

## **ABSTRACT**

This project has been undertaken to investigate the male dominated 'macho' culture of the British Fire Service and its impact upon the under-representation of women in the uniformed service. The project is supported by a review of current literature relating to sociology, culture, organizational theory, and equal opportunities issues. In addition, a study of the values and beliefs of the work-force involving a county fire service provided valuable real life evidence which was obtained by questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The author, who is an experienced practitioner within the organization, has drawn upon his twenty-three years experience of service as both a fire fighter and training officer. To provide a framework for investigation the project has been set against a recently published Home Office thematic review into equality and fairness in the fire service.

The study found that the Service remains institutionally sexist although the political will for change appeared intense. Inconsistent equal opportunities policy and inadequate training have led to confusion and anger at the radical actions now being taken in the recruitment of women. A deep suspicion amongst personnel was evident; many believed that a hidden agenda exists aimed at enforcing far-reaching changes in working conditions. It was concluded that a reappraisal of the Services equal opportunities policy and training was required. Furthermore, the perceived hidden agenda on the part of the Home Office was found to be fuelling a situation that is already resistant to change and proving unhelpful in changing the culture of the Service. The study has produced a number of recommendations aimed at producing a gender balanced working environment.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is evident, even to those outside of the organization, that the British Fire Service is dominated by white males. This unacceptable situation has been recognised at the highest level. Indeed, in September 1999 the HM Fire Service Inspectorate published a thematic review into Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service. Its terms of reference were to examine the extent to which all elements of the concept of equality and fairness at work are being embraced by the fire service. The reviews major findings focused upon leadership and culture.

The introduction to the review notes that *'Despite the efforts of many in the Fire Service, on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1998, there were only 513 people from black and ethnic minorities and 436 women employed in a service with a wholetime uniformed (excluding control room staff) strength of 33,597 and a retained Service [part-time] of 14,483.'* (HMI Thematic Review 1999:3). The authors of the review acknowledged, and indeed, were impressed by the *'overall dedication of the workforce...towards supporting the Service and providing for the needs of the public in any emergency....irrespective of the class, race, sex or creed of those who depended upon them.'* (HMI Thematic Review 1999:55). However, and by contrast, they noted that the objective of many of the workforce appeared to perpetuate a status quo, manifesting in an avoidance of uncertainty and denial of challenge, resulting in a significant block to change. Indeed, culture and leadership were singled out as the most important areas for change. The authors state *'We are strongly of the opinion that substantial change is necessary in the management and culture of the Service to achieve an environment whereby equality and fairness can be integrated into its whole operation and organisation...it is by changing the culture that the most significant improvements will be gained.'* (HMI Thematic Review 1999:55, 64).

The authors conclude that there is a need for major change in the culture of a Service that is so strongly opposed to women being able to join the uniformed section. They acknowledge that even if the Fire Service was able to become more welcoming to women it is unlikely that very large numbers would wish to join or would be able to meet the physical requirements of the job. However, they do believe that there are significant numbers of women who might wish to join and that the only limiting factor is *'the lack of willingness of male dominated 'macho' culture to accept this self-evident fact.'* (HMI Thematic Review 1999:66).

To fully appreciate the Fire Service culture, it is helpful to consider its origins. In the earliest days of professional fire fighting it was generally believed that ex-seaman made the best candidates. Indeed, *'until 1899 recruitment was entirely restricted to seamen...[as they were]...supposedly inured to ridged discipline and devotion to duty, well versed in the use of knots and splices in ropes, and long accustomed to going aloft, to the loneliness of serving a long watch and to the need for 'all hands on deck' at critical moments.'* (Bailey 1992:4). The Naval influence within the Service went well beyond the point of recruitment. The language, lore and social rules of the job, indeed the entire work culture, was based around Naval tradition and discipline. Even today naval terms such as 'crew' 'watch' and 'mess' remain in frequent use. Habits of obedience and sentiments of loyalty to the service are instilled by a hierarchy based

on military ideals. The long hours of duty, the shared workspace and male camaraderie, together with the reliance on teamwork demanded by a dangerous job, all nurtured a strong group dynamic which has been sustained right up to the present day. It is within these close knit highly cohesive work groups or 'watches' that loyalties are formed. The watch system of a closely knit team, constantly working together, leads to the sharing of a significant number of important experiences and these common experiences over time have evolved a shared view of the world around the Service. Culture in this sense is a learned product of group experience, which is particularly strong, due to the combination of group ownership, tradition and history.

The watch shift system was designed to facilitate twenty-four hour emergency cover and to enable the workforce to endure a longer working week than other occupations. The long night shift (fifteen hours) does not lend itself to duties other than fire fighting (e.g. fire prevention visits, training and servicing of equipment) and has resulted in a considerable amount of 'stand-down' time (nine hours) from routine work, where the watch would be available for emergency calls only. Traditionally, this time has been used for social and sporting activities. This has resulted in 'living together' being as important as working together. The Home Office review takes a critical view of the working pattern '*...the closed watch work regime is the prime contributor to the need to 'fit in' to the family culture...There is a need to break down this exclusive culture and to replace it with a team approach.*' (HMI Thematic Review 1999:64).

The review further suggests that the long hours may disadvantage women or men with families, which may produce unjustifiable indirect discrimination and recommends that new working practices are devised which avoid the need for long night shifts. '*Such arrangements could reduce the necessity for stand down time and enable a break in the long-standing 'family tradition' of watches...We envisage that a move to a non-watch orientated work practice could be the basis of a change in the existing culture of the service, thus contributing to an environment where equality and fairness can flourish.*' (HMI Thematic Review 1999:65).

The working hypothesis for this project is that the male dominated 'macho' culture of the Fire Service renders the organization institutionally sexist and resistant to change. The study aims to investigate this culture and attempt to reveal attitudes towards changing the working environment to make the Service more attractive to women as a career. It will attempt to explore the messy and complex world of people's thoughts and beliefs and the powerful factors that influence them. In order to reveal and examine the attitudes and opinions of the workforce, data will be collected by means of a questionnaire and semi-structured interview involving a County Fire Service. This will be supported by a review of current literature and draw upon the authors own experience from within the Service.

The HMI Thematic Review will form part of the framework of this research. Indeed this report has, and will continue to influence the future of Fire Service culture for many years to come. For example: following the review the Home Secretary announced recruitment targets (Fire Service Circular 1/2000) for women in the

Service, which demonstrates the political will to drive change. It will be shown that this rapid drive for change is seen by many within the Service as a threat to their working conditions, to their safety and to the perceived high standards that the Service has drawn from its long history. Indeed there may also be a body of opinion that believes equal opportunities issues are being seized upon by politicians as an opportunity to enforce far-reaching changes in working conditions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The inclusion of a brief history of the Fire Service in the introduction to this project was intended not just to set the scene, but also to establish the importance of history in relation to culture. While Schein (1985) offers some common meanings of culture, an apt one for the Fire Service being *'The rules of the game for getting along in the organization, "the ropes" that a newcomer must learn in order to become an accepted member,'* he argues that the true term for culture should be reserved for the *'deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization.'* (Schein 1985:6). These assumptions and beliefs are formed over time as a result of a significant number of shared experiences and have worked for long enough to be taken for granted. Culture in this sense *'is a learned product of group experience [and is] found only where there is a definable group with significant history.'* (Schein 1985:7).

**The traditions, public expectations and heroic nature of the job all have helped form and evolve the basic assumptions and beliefs of the all-male workforce. Becker *et al* (1961) suggest that groups facing common problems and situational pressures tend to develop certain common perspectives or *'modes of thought and action'* thus creating a peer group pressure on the individuals orientation to work (Quoted in Watson 1987:109). Here the concept of work orientation refers to the *'meaning attached by individuals to their work which predisposes them to both think and act in particular ways with regard to that work.'* (Watson 1987:86).**

The history and traditions are also reflected in the structure of the organization, which is distinctly hierarchical. There is a clear rank structure (Appendix A) with defined lines of communication and areas of responsibility designated to each rank. Indeed, the fire Service fits a mechanistic, bureaucratic model, which places a strong emphasis on the leader. Bush (1995) states that hierarchies *'stress vertical relationships within organizations...The organizational structure is emphasised with particular reference to the authority and responsibility of the managers at the apex of the structure...objectives are set at the institutional level...with decision making as a 'top down' process.'* (Bush 1995:39,143,144).

Furthermore, Bush suggests that a close relationship exists between structure and culture, he maintains, *'Structure may be regarded as the physical manifestation of the culture of an organization. The values and beliefs of the institution are expressed in the pattern of roles and role relationships.'* (Bush 1995:136). Handy describes a culture that not only fits with that outlined by Bush, but one which matches that of the Fire Service: *'The role organisation rests its strength in its pillars...The work of the*

*pillars...is controlled by...Rules for roles...Rules for communications...Rules for settlement of disputes.'* (Handy 1983:185).

Bush and Handy have illustrated that structure and culture have a close relationship. Schein (1997) argues that a similar relationship exists between culture and leadership, *'Once cultures exist they determine the criteria for leadership.'* (Schein 1997:15). It is not surprising then, that the HMI review singled out leadership as a focus for changing the culture of the Service. Indeed, they questioned the single tier recruitment into the Service where all entrants start as a fire fighter and have to work their way through the ranks to gain a management position; this they suggest can *'maintain and encourage the existing culture and conventions.'* (HMI Thematic Review 1999:71). The authors conclude *'all of the findings of the thematic review have emphasised a very real need for a change in the style of leadership and the processes of management.'* (HMI Thematic Review 1999:60).

However, it would be wrong to suggest that cultural influences can be derived from a single aspect from within an organization. Morgan (1997) states *'The influence of a host culture is rarely uniform.'* He believes that as individuals in a culture poses different personalities so do groups within an organization. *'Organizations are mini-societies that have their own distinctive patterns of culture and subculture.'* (Morgan 1997:129).

The mechanistic, hierarchical nature of the Fire Service presents a management / shop-floor divide, which in itself has potential for conflict. Morgan suggests *'...when groups with very different occupational attitudes are placed in a relation of dependence, organizations can become plagued by a kind of subcultural warfare.'* (Morgan 1997:137). Dawson tends to agree: *'problems of a functional structure are that it can lead to...an unhealthy attempt to build and defend specialist empires and above all, the construction of barricades...'* (Dawson 1996:114). From the perspective of the fire fighter (shop floor) the barricades manifest in the form of organized anarchy, which bear some resemblance to that described by Paul Willis (1977).

Willis' study of working class boys noted how in the classroom situation, *'the lads'* who were destined for the shop floor, developed informal groupings with a counter culture of complex chauvinism, toughness and machismo. He drew parallels with this behaviour to that of their fathers control strategies at work. He noted too, that the group held a common attitude towards conformists who they regarded as *'earoles and grassers'* and behaved towards them with intimidating behaviour in the form of *'pisstakes, kiddings and windups.'* The 'grass roots' culture of Willis' lads appears evident within watch life; an example of which is revealed in critical incident one (Appendix B).

Watson sees this behaviour as contributing to *'group solidarity'* he suggests *'The strong emphasis on masculinity in many workgroup subcultures may help provide male employees with the kind of 'counter culture of dignity' needed by males whose potency is symbolically threatened by their being 'under the thumb'...of employer and*

*supervisor.*' (Watson 1987:228). [See also Weick (1976) Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems].

It seems plausible that the macho posturing of the shop floor could be a direct reaction to the mechanistic hierarchy of the organization. Perhaps in recognition of this the HMI review recommends '*...a fundamental reappraisal of the way that the service is led, both constitutionally and through its managerial and command processes.*' (HMI Thematic Review 1999:56).

A contrasting approach to male macho management is revealed by Roddick (undated) who states '*I run my company according to feminine principles – principles of caring, making intuitive decisions, not getting hung up on hierarchy...*' (Quoted in Morgan 1997:136).

Morgan believes '*From a cultural standpoint, organizations shaped around 'female' values are more likely to balance the rational-analytic mode with values that emphasize more empathic, intuitive, organic forms of behaviour...modern environments require managerial competencies that have more in common with the female archetype than the male.*' (Morgan 1997:136).

Thus far, culture has been considered from a micro perspective: from within the organization. It would be remiss not to consider the effects of society as a whole and therefore a macro view must be taken.

**Western society places great emphasis on gender roles. These are depicted by 'codes which for the most part evolved at some distant point in the culture's history. These are renewed and from time to time modified with each generation, and powerfully influence how we think and function socially and personally...gendered terms...signify social...behavioural and experiential difference.'** (Buchbinder 1994:3).

Breakwell (1986) describes a situation where a person holds a job traditionally or stereotypically associated with a member of the opposite sex. Apologetically, because of its normative overtones, she calls this sexually atypical employment. Men as nurses, women as engineers or indeed women as fire fighters. She suggests that these '*All have roles which are inappropriate according to the sexual division of labour dominant in the western industrialized world.*' (Breakwell 1986:64).

Within our society women are restricted in the range of jobs available and are often restricted in terms of promotion. Marxist feminists have argued that '*women's disadvantaged position in paid work meets the 'needs' of the capitalist economic system.*' (Pilcher 1999:49). This, they argue, might occur for example by increasing the flexibility of the labour force whereby women take poorly paid part time jobs as they fit around their family commitments. This 'dual labour market theory' (Roberts,

Finnegan and Gallie, 1985) suggests that employers benefit as they have a reserve and fluid labour force *'which can be set to work or laid off according to economic exigencies.'* (Breakwell 1986:67). Other examples are 'de-skilling' of the labour force or by strategically controlling the labour force by *'diluting its homogeneity and thereby fragmenting its class consciousness and collective power.'* (Pilcher 1999:49).

Radical feminists place the blame for the exploitation of women directly with men. They see society as 'patriarchal' – dominated and ruled by men. Pilcher (citing the work of Walby 1990) argues that the forms of paid work performed by women are a result of *'long-term conflicts between capitalist employers and men as a dominant group.'* (Pilcher 1999:50). While Millett (1971) asserts that the strength of political power that men hold over women amounts to a *'fundamental political division in society.'* (Quoted in Barrett 1988:11).

**Indeed there is much evidence to suggest that strong socialization pressures exist within our culture, based on patriarchy, that guide members of each gender into particular roles. Martin and Roberts (1984) study of over five and a half thousand women suggested that *'girls tend to base their educational training and job decisions on the assumption that they will be wives and mothers.'* (Quoted in Watson 1987:117). This is supported by Breakwell who suggests *'Children learn what behaviours, emotions and beliefs are acceptable in each sex. They learn what jobs, at home and at work, are expected of each sex.'* (Breakwell 1986:65).**

Whatever the origins of patriarchy, our society has evolved clear cultural norms, which impact on our socialization, education and careers and strongly influence people's attitudes and beliefs. Buchbinder (1994) suggests that within masculinity and femininity *'there are norms, standards or models to which men and women in the culture are expected to conform if they wish to interact appropriately and acceptably with others.'* Furthermore, he alludes to the pressure that society places upon individuals to yield: *'...norms are often persuasively supervised, patrolled and enforced... [with]...consequent encouragements and strictures.'* (Buchbinder 1994:4).

**Maier (1993) states *'men...by virtue of their status as the gatekeepers and power brokers in organisations, possess, as a group, inherent structural advantages over women...for women, as a group, to break the glass ceiling depends on the extent to which men are prepared to work with them as equals, offering them the same types of informal as well as formal supports that men have themselves historically relied on for advancement...men have to assume an active role as equal teammates and allies of women, which requires identifying compelling reasons to do so.'* (Quoted in Northouse 1997:217).**

**Unfortunately, the power enjoyed by men within western culture cannot be easily *'surrendered, given away or abdicated. Aside from the seductions and advantages of such power, the censure which the individual man would incur from other men often acts as a sufficient deterrent to any real surrender of power. For a man publicly and unmistakably to give up his claim to masculine power and***

*privilege may be to invite not only the disapproval of other men but also their violence.’ (Buchbinder 1994:18).*

**It is convincingly argued that the cultural models of masculinity and of femininity have been shaped by appropriate social behaviour, based on patriarchy and is therefore male dominated. Appropriate feminine behaviour has traditionally been set by men and has served to reinforce and perpetuate the dominant relationship of men over women. Seidler suggests ‘...dominant notions of masculinity are intimately tied up with the power we traditionally exercise in relation to women. There is a relationship of superiority and inferiority...men’s power has been normalized as legitimate, as somehow working in the interests of all, and so has been deemed rational.’ (Seidler 1997:16).**

Buchbinder suggests that when women rebel against these conditions *‘they question both the patriarchal structure which imposes them and the men who mediate that structure in real social terms.’* (Buchbinder 1994:84). In essence they become an antagonist and are seen as the enemy. Pilcher (1990) appears to support this view: *‘Evidence suggests [Walby 1990; Houghton-James 1995] that men’s sexual harassment of women may be particularly blatantly sustained and vicious when women are working in jobs non-traditional for their gender; in other words when they have ‘invaded’ men’s jobs.’* (Pilcher 1999:50). Men too, are placed in a dilemma, for if they desire to be acknowledged as ‘masculine’ they must accept the *‘terms of patriarchal masculinity and the supervision by men in general...Failure to comply with the former necessarily invokes the latter.’* (Buchbinder 1994:84).

The exploitation of women is well documented and authors abound from the many factions of feminism. However, what is not so well discussed are the pressures placed upon men by the patriarchal culture to behave and perform in a masculine manner. In drawing this discussion back to the fire service the author directs the reader to critical incident two, an account of a visit to a fire station he made recently (Appendix B).

**Tolson says ‘In his social life a man will cultivate, and even fabricate, his masculine presence.’ (Tolson 1977:80). This is in clear response to the pressures placed upon him, by our culture, to demonstrate his masculinity. ‘Masculinity is something that we have to be constantly ready to prove. It isn’t anything we can feel easy or relaxed with because we have to be constantly vigilant and on guard to prove that, for instance, we are not soft or sissies.’ (Seidler 1997:39).**

The authors account (Appendix B) demonstrates not only the power of culture but also the need to fit in. Perhaps the all male working environment and the ‘heroic’ expectations of being a fire fighter intensifies this pressure. Seidler suggests that men inherit a fear of intimacy as this threatens male identities *‘because to have emotions or to need others is a sign of weakness and femininity’*. He believes that men learn to fear vulnerability, particularly in the company of other men and that they *‘learn to keep up appearances and to put on a good show so that others might not suspect what [they] are feeling. [Men] do not want to be put down in the eyes of others, for this*

*threatens male identities, which are affirmed within the public realm of work.'* (Seidler 1997:33).

It could be argued that the need to fit in is likely to place any under-represented group in a vulnerable position and that the organization, in terms of its leadership, must make provision for, and promote fairness at work. Indeed, the clarity of an organizations equal opportunities policy and effectiveness of its training can affect the attitudes of those within the culture. The HMI review found that within the Fire Service *'the majority of watch members saw the subject as irrelevant as well as unnecessary...there was considerable unease about the way equality and fairness training was delivered and what was seen as a heavy handed approach, which simply demanded compliance.'* (HMI Thematic Review 1999:44 45).

Jewson and Mason (1986) believe that there are *'conceptual confusions characteristic of the practice of equal opportunities policies at the workplace [and that the] confused and contradictory deployment of different conceptions of equal opportunities policies can constitute an important aspect of the struggle for control of resources, deference and legitimacy at work.'* (Jewson and Mason 1986:307).

Jewson and Mason proffer two conceptions of equal opportunities, one liberal and the other radical. The former is based upon fair procedures, is bureaucratic, supports positive action, and perceives justice. The latter supports the fair distribution of rewards, is politically driven, advocates positive discrimination, and consciousness raising. In their research they repeatedly observed situations where policy makers were oblivious to the fact that groups and individuals *'drew unintended, and often hostile, conclusions and implications from their statements and utterances.'* (Authors emphasis). (Jewson and Mason 1986:308).

It is their contention that whilst the two approaches, in theory, are distinct; in practice *'confusion...holds sway...[in the long term leading to]...disappointment with, and distrust of, equal opportunities policies.'* (Jewson and Mason 1986:308, 309).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

From the outset of any investigation it is important to consider the method of research. The researcher is faced with a dichotomy of approaches proffered by, on the one hand, proponents of scientific methods (positivists), and on the other, the humanistic ideals of the anti-positivists. Notions of objectivity and subjectivity, validity and reliability, and arguments between the value of quantitative and qualitative data prevail.

Cohen and Manion describe the anti-positivists dissatisfaction with the scientific approach. They say the target of the anti-positivist attack has been '*science's mechanistic and reductionist view of nature which, by definition, excludes notions of choice, freedom, individuality, and moral responsibility.*' (Cohen and Manion 1994:22).

Conversely, some positivists have been critical of the qualitative approach, they suggest '*...advocates of an anti-positivist stance have gone too far in abandoning scientific procedures of verification...*' (Cohen and Manion 1994:34). Furthermore, Bernstein (1974) is critical of the interpretative methodologies, he says '*Are there not dangers? Subjective reports are sometimes incomplete and they are sometimes misleading.*' (Quoted in Cohen and Manion 1994:35).

This project has been undertaken in the real world, the world of social science. Indeed, '*One of the challenges about carrying out investigations in the real world is in seeking to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally messy situation.*' (Robson 1993:3). According to Robson, real life refers '*to the actual context where whatever we are interested in occurs.*' (Robson 1993:2). This is as opposed to the controlled scientific approach of the laboratory.

It would seem then that an ethnographic approach might be well suited to this study, McNeill suggests the purpose of such research describes '*the culture and life style of the group of people being studied in a way that is as faithful as possible to the way they see it themselves...to tell it like it is.*' (McNeill 1990:64, 65). The fact that the author is in embroiled in the study by the very nature of being a serving officer within the Fire Service is of consequence. This indeed may provide an important qualitative aspect, as Sapsford and Evans point out '*the ethnographer is more likely...to become more aware of important factors which did not form part of his [sic] perceived notion of the situation.*' (Quoted in Bell *et al*, 1984:263).

A major disadvantage of ethnographic research is that it can be '*laborious and time consuming.*' (Bell *et al*, 1984:30). Considering the size and time restraints of this project the use of an ethnographic method would have to be controlled and selective. A different approach for consideration would be a survey questionnaire. '*Typically, surveys gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions.*' (Cohen and Manion 1994:83). As this project focuses on existing culture it would seem that this method would be a fitting starting point for the research by providing a 'barometer' of current opinion amongst the target group.

It appears that a balanced approach would be sensible, McNeill points out '*A survey can collect data only about those things which are included in the questionnaire, and*

*this may omit crucial points. An ethnographic study, on the other hand, can never be repeated in exactly the same way, so there is no way of checking its findings.'* (McNeill 1990:122).

Merton and Kendall support this view, they say '*Social scientists have come to abandon the spurious choice between qualitative and quantitative data: they are concerned rather with that combination of both methods which makes use of the most valuable features of each.*' (Merton and Kendall 1946 quoted in Cohen and Manion 1994:40).

The author therefore concluded that the current study required a careful mixture of research instruments, which attempt to overcome the constraints and limitations of the investigation. Research instruments should not only fit within these constraints, but also should be as unobtrusive as possible, gather sufficient data and provide opportunity for triangulation. Therefore, in the first instance, the author selected a questionnaire in the form of a blockage instrument consisting of forty non-consecutive, apparently random, mirrored statements, that will reveal either a positive or negative view of attitudes towards women within the organization. This instrument was originally developed by Woodcock and Francis (1982) to quickly identify blockages in organizations, and later adapted by Evans (1990) to identify effective and ineffective operations and activities. The blockage instrument lends itself well to this investigation and has been further adapted by the author (Blockage instrument statement pairings and Questionnaire Appendix C) to investigate attitudes under four areas:

- Culture
- Positive action/equal opportunities
- Physical abilities/health & safety
- Special facilities

The County Fire Service, selected for investigation, consisted of approximately nine hundred and fifty, full time, uniformed staff. Clearly it was not possible to include everyone in the survey, indeed '*Empirically supported generalisations are usually based on partial information...it is often impossible, impractical, or extremely expensive to collect data from all the potential units.*' (Nachmias and Nachmias 1996:179). Subsequently, it was decided to select forty respondents to take part in the blockage instrument.

The selection of respondents required careful consideration. It is significant that the lower ranks constitute the majority of staff within the organization and that, in general, these ranks perform operational fire fighting duties, working within a watch shift system. It was felt that in the main, the roots of fire service culture might be found within this group and therefore the rank of fire fighter formed fifty-two per cent of the respondents. This not to suggest that officer ranks do not contribute to the organizational culture, but merely they are fewer in number. This 'purposive' form of sampling enables the researcher to handpick the cases to be sampled '*on the basis of judgement of their typicality.*' (Nachmias and Nachmias 1996:103). By this method a sample which was satisfactory to the specific needs of the study was selected. (See demographic by rank Appendix E).

In addition to rank, the data collected under the four survey areas was capable of being interrogated by duty system (shift, non operational, flexi), length of service and age of the respondent. (Appendix E).

A problem with questionnaires is the temptation to take responses at face value. Furthermore, when these responses are converted into statistics, the human element is increasingly diluted. Therefore, in order to enrich the findings of the blockage instrument and provide a more qualitative perspective a second research instrument, the interview, was considered necessary. Bell suggests that '*a skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings.*' (Bell 1993:91). The interview, as opposed to the questionnaire, enables non-verbal communication such as: facial expression and hesitation, as well as the tone of voice to play part; a factor which written responses would hide.

Kitwood (1977) argues that, in interviews, there is a conflict between reliability and validity. He suggests that increased reliability is gained by increasing control of its elements which in turn reduces validity. He says '*In an interpersonal encounter people are more likely to disclose aspects of themselves, their thoughts, their feelings and values, than they would in a less human situation...in other words, the distinctively human element...is necessary to validity.*' (Quoted in Cohen and Manion 1989:319). In essence, if the interviewer becomes more mechanistic and remote in an effort to maintain reliability, the personal element is lost, and the response is likely to be a calculated one to the detriment of validity. Clearly one of the major advantages of an interview is that personal interaction can take place and to this end it was decided to include a semi-structured interview involving three respondents. Again the choice of interviewees was important as they had to be representative of the organizations many areas. The respondents selected were a Fire Fighter based at an operational station, working on the watch shift system, a Sub Officer working on non-operational duties (training) and an Assistant Divisional Officer (ADO) who worked a flexi duty system with managerial duties.

The questions (Appendix D) were based on the four areas contained within the blockage instrument thus enabling cross-referencing. Key responses were recorded on a grid (Appendix F) along with the questions allowing clear and systematic presentation.

Before undertaking the study both research instruments were piloted to ensure that they would reveal the information required and to check the method of data collection. This also provided an opportunity to evaluate the wording of the questionnaire. The pilot revealed the blockage instrument to be an extremely efficient method of collecting data. Although the questions were found to be straightforward some minor changes were made to reduce ambiguity. Additionally, two extra instructions were added to the notes for the completion of the questionnaire. Note five asked the respondent to work through the statements as quickly as possible; this was an attempt to prevent the respondents from becoming too analytical and discovering the 'pattern' within the instrument. Note six asked the respondent to be as honest as they could. This was in response to a comment by one respondent that he felt 'politically incorrect' in answering truthfully.

The third research instrument, in the form of critical incidents, drew upon the authors extensive experience of working within the organization, much of it as a serving fire fighter. Clearly there is a danger of bias here; however, the value of such experience could not be over-looked and it was felt that there was justification in including the author's ethnographic observations. Indeed, the author was inspired and encouraged by the classic ethnographic study by Willis (1977) of a group of working class 'lads' and their responses to schooling. In support of validity, many of the authors observations have been recorded throughout the BA course as entries in a portfolio of professional development.

In order to investigate the issues identified in the analysis of the research a final research instrument: a literature review was undertaken drawing on concepts from organizational theory, sociology, culture and equal opportunities.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The results of the blockage instrument can be found in appendix F (Page 56). As previously stated the instrument was an attempt to obtain either a positive or negative response to a series of statements. A cursory glance at the data shows the level of response to any particular statement pairing. On the one hand some pairings attracted very little response, for example statements twenty-seven & thirty one (discussed later). Conversely, other pairings attracted heavy attention, for example: the responses to negative statement eight and the positive statement seventeen. Clearly any statements, which attract greater interest, are worthy of further investigation.

Before proceeding however, the data appears to have thrown up an anomaly, highlighted by statement pairing ten and fourteen relating to positive action. It is clear that a significant number of respondents have answered both positively and negatively, to this pairing. This has raised an issue as to the construction of these two statements and led the author to consider the effects of 'dual answers' within the instrument. In consideration of this factor a second set of results have been produced entitled 'corrected analysis' (Appendix F. Page 57) which removes all dual positive/negative responses to the same question pairing. It is not being suggested that the raw data is flawed as the results are a true reflection of the attitudes and beliefs of the respondents to the statements. However, from a scientific perspective, it could be argued that, by removing contradiction, the corrected data better identifies areas for further investigation as it reduces any ambiguities that may have occurred due to the wording of the statements. The interpretation will draw upon both sets of data, and in addition, link them with the responses of the semi-structured interviews (Appendix F).

## CULTURE

It would seem that, from the results of the questionnaire, there is a notion on the part of fire fighters that women have a role to play in today's fire service. There is at least some recognition that the fire service should reflect the community it serves and that the qualities that women might bring to the service are positive. However, there is still a significant minority who see no need for women in the fire service and see the process of encouraging them to apply as '*political correctness*' (Appendix F: 1.1 Fire fighter).

Both the raw and corrected data show a fifty-fifty split in attitudes towards changing the fire service culture to become more welcoming to women. This is a clear demonstration of the difficulties ahead for any woman entering the service. A glance at the strength of responses towards the negative statements pertaining to special facilities, further demonstrates the resistance to change both in terms of culture and working patterns. All respondents in the interview agreed that the service is resistant to change and fully recognised that the present culture is very threatening to women. There is a belief that any woman coming into the service might need to be a '*pseudo male*' or '*honorary bloke*' in order to fit in. (Appendix F: 1.2 Sub Officer; Fire fighter). Indeed, the pressure to conform to the existing male heterosexual culture

appears to be very strong. The Sub Officer states that any members of the watch *'who go against the grain will be ostracised.'* This was also recognised by the Fire Fighter: *'you have to go with the watch otherwise your life will be made hell.'* The Sub Officer also recognised that much of the banter was derogatory towards women or 'weak' men *'...unless you're tough you must be queer.'* (Appendix F: 1.5 Sub Officer, Fire Fighter).

Statement pairing thirty-three and thirty-seven sought to reveal whether women should 'fit in' to the service or be valued for the qualities they might bring. The results, particularly the corrected data, are positive which is surprising considering the HMI review found that *'The overwhelming collective view of uniformed staff...was strong opposition to women being employed in the operational fire service.'* (HMI Thematic review 1999:23). An explanation for this conciliatory attitude might be that there was no macho credibility to be gained in a questionnaire situation. It could be that the male dominated banter on the watch is just a charade where macho opinions must be demonstrated and reasserted. Outside of this environment honest attitudes might be found.

**Indeed, what is interesting, based upon the author's experience, is that when in the company of women, male fire fighters behave 'gentlemanly' and often give them special attention. It is possible that much of the anti women opinion is more about demonstrating masculinity and actually has little to do with women themselves becoming fire fighters. Appearing conciliatory and caring about women is seen as a weakness. Seidler points out that as men *'we do not like being considered weak for this is a threat to our masculinity. A weak man is not a man at all, or so we learn...men respond harshly to an accusation of weakness, experiencing this as an attempt to humiliate them. Somehow emotions have been identified with weakness so that we learn that to be strong means being in control of your emotions.'* (Seidler 1997:190).**

During the authors career in the fire service he has noticed that the topic of conversation around the mess table often got onto the possibility of unprofessional relationships developing between men and women particularly considering the dormitory sleeping arrangements during night shifts. This experience led to the statements seventeen and twenty-one being included in the questionnaire, which explored the perceived fears that wives or partners might have regarding mixed working practices. The results of the raw data reveal a certain amount of dual responses, which might indicate ambiguity in the wording of the statements. The corrected data however, shows that there is little concern for the occurrence of improper relationships developing. Indeed, in the interview one respondent believed that it was *'a fear that has been hijacked by people who are anti women.'* (Appendix F: 1.3 ADO). The fire fighters comments; however, were more predictable: he stated that *'relationships are inevitable.'* (Appendix F: 1.3 Fire fighter). Perhaps there is a genuine fear on the part of fire fighters and their partners, indeed the HMI review found that *'many fire fighters freely admitted that their wives or girlfriends would not allow them to work with women.'* (HMI review 1999:23). Another explanation might be that this issue is exaggerated by macho fantasy and reinforced by banter within the male watch environment.

Statement pairings nine and thirteen, and twenty-five and twenty-nine, were aimed at revealing attitudes towards the need for change within the Service. The results of both the raw and corrected data indicated considerable resistance. The related question in the interview attempted to seek opinions on whether the culture prevented the Service moving forward. The result was a resounding yes, but there were differing perspective amongst the respondents. The ADO, perhaps being in a better position to recognise the fact, pointed out that the culture of the organization was not just found at '*grass roots*' level. He commented that the management of the Fire Service had a '*distinct masculine outlook*' and (related to an experience where a more feminine approach might make a difference See Appendix F: 1.4 ADO). The Fire Fighter, on the other hand, questioned what was meant by moving forward, he suggested '*women are not necessarily progress.*' However, both the Sub Officer and the Fire Fighter did recognise that the macho culture was '*self perpetuating*' and '*perpetuates status quo.*' This suggests the strong power of culture, which should not be under estimated.

What appears to be most important, according to the interviewees, is the need to fit in with the team. The reliance on team culture appears paramount to confidence and any new member of the team will be 'on probation.' The power of the team culture, which appears a vital aspect of the job, is at odds with the proposals by the HMI review and is likely to be a major source of conflict if change is enforced. (Discussed later)

## **POSITIVE ACTION & EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The statements under this heading were intended to reveal attitudes towards the Services equal opportunities policy and training. It is evident that there is considerable confusion and anger amongst the respondents. In the interview it was acknowledged by the ADO that '*there has been some kick back*' whilst the Sub Officer felt that targeting women '*sticks in my throat.*' The fire fighter stated that '*this is a major cause of resentment*' (Appendix F: 2.1). The dissatisfaction with the equal opportunities policy towards positive action (positive discrimination) is clearly revealed by the number of responses to negative statements two and six which show that the setting of recruitment targets for women is considered to be unfair. This dissatisfaction is further exposed by the number of responses towards positive statements twenty-six and thirty, suggesting that more equal opportunities training is necessary. This is supported by the findings of the HMI review, which stated '*The need for training, on the basis of what we found, extends to all involved; in leadership, management and in the work-force at large.*' (HMI review 1999 42).

It is apparent that Jewson and Mason's (1986) '*conceptual confusions*' appear evident within the Services equal opportunities policy. The 'liberal' policy employed sets out fair procedures which are '*enshrined in detailed rules*' aimed at providing an arena where '*individuals are enabled freely and equally to compete for social rewards.*' (Jewson and Mason 1986:313). However, while the service sets out its policy in one camp it is increasingly acting 'radically' and embracing positive discrimination which befits a radical policy, as opposed to positive action, which is closer to a liberal approach.

Statements eighteen and twenty-two reveal a general consensus that the fire service should be representative of a cross section of society. However, the over-riding concern is how this might be achieved **fairly** and **without lowering standards**.

Statements thirty-four and thirty-eight aimed to discover how well informed the respondents felt about equal opportunities issues. Once again the data surprised the author as he believed that equal opportunities information is minimal and low key within the Service. However, it should be considered that 'feeling' informed and 'being' informed are two separate issues. Maybe the information supplied by the 'canteen culture' produces an illusion of official information. These results appear contradictory considering the dissatisfaction with policy and the apparent need for more training. Another explanation might lie with a comment made by the Fire Fighter in the interview. When asked what should be the thrust of equal opportunities training he replied '*we need to know what is acceptable and what is not.*' (Appendix F: 2.4 Fire fighter). Perhaps if an individual feels that they know how to behave then they assume that they are well informed. In the interview, when questioned about the equal opportunities training provided by the Service, the respondents tended to give predictable answers. The ADO felt that things were improving; however, the Sub Officer described the training as '*minimal and inadequate.*' The fire fighter was more cynical he believed that it was '*tick box training*' that paid '*lip service*' to the issue (Appendix F: 2.5).

Currently, there is a great deal of debate within the Service as to whether recruitment standards have been reduced to allow under represented groups to pass the entry requirements. In the interview, both the ADO and the Sub Officer believed that there was a perception that standards had been lowered but in fact thought standards were more structured and justifiable. The Fire Fighter also accepted that some of the changes were fairer but had a deep distrust of the managers in charge of the recruitment process '*its open to abuse...they bend the rules to get certain people in*' (Appendix F: 2.2 Fire fighter).

The related statements in the questionnaire (ten and fourteen) aimed to reveal an overall consensus on this matter. However, the high number of dual responses to this statement pairing clearly suggests a problem with the wording. A closer examination of statement ten, which was intended to be a positive, might provide an explanation. On reflection it could easily be interpreted as being against 'positive action' and therefore could be considered as a negative statement. In essence the statement is saying that all potential recruits should be given equal opportunity, which might explain the high number of responses.

Although the author considers this statement pairing as a mistake it has still thrown up some valuable data which, depending on how it is interpreted, might further demonstrate the frustration caused by the confused equal opportunities policy.

## **PHYSICAL ABILITIES AND HEALTH & SAFETY**

The questionnaire indicated a fairly even split of opinions towards women's physical abilities to perform the job, as indeed were attitudes towards a perceived lowering of standards in recruit fire fighter training aimed at making it easier for women to pass. Furthermore, the interviewees reiterated the high status placed upon teamwork. All respondents referred to the physical demands of the job and their belief that a team *'is only as strong as its weakest link.'* (Appendix F: 3.1).

Williams (1981) suggests that culture is a *'signifying system [and] is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored.'* (Quoted in Watson 1987:83). The responses to interview question (3.2) appear to reveal the starting point of a fire fighters initiation into the service culture. The ADO (who had previously worked in training) and the Sub Officer (currently working in training) both felt that training did not reflect the job. The ADO believed that it was about *'rites of passage'* and described training as *'an induction process into the ways of the Service.'* The Sub Officer stated that *'training is still very traditional...helps to perpetuate the Service culture.'* (Appendix F: 3.2 ADO & Sub Officer). Indeed, most fire fighters, including the author, never forget the powerful experience that their basic training has upon them.

Question pairing nineteen and twenty-three indicates the value that individuals place upon the existing basic recruit training. Maybe there is a sense that this is a common process; something that everyone has to go through and because there is a sense that it is *'tough,' 'disciplined'* and based on sound health and safety procedures; satisfactory completion denotes *'exclusive membership of the club.'* The methods of training recruits have remained relatively unchanged for many decades giving the process a feel of safety and stability. However, these methods and standards are now being questioned and justification sought. This is perceived by some as an attack upon standards. For example: the Sub Officer when asked about his confidence in the physical abilities of women fire fighters stated *'yes, providing we can rely on the testing procedures...the trouble is that senior managers are getting involved...some people are being given more chances than others.'* The fire fighter had a similar view: *'we've all heard of the recent cases where recruits have failed the course and been given as many chances to pass as it takes...management are papering over the cracks...changing the rules to let them in.'* (Appendix F: 3.3).

It is understandable why fire fighters might wish to defend the traditional training standards, for it has been instilled in them, over many years, that their training is the best and that they can rely on what they have been taught to protect them in dangerous situations. This has built confidence in the individual, the team and in the hierarchy. Clearly questions towards the validity of training which fire fighters have been taught to depend on will be regarded as a threat. Such changes need to be treated sensitively and sold positively which is at odds with the autocratic *'macho'* style of leadership within the organization.

The distinct lack of responses to statements twenty-seven and thirty-one, aimed at revealing attitudes towards issues created by maternity leave, may reflect the hypothetical nature of the topic as there has been no experience of a fire fighter taking maternity leave in the organization. However, all respondents in the interviews were not confident that there were enough resources to provide refresher training. This was seen as a major health and safety issue rather than a reason for preventing women from entering the Service.

Health and safety and physical abilities are often voiced as reasons for precluding women from the Service. Indeed, the HMI review, in their research, found this very common: *'...the overriding view was that women were not capable of doing a man's job. There were also genuine, if misconceived, concerns for their welfare and health in the longer term.'* (HMI review 1999:23). These findings and the author's experience have influenced the questions in this area. One common concern voiced by many male fire fighters is that they might put themselves in danger because they will have to 'look out' for the safety of their female colleagues at incidents. There was some evidence of this in the interviews. The ADO acknowledged that *'many men have a natural tendency to be protective of women.'* Both the Sub Officer and the Fire Fighter admitted that they would feel the need to look after a woman colleague at an incident. It would seem that there is a strong patriarchal cultural influence here; as the Fire Fighter said *'it's a gentleman thing'* (Appendix F: 3.5). Interestingly, the questionnaire showed a strong opinion that women could look after themselves.

## **SPECIAL FACILITIES**

The HMI review states that *'the long hours may disadvantage women or men with children or family care responsibilities.'* Furthermore they suggest that this *'...may produce unjustifiable indirect discrimination against women and staff who wish to vary their shift patterns [and that] today, there is an opportunity to roster staff to duty requirements rather than a simplistic recurring rota pattern. Such arrangements could reduce the necessity for stand-down time and enable a break in the long standing family tradition of watches.'* (HMI review 1999:65).

The responses to negative statements towards changing in the shift system (statement pairings four & eight, and twenty & twenty-four) or the provision of special facilities demonstrates the strength of resistance to change within the Service and places the Fire Service management at logger-heads with its employees. Indeed there is a suggestion here of a hidden agenda on the part of the Home Office. In the interviews, when asked about changing the shift system to allow people to care for their children, the ADO stated *'I believe that the Home Office have always been looking for a way to break our shift system and get more flexible working practices. They know this is unacceptable to the FBU [Fire Brigades Union] and are attempting to use the equal ops door to force change.'* The Sub Officer said *'I don't believe it is negotiable.'* While the Fire Fighter suggested that *'...its the kind of issue that would cause a national strike'* (Appendix F: 4.1). Indeed the political undertow can be seen in the following statement:

*'We are aware that the national employers are anxious to increase the effectiveness of utilisation, to ensure best value from fire service staffing. We envisage that a move to a non-watch orientated work practice could be the basis of a change in the existing culture of the service, thus contributing to an environment where equality and fairness can flourish.'* (Author's emphasis). (HMI review 1999:65).

The HMI review sees the watch as a threat to inclusivity and blames the system for fostering a culture that is unwelcoming to women. However, the fire fighters, as has already been shown, place great importance on teams. This is evident in the responses of the interviewees. The ADO, who when asked if a system of job sharing

would be acceptable, said '*...it may hold dangers for the Service...all of these ideas break up teams which I feel are an important aspect of the job.*' The Sub Officer agreed '*there is a danger of weakening the team.*' While the Fire Fighter pointed out that continuity would be lost as well as having a weakening effect upon teamwork. He suggested that '*confidence in each other would be damaged*' (Appendix F: 4.4).

The thematic review speaks of staff rostering rather than the existing shift system and uses language such as 'effectiveness of utilisation,' and 'ensuring best value from Fire Service staffing.' This language appears explicit with little attempt at disguising its intentions. Indeed, such an agenda could be a masterstroke on the part of the Home Office as it plays two ideals dear to the FBU against one another. The FBU on the one hand are vehemently resistant to changing working practices but on the other hand, are strong proponents of equal opportunities and fairness at work. From the Home Offices perspective this political weapon may appear to be an effective strategy. However, it is apparent that the increased resistance produced by this tactic may be counter productive. Overall the responses towards the provision of special facilities and changing working practices were very negative and are likely to be a major issue for change management.

## EVALUATION

Although the Fire Service has a long history, literature appears to be limited. Indeed, studies relating to the functioning and culture of this public service seem to be particularly under-researched.

From the outset of my research I was particularly aware of my position as a practitioner from within the organization. My long service has exposed me to the accepted practices and cultural norms that exist within the organization. However, I believed that if I could stay aware of this I could minimise any bias caused by this factor. On a positive note I believe that having a comprehensive knowledge of the culture I was able to 'dig' in the right places.

I also had to consider how the respondents in the study would react to a researcher who was known to them. Would my rank and position within the organization be a barrier and inhibit honest responses? Having carried out the research I am convinced that the responses were frank and honest; indeed, I believe that I was in a privileged position. My long service, junior rank (Sub Officer) and position (Service fitness advisor) seemed to place me in a non-threatening position: one that perhaps an outsider, senior officer or researcher from the Home Office could not attain.

Indeed, I was never short of respondents wishing to take part in the study and would not have had any problems increasing the size of the survey. It was very clear that the fire fighters were desperate to talk about equal opportunities issues which I believe further supports one of the outcomes of this project: that the Services equal opportunities policy is out of step with the current political drive and that equal opportunities training is inadequate.

Having realised that there was massive potential for a larger scale study I have been frustrated by the limitations of this project. A casualty of this limitation was my failure to answer one of the questions set in my proposal. I stated that I was particularly interested to discover whether there was a shift in trend towards a more welcoming environment to women amongst newer recruits. While I have a notion that this is true the size of the study restricted the breadth of respondents across the range relating to length of service.

Having also concluded that the management and leadership styles are in need of review I am also frustrated that I was unable to examine a different approach to the way the Service is led and suggest this line of research for a future project.

The blockage instrument questionnaire proved to be a very efficient method of revealing the attitudes of the work force. While I recognise that the wording in a minority of the statement pairings were ambiguous the exercise proved to be a most

useful barometer of attitudes. Grouping the statements into categories enhanced this process and clearly revealed special facilities i.e. changing working practices to be the main source of resistance. I would be very interested to refine this method and repeat the study on a much larger scale.

## CONCLUSIONS

This project has considered some of the social, cultural and political influences that might explain the under-representation of women in the British fire service. The working hypothesis that the male dominated 'macho' culture of the fire service renders the organization institutionally sexist and resistant to change was, from my own perception, stating the obvious. However, exploring the underlying causes has proved complex and has by no means been exhaustive.

The mechanistic, bureaucratic organization clearly relies upon top down communication, and the clear role relationships within a hierarchy. Leadership, it has been argued, has a close relationship with culture and has been identified as being in need of change. Evidence has suggested that the social influence of society, the hierarchical structure of the organization, the single tier entry system and male dominated leadership serve to express and perpetuate the values and beliefs of the Service. I therefore conclude that the Service remains institutionally sexist. However, it is clear that there is a strong desire, both politically and from within the Service, to implement change.

As a long serving practitioner from within the Service I have been surprised at the influence that history and tradition have had upon today's British Fire Service. Indeed, based on the findings of this project, I believe that the Home Office has failed to recognise the power of social influence and cultural norms. The patriarchal nature of our society, which assigns male and female roles, has had a strong influence on the gender imbalance of the Service. There is strong evidence to suggest that within our society cultural norms relating to heterosexual males dictate particular behaviour where male power is normalized and legitimate. The all-male working environment appears to increase these pressures and it has been shown that the cultural influence to fit in and behave according to the expectations of the dominant group makes change all the more difficult. Indeed, the results of the study have reiterated the need to 'fit in' within the dominant culture and that strong pressures exist aimed at maintaining the status quo.

In addition to the sociological explanation it should not be over-looked that fire fighters place great value on 'teams', which they see as integral to their safety. This might further explain the inherent and strong need to fit in.

The Service has been shown to be disciplined and structured. The very nature of this structure, it has been suggested, presents a managerial / shop floor divide placing the two parties in 'sub cultural warfare.' This has led to a strong counter culture particularly within the lower ranks, which in part may be a reaction against the dominant management style. Evidence suggests that there is a need on the part of the male workforce to demonstrate masculinity in order to affirm group solidarity. Furthermore, the inherent dangers and physical demands of the job have produced a hero image for the fire fighter, which has led to an environment fostering toughness and machismo. The amalgamation of these complex factors has resulted in a working environment that is hostile to women and resistant to change.

I feel there is strong evidence to suggest that equal opportunities policy and training are failing the Service and hindering a change in culture that is more welcoming to women. It has been argued that the equal opportunities policy of the Service is out of step with current political initiatives. Indeed, the Services equal opportunities policy has been revealed as a major source of confusion and anger, which has caused considerable resentment. The 'kick back' against radical action, driven by political pressure, is clearly evident.

In addition to the pre-existing subculture within the Service, there is a strong distrust of senior managers and their political masters. The over-riding conclusion that can be drawn from this study is the perception by many in the Service that the recommendations by the Home Office come packaged with an unacceptable hidden agenda. The language used by the Home Office relating to changing working practices appears explicit in its intention and is directed at interweaving two sensitive topics. The Home Office might regard this as an effective strategy. However, in considering the strength of opposition revealed by this study, tying-in an on-going political battle ground to the worthy cause of creating a fire service that is fully representative of the society it serves is proving unhelpful.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Leadership and Management.** The Home Office (if possible in conjunction with the Fire Brigades Union) should review the single tier entry system. Consider ‘fast-tracking’ managers or allow professional managers to infiltrate the structure in non-operational roles. Ensure uniformed officers receive management training. Review other management models: the present system is designed to allow efficient incident management; however, this role forms only a small proportion of an officers time.
- **Equal Opportunities Policy.** The personnel manager should carry out a review of all equality and fairness policies and the procedures and processes that support them.

Following the review, update the policies to reflect the current radical approach.

- **Equal Opportunities Training.** The Chief Fire Officer (via the training officer) should review and amend equal opportunities training which should be targeted towards changing attitudes and winning understanding rather than focusing on compliance to procedures.

Consider out-sourcing equal opportunities training to avoid perpetuating fire service culture.

- **Review Entry Requirements.** The personnel manager should conduct an audit of recruit selection tests and withdraw any considered to be directly or indirectly discriminatory.
- **Update Fire Service Literature.** Many fire service leaflets and other promotional materials contain pictures of male fire fighters performing the role. These should be up dated to include women in all areas of the Service.
- **News Reporting.** Often fire fighters take part in radio and television interviews at incidents. A women fire fighter being interviewed would send a very strong message to society that change is happening.
- **Contact with Schools and Colleges.** The new initiative of community fire stations, aimed at improving fire safety, should be expanded to include educational visits to schools. These visits could be staffed by both men and women fire fighters, which would serve as a strong reminder that the fire service is not just for men.

Many colleges offer pre-service courses. The service has so far failed to effectively establish contacts with the organisers of these courses and therefore an opportunity for promoting women in the fire service is being lost. A concerted effort should be made to visit these colleges and arrange for the students to visit fire stations, particularly those with women fire fighters.

- **Improve Education Materials.** In the past children's television characters such as the firemen of Trumpton and more recently Fireman Sam have socialized children into gender roles. The Home Office or a collaboration between fire services should consider commissioning gender balanced educational materials which could be marketed to the mass media.

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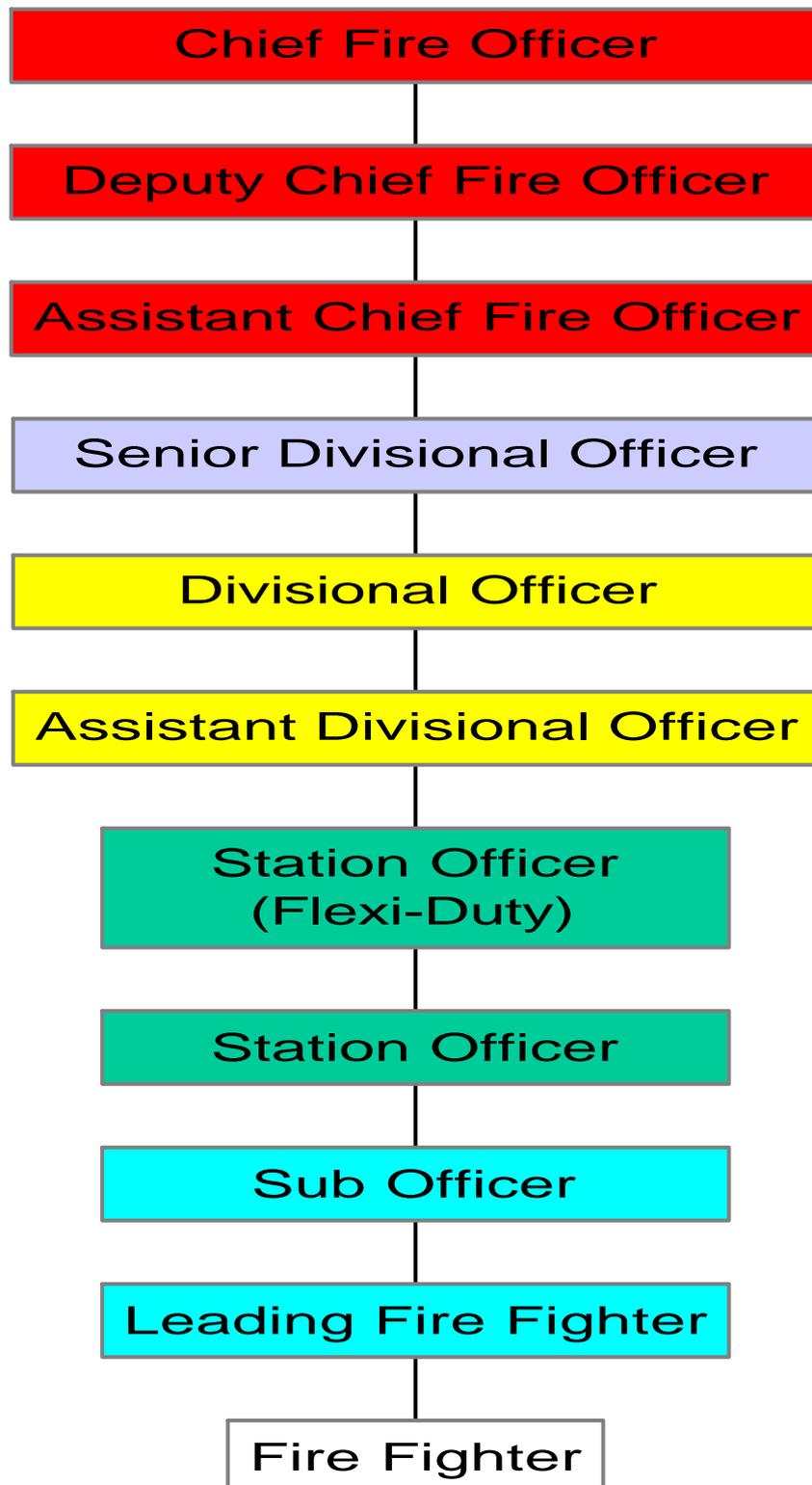
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**APPENDIX A**



# **FIRE SERVICE RANK STRUCTURE**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT ONE**

Date: 22/03/00

While reading for the 'Organizations of Education and Training' unit I became intrigued by micro-politics and self-interest within organizations. Morgan suggests that mechanistically structured organizations '*have unanticipated and undesirable consequences as the interests of those working in the organization take precedence over the goals the organization was designed to achieve.*' (Morgan 1997:28). This has led me to consider the sub-culture that exists within the fire service and has reminded me of the behaviour of the watch on which I served a number of years ago.

A new officer in charge had just taken over the watch. It was obvious from the start that he was ambitious; he was on the promotion trail. Consequently he wanted everything done by the book. Work routines were to be followed, breaks were taken at set times and were rarely extended. At incidents he liked to be in control and preferred to detail every task.

Because of his actions he was seen by the watch as an outsider: a 'managers man' and was often the butt of windups which by today's standards might be considered as bullying. A battle of wits ensued between the officer and the watch members; the officer continued to work by the rules and the watch developed more and more strategies to make his life difficult. For example there were endless problems with annual leave allocation, queries about pay, problems with uniform and equipment, and minor injuries on drills. By employing these control measures and keeping the officer continually busy, the group was able to assert their dominance on the watch routine.

Wilsher (Original account in PPD 22/03/00)

## CRITICAL INCIDENT TWO

**Date: 04/10/00**

A colleague and myself visited a local fire station for an appointment with the Fire Brigades Union chairperson who was a member of a watch at this station. While waiting for the meeting to commence, we were invited to have tea with the watch. During tea, which was typical of the fire service and consisted of the whole watch sitting around the mess table consuming cheese sandwiches and drinking tea, I found myself reflecting on the highly intimidating atmosphere which existed. This atmosphere was one to which I had become accustomed throughout my many years in the fire service but until reading for the Diversity and Differentiation unit, I had not really considered.

The group consisted of eighteen white males. The conversation was dominated by 'banter' aimed at seeking out an individual's 'Achilles heel'. Once a chink in a watch member's armour had been established the pack would pounce, led by the boldest characters in the group, and drive home the humiliation. The individual would then be subjected to an onslaught of 'humour' until the topic ran dry and an opening appeared to attack another individual. I observed a situation where two or three strong characters were vying for supremacy who were leading the banter; the remainder of the group would quickly join in to avoid being attacked themselves. What hit me and initiated this reflection was the fact that one of the group was a new recruit who had just completed his basic training and been posted to the watch.

*I had spent the last three months training him; he had sat next to me but remained silent. I was in a dilemma: I wanted to speak to him and ask how he was getting on but I was aware that I might expose him to the next onslaught of humiliation. If he said that he was doing well, the group might raise his recent mistakes or if he said he was finding some difficulty, a weakness would have been exposed. I chose not to speak to him at this time. I had not only observed intimidation but had been intimidated myself.*

This observation has led me to consider the strength of the Fire Service culture, particularly within the watch system. The banter serves as a tool to impose the values of the watch upon newcomers or visitors. It ensures conformity and presents strong resistance to change.

A recent Home Office thematic review into equality and fairness in the Fire Service (1999) has strongly attacked the 'macho culture' of the watch system and cites this as a major contributory factor in the under representation of women in the Fire Service. This incident tends to support this view and has brought home to me the power of cultural norms. If I could be intimidated with my twenty two years experience and considering the fact that I am a white male, belong to the same union and considered to be 'one of the lads' how might a woman feel in a similar situation?

Wilsher (Original account in PPD 04/10/00)

## APPENDIX C

### BLOCKAGE INSTRUMENT STATEMENT PAIRINGS

Positive Statements	Negative Statements	Category
1. Women have an important role to play in today's fire service.	5. I don't believe that women have anything extra to offer the fire service.	Culture
2. Positive action (targeting women) is a fair way of redressing the balance.	6. Setting recruitment targets for women is unfair to men	Positive action and equal ops training
3. Working as part of a team, women are capable of handling the physical aspects of fire fighting.	7. Women are physically incapable of performing some of the more demanding aspects of the job	<b>Physical abilities and health &amp; Safety</b>
4. The service needs to become more flexible in its shift system to allow people to care for their children.	8. If your life-style does not fit with shift work, then you should not take on the job	Special facilities
9. I accept that the fire service culture must change in order to become more welcoming to women	13. If women are able to fit in with the fire service 'way of life' then they will have no problems	Culture
10. Providing they meet the requirements, recruits should be taken on their own merits rather than because of their sex	14. Recruitment standards have been lowered to attract more women	Positive action and equal ops training
11. Recruit training today better reflects the job of a fire fighter	15. Recruit fire fighter training has been lowered to make it easier for women to pass	<b>Physical abilities/Health &amp; Safety</b>
12. Crèche facilities should be made available to encourage women into the service	16. If you have children they are your responsibility not your employer's	Special facilities
17. Our working practices should present no additional fears to wives/partners	21. Working on the night shift with women would cause friction with wives/partners	Culture
18. The intake of new recruits should reflect a broad cross section of our society	22. If there are enough men to meet recruitment numbers, we should we be forced to take on	Positive action and equal ops training

	women	
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Positive Statements	Negative Statements	Category
19. I would rely on anyone who has successfully completed the training	23. I would not feel safe if I had to depend on a woman to get me out of a sticky situation	Physical abilities/Health & Safety
20. There should be a facility that allows people to work 'days' only	24. The current shift system is not negotiable	Special facilities
25. The fire service needs to change; the old ways are holding us back	29. The service has functioned effectively and efficiently for years. We should not change what works	Culture
26. More equal opportunities training would help us move forward.	30. Equal opportunities training is unnecessary. I know how to behave.	Positive action and equal ops training
27. There are enough resources available to allow for re-training after maternity breaks	31. Women who take maternity leave would become a safety liability, as they would be less familiar with their role	Physical abilities/Health & Safety
28. Job sharing, where two people fill one post, is a good idea	32. All operational staff should all have the same work pattern. Mixed working practices would undermine confidence in one another and destroy teamwork.	Special facilities
33. Women should be accepted for the qualities that they bring to the service as individuals	37. If a women became 'one of the lads' she would have no problems fitting in	Culture
34. I feel well informed about equal opportunities issues	38. There is very little information about where the service is going with equal opportunities	Positive action/Equal opportunities Training
35. Women are just as capable of looking after themselves as men, in a crisis	39. Watching out for a woman in a crisis situation would add more pressure to the job	Physical abilities/Health & Safety
36. Career breaks would help people bring up their families and attract more women to the	40. Career breaks would be detrimental to the service and present staffing and training problems	Special facilities

service		
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## **APPENDIX C**

### **BLOCKAGE INSTRUMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Dear Colleague

I would be grateful if you would take part in a research project that I am currently undertaking as part of a BA honours degree.

The questionnaire overleaf should only take a few minutes to complete but will provide me with some valuable information. All returns are anonymous and will be treated in strict confidence. Individual returns will be seen only by myself. Once collated, only the data will be revealed to others.

I thank you in anticipation for your assistance.

Paul Wilsher

#### **Notes for the Completion of the Questionnaire**

1. Please fill in the profile details at the top of the form by ticking the appropriate boxes
2. Take each statement in order
3. Please do not discuss the statements with your colleagues
4. If you BROADLY AGREE with a particular statement, then please place a tick in the relevant box, adjacent to that statement number
5. Work through the statements as quickly as possible
6. Be as honest as you can

<b>Age:</b>	20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	50+
<b>Length of Service:</b>	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	30+
<b>Rank:</b>	FF	L/FF	Sub O	Stn O	ADO	DO	
<b>Duty System:</b>	Shift	Non Operational		Flexi			

1	Women have an important role to play in today's fire service.	2	Working on the night shift with women would cause friction with wives/partners.
2	Positive action (targeting women) is a fair way of redressing the balance.	1	
		2	If there are enough men to meet recruitment numbers, we should not be forced to take on women.
		2	I would not feel safe if I had to depend on a woman to get me out of a sticky situation.
3	Working as part of a team, women are capable of handling the physical aspects of fire fighting.	3	
		2	The current shift system is not negotiable.
4	The service needs to become more flexible in its shift system to allow people to care for their children.	4	
		2	The fire service needs to change; the old ways are holding us back.
5	I don't believe that women have anything extra to offer the fire service.	5	
		2	More equal opportunities training would help us move forward.
6	Setting recruitment targets for women is unfair to men.	6	
		2	There are enough resources available to allow for re-training after maternity breaks.
7	Women are physically incapable of performing some of the more demanding aspects of the job.	7	
		2	Job sharing, where two people fill one post, is a good idea.
8	If your life-style does not fit with shift work, then you should not take the job.	8	
		2	The service has functioned effectively and efficiently for years. We should not change what works.
9	I accept that the fire service culture must change in order to become more welcoming to women.	9	
		2	Equal opportunities training is unnecessary. I know how to behave.
1	Providing they meet the requirements, recruits should be taken on their own merits rather than because of their sex.	3	
0		0	
1	Recruit training today better reflects the job of a fire fighter.	3	Women who take maternity leave would become a safety liability, as they would be less familiar with their role.
1		1	
		3	All operational staff should have the same work pattern. Mixed working practices would undermine confidence in one another and destroy teamwork.
1	Crèche facilities should be made available to encourage women into the service.	3	
2		2	Women should be accepted for the qualities that they bring to the service as individuals.
		3	
1	If women are able to fit in with the fire service 'way of life' then they will have no problems.	3	
3		3	
		3	I feel well informed about equal opportunities issues.
1	Recruitment standards have been lowered to attract more women.	3	
4		4	
		3	Women are just as capable of looking after themselves as men, in a crisis.
1	Recruit fire fighter training has been lowered to make it easier for women to pass.	3	
5		5	
		3	Career breaks would help people bring up their families and attract more women to the service.
1	If you have children they are your responsibility not your employers.	3	
6		6	
		3	If a woman become 'one of the lads' she would have no problems fitting in.
1	Our working practices should present no additional fears to wives/partners.	3	
7		7	
		3	There is very little information about where the service is going with equal opportunities.
1	The intake of new recruits should reflect a broad cross section of our society.	3	
8		8	
		3	'Watching-out' for a woman in a crisis situation would add more pressure to the job.
1	I would rely on anyone who has successfully completed the training.	3	
9		9	
		4	Career breaks would be detrimental to the service and prevent staffing and training
2	There should be a facility that allows operational staff to work 'days' only.	4	

0 operational staff to work 'days' only.

0 service and present staffing and training problems.

## APPENDIX D

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### 1. CULTURE

1.1	Do you believe that women have a role to play in today's fire service?
1.2	Do you consider that the existing fire service culture is welcoming to women?
1.3	Is the fear of unprofessional relationships between male and female personnel a genuine one?
1.4	Is the existing fire service culture preventing the organisation from moving forward?
1.5	How strong is 'the need to fit in' within fire service culture?

#### 2. POSITIVE ACTION & EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

2.1	Do you feel that targeting women for recruitment by taking positive action is a fair and reasonable method of redressing the balance?
2.2	In your opinion have recruitment standards been lowered in recent years to attract under-represented groups?
2.3	Do you believe that it is necessary for the fire service to reflect a broad cross-section of society?
2.4	Is equal opportunities training necessary?
2.5	What do you think of the equal opportunities training provided by the organisation?

#### 3. PHYSICAL ABILITIES AND HEALTH & SAFETY

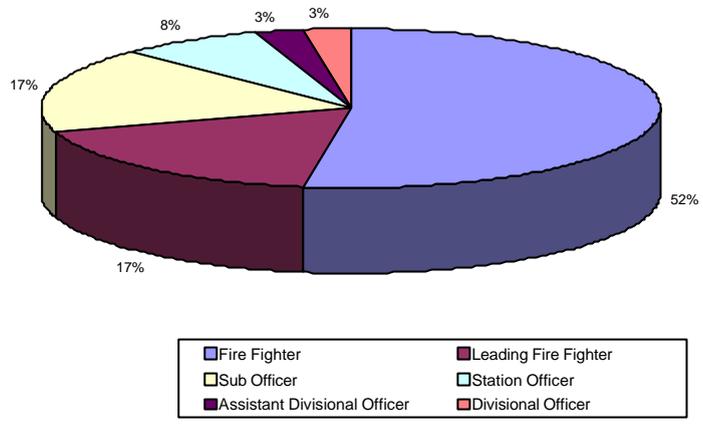
3.1	Considering that the job is based on teamwork how important are an individuals physical abilities?
3.2	Has recruit fire fighter training been made easier to allow women to get through or does it better reflect the nature of the job?
3.3	Given that training would have been successfully completed are you confident in the physical abilities of women fire fighters?
3.4	Upon returning to work from maternity leave are you confident that women would receive the necessary refresher training?
3.5	Would you feel more or less inclined to 'watch out' for a woman at an incident than you would for a male colleague?

#### 4. SPECIAL FACILITIES

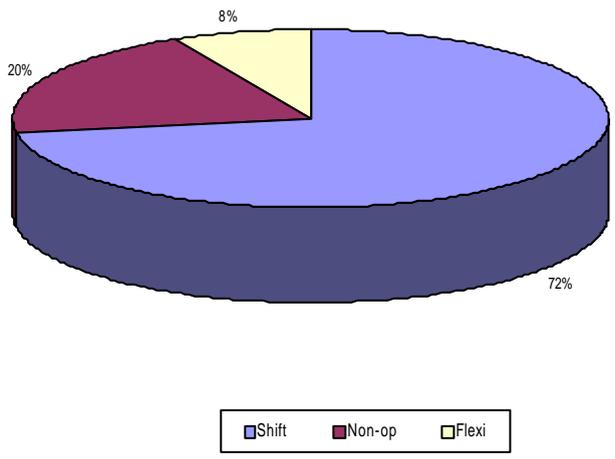
4.1	Do you believe that the shift system should change or become more flexible to allow people to care for their children?
4.2	Should the fire service be responsible for providing crèche facilities?
4.3	Should some staff be able to work days only in an attempt to make it easier to care for their families?
4.4	Would a system of 'job sharing' be an acceptable way of encouraging women into the service?

**4.5** | Should staff be able to take unpaid career breaks during their service?

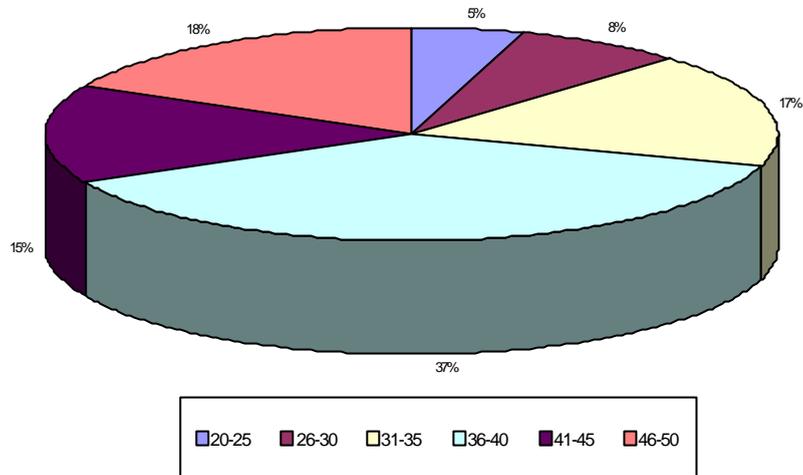
**APPENDIX E**



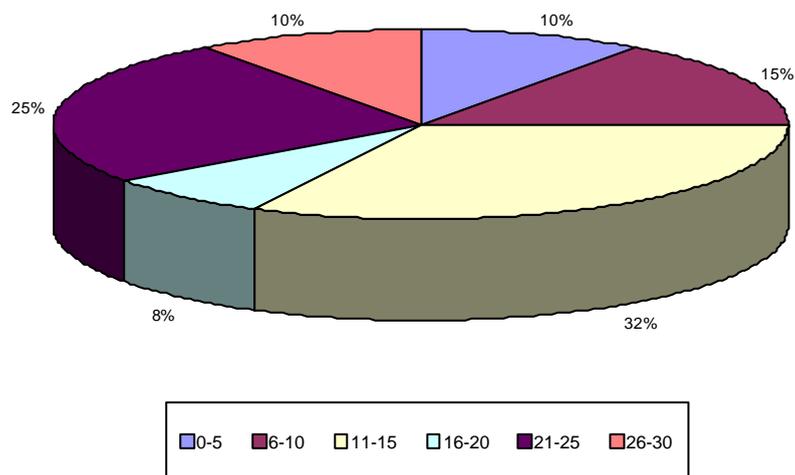
**CHART SHOWING DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF RESPONDENT BY RANK**



**CHART SHOWING DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF RESPONDENT BY SHIFT SYSTEM**



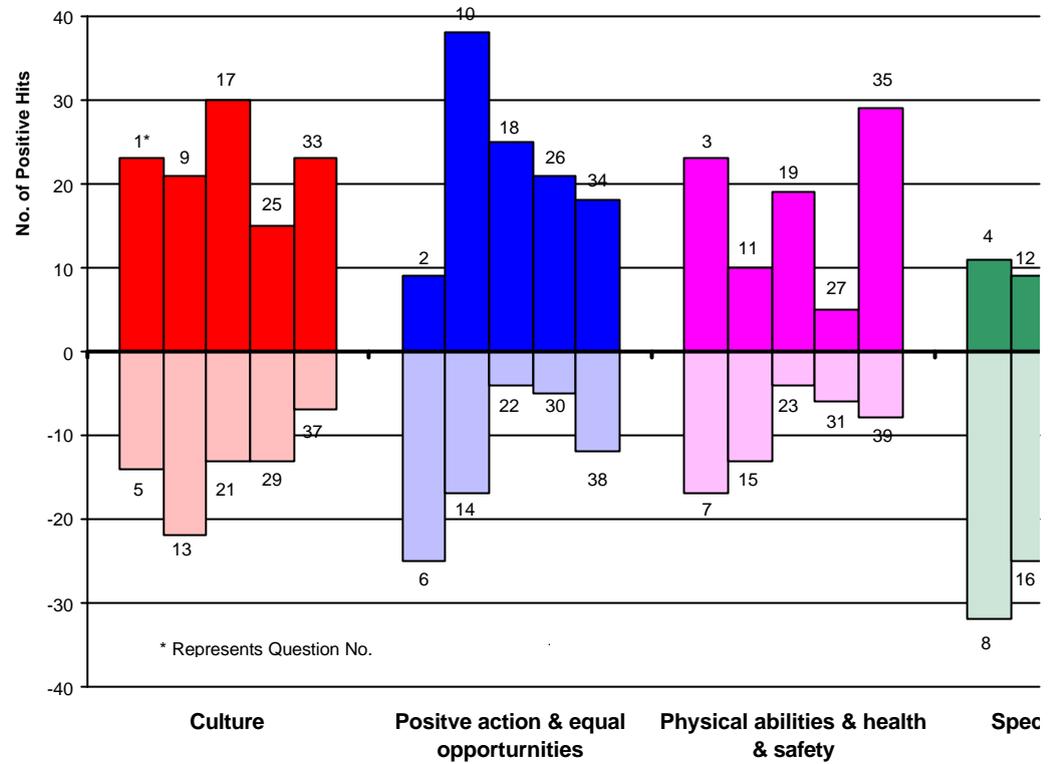
**CHART SHOWING DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF RESPONDENT BY AGE**



**CHART SHOWING DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF RESPONDENT BY LENGTH OF SERVICE**

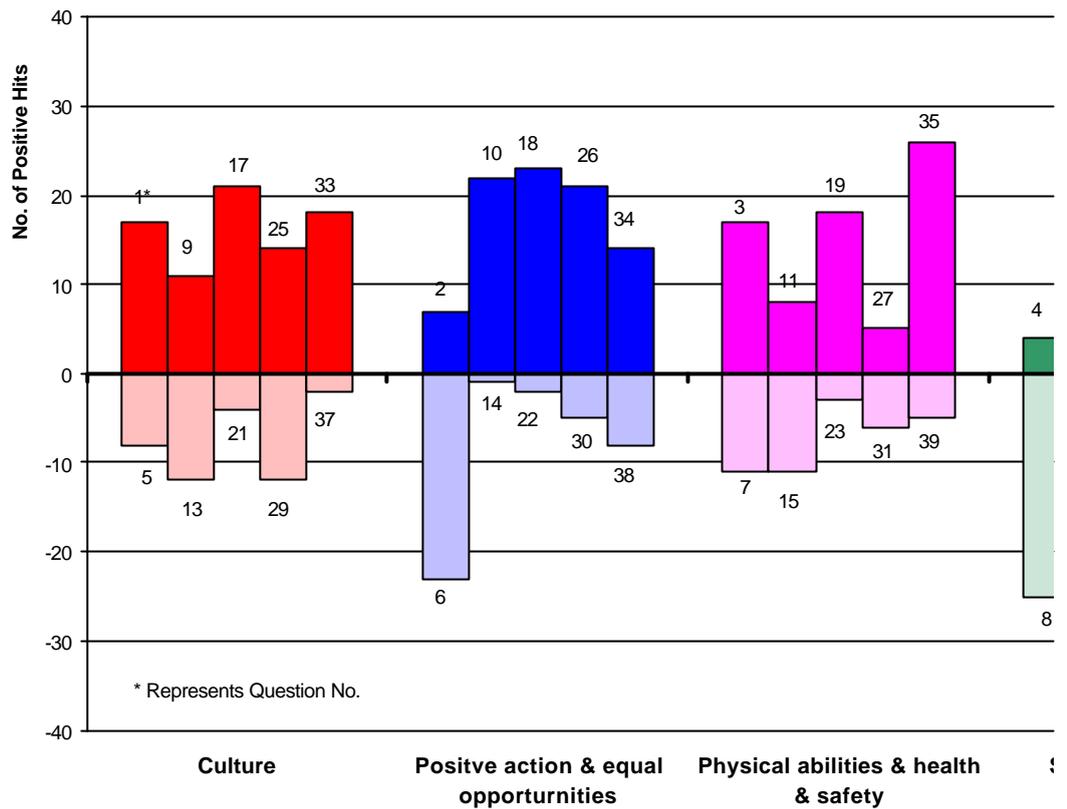


## APPENDIX F



## ANALYSIS OF BLOCKAGE INSTRUMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Bars indicate the number of responses (hits) to each positive/ negative statement pair and are subdivided into the four areas investigated. The number next to each bar refers to the statement shown in Appendix C.



## CORRECTED ANALYSIS OF BLOCKAGE INSTRUMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Bars indicate the number of responses (hits) to each positive/ negative statement pair and are subdivided into the four areas investigated. Where an individual responded to both the positive and negative statements in a question pair, both hits were removed from the analysis. The number next to each bar refers to the statement shown in Appendix C.

## RESPONSES TO SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

### 1. CULTURE

<b>1.1 Do you believe that women have a role to play in today's Fire Service?</b>	
ADO	Yes – The fire service is a public service; we serve the community and should reflect society. After all women make up about fifty per cent of society.
Sub O.	Yes – The service has been dominated by male attitudes. Women would provide a different perspective and would be more compassionate. Many men have blinkered views they have to keep working alongside women might change this attitude.
Fire Fighter	There is no need for women in the job. Unlike the police who have to deal with a wide range of jobs in the fire service, which need women. The whole thing about taking on women (respondent is visibly angry) its not as if we are short of applicants – there are thousands of applicants most of these are men – we should be able to take on the best.

<b>1.2 Do you consider that the existing Fire Service culture is welcoming to women?</b>	
ADO	No – the fire service culture is dominated by males; there is very strong male 'macho' culture. I don't think that programmes like London's Burning help, they make us out to be the stereotype.
Sub O.	No – the culture is male...the strong banter...the sexually derogatory joke environment...its like blokes want women to be pseudo males [women who act like men]
Fire Fighter	No – blokes of my length of service dig their heels in – we're resistant to change traditions where we have our set roles – I'm set I my ways. Any minority, at the moment, will stand out, its gonna be a tough time for any culture changes...it'll be a different job then.

	<p>London's burning has done us more harm than good...it glamorises the job...at makes them think they can be part of a soap opera rather than real life...it can be very n</p>
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**1.3 Is the fear of unprofessional relationships between male and female personnel a genuine one?**

ADO	I think there is some concern but it's a fear that has been hijacked by people w women work together in most other occupations why should ours present additional pro
Sub O.	Personally I don't have any worries. I think there is a misperception...there is : together that doesn't happen in many jobs. Flirting could cause friction on the watch.
Fire Fighter	I don't have any worries personally, but there is a genuine fear out there, from wives too  I think relationships are inevitable. This will cause ructions and jealousy on the wa when any women come on the station, blokes are round them like flies...I suppos blokes get used to working with women.

**1.4 Is the existing fire service culture preventing the organization from moving forward?**

ADO	<p>Yes – the macho culture is clearly threatening, especially to women, but it's management has a distinct masculine outlook...this is supported by the hierarchic is a synergy between culture, management and hierarchy.</p> <p>A colleague of mine is under extreme stress, he knows that if he can't cope with mean by masculine [macho] management, a more feminine culture might recognize and find a way to resolve the problems...management are just as macho as the fire fighters</p>
Sub O.	<p>Yes – the macho culture is self-perpetuating...blokes can't see the benefits of change difficult to make any changes...every thing is a threat.</p>
Fire Fighter	<p>Yes – but it depends what you mean by moving forward – women are not necessarily present The culture perpetuates status quo – new blood will help change...younger blokes might</p>

<b>1.5 How strong is 'the need to fit in' within Fire Service culture?</b>	
ADO	Extreme...absolutely vital...a 'square peg' will be rejected. Having said that, once to the hilt. Unfortunately, women will be even more under the spotlight, at least until change.
Sub O.	Very strong – its like your not allowed an opinion until you have done a few years or you will be ostracised. On some watches the banter is particularly strong...its often directed at women...like unless you're tough you must be queer. A new recruit goes through a process to establish their position in the pecking order – at the bottom of the pile!
Fire Fighter	There is a very strong need to fit in...any woman coming in must be an HB [honorary brother]  We have to be a team...you can't be a square peg in a round hole...its particularly difficult for women to fit in you will get ostracised...I've seen victimisation and intimidation. [For example, if you are not doing what its supposed to, like not training properly, and you want to train, you will be ostracised otherwise your life will be made hell. The only thing to do is get moved...its full of negative attitudes...you have to fit in with the group you are working with.

## 2. POSITIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

<b>2.1 Do you feel that targeting women for recruitment by taking positive action is a fair and balance?</b>	
ADO	Yes but it is not without it's difficulties. A lot of damage has been caused by 'back' I think it's a good idea but [within the Service] we've done it badly...the 'sold' as a good thing.
Sub O.	This is a difficult question to answer...even though I can see the need to help women fair to everyone...positive action is morally wrong. Some things we have done, I to discard a man with the right qualifications because he's a man and to let in a woman because we've been given targets has got to be unfair. I can see the benefits but badly...poor information...its not been explained properly.
Fire Fighter	No – as I said before there is no need for women in the Fire Service...its being done pu Its totally unfair to fast track minorities. Alright, women are under-represented but an unfair advantage just because we've been given targets by politicians...w quotas...this is a major cause of resentment in my view.

<b>2.2 In your opinion have recruitment standards been lowered in recent years to attract underrepresented groups?</b>	
ADO	I believe that there is a general perception that standards have been lowered. In p make the process fair and justifiable...this provides easy ammunition for those lowered.  There is a fine balance between justification and health and safety.
Sub O.	I think blokes feel that it's easier because it's not the 'beasting' it used to structured...we can't justify the way we used to treat people...it was unfair to men let al
Fire Fighter	Yes. [For example?] The height restriction has been removed this has got health reach the ladder as part of a team I'm going to get more of the load...people will get inj

	<p>Some of the changes are fairer but the trouble is I don't trust the managers in charge set requirements for recruitment but its open to abuse...they bend the rules to get carried out by some independent group.</p>
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**2.3 Do you believe that it is necessary for the Fire Service to reflect a broad cross-section of society?**

ADO	Yes [see 1.1]
Sub O.	Yes – because we’re part of society...being an all white male organization might staff will help us to work with the public.
Fire Fighter	No – as long as the job gets done efficiently what does it matter who puts the fires out.  Any way I don’t believe that it is achievable, look at the effort we have put in to t only got a few...its quite clear that most of them don’t want to be firemen...all we cut corners.

## 2.4 Is equal opportunities training necessary?

ADO	Yes – From my experience, when interviewing people for promotion, I have enlightened...the older are not so positive...I believe education is essential.
Sub O.	Yes...to educate...to open their minds. There's a misperception about what equal to be hit with...to comply with...they don't see the positive aspects.
Fire Fighter	Yes – equal ops has never been an issue before we need it to raise awareness...there's  [What should be the thrust of this training?] We need to know what is acceptable and w

**2.5 What do you think of the equal opportunities training provided by the organization?**

ADO	It's improving...people have struggled to come to terms with what its about behaviour.
Sub O.	Minimal – inadequate...it's obviously not working.
Fire Fighter	I've had one session which I think is totally inadequate...I was surprised, I wasn't my views were quite moderate compared to some. It was tick box training it...there's the usual lack of resources.

### 3. PHYSICAL ABILITIES AND HEALTH & SAFETY

#### 3.1 Considering that the job is based on teamwork how important are an individuals physical abilities

ADO	We work as a team but there is a reliance on physical strength and stamina. A good team has different strengths and weaknesses; however, in some circumstances a team is only as good as its weakest link where one fire fighter is relying on another safety might depend on individual physical abilities being very important.
Sub O.	Very important – a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The job is physically demanding and requires a high standard of fitness. Someone who is not up to it is a liability and is a danger to themselves and others.
Fire Fighter	The job is physically demanding by nature...we can't have a weak link.  There's a lot of competition in the job no one wants to be the first to crack under pressure.

**3.2 Has recruit fire fighter training been made easier to allow women to get through or does it better**

ADO	I have always believed that recruit training is about 'rites of passage' its an ind service. You ask has it been made easier to let women in; I suggest that efforts ha justifiable; like I said before, these changes are easily hijacked by people who are standards have been lowered.
Sub O.	A lot of the bullshit has been removed and the discipline is more relaxed...older h as tough as when they did their training. The main thing is that we now have a doesn't really reflect the job...its still very traditional...the training helps to per Compliance, orders, hierarchy, mental and physical toughness.
Fire Fighter	I've heard people say that standards have been dropped but I think training better refle

**3.3 Given that training would have been successfully completed are you confident in the physical at**

ADO	Yes – if the physical tests are reliable
Sub O.	Yes providing we can rely on the testing procedures. The trouble is that seni people are being given more chances than others...this weakens confidence in t political pressure to get certain groups through.
Fire Fighter	<p>Any new person regardless whether they are a women or not must prove thems This is the nature of the team, when we are close nit we know who to trust...any new m</p> <p>What I'm not confident in is the procedure at training centre...we've all heard failed the course and been given as many chances to pass as it takes...this is cl women is dangerous...management are papering over the cracks...changing the 1 moment the confidence in recruits coming out of training school is low...not management interference.</p>

**3.4 Upon returning to work from maternity leave are you confident that women would receive the n**

ADO	No – we can't even provide the necessary refresher training within our existing set up.
Sub O.	No – there's not enough resources it will be botched.
Fire Fighter	No – there's not enough facilities now.

**3.5 Would you feel more or less inclined to ‘watch out’ for a woman at an incident than you would f**

ADO	Personally not but I could see it happening on a ‘watch.’ Many men have women...this would probably change as women became more established in the s of the team.
Sub O.	I would like to say that I wouldn’t as I’m sure it would be patronising; however, t need to look after a woman...it’s a man thing...it must be the way we are brought up.
Fire Fighter	<p>I would be more inclined to look out for a woman. [Can you say why?] I thi women and partly because it’s a gentleman thing...it’s the way I’ve been brought up.</p> <p>I do think that this would go away with time...once confidence has been gained.</p>

#### 4. SPECIAL FACILITIES

4.1 Do you believe that the shift system should change or become more flexible to allow people to c	
ADO	<p>This is a very political issue...I believe that the Home Office have always been loc and get more flexible working practices. They know this is unacceptable to t attempting to use the equal ops door to force change. It's a nice caring idea but its bein;</p> <p>The need is as strong for men as women.</p>
Sub O.	<p>No. I have three children and the shift system fits quite well with child care [D see that it would be more difficult for single parents. Flexibility would come a should there be official help?] No our shift system is very popular it works we negotiable.</p>
Fire Fighter	<p>I think you accept the conditions when you decide to join, you can't expect the sy think that the shift system should change. I can't see us accepting any change in th would cause a national strike.</p> <p>Flexible shift patterns would be very awkward...there are training implications and it wo</p>

#### 4.2 Should the fire service be responsible for providing crèche facilities?

ADO	Its something to be explored...again this is as big an issue for men as it is won and who would pay?
Sub O.	Yes this facility would have helped me a lot...but I think it would be impractical centralised crèches would present problems with travelling.
Fire Fighter	No – its another financial burden that the service can't afford. If we did have the station.  People make a rational choice when they decide to have kids...why should it be y them.

**4.3 Should some staff be able to work days only in an attempt to make it easier to care for their families?**

ADO	Again this is another political issue that effects our conditions of service. I do not know of any other ways of being a caring employer. The idea is fraught with difficulties.
Sub O.	No it might be open to abuse and would cause animosity...we might find that we are not the shift system when you join, if I wanted to be a tanker driver I would have to be any different?
Fire Fighter	It's a nice idea in theory but it might be open to abuse...there's staffing constraints like to get out of working nights not just those with children. As I said before you join.

**4.4 Would a system of 'job sharing' be an acceptable way of encouraging women into the Service?**

ADO	Its another idea to be explored although it may hold dangers for the Service...all feel are an important aspect of the job. Having lots of people working different greater difficulties in continuation training.
Sub O.	No – there is a danger of weakening team work...a person would gain only half the implications, like I said, you accept the shift system when you join.
Fire Fighter	No – you would lose continuity...weaken the team, I think that confidence in each other

#### 4. Special Facilities

4.5 Should staff be able to take unpaid career breaks during their service?	
ADO	Yes, for child care
Sub O.	Yes, but I think it should be limited to a maximum of say five weeks triennially. which we probably could not cope with.
Fire Fighter	Yes – this is a good idea. It should not be restricted to family care it would all further their education. If you could afford to lose you income this is a good thing.