the fire recruitment service department, so that was the base.'
>
> (Marty – Station Officer, 20 years experience)

It was common for firefighters to discuss their desire to be generational firefighters. Both Reese and Marty for instance had fathers who were employed in the service, which they believed gave them a good understanding of the work culture and the nature of work performed by firefighters. Similarly, the men would also discuss how friends in various social clubs had spoken positively about the working conditions in the service, suggesting that the shift work allowed for four days off each week to play

sport and engage in other paid work. Firefighters across the four stations also explained that they received assistance from generational firefighters and friends, particularly in relation to the recruitment process. This assistance included tips on how to answer questions during interviews as well as information on what happens in the fire service day-to-day:

> ‘A mate of mine was in the surf life saving club with me. He was a firey and sort of got me interested, probably because of him. Then he was sort of helping and encouraging me.’
>
> (Trevor – Senior Firefighter 11 years experience)

> ‘A couple of guys I played [sport] with are firefighters and station officers now. Yeah, [I] got in contact with them and found out a little bit about what happens in the fire service, and they … they sorted of, put me in the right direction.’
>
> (Lance – Senior Firefighter, 14 years experience)

> ‘One of my best mates just joined the fire brigade and his father was a recruiting officer. He was the station officer in the training department and he said to me, “why would you want to be doing this for all of your life when you could get a job in the fire brigade?” So that’s why I joined.’
>
> (Kasper – Station Officer, 28 years experience)

> ‘You talk to a few of the old firey’s. It was always that type of team type of thing … team building, working with a group and that sort of thing. This job sort of ticked all of those boxes.’
>
> (Seth – Senior Firefighter, 10 years experience)

These comments show that many of the firefighters are aware prior to entry that particular focus is given to personal characteristics in constituting the ideal firefighter, rather than risk or one’s ability to fight fires. As Seth commented, prior to entering the service he was informed that the fire service places great emphasis on working as part of a team. Similarly, Trevor was encouraged to apply for the job by a friend in the

service who commented that his previous experience working in surf life saving would be favoured by the recruitment officer.

As the above comments show, it was often the social aspects of the job, rather than the work they perform that attracted the participants to the fire service. The physical nature of the work performed by Western firefighters is often assumed to be predominantly high-risk. While firefighters do encounter physical (Desmond, 2008, Aisbett et al., 2012) and psychological risks (Salazar and Beaton, 2000, Kales et al., 2009), the centrality of risk in emergency first responder literature often overlooks the significance of the routine and everyday occurrences of cleaning, eating and sleeping schedules in these services. It also underestimates the ways in which risk can be socially constructed, managed and policed and how its absence is significant in relation to identity maintenance and work cultures.

Experiences in the field were rarely discussed in relation to potential physical risks and were instead discussed in relation to routine. Such experiences were framed by the interactions and experiences that the firefighters had had with the public, which they saw as confirming their high social and moral status. The firefighters would talk about the types of work they perform in the field, commenting on the commonplaceness of hosing down a house or rescuing pets from trees. Participants also mentioned that their standing in the community did not seem to be negatively impacted by the type of duties they perform on occasion, such as destroying private property, even the home. Saving lives was paramount, even if it did involve the destruction of a home and other kinds of property such as shopping complexes.

The international public perception of the occupation and the high risk involved in some of the work they perform was often discussed simultaneously. It is notable that American fire services often produce workplace cultures that value and encourage risk-taking behaviours in comparison to Australian metropolitan fire services (see Desmond, 2008, p. 89, FRNSW, 2016, p. 3, SAMFS, 2016, p. 10, Fahy et al., 2017, p. 21, O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017). During a station visit at The Busy Bee for instance, I was informed of the belief that Australian metropolitan fire services place a higher value on life than American fire services. While on the truck with three senior firefighters and a station officer the topic of fatality was raised in relation to the level

of support they feel from co-workers:

Blair: ‘Well, in terms of Australia, yeah, generally. But a lot that is our training and stuff like that too, and I guess that’s [the way] buildings are built here as well. Like if you go up to America and you go to the national firefighters memorial … they lose 2-300 firefighters a year.’
(Station Officer, 22 years experience)

Ashley: ‘They expect to lose X per year.’
(Senior Firefighter, 15 years experience)

Blair: ‘[I asked] why do you lose so many? And he said, ‘most of it is a heart attack with volunteers.’
(Station Officer, 22 years experience)

Damien: ‘I was just going to say, part of that [is] being professional firefighters. We’re not that excited about fires or stuff like that so we don’t run in and do things in a rush. We sort of think about what we’re doing.’
(Senior Firefighter, 27 years experience)

Physical risks were identified as an element of the work they perform, however the participants’ relationship to and understanding of physical risk did not inform their construction of legitimacy and power. The relative absence of high physical risk in Australian fire services was instead used to position metropolitan firefighters as ‘professional firefighters’, which suggests a move away from the heroic leadership styles more typical in the south-eastern United States (Pillai and Williams, 2004) and in the United Kingdom (Baigent, 2001, p. 7), though they do assist country fire services with bushfires on occasion.

In many ways, downplaying physical risks aided the firefighters in the ways in which they constructing their preferred selves (Riessman, 2008), such as being rationally organised, cool-headed, team players (See also Binns and Kerfoot, 2011). Observations of real-time experiences of physical risk were not made possible due to the negotiations with the United Firefighters Union, the officers and Human

Resources, who felt it would be inappropriate to have a researcher in the field. Additionally, firefighters were not asked specifically about experiences of risk in the field. Firefighters were however asked to explain what they disliked most about their job, which allowed for discussions relating to undesirable aspects of their occupation, such as the work performed in the field. Discussions of the risks to life or the deaths of firefighters did not however present as a key theme in the men's comments. For instance, when asked, 'what do you dislike most about your job?', Jayden responded with the following comment about night shifts:

> 'Responding to calls if they ever happen … which are 99% of the time false alarms. But you've still just got to treat them all as if it's a job and you go out. Our job is about being prepared ready to respond, very little actually happens in the way of kicking in doors and dragging people out of houses.'
>
> (Jayden – Senior Firefighter, 14 years experience)

It was common for operational firefighters to describe their everyday call-outs as both mundane and ordinary due to the number of false alarms. Jayden's comment also contradicts the statement William made earlier about breaking someone's front door down. While firefighters commented on the demands of being on-call 24 hours a day, this preparedness was not often put to the test. The participants' working experiences in these stations suggest that physical risks were not used to make sense of their everyday working lives. Instead, call-outs were seen as part of the service they provide to the community. Outside of their commitment to serve the community, the participants argued that keeping fit, socialising and downtime constituted the largest parts of their daily working lives. This was evident during station visits, where firefighters would break up the everyday mundane by watching television in recreational rooms, cleaning up stations/kitchens and engaging in equipment training and workouts (see Table 3).

Another example of operational firefighters describing their everyday call-outs as both mundane and ordinary can be seen in an interaction that occurred during a visit to The Youth Squad station. Standing beside one of the appliances in the holding bay, Marty and a senior firefighter discussed the importance of social cohesion at work,

including the need to trust other firefighters during call-outs. The other firefighter Zach, with 5 years experience, commented that while every firefighter loves going to call-outs, it is 'nowhere near as exciting as people think'.

Participants at different stations made similar remarks regarding the mundane nature of their everyday working lives and the amount of downtime it afforded them. Interestingly, 'getting along' at the station was often discussed as more important than being a thrill seeker, which counters popular interpretations in first responder occupation literature (Desmond, 2008, Wagner et al., 2009, Lander, 2013, p. 48). Furthermore, the occurrence of false alarms at these stations provides insight into how physical risk is perceived and understood by the firefighters. A common complaint from participants, particularly at The Outstation and The Retirement Home, was the frequency of false alarms. During fieldwork, I was able to observe two instances of alarms being raised. These alarms were raised in The Youth Squad station. This station was considered a busy, yet smaller station. Both times, the call-outs required both trucks at the station. The interviews that were being held at the time came to an abrupt stop as the sirens started and the firefighters raced to put on their Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and prepare the appliances (trucks). During my return visit, the participants apologised for the previous disruption to the interview process with one participant stating, 'yeah, it was a false alarm', while another firefighter grumbled, 'they're all false alarms'. Similarly, a commander working at The Busy Bee station commented, 'It's not as if we go to towering infernos day in day out'. When asked 'who would not be suited to a career in firefighting?' Ethan similarly responded by downplaying physical risk:

> 'I think if you were an adrenaline junkie this probably funnily enough isn't the job for you because there's not … yeah you don't go to enough instances every day, you know?'
>
> (Ethan – Station Officer/Relief Staff, 12 years experience)

He later explained that he felt lucky to be paid to 'turn up' at work, commenting that he enjoys the lifestyle of spending his downtime with the boys at work, suggesting that the social interactions at the station informed his impression of the occupation more broadly. Moreover, his comment shows how the personal characteristics of

firefighters, such as their ability to engage with the brotherhood, are privileged over leadership, dominance and risk-taking behaviours. Similarly, when Darryl was asked what he liked least about his job, he referred to 'alarm calls', which he suggested were frequent in his station:

> 'Going to alarm calls, that's about all, they really give you the shits. You put all of that stuff on for a stupid alarm call. You love going to a fire, but I hate going to alarm calls. If you're going to ring up you could at least say, "there's a fire", or, you know! But no, [whingey voice]. "oh there's smoke in the area" They can be idiots but it's just dealing with shit.'
>
> (Darryl – Senior Firefighter, 33 years experience)

He suggested that the everyday working life of a firefighter allows for considerable downtime and that much of their time is occupied by false alarms spurred by an ill-informed public. False alarm calls were not conceptualised as a service to the public, indeed, some firefighters even went as far as to suggest that fire alarms disrupted their daily routine of playing team sports and going to the gym:

> 'You go down to the gym then and do whatever you want to do, work out or team sport or whatever you do. Then you've got fire calls going throughout the day there, so that buggers up your day sometimes. If you have structured things on and you get fire calls, you know?'
>
> (Aaron – Senior Firefighter, 32 years experience)

Firefighters did not discuss incidents that posed a high-risk to their physical safety in the field, such as dangerous structural fires. However, there were occasions where firefighters would mention the emotional and psychological risks associated with first responder work. Though the psychological and emotional risks of being a first responder were discussed during interviews and fieldwork, physical risk was not discussed as a significant feature of their occupational identity:

> 'The guys at [another station] who had to go to that car prang where that young girl died. They're trying to resuscitate an 8-year-old girl … so, that's fairly traumatic.'
>
> (Blair – Station Officer, 22 years experience)

> ‘Seeing young kids hurt or burnt would be the worst thing. I haven’t had that yet luckily. I’d imagine that would be the worst thing you could see.’
>
> (Aaron – Senior Firefighter, 32 years experience)

> ‘People can suffer either physically, mentally or emotionally, but in car accidents’ … that’s probably the one that I see as being the hardest. It doesn’t have to be [a] fatality, it can just be somebody who has been injured or trapped in a car and the grief that they go through and what we have to do to open their car up to get them out.’
>
> (Trevor – Senior Firefighter, 11 years experience)

While Aaron had 32 years of experience at one of the busiest stations, his comment suggests that not all firefighters experience the same psychological and physical risks at work. It is plausible however that the minimisation of physical and psychological risks in the men’s comments could have reflected a coping strategy to deal with the stresses of witnessing the trauma and distress of others, particularly in car accidents. As Trevor and Blair’s comments suggest, most of the men discussed trauma in relation to attending road accidents where people were trapped inside vehicles rather than in house or structural fires. These examples also show the tensions and contradictions of the high physical risk associated with firefighting and the ways in which the participants came to understand their work as largely routine and free from physical risk.

In the section above, I analysed the ways in which firefighters constructed their occupational identity in relation to constituting the ideal firefighter. This ideal construction relied on personal characteristics rather than the risk-taking behaviours and traditional heroic leadership styles that we might assume in Western fire services. The findings show that firefighters are often drawn to the occupation as a way of escaping the broader changes in the labour market. Similarly, the data suggest that generational firefighters and friends assist potential firefighters through the recruitment process by providing inside information relating to what type of worker is valued in the service. Engaging with the brotherhood, enjoying downtime and seeking a good lifestyle were found to be key motivators for joining the service. Physical risk

was instead downplayed and was not found to be central in constructing the ideal, while engaging in risk-taking behaviour was believed to be unprofessional. Indeed, the social construction of physical risks shows the potential socio-cultural differences in how Australian firefighters construct their work identities and the work identities commonly found in the United States and the United Kingdom (see Baigent, 2001, p. 7, Pillai and Williams, 2004, p. 146), which are frequently constructed through risk-taking behaviours.

Conclusion

This chapter provides insights into how firefighters self-conceptualise their own identity by constructing an elusive image of the heroic, working-class firefighter. One of the themes to emerge from the analysis was the significant tension in sustaining this occupational identity, which includes several contradictions that incite some defensiveness. The firefighters had to rely on other identities, such as being 'good fathers' to balance the ambivalence of the actual physical risks they experience in their occupation. On the one hand, firefighters would discuss how they believed they were held in high esteem and treated like a demi-celebrity by the public. As Quinn commented, 'you know we're the good guys, kids love us.' However, the firefighters were also aware of counter narratives, which saw firefighters conceptualised as lazy and over-appreciated. This was evidenced in William's comment, 'they think that we just sit around playing cards and drinking coffee all day'.

The men constructed their occupational identity in surprising ways in the sense that the hegemony of these workplaces was rarely constructed through traditional conceptions of military masculinities that emphasise heroic leadership (Snyder, 1999, Eichler, 2014), such as displaying unilateral authority and courage. The emphasis on being 'good guys', which was used to position themselves in discourses of sacrifice and bravery, was often achieved by focusing upon their community mindedness rather than defining themselves in relation to risk-taking behaviours. Indeed, engaging in risky behaviours in the field was conceptualised as unprofessional and was thus removed from discourses of sacrifice and bravery. Additionally, the firefighters' relationships with the public functioned to facilitate their belief that the public saw them as moral and likeable.

The men in this study believed that they benefited from their working conditions, which allowed adequate downtime, work flexibility and a level of job prestige. However, they were also equally defensive of the aspects of their occupation that would traditionally be ascribed to the private rather than the public sphere, such as cooking and maintaining these stations as homely. It is notable that the findings in this chapter do not imply that physical risk is absent from the firefighters' lived work experiences, as the nature of the data does not allow for this level of analysis. What the analysis does show is that the firefighters in these services constructed their occupational identity around domesticity at work.

Although physical risks are often assumed to be an inseparable component in Western firefighting (Maddern et al., 2007, Keyte et al., 2013), the findings show that the physical risk was not central to their identity construction. Firefighters instead focused on the relational context of their work. Although the data reveal that physical risk was not centrally deployed as a key aspect of the firefighters' occupational identity, particularly in The Outstation, it is interesting that this station was the most apprehensive about being unable to attend call-outs during the station visit. As Chapter Three argued, it is common for researchers to experience hostility when entering into high-risk research sites. However, the hostilities I encountered entering these workplaces occurred during their downtime – away from the field (see also Chapter Six), suggesting that this defensiveness might have been related to the level of exposure given to their 'home away from home'.

The findings showed that the firefighters used morality and community mindedness to frame their occupational identity when reflecting on their interactions with the public. It also showed the effort that went into ensuring that firefighters upheld this ideal. This was shown when Damien policed Ashley's comment, 'I thought that firey's did nothing' by commenting that the occupation had shaped Ashley, thus reinforcing the imperatives of constructing an image of respectability. As Chapter Five will show, great effort was given to police the interactions between the men across these four stations. Indeed, sharing the same sense of humour and behaviours at these stations helped establish barriers, which policed against outsiders through language and performance that consequently worked towards the reinforcement of masculine practices as both normative and legitimate.

CHAPTER FIVE: 'IT'S A GAME, PLAY THE GAME'. DEFINING OUTSIDERS THROUGH PERFORMANCE AND LANGUAGE

The social interaction between co-workers is analysed in this section to show how firefighters position and define certain workers as 'outsiders' through language and performance across these stations. This is achieved by focusing on the use of different forms of humour, which the ethnographic data revealed to be dominant in managing multiple masculinities in these workplaces. This chapter looks at humour and mockery to show how teasing and mockery evolve out of the domestic workplace cultures and downtime that inform part of the firefighters' daily lives. It also explores recruitment to show how legitimacy is made through discourses of persistence. Outsiders are defined in these work cultures as women, alternative masculinities and gay men.

I argue that men negotiate the work culture by constructing the hegemony of a specific form of masculinity that is maintained during downtime in ways that do not relate to work performance, such as fighting fires (see also Chapter Four). These findings add further depth to the analysis presented in Chapter Four, which outlined how the station cultures provide for a variety of social interactions, showing the distinctive ways in which men manage multiple masculinities in these workplaces through performance and language.

The pervasive use of humour is first explored, showing the multiple functions of humour in both bonding and dividing men, as well as providing a coping mechanism for dealing with trauma. As Chapter Two argued, the ability to function as part of a team is essential in the ever-changing demanding environments that firefighters are exposed to (Baigent, 2001, Desmond, 2008, Goldberg, 2017). The analysis illustrates how certain forms of sophomoric humour, which utilise exaggerated displays of heterosexual masculinity, can separate men rather than generate solidarity. It also establishes a gender order in which mockery is subtly used to reinforce heterosexual masculinities and avoid deviation in interpersonal behaviour, which, as documented in Chapter Four, is seen as embodying the firefighter ideal.

A culture of mockery is identified, suggesting that mockery is deployed through the everyday use of humour across the four stations. It is proposed that the culture of mockery within these workplaces allows for patterns of behaviour, such as offensive talk, that are otherwise deemed inappropriate in the public domain (see also Rosell et al., 1995, Yarnal et al., 2004, O'Rourke, 2014a, 2014b). Finally, the relationship between recruitment and competitive masculinities is addressed as a defining exemplar of how the male domination of these workplaces is maintained, by normalising and qualifying men's dominant position in the service as a product of men's persistence to get into the service. The significance of the body and performance is also considered. Moreover, the treatment of women's bodies as lacking and the use of language surrounding women's positionality in these workplaces further demonstrate how great effort is exerted to keep women out of these work cultures.

How Humour Maintains the Firefighter Ideal

This section examines how humour is deployed through everyday interactions in these stations. While humour is used to generate social bonds between men, I argue that it can simultaneously distance and separate men who do not benefit from the forms of masculinity which dominate in these workplaces. I suggest that the dominance of gendered humour patterns in these interactions exclude women and some men from these workplace cultures.

The exclusion of women and some men from these workplace cultures was achieved by reinforcing a masculine culture through exaggerated heterosexual masculinity. One example of exaggerated heterosexual masculinity that positioned me as a spectator occurred during a visit to The Youth Squad station. I was in conversation with two station officers, who were explaining how firefighters acquire nicknames at work. Quinn and Marty explained that firefighters often receive nicknames if they have 'messed up' in some way. The storytelling started with Quinn, who explained the nicknames 'Biscuit' and 'Slippery'. The nickname Biscuit was given to a firefighter who was accused of crumbling under pressure in the field. The nickname Slippery, however, was given to a firefighter who broke his ankle travelling down a wet 'fireman's pole'. The firefighter was not told beforehand that the pole had been

soaked with water by the other firefighters. Marty added, ‘the name sticks the more you complain about it’. After listing a number of nicknames and their origins, the men started to discuss ‘a legend’ amongst the firefighters. Quinn carefully tried to recall the story of a generational firefighter who had been warned that firefighters get given nicknames. The firefighter burst through the doors of The Busy Bee station on his first day at the job and said loudly, ‘now I’ll just be honest I have something embarrassing about myself … and before you all jump on me, I’ll just say what it is.’ Marty started laughing as he realised what story Quinn was referencing. He continued, ‘I don’t like it about myself and I don’t want the nickname but here it goes. I have a huge dick and massive balls.’

This example is indicative of the ways in which heterosexual masculinity is celebrated in the service and used to reinforce a masculine culture that defines outsiders through performance and language without directly stating them as other. Indeed, similar dramatised stories of men standing up to superiors, hazing other men and stealing their colleagues’ wives were commonly put on for my benefit during ethnographic fieldwork. These examples show the significance of heterosexual humour in establishing status and power, rather than the harmony between men. The significance of Quinn’s choice of story that involved male genitalia was also compelling. Quinn and Marty believed that this firefighter had claimed workplace authority through his gender practices, with Marty commenting, ‘I wish I had done that’. As Kanter (1977b, p. 975) argues, members often ‘reaffirm shared in-group understandings by emphasising and exaggerating those cultural elements which they share in contrast to the token.’ In this instance I was expected to be a passive spectator to what is still regarded as offensive talk in the public domain. The requirement to accept such gendered humour is a common experience of women employed in Western fire services (Lewis, 2004a, Batty and Burchielli, 2011, Bindel, 2012). As Connell (1995, p. 54) and Cook (2005a) explain, penis size is often used as symbol of power in the achievement of Western heterosexual masculinity. The men believed that this firefighter was able to establish his status amongst the men through his ability to ‘play the game’.

Another example of exaggerated heterosexual masculinity shows how humour was used to alert other men that they were becoming too personal or too emotional in a

given situation. After discussing their dissatisfaction with upper-level management and the lack of support they felt, two senior firefighters discussed the difficulties of managing family and work commitments:

Aaron: 'You get support, not just work stuff, but what's going on in your life. Some of the guys have had marriage break-ups or something wrong – like a kid with an illness or something, so you get that support from the guys. Everyone is asking about your welfare.'

(Senior Firefighter, 32 years experience)

Damien: '… and your ex-wife's phone number.'

(Station Officer, 27 years experience)

The timing of this rejection of another man's expression of emotional vulnerability put an abrupt stop to any further revelations. This interaction also shows how the unveiling of a firefighter's metaphorical 'inner skin' is met with immediate resistance, showing how perceived feminised emotional expression is not received as an acceptable practice of masculinity within this workplace. The juxtaposition between serious conversations of homosocial intimacy and humour show a deep discomfort with the feminisation of the workplace. The data show the opposing gender practices within this male-dominated workplace and how heterosexual hierarchies are constructed in this context. While Aaron was willing to refer to emotional vulnerability and sentiment, the limits were policed by Damien's comment '…and your ex-wife's phone number'.

The contradictory use of humour in the workplace also meant that while expressions of emotional vulnerability and sentiment were managed, as they were perceived as effeminate (Connell, 1995, p. 136), humour was simultaneously believed to facilitate homosocial intimate relations and emotional vulnerability between men through emotional suppression (O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017, p. 88). Studies of men and masculinities argue that humour is an integral part of homosocial bonding in male-dominated workplaces, as a facilitator to the maintenance of masculine authority (Kanter, 1977b, Collinson and Hearn, 1994, Collinson, 2002, Flood, 2008, Schnurr,

2008). When discussing the positive aspects of their daily working lives, firefighters responded with the following:

> ‘We do see some pretty nasty stuff from time to time so it’s always nice, especially [at this station]. There’s always [several] of us here, so you do get to build up a good rapport with the group that is here and you sort of joke around from time to time to get over those nasty things that you come across from time to time.’
>
> (Seth – Senior Firefighter, 10 years experience)

> ‘You come in and you have a bit of a joke and a bit of a laugh and when it’s time to get serious you get serious. Most times you can just have a bit of a chat and I like that environment.’
>
> (Alex – Station Officer, 28 years experience)

The findings suggest that humour is multipurpose and is important in the construction of workplace cultures between and within the groups of men. For instance, while humour was used to reject expressions of emotional vulnerability, such as those expressed by Aaron, it was also believed to protect men from emotional trauma. Seth believed that humour was a way to ‘get over’ nasty things, which included pulling teenagers out of car crashes and recovering deceased bodies from structural fires. Similarly, another firefighter commented, ‘we deal with the bad times by talking shit’. As discussed in Chapter Four, the minimisation of physical and psychological risks by the men could reflect an attempt to construct coping strategies. In this sense, we can see how humour is used to negotiate emotional vulnerabilities and emotional risks between men.

Interactions at all four stations reveal that several strategies are adopted to deal with work-related trauma, as well as managing life stresses outside of work, such as divorces. Firefighters at The Youth Squad station and The Busy Bee station for instance spoke proudly about their ability to provide emotional support at work, contrasting their workplace culture to other stations they believed were dysfunctional and unsupportive. Conversely, the data suggests that firefighters at The Retirement Home station and The Outstation did not discuss trauma or emotional vulnerability

between themselves as openly as the other stations during fieldwork, though this could reflect generational differences in expressions of emotional vulnerability due to the older ages of the participants. Despite the differences between the perceived emotional support offered at these stations, the men often believed that humour was a catalyst for homosocial bonds. Darryl, for instance, was very critical of upper level management but disclosed that he felt supported by his co-workers:

> 'Co workers are all bastards (laughing), good bastards … and they would be there if you needed them straight away and we know that we can get … if we need support we can get [it]. We can get however much support we need because we deal with it as a group together and you never want to take anything home, so we always deal with it together and then if you need a bit more help then you can go up the chain.'
>
> (Darryl – Senior Firefighter, 33 years experience)

Humour was frequently used to create emotional boundaries between men (see also Collinson, 2002). Humour was juxtaposed against deep feelings of belonging, support and friendship in order to construct an adult male heterosexual identity that better aligned with the gender practices of men in male-dominated work. Similarly, at The Busy Bee station and The Youth Squad station, firefighters would quip, 'I hate the guys' and 'they're all dickheads' before noting that they would give their lives for their colleagues.

The use of sophomoric, heterosexual humour functions by destabilising perceived feminised gender practices and reinforcing the hegemony of straight men over gay masculinities. In doing so, the men were able to show subtle verbal displays of 'rough-and-tumble' in order to define their masculine authority and distance themselves from the homoeroticism of living with other men. As Kehily and Nayak (1997, p. 72) argue, these displays are common in school settings and are indicative of the boundary settings of appropriate masculinities. Similarly to adolescence boys in schools, these deliberate displays of rejection of homosocial intimacy help the men establish heterosexual masculinities.

The surveillance of homosocial intimacy was often closely monitored in these stations. As a consequence, discussions of distress, fear and sadness were perceived as intimate topics and were consequently avoided in larger social setting at lunches and dinners. As Barrett and Bliss-Moreau (2009) suggest, individuals have a systemic belief that Western men do, and should, experience emotions differently than women. The socialisation of gender relations requires men to experience some emotions as private and disembodied, such as the feminisation of public displays of sadness or fear, while other emotions such as anger are normalised in men (Hochschild, 1979, Connell, 1987). For instance, firefighters at The Youth Squad and The Busy Bee would comment, '[you can] have a bit of a chat', believing that they were able to discuss their emotional vulnerability with their co-workers:

> 'Then if you have troubles, whether it be health-wise or family-wise or anything, these guys are sort of there for you. Around the station I mean, we gig each other lot and stir each other a lot, but if you need help either here or down the street, they'll back you up.'
>
> (Trevor – Senior Firefighter, 11 years experience)

This example shows how firefighters make sense of the everyday culture of mockery discussed later in this chapter and the use of humour, which they believe is more playful and responsible for producing inclusive workplace cultures. After learning of his colleague's testicular cancer, Trevor and his co-workers visited their co-worker outside of working hours. Trevor was quick to mention that even though they might joke at work, intimate support can be offered on request outside of work hours. Similar stories were also told at The Busy Bee station, where firefighters believed they generally had close relationship at work. The men would discuss the difficulties of going through divorces and having their co-workers visit them at their homes, help them move furniture and even provide meals for them during difficult times.

In summary, this section has shown how humour serves several functions in the reproduction of male dominance in these workplaces, which legitimises and reinforces a masculine culture through performance and language. One such function is the practice of sophomoric humour in the form of exaggerated heterosexual

masculinities, which were performed through myths, storytelling and jokes (Kanter, 1977b, Kehily and Nayak, 1997, Carless, 2012, de Ridder and van Bauwel, 2015). Quinn and Marty's conversation about the 'legend' firefighter shows an example of how firefighters deploy sophomoric humour to emphasise a particular and hegemonic form of male bodily practice that others women without directly stating them as other. This example also shows the exaggeration of heterosexual masculinities for the purpose of affirming a gender order that positions women and gay masculinities as unequal participants in the culture.

Heterosexual masculinities have also been shown to be dominant in these workplaces, reproducing a specific form of hegemonic masculinity. Firefighters would frequently interrupt serious conversations to verbally insult the speaker in an attempt to defeminise the conversation and avoid the impression of emotional vulnerability between men. For instance, Aaron and Damien's interaction in the truck suggests that a specific type of heterosexual masculinity is inserted into interactions that are perceived to be too intimate. Ironically, firefighters at The Busy Bee station and The Youth Squad station were open about their relationships both within and outside of the stations. However, these expressions were often policed when vocalised in the presence of other men, though to a much lesser extent than The Retirement Home and The Outstation. The following section discusses a culture of mockery that facilitates these contradictory forms of humour, suggesting that the nature of these everyday practices of mockery complicate the boundaries between experiences of friendship and ridicule. It shows that while humour is believed to help men 'get over nasty stuff', it also has contradictory functions in that it can result in practices that ostracise workers.

A Culture of Mockery

As the previous section showed, firefighters' humour frequently intersected with the everyday practice of mockery. The findings presented in this section discuss the forms of conflict that characterise these interactions, suggesting that mockery is often used to target men who do not adhere to the particular forms of dominance celebrated in these workplaces. Specifically, this section explores how mockery is played out between the men and how these interactional conflicts are used to reinforce the legitimacy of the elusive ideal of the heroic firefighter (see also Chapter Four).

Unsurprisingly, the research literature on male-dominated workplace occupations suggests that fire services across Western industrialised societies produce hostile work environments (See also Chapter One), particularly for women who do not conform to the celebrated heterosexual masculinity associated with this occupation (Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997, Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, Hulett et al., 2008a, Bindel, 2012, Remeikis, 2014, Baigent, 2016). Indeed, problematic behaviours that persist in these workplaces, which include allegations of bastardisation, abuse, isolation and harassment (Yarnal et al., 2004, O'Rourke, 2014a), are often hidden behind the heroic image of the profession. These instances are also further minimised through the discourse that these patterns of masculinity form part of a normative joking workplace culture, unique to firefighting (see Moran and Roth, 2013). Below, I show that while physical strength and the heroic ideal are not at the heart of what firefighters discuss as constructing a valued firefighter, these masculine characteristics – or lack of in some instances – are used against those who are seen as not affirming the interpersonal ideal.

It is notable that bullying, hazing, mockery and teasing are loaded terms, each with their own distinctive historical and cultural context. Bullying for instance is characterised by a misuse of power whereby the speaker exerts their dominance over the listener, with the intent to control and regulate their behaviours, actions and thoughts (Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996, Beale and Hoel, 2011, Johnson, 2011). Teasing however is often intended as playful. For this reason, this section purposefully uses the word mockery in order to better capture the interactions that were observed, which often blurred the line between bullying and teasing. The line between playful mockery and more contemptuous forms is consequently considered, suggesting that a widespread tolerance of contemptuous mockery creates workplace cultures in which bullying can exist.

An example of contemptuous mockery occurred at The Busy Bee station during lunch in the firefighter mess. While I observed multiple instances of both playful and contemptuous mockery, the following interaction provides the most striking example of potential overlap. At this stage of the day, several of the participants had been interviewed and the atmosphere was considerably more relaxed than earlier. I was sitting at a six-seater table with Liam to my left. Liam was sitting with his arms

crossed and, after being the subject of several mocking comments, he proceeded to rock his chair back and forth looking towards the ground. Liam was a station officer who wore glasses and had a thicker physical build than the man insulting him. Station officers attend fires with firefighters and are not seen as 'management' due to their operational role (see Appendix C), though station officer rank does afford additional responsibilities and pay. One of the firefighters at this table started to explain to me that most firefighters like to stay fit and healthy while others get lazy and overweight over time. The same firefighter then jokingly remarked that he enjoys telling visitors at their station that Liam is not a firefighter, but is instead the IT guy. The men at the table all started to laugh. The firefighter continued, 'because it's believable, you actually look like an IT guy'.

This interaction provides a striking example of how the body is read and what status is given to bodies that do not conform to the hegemonic ideal operating in these workplaces. It also shows how the men manage the public's perception of the occupation by labelling Liam as the 'IT Guy' in order to preserve their occupational identity by devaluing his professional role in front of me. This specific joke aimed to devalue his professional role, which had slightly higher status in the official hierarchy. This joke only worked in the context that it occurred publicly, suggesting that the humour moved beyond a joke towards a putdown, which differs from banter or reciprocal teasing (Dynel, 2009). Though it is not uncommon for men of economical lower status to attempt to equal their status through body politics, such as drawing on the accomplishment and control of having the cultural ideal of a muscular physique.

This example also shows how targets of everyday mockery 'pass' during these uncomfortable situations by using complicit silence. As Fordham (1993, p. 3) argues, '"passing" implies impersonation, acting as if one is someone or something one is not', which also relates to remaining silent and positioning oneself in the background as a way of showing acceptance for their status in the gender order. Liam was ascribed a nerd identity (Kendall, 2011), which was discussed in relation to his pale skin, his glasses and his physique. Liam did not laugh at their comments and instead displayed an embarrassed smile while quickening the pace of his rocking and it was evident by his body language that he was uncomfortable with the kind of attention he was receiving. The behaviour that Liam engaged in reveals a larger set of social

interactional expectations (Goffman, 1955, p. 216). Liam smiled at the insult rather than violating the norm of the group by responding with anger and experiencing the interaction as a threat, which could be interpreted as refusing the norms of the larger group. Stronach and Allan (1999) offer the suggestion that social actors faced with deprecating jokes often laugh at themselves in the presence of others to suggest that they are 'in' with the joke, rather than being the subject of it. In this way, individuals can create a situation where they are effectively 'reclaiming the event for farce rather than tragedy' (Stronach & Allan 1999, p. 34), by engaging in complicit silence. This example shows that while Liam was marginalised to a degree in this interaction, the power relations nevertheless demanded that he accept the insults in order to 'fit in' to the culture.

The interaction with Liam and his colleagues offers an example of contemptuous mockery and shows the significance of short-term ethnography in situating the researcher in the action of taken-for-granted interactions at work (Campbell and Gregor, 2004, Pink and Morgan, 2013). This interaction is significant in that it occurred with my own complicit involvement. It also occurred in the presence of two other firefighters who attempted to ameliorate the situation. During the incident, one of the firefighters to my right leaned in and said, 'that's how you know you're liked around here'. Another man added, 'yeah, when no one makes fun of you, you know you're in trouble'. Both men attempted to disrupt the interaction by suggesting that Liam was neither an illegitimate firefighter nor the target of contemptuous mockery, but instead, a likeable worker. The comments by the two attempt to reject this version of the 'boy code', which acts to elevate men's social interactions with other men (Anderson, 2009, p. 46). The first firefighter then quickly responded, 'well except for him', pointing towards Liam. The men proceeded to laugh even harder this time at the suggestion that his colleagues disliked Liam. While the two firefighters had initially attempted to mitigate the situation they also laughed during the second comment. In this example of an aggressive assertion of firefighter masculinity, contemptuous mockery was the vehicle, and although the criticisms of the 'nerd' identity prevailed, it did not go unchallenged.

This interaction also shows the ways in which women are tested and made complicit in male-dominated workplaces. As Kanter (1977b, p. 976) explains, 'token' women

are often presented with multiple exaggerated performances that aim to communicate men's physical prowess, their heterosexual masculinity and their ability to outperform women at work. The interaction at The Busy Bee station with Liam occurred in an attempt to test my response to their male culture. It also acted as a boundary-setting technique to reinforce the power relations by establishing the difference between the dominant group and myself – the outsider.

It is notable that firefighters rarely used the term bullying to understand instances of contemptuous mockery. As Moran and Roth (2013) argue, fire services are often believed to have a joking culture, which allows for more intimate bonds between men. As Chapter Two argued, studies of fire services across America, Australia and the UK suggest that fire services have a cultural apathy towards bullying cultures (Baigent, 2001, Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, Lewis, 2004a, O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017, Willingham, 2017). However, the data show that the everyday culture of mockery often blurs the line between playful and more contemptuous forms of mockery within these stations. Indeed, the research literature on workplace bullying in Australia is abundant and has long established the parallels between adolescent schoolyard bullying and the bullying that occurs in workplaces (Beale and Hoel, 2011, Kelly, 2013, Williamson, 2015, Stephen and Tarun, 2016), such as Australian fire services (McLennan et al., 2008, Batty and Burchielli, 2011, Fishwick and Martin, 2012). Additionally, the term 'workplace bullying' has been used in research literature of work and workplaces to differentiate it from schoolyard bullying. The distinction between schoolyard and workplace bullying helps capture the complexities inherent within workplaces, which include repeated complicit silence by organisational leaders as well as insufficient protection and support for workers who experience harassment (Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996, Vega and Comer, 2005, Salin and Hoel, 2013).

Another example of the blurred line between playful and contemptuous mockery can be seen in Neil's experience. Neil was a senior firefighter who decided to become a peer support officer as he believed that his 31 years experience in the service would be useful to less experienced firefighters. The following comment shows the inconsistencies between Neil's role as a peer support officer and the gender practices believed to be required of firefighters. While peer support officers are trained to help

colleagues who need help and counselling, his comment shows the significance of contemptuous mockery, even in instances where peer support would be needed:

> ‘I know personally when I joined it was a lot more bastardisation back then. They really used to pick on you and deliberately try and get a reaction out of you and they thought that was part of what they should do, like the military training and that. Because I have always been involved in playing football and teams and stuff it took me about two weeks. The first two weeks I went, “what the hell is going on here? Why are they doing this?” and then I went, “ah, it’s a game. Play the game.”’
>
> (Neil -– Senior Firefighter/Peer Support Officer, 31 years experience)

‘Playing the game’ was another way that participants could establish themselves as legitimate firefighters, again relying on the athlete narrative to solidify their masculine authority at work (Anderson, 2009, p. 77). Additionally, the quote shows how the gender order is reinforced in more hegemonic ways. It is notable that the phrase ‘play the game’ is embedded in the history of British militarised masculinities and Army cultures and featured in Sir Henry Newbolt’s 1892 poem about future soldiers in British schools (See Macdonald, 1988, p. 233). Once Neil realised his peers were playing the game, he believed that he was able to adjust to the culture through the realisation that he was a participant in the game, similar to what he had experienced in the Australian Army and in playing football. He was frequently questioned on his clothing choices and asked to change his official uniform in front of the other firefighters despite being properly dressed for the working day, which is a common form of paramilitary hazing (See also Cheng, 1996, Mechling, 2009, Evans, 2013). While he was initially confused by these requests, he found he was able to draw on his experience of bastardisation in the military to make sense of the fire service cultures.

The language of ‘playing the game’ and the performance of mockery across these four stations suggests that interactions between the men require constant negotiation. Even though Neil felt he was eventually able to make sense of the game at work, he had to rely on the stoic configurations of militarised masculinities that he had experienced in previously male-dominated situations. The gender order required a level of

complicity, which involved saying ‘yes sir’ to all commands (see also Baigent, 2001, p. 73). Neil believed that not all men were able to learn the rules of the game and conform to the rigid expectations of dominance in the service:

> ‘They’d go, “I’m not getting a reaction out of you because you know what’s going on” and then there were others that would just arc up, [whingey voice] “why am I being picked on? It’s always me that’s being picked on”. “Well … you’re the one who is reacting. You know it’s a game” and they’d say, “I know it’s a game but …” and there’s the “but” and that’s what they try to get out of you. So that’s the sort of person who I think struggles in this job.’
>
> (Neil – Senior Firefighter/Peer Support Officer, 31 years experience)

Nevertheless, Neil appeared relieved that the bastardisation culture had subsided, shaking his head when remembering the requests of the officer in charge. However, there was also a level of romanticism, where he likened the interaction to a game, where he was able to compete with other firefighters and ultimately win because of the perceived skill and expertise he had acquired in his previous life. At the same time, his position as a peer support officer was at odds with his understanding of the making of masculinities in male-dominated workplaces. His support role meant that he provided emotional support to workers who felt ostracised and harassed at work. Yet his comment, ‘it’s a game’, suggests a high level of complicity in the very workplace cultures and behaviours that reproduce and support harassment, humiliation and intimidation within the hegemonic project (Connell, 2000).

The tension between playfulness and contempt results in Neil expressing unclear boundaries between what is required in relation to the game play between men and what is required in relation to ‘peer support’, which supports anti-bullying in the workplace. As Allison and Bastiampillai (2016) argue, bullying cultures in Australia are often left uncontested when there is a manifestation of power. Neil’s account of ‘fitting in’ to the service shows such an example. A few of the firefighters did say they felt uncomfortable with the bastardisation culture. Kasper, for instance, was one of the few firefighters who referred to his experiences of contemptuous mockery as a form of bullying. After being asked which station was his favourite, he recalled some

of the negative experiences he had had with a station officer at his previous workplace:

> ‘He was a bully … a pig of a man and I just one day had an [epiphany] thinking “nup, I’m not staying here any longer.” ’
>
> (Kasper – Station Officer, 28 years experience)

He believed that his action to leave the station created a ripple effect that prompted the remaining three senior firefighters to relocate. One of his colleagues went to a quieter station in the inner north of the city while the other two went to an outstation in the outer north. While Kasper did not make a formal complaint against the station officer, he believed that leaving the station was the best option. It was common for firefighters across the four stations to say that ‘speaking up’ against the culture resulted in firefighters losing their legitimacy as ‘team players’, which resulted in being relegated the status of ‘individuals’ (see also Khan et al., 2017, p. 221). Kasper’s experience of playing the game shows that silence is sometimes used to avoid bullying in the workplace. These power relations have notable outcomes for the power relations within these services. Similarly, Yoder and Aniakudo (1996) argue that indicators of a harassing climate in an organisation can often be subtle and need to be considered in relation to broader gender practices within the workplace. What these power relations show is the potential difficulties for targets of harassment to confide in support officers within the service. It shows that instances of contemptuous mockery and shaming are used to manage interpersonal behaviours while simultaneously reinforcing the occupational ideal (Miller and Rayner, 2012, Salin and Hoel, 2013). The gender negotiations between and within groups of men actually made these daily working relationships difficult to navigate, suggesting that the firefighters’ experiences of their working conditions were at odds with the nature of work they perform.

One example that shows the difficulties of men getting along with other men is shown in Zach’s experience as one of the newest and youngest firefighters working at The Youth Squad station. Unlike many of the other firefighters at his station, he had attended university before deciding to take a paid position with a courier company. He then applied to become a firefighter after seeing a call for applicants in his local

newspaper. Zach explained that the everyday culture of mockery in the fire service was something he had never experienced in other paid employment:

> ‘Once you develop your thick skin and figure out when people are joking and how it all works then it’s good but, yeah. It is strange when you first start and you just get scared about making a mistake or something like that because they’ll all jump on your back and give you a ribbing for it, but you get used to it.’
>
> (Zach – Firefighter, 5 years experience)

Having a thick skin was conceptualised as advantageous in that it communicated the firefighter’s ability to play the game as well as their ability to practice complicit silence during instances of mockery. As Braun and Nobis (2017, p. 197) argue, an important part of demonstrating hegemonic masculinity is having the ability to develop a metaphorical thick skin. Several other participants at The Youth Squad and The Retirement Home similarly expressed the idea that they too had developed a thick skin in order to endure sophomoric humour and mockery in the workplace. One participant at The Youth Squad took this metaphor even further, suggesting that he had developed a ‘second skin’ that he believed was a unique requirement for affirming the firefighter ideal in his workplace. Adjustment to the workplace culture was not described as a natural or smooth process, even though these behaviours and actions are similar to those experienced from school onwards (Connell, 1996, Pascoe, 2005, Beale and Hoel, 2011).

It is notable that while humiliation can sometimes function as a form of play, the differentiation between ridicule and play often rests on the player’s intent as well as the ritualised nature of the humiliation (Mechling, 2009, p. 52). In order to develop resilience inside these work cultures, the firefighters described having to work out how to effectively play the game and navigate the space between insult and jest. Baigent (2001, p. 75) refers to this as the push to ‘fit in’ in Western fire services, while O’Neill and Rothbard (2017, p. 81) describe these game-like interactions as a culture of joviality.

Playing the game helped to reinforce the hierarchies of masculinities in these worksites and often demanded that firefighters police each other's masculinities in public settings, as was shown with Liam 'the IT guy'. Indeed, several firefighters mentioned an annual awards night called The Can, which was a social event run by firefighters for the purpose of making fun of the mistakes of other firefighters:

> 'We would probably have at least four social dos a year through the social clubs, like a bowls day. The Can night, which is an awards night for things people have done throughout the year that they have stuffed up or whatever.'
>
> (Reese – Senior Firefighter, 6 years experience)

While some participants at The Youth Squad station mentioned their apprehension to be included in The Can awards night, it was simultaneously normalised as a rite of passage and a bit of fun. Reese, for instance, had only been a firefighter for six years, which was perceived as a relatively short working history in this particular service. Similarly to Zach, Reese discussed the challenges of trying to learn new tasks and the inevitability of making mistakes on occasion. He commented that he did not want to 'mess up' in case he was subjected to a live commentary of his failures in front of a large audience during this annual, informal event.

The Can awards night was run across each station annually and was believed by the men to be a hazing event; a common occurrence in sports (Van Raalte et al., 2007, Waldron and Kowalski, 2009), military services (Pershing, 2006) and fire services (Manolakes, 2002, Hulett et al., 2008b, p. 3, O'Rourke, 2014a). The ability to participate in, or at a minimum, tolerate contemptuous mockery, ultimately enforced gendered power relations between men who were expected to participate in the culture of mockery either directly or indirectly. Contemptuous mockery also subtly reinforced the masculine culture, which provided a veil of silence around the intimidation and violence of workplace experiences (See Willingham and Preiss, 2017). In doing so, contemptuous mockery played out in ways that prevented firefighters from deviating from interpersonal behaviours embodied in the firefighter ideal (See also Chapter Four), which was reinforced through events like The Can awards night. The findings suggest that this type of game play is not always

experienced as joviality, as O'Neill and Rothbard (2017) claim. Indeed, younger firefighters like Zach had conflicting experiences with the work culture.

The findings so far have indicated that shame and embarrassment are used to marginalise and subordinate certain men, while humour is used to reinforce this subordination through the complicit silence of onlooking co-workers. Even firefighters who had military backgrounds, like Neil, often commented that they felt shocked during their first few experiences of mockery at work. Indeed, participants would frequently discuss the need to teach new recruits how things were done around the station, or conversely, would comment they were still learning themselves (see also Baigent, 2001).

To summarise this section, I have argued that the interactions between men in these workplaces sometimes play out in the form of contemptuous rather than playful mockery, and that humour is used in a variety of ways in order to reinforce the firefighter ideal. The interactions discussed in this section show the subordination of masculinities and the ways in which shame and embarrassment can be used to invalidate gender practices through the labelling of alternative gender identities (see also Connell, 1995, Pascoe, 2005, Anderson, 2009) in ways that maintain these workplaces as male-dominated. It was also shown that contemptuous mockery was used to manage interpersonal behaviours while being normalised as part of the masculine joking culture.

The data show that contemptuous mockery and denigrating humour is used to manage outsiders within these spaces in ways that reinforce the firefighter ideal (see also Yoder and Berendsen, 2001), furthering the shame and embarrassment experienced by the target by subjecting them to humiliation within their peer group. Not surprisingly, given the pressures to conform, some men remained silent in the face of contemptuous mockery of others. Newer firefighters argued that they are still trying to adjust to being humiliated in front of colleagues, as was the case with Zach and Reese at The Youth Squad. Self-proclaimed seasoned firefighters, who hold higher ranks in the service, however proceeded to normalise contemptuous forms of mockery to the newer generation of firefighters by arguing that they help to reinforce order. The findings show how some newer recruits changed their behaviours to try to avoid being

made an example if in front of their peers, suggesting that some firefighters experience hazing as a form of ridicule rather than play. The following section examines how men make sense of their dominance in these workplaces by looking at physicality and discourses of persistence. The emphasis on the game play is explored to show how men negotiate male gendered power in these settings.

Recruitment: The Making of Legitimacy Through Discourses of Persistence

As the previous section suggested, the ability to 'play the game' was crucial to 'pass' in these workplaces. While this meant participating in and tolerating the culture of mockery, it also demanded that firefighters play the game by legitimising male gendered power relations through discourses of persistence. This section discusses the issue of competitive recruitment, which is central to debates around racial and gender diversity in the service and is necessary for discussing the social processes that allow men to play the game in ways that establish boundaries between current firefighters and potential firefighters. As Chapter One highlighted, competitive recruitment is particularly pronounced in Australia metropolitan fire services, with some services recruiting less than two percent of applicants through their recruitment processes (Fedorowytsch, 2015, Homfray, 2015).

The findings show that competitive recruitment provides firefighters with a tool to validate their occupational identity through proving their physical skills and abilities in front of other men. The competitive recruitment process meant that there was a high likelihood of failing at the first attempt, so the ability to show resilience and persistence was often incorporated into the overall discourse of the good firefighter. Value was placed on one's personal identity to be good enough to get in as well as one's ability to continually prove themselves inside these work cultures. The men spoke at length about experiences of getting in and then fitting in to the service. Failing to get into the service was discussed as a character building exercise that taught the men how to 'not give up', which was consequently discussed as a characteristic they believed all firefighters require. In this context, men were framed as persistent in response to their failures.

Conversely, the data show that women who experience similar challenges in

recruitment are framed as inadequate, showing the illogical aspects of discourses of gender. One example of this occurred when Alex, who gave me a tour of his station, showed me the recruitment circuit. Alex was a station officer with 28 years experience. He was motivated to join the service because he liked the idea of keeping physically active at work and liked the idea of having a solid career. After showing me the obstacle courses outside, Alex then suggested we tour the internal recruitment area, which was inside a small-bricked building. The inside of the building was very dark, dimly lit by a light on the right-hand side of the wall that was veiled by red cellophane. Alex explained that the room was constructed to give minimal visibility, as would occur on a call-out to a house fire. He asked if I would like to attempt the task simulation to get a feel for what the participants had all gone through, to which I agreed (see also Pink and Morgan, 2013).

Alex took this opportunity to discuss his frustration with 'equal opportunities' and the women he believed were given their job due to their sex. After completing a tour of the course, we walked back outside and Alex showed me the final obstacle in the recruitment circuit. The final test involved lifting a fire extinguisher from the inside of a truck and then moving it to a marked yellow square across the courtyard. He believed that the recruitment circuit allowed only the best of the best to become firefighters. He recalled how frustrated he was to work with a female firefighter whom he believed was too short for the job. He claimed that she could not fulfil all of the tasks due to her height, commenting that other male firefighters had to assist her during their shift. He said 'people are getting through who shouldn't because of equal opportunities'. For Alex, equal opportunity legislation equated to an influx of inadequate firefighters who did not compete or adequately prove themselves through multiple attempts at entry and were instead given the job due to their minority status.

The significance of women's minority status in these workplaces shows the interplay between women's underrepresentation in the service and the belief that women and other minority groups are given greater advantage and consideration than men (see also Back, 2017), though studies of female firefighters in Western industrialised countries suggest that female firefighters also attempt entry multiple times (Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, Perrott, 2016). The following example shows how firefighters deploy similar arguments to those who oppose gender equality. Ian explained that he

had a strained relationship with upper-level management after he was called to the chief officer's office. This incident occurred after his email unintentionally circulated, resulting in its contents being read by a member of the United Firefighters Union:

> 'What are they going to negotiate next … improve the rights of the gays and lesbians? I guess [the email] could be deemed offensive by a gay or a lesbian person, but what I was really meaning was, what minority group are they going to improve for next? I mean, the bulk of us are just baggy-arse firey's and shouldn't they be looking after the majority rather than the minority?'
>
> (Ian – Senior Firefighter, 6 years experience)

Ian articulated the belief that minority groups are given greater consideration, not just in recruitment, but also in their working lives at these stations. This comment sheds light onto the potential minority and majority group relations that play out inside these stations, where men in dominant positions within the service perceive that they receive less advantage than sexual and gender minorities. The topic of recruitment, the body and performance is crucial to ongoing discussions of gender relations in male-dominated workplaces (Burton, 1991, Still, 1995, Petersen et al., 2000, Knights and Richards, 2003, Castilla, 2008), with the data suggesting that the increase of minority groups within these services is interpreted as a challenge to the dominant position of men. As Connell (1995) argues, when masculine authority is challenged, it is often defended through different forms of backlash. For Ian, this meant privately sending an email to his colleagues about his beliefs that the fire service unfairly privileges sexual minorities.

Other forms of defence against women can be quite direct. For example, Alex described how firefighters at The Busy Bee station had resisted women's entry into the fire service by manually altering the task simulation prior to the recruitment process. He explained that most people can carry a standard fire extinguisher but not everyone can reach their hands inside the truck. If the fire extinguisher that the task required was placed inside the truck instead of outside on the concrete, then a short person, (as women are more likely to be) simply could not reach the extinguisher and would fail the upper body strength test. Failing this part of the obstacle course results in a failure to pass the PAT 2 stage of the recruitment process. This act of deliberate

hostility towards women ensures that height requirements, which historically discriminate against female firefighters (Epstein, 1988, p. 512, See Norris and Reardon, 1989, p. 58, Wang and Kleiner, 2001, p. 181), can still be informally enforced. These types of actions not only maintain these workplaces as male-dominated but also are in effect, cheating in reverse.

Ironically, while the men went to great lengths to ensure that women were seen as inadequate through their failures in recruitment, the men did not see their own failures as signs of inadequacy. Instead, the men understood their own failures through discourses of persistence. Firefighters across all four stations commonly reflected on their own failed attempts at entry while simultaneously restating the competitive and perceived masculine nature of their occupation, speaking about their failures with a sense of pride:

> ‘Me and another mate who’s actually here, we went to high school together and went “yep, that’s what we’re going to [do]” … so yeah. He got in straight away and it took me a few years, but we ended up together.’
>
> (Randal – Senior Firefighter, 11 years experience)

> ‘Tried twice probably in my early twenties … went there, missed out and didn’t try for a few years and then tried twice in a row again and got in.’
>
> (Reese – Senior Firefighter, 6 years experience)

> ‘I think I tried about three times to get in the fire service.’
>
> (Lance – Senior Firefighter, 14 years experience)

These examples show how the participants rationalised their failures as a natural process of trying to get into the service and were frequently believed to be a natural consequence of the competitive nature of the recruitment process. As Bird (1996, p. 122) and Wadham (2013) argue, competition is crucial to the construction of male homosocial relationships and supports the norms of hegemonic masculinity in male-dominated workplaces. To this effect, their failure did not signal that they were unsuitable or unfit for the job; rather, they perceived that their failure demonstrated that competitive recruitment works, commenting on how ‘lucky’ they were to be

recruited given the competition they encountered. The men also believed that multiple attempts at entry meant that competitive recruitment was not only effective but that it created a necessary barrier to ensure that only the finest get in (see Burton, 1991, Connell, 1995, p. 174), which translated to heterosexual family men who had previous working experience in other male-dominated workplaces (see also Chapter Four).

It is unsurprising that studies of workplaces have long established that meritocracy has largely been constructed on systemic gendered biases (see Burton, 1987, Still, 1995), which result in men receiving greater economic advantage and career mobility than equally qualified, skilled and experienced women (Castilla and Benard, 2010). As Castilla (2008) argues, meritocracy can often rely more heavily on personal attributes rather than qualifications and experiences. It is the criteria of merit that is often the issue, as merit can be used post-recruitment to justify certain biases. Biases such as nepotism have been found to play a central role in how and why certain workers are chosen for employment (Vinton, 1998, Rosenbaum and Walsh, 2012). Furthermore, studies of gender, work and workplaces show that biases in the criteria of merit particularly privilege people who already possess similar traits to those employed as they are believed to be a good cultural fit for the occupation (see also McPherson et al., 2001).

The cultural fit for this service translates to being male and having previous experience in all-male work environments. One firefighter, for instance, queried his repeated rejection during the recruitment process, believing that certain biases could have impacted his entry. William had worked for the service for ten years, reflecting, 'It actually took me 10 years to get in to the fire service.' William was confused about why it took the fire service so long to accept him given that he always passed the PAT1 and PAT2 tests and believed that he had all of the qualities that are needed for the job. William argued that his abilities as a tradesperson and his problem-solving skills did not change or advance during the ten-year period that he was consistently rejected. He believed that he was regarded more favourably when he became a family man with two children.

As Chapter Four argued, the firefighters often made sense of their occupational identity through the belief that they were moral men and good fathers. Adding to

these findings, in relation to recruitment more specifically, being a good father translates to a widespread social assumption about men's sexuality and the ability to function in a team. Firefighters across the four stations commented that having a family was seen as advantageous, not only with regards to the working relationships in the station, but also through the recruitment process, where men with families were believed to be more stable and less selfish. For example, when asked, 'who would not be suited to firefighting?' Kasper responded with the following:

> 'They've never married or they are in a relationship but they are not married and they don't have any children at all and they tend to be arrogant, self-centred bullies. They follow procedures right to the dot and there is no accountability if you do anything different, right? All of the guys that I know that are single and are like that and are officers are real … can I say pricks? [laughing]'
>
> (Kasper – Station Officer, 28 years experience)

Kasper shared the common belief that married men better suited a career in the service. The social value of being a family man functioned on two levels. Being a family man required a particular type of family that was grounded in heterosexual masculinities. This can be seen in Ian's comment about 'gays and lesbians' in the service. Secondly, having heterosexual family men helped to regulate potential perceptions of homosexuality in these workplaces, which ultimately marginalises gay masculinities. As McCormack and Anderson (2014, p. 111) argue, the 'policing of males' behaviours by other men is fundamental to the maintenance of heterosexual masculine identities by clearly othering such minority identities as outside of their work culture. The belief that family men were better suited to firefighting was often based on the opinion that having a wife and children requires the ability and willingness to compromise, which was thought to alleviate the selfish tendencies more typical in single men. Similarly, playing team sports was highly valued due to the necessity of collaboration, effective communication and teamwork, which helped reinforce the firefighter ideal:

> '[You're] working in a team environment so if they play team sport [they are] good with the community and all of that sort of stuff. So really, you do need to

> work as a team and you do notice the ones that are in it who either haven't done that or aren't used to doing that.'
>
> (Reese – Senior Firefighter, 6 years experience)

> 'I think … team sports [help]. I think the service provides a good background for being able to mix well with other people and that's the main thing for me, you know?'
>
> (Geoffrey – Station Officer, 33 years experience)

Reese and Geoffrey drew on the team rhetoric to help affirm the firefighter ideal, which necessitates soft skills in these work cultures (see also Chapter Four). This team rhetoric also helped establish the firefighters' perceived occupational legitimacy by the power relations between men. As Chapter Two discussed, gender relations and workplaces suggest that leadership is often masculinised in organisational settings through language, humour and the reproduction of hierarchy and the assumed legitimate authority of men within these contexts (Still, 1995, Schnurr, 2008, Brownson, 2014, Burton, 2014, Woodfield, 2015). The firefighters often relied on the athlete narrative to affirm their occupational identity through discourses of teamwork (Anderson, 2009, p. 77). Rather than relying on heroic leadership styles, such as strong independent leadership (see Fletcher, 2004), the findings suggest that in this setting, being team oriented and having past experiences in sports were thought to be advantageous to their ability to fit in to the culture of the service.

This section set out to analyse how issues related to competition, resilience and persistence shape the ways in which multiple masculinities are negotiated in these workplaces. I suggest that firefighters construct varying forms of legitimacy through discourses of persistence, using competition and masculine identity to reaffirm the dominant forms of masculinity practices in this work culture. The findings show that maleness and masculinity are largely constructed in opposition to women as well as gay masculinities. An example of this can be seen in Alex's discussion of women applying for the service. This example shows how masculine authority is defended in male-dominated workplaces when the hegemony of the workplace is challenged by potential political changes to the existing gender order. Ironically, while some men used competitive recruitment to defend the lack of women in the service, the data

reveal that the policing of equal opportunities by men in the service disrupts formal measures to create greater diversity in the workplace. Firefighters similarly constructed narratives of legitimacy through specific forms of hegemony that relied on a family man discourse and the athlete narrative, which privileged heterosexual working fathers in recruitment (see also Chapter Four).

While certain hostilities towards women and sexual minorities were overt, such as Ian's comments about 'gays and lesbians', other forms of resistance were systemic and constructed through the assumed 'natural' maleness of the service. As the previous section argued, this was often achieved in ways that othered women without directly stating them as other. The following section explores how women are understood in these workplaces as outsiders. The findings build on the analysis provided in this chapter by showing how humour is used to position women as spectators of the male culture.

Women as Disrespected Others

This section draws on my encounters with firefighters to show how women are treated as disrespected others in these workplaces and how language and performance is played out in these stations. As Campbell and Gregor (2004, p. 70) argue, 'people who work in a large organization, for instance, will be members of a discourse that has a shared language, beliefs and values, ways of working and so on'. I note that the data presented in this section is informed by my reflexive encounters with the participants.

The analysis below reveals how I was positioned as a spectator of exaggerated heterosexual masculinities during instances of storytelling. The use of humour in these workplaces is meaningful to our understanding of power relations, as informal hierarchies and interactions communicate the ways in which differences are reproduced in male-dominated workplaces. These personal accounts show how insider language was used in some of these workplaces to other me (Pink, 2009, Pink and Morgan, 2013) and was often enacted through organised silence (see also Chapter Three). The two forms of organised silence that were experienced can be explained through Kanter's (1977b) theory of token disadvantage. Kanter (1977b, p. 969) argues that tokens experience disadvantage when 'the token's social category (master status)

is physically obvious, as in the case of sex' and also when 'the token's social type is not only rare but also new to the setting of the dominants.'

While my quasi-insider status did afford me some research mobility (see Chapter Three), the firefighters were deliberate in their attempts to remind me of my status as an outsider. During lunch at The Busy Bee station I was again reminded that I held little authority in this masculine space. The firefighters formed a line, serving up their lunch onto plates and then proceeding to join their colleagues in the firefighter mess. I was served up a plate of steamed carrots, cauliflower and peas alongside some crispy oiled potato chunks and thick sections of marinated steak. Sitting at the table with a group of six men, I ate the steamed carrots and cauliflower while my steak remained untouched. One of the firefighters at the opposite end of the table stood up and walked back into the kitchen area, returning moments later with a butter knife that he placed next to me. The man was silent, staring at the butter knife. He then raised his chin and looked at my steak, gestured with his head that the knife was used to cut the meat. I said, 'oh I don't eat meat'. Many of the men stopped eating and exchanged looks with one another, with some of them raising their eyebrows. The man who retrieved the butter knife then commented, 'now would be a great time to start'.

I experienced this as a form of hostility towards me being a female researcher in a male-dominated workplace. While it is well established that meat eating in Western industrialised cultures is often used to reaffirm hegemonic masculinity (Stibbe, 2004, Rogers, 2008, Nath, 2011), this interaction seemed to be a particularly sharp, while unnecessary public performance aimed at establishing the authority of men's eating practices. The disrespect exhibited to me as an adult at their table suggested I had committed a serious transgression, which needed to be countered by an explicit response of dominance. Other performances of dominance and symbolic control were often enacted in the form of exaggerated heterosexual masculinity, which again required that an audience witness these practices.

For example, during my first night visit to The Youth Squad station, a station officer asserted his dominance through such a performance. After introducing myself to the two men in the office, I was asked, 'so why are you studying firey's?' I responded by discussing the study and then disclosing that my father was a firefighter, which led to

an interest in the work culture. The firefighter, who first had his arms crossed around his chest, soon opened up his body by loosening his arms and smiling. He then exaggeratingly looked at my body up and down and said 'there is NO way you're [firefighter's name] daughter'. He proceeded to laugh, nudged the firefighter to his right and said 'no offence to your parents'. Another example, which followed a similar script, involved a firefighter jokingly stating, 'your mum must be really hot'.

These examples show how everyday sexual harassment is taken-for-granted and used to maintain these workplaces as male-dominated. It also shows the ways in which heterosexuality is used to signify masculine authority (Connell, 1987, Frank, 1987, Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001, Pascoe, 2005, Dean, 2013). Similarly to the exaggerated heterosexual displays discussed earlier in this chapter, the purpose of these comments was to extend the privilege of masculinity by rendering women in this context as sexual objects in order to reinforce the power of male heterosexuality. According to Connell (1995, p. 74), power relations are connected with cathexis, which position heterosexual desire as normative while also prioritising men's sexual desires and sexual freedoms. These examples of sexual objectification set the tone for boundary management, unequal power relations and heterosexual masculinity at these stations and problematise the agency of female researchers in this context. It also shows an example of performance pressure, which Kanter (1977b, p. 973) refers to as the 'attention to a token's discrepant characteristics'. Rather than being read as an academic or a researcher in this context, my interactions were largely understood in relation to my physical appearance.

I held two positions within this research context. At times I was placed as an *observer* of heterosexual masculinity, when men would boast about their sexual prowess. Other times however I was made *observable*, through comments about my body and appearance. Being made observable was a common practice aimed at ostracising and othering individuals who did not conform to the gendered dispositions that were privileged in the service. Further examples of stigmatising and othering of bodies can be seen in the broader use of sophomoric humour. Another example of when I was made observable occurred during a day visit to The Outstation. The station officer in charge tried to initiate the interviews without offering a tour of the station, saying 'so you can do your interviews in here', pointing towards the office. One of the senior

firefighters in the kitchen commented, ‘let her sit first’, offering me a coffee shortly after. I accepted the offer and sat at the table with the men. After a light conversation about the study, one of the firefighters brought over a coffee and said, ‘I haven’t put a love heart or a phone number on here like other people do’. Confused on the phrasing, I clarified, ‘on the coffee?’ to which he replied, ‘yeah, like they do in the coffee shops when a hot girl is there’.

None of the firefighters at the table remarked about the comment and continued to treat the situation as though it was common practice. As Acker (1990, p. 153) argues, a critical component of hegemonic masculinity requires that men prove their sexual potency. Similarly, Connell (1995, p. 123) explains that the practices of masculinisation initiate ‘experiences of the body that define females as other, and shapes desire as desire for the other’. The examples given thus far suggest that heterosexual masculinity is central to the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity in the context of this service and that its prevalence and reproduction relies on the complicity of those who observe the interaction – which included my acceptance in the organised silence. While I was, at times, afforded kindness and hospitality by some firefighters, larger group interactions often resulted in deliberate and exaggerated displays of heterosexuality that often mitigated earlier interactions with the same individuals.

What these findings suggest is that these experiences of disadvantage often reach beyond women working in these occupations, extending to female researchers who examine these workplace cultures. Indeed, hostilities and gatekeeping have been experienced by female researchers (Katila and Meriläinen, 1999), although to varying degrees depending on the context of the research. The performative nature of these acts of hostility often resulted in the firefighters deliberately putting on a show of their heterosexual masculinity for the benefit of other men. During a visit to The Busy Bee station, I was seated in the firefighter mess while taking notes. This position allowed me to be neither seen nor heard by the participants while they interacted in the kitchen and adjacent rooms. Consequently, the men’s voices were often unobstructed by the brick wall that partially separated the two rooms. One participant said to another firefighter, ‘are you going to the gym now?’ and the two men laughed while the firefighter said, ‘shut up’. The firefighter continued, saying, ‘lots of motivation

today!' The two men laughed and then fell silent as one of the men leaned his head back with flushed cheeks to see if I had left the room after lunch. The firefighter quickly pulled his head back after noticing that I could hear their interaction.

As a female researcher, I was often used to as a prop for performances of exaggerated heterosexual masculinity. Although, as the aforementioned example shows, these performances often occurred as a product of the culture rather than a result of my presence. While some firefighters used my presence to perform exaggerated masculinity, other firefighters believed that my presence had had the opposite effect, resulting in the participants being on 'their best behaviour'. As one firefighter explained, 'It's probably a bit tamer when you're here'. While 'being on their best behaviour' was often believed to be a show of respect towards women, these comments often originated from the belief that men and women are intrinsically different:

> 'You change the way you speak, obviously when there's just blokes you tend to be a little more open, you call people things … well, it's all with jest and joking. [Un]til you get to know that female, "well I better not" because they might take it the wrong way. I guess also, not that you do a lot but you come into work and you might have a shower in the morning or a shower in the afternoon after being in the gym, so you've just got to be a bit more careful with privacy.'
>
> (Trevor – Senior Firefighter, 11 years experience)

Similarly to many of the other firefighters at his station, Trevor commented that women are welcome in the service, only to then contradict these comments by emphasising the perceived differences of men and women's bodies and sense of humour. The use of language and performance is directly related to men's continued dominance in these workplaces, as the firefighters believe that men and women deploy different gendered humour patterns. To further illuminate his belief that women and men are intrinsically different, he mentions the danger of heterosexual attraction by posing the potential threat of a woman seeing a naked man at work. Similarly, other firefighters commented that their wives do not like the idea of them working with other women, believing that the intimacy of their work environments

would inevitably lead to heterosexual tension and attraction. Women are seen in this context to be troubling (McDowell, 2001, p. 183), risking the family man occupational identity that the firefighters construct through being moral men (see also Chapter Four).

Complicit acceptance of the hegemony of these workplaces was often demanded publicly, through public demonstrations of dominance and through public displays of heterosexual masculinity. My own silence in these interactions was a consequence of the research-participant dialogue, where I knowingly allowed myself to be an observer of the culture. My silence was also a consequence of the tensions that resulted from these interactions. It is notable that the demonstrations of dominance fostered an expectation of silence, as though speaking up was a transgression to the culture and a sign of disrespect to the firefighters themselves. As the research literature on men and masculinities argue, heterosexual humour is often used to facilitate masculine identities rooted in the hegemonic project (Connell, 1995, Kehily and Nayak, 1997, p. 69, Anderson, 2009). Pascoe (2005), for instance, argues that teasing and homophobic slurs inform social order by exaggerating heterosexuality as the normative practice. The dominance of heterosexual humour instils fear in other men that they too can be judged for their sexuality and need to ensure that they 'perform' their gender and sexuality within the normative boundaries or risk being the subject of sacrifice for the sake of humour.

This section suggests that participants affirm their legitimacy through the reproduction of heterosexual masculinity and through complicit silence when hearing sexually inappropriate comments. Interestingly, while many firefighters commented on the tameness of their interactions, several exchanges suggest that the firefighters were embellishing their masculine authority and heterosexual masculinity as a result of my presence.

The power relations embedded in the research-participant dialogue illuminates that female researchers can occupy, sometimes simultaneously, two positions within these workplaces. The first position frames women as the *observers* of male culture. I was reminded of this position through repeated acts of organised silence (see also Gurney, 2003, Figenschou, 2010), such as the deliberate collective silence enacted during my

first meeting with the firefighters. The second position frames women as *observable*, where they become highly visible and potentially sexualised (Kanter, 1977b, Acker, 1990). This sexualisation occurs for the purpose of reproducing the specific form of hegemonic masculinity required in these services, which mandates the reproduction of heterosexual masculinity. While it is notable that some men in the study experienced similar instances of heightened visibility, they did not occupy the same double bind of being made an *observer* and *observable* as the product of heterosexual masculinity. The implications of these findings extend beyond the current study and have potential consequences for future research into male-dominated workplaces. The analysis provided in this section shows the useful application of short-term ethnography in male-dominated workplaces, particularly those that have a systemic history of resistance towards the inclusion of women (Smith, 2005, Pink and Morgan, 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter shows how the hierarchy of masculinities plays out during the firefighters' downtime, showing how firefighters define outsiders through language and performance across these stations. As discussed in Chapter Four, fitting in requires that firefighters accept the dominant culture of these workplaces. This chapter offers further insights into how the process of fitting in is reproduced through the practice of playing the game. This suggests that legitimacy is constructed through a culture of mockery and a use of humour that reinforces a particular ideal of maleness specific to these workplaces. For instance, while Liam's masculinity was not celebrated in this service, the devaluation of his professional value might not have occurred in other contexts, such as tech companies where Liam's identity would be at the very least normative, if not high status. While mockery and sophomoric humour are shown to be potentially powerful tools for producing solidarity and friendship within this service, they are also shown to be dis-unifying in certain contexts (see also Chapter Six) and deployed in ways that police against outsiders.

Research literature of gender, work and workplaces has established that humour plays an important role in the reproduction of culture (Holmes, 2000, McDowell, 2011, Schnurr, 2011, Willis, 2012, Westwood and Johnston, 2013). As Westwood and Rhodes (2013) argue, the use of humour in everyday organisational life is often taken for granted by workers. In male-dominated workplaces it is not until hegemonic

masculinity is challenged that the various forms of humour start to become more obvious to casual observers. Challenges to hegemonic masculinity can occur through the use of anti-gay humour that subverts the heterosexual masculinities being practiced in the workplace and can similarly occur when the inclusion of women in the workplace results in conscious modifications to humour (McCormack and Anderson, 2010, Westwood and Rhodes, 2013, p. 134). The gendered humour patterns in this service were also made visible due to my position as a female researcher in an all male workplace.

The findings suggest that the culture of mockery, particularly the deployment of contemptuous mockery, creates workplace cultures that blur the line between jest and insult, allowing bullying practices to be reproduced and normalised over time. Furthermore, the significance of humour in the firefighters' everyday working lives shows the potential difficulties of mediating more harmful forms of mockery, especially when considering the ways in which alternative masculinities are made complicit within these interactional contexts.

The centrality of these gendered humour patterns, which rely on sophomoric humour, also maintain a specific form of legitimacy as they position working-class heterosexual masculinities at the top of the gender order in this service, giving straight men power in these workplaces. This was evidenced in Quinn and Marty's conversation about the legend firefighter who displayed exaggerated heterosexual masculinity in his first interaction with firefighters in the service. The social demand for sophomoric humour inside these work cultures means that while humour can be used positively to generate social solidarity (see Chapple and Ziebland, 2004, Moran and Roth, 2013), it can also be used to exclude, ostracise and isolate those who do not conform to the dominant group (Kanter, 1977b, Bird, 1996, Kehily and Nayak, 1997, Holmes, 2000, Quinn, 2000, Charman, 2013).

This chapter also shows the tensions of being moral men (see Chapter Four) and simultaneously being the 'bastards' who mock and, at times, humiliate their peers. The men's stories show a perceived inability to speak up against cultures that are described as uncomfortable and unnatural in the workplace, even at times where the hegemony of the workplace does not benefit the firefighters. The participants who

seemed to separate the two identities did not always acknowledge the contradictions between these opposing occupational identities. While some men would comment on the strangeness of experiencing contemptuous mockery at work, they simultaneously offered a defense of this culture by normalising and at times romanticising the hegemony of these workplaces, such as Neil's comments about learning to 'play the game'.

On the one hand, the culture of mockery was believed to help re-establish the gender order, which maintained boundaries between the men. Firefighters learned to stay quiet during instances of contemptuous mockery, trying to stay under the radar in order to avoid 'messing up' and facing further ridicule. This was clear when Reese discussed the social advantages of keeping mistakes private at work due to the culture of mockery in these workplaces, commenting 'you just get scared about making a mistake'. Additionally, mockery was believed to help create legitimate firefighters through perceived desirable traits. These traits include the development of a 'second' skin during everyday social interactions, which, as explained by several newer firefighters, was experienced as a foreign concept outside of their interactions with this occupation.

I propose that these workplace cultures do not always allow for a safe space to discuss vulnerability without the presence of sophomoric humour to defeminise these interactions. Similarly, the analysis suggests that not all men benefited from hegemonic masculinity and that competing masculinities within the service trouble the illusive image of the ideal firefighter. Instead, several firefighters commented that they found it difficult to adjust to these cultures, with less experienced firefighters saying that they were still struggling to find their place in the culture, showing how performance and language provide insight into the social interactions that inform the broader workplace culture. This chapter showed the complexities of negotiating multiple masculinities in these workplaces. Chapter Six looks more specifically at how men manage and police masculinities through interactions within these stations. In doing so, it shows competing forms of dominance, suggesting that disharmony is experienced throughout the service as a consequence.

CHAPTER SIX: INTERNAL BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT BETWEEN FIREFIGHTERS IN THE WORKPLACE

In this chapter, I examine the policing of boundaries between men in these workplaces, specifically focusing on competing forms of masculinity. Additionally, this chapter analyses how firefighters make sense of their occupational identity between and within different generations and ranks. The findings build on Chapters Four and Five by examining how boundary management is enacted within these workplaces between men in ways that aim to preserve an elusive heroic ideal of working-class masculinity.

This chapter begins by exploring the relationship between firefighters and upper-level management, showing the type of work that is valued in these workplaces as well as the ways in which certain work is devalued. As Chapter Three argued, each station operates under the station schedule (see Table 3) and each firefighter within the service operates under their position description (see Appendix C). Despite the differences between ranks and station cultures, the gender order operating inside station cultures is stable and consistent. This aspect has not been widely appreciated in the emergency first responder literature, which tends to focus on the experiences of fighting fires (Desmond, 2008, Aisbett et al., 2012, Moran and Roth, 2013, Owen, 2014). The analysis considers the gender order and shows that firefighters develop several strategies in order to devalue the work of management, including emphasising physicality and morality. In doing so, firefighters draw on their perceived superior physical capabilities in the field and at the stations relative to those who work in management.

The internal policing and management of masculinities in the service are then discussed to show the generational conflict between firefighters. The emphasis on physicality as a legitimising practice for the younger generation of firefighters is shown to be an informal station norm rather than a consequence of the work that firefighters perform. Finally, I show how instances of discrimination become

normalised through these male gendered power relations, where some workers become isolated and harassed due to this focus on the body.

Establishing Boundaries Between Operational and Non-operational Firefighters

This section discusses the strategies employed by operational firefighters to distance themselves from management. These boundary management strategies include emphasising the role of physicality, anti-management talk, constructing management as others by delegitimising their morality, and drawing on the necessity of shift work to show a disconnect between 'operational' bodies and non-operational management. While anti-management talk is common in workplaces (Donaldson, 1995, Fournier and Grey, 2000), it is often assumed to be less common in paramilitary organisations that impose a pyramid hierarchical structure, which demands respect for the authority of higher ranked personnel (see also Chapter Two).

Being physically active was used as a source of power in the gender order, which privileged gendered bodies that were conceptualised as physically active in various contexts. This sense of physicality related to participating in training at work and attending the gym regularly. As Chapter Four discussed, the men would often describe firefighting as para-military in order to account for the tensions in the heroic ideal of their occupational role and their experience of leisure at work, which offered workers a sense of structured routine and discipline. Being physically active was another way of establishing a sense of routine and discipline, which included strong attempts to keep boredom at bay in between call-outs. Indeed, several firefighters used their daily gym attendance as a way of establishing themselves as physically active and busy:

> 'In the afternoon we have the clean up and you sort of do a bit of [personal training]. So some of us play a bit of sport in the gym, or we might have a [personal training] session before that to try and keep … try and do something … sweat up a bit.'
>
> (Francis – Firefighter, 5 years experience)

> ‘Drilling after lunch time until 2:30 and then cleaning up [the] station and then heading to the gym.’
>
> (Oliver – Senior Firefighter, 8 years experience)

> ‘You go down to the gym then and do whatever you want to do. Work out or [do] team sport[s] or whatever you do. Then you’ve got fire calls going throughout the day.’
>
> (Aaron – Senior Firefighter, 32 years experience)

The men frequently noted that a standard of fitness was not formally enforced in the service, though the firefighters also explained that there was an informal understanding that firefighters should avoid being ‘lazy’ by attending the gym while on shift. These comments suggest that the nature of work involves effort to get through long shifts, which includes finding activities to pass the time, such as cleaning the station, team sports and going to the gym. Being lazy equated to gaining weight, being physically unfit and having physical ailments that prevented mobility, such as having ‘bad hips’ or ‘bad knees’. After discussing the gym culture in The Busy Bee station, I asked if there was any incentive to stay physically fit in the service:

> ‘No there’s still no level of fitness that you have to [meet]. Once you’re in, you’re in. I guess that our level of fitness is that every year you do your breathing apparatus training. So you go through tunnels and up ladders and all that. If you can’t do that they’ll question your fitness…. They have been threatening that for years, to bring in a level of fitness. Like I said, there wouldn’t be many blokes who wouldn’t pass because that mind-set of being fit and being in the gym.’
>
> (Aaron – Senior Firefighter, 32 years experience)

Aaron’s comments suggest that once you’re in, the level of fitness is not examined, suggesting that the recruitment process privileges bodily performances that are not monitored/policed once firefighters manage to ‘get in’ to the service. This makes Alex’s retaliation towards women entering the service even more hypocritical (see Chapter Five), as fitness and strength are often used to frame women’s bodies as

lacking. Yet, fitness and strength are infrequently used to maintain the idealised image of firefighting during social interactions, where long shifts are punctuated by demands for call-outs, which sometimes demand intense high physicality as well as periods of time where not much is happening. Interestingly, while a standard level of fitness was not enforced, Aaron did comment that being seen as physically active was seen as a way of showing commitment to a workplace culture, which emphasised vitality, energy and preparedness.

Operational staff would distance themselves from management by emphasising the role of physicality in their everyday working lives. This strategy meant that operational firefighters identified their working conditions as physically active while managerial work was perceived as inactive and passive. While non-operational firefighters also cook, clean and work out during working hours, operational firefighters (firefighters, senior firefighters and station officers) believed that management had less time for these physical activities due to the paperwork they had to complete. In doing so, operational firefighters framed themselves as active while management were framed as passive (see also Connell, 1995, Coles, 2009):

> ‘Management, okay, operationally, this place works spectacularly well because we are task focused; we’ll go and do a job. Administratively … it doesn’t work that well [laughing] … it doesn’t. I don’t know what management … why they make it as hard as they do [laughing] but that’s high up the chain [with management], when it comes to operationally, on the trucks, responding to calls … we work very, very well.’
>
> (Jayden – Senior Firefighter, 14 years experience)

While Jayden and other firefighters across the stations commented on the amount of downtime at work, he was critical of management for complicating the working conditions of operational firefighters. It was a common tactic of operational firefighters to use their physical capabilities and skills to establish masculine capital (Skeggs, 1997) and legitimacy in the hierarchy of masculinities. This was often accomplished through identification with the bodily performance of physically active men, which the men often equated to being agile and able to adapt. Surprisingly, the operational firefighters often used physicality to give themselves what they believed

was a competitive edge over management, suggesting that operational firefighters 'work very, very well'. He also separated himself from management by making the argument that firefighters are 'task focused', implying that management is not task focused and hence less valuable in various ways. Being task focused in this context referred to the ability to perform work on the trucks with other operational firefighters. In doing so, he was able to relocate the assumed power and legitimacy of management into the physically active bodily performances of operational firefighters.

Another strategy that operational firefighters employed in order to distance themselves from management included engaging in anti-management talk. They emphasised the belief that operational firefighters function better without management due to their ability to be both leaders and followers in the field depending on the requirements of the call-out. The need for supportive and strong leadership in fire service cultures has been argued elsewhere (Baigent, 2001, Thurnell-Read and Parker, 2008), suggesting that bad communication in the field can have fatal consequences for workers (Santos, 2013), while poor communication across ranks can lead to psychological distress, extended sick leave and disunity amongst workers (Hulett et al., 2008b, Herald Sun, 2017). Similarly to Jayden, another firefighter shared similar anti-management talk, expressing his belief that non-operational firefighters are 'removed' from the embodiment of the occupation:

> 'Some of them need to come down and do a couple of night shifts in here and go to five alarm calls from midnight until five and then they might wake up to it and go "oh yeah, that's right", so not so good.'
>
> (Philip – Senior Firefighter, 30 years experience)

The expression of frustration in Philip's comment echoes Jayden's earlier grievance with management, showing the belief that non-operational firefighters lack a basic understanding of the work that firefighters perform. Although it is a position requirement that commanders have experience as a station officer in addition to having extensive experience across a broad range of operational roles and incidents (See Appendix C). These findings contradict common sense assumptions relating to rank in the militarised performances of hierarchy (see Halbe, 2011), in which higher

ranked personnel are often respected in military working life. The findings presented in the current study instead show how higher ranked personnel are not necessarily seen as performing work that is legitimate and valued. Philip expressed this belief by claiming that management live in 'their own world up there', needing to instead 'come down' to the firefighters' level in order to experience their bodily performances, despite having already experienced these working conditions in their previous position as station officers. It also echoes class conflict between perceived 'elite' managers and working-class masculinities, which instead rely on hard manual labour (McDowell, 2003, p. 153) (see also Chapter One).

In their criticisms of management some firefighters went even further and described management as gaining authority from morally corrupt tactics. While firefighters were asked about the level of support that they felt from upper-level management during interviews, conversations about the morality of management were naturally raised across the four stations during informal conversations at lunches and dinners, showing the significance of these tensions in the firefighters' everyday working lives. As discussed in Chapter Four, morality plays a central role in how firefighters construct their occupational identity. To prevent management from being conceptualised as legitimate, operational firefighters would often characterise managers as morally corrupt:

> 'They tend to look after their own interests and they are all too busy stabbing each other in the back.'
>
> (Neil – Senior Firefighter/Peer Support Officer, 31 years experience)

> 'The support that they give us is a bit poor because they get too involved in their own world up there.'
>
> (Philip – Senior Firefighter, 30 years experience)

> 'I get the impression that it's a little bit dog-eat-dog and same with [the police], people that generally climb the rank quick … they are a bit unscrupulous.'
>
> (Ian – Senior Firefighter, 6 years experience)

As the examples above show, operational firefighters would often question the morality of managers by referring to them as 'dirty players', as one participant commented during dinner. In doing so, the firefighters would often contrast these perceived traits against their own to position managers as Machiavellian. Ian discussed his distrust of chief officers who attend big fires, offering water and support to operational firefighters. He cited an example of a large high-risk fire that he and his colleagues had attended the year before. During this time, one highly ranked officer attended the fire to offer water and food to the firefighters in order to thank them for their overtime. Ian interpreted this action in the field as disingenuous, as did other firefighters who believed that upper level management act more empathetically when being filmed for a television news segment, commenting that they only see management when it is to their own benefit. He was frustrated at the claim to workplace authority, which he believed was being falsely represented through the officer's embodiment of the occupation in front of the public's view. While the operational firefighters had worked long shifts, they believed that management were able to receive the praise for their hard work.

The physical strain of shift work was used by operational firefighters to further devalue the work performed by non-operational firefighters, as was the case with Ian's example. Disrupted sleeping patterns were thus seen as a way of establishing the work as physically demanding, particularly at busy stations where call-outs were more common. Older firefighters would comment that they wanted to stay operational and therefore stay physically active, but were also aware of the health detriments of performing shift work later in life:

> 'The older I get, the more it affects me I would suggest … not in a massively detrimental way. Most of the older blokes when they retire, they retire because I would suggest that they have trouble sleeping of a night time, which sounds a bit stupid when you come to work, but it's just I would assume it's because of the disrupted sleep.'
>
> (Gavin – Senior Firefighter, 28 years experience)

> ‘I have done shift work for over 20 years and it screws your sleeping pattern up … and family life and social life. It’s not that great.’
>
> (Benson – Senior Firefighter, 9 years experience)

> ‘Even though you are resting and asleep, you [have to] get up and you have to concentrate straight away. That’s pretty tough and you might be out in the wee hours of the morning dealing with all of this stuff that you don’t really want to deal with but you have to.’
>
> (Alex – Station Officer, 28 years experience)

Despite the participants’ awareness of the heath detriments of shift work, which include a plethora of health complications, including the onset of some cancers (see Harrington, 2001, Schernhammer et al., 2003, Wang et al., 2011, Caruso, 2014, Adriaenssens et al., 2015), few firefighters wanted to relocate to quieter stations where call-outs are less frequent as these stations were stigmatised as ‘lazy’ stations. The disunity between operational and non-operational firefighters in these stations is significant to note, given the importance of social cohesion in the field within this occupation. While the literature of male-dominated workplaces often discusses disharmony in leadership within these services in relation to rank, the interactional dynamics that contribute to disharmony are often given less attention (see Chapter Two).

It is not uncommon for workplaces to foster anti-management tendencies where workers view management negatively (Donaldson, 1995, Fournier and Grey, 2000). In the context of the work that firefighters perform, taking the directions of a station officer or commander in the field can mean the difference between life and death. The willingness to follow orders across these stations is thus crucial. However, interactions across the four stations illustrated that firefighters believed that management had lost touch with their occupational identity, even though they had originally been in the field.

In summary, the data show the different strategies used by operational firefighters to separate their work performance from non-operational managers. Operational firefighters cope with the power of management by attempting to devalue the work

that they perform, which they believe is in conflict with their public image of heroism, agility and preparedness (see also Chapter Four). Additionally, the findings extend the argument that dissatisfaction with leadership relates to rank (Carter, 2007, Yuan et al., 2011, Russell et al., 2015) by showing that it also relates to the embodiment of the occupation and the nature of work performed.

The contested masculine authority of leaders within this service also shows a significant tension in the hegemony of the service. As Chapter Four argued, being physically active was a way of upholding the ideal of the respectable working-class firefighter. Firefighters across all four stations, including station officers, distinguished themselves symbolically from upper-level management by signalling their bodies as operational and prepared to act. This 'preparedness' equated to being physically active at these stations. As Jayden's comment suggests, management were instead interpreted as being passive and inactive while simultaneously complicating the working lives of operational firefighters.

Furthermore, the morality of non-operational managerial staff was also contested on the assumption that management were corrupt, aggressive, competitive, ruthless and Machiavellian. This contestation of legitimacy was often in conflict with the promotional process, which relied on managers being promoted though the operational ranks. Indeed, the person specification for the position of Station Officer requires that they have relevant operational experience, including experience at a broad range of operational incidents, as well as substantial knowledge of fire behaviour (see Appendix C). The value of previous experience as an operational firefighter was seen as weakened by promotion to management levels. Interestingly, the interactional dynamic of operational and non-operational firefighters shows an unravelling of legitimacy through rank rather than the increase in respect and honour more typical of paramilitary and hierarchical organisations (see Douglas, 1999, Baigent, 2001, King, 2003, Halbe, 2011). Rather, the repeated discourse of individualism in management framed men in leadership positions as imposters who did not have the perceived morality and heroic traits of operational firefighters.

On the one hand, firefighters would justify their occupational identity through championing the nature of work they perform in contrast to management. Yet, as

Chapter Four showed, firefighters also acknowledge the nuanced nature of the work they perform, which allows for periods of downtime that are rare in the context of other emergency first responder occupations. In this sense, management were resisted due to their perceived lack of physicality and morality, while firefighters contradict the need for physicality in their own descriptions of their everyday working lives (see Chapter Four). As the following section will also show, the emphasis on physicality is central to boundary management within these stations and is used to police specific practices of masculinity.

Generational Conflict and Competing Masculinities

In many ways, working at a busier station was a strategic move for older generations of firefighters who wanted to show their legitimacy as physically active, operational firefighters. This translated to the ability to work on operational trucks and stay alert during night shifts. Outstations that were less busy were stigmatised as 'retirement homes' due to this association. The significance of a station's 'busyness' relates – in part – to the number of call-outs firefighters receive during night shifts. While smaller stations might only receive one call out a night, busier stations often experience multiple call-outs at all hours for random incidents. While many of the firefighters mentioned that their daily working lives offered little in the way of thrills, the image of the busier station being the hub of action made station selection an important bargaining tool in the negotiation of late-life masculinities. As discussed in Chapter Four, The Busy Bee and The Youth Squad were seen as active stations. Busy stations were described as 'full of excitement', which is indicative of the thrill seeking typical of hegemonic masculinity (Zuckerman at al. 1990; Connell 2005). Firefighters across all four stations believed that lazy, inactive workers relocate to quiet stations in order to symbolically retire. When asked what type of firefighter is not valued within the service, Francis responded with the following:

> '[Some]one that is lazy and doesn't do anything. You get that, obviously here and probably in outstations. Grumpy [station name] had a few old blokes who were waiting for their time out and they didn't want to do anything and it made the day a bit long.'
>
> (Francis – Firefighter, 5 years experience)

This example mirrors the belief echoed by other firefighters who commented that quiet stations were illegitimate workplaces. While this comment reflects Francis' understanding of the working day, the effects of stigmatisation across stations had broader consequences for the solidarity of the workplace – as will be discussed later in this chapter. Francis' comment shows a striking example of Douglas' (1966) second level of pollution, whereby ritually stigmatised workers are seen as both dangerous and contagious, with the potential to contaminate existing workplace cultures. It is notable that pollution reflects contemporary views of class and power relations, where improper conduct can be conceptualised as a threat to the broader gendered relations within society (Balzer, 1981, p. 852). Symbolic pollution refers to the various processes of devaluation whereby workers become symbolically understood as potentially dangerous (Hughes, 1962, Douglas, 1966). The social regulation of pollution results in the marginalisation, ostracism and devaluation of subordinate and marginalised masculinities (see also Saugeres, 2002, Schilt, 2006). Although it is notable that the level of marginalisation discussed in this thesis differs from other forms of marginalisation, such as the marginalisation of gay masculinities (Taywaditep, 2002, Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, Coles, 2009, Tiemeyer, 2013). Francis likened being lazy and or physically inactive to being old and incapable. As a consequence of the expressive level of pollution, firefighters held the belief that active stations were able to offset potential contagion through increased social pressure and the maintenance of physicality as a form of legitimacy.

Another example of physicality as a form of legitimacy can be seen through Damien's account of working with older firefighters in the service. As Young (2005) explains, being physically active is often associated with men's bodies and masculine spatiality. Additionally, the inability of men to adhere to normative constructions of late-life masculinities made them vulnerable to losing their position within the gender order and thus become physically tainted:

> 'You go to some of the outstations and a lot of the guys become old and lazy because it's a quiet station they're not busy. The guys [here] are really good so you see their enthusiasm and that's why they want to be at that station, and they're active type of people.'
>
> (Damien – Senior Firefighter, 27 years experience)

In contrast to other ways of achieving respectable masculinities, such as achieving senior leadership (Collinson and Hearn, 2014, Hoyt and Murphy, 2016) and drawing on warrior-culture (Zurbriggen, 2010, Callahan, 2016), many of the firefighters, including Damien, believed that preparing meals and conducting equipment checks was a way to demonstrate the achievement of physically active and respectable masculinities in the fire service. While he was aware that he was similar in age to the men he was stigmatising, he believed that his commitment to physical activity, which included daily gym sessions, separated him from those who he believed were lazy firefighters. While the firefighters were generally critical of older workers whose physical capabilities had become challenged over time, Damien's comment, 'they become old and lazy' shows how being old is not necessarily linked to chronological age but is instead linked to the workers' proximity to symbolically polluted stations. Similarly, some physically injured and older workers were confronted with ostracism and hostility when they did not adhere to the hegemony of the workplace, which included working at busy stations and maintaining a muscular physique. Firefighters who were perceived as lacking physical legitimacy were also interpreted as tainting the service through their inability to perform the required bodily practices:

> 'He's expected to do the same job that I do? There is another guy that I work with at [a different station]; he's 33 years in the job. [He's] overweight, smokes, fitness isn't there, he's pretty much a functioning alcoholic. [He] doesn't come to work drunk or anything but he struggles physically.'
>
> (Benson – Senior Firefighter, 9 years experience)

Benson worked at The Outstation, which made his gender negotiations highly visible and particularly vulnerable to criticism due to the stigma attached to his workplace. He distinguished himself from older workers by affirming his own perceived legitimacy as physically active, 'he's expected to do the same job I do?' Benson drew attention to the generational conflict, discussing smoking and drinking behaviours to signal the different practices and priorities of this older worker against the new emphasis on diet, exercise and health from younger generations. This example shows the symbolic and expressive level of pollution (Douglas 1996) in which devalued and delegitimised workers are seen as potentially contagious to the workplace:

> ‘A lot of the blokes will go to an outstation where there is just the four of them and they’ll hibernate for the rest of their career, but I’ve sort of been in [this station] because it’s busy, it’s where the action is and it’s just a bunch of blokes. I think the younger guys keep me motivated and get me down to the gym and things like that.’
>
> (Aaron – Senior Firefighter, 32 years experience)

Invalidating the gendered practices of younger men was also a common strategy amongst older workers who felt as though their own physical legitimacy was threatened due to the generational tensions between the competing forms of hegemony. Aaron, for instance, also mentioned how the fire service culture had changed from drinking alcohol and smoking at work to drinking protein shakes and working out, ‘they’re drinking their protein shakes and they’re all in the gym and it’s all the metrosexual boys’. He positioned himself as separate from the younger ‘metrosexual boys’ who were drinking their protein shakes, but suggested that despite his older age he could still keep up with the younger generation of firefighters. In doing so, Aaron distinguished his practices of masculinity through an emphasis on muscularity and physicality (see Gorely et al., 2003, McCreary et al., 2005, Gattario et al., 2015) by contrasting it to newer models of masculinity, such as metrosexual masculinities (Anderson, 2009). However, he was also careful to position his practice of masculinity as physically active, thus emphasising the legitimacy of his physical performance and his ability to adapt to the newer forms of hegemony in the workplace.

The tensions between the legitimacy of physical performances and newer forms of hegemonic masculinity were evidenced in the generational conflict between some older workers. These workers discussed the perceived erosion of tradition by the younger generation, specifically in relation to a lack of respect for authority and an increase in individualism. It was common for the older generation to comment on the inadequacies of the newer generation, signalling their concerns that younger firefighters lacked an understanding of the tradition and militarism that emphasised respect for rank and the role of group solidarity:

> ‘[A] couple of kids … all of a sudden you have to make mental notes to make sure that they get the information that I’m trying to give them so that they can do their job properly.’
>
> (Geoffrey – Station Officer, 33 years experience)

> ‘I’m totally generalising, but sometimes it’s that Y generation that come in who have been at home and they come into an environment a workplace that is very much team orientated and they go off and do their own things and they get pulled back into line and they don’t like it.’
>
> (Neil – Senior Firefighter/Peer Support Officer, 31 years experience)

The generational conflict between firefighters often meant that older generations would deemphasise physical legitimacy, commenting instead on their ability to lead and mentor younger firefighters, who were commonly described as lacking skill and experience. In doing so, older workers were able to affirm their moral legitimacy through the common archetypical masculine ‘wise old man’ (see Greenfield, 1983, Hart and Brady, 2005), which consequently allowed them to construct their occupational identities around the perceived morality of their skills and experience rather than in the physicality of their bodily performances. The contestation between morality and physicality in the construction of the firefighters’ occupational identity is important to note as it shows a significant shift in the ways in which masculinities have been historically and culturally idealised in this profession (see Chapter One). Indeed, studies of men and masculinities argue that the physically active body is used to reproduce the privilege of masculinity (Connell, 1995, Liepins, 2000, Anderson, 2009, Eman, 2011, Moss, 2011). In this respect, ‘keeping busy’ often equates to the successful management of late-life masculinities whereby the body is used for hard manual labour. ‘Keeping quiet’ however, instead equates to the recreation of stigmatised masculinities that are instead perceived as inactive, passive and lazy (Connell, 1995, Gerschick and Miller, 1997) due to the perceived taint associated with stationary office work.

The generational conflict also shows that two forms of hegemony were practiced in the service, with neither form succeeding in claiming masculine authority over the

other. The existence of these competing forms of hegemony troubles Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity, which argues that the existing hegemonic gender hierarchy does not allow multiple masculinities to dominate at once (see Chapter Two). Older operational firefighters frequently commented on the generational shifts they had witnessed, which included an emphasis on diet, exercise, and health. During lunch at The Busy Bee station, a small group of six firefighters remarked that the firefighters mess would have been engulfed in cigarette smoke if fieldwork had occurred only a decade before, joking that their priorities had shifted from tobacco and alcohol to protein shakes and coffee. While some firefighters jokingly commented on the humour and perceived stupidity of wearing their carcinogenic turnout gear (Personal Protective Equipment) hours after call-outs (see also Manolakes, 2002, O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017), others expressed sadness and anger when reflecting on their asbestos exposure and repeated smoke inhalation. The relational context of generational conflict and competing forms of hegemony detailed in this section give additional support to Demetriou's (2001) claim that hegemonic masculinity does not sufficiently account for multiple expressions of dominance and the hybridity of masculinities.

As discussed in Chapter One, the emphasis on physicality as a prevailing form of legitimacy in the service since the 1900s has reframed what hegemony means in relation to the competing practices of masculinity in Western firefighting, which has emphasised the physicality of the occupation. The shifted emphasis from the morality of the profession (see Cooper, 1986) towards physicality helps explain part of the generational conflict presented in the data. As Aaron commented during his interview, 'in the last 15 years it's all changed, everyone's so fitness conscious.' This shift has also had an impact on the recruitment of women. It is notable that not all men were able to negotiate their late-life masculinities in ways that afforded them different forms of legitimacy, especially when their bodily practices were seen to be inconsistent with the bodily practise of the new fetishised ideal.

One example of late-life masculinity negotiations occurred at The Youth Squad station, where the literal isolation and ostracism of an older worker provided a powerful example of the contemptuous mockery faced by certain workers in this context. Upon entering the station, I was shown a small room where the interviews

would take place later in the evening. A sign hung on the door read, “Phester’s cryogenics laboratory”. During dinner the following visit I asked what the sign meant. The men started to laugh as they explained that it was a running joke about a firefighter who was currently on leave, whom they likened to a character named Phester in *The Addams Family* film, (see Sonnenfeld, 1991). The firefighters discussed their disdain for the firefighter, commenting that he was old, fat and lazy and always wanted the air conditioner on. Frustrated at his perceived laziness, the firefighters decided to stick a sign on his door in retaliation. The decorative Phester light underneath the television in the firefighters mess was also bought by one of the firefighters to make fun of the worker.

The emphasis on physicality often posed specific challenges for older men who developed health issues related to their age who were believed to receive special, ‘individualised’ treatment. While ‘Phester’ was similar in age to many of the participants working at The Busy Bee station, his inability to help with tasks around the station due to the limitations of his body meant that he was literally and symbolically isolated at work.

Indeed, the topic of the ageing workforce in Australia’s metropolitan fire services is cited as a key area of organisational interest due to the concerns over how workers will negotiate these challenges both in the field and in these stations. For instance, the SAMFS (2016, p. 43) annual report commented, ‘many of our long serving personnel have accrued significant leave balances during their careers while others are developing health issues associated with age.’ The issue of age and physicality was similarly addressed at my observed lunches and dinners. While the ages of the participants have been deliberately concealed (see Chapter Three), publicly available data of employee age profiles indicate that within some services, there are more workers between the ages of 55-59 than there are in any other age bracket (SAMFS, 2016, p. 53). The ageing workforce has significant impacts to the ways in which legitimacy is constructed at work. The legitimacy associated with performing shift work and the health issues related to older age within these services mean that workers who voluntarily elect to work at quieter stations in their older age may have their masculinities policed through contemptuous mockery as a consequence.

To summarise this section, I have argued that the body is central in negotiating late-life masculinities. In the context of male-dominated work, bodies are either seen as respectable, valued and worthy, or consequently viewed as toxic, useless and damaging to the collective image of firefighting. The analysis suggests that some older firefighters risk being framed as lazy unless they actively contest this image by staying busy or positioning themselves as more experienced than younger firefighters. The production and reproduction of workplace cultures in this particular metropolitan fire service generated self-defined and perceived categories of workers, each holding different values within the service. The self-defined workers are young and highly physical, or older and wiser while physically active enough to work in the field. The devalued workers, however, were perceived as lazy and toxic. The data suggest that being a valued firefighter rests heavily on two important features: 1) the worker's ability to adhere to the evolving form of hegemonic masculinity that emphasises physicality, and 2) the worker's willingness to comply with desired workplace geographies, working at busy stations with multiple night call-outs to show their collective rejection of stigmatised others.

If a firefighter voluntarily elects to be situated at a stigmatised station, they are seen as lazy. This is not a self-defined category, but a social perception embedded in the idealised image of firefighting. Older firefighters who elected to work at stigmatised stations described this a necessity in relation to their health, arguing that older workers experience greater challenges overcoming disrupted sleep patterns. While voluntary relocation to a stigmatised station has negative consequences for any firefighter, regardless of age, it has particularly damning consequences for older workers due to generational conflict, as was evidenced in The Youth Squad with 'Phester'. The symbolically polluted firefighter in many ways represents the outcomes of those that transgress from the heteronormative, sexualised and idealised image of the young, agile firefighter. This transgression is one that destabilises the firefighters' collective team impression and instead exposes the possibilities of decay and individualism. This directly opposes the idea of sacrifice, which is seen by the participants as being a quintessential quality desired in current workplace cultures (see also Chapters Four and Five).

Additionally, the generational conflict presented in this section challenges the normative gender relations of late-life masculinities. Studies exploring the relationship between gender relations and age suggest that older women are perceived as 'cranky' or 'bitter' (Irni 2009, p. 676), while older men are frequently described favourably due to late-life masculinity expectations (Thompson 2006). Similarly, the findings trouble the links between leadership, masculinities, rank and masculine authority in studies of paramilitary life, which suggest that rank often equates to power, economic privilege and respect in these contexts (Baigent, 2001, King, 2003, Halbe, 2011). However, the historical and cultural shifts in what it means to be masculine in Western firefighting have resulted in generational conflict that leaves some workers vulnerable. While several older firefighters were able to negotiate their masculinities in this context, the findings suggest that older men can be viewed as lazy and toxic if they do not conform to the ideal that favours hard, labour-intensive work.

Furthermore, while studies of fire service cultures suggest that women frequently feel pressured to stay silent about harassment and mistreatment at work (Rosell et al., 1995, p. 344, Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997, p. 330, Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, p. 30, Hulett et al., 2008b, p. 193), the findings suggest that gender discrimination occurs under this focus on the body, which is reinforced every day and not just in relation to women. Indeed, male firefighters also experience varying degrees of mistreatment from other men, especially when their bodies are conceptualised as illegitimate. The tension between certain firefighters and the organisational challenges of having an ageing workforce has broader consequences for gender and power relations operating at these stations, especially when physicality is used to maintain male gendered power relations.

This section shows that being seen as legitimate in the context of this fire service requires the navigation of physicality, which is not always possible for firefighters whose bodies do not socially pass as 'physically active'. The data echo findings on women's experiences in Western fire services, which consistently find that women are largely viewed as polluting the culture (Cheng, 1996, Baigent, 2001, Batty and Burchielli, 2011, Bindel, 2012). Older firefighters would comment that they deliberately chose to work at busier stations to avoid the label of being old or lazy. In

this context, older generations of firefighters are not seen as 'earning' their place in slower stations after providing decades of hard laboured service. Instead, they are stigmatised as taking up space that could be used to recruit younger, more agile firefighters. When firefighters would discuss their discontent and concerns about working into older age, they would quickly affirm their masculinity in relation to more traditionally privileged gendered dispositions, which prioritised leadership, morality and wisdom from experience. In doing so, certain workers were able to mitigate their perceived lack of physical legitimacy and re-negotiate their occupational identity. Though very few firefighters appeared to benefit from the emphasis on physicality, the hegemony of the workplace often meant that the men nonetheless subscribed to this form of legitimacy. Workers faced the option of working tirelessly into their sixties at a busy station to prove their occupational legitimacy, or facing the alternative of being relegated to an outstation, subjected to isolation, harassment and humiliation at work.

Conclusion

This chapter considered the internal boundary management between firefighters in the workplace, analysing how power was negotiated between men and how generational tensions played out during working hours. The emphasis on physicality in the reproduction of workplace cultures was significant at the intersection of power and gender relations within the service. The consequence of this emphasis meant that some workers were confronted with ostracism and hostility when they stopped affirming the rigid expectations of young masculinities operating in the service. The example of "Phester's cryogenics laboratory" shows the literal physical boundaries that were constructed to separate and isolate perceived toxic workers from polluting legitimate firefighters (Douglas, 1966, Tracy and Scott, 2006). However, the symbolic boundaries of stigmatised retirement homes and outstations also show the extent to which physicality is used to draw lines between workers.

The emphasis on physicality was a key finding in this chapter, which shows how firefighters use physically active bodies to police boundaries between men in these workplaces. Notably, maleness and masculinities were largely constructed through physicality in ways that distinctively excluded certain workers. Important distinctions were also made between the significance of morality and physicality in the

firefighters' performances of masculinity, showing that two forms of hegemony coexist that result in a vague notion of masculinity disconnected from the physicality of fighting fires. One form of valued masculinity is the fetishised, young heterosexual ideal celebrated by many of the younger workers, which is reinforced and sustained through interactions between men. The other self-defined category of worker is the wise, old and moral ideal celebrated by many of the older generations. The tensions between these masculinities demonstrate that hegemonic masculinity is contested and not easily maintained. In the context of this service, the competition between physical and moral forms of legitimacy were not universally practiced and the traditional forms of legitimacy had not formally eroded, leaving both forms of hegemony in a state of contestation that consequently forced older workers to work harder physically in order to prove their legitimacy.

The disharmony between operational firefighters and management is notable given the importance of hierarchy within this organisation (see Chapter One). Indeed, the occurrence of problematic workplace behaviours such as bullying suggests that operational firefighters felt little support. Given the centrality of men in leadership and managerial positions in many organisations across the Western industrialised world (Collinson and Hearn, 1994, Connell, 2011), the critical role that men play in the reproduction of problematic workplace cultures is paramount to our continued understanding of masculinist workplace cultures. As Chapter Seven will detail, these findings have consequences for future research, suggesting that awareness of workplace cultures should be key priorities for this service.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis concerns itself with the gendered power relations of thirty-three male firefighters to address the question, 'in what ways do men negotiate masculinities in male-dominated workplace cultures within Australian metropolitan fire services?' The focus of this research is on the interactions that occur across four metropolitan fire services. By analysing the making of masculinities in these workplaces this study demonstrates how the hierarchy of masculinities feeds into workplace cultures that resist femaleness and femininity, which I argue has consequences for male workers who challenge the different dominant masculinities practiced in the service (see Chapter Six). The contributions that this study makes to existing knowledge of male-dominated occupations and studies of gender, work and workplaces relates to the major finding that rather than defining their occupational identity in relation to their ability to fight fires or their experience of physical risk, firefighters consistently conceptualise the ideal firefighter as someone who is able to fit within the culture of this service. These workplace cultures are sustained by subscribing to certain hegemonic masculine dispositions, which embody the perceived public perception of firefighters as 'good guys'.

The findings show that this masculine firefighting identity gets established and reinforced through everyday interactions at the station during downtime, including activities involving recreational exercise and cooking. As the review of research literature has shown, studies of first responder occupations are historically rooted in disaster discourse (Marshall, 2003, Dunn, 2011, Toelken and Shaw, 2012, O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017), which emphasise the nature of physical risk in these occupations. This research literature also addresses the psychological stress that workers endure and the impact that these stresses have on work performance and group solidarity (Marmar et al., 2006, Chopko and Schwartz, 2009, Haugen et al., 2012). Furthermore, studies that do explore gender relations within these occupations have a tendency to analyse gender and power relations through the lens of women's experiences (Grube-Farrell, 2002, Yoder, 2002, Woodfield, 2015), and those that do focus on men pay less attention on the performative significance of interactions

between men. The emphasis on women's embodied experiences in emergency first responder literature is motivated by the awareness that women are marginalised in these settings due to the associations of risk, bravery and heroism attached to these occupations (see Yoder and Berendsen, 2001, Braedley, 2009, Baigent, 2016). I argue that central to the reproduction of male dominance in firefighting is an emphasis on fitting within a masculine workplace culture and upholding the perceived community perception of firefighters as heroic good guys, rather than relating this ideal to the ability to fight fires or encounter physical risks. This widely held occupational identification as good guys shows the hegemonic characteristics of this ideal and how it is reproduced in these workstations, despite the presence of multiple masculinities. While not always directly mentioned within it, this masculine culture inherently marginalises women who will struggle to embody the identity on which the ideal firefighter is constructed in this service. From ethnographic methods, I show the significance of mundane interactions at fire stations in the upholding of this ideal, as well as illuminating the implications for non-operational firefighters and those perceived as lacking masculine authority.

Key Findings

Drawing on the method of short-term ethnography, including fieldwork and interviews with thirty-three men currently employed in an Australian metropolitan fire service, I explore the ways in which men negotiate masculinities within Australian metropolitan fire services. This thesis explores how masculinity plays itself out in these workplaces in contrast to traditional hegemonic masculinity around male-dominated workplaces and paramilitary organisational cultures, in which male strength and other attributes have been used as a way of justifying the exclusion of women (Lander, 2013, Eichler, 2014). Attention is given to the gendered practices of the men and the ways in which their practices of masculinities operate in tension between and within groups of men. Specifically, the study focuses on the occupational identity of firefighters and the consequences of these gendered dispositions on power and gender relations within these stations.

Utilising the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2005) and the method of short-term ethnography (Pink, 2012, Pink and Morgan, 2013), this study

develops an approach for exploring how men negotiate masculinities in male-dominated workplaces, which focuses on the interactions of men *as men* in these workplaces (see also Chapter Two). By drawing on this approach, this study identifies how varying forms of workplace authority are claimed. Emphasising the taken-for-granted and nuanced interactions both within and between men's performances of masculinities in these contexts, this study explores the ways in which hostilities and tensions are managed in these close, intimate workspaces where power and workplace authority have to be consistently proven.

This thesis shows that while it might appear that a specific form of hegemonic masculinity is practiced, there are multiple masculinities that rely on different aspects: physicality and morality. Each form of masculinity includes practices that overlap and celebrate public performances of heterosexual masculinity, which are commonly performed in attempts to acquire workplace authority through the approval of other men. This relational context is significant to our understanding of power relations in male-dominated workplaces as it shows the performative requirement that men practice in order to prove their masculine legitimacy.

The monitoring and policing of masculinities detailed in this thesis indicates that the achievement of legitimacy is not universally understood by the firefighters, requiring that men subscribe to certain hegemonic masculine dispositions even if they do not directly benefit from hegemonic masculinity. The findings detail the ways in which some workers are marginalised in these workplaces. Inconsistent accounts of moral and physical legitimacy illuminate the tensions of masculinities being practised in these settings and thus explain the deliberate attempts to maintain an elusive 'ideal' image of the respectable firefighter. The following section details the key findings that were developed from this research project.

Performing as 'Respectable Working-class Men'

Great effort is exerted to maintain an image of firefighting as a respectable occupation, including repeated statements that firefighters are a bunch of 'good blokes', who are moral and altruistic. Interviews with the firefighters reveal that being 'good' means being community minded, helping other firefighters in the field and generally being a positive role model to the public. For example, Marty expressed

pride in driving the big red truck and seeing people's faces light up upon his arrival. Similarly, Ian reminisced about having people ask to take a photograph with him, likening his experiences to that of a celebrity. The way they affirm their occupational identity is reliant on the public's perception, which they use to construct an ideal image that is monitored by other men. Interestingly, community mindedness holds little significance to the interactions inside these stations, which are informed through other dominant practices rooted in the everyday mundane. Fieldwork observations and group interviews across the four stations show that in relation to the firefighters' private interactions outside the public's view, being 'good' means cooking meals and getting along with men at work. Although they rely on public approval as part of the valued occupational identity, the firefighters also complained about the stupidity of the public, especially in relation to false alarms, described by one firefighter, Darryl, as occurrences which interrupted his daily routine by 'dealing with shit.'

The tension in their views of the public is also evidenced in the men's understanding of their working conditions, which are informed by their previous work experiences in other male-dominated occupations that they believe have less job prestige. The private motivator of escaping traditional 9am to 5pm office-based hours is often at odds with their public persona, which demands they be motivated by a commitment to the community. Additionally, the firefighters' descriptions of their working conditions show how fire service cultures are believed to facilitate an escape from the insecure working conditions in the broader Australian labour market. The short-term ethnographic data in this study shows how the men benefit from the male-dominance of these workplaces, though to varying degrees. Firefighters are able to have flexible work arrangements and extended downtime at work. Downtime is spent playing darts, watching TV and playing team sports. These working conditions, which are defended by the firefighters, offer benefits that are unmatched in other emergency first responder occupations (Davies, 2003, Braedley, 2009). These working conditions are defended in various ways, including a commitment to structure and routine.

This thesis argues that firefighters negotiate power relations in ways that are distinctive from the risk and violence associated with militarised masculinities (Maddern et al., 2007, Baigent, 2001, Coad, 2008, p. 156, O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017). First responder literature and television media often emphasise risk as an

inseparable component of firefighters' everyday lives (see Maddern et al., 2007, Desmond, 2008, Keyte et al., 2013). Additionally, first responder occupations have historically and culturally been entrenched in disaster discourses linked to risk, bravery and traditional Western forms of masculinity (Snyder, 1999, Eichler, 2014). I argue that in the context of this service, the gender order is constructed through the mundane, routine daily structures of the firefighters' working lives. Soft relational skills are particularly privileged as forms of legitimacy between groups of men. Interestingly, the findings simultaneously show that physical risk is largely absent from the firefighters' occupational identity construction. The downplaying of risk is used to defend the firefighters' occupational identity as professional and rational workers. These findings indicate an important potential cultural difference in Australian metropolitan fire services when compared with those of the United States of America (O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017) and the United Kingdom (Baigent, 2001), which construct hegemony through thrill seeking and dangerous behaviours, such as deliberately inhaling smoke during call-outs (Manolakes, 2002).

It is notable that while this study finds that the firefighters deemphasise physical risk in their identity construction, they still rely on the occupation's broader association with danger to reinforce their position as 'good guys' who serve the community. Similarly, they draw on the occupation's broader association with sacrifice to frame themselves as kind and selfless outside of working hours, for example as 'good fathers' and thus the heroes of domestic life (see also Cooper, 1986). Being 'servers' of the community thus extends beyond their interactions with men at work and towards their domestic abilities outside of work, which they use to uphold the ideal heroic image of firefighting while grappling with the inherent contradictions of their occupational identity.

Tensions Between Masculinities

Interviews and fieldwork observations across the four stations show how the participants in this study engage with different forms of humour at work in order to deal with trauma and bond with other men. The most common form of humour is identified as sophomoric due to the adolescent nature of its deployment. While the firefighters are conscious that the use of sophomoric humour would be censored through human resources in other organisations, such as instances of name-calling and

pranks, it is often understood as a normal aspect of the firefighters' everyday working lives. The use of sophomoric humour, which is usually used for dealing with distress (Chapple and Ziebland, 2004, Moran and Roth, 2013), is routinely celebrated as a strategy to help men get over the physiological stress that they face as a consequence of responding to traumatic incidents. Such humour is celebrated as a comedic tool that bonds men. However, the centrality of sophomoric humour is also shown to create a culture of mockery that sometimes generated hostilities within these workplaces (see also Quinn, 2000, Holmes et al., 2001) and contributes to disharmony within the service.

The centrality of sophomoric humour in the firefighters' everyday interactions in this study demonstrates the useful application of contemporary ethnographic methodologies (Smith, 2005, Pink, 2012, Watson, 2012), especially when used in combination with sociologically informed interactional theoretical approaches (Hochschild, 1979, Connell, 1987). For instance, interviews with the firefighters show a level of awareness of the existing tensions between playful and contemptuous mockery. Trevor, for example, discussed the interplay between needing emotional support at work and insulting each other during working hours. Similarly, Neil discussed his discomfort with earlier bastardisation in the service shortly before excusing similar behaviours as methods of bonding. While firefighters reveal some insight into these tensions in the interviews, fieldwork observations and interactions with the men show that the line between playful and more contemptuous forms of mockery are not clearly defined, leaving some firefighters feeling as though they are still learning how to 'play the game', as was the case with Zach and Reese who are both relatively new to the service. Fieldwork observations at these stations illuminate how instances of contemptuous mockery play out, revealing the compounding influence of complicit silence in managing and policing these cultures of mockery.

The findings demonstrate how the intricacies of playing the game reinforce certain hegemonic masculine dispositions that are routinely performed across the four stations in order to negotiate the gender order within the service. Playing the game often relates to knowing the social rules that specify when players can speak up and when they must stay silent. While some firefighters are instructed about these rules by older firefighters who have already claimed authority through their experiences with

these cultures, others believe that they will eventually learn the rules through repeated interactions. The findings demonstrate that this game play is not experienced as a natural interaction between men, as many of the firefighters commented on its obscurity, even in the context of other emergency first responder occupation work. Despite its obscurity, playing the game is largely taken for granted and is accepted as a strategy for eventual social cohesion within the service. The firefighters in this study are consequently left with workplace cultures that regularly allow contemptuous mockery to be excused as sophomoric humour, as was the case with Liam 'The IT Guy'. Furthermore, this thesis argues that acts of contemptuous mockery occur in workplaces that simultaneously support a culture of silence, which is masked as 'playing the game', showing how avenues of bullying are collectively normalised by groups of men.

The use of sophomoric humour is so familiar to the participants that little attention is given to the boundaries that are crossed, which is noticeable in relation to the casual instances of sexual harassment I encountered during fieldwork (Connell, 1995, Cook, 2005a). As this study shows, I was often used as a prop to showcase heterosexual masculinity in certain group interactions, which involve a broader practice of positioning social actors in the gender order (Kanter, 1977b, p. 975). Unwelcome comments about my physical appearance not only framed me as an outsider in these instances, but also simultaneously allowed dominant personalities to claim masculine authority by objectifying the female body (see also Mulvey, 1989). The significance of these findings relates not only to use of sophomoric humour in the othering of women in male-dominated workplaces, but also in the production of silence around experiences of harassment more broadly. The complicit silence of the men who heard these comments does not necessarily indicate an acceptance of these comments or the workplace cultures they produce. However, it does show an acceptance of contemptuous mockery and heterosexual displays.

Opposition to femaleness and femininity is revealed to be a dominant feature of constructing maleness and masculinity in this service, which is not only marked in the use of exaggerated heterosexual humour, but also in discussions about female firefighters. As the research literature in this study shows, the continual emphasis on strength, courage and heroism within emergency first responder occupations (Baigent,

2001, Lander, 2013), coupled with the sexualisation of firefighters in Western industrialised societies (see Coad, 2008) has resulted in an image of firefighting as a distinctively masculine occupation (Baigent, 2016). While the performances of heterosexual masculinities across the four stations demonstrate how the participants share in their reading of women's bodies as observable, it also shows in discussions around female firefighters who are largely framed as polluting the culture through their lack of physical legitimacy (Rosell et al., 1995, Ainsworth et al., 2014). The focus away from the action of fighting fires demonstrates the hegemonic characteristics of these forms of legitimacy as it takes attention away from other skills, such as knowledge of fire behaviour and leadership qualities. The findings also highlight how men who are seen as physically lacking are symbolically positioned as outsiders within the service (see Chapter Six). What this study consequently reveals is the harmful actions that can sometimes accompany the belief that certain gendered bodies and dispositions lack physical legitimacy, such as tampering with the recruitment process to ensure that shorter women fail the physical component.

Hostile Workplace Cultures

This study discovers examples of group solidarity and mateship in the men's everyday working lives, although it also exposes the hostile workplace cultures that can result from inconsistent accounts of what practices of masculinity are valued in male-dominated workplaces. This study demonstrates how morality and physicality are used to construct competing forms of hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, this study explained how these forms of legitimacy are affirmed through interactions between men, which facilitate the imperatives of heterosexual humour and help maintain these workplaces as male-dominated as a consequence.

Firefighters who try to speak up against problematic workplace behaviours are seen as struggling to adjust to the culture or are conceptualised as 'individuals' who do not 'get along' with others. The nuanced differences between stations, including smaller stations that do not share meals, show the performative significance of these daily interactions at work. These differences further demonstrate the need for methodological applications that consider the significance of place in male-dominated workplaces (Pink and Morgan, 2013). The contemptuous mockery of 'Phester' in The Youth Squad station similarly illuminates the significance of place at work and the

ways in which workers can be made out-of-place when they are conceptualised as polluted (see also Douglas, 1966).

The policing of the firefighters' occupational role results in the ostracism and isolation of some workers, both physical and symbolic. Indeed, both forms of hegemonic masculinity operating in the service rely on a complex interplay between physical and moral forms of legitimacy and workplace authority, as well as the embodiment of the perceived public perception of firefighters as heroic 'good guys'. Firefighters have to either position themselves as moral men by being community minded, mentors and good fathers, or conversely position themselves as physically active by being seen as physically engaged at work by attending the gym. An example of this strategy was shown by Aaron, who strategically positioned himself at a busier station while drinking protein shakes and working out with the younger generation of firefighters at work. Indeed, several firefighters noted that their choice of workstation is not random, but carefully selected with this value system and gender order in mind.

The tensions between these masculinities are important to note given that the ageing workforce is a key area of concern for metropolitan fire services in Australia (SAMFS, 2016). These generational tensions often result in the social and organisational displacement of bodies that fail to perform tasks specific to strong and physically agile bodies. The social displacement of certain bodies shows a wider intolerance of diversity within the service. Furthermore, the normalisation of bullying and problematic workplace behaviours is evidenced in the accounts of the firefighters' everyday working experiences, and were often met with little consequence. Indeed, the findings demonstrate how experiences of hazing and harassment are discounted as part of the game play normalised in these workplaces, even by peer support officers. The intersection of the culture of mockery with the game-like interactions enacted in these services indicates a level of disharmony largely taken for granted by the firefighters.

Applying a sociologically informed interactional lens with contemporary ethnographic methodologies, which focus on the taken-for-granted interactions within these stations, helps explain the ways in which power and gender relations intersect in male-dominated workplaces. The insights uncovered relate to the negotiation of

masculinities between and within groups of men. The findings offer new understandings of how male dominance is maintained and how multiple masculinities are negotiated in male-dominated workplaces. The traditional masculine authority offered to managers in male-dominated workplaces is challenged by operational firefighters who attempt to undercut management's authority by privileging the physical legitimacy of truck driving and attending call-outs at work (Collinson and Hearn, 1994, Connell, 2011). Office and administrative work in this context is in some ways devalued in relation to the ideal, which generates a striking sense of disunity throughout the service, where managers are neither trusted nor respected. These findings are at odds with the broader research literature of emergency first responders, which instead argue that rank often equates to greater respectability and positions of power because of the pyramidal hierarchical structure and paramilitary cultures practiced in these services (Firestone and Harris, 1999, Buchanan et al., 2008, Farris et al., 2015, p. 37, Sadler et al., 2017).

What this thesis shows is the struggle to grapple with the inherent contradictions of the occupation and adapt to the broader changes occurring in Western industrialised workplaces. While self-proclaimed progressive firefighters believe they are motivated to adapt their behaviours to accommodate workplace diversity, fieldwork observations suggest that this motivation is not met with practical solutions on how to accommodate workers who might not qualify for the moral and physical forms of legitimacy boasted in the service. For instance, whilst Trevor commented that he would welcome changes to the sex demographic at his workplace, he shared concerns over women's abilities to adjust to the sophomoric humour and potential nudity they might witness in the showers. The construction and maintenance of these hegemonic characteristics as they relate to masculine workplace cultures, results in the indirect othering of women, which shows how femininity is marginalised within these male-dominated work cultures. In many ways, the firefighters provide conflicting and inconsistent accounts of their workplace cultures and their ability to adapt to the changing demographics of the service, which include its ageing demographic.

On the one hand, workers express their dissatisfaction with the lack of accountability from upper-level management in addressing instances of bullying and problematic workplace cultures. Yet, many of the same workers quickly excuse the use of

contemptuous mockery, showing a lack of understanding about how their behaviours and actions impact the broader workplace culture in which they are situated. The inconsistent positions that the firefighters take in relation to the reproduction of workplace cultures suggest that they are grappling with the inherent contradictions of the occupation. Firefighting has highly competitive entry requirements as well as continued prestige amongst male working-class occupations. Yet, it also has physical demands and long shifts, which require that domestic tasks be performed in between sometimes 'stupid' call-outs. The inherent contradictions of the occupation also require that firefighters defend it from the impact of women in the workplace.

Limitations

This research project has several limitations worth considering which relate specifically to the collection of data. The most prominent limitation is the lack of interactional, cross sectional data from other metropolitan fire services. While the original scope of this thesis aimed to provide a national perspective through the exploration of two separate metropolitan fire services, limited access to key informants and limited time in the doctoral thesis prevented this approach. Consequently, the thirty-three male participants interviewed in the current study may have different working experiences than firefighters employed in less affluent or rural areas. Similarly, the sample participants are all white. While the characteristics of the participants sampled are common across Australia's metropolitan fire services (see Chapter One), it is notable that this sample is not representative of individuals who may identify as ethnic, racial, sexual or gender minorities. Additionally, given this service's sensitivity to the word 'gender' in the title of the study, certain lines of questioning were avoided, such as the topic of minority groups in the service. The exclusion of women from the sample is purposeful in order to avoid potential identification and consequent devaluation of professional standing as a consequence. Furthermore, it is notable that while this thesis explores hegemonic masculinity in relation to the West, the data in this study focused on Australian metropolitan fire services that have distinctive characteristics and different conceptualisations of risk between countries. The ability to identify the nuanced differences between these characteristics illuminates the strength of ethnographic research, though cross-cultural studies that look at the relationship between ethnicity and social class would strengthen further research.

A second limitation is the duration and timing of fieldwork. This study could have benefited from longer fieldwork within these stations, advancing our knowledge on the performative and interactional context of the workers' everyday lives over the duration of several months or years. While this study shows the performative significance of interactions at workstations, it does not observe interactions in the fighting of fires. Additionally, timing is also an issue as major fires and the loss of life can affect the workplace culture. As discussed in Chapter Three, this type of prolonged fieldwork was not possible due to the organisation's apprehension and, at times, hostility towards the research project. Similarly, the combination of Christmas and school summer holidays delayed data collection and prevented observations during bushfire seasons where high-risk incidents would be more likely to occur (see Chapter Three). Despite these limitations, the application of short-term ethnography shows the potential of contemporary ethnographic methodologies in emergency first responder research, as experiences of resistance and hostility are used as data. This methodology allows for observations of these workplace cultures in moments of downtime. These limitations subsequently form part of the methodology discussed in Chapter Three and the data presented in Chapter Six.

Finally, this thesis does not explore the effectiveness of policies aimed at increasing gender and racial diversity in this service, though reference is made to policies aimed at addressing women's participation in metropolitan fire services (see Chapter Two). As Chapter Three discussed, the Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer believed that studying gender relations in the service would lead to potential legal ramifications in light of sexual harassment claims from women working in Australian metropolitan fire services (Allison, 2014). As a result, the performative significance of interactions in the workplace and the maintenance of workplace cultures are prioritised over the hierarchy of the fire service and policy implementation.

Future Research

A cross-cultural study of fire services that looks at the intersection of ethnicity and social class is needed. While this research project purposefully excludes the standpoints of women firefighters, future research should explore the broader gender and power relations operating across different services. Furthermore, this thesis did

not allow for an exploration into the interconnections between race, gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality. Given the cultural dimensions of whiteness, the intergenerational recruitment of firefighters and the emphasis on heterosexual masculinities in these workplaces, these standpoints could further strengthen future policy implementations and build on the insights provided in this study. This would be best achieved through an exploration of several metropolitan services in order to mitigate the potential identification of women due to their minority status in these services (see Chapter One). It is evident that cross-national findings on the interactional influences on workplace cultures would significantly advance our knowledge of the value systems operating more broadly in Australia. Further, the contradictions and tensions in the men's interviews and daily interactions with other men show the need for greater qualitative emphasis on the formation of gender hierarchies through an interactional theoretical lens.

Future research could also examine the interactions that occur between firefighters during call-outs, such as road vehicle accidents and major fires. It is notable, however, that the methodological implications for this approach could present multiple ethical challenges to the service, the researcher and the general public. Nevertheless, exploring how workers interact while fighting fires may add further depth to the ways firefighters conceive of their occupational role, showing how the gender order plays out during high-risk incidents outside these workstations.

Research that examines policy implementation could also build on the findings presented in this study, which show how firefighters conceive of their occupational role in relation to interpersonal characteristics rather than the ability to fight fires. Such an approach could consider how various policies and support programs are understood within the culture of various male-dominated workplaces. The findings presented in this study for instance show that peer support programs may be insufficient if those chosen to endorse these programs are grappling with the inherent contradictions of their occupational identity.

In closing, this study argues that firefighters conceive of their occupational role by subscribing to certain hegemonic masculine dispositions in an attempt to maintain the perceived public perception of firefighters as heroic 'good guys'. The findings show

how this occupational role is maintained through workplace performances that are policed and managed between and within groups of men during their downtime through recreational exercise and cooking duties. These duties demonstrate the performative significance of interactions in these stations and the ways in which they actively reinforce the masculine authority of physical activity and community mindedness. I argue that men negotiate their masculinities through complex interpersonal interactions within their workstations and maintain these workplaces as male-dominated by romanticising an illusive idealised occupational identity of which few qualify. The hegemonic masculine dispositions celebrated in this service produce masculine work cultures that indirectly other women through language and performance without directly stating them as other.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: NINETEENTH CENTURY PAINTINGS



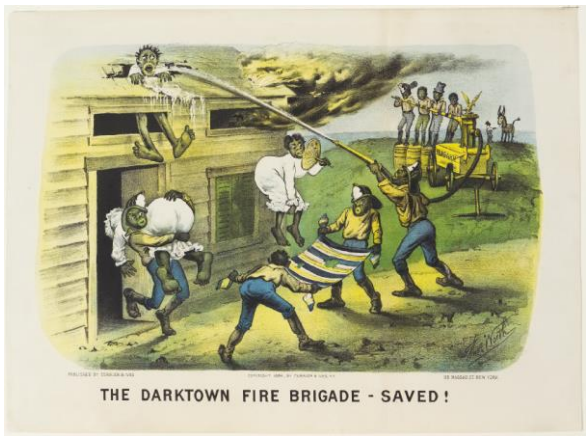
‘The Rescue’ (Millais 1855)



‘American Firefighter: Prompt to the Rescue’ (Currier and Ives 1858)



‘Saved’ (Vigor 1890)



‘Darktown Fire Brigade’ (Currier and Ives 1891)

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Title of the Project:

"Taking the Heat: Gender and Social Identity in Australian Fire Services"

Researchers:

This project is being undertaken by a PhD (Sociology) Candidate at the University of South Australia in Adelaide. Full contact details of the student and supervisors are listed below.

About the Study:

This study is part of the project entitled 'Taking the Heat: Gender and Social Identity in Australian Fire Services'. This project will investigate how firefighters develop their social identity through their work. The University of South Australia, School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy, support this project.

Invitation to participate:

You are invited to participate in observational fieldwork with a PhD candidate who will observe you in your professional capacity over a period of 1-2 weeks during your working hours at your work site (station). The observational fieldwork will involve the researcher writing notes on your daily routines and interactions. You are also invited to complete a face-to-face interview with the PhD candidate who will ask you a few questions about your experiences as a firefighter and ask questions relating to your professional capacity. The interview should take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour.

The interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder to help with looking at the results. Similarly, detailed field notes will be recorded during observational fieldwork. The interviews and field notes will be coded, transcribed (typed-up) and stored on the password-protected University of South Australia U-drive for 7 years at the Magill Campus, Centre for Work and Life, Building A2 via Lorne Avenue. The information will be stored on a password-protected computer as coded audiotapes and transcriptions. All information will be coded to ensure that neither you nor your

station will be identified. Once the retention time has lapsed the coded electronically stored data will be destroyed.

Benefits:

While this study may not provide direct benefits to you as a participant, we hope that the information we gather from this study will provide information in the following ways:

- Allow you to talk about your experiences of being a firefighter
- Improve the understanding of the workplace cultures inside Australian fire services.
- Provide a better understanding for how firefighters manage their time around their work.

Confidentiality:

Your identity and the location of your worksite (station) will be re-identified (coded) to remove any identifying information of your identity and the location of your worksite. All records containing personal information will remain confidential and no information that could lead to identification of any individual will be released, unless required by law. The researcher anticipates few risks from your involvement in this study.

Withdrawal:

Participation is voluntary. You may answer ‘no comment’ or refuse to answer any questions and you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time without effect or consequences. If you would like to participate in this study a consent form accompanying this information sheet will be given to you. A summary report of the findings will be available those who request them on the completion of this research project. If you agree to participate please read and sign the form.

Complaints:

The University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this study. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee:

Vicki Allen

Human Ethics Compliance Officer
University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee University of South Australia
Tel: (08) 8302 3118
Fax: (08) 8302 3921
Email: Vicki.Allen@unisa.edu.au

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involve

APPENDIX C: RANK AND POSITION DESCRIPTION

	Senior Firefighter	**Station Officer**	**Commander**
General duties	- Fulfil all roles and functions of a Firefighter - Perform higher duties (subject to qualifications) - Contribute to fire awareness training - Assist with investigations into the cause of fires - Identify the need for critical incident debrief	- Manage post-incident analysis - Develop a station management plan - Develop training plan for crew - Undertake administrative tasks - Respond to public enquiries - Promote a harmonious and safe workplace - Monitor staff wellbeing	- Manage department - Ensure compliance against project plans - Oversee station maintenance - Provide mentorship/leadership - Resolve conflict - Prepare and implement review of capital and recurrent budgets - Undertake Professional Development as required
Personal abilities and skills	- Clear verbal and written expression - Computer literacy - Interpersonal, negotiation and facilitation skills - Ability to make effective decisions - Ability to lead, manage and motivate staff	- Ethical - Honest - Maintain confidentiality - Self-disciplined - Assertive - Good time management - Commitment to equal opportunity and occupational health, safety and welfare	- Effective planning - Working in teams - Solving problems - Communication - Applying mathematical principles - Decisiveness and assertiveness - Resistance to stress - Leadership

Experience and knowledge	- Knowledge of front line management techniques - Ability to work as an effective member of a team - Sound interpersonal skills - Ability to occasionally supervise a small team - Experience at a range of operational incidents	- Full time Senior Firefighter - Completion of training and development - Operational experiences including experience in a broad range of operational incidents - Experience assisting with budgets - Understanding of industrial relations	- Experience across a broad range of operational roles and incidents - Experience managing workplace information and projects - Knowledge of and experience assisting with the preparation of budgets
Education	- First Class Firefighter Level 3	- Tertiary studies in Management or Business Administration - Training in communications, media liaison or public speaking	- Level 2 Station Officer - Completion of training and development - Tertiary studies in Management or Business Administration - Associate Diploma of Applied Science - Accredited Assessor - Training in communications, media liaison or public speaking

Staff supervised	- Firefighters - Retained Firefighters	- Firefighter - Senior Firefighter	- Station Officer
Supervisor	- Station Officer	- Command District Officer	- Commander Metropolitan Operations