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Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse, and Harassment in Fire Departments

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Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse, and Harassment in Fire Departments

John C. Griffith and Donna L. Roberts

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Abstract

Firefighters are heroes who save lives and protect property. They are highly revered in societies all around the world and perform under the most stressful of conditions. Drawing on literature from the United States (USA), this chapter

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reviews the culture, demographics and changing mission of the fire service as a backdrop to workplace harassment and bullying issues. The fire service has unique organizational dynamics that can lead to harassment and bullying and, at the same time, are the critical reasons for working to eliminate intentional and unintentional unfair treatment of women and minorities. Recent literature and studies show that the battle to eradicate harassment and bullying is far from over. More women than men perceived differential treatment based on gender, race and sexual orientation. Moreover, more women than men have reported ill-fitting equipment issues in multiple studies. Recommended solutions include ensuring harassment and bullying are not tolerated by verifying all know that a policy exists and how to follow it. Fire stations should be designed to ensure women have separate sleeping quarters and showers, which afford privacy. Fire station leadership should also ensure firefighting equipment issued to its members fit (to include female-sized equipment and turnout gear) so that firefighters have confidence that the equipment will protect them while they save others. The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) has taken steps to identify areas of bullying and discrimination and is working diligently to enforce and develop effective strategies to mitigate these issues. Future research should include continued studies of the US fire service as well as studies of non-US fire services. Additional research should also focus on the effects of bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination on bystanders and volunteer firefighters.

1 Introduction

In a world where one minute firefighters may be cooking together and in the next pulling each other out of a collapsed building, camaraderie is certainly necessary. Trust is essential. Teamwork is vital. In 2015, there were over 1.3 million fires reported in the USA, resulting in 3280 civilian deaths, approximately 15,700 civilian injuries and damage to property of over \$14 billion (National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], 2015). A total of 69 firefighters died in 2015 (Fahy, LeBlanc, & Molis, 2017). Changes in mission and demographics over the past 20 years make fire stations a unique environment to explore workplace bullying, emotional abuse and harassment.

This chapter explores the unique workplace of the firehouse, its strengths and weaknesses with regard to interpersonal dynamics and its role in creating a safe and healthy future for all its members, with a specific focus on the US fire service. The USA has conducted a great amount of research with regard to issues women and minorities are experiencing in the fire service. Research in other countries is not as extensive as in the USA. The authors acknowledge that the great majority of firefighters set the standard for professionalism and do not engage in discrimination or bullying in any way. This chapter in no way means to discredit the many ethical firefighters who sacrifice their lives and safety for others each day. Firefighters have a vastly different work setting from most people. Monthly schedules can be ten 24-h

shifts a month where firefighters work, eat and live together. This work culture is different than most people will experience.

2 A Typical Day for a Firefighter

A firefighter's shift starts around 8 am. Firefighters will report to work, change into their uniforms and relieve the outgoing shift. The first order of the day is to check personal protective equipment or turnout gear which includes pants, jacket, gloves, helmet, mask and air pack. Fire engines are checked for fluid levels and tyre pressure. The engines are operationally checked to ensure lights, sirens and other equipment are in working order. After the early morning checks are completed, the fire crew and company officer will meet to discuss the schedule for the day. Daily activities can include fire training or community outreach.

Required physical fitness training is typically scheduled for later in the day. Firefighters may also be involved in pre-fire planning or other activities. Late afternoon consists of dinner and kitchen clean-up. Families of firefighters will sometimes come to visit during the evening.

Firefighters will go to sleep around 10 pm with turnout pants and boots near the bed so if the alarm goes off, they can have their boots and pants on before fully standing up. Jackets, gloves, helmets, masks and air packs are pre-positioned, enabling fast muster time to the assigned engine. Everyone has a predefined role once the alarm goes off. If no emergency calls come in during the night, firefighters will rise early and eat breakfast before shift change. Most firefighters will be off for 48 h before returning to the station for their next shift (Virginia Beach City Government, 2017). Firefighters are expected to always be ready to handle any emergency they face.

3 Public Expectations of Firefighters

Firefighters are first responders whom the public looks to when tragedy strikes. In the USA, firefighters are required to respond to fires, car accidents, medical emergencies, hazardous material situations and even victim rescue procedures in situations ranging from floods to malfunctioning amusement park rides. When firefighters arrive at an accident site, the fire chief is typically the "on-scene" commander who has to make quick and accurate life-and-death decisions. The public looks to firefighters expecting that the crews can handle any situation they are faced with. Firefighter priorities are life safety and then property conservation, in that order (Reardon, 2015). Because of the extreme job requirements and public expectations, fire crews are highly trained cohesive units. Firefighters typically complete fire academy training where they learn what causes fires and the latest techniques of how to safely extinguish them. This training includes fighting live fires in full "turnout" gear and learning the significance and limitations of their protective mask, air pack and equipment. Firefighters also train in first aid, but many firefighters take that training one step further and become paramedics to provide medical care in

any situation from broken bones to heart attack. Paramedics undergo training which includes anatomy and physiology as well as advanced life support, advanced paediatric life support and basic trauma life support (Emergency Medical Services, 2016). Few occupations demand as much from their members.

4 Culture of Uniformity

The public demands high efficiency under stressful situations along with the unique work environment of 24-h shifts where firefighters work and live together which helps make for a unique culture within the firehouse. Firefighters must know their roles well and be interchangeable. Standardization of training, skills, language and behaviour is encouraged. This section examines the relationship between the organizational culture and bullying behaviours, highlighting the reciprocal relationship of cause and effect in which established dynamics can serve to normalize, justify and perpetuate a hostile environment. Workplace bullying is not an isolated event but rather develops and perpetuates as an integrated aspect of the organization's interactive culture (Salin & Hoel, 2011), specifically related to the established interpersonal, structural and communicative practices (Lipinski & Crothers, 2014).

Firefighters need to depend on each other in potentially life-and-death situations. A strong focus on training, procedures and competence is necessary. Firefighters must possess requisite sets of skills to operate effectively in their roles. Requirements increase as firefighters move up the ranks. These skills range from donning turnout gear in 60 s to properly "clearing a room" in a house fire to conducting a 360° on-scene assessment, depending on a firefighter's role. Procedures are a critical engrained part of training to enable firefighters to "fall back on your training" in emergency situations increasing the firefighter's ability to survive in dynamic and stressful situations. This training is designed and is very successful in saving lives. Similar training and procedures which are consistently reinforced lead to uniformity. Uniformity of thoughts and actions are seen as positive attributes in team members who are viewed as interchangeable. Firefighters are expected to act and look similar, even down to their uniforms. Firefighting units are called brigades and identified by station and engine numbers similar to military units.

The fire service is traditionally characterized by a strong paramilitary culture that values hierarchical rank structure, a prescriptive and authoritarian discipline code, time-honoured masculine rituals and loyal in-group cohesion. Additionally, there is a self-perpetuating aspect of the work culture that demands acceptance and tolerance of the group traditions that is sometimes extended to include incidences of hazing, pranks, "horseplay" or even sexism and racism, in order to attain group acceptance.

Aspects that can strengthen the uniformity of a team can be a two-edged sword. Some insiders argue that the unique environment of a firehouse facilitates a professional bonding that may appear unconventional to outsiders, but that helps team cohesion under some of the most stressful and dangerous situations. Others argue that what is often passed off as harmless horseplay often actually degenerates into incidences of assault, battery and civil rights violations, citing dozens of documented

cases of severe injury, mistreatment and even death. Speaking to this dichotomy, Archer (1999, pp. 94–95) notes:

Within the operational activities of the Fire Service is a culture based on power, that is to say rank and position with undisputed obedience to orders and instructions is appropriate and does involve sympathetic activities. To this end, the Fire Service is very effective in its primary role of fire-fighting and rescue. The difficulties experienced within managerial and interpersonal relationships surface within the non-operational periods of activity where the cultures of power and bureaucracy (or role) form an uneasy alliance.

However, the very nature of the profession demands that firefighters accept the commands given to them by company officers who may send them into harm's way. This requires common views of the chain of command, common attitudes and a uniform set of knowledge, skills and abilities to perform under difficult situations. Just as firefighters put the safety of potential victims above their own, firefighters also are trained to put the needs of their unit or crew above themselves. Teamwork and cohesion are critical to effective firefighting.

4.1 Cohesion

Because firefighters go through similar training, wear uniforms and deal with “victims during the worst day of their lives”, camaraderie and respect exists between firefighters. This camaraderie reinforces norms and behaviours that—for the most part—benefit the firefighting community as a whole. During the 2017 Fire Department Instructors Conference, firefighters representing departments from across the USA gathered in Indianapolis, Indiana. At precisely 1:30 pm during the conference, over 200 firefighters followed an honour guard procession which included bagpipe players in a climb into the stands at Lucas Oil Stadium to honour the 343 firefighters of the New York City Fire Department who perished during the collapse of the two 110-storey World Trade Centre towers in the 9/11 attacks. Most of the firefighters wore full turnout gear including tanks. Several firefighters rang a bell during the climb to honour a fallen firefighter (National Fallen Firefighters Foundation [NFFF], 2017a). The motto of “Everyone Goes Home” is a central theme to their training and culture (NFFF, 2017b).

Training, culture and ethos set firefighters apart from the society they serve. Although firefighters have similar cultural aspects to the military and police force, they are indeed a separate subculture with skills and experience that is rarely duplicated by non-firefighters. As with any homogeneous tight-knit group, norms evolve that help set this special group apart and reinforce its unique identity. The only way to break into this group is through training, being placed in a station and exhibiting competence, all according to specific rules. These rules can be written into formal procedures and unwritten based on group norms. Adherence to these rules is key for any firefighter to be accepted into the group. Firefighters depend on each other in extremely stressful situations. Interchangeability and predictability of the group's members are key to cohesion and trust.

5 Precipitating Factors to Bullying in the Fire Station

We do not live in a static world and the same is true for the US fire service, which is currently being faced with two difficulties: “What happens when an organization undergoes long-term mission changes requiring new skills and different balances of power?” Additionally, “what happens when a highly structured homogenous culture introduces a higher percentage of new members who are of a different gender and race?” Added to these factors are the day-to-day strains on firefighters and their families from the demands and stresses of the job. These factors may result in intentional and unintentional discrimination through hazing, bullying and other behaviours.

5.1 Changing Missions

The public perception of firefighters is that of a person in turnout gear coming out of a burning building with a victim in his or her arms. In 1986, approximately one out of five calls fire departments in the USA responded to were for actual fires. By 2015, those numbers decreased to only 1 out of 20. Medical calls constituted 54% of all calls in 1986. Out of over 33 million calls in 2015, 64% were for medical emergencies (NFPA, 2017a). Only 4% of calls fire departments responded to were coded as fires. An additional 4% were to support “Mutual Aid” agreements, which typically involve larger-scale emergencies to include fires. The other 92% of calls firefighters responded to were for other reasons such as medical aid, false alarms and hazardous materials. The full breakdown is shown in Fig. 1.

In real numbers, US firefighters responded to 1.3 million fires in 2015. This number is down from the 2.27 million fires responded to in 1986. Due to prevention efforts and expanding responsibilities of the fire service, a more diverse set of skills is needed to satisfy the mission of the US fire service. In particular, medical calls are increasing inversely to the rate of fire calls. Changing skill sets have the potential to upset the balance of power in the fire station requiring new certifications and procedures. This along with changing demographics leads to a situation that can make it difficult for new members to be accepted by “traditional” firefighters.

6 Changing Demographics of the US Career Fire Service

Over that same period of time, the number and proportion of paid US firefighters has changed. In 1986, the USA employed 205,000 paid firefighters. By 2012, that number increased to 295,000. The percentage of female firefighters increased from 1.9% in 1986 to 3.4% in 2012. Most of that increase has occurred since 1998. Currently, there are approximately 13,750 women in the fire service. Statistics from the 2015 Fire Department Profile Report indicated that women still represented only 7.3% of the total population of US firefighters, ranking it in the lowest 11% of all occupations with regard to inclusion of female employees. Breaking that number

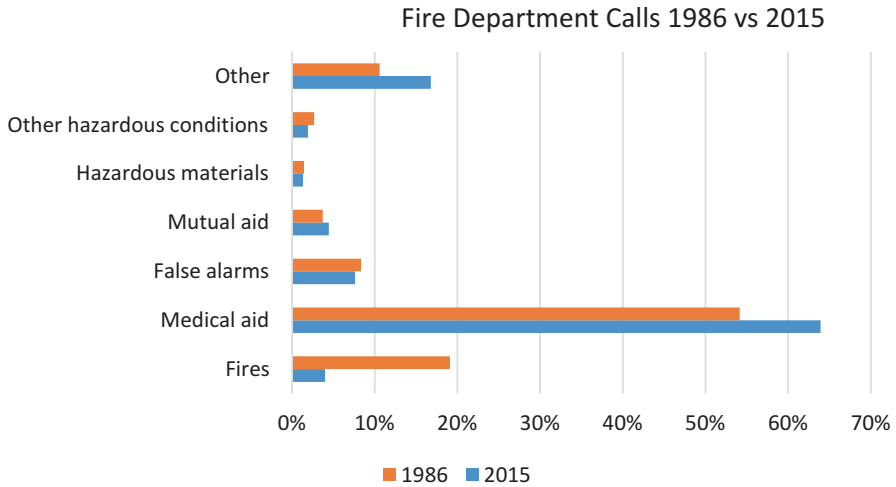


Fig. 1 Types of fire calls. Data adapted from “Fire Department Calls” (2017a). NFPA from 1986 and 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.nfpa.org/news-and-research/fire-statistics-and-reports/fire-statistics/the-fire-service/fire-department-calls/fire-department-calls>

down further, females represented 3.7% of the career firefighters and 8.9% of the volunteer firefighters. The proportion of black firefighters has held steady at around 8%. Firefighters of Hispanic origin increased from 4.4% to just under 10% (NFPA, 2017b). In all, the percentage of non-white male firefighters has increased from 14% of the force to 22% between 1986 and 2012 (Haynes & Stein, 2017). These numbers are not unique to the US fire service.

Friction can result any time there is a changing mission, which requires new skills, along with a changing gender and racial mix of the workforce. The US fire service is currently facing these changes. Some fire stations are handling the mission and workforce changes well. Others are having difficulty. Misunderstandings occur when an ingrained culture has new members who are different from the white male-dominated workforce. Due to the internal dynamics of most fire departments, questions minority firefighters contend with include: Are women strong enough to handle the physical rigours of firefighting? Will males help women to develop a productive career? Are promotions fair between genders? This uneasiness sometimes leads to friction. Many women argue that the bar is set even higher for them because they are “breaking in” to a male-dominated industry. Make no mistake, every new firefighter must prove themselves to their co-workers. One of the authors of this chapter has experienced this idea at first hand. There are few examples in life that duplicate being in a room that is on fire with other people depending on each other to not panic and do the right things. People have to believe their teammates know what to do and feel that they can rely on each other in emergencies. Research has shown, however, that some in the white male minority make it more difficult for women and minorities to succeed in the fire service, as we will discuss later in this chapter. In the US fire service, the most common types of mistreatment include discrimination and hazing.

6.1 Discrimination

Intentional discrimination is when one person makes an active attempt to treat a co-worker of a different gender, race or ethnic background differently because they are different. These actions can include teasing, bullying, making it difficult for victims to perform their jobs, holding victims to higher standards than everyone else and using different criteria for promotions and using hiring practices that limit minority participation. Unintentional discrimination can include actions that make the workplace more hostile. A good example is a calendar of a scantily clad woman hung where everyone can see, including female firefighters. Obviously, leadership has the responsibility to eliminate both intentional and unintentional forms of discrimination. Leadership needs to have a process in place to deal with perceived discrimination when incidences occur.

Clearly there is polarized debate about what constitutes incivility and abuse in various contexts, its prevalence and what action should be taken in response to incidents of workplace bullying. The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) defined workplace bullying as “repeated mistreatment; abusive conduct that is: threatening, humiliating, or intimidating, work sabotage, or verbal abuse” in their 2014 National Survey (p. 3). Some bullying has a direct impact on the career of the victim and could be classified as a more direct “attack”. Indeed, a full 93% of the American workers who indicated an awareness of workplace abusive conduct voiced a need for worker protection beyond current discrimination legislation and support for specific workplace anti-bullying statutes (WBI, 2014).

Firefighting is traditionally a strongly male-dominated occupation. In the US fire service, women did not join the ranks of career firefighters in significant numbers until 1974. In addition, there are strong intergenerational trends, whereby initiation into the occupation, by way of job opportunities and professional connections, is formally or informally, “passed down” in extended families, primarily to male relatives (Chetkovich, 1997; Hulett, Bendick, Thomas, & Moccio, 2008a). Speaking candidly about how far we have *not* come in addressing occupational segregation within the fire service, Jeanne Pashalek, a previous president of the International Association of Women in Fire and Emergency Services (i-Women), once noted, “It is 2012, but we still have a lot of issues out there. It ranges from verbal abuse to physical assault to rape” (Bryan, 2012).

By virtue of their lower representation in the fire service workforce, women and minorities face an increased risk of experiencing workplace discrimination, harassment and bullying (Bergmann, 1986; Gutek, Cohen, & Konrad, 1990). Historically, the larger society itself has reinforced the traditional attitudes through images of white male heroes, language such as “firemen” and the stereotype of women possessing inadequate physical strength and stamina (Charles, 1981; Chetkovich, 2004). This can lay the foundation for gender bias, non-acceptance, hostility, negative attitudes, lack of promotional opportunities or more serious instances of harassment, violence and assault and lack of implementing mutually interdependent safety measures required in fields like firefighting.

Traditional roles in the fire department typically include firefighters, fire instructors, fire investigators and fire officers. As noted earlier, typical work rotation in a

firehouse may consist of 24 h on-shift and 48 h off-shift (Carter & Rausch, 2017). During this time, co-workers share communal space and live, sleep and eat together in close proximity. Beyond the fundamental mission of fighting fires, fire departments, like all organizations, must engage in tasks of personnel management and administration. Depending upon the size, location and available resources, this function may be performed by separate personnel departments or, more likely, may be assigned to a fire chief, fire director or commissioner.

On a formal level, there are position descriptions, training and competence standards and career development paths outlined for the various levels. As with any organization, informal roles, responsibilities and functions exist and vary depending upon the specific dynamics and operational norms of the firehouse. It is primarily these informal norms that set the tone of the environment and the culture of the organization. The fire service has a long tradition of being considered an exclusionary organization and slow to respond to emerging diversity issues. Although legal requirements for diversity and inclusion have existed for over 40 years, this culture change is not considered a priority in many fire departments (Carter & Rausch, 2017). Increased diversity in the composition of fire service personnel has necessitated an examination of new issues, including family leave, race, gender and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning) issues (Carter & Rausch, 2017).

Volunteers have always comprised a major portion of the US fire service. The 2015 Fire Department Profile Report indicated that volunteers made up 70% of the fire service ranks (Haynes & Stein, 2017). A general trend in the fire services is a growth in the number of departments that include volunteer and career firefighters working side by side (Carter & Rausch, 2017). Bullying is equally common in the volunteer ranks.

The results of a 9-month survey by the Volunteer Fire Fighters Association (VFFA) indicated that 73% declared bullying and harassment was occurring, while 62% stipulated they had been directly impacted. Additionally, 75% noted that the volunteer ranks had lost experienced members due to bullying (Holton, 2017). Based on their status, the situation for the volunteer firefighter is made more tenuous and distressing, as most typically do not have access to the same protections, resources and services as those available to paid employees, thus hindering their options for addressing the issue.

6.2 Hazing

Firefighter hazing has a long history in the fire service. Groups haze their new members to informally measure commitment to the job and endurance and if they can be trusted to keep the hazing rituals to themselves and not complain to supervisors showing they “have their co-worker’s back” and can be trusted. These informal tests are a problematic way to see if new members can handle the pressure. If they can, they are accepted. If not, they can be ostracized from the group. Some hazing can be light-hearted and risk- and injury-free. Other types of hazing can be physically dangerous (Broman, 2009).

Several recent instances of hazing have made the national news in the USA. One new firefighter underwent a water board type of initiation where he was sprayed with water from a fire engine. He also had mustard, flour, chocolate and ice poured on him. Although the hazing incident was recorded and shown on local television (TV), the new firefighter did not file a report against the five firefighters who perpetuated the hazing. The fire chief issued a statement that he did not condone the hazing and he fired the five firefighters involved in the hazing incident (Steele, 2017). In 2015, another male firefighter was sexually assaulted with a sausage at a volunteer fire station in North Texas. The five firefighters and girlfriend of one of the alleged perpetrators involved in the incident faced charges. The chief and assistant chief were relieved of their duties and were charged with tampering with a witness in an alleged cover-up. The victim was his department's rookie of the year in 2013 and firefighter of the year in 2014 for his work on over 500 calls prior to the incident. He still wanted to serve as a firefighter after the incident (Fechter, 2015; Salinger, 2015). Leaders in the fire community have argued against the necessity of these hazing rituals and have written guidelines to discourage hazing practices (Broman, 2009).

The difficulty in addressing these specific organizational forces lies in the fact that it is the very culmination of these dynamics that can lead to both the desirable camaraderie that operates to maintain a cohesive, functional team and the undesirable undercurrents that result in harassment and abuse. Among the dynamics at the firehouse, there is a process of normalizing particular sets of behaviours, which vary from firehouse to firehouse and can be positive or negative. These behaviours are rationalized and legitimized by classifying them as "tradition". These can engender positive cohesion through bonding rituals or team-building activities, or conversely, they can perpetuate, or even escalate, negative patterns of behaviours such as hazing rituals or ostracizing individuals. A firefighter victim of bullying stated: "I think it's tradition in the fire brigade that what we now class(ify) as bullying has always been teasing and it has been stuff which everybody is supposed to put up with" (Archer, 1999, p. 97).

Glomb (2002) and Keashly and Harvey (2005) theorize a bidirectional aspect to the relationship between organizational culture and bullying behaviour, suggesting that organizational culture is both a cause and a subsequent effect of hostile work environments and associated behaviours. Aquino and Lamertz (2004) argued that norms in the workplace could serve to normalize, justify and perpetuate inappropriate behaviours. Through widespread group acceptance, these behaviours can evolve and escalate into harassment and abuse.

7 Effect on People and the Organization

Firehouse bullying has long-term effects, both on the individuals and the organization as a whole, including its impact on safety and the ability to carry out the overall mission effectively.

Blackistone (2014) observed that the distinctive environment of the firehouse can foster the development of inappropriate behaviours that isolate and marginalize

some individuals. He urgently called for more precise definitions of inappropriate behaviour and stricter self-regulation within the firehouse, in the context that understands the unique culture, arguing that some actions appropriate in the firehouse may seem inappropriate in an office setting.

Social and interpersonal exchanges in the firehouse can be intensified by the hardship of demanding work schedules, where, for example, some teams spend 24 h or longer together in a shared living space and often find themselves in situations of life and death (Yoder & Aniakudo, 1997). Similarly, O'Donnell (2004) noted the "close confines of firehouse living, where shared meals and sleeping quarters can lead to a boiling over of sibling-like relationships fuelled by constant ribbing and full of all the tensions, personal feuds and intense competition of any family ties" (para. 3).

While some contend that this unique culture cannot be understood by outsiders and is necessary to maintain the energy and mentality required for the high-stress, high-risk job of firefighting (Pennington, 2013), others argue that it actually degrades the essential teamwork and camaraderie and alienates some individuals. Look (2009) highlights the dangers of acceptance of questionable behaviours based upon the exceptional environment, stating that when we allow for the "reinforcement of the stereotypes of the 'culture of the firehouse,' it provides a justification for those traditions to endure" (para. 11), further noting instances of potentially dangerous groupthink. Hammer (2012) notes that hazing rituals in firehouses represent a form of bullying, stating "The firefighting culture seems to demand hazing of new recruits to determine the firefighter's ability to successfully do their job. The most common justification is to prove that the new firefighter 'has what it takes'" (para. 2).

In their research on the specific antecedents of workplace bullying, Ortega, Høgh, Pejtersen and Olsen (2009) concluded that the type of work and gender ratio are risk factors in the onset of workplace bullying. Banks (2006) argued that these aspects and the firehouse culture are particularly challenging for women and often result in harassment, discrimination and a dropout rate that is more than twice the rate for men. Likewise, in an extensive survey on race and gender, Yoder and Aniakudo (1997) concluded that:

Research with African American women firefighters highlight patterns of social interaction that involve subordination token difference, and the intertwining of race and gender. A series of processes - including insufficient, unnecessary and hypercritical training; open and subtle co-worker hostility; silence; exacting supervision; lack of support; and demeaning stereotyping with negative treatment - combine to send a clear message of exclusion to Black women firefighters. (p. 336)

7.1 Academic Studies on Bullying and Harassment in the Fire Station

As a national problem in the USA, bullying in the workplace mirrors issues noted in the firehouse. While the measurement of the incidence of bullying in organizations can be problematic with regard to issues such as the consensus of definition and

reluctance to report (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999; Nielsen, Bjørkelo, Notelaers, & Einarsen, 2010), frequency rates range between 10% and 27% (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2010; WBI, 2014). Variations in this reported prevalence of bullying have been attributed to factors such as differences in the operational definitions used to measure prevalence and incidence of bullying in an organizational context, variations in the organizational culture prevailing in the workplaces and/or differences in cultural norms and practices in the workplace (Agervold, 2007; Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Zapf, 1999).

Specifically, the WBI (2014) reported that 27% of Americans had suffered abusive conduct at work with 7% reporting that the bullying was currently happening and 20% having the experience at some time in their work life. Moreover, their survey indicated that an additional 21% have witnessed at first hand the bullying of others and 23% were aware of others being bullied (without directly observing the actions). Together, their findings indicate that a full 72% of adult American workers are aware that bullying is a real and substantial threat in the modern workplace. Extrapolating these results over the broad US labour force equates, in real numbers, to 37 million workers being directly subjected to abusive conduct and a total of 65.6 million affected either personally or vicariously.

According to the 2013 WBI Industry Report, the two fields reporting the most bullying incidences were hospital-based healthcare and public services, including fire and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) (Namie & Christensen, 2013). Studies examining the fire service are similar to these overall trends noted in the American workplace.

Bullying does not appear to be the only type of mistreatment that frequently occurs in public services. The *i-Women* 1995 report involved a survey of 551 female firefighters in the USA. A high percentage of the survey respondents (88%) stated they had been sexually harassed. This harassment ranged from sexually offensive jokes or comments to clear demands for sexual favours. Of those who stated they were harassed, 70% stated that the problem continued after reporting the incident. More than 50% of survey respondents were subject to unwanted physical contact, and of those, 69% stated that contact happened more than once. Women firefighters who answered the survey also indicated that explicit sexual demands had been made, and 13% indicated those demands happened more than once. Of those women who were subject to sexual demands, 4% indicated the requests were explicitly for sex. Within this 4%, more than two-thirds were sexual requests made by supervisors who indicated compliance was necessary for promotion or to keep their jobs. When women reported the issue of harassment, over half indicated nothing was done and only 34% indicated they were completely satisfied with the resolution of the problem. Of the women who did indicate they were harassed, 11% were reassigned to other duties and 15% indicated that the offender was disciplined (*i-Women* 1995).

Offensive jokes or pranks while not physically harmful were also noted as a source of harassment in the USA. As of 2015, at least 15 American city fire departments were involved in lawsuits involving inappropriate behaviour or hostile working environment. Settlements ranged from \$100,000 to over a million dollars (Futty, 2015; McCaughey, 2015).

Researchers at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University conducted three studies on the issue. The first was a survey of 339 male and female US firefighters in 2014. Results indicated that 84% of female firefighters would enter the fire service again if given the choice. Seventy-three percent of the survey respondents indicated they would recommend a career in firefighting to a friend, family member or daughter. A full 75% of survey respondents stated that the longer a female firefighter stayed on the job, the more they would feel accepted by their male counterparts. Slightly more than half of female survey takers stated physical requirements did not hamper women from having a successful firefighting career. Survey results were statistically significant. Open area comments of the surveys were also reviewed. Of the 162 open area comments, 36 indicated women were treated differently because of their gender, 29 stated they had a great career with minor actions, 20 thought the fire organizational culture was outdated, 14 advised not to use gender as an excuse and 14 discussed the idea of the level of acceptance increasing the longer they were on the job (Griffith, Schultz, Wakeham, & Schultz, 2015).

Two more Embry-Riddle studies were partial replications of the groundbreaking Cornell study which is important to discuss here. Researchers at Cornell's Institute for Women and Work published the report entitled *A National Report Card on Women in Firefighting* (2008b), which addressed the small number of women in the US fire service and associated harassment issues. Researchers analysed survey results from 675 firefighters working in 114 different departments in 48 states across the USA and conducted interviews with 175 female firefighters. Eighty-five percent of respondents indicated that they were treated differently. Surprisingly, 80% of firefighters stated they were issued ill-fitting equipment, 50% reported shunning or social isolation at work, 37% indicated their gender prevented career advancement and 37% cited verbal harassment (Hulett, Bendick, Thomas, & Moccio, 2008b).

Two more Embry-Riddle studies followed replicating the survey portion of the Cornell study. The first study focused on Bullying in the Workplace which highlights how gender should be accounted for when examining these complex issues. It is important to note that the data in Tables 1 and 2 showed overall responses regarding recruiting, testing, policies and equipment which were not broken out by gender (Griffith, Roberts, & Wakeham, 2016a).

Griffith, Roberts and Wakeham (2016a) reported that significantly more survey respondents agreed that entry-level physical exams accurately reflected their ability to accomplish firefighting duties, that men and women were treated the same during the physical test and that there was a formal procedure for gender- or race-based complaints. Significantly more respondents disagreed that firefighters were treated differently due to race or ethnic origin.

There was not enough evidence to show a statistical difference on the question: Departments take extra steps to recruit women and minorities. A slight majority of survey respondents felt that they had not been treated differently because of their gender. Although not statistically significant in the survey but noteworthy was that just under half the firefighters surveyed had experienced ill-fitting uniforms or gear. Table 2 shows answers to questions about supervisor treatment and perception of a firefighter career. Please note that data were not broken out by gender.

Table 1 Recruiting, testing, policies and equipment

"Bullying at the Fire Station" 2016 survey results				
	Agree	Disagree	<i>p</i>	Significant?
My department takes extra steps to recruit women (<i>n</i> = 111)	30	47	.053	
My department takes extra steps to recruit minorities (<i>n</i> = 113)	36	45	.317	
Entry-level physical exam accurately reflected my ability (<i>n</i> = 101)	54	22	.0002*	Yes
Men and women were treated the same during the physical test (<i>n</i> = 100)	79	12	.000*	Yes
Have you been treated differently due to gender? (<i>n</i> = 112)	52	60	.45	
Different treatment due to race or ethnic origin? (<i>n</i> = 107)	13	94	.000*	Yes
Formal procedure for gender- or race-based complaints? (<i>n</i> = 112)*	80	32	.000*	Yes
Experienced ill-fitting uniforms or gear? (<i>n</i> = 113)	56	57	.925	

Note. Data were compared using Chi-Square goodness of fit test for equal expected frequencies ($\alpha = .05$). Neutral responses were not included in the analysis with the exception of the question on formal procedures for gender- or race-based complaints where neutral responses were counted as "disagree".

*A formal procedure for gender bullying should be in place to identify the procedures for victims, the accused, and supervisors to resolve issues. The crux of the question was to see if these procedures were clearly spelled out and well known by employees and management.

Results taken from *Bullying at the Fire Station? Perceptions Based on Gender, Race and Sexual Orientation* (Griffith, Roberts, & Wakeham, 2016a)

Most survey respondents indicated that their supervisors addressed complaints concerning gender- and race-related incidents. A statistically significant majority also disagreed that they were treated differently due to sexual orientation. Most survey respondents indicated that promotions were decided upon fairly and that gender and ethnic origin was not a barrier to career development. Significantly more respondents agreed than disagreed that they would advise a young woman, young minority woman, young man or young minority man to become a firefighter ($\alpha = .05$).

A different Embry-Riddle study used a slightly larger sample and demonstrated that not much had changed since the 2008 Cornell study. Griffith, Schultz, Wakeham and Schultz (2016b) directly compared results from 141 survey respondents with the 2008 National Report Card Study. The difference between Tables 3 and 4 and the tables previously shown is that data were broken out by gender. It is interesting to note the differences in perception between men and women. The data also show a direct comparison to the National Report Card Study.

Results from Table 3 indicate that significantly more women felt they were treated differently due to gender, that there was no formal procedure for gender- or race-

Table 2 Supervisor treatment and opinion on a firefighting career

"Bullying at the Fire Station" 2016 survey results				
	Agree	Disagree	<i>p</i>	Significant?
My supervisor addresses complaints concerning gender-related incidents (<i>n</i> = 113)	66	20	.000*	Yes
My supervisor addresses complaints concerning race-related incidents (<i>n</i> = 111)	57	12	.000*	Yes
Treated differently due to sexual orientation? (<i>n</i> = 112)	25	55	.0008*	Yes
Promotions are decided upon fairly (113)	55	32	.014*	Yes
Gender is not a barrier to my career development (<i>n</i> = 111)	73	27	.000*	Yes
Ethnic origin is not a barrier to my career development (<i>n</i> = 111)	69	12	.000*	Yes
Would you advise a young minority woman to become a firefighter? (<i>n</i> = 112)	80	23	.000*	Yes
Would you advise a young white woman to become a firefighter? (<i>n</i> = 113)	81	22	.000*	Yes
Would you advise a young minority man to become a firefighter? (<i>n</i> = 112)	92	9	.000*	Yes
Would you advise a young white man to become a firefighter? (<i>n</i> = 113)	97	5	.000*	Yes

Note. Data were compared using Chi-Square goodness of fit test for equal expected frequencies ($\alpha = .05$). Neutral responses were not included in the analysis. Adapted from *Bullying at the Fire Station? Perceptions Based on Gender, Race and Sexual Orientation* (Griffith, Roberts, & Wakeham, 2016a)

based complaints in their organization and that they experienced ill-fitting uniforms or gear ($\alpha = .05$). Men did not have these perceived differences at a similar rate.

Non-significant findings in Table 3 were that fewer women than men felt their department took extra steps to recruit women and that the entry-level physical exam accurately reflected their ability on the job. Slightly more women than men felt the genders were treated the same during the physical test.

There was no statistically significant difference in how the six questions in Table 3 were answered between the 2008 and the 2016 study. Statistically speaking, survey takers in this study answered similarly to survey takers in 2008. It appears perceptions have remained relatively constant regarding these issues.

Two additional findings were noted with regard to facilities and equipment issues. Survey takers were asked if they had encountered problems maintaining their privacy in the bathroom, changing or dormitory areas, where 48% of women responded that they had these types of issues compared to 7% of men ($\alpha = .05$). Results for the question regarding ill-fitting equipment were explored further. Of the 82% of women who had problems with ill-fitting equipment in this study, 71% had issues with gloves, 69% had issues with the turnout/bunker coat, 55% had ill-fitting boots, 50% had ill-fitting masks and 40% had issues with ill-fitting helmets. Of the 19% of men who had issues with ill-fitting equipment, 19% had issues with gloves,

Table 3 Comparison with the 2008 National Report Card Study: Recruiting, testing, policies and equipment

	2016 survey results			2008 National Report Card Study			Difference between the two studies?	
	Women	Men	<i>p</i>	Women	Men	<i>p</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>
My department takes extra steps to recruit women (<i>n</i> = 139)	20%	32%	.096	36%	69%	.001*	.26	.607 No
Entry-level physical exam accurately reflected my ability on the job (<i>n</i> = 126)	54%	60%	.574	43%	53%	.307	.14	.709 No
Men and women were treated the same during the physical test (<i>n</i> = 125)	81%	76%	.69	87%*	90%*	.822	.198	.656 No
Have you been treated differently due to gender? (<i>n</i> = 140)	78%	12%	.000*	85%	12%	.000*	.039	.84 No
Formal procedure for gender- or race-based complaints? (<i>n</i> = 140)	57%	80%	.049*	35%	57%	.022*	.29	.59 No
Experienced ill-fitting uniforms or gear? (<i>n</i> = 141)	82%	19%	.000*	80%	21%	.000*	.125	.724 No

Note. Results adapted from *A Replication of the 2008 U.S. National Report Card Study* (Griffith, Schultz, Wakeham, & Schultz, 2016b). The *p* value is a Chi-Square goodness of fit test with equal expected frequencies. Result is considered significant at $\alpha = .05$. The data for women and men under the Comparison with 2008 National Report Card heading were adapted from *A National Report Card on Women in Firefighting* (Hulett, Bendick, Thomas, & Moccio, 2008b). Retrieved from <https://i-women.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/35827WSP.pdf>

44% reported ill-fitting turnout/bunker gear, 63% had problems with boots, 13% reported issues with masks and 13% had issues with ill-fitting helmets (Griffith, Schultz, Wakeham, & Schultz, 2016b). Table 4 shows survey results that relate to organizational culture, promotions and career development. It also shows a direct comparison to the 2008 National Report Card Study.

As seen in Table 4, significantly more women than men felt that their supervisor did not address complaints concerning gender-related incidents, that they were treated differently due to sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation, that promotions were not decided upon fairly and that their gender was a barrier to career development ($\alpha = .05$). As noted in the far right column of Table 4, the survey takers in this study did not answer significantly differently than the survey takers in *A National Report Card on Women in Firefighting* (Hulett, Bendick, Thomas, & Moccio, 2008b). Based on the results of this study, perceptions have remained relatively consistent.

Table 4 Perceptions of organizational culture, promotions and career development

	2016 survey results			2008 National Report Card Study			Difference between the two studies?	
	Women	Men	<i>p</i>	Women	Men	<i>p</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>
My supervisor <i>does not</i> address complaints concerning gender-related incidents (<i>n</i> = 139)	34%	4%	.000*	23%	6%	.002*	1.34	.247 No
Treated differently due to sexual orientation? (<i>n</i> = 140)	34%	13%	.002*	31%	14%	.011*	.132	.716 No
Promotions are <i>not</i> decided upon fairly (141)	43%	16%	.000*	34%	18%	.027*	.731	.393 No
Gender is a barrier to my career development (<i>n</i> = 139)	44%	4%	.000*	37%	7%	.000*	1.25	.263 No

Note. The *p* value is the result from an appropriate Chi-Square test. Result is considered significant at $\alpha = .05$. The data for women and men under the Comparison with 2008 National Report Card heading were adapted from *A National Report Card on Women in Firefighting* (Hulett, Bendick, Thomas, & Moccio, 2008b). Retrieved from <https://i-women.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/35827WSP.pdf>

Researchers also found that women indicated they planned to seek a promotion at a higher rate (72%) than men (65%). However, only 54% of women who responded indicated they received coaching, mentoring or encouragement from their supervisors or other senior department personnel compared to 73% of men. The differences between genders were not statistically significant.

7.2 Perception Is in the Eye of the Beholder

As an overall group, the firefighter perceptions of bullying and unfair treatment are different based on who is asked the question. When not broken out by gender, results in Tables 1 and 2 indicated that significantly fewer survey takers seemed to believe that there were bullying issues at work with regard to treatment on the job than those who indicated it was an issue. However, when responses from men and women were directly compared (Tables 3 and 4), there was a significant difference in the way women perceived their work environments compared to men.

Researchers hoped perceptions would change since the 2008 study; however, the responses in 2016 surveys were quite similar to the findings in the 2008 National Report Card Study. In fact, data are quite similar to what was reported back in

1995 by the i-Women. The main issues noted from the survey still show those that have not been resolved:

- Significantly more women than men indicated that there were issues with treatment based on gender, race and sexual orientation.
- Significantly more women than men felt that promotion decisions were unfair.
- Eighty percent of female firefighters had experienced issues with ill-fitting uniforms and equipment which place them at increased risk for injury and harm.
- The 30 open area comments reviewed were mixed. Some indicated that the fire service was a great experience, the best of their lives, and some comments discussed discrimination, ill-fitting equipment, issues with promotion and training. Other comments brought out issues with privacy in the fire department regarding sleeping areas, showers and bathrooms.
- One telling finding was that females answered significantly different than men when asked if they would recommend the fire service to a white female or minority female. In both questions 55% of female firefighters indicated they would recommend a career in the fire service (versus 88% of men). The difference in the way women and men answered the question was statistically significant ($p = .000$).

8 Prevention and Intervention—Building a Strong Future

This section considers issues related to successful prevention and intervention strategies to counteract the development and continuation of hostile environments and bullying behaviour in the firehouse setting. It speaks to the need to forge new patterns of relating in the modern environment by promoting diversity and tolerance, as well as an appreciation of unique contributions to a healthy workplace.

Despite its known prevalence, the WBI (2014) reported that 72% of American employees indicated their employers have done nothing to address bullying in the workplace environment. While increased social awareness of bullying and its deleterious effects have prompted various anti-bullying programmes, specific legislation exists primarily for the school environment.

Currently in the USA, statutory enforcement of employment discrimination is restricted to behaviours that violate Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (Maurer, 2013). According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM):

Presently, bullying by itself does not violate Title VII or any other anti-discrimination law. Employees can sue companies for creating a “hostile work environment,” which can include bullying as harassment, but the harassment usually is tied to a protected category, such as race, sex, religion or national origin. Anti-bullying advocates are pushing legislation to protect workers who are not in a protected class. (Maurer, 2013, para. 5)

Notwithstanding this lack of specific bullying-focused legislation, the Healthy Workplaces Campaign (HWC) reports that workplace bullying is four times more prevalent than illegal discrimination. Since 2003, 29 states and two territories have introduced some version of the Healthy Workplace Bill (HWB) which prohibits workplace harassment without the mandate of proving that such harassment is based on a protected class (Maurer, 2013). Among its many provisions, the HWB:

Precisely defines an “abusive work environment;” plugs the gaps in current state and federal civil rights protections; provides an avenue for legal redress for health harming cruelty at work; allows targets to sue the bully as an individual; holds the employer accountable; seeks restoration of lost wages and benefits; compels employers to prevent and correct future instances. (HWC, 2014, para. 1)

In 2015 alone, 11 bills were introduced in 10 states (HWC, 2015). Critics argue that legislating civility is nebulous, and anti-bullying legislation would lead to an outpouring of frivolous lawsuits. However, the HWB is garnering widespread support as the detrimental effects of hostile work environments enter the social consciousness.

8.1 Addressing Bullying in the US Fire Service

The 2008 National Report Card on Women in the Fire Service remains a landmark study in which the authors recommended a stronger emphasis by leadership to eliminate discrimination, accountability for all levels of leadership to ensure discrimination is eliminated, transparency in human resource management practices, zero tolerance for sexual harassment and finally training to help change the culture of the fire service (Hulett, Bendick, Thomas, & Moccio, 2008b). Based on the data collected in the 2016 study, little has changed.

While some still insist that bullying claims are exaggerated and that the “horseplay” found in the fire services is a necessary component of building camaraderie in the unique and stressful environment of the firehouse, instances that culminate in alienation, violence or worse clearly cross the line and must not be tolerated for the sake of both the professionals involved as well as the larger society they serve.

Countless anecdotal examples of bullying, harassment and physical violence exist within both firehouse lore and official record. While “all-in-good-fun” teasing and “horseplay” exist on one end of the spectrum, severe injury, trauma and even death are real consequences of bullying incidences that have spiralled out of control.

In 2004, an incident of verbal taunting at a Staten Island firehouse escalated into physical violence that resulted in a firefighter on a respirator at a local hospital. The fire commissioner for that district commented that the incident “at least partially stemmed from the close confines of firehouse living, where shared meals and sleeping quarters can lead to a boiling over of sibling-like relationships fuelled by constant ribbing and full of all the tensions, personal feuds and intense competition of any family ties” (O’Donnell, 2004, para. 3). While this may explain increased

tensions, arguments and rivalries, it cannot be considered a reason to condone or excuse violence. The ubiquitous taunting that characterizes the typical firehouse culture is often defended as necessary for building camaraderie or even further as an avenue for building the strength needed in crisis situations.

More recently, in April 2016, the body of firefighter-paramedic Nicole Mittendorff was found in a Virginia national park, the victim of suicide by hanging. Investigations into her death revealed that she, and other female firefighters and medics, had been the target of sexist harassment and cyberbullying via an anonymous social media web forum frequented by county firefighters that was characterized as “lewd, raunchy, sexualized, crude, offensive and disrespectful” (Farina, 2016; Va. firefighter-paramedic, 2016). In response to the Mittendorff suicide and the subsequent media attention that ensued, William R. Metcalf, former president of the IAFC, referred to firefighting as a “white guy’s club”, where women are not welcome. He further reiterated his 2014 statement, noting that “In a surprisingly large number of fire departments . . . it’s OK to harass and physically assault women and minorities - even rape women - in our fire stations” (Jouvenal, 2016, para. 9).

Ferris, Zinko, Brouer, Buckley and Harvey (2007) suggested that in some organizations, leaders intentionally engage in “strategic bullying” for the intended purpose of increasing productivity, motivating through intimidation, eliminating underperforming or troublesome employees and/or increasing the leader’s sense of power. Likewise, Brodsky (1976) concluded early on that workplace abuse could not persist without some level of direct or indirect consensus by management, what he termed the “sense of permission to harass” (p. 84). Others (Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Ferris, 2004; Glomb & Liao, 2003; Harvey et al. 2007a, b; Keashly & Harvey, 2006; Reames & Harvey, 2006) concurred that organizations implicitly condone and enable bullying and incivility by an obvious lack of response to developing questionable behaviours. Specifically, Andersson and Pearson (1999) described a “climate of informality” that gives rise to “incivility spirals” (p. 453). They concluded that this dynamic perpetuates reactive hostility and displaced aggression which, left unchecked, pervades an organization.

In response to the escalation of serious injury claims, and specifically the increasing number of cases related to harassment and cyberbullying, the IAFC formed a task group, led by their Safety, Health and Survival Section, to help emergency services understand and address the issue. The task group has established a number of goals, including:

Conduct an academically based evaluation or the body of research on bullying, harassment and violence; identify typical examples of and the connections between bullying, harassment and violence in fire and emergency services; create a tool box for fire and emergency services leaders to prevent, or identify and eliminate bullying, harassment or violence where it may occur (Daniels, 2017, para. 2)

As recommended by the IAFC, future studies should focus on continuing to define bullying and harassment in the fire and emergency services. Future researchers should also identify effective strategies to resolve these issues. Fire

stations typically suffer from not having a large enough staff to handle the many tasks that need to be done. Marginalizing any group of people within the organization means losing the full potential of bullied individuals to contribute to the team. However, there are tangible measures fire stations can use in the near term to reduce the incidents of women and other minority firefighters feeling bullied and harassed:

1. Ensure women have the equipment to perform their duties. In most cases, women are smaller than men, which means equipment items such as turnout gear, masks and gloves tend to be a smaller size. Properly fitting equipment is a key safety issue that has surfaced in multiple surveys. It is hard to imagine going into a fire situation not having full confidence in the fit and protection of the turnout gear.
2. Ensure firehouse billeting arrangements are designed so women are in separate sleeping quarters with separate bathrooms. Many issues of harassment could have been resolved just by altering the design of the fire station and its sleeping arrangements.
3. Do not tolerate harassment or hazing of firefighters because it undermines trust. Every relationship begins and ends with trust. Team members have to be able to trust one another in order to function as an effective team. Firefighters will be called upon to function in high-stress situations. They need to be able to trust one another.
4. Ensure grievance policies are understood by firefighters and station leadership. Make the standards visible and ensure that when an infraction occurs, procedures are in place to investigate the violation and communicate the results.
5. Ensure promotion criteria and standards are well known by all firefighters. Promotions should be based on merit identified by observable actions as much as possible. Teamwork should be one criterion for promotion.
6. Don't allow small jokes and behaviours that offend some firefighters to be part of the fire station culture. Be sure that all firefighters know these jokes and behaviours will not be tolerated. If left unchecked, they can lead to a hostile work environment which leads to unhappy employees, more harassment and (sometimes) lawsuits.

9 Recommendations for Further Research

Although research has been conducted on bullying in fire service, more work remains to be done. One important area to explore would be the effects of workplace bullying, sexual harassment and hazing on bystanders. Given that firefighters live and work so closely together, it would seem only natural that bystanders would have a very close-up view of bullying dynamics. Understanding how bullying impacts bystanders along with strategies bystanders could employ to support and potentially intervene to help minimize the effects of bullying. Research comparing harassment, bullying and discrimination internationally could also help provide additional insights on the complexity of bullying dynamics in this particular occupation.

1. Future research should explore the effects of workplace bullying and sexual harassment in fire services in nations other than the USA. Bullying and sexual harassment can take place in any work setting with a negative impact on victims. The number of women and minorities entering the fire service will continue to increase. Fire and emergency organizations will need to ensure bullying and sexual harassment are prevented and eliminated.
2. The effects of workplace bullying, sexual harassment and hazing on bystanders. Harassment can have a direct impact on morale, but the impact on bystanders has not been separately assessed. Bystanders may become fearful, or reluctant to speak up against harmful behaviour. They also may assume bullying and sexual harassment are part of the work culture. These negative effects should be investigated in future studies.
3. The effects of workplace bullying and sexual harassment on volunteer firefighters. Studies on discrimination have sometimes included volunteers but more research should focus on this group of firefighters. The USA is not alone in the respect that the number of volunteer firefighters greatly exceeds the number of paid firefighters. The impact of bullying and sexual harassment is not really known within the volunteer firefighting force. Future researches should address this important issue.
4. Further studies should be conducted to determine if progress is being made in reducing discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying in the US fire service. The 2008 Cornell study is the benchmark from which future research should grow to determine if sexual harassment and bullying are decreasing. Study replication using the Cornell study as a baseline should be accomplished every 5 years to measure changes in perceived bullying and sexual harassment.

10 Conclusions

Firefighters are highly respected in their communities because their mission is to help people during emergencies when no one else can. Most firefighters do a heroic job in protecting life and property. The fire service has a critical mission which changed from a primarily firefighting role to medical assistance and other types of calls. The demographics of the fire service are also changing to include more minorities. The fire service requires standardized training and interoperability of personnel who put the victims they help, fire departments and fire crews above individual needs. The unique demands of the firefighter occupation lead to a commonality of purpose and reward common views, acceptance of authority and subscription to professional norms. As in any profession, sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination exist. Women and minorities report being discriminated against with regard to hiring and promotions. Other troubling issues such as physical abuse during hazing rituals and ill-fitting equipment (particularly experienced by women) have persisted. Fire chiefs across the USA realize the harm in marginalizing firefighters by gender or race. Their leadership is taking steps to formalize procedures reducing the issues mentioned in this chapter. The authors of this chapter

have seen some progress in these efforts and believe that in time, fire department leadership will find more effective ways to address discrimination, bullying and harassment.

11 Cross-References

- ▶ [Ostracism in the Workplace](#)
- ▶ [Workplace Bullying and the Police](#)
- ▶ [Workplace Bullying in Military Organizations: Bullying Inc.?](#)
- ▶ [Workplace Bullying in the Public Sector](#)
- ▶ [Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse and Harassment in the Context of Dirty Work](#)

12 Cross-References to Other Volumes

- ▶ [Cyberbullying at Work: Understanding the Influence of Technology](#), Vol. 1
- ▶ [Culture and Workplace Bullying: An Overview](#), Vol. 3
- ▶ [Ethnicity and Workplace Bullying](#), Vol. 3
- ▶ [Gender and Workplace Bullying](#), Vol. 3
- ▶ [Regulation as Intervention: How Regulatory Design Can Affect Behaviours in the Workplace](#), Vol. 3
- ▶ [Sexual Orientation and Workplace Bullying](#), Vol. 3

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