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Affiliation, commitment and identity of volunteers in the NSW Rural Fire and State Emergency Services

Anthony J. Baxter-Tomkins
Southern Cross University

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Affiliation, commitment and identity of volunteers in the NSW Rural Fire and State Emergency Services

Anthony Baxter-Tomkins

Bachelor of Social Science (Newcastle University)
Bachelor of Counselling (University of New England)
Master of Letters (University of New England)

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SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY
CANDIDATE'S CERTIFICATE

I, Anthony Baxter-Tomkins, certify that the work presented in this thesis, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is original as acknowledged in the text and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a Degree at this or any other University.

I also certify that, to the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged.

Signed

Anthony Baxter-Tomkins

Date

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I dedicate this research to my partner Debby and our grandchildren, Liam and Andrew.

Abstract

This research examines the experiences and perceptions of some emergency service volunteers of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and the New South Wales State Emergency Service. In particular in investigates their motivation for joining their organisation of choice, their affiliation, commitment and identity formation. There is very little research regarding the NSW State Emergency Service volunteers but there is a growing body of knowledge regarding Rural Fire Service volunteers in Australia. Significant research has been undertaken by McLennan and colleagues at La Trobe University and the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre.

The substantive findings of the research presented in this thesis about emergency service volunteers' affiliation, commitment and identity reveal many complex issues that require careful consideration. This research found that emergency service volunteers are very strongly affiliated with their fellow unit or brigade members and with their local community. This affiliation is strengthened through the belief that the members of a brigade or unit constitute a 'family unit'. Feelings of family, a sense of belonging to a team, camaraderie, friendships, being part of a group, trust and being one of the 'locals' are the emotive responses to the question about their affiliation with one another at the unit and brigade level. Close ties are also formed between the volunteers and their local community and this has a profound influence on the commitment of emergency service volunteers. An emergency service volunteer's commitment is largely parochial. It is influenced to a high degree by their identification to their primary group, their local community, the parent organisation and positive media reports. The sense of identity of individual emergency service volunteers and of the collective primary group is formed and strengthened by the tendency to recruit like-minded people, by positive social opinion and by meaningful symbolism.

A number of theoretical perspectives from the disciplines of sociology and psychology have been used to inform this research. The methods adopted included participant observation, document analysis including media reports, and semi-structured interviews.

This research investigates a wide range of responses from emergency service volunteers about their subjective world and the issues they feel strongly about. A thematic analysis is made from the responses to the questions posed. The importance of this research can be attributed to its contributions to several bodies of knowledge. In the broad sense it adds to the knowledge bases regarding the 'work' of the NSW SES and the NSW RFS emergency service volunteers. More specifically, it adds to an understanding of the issues of emergency service volunteers' subjectivity and the fields of recruitment, motivation, commitment, affiliation and identity formation.

A major contribution of this research is the detailed analysis of the complexities and subjective nature of emergency service volunteering. From a theoretical perspective, this research has contributed to the growing body theory on psychological contracts. It demonstrates that a range of psychological contract types is applicable to emergency service volunteers and how they apply within specific contexts and situations. This knowledge provides a new insight into the complexities of psychological contract formation and, in the case of emergency service volunteers, provides an insight into my construct of the different types of contracts they hold.

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List of acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Services
AEMVF	Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum
AFSM	Australian Fire Service Medal
AO	Order of Australia
BEM	British Empire Medal
BFCC	Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee
CFA	Country Fire Authority (Victoria)
CFS	Country Fire Service (South Australia)
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRC	(Bushfire) Co-operative Research Centre
DISPLAN	Disaster Plan (State)
FSJSC	Fire Services Joint Standing Committee
GDP	Gross National Product
HRM	Human Resource Management
NSW RFS	New South Wales Rural Fire Service
NSW SES	New South Wales State Emergency Service
NTES	Northern Territory Emergency Service
NUD*IST	Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RFSAC	Rural Fire Service Advisory Council
SME	Subject matter experts
SOC	Sense of community
VRA	Volunteer Rescue Association

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

This research takes place against a backdrop of escalating human-made and natural disasters being experienced in Australia. Recent examples are the tragedies of the February 2009 Victorian bushfires and, as recently as January 2011, the history-making flooding in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. This research was undertaken during 2003 and 2004 and examines the emergency service volunteers of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and the New South Wales State Emergency Service. The voluntary action by our emergency service volunteer is exemplified by their response to the recent disasters described above.

The work of the emergency service volunteers is unique in volunteering. Their unparalleled commitment to respond during times of disaster often involves considerable danger. Consider the firefighter working in the extreme heat, constantly under threat of being caught in the fire or being injured by falling tree branches. Consider the SES volunteer who battles flood ravaged rivers to save people trapped in vehicles or tarping roofs in extreme weather trying to protect the home and contents. Our emergency service volunteers respond at all times of the day and night responding from their homes and loved ones or place of work. They are required to undergo considerable ongoing training to maintain their professional abilities often committing them to considerable hours of travel. During these disasters family and friends understand the risk the volunteers are taking on behalf of their community.

This chapter outlines the overall field, the objective and scope of the research, the research design and the organisation of the research. First, background information is provided and this will be followed by the research questions and objectives. The major bodies of theory are summarised along with the justification and significance of the

research. The research design, methodology, definitions and limitations are explained and an overall outline of the research and a chapter summary are provided.

I begin this research by acknowledging the vital work undertaken by all emergency service volunteers. The primary focus however is on the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) and the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS). The NSW SES has an estimated 10,000 volunteers whose core combat roles include floods, storms and tempest (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006, p. 2). The RFS claims a membership of over 70,000 volunteer firefighters throughout the state and their core combat roles include the 'protection of life, property and the environment against firefighting bush and grass fires'(New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2008/2009; New South Wales State Government 2007).

This research has four interrelated lines of enquiry. It aims to explore the motivation to join, initial recruitment process of emergency service volunteers; the development of their individual and collective identities; the construct of their individual and normative psychological contracts; and how these psychological contracts impact on their affiliations and their commitment to their voluntary work. The research then examines how these aspects of emergency service volunteering affect the sustainability of these emergency services. The research examines how emergency service volunteers view themselves, their peers and their roles. It also examines how they believe they are viewed by the wider community.

1.2 Purpose of this research: what was learned, what might this change?

Emergency service work is arduous and often dangerous. I was interested in why a person would volunteer for this type of work given that it requires a twenty-four hour, seven-day-a-week commitment and volunteers are expected to respond to emergencies regardless of how they interfere with their family or paid employment. To put it simply, I wondered: why do they do it and what sustains their desire to do so? I hoped to learn the

answer to this question and I found the answer to be far more complex than imagined. I found that emotional considerations underpinned emergency service volunteering and are strongly associated with a sense of affiliation, commitment and identity. These emotive responses are closely interrelated and, in many ways, depend upon each other. It is necessary to understand these interrelationships if one is to adequately understand the motivations of volunteers. Although it is very difficult to isolate these emotions and report on each as though it was a separate issue I have tried to do so in this work. I have done this so that each emotion is considered in light of the 'work' and the organisation's expectations.

Emergency service volunteer's sense of affiliation

I considered the emergency service volunteer's affiliation with members of the chosen service and the membership of 'sister' organisations. I found that the sense of affiliation was graded and was strongest at the primary group level. However, there was also a very strong affiliation with the person's local community, particularly in rural areas.

Affiliation within the primary group was closely linked to the tendency for members to either already know each other or have a relative or friend who was a member. This provided the ingredients for an inclusive relationship from the beginning. The relationship was strengthened through volunteers' close association and respect for each other's capabilities. An individual's capabilities are important because every member relies upon the other to keep them safe from harm; they have to trust each other.

An emergency service volunteer's affiliation with her or his community was found to be almost as strong as their affiliation with the members of the primary group. The link between an individual and his or her community results in the ideology-infused concept of service to others, particularly 'one's mates' as many volunteers described the members of their community. Conversely, the members of a volunteer's community expected and relied upon the volunteer to 'do their duty' when required and subsequently portrayed them idealistically as heroes. This sense of being important is also strengthened by the media who depict emergency service volunteers as indispensable and courageous.

An emergency service volunteer's sense of affiliation with 'sister' groups is relatively strong and originates from the knowledge that they are doing similar work for similar

reasons. Trust between these groups is relatively high but relationships between members of different units or brigades are not as intimate as the relationships within primary groups. Emergency service volunteers have a different relationship with their organisation as a whole. There appears to far less trust or respect for career officers and considerable disquiet was voiced around issues of their treatment by career officers, equipment and re-imbursement of expenses.

An emergency service volunteer's commitment

Commitment is closely aligned to feelings of affiliation. Emergency service volunteers are committed to their primary group because of their relationships with one another, because of their feelings of belonging to their community and because they possess the same or very similar ideologies of service. Other considerations came to light such as the need to 'give something back' to the community, expressions of satisfaction in the work they were doing, the excitement and adventure they experienced. The feeling of doing something out of the ordinary relieved personal pressures and some volunteers said they were learning skills that would be useful in gaining employment. Once again, a volunteer's commitment was strongest for their primary group and local community and lees strong for the wider community and the parent organisation.

Emergency service volunteers' sense of identity

The identity of the emergency service volunteer is formed through close contact with people who hold similar beliefs. Belonging to a primary group strengthens these beliefs resulting in a common identity. This identity is in turn further developed through the intrinsic rewards received such as the pride and trust a community has in its volunteers, the symbolism of emergency services such as the uniform, the equipment and the vehicles. Other forms of positive feedback enhance the individual's and the primary group's sense of identity such as media reports that praise their heroism and unselfishness. All of these contribute to the belief that they belong to an exclusive group.

Theory based understanding

A number of theories were considered that adequately explained the actions of emergency service volunteers and their affiliation, commitment and identity formation; these are explained below. Of particular interest are their psychological contracts, how they are formed, with whom, under what conditions, what the exchange components of these contracts are and what would be considered a breach of these contracts that would be sufficient reason to separate from the parent organisation. The insights learned from this research could be of considerable value to the parent organisations because they could supply the stimulus required to review policies regarding human resource management of volunteers, training career staff in staff–volunteer relations, communication channels, the reimbursement of actual out-of-pocket expenses, and the expectations of the parent organisation. Other issues that could be addressed as a result of this research are the masculinised nature of the agencies and how to introduce greater female participation and how to cater for the needs of individuals whose first language is not English.

1.3 Justification for the research

1.3.1 Theory gap

These questions are important because they address issues that are often subjective; issues which are not dealt with adequately in the literature. The second and most recent national survey of voluntary work undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2007, p. 44) reports that 4.1 percent of all volunteers were engaged as volunteers in a range of emergency services. Australian society cannot do without emergency service volunteers and may come to rely more heavily on them. However, these volunteers and their activities appear to be under-researched (Baxter-Tomkins and Wallace 2006; Branch-Smith and Pooley 2010; Britton 1991; McLennan 2008; Moran, Britton and Correy 1992). As will be discussed in Chapter 3, twenty years ago Britton (1990) undertook a study of NSW SES volunteers but since then little new qualitative

knowledge about the NSW emergency service volunteers has been done, although there has been some quantitative research into Australia's state fire authorities' emergency service volunteers (McLennan 2004; McLennan 2005; McLennan and Birch 2006; McLennan, Birch, Beatson, Cowlishaw 2007). This dearth of knowledge is conveyed aptly by McLennan (2008):

> *Almost all the recent available Australian research has focused on voluntary-based fire services and comes from the work of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre Volunteerism Project team. There is very little research available which involves other volunteer-based emergency services organisations* ***other than*** *fire services* [original italics] (McLennan 2008, p. 4)).

Volunteering in general, on the other hand, has become more widely researched (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006; Australian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council and Australian Institute of Police Management 2010; Ironmonger 2000; Oppenheimer and Warburton 2000; Volunteering Australia 2010; Warburton and Mutch 2000).

The research gaps identified by an examination of the research literature indicate the paucity of information about the motivational aspects of becoming an SES volunteer (McLennan 2008), the construct of their varied psychological contracts and the exchange relationships of these contracts and the apparent lack of informed data on the subjective experiences of volunteers in the emergency services studied here. The extant literature generally examines recruitment, the difficulties of retention, the ageing volunteer population and the lack of female volunteers and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. This research addresses these issues.

Little qualitative data is available that provides a nuanced view of the ways in which NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers experience their roles. This is particularly the case with the NSW SES (Beatson 2005; Britton 1990; McLennan 2008). Considerable research into Australia's emergency volunteer firefighting agencies has been carried out by the Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre staff and other researchers (Beatson 2005; Birch and McLennan 2007; Birch et al. 2009; Birch et al. 2007; Branch-Smith and Pooley 2010; Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and Australasian Fire

Authorities and Emergency Services Council 2009; Cowlishaw et al. 2008; McLennan et al. 2009). However, unlike this research, these studies do not address the subjective experiences of the volunteers.

1.4 Research problem and contributions

The research problem addressed in this research examines the experiences of a sample of emergency service volunteers and explores their motivation to join, affiliation, recruitment practices, commitment, sense of identity and their subjective view of their world.

1.5 Overview of theoretical perspectives

This research has drawn from and been informed by a number of theoretical perspectives from sociology and psychology. The major theories include:

Social capital theory explains the 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arises from them' (Putnam 1995, p. 19). Leonard (2002, p. 33) describes social capital as focusing on the 'process value rather than the product value' and defines it as those features within a society that generate trust, develop norms and significant networks. Leonard's view is supported by those of other writers (Leonard et al. 2005; Norton 1997; Onyx and Leonard 2000; Ostrom and Ahn 2009; Stukas et al. 2005).

Social identity theory holds that people categorise themselves and others into groups by '…memberships, affiliation, age, gender, culture and others' (Tidwell 2005, p. 450). and explains the way in which the process of making salient the distinction of '"us" and "them"' changes the ways people view each other (Reza 2009, p. 82). This distinction suggests that social identities are based upon the idiosyncratic nature of the individual's contribution to a group identified as being significant and the pre-existing social elements

or characterisations of that group (Postmes, Spears, Lee and Novak 2005). Reza (2009) argues that social identity is an individual's self image derived from the knowledge of her or his acceptance by the membership of that group (Deaux 2000; Hall 2000; Stets and Burke 2000).

Psychological contract theory provides a useful framework from which to better conceptualise the relationships between the employer and full-time employee. However the topic has received relatively little empirical attention until recently (Montes and Zweig 2009). Research into the psychological contracts of volunteers, their expectations, their beliefs, their perceived and expressed promises and obligations, and their understanding of the organisational reciprocal nature of these perceptions, have received less attention (Farmer and Fedor 1999). No research has been located that specifically considers the characteristics of the NSW SES and the NSW RFS psychological contracts.

Psychological contracts are the adopted and inculcated individual and normative group belief systems, and expectations, and the promises employees assume that employers have made to them regarding their mutual obligations. They are reinforced '…through day-to-day interactions' (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 1) '*operating at all times between every member of an organization and the various managers and others in that organization'* [original italics] (Makin, Cooper and Cox 1996, p. 4). Other researchers express similar views (Coyle-Shapiro and Neuman 2004; De Vos, Buyens and Schalk 2003; Farmer and Fedor 1999; Guest and Conway 2001; Kim, Trail, Lim and Kim 2009; Montes and Zweig 2009).

Strategic human resource management theory considers the systems of staffing, training and development, motivation, and retention (DeCenzo and Robbins 2005) and is applicable to the volunteer sector because these organisations need to attract and retain productive, committed and reliable volunteers. Recruitment and retention of skilled paid workers is a 'hot topic' in the management literature due to the impact of lower unemployment and the skills shortage (Dychtwald and Baxter 2007). Similarly, because it is important to maintain or increase emergency service volunteer hours, attracting and

retaining volunteers are likely to also become more pressing (Birch and McLennan 2007; Branch-Smith and Pooley 2010; McLennan, Birch, Cowlishaw and Hayes 2009)

Retention management examines the connection between the employer and the employees and the variety of considerations that will positively affect the employee's sense of satisfaction. For emergency service volunteers, some of these considerations are: the degree of interest and challenge involved, being given responsibility and recognition, being given performance feedback, good human resource policies and practices, congenial colleagues, fair treatment, opportunities for learning and development, open and frequent communication, and organisational support (Stone 2005). I use this context to highlight the similarities and differences between recruitment and retention among paid employees and volunteers in emergency service organisations (De Ciere, Kramar, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright 2008).

Constructionism which assumes that there are multiple realities dependent upon the person, the social construct, the use of language and the interpretation of this language and of cultural norms and symbols (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Therefore a person being introduced into a social world is subjected to the language type, symbols and cultural norms through individuals who are already conversant with the world view of that social world.

The research questions are:

- How is emergency service recruitment generally effected?
- Does an 'emergency service identity' exist, and if so how is it formed, how is it enacted/accepted by the volunteers and how is it sustained?
- Within the field of emergency service response, what part does affiliation play in the identity formation and commitment of volunteers?
- Given the dangerous and often stressful nature of the voluntary work, what maintains the commitment of these women and men?

A more complete explanation of these questions is provided in Chapter 4, Section 4.1:

Within this set of questions, my research focuses on the subjective world of these volunteers and considers the similarities and differences between rural and urban settings. I acknowledge my own situation, living and working in a regional area of Australia for most of my life. During this time I have been a member of both the NSW SES and the NSW RFS as a paid career officer and as a volunteer. For much of that time I served in both capacities simultaneously. Having been so closely involved with these volunteers prompted me to explore the literature on these women and men and examine their experiences at the local level of service provision.

1.5.1 Significance of the research

This qualitative research is needed for a number of reasons. As will be seen in Chapter 4, the subjective views of emergency service volunteers are a previously unexplored field of research that sheds light on their commitment and dedication. As importantly, these views reveal formerly obscured insights that help us to understand these men and women, their recruitment experiences and their commitment to serve. Further, information about the identity formation of NSW SES (McLennan 2008) and RFS volunteers and their commitment to their roles, communities and colleagues will provide a greater understanding about the type of person who chooses such activities. For example, factors which influence this identity formation may include the effect of public discourse and the news media. These external forces help create the conditions under which their identity is manifested. For many volunteers their involvement in the NSW SES or the NSW RFS also involves a radical change to their other social activities and involves the formation of an organisational, work-based identity.

The findings of this qualitative research personalise emergency service volunteers and reveal information about such issues as their localised recruitment practices and the deliberations they make about remaining with their chosen organisation, their identities, how these identities are formed, what they mean to the volunteers and how they are

sustained. This combined knowledge will in turn, provide emergency service organisations with another tool with which to enhance recruitment opportunities. Any recruitment policies or procedures developed in light of this knowledge will at the same time enrich the volunteers' experiences, resulting in greater retention and satisfaction for all parties. All of these issues have significant implications for the longevity of emergency services in Australia.

This research also expands on the existing qualitative research about volunteering in Australia because it provides empirical data about emergency service volunteers' beliefs and observations about their organisations. These beliefs and observations provide them with powerful reasons for enlisting, training and remaining as active volunteers. The research further extends current knowledge about the emergency service volunteers' belief systems, the expectations they have as a result of organisational and individual promises and perceived obligations and how these are linked to the ethic of emergency service voluntary action. Consequently, it sheds light on their identity within the primary group, the local community and the organisation.

By examining NSW RFS and the NSW SES volunteers, this research adds a new dimension to the literature because it is a qualitative analysis of emergency service volunteers' subjectivities and the organisations to which they belong. Through my examination of these emergency service volunteer agencies I contend that a new dimension to the literature is realised because this research addresses the absence of such information in the Australian context. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (1995; 1996; 2000; 2001; 2006; 2007) publishes statistical data about emergency service participation. However, as informative as this is, it does not show how the entrenched practices and beliefs of emergency service volunteers sustain their voluntary work.

I add to the existing qualitative scholarship relating to emergency service volunteers in Australia by providing new insights about the development of a number of complex, divergent but interrelated psychological contracts and the subsequent identities which are dependent upon the agency through which these contractual relationships are formed.

There is a growing body of international and Australian research about psychological contracts. However, I diverge from some of the traditional theories about this area of psychology as it relates to voluntary action. I argue that, with few exceptions (Farmer and Fedor 1999; Frey and Goette 1999; Kim, Trail, Lim, Kim 2009; Liao-Troth 2001; O'Donohue, Sheehan, Hecker and Holland 2007) there is little experiential information that describes the psychological contracts of volunteers and that no studies have been located that describe what happens in the NSW SES and the NSW RFS voluntary sectors.

In summary, this research contributes to the body of knowledge about emergency service volunteers by enriching the explanations about why they volunteer and why they sustain their voluntary action. As a result it also contributes to the limited literature on emergency service volunteers and regionality from a constructionist's sociological perspective. This research is a unique contribution in that it extends our current knowledge about psychological contracts and their impact on the identity formation of NSW RFS and SES volunteers. This is the first time this type of research has been undertaken in Australia.

1.6 Methodology

The ontological positioning for this research assumes that people construct their individual realities. This research examines the particular realities constructed by the study population. By adopting this subjective position I am aware that epistemologically the study population and the researcher co-create any understanding reached. The methodological procedures adopted reflect the ontological and epistemological assumptions. This research as a multi-method approach and uses three techniques of data collection in the design. These methods combine semi-structured interviews, participant observation and key informant feedback. This methodology was used for the pilot and major studies. Triangulation such as this 'highlights different dimensions of the same phenomena, to compensate for shortcomings of each method or to validate the findings by examining them from several vantage points' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 14). From

my readings I concluded that the quantitative methodologies commonly used to study this field only provide a partial insight into the personal relationships, the sense of affiliation, the commitment and the development of an emergency service identity among volunteers.

In Section 3.14 the techniques used for analysing the data are introduced. They involve examining, interpreting and drawing out of the data, which was collected firstly through observation and then through conversations. The data was subsequently converted into text, and the component parts were combined and developed into descriptive subjective concepts through a process of 'Typologising' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 266). My thematic analytic procedure involved systematically examining what was said and coding statements into the emerging themes identified until 'saturation' began to emerge (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 13). The Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing software package or NUD*IST® was used in the collation and organisation of the data (Richards 2002).

Chapter 5 introduces the emergent themes, all of which describe the subjective nature of issues. They include: volunteers' reasons for joining an emergency service, how they were recruited, their sense of affiliation, their sense of pride and its sources, gender issues, leadership, operational experiences, training, perceived rewards, joint membership and friction between groups, perceptions of negative and positive recognition, decisions about whether to leave the organisation, concerns about possible litigation and re-imbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

1.7 Outline of this research

This research concentrates on the NSW State Emergency Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service in New South Wales, Australia. This research examines the subjective world views of emergency service volunteers and therefore provides important insights into

their beliefs, values, social identity formation, primary group, local community, 'sister' RFS brigades or SES units within the state, other emergency service agencies and organisational affiliations, and commitment. It also offers an interpretation of the psychological contracts that volunteers perceive to be in existence.

The literature review begins with a discussion of '*Definition of Volunteering'* (Cordingley 2000) which outlines a contemporary view of the definition and principles of volunteering. According to these definitions and principles, 'volunteers work in non-profit organisations', their work is of 'benefit to the community', it is 'undertaken without coercion', it 'is unpaid' and it is carried out in 'volunteer-designated positions' (Cordingley 2000, pp. 78-79). This is followed by an outline of the historical development of voluntary action in Australia. An account of the historical development of the NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW State Emergency Service follows. The chapter then examines the literature on what is currently known about emergency service volunteers and finds a paucity of material. This examination includes an investigation of the claimed recruitment problematic and the decline in emergency service volunteer numbers.

In contrast to suggestions that volunteering may be in decline (Cox 2000; Lyons and Hocking 2000; Smith undated; Warburton and Mutch 2000) this research finds that between 1995 and 2006, there were very significant increases in the numbers of hours worked by volunteers throughout Australia and that females tend to volunteer more often than males (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007). An examination of the literature indicates there is a shortage of information about our volunteers (Australian Council of Social Services 1996; Britton 1991; Oppenheimer 1998; Oppenheimer and Warburton 2000; Scott 1998) but that interest in the subject is growing. Data detailing the small percentage of the total volunteer population who choose emergency service organisations and the estimated number of volunteers for both services under examination is provided.

The lack of knowledge and understanding of our emergency service volunteers includes aspects such as motivation and this explains why altruism is often cited as a key motivator for joining. Other reasons also exist, some of which include to learn skills, intrinsic rewards, a sense of community, mateship and satisfaction (McLennan, King and Jamieson 2004). Other studies (Nisbet and Wallace 2007) suggest that volunteering may be viewed by some volunteers as preparation for and a precursor to paid employment. Recruitment practices within the emergency services are also examined.

In order to illustrate the value of SES and RFS volunteers to our society a snapshot of some of the responses to disaster situations over a three-year period is detailed. This snapshot informs the reader about some of the types of disasters experienced and the estimated cost they have to the public purse. These costs are then examined further and estimates made of the economic contribution made by emergency service volunteers.

Ethnicity and gender membership within the SES and RFS are considered. This scrutiny concludes that there are significant representative gaps of some cohorts.

Chapter 3then provides the theoretical perspectives that have informed this work. A constructionist perspective has been adopted, based on the view that truth and knowledge are created and defined through the cognitive process of the individual mind. Other theories are considered in order to adequately explain the issues being examined. They include alienation and self-actualising theory, neo-institutional theory and class. Other theories used to inform this research include constructionism, social capital theory, social identity, psychological contract theory and human resource management theory.

Chapter 4 justifies the methodology of this research in terms of its usefulness as a sociological instrument that contributes to our understanding of emergency service volunteers and the ways they perceive themselves, the ways the public perceives them and the impact these views may have on recruitment and retention. Chapter 4 then addresses the gaps in the literature. The methodology adopted provides a qualitative and partial understanding of volunteers' issues including their many personal perceptions and

experiences, the meanings attributed to their voluntary actions and how these meanings are developed and sustained. These personal issues are complex and often contradictory. Therefore, research methods are required that allow for these contradictions and multiple levels of self interpretation or significance to be accessed (Minichiello et al. 1997).

The way in which I situate myself in the research paradigm and the problems, concerns and ethical dilemmas these entail are detailed. This is followed by a description of the research strategy which included obtaining permission for the research from the parent organisations of the NSW SES and the NSW RFS, the pilot study selection and implementation, the recording procedure and thematic analysis, and the modifications made to the study following the pilot study. Following this the major study and selection process and their demographics are described, the use of key informants and the use of a modified Delphi Technique. The data collection process and the delimitations of the research are then explained. This is followed by a comprehensive explanation of the ethical considerations and how these were addressed. Finally, the techniques for data analysis and the analytical software are explained and justified.

Chapter 5provides an analysis of themes related to emergency service volunteers' subjective views of the salient issues. The themes include participants' profiles, their demographics, the reasons they volunteered, issues they thought might make them consider leaving their organisation, their commitment and affiliation and issues of identity, recognition and recompense. Insights into the structures of the organisations are introduced as well as the complexities of my construct of their psychological contracts. Each of the themes is analysed and the findings are reported and explanations considered.

Chapter 6 firstly summarises the findings in Chapter 5 and explains how they either support or refute the findings of previous research.

The implications of this research for the theoretical perspectives and for the wider body of knowledge are discussed. The findings of this research offer practitioners and

managers suggestions for augmenting and improving current practices. Finally the limitations are outlined.

1.6 *Definitions*

Definitions adopted by researchers are often not uniform, so the key and controversial terms are defined to establish positions taken in this research (Perry 2002).

The concept ***volunteer*** is often used as an essentialist term. However, factors such as locality, gender, class, cultural background and employment status are examples that re-categorise the volunteer as having many identities. A caveat must therefore be included: to rely on a relativistic view of the world could minimise the similarities that transcend the factors mentioned above. Operating from a constructionist perspective, the challenge was to acknowledge both the differences and similarities among volunteers, particularly as each person's account of their experiences is a personal encounter. While the term volunteer is frequently used in this research it is not used as an essentialist term and acknowledgement is made of the differences as well as the similarities amongst volunteers.

A fundamental tenet of volunteering is that volunteers do not receive financial remuneration for their actions although their 'work' and professionalism are considered no less worthy than that of paid staff. The formal definition of ***volunteering*** adopted for this research is the one suggested by Cordingley (2000, p. 74-80) who states that 'volunteers work in non-profit organisations, volunteer work is of benefit to the community, is undertaken without coercion, is unpaid and is undertaken in volunteer-designated positions'.

Pearce (1993, p. 96) proposes four characteristics of volunteer commitment. First the act must be '*explicit',* second it must be '*irrevocable',* third it must involve '*volition'* and the fourth it is a '*public'* act. Pearce argues that 'If the people whose opinions are valued know of explicit, irrevocable, and intentional actions, the actor is more likely to be

committed to the future actions these imply'. She proposes that other attributes of volunteer commitment are: *'continuance',* a commitment to the survival of the host organisation; *'cohesion',* an importance placed on the social ties developed within the organisation; and *'control',* the belief of the person in the norms and values of the organisation [original italics] (Pearce 1993, p. 102).

Emergency service volunteer refers to the volunteers of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and the New South Wales State Emergency Service. These volunteers provide vital links between the parent emergency service organisation and the community.

This research acknowledges the many other important forms of organisational voluntary work and the vital voluntary action that occurs outside of formal organisations which includes unpaid domestic work and informal caring duties. These forms of voluntary action fit the definition above but are beyond the scope of this research.

Organisational culture is defined as

> the set of important assumptions (often unstated) that members of a community share. These assumptions consist of beliefs about the world and how it works and the ideals that are worth striving for (Noe, Hollenbeck and Wright 2003, p. 621).

Therefore, emergency service unit, brigade and organisational culture is viewed as operating according to a set of written and unwritten expectations of behaviour (the rules and norms) that influence the culture of the membership and contains their values, beliefs, rituals, practices, language and history. Emergency service volunteers' interactions within their respective organisations give rise to their particular organisational culture.

Volunteer satisfaction is defined as 'a state of pleasantness and well being consequent upon having achieved a goal' (Williams 1998, p. 6). Emergency service volunteer satisfaction is attained by having some, or all, of their reasons for their actions met through the performance of their voluntary actions.

Motivation is defined in this research as 'the willingness to exert high levels of effort towards … goals, conditioned by the effort's ability to satisfy some individual need' (Williams 1998, p. 6).

Motivation may be intrinsic, satisfying a personal emotive value or belief such as the realisation of altruistic endeavours that are of value to the recipient, or of an extrinsic nature, satisfying a more tangible and material goal and which might include the receipt of payment, training, or gifts. Motivation is a multi-faceted phenomenon because people are enthused by a variety of stimuli under different situations and motivation originates from within an individual or from a situational relationship.

Combat agency 'means the agency identified in Displan as the agency primarily responsible for controlling the response to a particular emergency' (NSW State Government 1989, p. 1). ***Combat role*** refers to the actions provided under the above definition.

A psychological contract is defined in this research as 'an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of an exchange relationship between himself/herself and another party' (Coyle-Shapiro 2001, p. 3). Rousseau, (2000, p. 1) describes a psychological contract as 'the belief systems of individual workers and employers regarding their mutual obligations'.

Beliefs, expectations and obligations are reciprocal in nature and the exchange relationship believed to exist within an occupational setting is examined. However these exchanges are often individual subjective experiences affected by personal values, societal beliefs and norms and the relationship's history. They grow from and are sustained by promises perceived to exist during recruitment, during employment and through day-to-day interactions.

Normative psychological contracts are defined for this research as dualistic; the first type is considered to be 'a covenantal form of relationship based on perceptions of value-based mutuality in their relationships with the organisation' (Farmer and Fedor 1999, p. 355). The second type is the normative psychological contract an individual holds with her or his primary group and is described as the 'covenantal form of relationship that springs from normative and affective foundations highly consistent with altruistic behaviours' (Farmer and Fedor 1999, p. 360). The types of covenants that can be expected to exist within the primary group include loyalty, trust, recognition and adherence to the primary group's values and norms, a safe and secure working group with social environment characteristics, a sense of community and shared beliefs.

Ideology-infused psychological contracts are defined as those that are held to have a 'fit between me, us, and the rest of society'. Therefore they are the 'adoption of cause-driven missions by organisations seeking to establish a broader explicit connection with their environments in order to induce greater employee contributions' (O'Donohue, Sheehan, Hecker and Holland 2007, p. 5). Ideology-infused contracts hold that a social exchange is vital and that the ideological rewards for volunteering are effective inducements because 'helping to advance cherished ideals is intrinsically rewarding' (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 6).

Transpersonal psychological contracts provide the 'perspective that recognises the "connectivity of people and organizations to something outside of themselves"' (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5). These contracts will be subjective, flexible, open ended and encompass a concern for the community, service to humanity, a sense of compassion and 'voluntary selfless work' (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 6).

1.8 Delimitations of scope and key assumptions

Three delimitations will be highlighted in this research. The first is the conscious resolve to exclude the views and opinions of paid professional emergency service staff employed

by the NSW Rural Fire Service or the NSW State Emergency Service. The area of interest is emergency service volunteers within these organisations and their subjective views of their world. To have included the career officers' views would have been inappropriate.

Secondly, a geographical delimitation is apparent. This research is restricted to New South Wales, Australia. The decision to restrict the field to NSW was determined by the gaps in the literature that suggest

> Almost all recent available Australian research has focused on volunteer-based **fire** services and come from the work of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre Volunteerism Project team. There is very little research available which involves other volunteer-based emergency services. This lack of research on volunteer-based emergency services organisations **other than** fire services constitutes a major research gap [original bold] (McLennan 2008, p. 4)).

Finally, no consideration was made of the other arms of voluntary emergency service agencies such as the volunteer coastguard, St John Ambulance, surf lifesaving organisations or welfare services. The value, commitment and efficacy of these services is acknowledged but they were excluded for reasons of organisational differences. These volunteers often work rostered hours rather than being regularly expected to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and secondly an assumption was made about perceived group cultural differences.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter laid the foundations for the research. It introduced the research problem and research issues. This was followed by a justification for the research, definitions were provided, the methodology was briefly outlined and justified, the research was summarised, and the delimitations were described.

Chapter 2: A contextual overview of the legislation governing emergency services within Australia

Emergency service volunteers: Ordinary people doing extraordinary things

2.1 Introduction to the New South Wales State Disaster Plan

In order for the reader to adequately contextualise the organisation and history of the emergency services in Australia, particularly the RFS and the SES, it is imperative that an overview of the foundation legislation is provided. The focal point of Australian emergency services are the state (and territory) disaster plans (referred to as Displans). Each state and territory is required to have such a plan and its contents direct the development and operations of the various adjunct plans. These adjunct plans include the State Rescue Policy and District and Local Disaster Plans. The State Disaster Plan is prepared by the State Emergency Management Committee and complies with the *State Emergency Rescue Management Act (1989)* (New South Wales State Emergency Management Committee 2006) and is subsequently approved by the Minister for Emergency Services in each state and territory.

Part 1 of the NSW Displan provides the introduction and explains the Plan's legislative basis, its aims, functions, purpose, scope, principles, the protection from bush fires and storms and flooding and the security of information. Part 2 outlines the planning principles of the Plan. Part 3 details the control, coordination and communication arrangements which are to take place during an emergency. Part 4 details the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies that are or may be required to render expertise and assistance. Part 5 of the Displan outlines the emergency response operations and how they are to be implemented. Part 6 deals with the recovery phase in the aftermath of an emergency and Part 7 deals with the logistics, administration and training required.

The state recognises the need for a coordinated response from all agencies that have roles or responsibilities during disasters. Therefore, the State Disaster Plan details emergency preparedness, response and recovery arrangements within NSW to ensure this coordinated response to emergencies when required. The functions of the State Disaster Plan is to identify, in relation to each different form of emergency, the combat agency primarily responsible for controlling the response to the emergency; to provide for the coordination of the activities of other agencies in support of a combat agency in the event of an emergency; to specify the tasks to be performed by all agencies in the event of an emergency; and to specify the responsibilities of the Minister, and the State, District or Local Emergency Operations Controllers (New South Wales State Emergency Management Committee 2006 p. 1).

The Plan specifies who is responsible for preparedness, response and recovery at the local level and who is responsible for overall control and coordination. Therefore, it is required that each local government area and each designated district develop an emergency plan that meets the perceived needs of the areas in a manner that is in line with the State Plan and its functional objectives. Each of these local plans is also required to have appropriate 'Supporting Plans and Sub Plans, as required by Functional Area Coordinators and Combat Agency Controllers'. Therefore each district and local government area is required to have functional area sub-committees and District Emergency Management Committees (New South Wales State Emergency Management Committee 2006 p. 4). A functional area is described as 'a category of services involved in the preparation for an emergency' (New South Wales State Emergency Management Committee 2006 p. xvii). Examples include agricultural, communication, energy and utility, engineering, environmental, health, public information, transport and welfare services. It is only when local resources are insufficient to manage the emergency that the responsibility moves up the hierarchy to the district level and, if required, to the state level of operations. The State Emergency Management Committee is the principal committee established through legislation for the purpose of emergency management throughout the state and is responsible for emergency planning. It is responsible for a number of activities, including:

- identify, evaluate, and monitor hazards and threats to life and property;
- establish and review appropriate emergency management structures at all levels;
- identify emergency resources both within and outside the State and make plans for the allocation and coordination of the use of those resources;
- review and recommend emergency management legislation (including legislation and proposals for legislation of other agencies);
- review plans at all levels and within each emergency service organisation and functional area;
- produce specific hazard management guidelines;
- arrange emergency management training for individuals, including individuals employed in emergency services organisations and functional areas;
- arrange the conduct of training exercises to periodically test emergency management plans;
- assist in the selection and training of district and local government personnel for appointment to relevant organisations;
- act as the single point of contact for Commonwealth support to emergency operations in New South Wales;
- produce Standing Orders and Instructions and Standard Operating Procedures under Displan; and
- arrange for graduated warnings of emergencies to the public (New South Wales State Emergency Management Committee 2006 p. 5).

The State Emergency Operations Controller, operating out of the State Emergency Operations Centre, is responsible for the overall direction, control and coordination of emergency response and recovery operations at the state level. This person and her or his staff are on duty twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. At the district level the Regional Commander of Police is responsible for the control and coordination of emergency response and recovery operations; at the local level a similar process applies with the senior police officer for the area assuming responsibility in the event of an emergency. Each of the committees at state, district and local levels referred to above

will, in the event of an emergency, second liaison officers from each government department and functional agency to sit in the operations centre during an emergency. These officers are senior people who have extensive knowledge of their particular resources and who have the authority to commit these resources if required.
Emergency response mobilisation may originate at the state level, in which case the state body will alert the combat agency or agencies and either activate or place on standby the functional agencies. At this point the State Emergency Operations Centre will activate the State Disaster Plan. Mobilisation of emergency services and functional agencies may also occur at the district and local levels of the hierarchical chain of command. Following the response to an emergency the recovery phase takes place. This phase usually commences after the emergency response is planned for during the operational phase so that an effective and efficient response can be implemented without delay. The logistics, administration and training for emergencies are controlled primarily at the district and local levels. The goods and services required during an emergency are also sourced locally. However, if these goods and services are exhausted the State Emergency Operations Centre will assist.

During a disaster it is common for non-emergency service individuals to offer their services. These members of the public are referred to as 'casual emergency volunteers' (New South Wales State Emergency Management Committee 2006 p. 47). During operations all emergency service personnel employed by the Crown are insured under the provisions of the *Workers Compensation Act (1987)* and the *Workers Compensation (Rural Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act (1987)* applies to registered emergency volunteers or casual emergency volunteers. Casual volunteers are not encouraged to assist unless they have been registered by the agency for whom they wish to volunteer.
The capability of the emergency service management structure of the state to respond effectively in emergency response and recovery operations is regularly tested by exercises conducted by individual agencies and functional areas, and by the emergency management structure as a whole at state, district and local levels. Functional agencies take part in these regular exercises. The New South Wales State Rescue Policy underpins

the response to emergency situations. The State Rescue Board is a Statutory Body constituted under section 42 of the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act (1989).*

2.2 The New South Wales State Rescue Policy

The principal function of the New South Wales State Rescue Policy is to ensure the maintenance of efficient and effective rescue services throughout the state. It carries out this responsibility through the heads of the agencies which provide accredited rescue units and the NSW Police Force. The State Rescue Board is responsible for the promulgation of rescue policy, the setting, dissemination and monitoring of standards of training and for providing advice on equipment levels for all rescue units in the state. The Board's Response Policy includes regulations which control where accredited rescue units are to respond within the state, and should the rescue unit either be unavailable or inoperable, the Board applies the principle of allocating an alternative unit (New South Wales State Government 2006).

The accreditation process which is formally approved by the Minister for Emergency Services is stringent and the standards include the ability to respond to all hazards identified within the particular area in which the unit operates. Rescue agencies are required to maintain a register of all rescue personnel including the currency of their qualifications. Cross-border rescue operations are also considered by the Rescue Board. Interstate or territory rescue groups operating in New South Wales require the approval of the Board and must be accredited within their own state or territory; this policy applies equally to rescue units wishing to assist outside of the State of New South Wales (New South Wales State Government 2006).

Land rescue units require a minimum of two qualified and current operators in order to respond to an emergency. However, trainees may attend to undergo on-the-job training but must be supervised by qualified personnel. The standard response to a road accident rescue incident, detailed in the response policy, will include the NSW Police Force who is responsible for coordinating and determining the priorities of action of the agencies

engaged in the rescue, the Fire Service with operational jurisdiction for the area to provide fire protection, the NSW Ambulance Service to provide pre-hospital triage and care and the rescue unit. The responsibility for calling out the rescue unit lies with the NSW Police. However, should a member of the public report an accident the rescue unit will respond but must advise the police force of their activation. Marine rescue activities follow a similar pattern of response and jurisdiction (New South Wales State Government 2006).

2.3 The Rural Fires Act (1997)

The objectives of the *Rural Fires Act (1997)* are to prevent, mitigate and suppress bush and other fires in local government areas and other parts of the state 'constituted as rural fire districts', the coordination of bush fire fighting and bush fire prevention, 'the protection of persons from injury or death, and property from damage, arising from fires' and the protection of the environment (NSW State Government 2008 p. 1). A rural fire district as detailed under the Act is considered to be the area of each local government authority. The Rural Fire Service comprises a Commissioner and other career staff and Rural Fire volunteers. This emergency service agency is also charged under the Displan to render assistance to other emergency service agencies when asked to do so (NSW State Government 2008 p. 3).

The NSW Rural Fire Service is funded through the NSW South Wales Rural Fire Fighting Fund. The treasury contributes thirteen per cent of the required funds of the annual budget, local government areas each contribute thirteen-and-a-half per cent of the estimated cost to maintain a service within the local government area and the insurance companies contribute, through the premiums paid by the public, the remaining seventy three point seven per cent of the required annual budget. These funds are received into a Special Deposits Account in the treasury. Local governments are also required to maintain fire fighting equipment and amenities. As with the requirements for the State Emergency Service, the local government is required to supply, at no cost, suitable headquarters.

The estimated cost to local governments is considered problematic however. Rural local governments throughout the state receive less income from rates and charges than larger local government areas close to urban areas. Therefore, the less financially well off the rural local governments are, the fewer the resources that will be supplied by the Rural Fire Service. This perceived inconsistency in the supply of modern up-to-date equipment results in disquiet amongst rural fire service volunteers who believe that urban brigades receive preferential treatment.

2.4 The New South Wales State Emergency Service

The NSW State Emergency Service is controlled by career officers with a Director General at its head, a Deputy Director General and a number of staff sufficient for the purpose of the *State Emergency Service Act (1989).* The state is divided into nineteen divisions and each division is headed by a Divisional Controller. The Divisional Controller is supported by a Local Controller who has responsibility for a local government area and may oversee a number of SES units within that area. Each unit has a Unit Controller who coordinates local response and ensures the necessary administrative work is completed and prepares the training schedule for the unit.

The NSW SES has a number of functions which include acting as the combat agency for floods and storms and tempest and coordinating the evacuation and welfare of affected communities (NSW State Government 1989 p. 6). It also acts as the primary agency for civil defence planning and as an agency for the conduct of civil defence operations. However, the NSW SES plays no role in 'actual military combat or preparations for military combat' (NSW State Government 1989 p. 5). The NSW SES is also responsible for dealing with any emergency where no other agency has lawful authority to assume command of the emergency operations. The NSW SES carries out, by accredited rescue units, rescue operations allocated by the State Rescue and Emergency Board. It assists the State Operations Controller carry out emergency management functions such as the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from emergency situations in accordance with the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act (1989)* (NSW State

Government 1989). Finally, the NSW SES assists, at their request, members of the Police Force, Bush Fire Brigades, Fire Brigades or the NSW Ambulance Service.

Operations are controlled at the local level until such time that insufficient resources compel the unit or division to request assistance. Information is regularly supplied to NSW State Headquarters in the form of situation reports detailing the response, the expected duration and the needs required to combat the event. As is the case with the NSW RFS, career staff are insured under the *Workers Compensation Act (1987)* and the volunteers and casual volunteers are insured under the *Workers Compensation (Rural Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act (1987).* NSW SES volunteers and staff may operate interstate if requested and the same provisions regarding qualifications and accreditation apply to the NSW SES and the NSW RFS.

Like NSW RFS volunteers, NSW SES volunteers also complain about the perceived lack of equipment being delivered to rural areas. The difficulty the Director General has is twofold: firstly the NSW SES is funded by the state government and not by local governments or insurance companies. Secondly, urban areas are likely to have to respond to accidents and other emergencies more frequently than rural units and these responses involve greater numbers of people. The frequency of response naturally has an impact upon the available budget and subsequently on the available equipment.

Barton (1969) states that one of the 'main obstacles to effective individual participation in the emergency social system' is a failure to define adequately what each person's role is under the prevailing circumstances (Barton 1969 p. 66). This obstacle is minimised in Australia because established legislation clearly details each agency's responsibilities during an emergency. Agency staff also take part in regular simulated response exercises. The regularity of these simulated exercises enhances individual and agency skills and response times and, in the event of staff turnover, inducts new members into the 'emergency social system'. Members of these agencies within the emergency system are aware that they may be required to respond to an emergency and their particular role within the agency is specified. Therefore, staff are aware of and motivated to participate.

Barton also considers the issue of 'role conflict' which he describes as an individual having 'a role [that] may require his participation at the same time, creating "role conflict" for the individual' (Barton 1969 p. 67). His observation is insightful because, during an emergency, one's family or friends may be involved for example and an individual is likely to be torn between responding to the emergency or attending to the welfare of her or his loved ones. This problematic is partly addressed by participating emergency service agencies within their planning process which includes a comprehensive public communication protocol. Effective, consistent communication with the public provides up-to-date information about the situation and serves to reduce anxiety. Emergency service combat agencies also recognise the difficulty with 'role conflict' and actively discourage senior volunteers from belonging to other emergency services. This agency 'policy' endeavours to ensure that these officers will be available when required.

However, emergency service volunteers in a combat role also have the problem of having to choose between their volunteer responsibilities and protecting or being with their loved ones during emergency situations. The existence of 'role conflict' among emergency service volunteers was acknowledged when they described their reluctance to serve out of area for extended periods of time. Nevertheless, the paramilitary nature of emergency service combat volunteers and the frequency of their activities provide opportunities for both family members and the volunteer to confront role conflict. They have the chance to work out their feelings of personal responsibility and often have 'inside knowledge' of prevailing weather conditions, knowledge of resources, agency response initiatives and other combat intelligence. An emergency service volunteer is also acutely aware of his or her position within society, particularly in small communities and people have expectations that she or he will perform their professional combat role. These opportunities to confront personal role difficulties give members and their families a chance to build and elaborate an understanding of their personal commitment to the emergency service agency and how it impacts upon their private responsibilities, thus minimising role conflict.

2.5 Conclusion

All states and territories have legislation that prescribes the development of a state or territory Disaster Plan. The State of New South Wales has a Disaster Management Plan commonly referred to as the Displan. This plan details the disasters that are most likely to occur within the state and defines the process that will occur in the event of a disaster. A similar process devolves to the district level which further develops details about the disasters that are likely to occur within the district and develop a localised district emergency plan. In turn, this requirement further devolves to the local government level where the same process takes place. Any new data is then incorporated into the state Displan.

Each district and local government area must have a District Emergency Management Officer or Local Emergency Management Officer. Further, all districts must have a District Emergency Management Committee and each local government area must have a Local Emergency Management Committee. These officers and committees are responsible for the planning, response and recovery of emergency situations for their area of responsibility. Each Emergency Management Committee, at State, District and Local levels, consists of senior representatives of the authorised combat agencies and the functional areas. Functional areas are those other than designated combat agencies and include for example transport, utilities, welfare, communication and health services. These representatives must be aware of the resources available to them and have the authority to commit them if required. The two combat agency classifications are the NSW State Emergency Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service. These combat agencies incorporate a group of agencies such as the Volunteer Rescue Association and the Volunteer Coast Guard associations. The NSW RFS and SES each have an act of parliament that details their roles and responsibilities. Disasters are to be controlled at the lowest level of responsibility possible. However, if the situation requires more resources than are available locally, the responsibility for the disaster moves up the hierarchy until the state becomes responsible. In the event that state resources become limited, assistance can be obtained from the federal government.

Each plan is tested at least annually and any difficulties experienced rectified. During these simulated disasters all combat and functional agency liaison officers assemble under the control of the senior police officer for the area. In addition, each functional area agency at district and local levels also holds regular exercises to hone their particular skills. These exercises are documented and reported to the State Emergency Management Committee. These mandatory exercises develop the response capabilities of all agencies, particularly those which do not normally respond to the regular activities of combat agencies.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Britton (1990, p. 31) undertook some preliminary work into the NSW SES. However, since that time 'Australian research concerning motivational aspects of being an SES volunteer is sparse' (McLennan 2008, p. 24). Then there was a pause in research into emergency service volunteers. A growing body of quantitative research, predominantly by McLennan and colleagues and the Bushfire Cooperative Research Council, has been undertaken over the last decade into a range of issues specific to the Australian Rural Fire Services. Examples include McLennan (2004, p. 2) who considered the cost involved in recruiting and training emergency service firefighters, the costs involved in replacing volunteers who left the organisation and the profiles of our volunteer firefighters. McLennan, Acker, Beatson, Birch and Jamieson (2004, p. 3) provide 'the first comprehensive review of research relating to recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters in Australia'.

Some of this comprehensive review by McLennan and colleagues include the motivation to volunteer for firefighting (McLennan et al. 2004, p. 45), the factors that influence the recruitment and retention of female volunteer firefighters Beatson (2005, p. 3), the declining and ageing male firefighting population (Beatson and McLennan 2005, p. 18; McLennan and Birch 2007), and the importance of service awards (McLennan and Bertoldi 2005). Birch, McLennan and Surrey (2007, p. 1) consider the financial arrangements between employers and their volunteer firefighter employees, Cowlishaw, McLennan and Evans (2008, p. 22) observe that emergency service volunteer numbers were in decline and analyse the effects family life has on this decline and McLennan, Birch, Cowlishaw and Hayes (2008) discuss the problem of volunteer firefighters resigning due to leadership issues. The examples above of the significant work being undertaken by McLennan and colleagues are a small sample of the large amount of

research being undertaken. The works of these scholars will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

This research explores whether an emergency service identity exists and, if so, how it is formed, enacted and sustained. The research also considers how individual and normative psychological contracts are formed and expressed, the part affiliation plays in identity formation, volunteers' commitments to their respective organisation and how they sustained those commitments. This chapter draws on the literature pertinent to the issues in question and offers an historical and contemporary context to emergency service volunteering in Australia. In order to achieve this, I examine the literature relevant to volunteers in general and more specifically, the volunteers in the emergency services. This chapter also provides overviews of the theoretical perspectives applied in this work.

This chapter deals with 3 bodies of literature –a contextual view of emergency service volunteers, a contemporary examination of emergency service volunteers and the theoretical perspectives. The historical background contextualises the development of emergency service volunteers since the arrival of the First Fleet. The contemporary provides an overview of what is currently known about Australian emergency service volunteers, and the theoretical perspectives can inform an analysis of the experiences of emergency service volunteers.

3.1.1 A contextual view of the Australian emergency service volunteer

Question not, but live and labour
Til yon goal be won,
Helping every feeble neighbour,
Seeking help from none;
Life is mainly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone:
KINDNESS in another's trouble,
COURAGE in your own.'

(Cathcart 1994, p. 338) quoting Adam Lindsay Gordon *'Ye Wearie Wayfarer'*.

The above verse by Gordon and the work of Henry Lawson (1984) reveal an understanding of the mythical Australian character. Writing about the life he saw around him, Lawson depicts the emergency service ethos. In 'The Bush Fire', written in 1901, he describes the conflict between two families living out a hard and unforgiving life in the Australian bush. 'Wall' was a squatter and considered to be a hard man. He had a poor relationship with his neighbour 'Ross' who had taken up a selection on his run. Added to this challenging situation was a 'Romeo and Juliet' complication between his daughter and Ross's son. Just before Christmas one year Ross had the misfortune to have a fire on his selection that was threatening his small but vital wheat crop. Ross had only his son to help him fight the fire and Wall's daughter urged her father to assist Ross and 'turn out the men and send them at once' (Lawson 1984, p 18). Wall refused and was condemned for it by his adult children who went to lend a hand in defiance of their father. Gazing at his late wife's portrait and undergoing some healthy self-reflection Wall finally 'turned out his men' and went to the aid of Ross, saving his crop and his future on the land despite their domestic and ideological differences.

Patsy Adam-Smith (1984) also has the ability to describe life in Australia and the accepted ethos that prevailed during the First World War. She reconstructs for the reader the responsibilities Australian women accepted and indeed embraced in the service of their country. One of the many descriptions of altruistic endeavour in her work is about Sister Cassidy who, having trained at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, paid her own passage to England, sailing in October 1914 where she undertook voluntary work with the French Red Cross. Another volunteer was Sister A. V. C. Reay who travelled to London at the outbreak of war in 1914 and requested of the War Office to be attached to an Australian unit. The following week she was in France with the Australian Voluntary Hospital behind the lines (Adam-Smith 1984, pp. 30 - 31).

The above references, one fictional and one historical, are worlds apart in setting. However they both portray the ideology of emergency service and the altruistic values accepted as part of the 'Australian' way of life. This ideology assists in the development of social capital. Firefighting in Australia has had a long history. However, its

development into a cohesive and organised institution has been a relatively recent accomplishment. Coping with fires was a routine that early settlers had to face as a ubiquitous feature of rural life (Payne 1998). Protecting themselves from bushfires in these early years often meant '[T]he dramatic alarm, the wild ride of warning, the sudden appearance of flame and the hail of embers; furious struggles with beaters, boughs, and brands; the camaraderie of the fight and the social solidarity of its aftermath' (Payne 1998 pp. 183-184). During our formative years as a Westernised country firefighting relied upon neighbours. Convict gangs were often 'ordered out' with the promise of 'a pardon if they could beat back the flames'. The military in the form of the New South Wales Corps were also required to combat the threat of fire (Payne 1998 p.193).

In the early 1900s planning for fires began to take shape. It became common practice to take precautionary measures such as to 'plough a double furrow alongside long strips, and then burn off the strips in the early summer' (Payne 1998 p. 203). Fire spotters were used, a practice that continued until the mid-1970s and back burning became an instrument for containment. The guiding principles for fire management principally came from the foresters, particularly those of Western Australia. These foresters were granted '*undivided autocratic control over all operations'* [original italics] (Payne 1998 p. 254). Fire fighting became, under this system, a 'quasi-military' campaign – a state of affairs that remains with us (Payne 1998 p. 254). The Forestry Commission of NSW introduced the *Careless Use of Fires Act (1901)* and this was subsequently extended to exploit provisions in the *Local Government Act (1906)*. The *Local Government Act (1906)* provided the authority to local governments to form bushfire brigades. However the brigades were denied any powers or responsibilities. Changes in 1937 to the original provisions of the *Careless Use of Firs Act (1901)* resulted in the formation of Bush Fires Advisory Committees in the hope that the committees could influence their shire councils to apply for their districts to be brought under the provisions of bush fire acts (Payne 1998).

The various states within the Commonwealth underwent these changes towards systematic fire prevention over a long period. The Forestry Commission assumed control

for the arrest of fires in NSW in 1916; Victoria introduced an organised system of fire control in 1890 with the introduction of the Country Fire Brigades Board; South Australia introduced its *Bush Fires Act* in 1854 and revised it in 1913 which empowered local governments to appoint fire control officers and to fund programmes for fire prevention; Queensland introduced its *Rural Fires Act* in 1927; Western Australia established its *Bush Fires Act* in 1937 and Tasmania introduced its *Bush Fires Act* in 1935 (Payne 1998). Although legislated provision for fire control had been provided in all states it was not until the closing months of World War II that significant progress in the control and suppression of fires in Australia occurred. At this point 'all states quickly enacted new bushfire acts and organised bushfire brigades' and finally, 'the prospect for a truly national strategy toward bushfire was at hand' (Payne 1998 p. 312).

Things have changed since those days; no longer do firefighters depend upon 'boughs and brands' to fight fires. However the 'wild rides' continue in modern fire appliances, the sudden appearance of spot fires continues and the camaraderie and solidarity are most certainly a strong feature of our modern day volunteer firefighters. 'For New South Wales the reconstruction began in 1951 when a new Bush Fire Act provided the mechanisms for an effective volunteer brigade force' (Payne 1998 p. 329).

3.1.2 Definition of volunteering

There are a number of ways volunteering is conceptualised and defined and what constitutes voluntary work has become less clear in the current political climate. The federal government has contributed to this confusion by describing acts that are performed in return for welfare payments – 'work for the dole' - as 'voluntary' (Cordingley 2000; Cox 2000; Oppenheimer and Warburton 2000). Noble (2000, p. 154) suggest that volunteering '… promotes a more democratic, caring, informed, dynamic and cohesive society' and should fulfil the need to belong, to feel capable and to play a part in society. McGill (1996) supports this belief. An argument can also be put for the inclusion of work associated with relatives, caring or housework as exemplars of the above concept.

Cordingley (2000) outlines a set of common principles detailing the accepted characteristics of voluntary action. She cites and expands on the accepted definition, developed by Volunteering Australia in 1996, of what voluntary work is. In doing so she suggests '… there are compelling reasons for volunteer work to be undertaken only in non-profit organisations' (Cordingley 2000, p. 74). The principles developed provide a restricted but sound foundation for informing social policy regarding the development and determination of voluntary action. Briefly, the principles are outlined as being:

'Volunteers Work in Non-Profit Organisations' (Cordingley 2000, p. 74). Non-profit organisations, often referred to as the "third sector", are separated from the state and the for-profit sectors although they may, and predominantly do, rely heavily on both these sectors for funding. A non-profit organisation is therefore defined by the Legal and Constitutional Committee of the Victorian Parliament (Victorian Parliament 1989, p. 74) as '...constituted by people who have joined together for a common purpose and which is not established to, and does not, make a profit for its members'. Cordingley (2000) gives examples of the exploitation of volunteers by the for-profit sector. They include working for the dole, on-the-job training, work experience programs and the inducement of volunteers to undertake work that should be performed by paid staff; the latter is commonly confined to the welfare sector.

'Volunteer Work is a Benefit to the Community' (Cordingley 2000, p. 77). Cordingley differentiates clearly between a charitable voluntary action, therefore an unpaid activity, and true voluntary action by stating they are activities that result in '…real and substantial benefits… [to] the community' (Cordingley 2000, p. 78).

'Volunteering is Undertaken without Coercion' (Cordingley 2000, p. 78). Volunteering is expressed here as the objectification of citizenship and is an activity that is not imposed or considered as being an obligation. Cordingley reports on the national surveys of volunteering undertaken in the United Kingdom during 1981, 1991 and 1997 which

suggests that the 'better off people are, the more likely they are to be involved in volunteering' (Cordingley 2000, p. 78).

'Volunteering is Unpaid' (Cordingley 2000, p. 79). This is conceived of as a fundamental characteristic of voluntary work.

'Volunteering is in Volunteer-designated Positions' (Cordingley 2000, p. 80). Cordingley (2000) believes voluntary action is negated when it is performed under a mutual obligation imposed by the government such as the work for the dole scheme. 'Volunteer-designated positions' defined here refers to those positions traditionally undertaken by volunteers.

King, Bellamy and Donato-Hunt (2006) reporting for Anglicare, have also adopted the above definitions as being the basis for voluntary action.

3.1.3 The development of voluntary action in Australia

Oppenheimer (2008 p. 10) provides a sound generalist overview of the history and development of volunteering in Australia. She describes the voluntary action and principle as having close connections to 'what is now called civil society and social capital'. Service to others and the Australian tradition of volunteering is the result of an ideology woven over time into the political and cultural heritage of European countries and transported to Australia with the convicts, their gaolers and free settlers. This tradition was already understood, articulated and practised in ancient Rome and Greece before it came to be accepted in Britain and the traditions of volunteering became 'part and parcel of British political, cultural and philanthropic customs and institutions originating in the Tudor period' (Oppenheimer 2008 p. 16).

As a result of Australia's penal settlement origins, governments provided most of the financial and economic direction for charitable endeavours. The first private charitable

organisation, the New South Wales Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Benevolence (the Benevolent Society) was established twenty-five years after the arrival of the First Fleet (Oppenheimer 2008). This organisation was heavily subsidised by Governor Lachlan Macquarie's government. Oppenheimer (2000) reports that Australia during that time, being a gaol run by the state, was dependent on government partnerships for the provision of charitable deeds either through financial, political or legal impositions. The state, from the colony's earliest years, partnered volunteers and philanthropic agencies in order to alleviate poverty. There were no sophisticated church parishes to provide the 'long-accepted methods of welfare distribution and no poor laws' (Oppenheimer 2008 p. 24). The practice of subsidising charitable and voluntary action by government has continued with a resultant growth in the sector. This long-term association with subsequent governments 'makes Australia stand apart from other comparable countries'; not so much in the type of volunteering but in its close association with government (Oppenheimer 2008 p. 22).

Therefore, three factors have heavily influenced the Australian way of volunteering. The first concerns the historical concept of white Australian's foundations and the unique relationship with the state. These formal beginnings of British voluntary action and the acceptance of the need to care for those less fortunate were developed in the early fifteenth century. According to Oppenheimer, 'the modern framework of voluntary action [in Britain] was laid down in 1601 with the implementation of the Elizabethan statute (or Poor Law)…' (Oppenheimer 2000, pp. 12-13). This statute decreed that local parishes were to provide assistance to persons who were old, destitute, sick or unemployed and that it was to be funded by the public purse. This provision was subsequently abolished and replaced with the *Poor Law Amendment Act (1834)* which decreed that the state no longer provided relief to these groups except under the provisions of 'unions of parishes' that only provided assistance if the person was employed in a workhouse (Oppenheimer 2000, p. 12). Over time this ideology underwent changes, assuming its own Australian character as is evident in the preceding anecdotes. However, this transference of philosophy, as a matter of necessity, relied on the state for support.

Although the European historical philosophy of voluntary activity or reciprocal action was adopted during the earliest years of white settlement the colonists did not 'invent' this ideology; the same philosophy was well established by the Indigenous inhabitants of the continent for many thousands of years prior to the invasion. For example, reciprocal gift giving and cooperative trade and exchange were common, as was the exchange of songs, dances, lore and myths which were based on both social and ritual need (Flood 1989, pp. 246-247).

Australian society has a tradition of relying on this type of reciprocal behaviour and voluntary action and has come to rely heavily on it. Although acknowledging the Indigenous traditional custodians of this country and their strong philosophy of assisting each other, this research concentrates on the post-invasion period of Australian history.

As early as 1797 Governor Hunter mobilised local settlers and convicts to fight a fire which threatened granaries. The first reported urban fire in the Victorian Colony was in Geelong in September 1842. It threatened the local newspaper building and local residents banded together in an effort to save the business with some success. The *Geelong Advertiser* reported 'the inhabitants soon assembled and a supply of buckets and water was procured…' (Murray and White 1995, pp. 4-5). Our volunteer fire-fighters had begun their illustrious tradition.

There are many other examples of altruistic endeavour that can be recounted, such as the response by wage earners and their generous donations during the Shearer's Strike of the 1890s. This response was not to a natural disaster but a human-made one. Although a political stance was being enacted, the emergency faced by shearers was as real to them as a fire emergency. The theme remains intact; that of service to others in the face of adversity (Adam-Smith 1982, p. 83).

Service to others and the Australian tradition of volunteering is the result of an ideology woven over time into the political and cultural heritage of European countries and transported to Australia with the convicts, their gaolers and free settlers. This tradition

was already understood, articulated and practised in ancient Rome and Greece before it came to be accepted in Britain during the Tudor period. The formal beginnings of British voluntary action and the acceptance of the need to care for those less fortunate were developed in the early fifteenth century. Oppenheimer (2000), reports that Australia during that time, being a gaol run by the state, was dependent on government partnerships for the provision of charitable deeds either through financial, political or legal impositions. Secondly, the vast distances and the unforgiving nature of Australia meant that it was necessary for pioneers to develop communities in order to assist one another in times of need. More recently, the ANZAC tradition of helping one's mates was instrumental in producing the Australian 'type' of volunteer; if there is a 'type'– 'laconic, laid back, reticent then these characteristics have helped form and mould our Australian way of volunteering' (Oppenheimer 2008 p. 27). The third factor that contributes to the distinctive Australian way of volunteering concerns Australian federalism. The creation of Australian federalism in January 1901 failed initially to develop a strong system of local government, unlike that existing in Britain: 'An overarching state and federal system, and precious little government at the local level, meant that Australians often had to do it themselves or not at all' (Oppenheimer 2008 p. 27).

Given our impressive history of volunteering, why is it we know so little about it? Fundamentally, the reason that volunteering has taken so long to become recognised is because it is unpaid work and 'falls outside of the rubric of our economic structures' (Oppenheimer 2008 p. 7). Unpaid labour is excluded from standard statistical models operating in Australia and is considered as 'essentially unproductive, it's not counted and rendered invisible' (Oppenheimer 2008 p. 7). It was not until 2000 that South Australia led the way in establishing offices for volunteers and created a minister for volunteering. Oppenheimer (2008) believes that if voluntary labour was given a monetary value the work would become visible and would consequently influence policy makers.

3.1.4 The extent of Australian voluntary action

In order to conceptualise emergency service voluntary action it is necessary to begin by outlining volunteering in general. Voluntary organisations in Australia today adhere to five fundamental conceptual components – they are formal, properly constituted organisations; they are self governing; they are not state instrumentalities, although they are often dependent on state assistance; they are non-profit organisations; and they depend on the good will of volunteers (Oppenheimer 2000, p. 10).

The importance of volunteers to Australian society and national life is becoming increasingly evident, demonstrated by the current surge of interest and research. The ABS survey (2007) which is the most recent data available provides an overview of voluntary work in Australia during the preceding twelve months. It defines a volunteer as '…someone who, in the last 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, p. 3). The 2007 Voluntary Work Survey reports a change in the definition of voluntary work by explaining that new questions were inserted to exclude work undertaken as a result of some form of coercion; thus excluding '…unpaid work for organisations where the work is undertaken under some form of direction' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, p. 2). The ABS data is limited in a number of areas as it fails to recognise unpaid work, such as caring for children, older family members, home duties and other forms of what is often traditionally considered the routine of the private sphere. The data is also incomplete as it only reflects voluntary work reported by persons aged eighteen years and above. Clearly there are many hours of voluntary labour provided in the interests of the community by persons who belong to a group or organisation who are under eighteen years. Examples of this include St John Ambulance (Australia), Defence Cadets, Scouting, Youth Councils and many faith-based groups.

The ABS (2001, p 3), reports that the number of volunteers during 2000 was 4,395,600, representing 32 percent of the civilian population, an increase of 8 percent over the 1995 figure. In 2006 the number of volunteers was reported as 5.2 million, representing 34

percent of the Australian population, an increase of 2 percent on the 2000 figure (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, p 3). In contrast to the concerns that volunteering may be on the decline, (Cox 2000; Lyons and Hocking 2000; Smith undated; Warburton and Mutch 2000) the ABS (2006, p. 5) reports an increase in volunteer growth rates for most age groups and for both sexes, particularly the 35–44 year old cohort. During 2006 volunteers contributed 713 million hours of voluntary work, an increase on the 2000 figure of 8.9 million hours (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, p. 3). This is an increase of 279.1 million voluntary hours provided to our communities over the 1995 figures (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995, p. 1).

Volunteer rates varied considerably across the states and territories and between urban and rural communities. All states reflected a significant propensity for rurally located volunteers to donate more time than their urban counterparts. However, the Northern Territory shows this trend only slightly and the ACT only records a metropolitan figure. The rates of voluntary action between regions range from the lowest rate of 30 percent in both Sydney and Melbourne to the highest voluntary rate in the ACT and Queensland at 38 percent. Data suggests therefore that people are more likely to volunteer if they live outside a capital city (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, p. 3).

Male and female volunteer rates varied across different groups and according to whether there were dependent children in the home. The volunteer rate of 36 percent for women was higher than the 32 percent for men and with few exceptions, this seemed to be the case in all groups regardless of birthplace, family status, labour force status or location (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, p. 3). The general pattern of volunteering changed with age and life stages. People aged between 35 and 44 are more likely to be married with children and their voluntary rate is reported as being the highest; this may be a result of family commitments and resultant membership in children's sporting clubs, other children's organisations or school canteens. Voluntary action is highest for women with dependent children (50%) compared to women without dependent children (32%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, p. 4).

Having provided a snapshot of volunteering generally the following body of work will consider in some depth the voluntary action of emergency service volunteers. A brief historical outline will then be given of the NSW RFS and SES emergency services beginning with the volunteer fire fighting services.

3.1.5 The New South Wales volunteer fire fighting service

A rudimentary fire service began when convicts were used to combat bushfires. This was enforced labour rather than voluntary action however. Governor Hunter issued the first known officially recorded fire warnings in 1797 to settlers, recommending caution during the fire seasons and urging them to protect their grain and other crops by providing fire breaks and a '…wattle hedge…' around their granaries, cultivation and homes (Murray and White 1995, p. 4). Hunter wrote to the colonial authorities about the threat fire posed to the colony and explained how he intended to publicise fire safety in the hope that he could make the colony free of fire in the future. By doing so Hunter provided a legacy and pattern of public fire awareness, community action, and government awareness '…of the prevailing conditions to be expected during the summer months and during drought' (Murray and White 1995, p. 4).

In spite of Hunter's legacy very little information is available about volunteer firefighting in New South Wales prior to 1900. During the 19th century group firefighting was fragmented and it was more often the case that each resident had to look after themselves and hope neighbours were available and willing to assist. Serious fires in NSW and Victoria during 1896 however became the catalyst for an organised and concerted call for the formation of voluntary firefighting brigades. The NSW Rural Fire Service claims that the first volunteer fire brigade in Australia was formed at Berrigan in November 1900 (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2008/2009, p. 3; NSW Rural Fire Service 2006, p. 2). In 1906 a local government act authorised local councils to form bushfire brigades throughout the state and this was the way it remained until World War II. During World War II the federal government imposed wartime security regulations which included

provisions for the prevention of bush and rural fires. As a result, the federal government '…set up a special Bush Fires (Emergency) Committee' (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2006, p. 1).

Following World War II this Committee formed the basis of what was to become, in 1949, the *Bush Fires Act (1949)* (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2006). The Act provided for a Bush Fire Fighting Fund from which local governments could access funds to purchase equipment for their local fire brigades. This fund continues to operate and is financed by state and local governments and the insurance industry. Following on from this initiative a number of fire prevention associations were formed.

3.1.6 Australian fire prevention associations

In 1958 the first Fire Prevention Association in NSW was established. It was concerned with the development and adoption of fire break systems and other measures of preventing and containing fires on crown land. It was not until 1970 that amendments were made to the *Bush Fires Act (1949)* which recognised the need to coordinate in order to mitigate problems that arose as a result of the many statutory and voluntary organisations involved with firefighting. Part of these amendments renamed the Bush Fire Committee as the Bush Fire Council, incorporating representatives from all the firefighting organisations (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2006). In 1990 the Department of Bush Fire Services was formed to administer the responsibilities of the NSW Minister for Emergency Services under the new Bush Fires Act which renamed the NSW Bush Fire Brigade as the NSW Bush Fire Service later to become the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW Rural Fire Service 2006, pp. 1-2).

During December 1993 and January 1994 protracted fires resulted in what at the time was said to be the largest firefighting effort in Australia's history. These incidents saw '…20,000 fire-fighters deployed at over 800 fires throughout NSW' (NSW Rural Fire Service 2006, p. 2). In 1997, following these disastrous fires, a lengthy coronial inquiry was held resulting in the NSW Government introducing legislation which created a single

rural fire service with a single chain of command. The *Rural Fires Act (1997)* was proclaimed in September of that year and it radically redefined and transformed the NSW Bush Fire Service into the '… world's largest fire service … protecting some of the most fire-prone areas on earth' (Koperberg 2006, p. 3).

Today the RFS claims a membership of over 70,000 volunteer fire-fighters who are formed into 2,100 bush fire brigades in 143 rural fire districts. Its extensive fire fighting responsibilities include the protection of 95 percent of the State of NSW and 1,200 towns and villages across the state (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2008/2009; NSW Rural Fire Service 2006, p. 2).

The Service is controlled by the NSW State Government, which employs paid emergency response professionals who mange the day-to-day operations of the service. Its headquarters are in Rosehill, Sydney. Regional offices and District Fire Centres are located throughout the state. The paid emergency response professionals carry out a range of duties including operational management, administration and finance, training volunteers, hazard reduction education management and engineering. The administrative arm of the Service provides support to local governments, the NSW Government and other government agencies and emergency services. These duties are defined in the *Rural Fires Act (1997)* (NSW State Government 1997).

3.1.7 The NSW *Rural Fires Act (1997)*

The NSW *Rural Fires Act (1997)* outlines the operational responsibilities of the organisation. They are summarised as follows:

> The protection of life, property and the environment against fire within rural NSW, the safety and welfare of volunteers, the provision of effective training and required resources to rural fire brigades and the provision of assistance to other emergency service organisations (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2006, p. 8).

The three major bodies that govern the operations of the NSW Rural Fire Service are the Rural Fire Service Advisory Council (RFSAC), the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC) and the Fire Services Joint Standing Committee (FSJSC) (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2006, p. 8).

The roles of volunteer fire-fighters involve far more than fighting bush and grass fires. They are trained in dealing with, and are regularly called upon to attend, house and other structural fires in rural areas, motor vehicle accidents, and to provide a fire safety net to other emergency service professionals. As accredited rescue providers in some areas, they are involved in land search and rescue operations, assistance with storm and tempest and flood at the request of the SES. They also undertake community education programs and attend community events to assist with crowd and traffic control, and security. The other emergency service organisation considered by this research is the New South Wales State Emergency Service.

3.1.8 The state and territory emergency services.

The State of Victoria claims the formation of the first State Emergency Service in March 1939. It was based on the United Kingdom's Air Raid Precautions model in response to World War II. The service was disbanded in January 1942 because it was considered that there was a minimal chance of direct attack (Victorian State Emergency Service 2006). Following World War II, the Victorian Government and the commonwealth undertook discussions about the formation of a civil defence programme. As a result, a Commonwealth Civil Defence Directorate was established within the Department of the Interior. The Commonwealth also established the Civil Defence School at Mount Macedon, Victoria, where it conducted its first course in 1956 (Victorian State Emergency Service 2006). This institution, which was renamed a number of times over the ensuing years, has been put to the test repeatedly since then.

Cyclone Tracy, for example, was to test the newly formed Natural Disasters Organisation, the name which replaced the Commonwealth Civil Defence Directorate, once again giving impetus to the states and territories to form their own emergency services organisations. The Civil Defence School later became the National Emergency Services College, and then the Australian Counter Disaster College. This was followed by the Institute of Emergency Services and finally the Australian Emergency Management Institute, its present title (Victorian State Emergency Service 2006, p. 1).

Prior to Victoria assuming some responsibility for emergency services in 1939, the need for an Australian state and territory emergency services had already been voiced in 1936. At a Commonwealth and States Ministerial conference in Adelaide it was agreed that the states should provide resources and training to protect the population against gas attack and to undertake essential civil services. It was further agreed that the Commonwealth would supplement these efforts by agreeing to train key personnel and provide the necessary equipment, training materials, specialist information and advice (Commonwealth of Australia 1993). Civil defence matters were, up until this time, the responsibility of various commonwealth departments. These arrangements, with no formal agreement about the division of responsibilities, remained as they were until 1959 when the then Interior Minister Gordon Freeth proposed that each state and territory assume responsibility for the development and operation of civil defence capabilities within their areas of responsibility, with the 'Commonwealth providing national guidance and coordination as necessary' (Commonwealth of Australia 1993, p. 1).

Therefore, from 1936 until 1966, all states and territories had an established civil defence organisational structure. However, other than establishing a planning mechanism and coordination centres their roles were ill-defined. In an effort to rectify this anomaly the Commonwealth, in 1966, once again convened a state and federal ministerial meeting to discuss improvements. Following this meeting a division of responsibilities was agreed upon. An integral part of this agreement was that the states were to be responsible for the establishment and efficient operation of voluntary civil defence services (Commonwealth of Australia 1993, p. 2). Little change to these arrangements occurred

until the 2 July 1974 when the National Disasters Organisation was formed, led by Major General Sir Alan Stretton CBE, AO. These changes came about as a result of major floods in Queensland and northern NSW which highlighted the problems that were experienced providing disaster relief. The National Disasters Organisation assumed the responsibility for overall coordination and relief operations utilising national resources through the National Emergency Operations Centre (Commonwealth of Australia 1993, p. 6). The following section will explore the origin and development of the State Emergency Service in NSW.

3.1.9 The NSW SES story

The New South Wales Government had recognised and responded to the need for a coordinated response to natural disasters well before 1936. From as early as the 1870s volunteer residents located along the river systems to the north of Sydney formed 'water brigades' who assisted local people during floods. These groups were supported by local councils and the state government (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006, p. 1). By 1906 there were about twenty of these water brigades serving residents from the Hawkesbury to the Tweed. A long period with no floods was experienced from about the 1920s until the end of World War II and this resulted in a significant decline in the numbers of residents belonging to these water brigades. Numbers also declined as a result of the human toll experienced as a result of the War.

Following World War II a decade of regular flooding occurred in NSW and the water brigades had great difficulty in responding adequately. Severe flooding was experienced in the North West and Central West in towns such as Dubbo, Inverell, Moree, Narrabri and Coonamble. They claimed twenty-two lives and caused enormous damage to infrastructure and property.

The factor that galvanised the NSW State Government to respond and coordinate recovery responses for any future floods was the disastrous flooding along the Hunter River during February 1955 when many lives were lost (Keys 2005, p. 26). The government of the day established the NSW State Emergency Services based on a

voluntary body of people drawn from local communities. This volunteer membership was to play an integral role in issuing flood warnings, communications, evacuations and the maintenance of essential supplies to people stranded or isolated during flood periods (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006, p. 1). These changes occurred during the Cold War and therefore the government felt a need to establish a civil defence organisation to manage protective measures for residents in the event of another conflict. So it was that the early NSW SES had the dual role of flood response and the management of civilian welfare in the event of a nuclear attack. This new organisation became known as the Civil Defence and was led by Major General (later Sir) Ivan Dougherty. The *State Emergency Services and Civil Defence Act (1972)* was replaced by the *NSW State Emergency Service Act (1989)* (Murrumbidgee State Emergency Service 2006).

The current organisational structure of the NSW SES consists of a state headquarters, located in Wollongong and 17 regional offices and 230 units across the state. These units are staffed by an estimated 10,000 volunteers, '…aged from 16 to over 80, from both sexes and a very wide variety of backgrounds' (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006, pp. 1-2). The Service's Guarantee of Service for the provision of immediate assistance to communities in times of natural or human-made incidents or emergencies includes:

- 'The preparation of flood plans for communities at risk;
- To assist the Bureau of Meteorology in developing and disseminating official flood and storm warnings;
- The translation of official warnings into likely affects and disseminate this information;
- The evacuation of people whose properties are threatened or made uninhabitable as a result of floods or storms;
- To rescue people who are endangered, trapped or injured by floods or storms;
- The resupply of communities and individuals who are isolated due to flooding;
- To minimise damage to properties affected by floods or storms;
- To co-ordinates immediate welfare requirements for affected communities, in conjunction with the Department of Community Services, and;

- To undertake public education to ensure that those at risk know what they should do to protect themselves and their property' (Murrumbidgee State Emergency Service 2006, p. 1).

In addition to all of the above arduous tasks, members of the NSW SES conduct rescues, or assist professional personnel in rescues, at road accidents, cliffs and other hazardous situations within rural NSW. They assist other agencies in the management of disasters such as bushfires, they are the combat agency for earthquakes and landslides, they provide assistance with technological disasters, and they help the police with searches for lost people or evidence (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006, p. 2). The SES's primary role is to act as the combat agency for dealing with floods. This involves establishing flood warning systems, coordinating the evacuation and welfare of affected communities. The SES also acts as the combat agency for damage control for storms and tempests. It coordinates the evacuation of affected communities and protects their welfare. It acts as the primary agency for civil defence planning and the conduct of civil defence operations and deals with emergencies where no other agency has lawful authority to assume command of the emergency operations (NSW State Government 1989, p. 6). These responsibilities are statutory ones and are controlled and carried out in accordance with the *NSW State Emergency and Rescue Management Act (1989)* and, '…in particular, with the requirements under DISPLAN or any State of Emergency under that Act' (Howard 2001, pp. 9-10). Affiliated organisations are the Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network, the Australian Volunteer Coastguard Association and The Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2001-2002 p. 10).

The use of the term 'combat agency' by the SES provides an insight into the organisational basis and structure of the agency. 'Combat agency' is not just a term which the SES uses to refer to itself; indeed it is described as such in the *State Emergency Service Act (1989)*, (NSW State Government 1989, p 6), in the NSW State Rescue Policy (2006) (New South Wales State Government 2006, p. 6) and in the NSW State Disaster Plan (DISPLAN) (2006) (New South Wales State Emergency Management Committee

2006, pp. 2-3). This reflects the paramilitary nature of the organisation and has, as will be shown in Chapter 4, a significant bearing on volunteers' perceptions and responses.

3.2 Are emergency service volunteer numbers in decline?

Table 3.1. NSW SES claimed numbers adjusted to reflect 'active' membership for 1995, 2000 and 2006 by the percentage of national emergency service volunteer numbers.

SES	Claimed no's	National %	Adjusted no	National %
1995	5,500	4.3	3,000	2.5
2000	9,000	4.5	5,400	2.7
2006	10,000	5.7	6,000	3.4
Increased values		**1.4**		**0.9**

Source: (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007; New South Wales State Emergency Service 2000-01; New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006-07; Richmond/Tweed SES and Name withheld 2005)

Table 3.2 NSW RFS claimed numbers adjusted to reflect 'active' membership for 1995, 2000 and 2006 by the percentage of national emergency service volunteer numbers.

RFS	Claimed no's	National %	Adjusted no	National %
1995	67,005	52	48,373	31
2000	69,000	35	41,370	21
2006	71,000	40.5	42,600	24.3
Decreased values		**11.5**		**6.5**

Source: (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007; Glass 2005; New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2001; New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2007; New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2008/2009)

As the tables show, any claim that the numbers of volunteers are declining is difficult to substantiate, particularly when the ABS (2007, p. 5) reports a steady increase in volunteer numbers overall. Evidence is presented below that shows an overall increase of 46,400 emergency service volunteers nationally from 1995 to 2006. This increase is then compared to volunteer numbers for the NSW SES and NSW RFS.

Evidence shows that the NSW SES has marginally benefited from the nationwide increase in total volunteer numbers. In 1995 there was an SES volunteer population of 5,500 (Richmond/Tweed SES and Name withheld 2005) or 4.3 percent of the total emergency service population. This figure rose in 2000 to 9,000 (New South Wales State

Emergency Service 2001-2002, p. 9) equating to 4.6 percent of the total emergency service population. In 2006 there were an estimated 10,000 volunteers (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006-07, p. 11) or 5.7 percent of the emergency service population. The overall increase in emergency service volunteers nationally between 1995 and 2006 was 46,400, a 36 percent increase. The increase in NSW SES volunteer numbers during the same period was 4,500, an increase of only 1.4 percent over the eleven-year period.

The NSW RFS results are not as positive. In 1995 there was an RFS volunteer population of 67,000 (Glass 2005) or 52.1 percent of the available emergency service population. In 2001 this increased to 68,350 (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2001, p. 8) or 34.7 percent of the available emergency service population. The figure for 2006 again rose, reaching 71,000 (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2007, p. 2) or 40.6 percent of the available emergency service population. This means that between 1995 and 2006 the percentage of the available emergency service volunteers who were in the NSW RFS decreased from 52.1 percent to 40.6 percent.

3.2.1 Determining actual volunteer numbers within the NSW SES and NSW RFS.

Determining the actual number of NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers is problematic however. This is because of the wide discrepancy between the volunteer numbers reported by brigades and units and the numbers reported by their headquarters, and because of a lack of substantive data regarding the numbers of active and inactive volunteers. This constitutes a gap in emergency service research. There is a real need for accurate data to enable '…researchers, planners and policy makers' to fully understand the nature of our emergency services '…on a state and territory basis' (McLennan 2008, p. 7). The total number of people volunteering for the full range of emergency services nationally in 1995 was 128,600 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995, p. 10). Between 1995 and 2000 that number increased by 68,400 to 197,000

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000, p. 26). The figure for 2006 using the most recent ABS statistics shows an overall decline from 197,000 in 2000 to 175,000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, p. 7).

As mentioned above, determining the number of NSW SES and RFS emergency service volunteers is difficult. The reason for this difficulty is that no reliable figure is available from either the local level or the centralised headquarters of the organisations because volunteer numbers fluctuate considerably. Each organisation has an estimated number of volunteers but discrepancies exist when active and inactive membership numbers are taken into consideration. Percovich, Bennett and Handmer (2004, p. 21) defined an active volunteer as one who '…attended 60% of relevant training sessions and unit meetings …' over the six-month period of their study. Using their 'task specific input method', estimates of volunteer numbers will be calculated below for the years 1995, 2000 and 2006 (Percovich, Bennet, Handmer, 2004, p. 1). The calculations below were made by using the reported membership figures in the Annual Reports; in the case of the SES, the number of Hepatitis B Inoculations during 2004 and the reported unit membership numbers.

3.2.2 Determining NSW SES volunteer numbers

The variance between active members and total claimed membership is a result of the volunteer number estimates taken by Percovich et al. (2004) from the NSW SES Internet site; 5,500 active and non active members for the year 1995, and their survey's report on unit active membership numbers of 3,300 for the same year. Using their Task-specific Input Method, their calculations show between 4.3 percent and 2.5 percent of the national emergency service volunteer population as members of the SES.

Making the same calculations, the NSW SES reported 9000 volunteers for the year 2000/2001 (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2000-01). This figure represents 4.5 percent of the national emergency service volunteers for that year. Using Percovich's

original survey calculations the adjusted figure for active membership became 5,400 or 2.7 percent of the national emergency service volunteers. The overall increase in membership for 2000 was, therefore around 0.2 percent (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2001-2002, p. 9). In 2006, SES volunteers numbered 10,000 (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006-07), this represented 5.7 percent of the national emergency service volunteers. Using Percovich's original calculations once again the adjusted figure for active membership became 6,000 or 3.4 percent of the national emergency service volunteers. The above calculations represent an increase of between 1.4 percent and 0.9 percent over the 1995 – 2006 interval.

3.2.3 Determining the NSW RFS volunteer numbers

The Librarian for the NSW RFS reported that there were 67,005 RFS members for the year 1994/95 (Glass, personal communication 2005) or 52 percent of the national number of emergency service volunteers. If the above estimation made by Percovich et al. was applied to this organisation using the reported active membership figure for 1995 as 48,371 (Glass 2005) it would equate to 31 percent of the national number of emergency service volunteers.

Based on the estimated 69,000 NSW RFS emergency service volunteers for 2000 (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2001) the calculations would reveal a claim of 35 percent of the national number of emergency service volunteers. Again, making Percovich et al's adjustment for active volunteers the number would be 41,370 or 21 percent of the national number of emergency service volunteers. This represents a decrease in emergency service volunteers of between 17 percent and 10 percent for the period 1995 to 2000. In 2006 the RFS claimed 71,000 emergency service volunteers (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2006) or 40.5 percent of the national number of emergency service volunteers. Making the same adjustment as above, the active figure would have been 42,600 or 24.3 percent of the national number of emergency service volunteers. These figures reveal a decrease in numbers of RFS volunteers in relation to the national

numbers of emergency service volunteers between 1995 and 2006 of between 11.5 percent and 6.5 percent.

3.2.4 A comparison of the emergency services of NSW, Victoria and South Australia

A brief comparison is made here between the emergency services of NSW, Victoria and South Australia which suggests that the overall problem of declining numbers of emergency service volunteers is not restricted to NSW.

A decline in emergency service volunteer numbers is also reported by Victoria's CFA (Country Fire Authority) in a submission to the Economic Development Committee of the Parliament of Victoria. The Committee reports '… a decline within the CFA at between 4.4% and 4.8% over the last decade' (Economic Development Committee 2002, p. 247). A number of causes for the decline in recruitment have been identified and include economic and demographic factors and family and work commitments (Birch and McLennan 2007; Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and Australasian Fire Authorities and Emergency Services Council 2009; Cowlishaw et al. 2008; McLennan et al. 2008; McLennan et al. 2009). Since 2003 recruitment practices have improved and the steady decline has been 'reversed somewhat' although Queensland figures do not reflect this trend (McLennan 2008).

Although the tables above indicate either a marginal increase or a decline in emergency service volunteers within the NSW SES and RFS between 1995 and 2006, other evidence indicates that social trends may result in a more rapid decline in the 21st century. Smith (undated p. 8), discussing the South Australian State Emergency Service (SA SES) and Country Fire Service (CFS) reports '[y]ounger residents are leaving for the capital cities and the older volunteers are …"dropping off"'. Palmer (2003, p. 9) also reports a decline in the membership of the CFS (Country Fire Service – South Australia) saying

> [o]ver the past five years, the Country Fire Service volunteer population has continued to record a gradual downward trend. On average, approximately 1200

> new members join the Country Fire Service each year, while 1600 leave the service.

This translates into a decrease of 13 percent over the reporting period. The CFS volunteer numbers for 2003/04 are reported as 15,000 (McLennon 2005, p. 52). The CFS Annual Report for 2002/03 however, reports its volunteer numbers as 16,280 (Monterola 2002/03). This is 4.3 percent of the South Australian emergency services population, a decrease of 1,280.

3.3 A summary of natural disasters and emergency events in Australia: the economic implications.

Between 1967 and 1999 the total cost of Australian natural disasters was estimated at $36.4 billion in 1999 prices. The Bureau of Transport Economics (Bureau of Transport Economics 2001, p. 21) reports that this is equivalent to 'an average annual cost of disasters of $1.10 billion in 1999 prices'. The Emergency Management Australia database has a record of 265 natural disasters, each of which cost $10 million or more between 1967 and 1999. This data suggests Australia can expect eight disasters per year on average. Since 1980, however, '…the average number has been approximately 10 events per year', (Bureau of Transport Economics 2001, p. 26).

Data on some of the responses made by emergency service volunteers in NSW over a three-year period demonstrates the workload and associated costs related to the natural disasters outlined above.

Table 3.3. Some severe recent storm events in NSW history

Date	Location of Major Impact	Principal Contents	Total Est. Cost $A million	Damage
March 2010	South West Queensland and North West NSW	Flooding	47	Homes flooded Roads damaged Properties isolated
May 2009	Northern NSW	Flooding and storm damage	48	Homes flooded and damaged
April 2009	Northern NSW	Flooding	37	Homes flooded
April 1 2008	Lismore	Flooding	15	Flooding of homes and CBD, vehicles/caravans destroyed.
September 12 2007	Sydney	Giant hail, very strong winds, flash flooding.	201	Homes and cars damaged.
September 10 2007	Lismore	Hail and wind	57	Power lines/trees down, damage to houses/industrial premises.
July 6 2007	Various Regions	Severe Storms	1350	Heavy residential, commercial and institutional losses, many cars written off.
October 31 2006	Sydney	Giant hail, some strong winds.	52	Extensive damage to houses, public buildings and vehicles.

Source: (Attorney General's Department 2008; Insurance Council of Australia 2010).

3.3.1 Estimating the economic contribution of NSW SES and NSW RFS emergency service volunteers

Lyons (2001) argues that the third sector as a whole is a significant contributor to the economy of this country but this is often overlooked. Lyons defines the third sector as the private sector that is formed and sustained by groups of people acting voluntarily and without seeking personal profit to provide benefits for themselves or for others (Lyons 2001). He reports that 1,210,000 people were employed in this sector during 1995/96 with an overall turnover valued at $86.4 billion contributing 6.3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and that the figures quoted '…are framed according to

conventional economic assumptions and omit several important pieces of information, one of which is the value of volunteer time contributed to these organisations'(Lyons 2001, p. 197).

Percovich, Bennet and Handmer (2004) calculated the economic contribution of the NSW SES, taking into account volunteer time including active and non-active members. The RFS membership figures are, at best, an approximation as an accurate figure is not known and could be many thousands fewer than reported in the Rural Fire Service's Annual Report. Percovich et al. (2004, p. 2) report the '…total value of the NSW SES as [being between] $69.4 million [and] $85.1 million per year'. This variance in values is based on the differences between official membership numbers and those reported by the units. For the same period, the Victorian SES estimates are '…between $37.6 million and $55 million per year' (Percovich et al. 2004, p. 2). Using the same method for calculating the membership for the NSW RFS the total value could be estimated as between $499.5 million and $612.9 million. The lower figure is consistent with the Victorian Country Fire Authority (CFA) who estimate their volunteer fire-fighters contribute '…more than $480 million per annum…' (Woodward 2003, p. 8). Assuming CFA volunteer numbers to be lower than the NSW RFS numbers, the estimated figure for the NSW RFS is further enhanced. Emergency service volunteers thus enable the states to provide the public with an exemplary and effective emergency service at a low cost.

In 2006, our national emergency service volunteers contributed 26 million hours of voluntary work (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, p. 7). Applying the calculations of Percovich et al. (2004), based on the average Australian wage in 2004 of $23.14 an hour, emergency service volunteers contributed $601.2 million to the Australian community. This figure does not include the economic contribution made as a result of their voluntary action. It is surprising then that little is known about those who give so much.

Of significant interest, and an issue that will be considered in some detail in Chapter 5, are the costs incurred by volunteers whilst undertaking voluntary action. King, Bellamy and Donato-Hunt (2006, p. 37) identify all potential sources of direct financial cost, and

in-kind costs, made by volunteers. They report that '[t]he **average direct financial cost per respondent,** for the period April 2005 to March 2006, after reimbursements, was **$544'**. Further, '[t]he **average in-kind contribution per respondent** after reimbursements was **$406** per annum. Therefore, **the combined average** of both direct costs and in-kind contributions per respondent was **$950** per annum' [original bold]. They report that the costs were significantly higher for self-employed people compared to employed or retired volunteers. The costs to lower income groups, particularly retirees, assume greater significance when considered as a proportion of their total income.

3.3.2 Rural and urban settings within the emergency services

Reciprocity or the expectation that favours will be returned and that a cooperative approach between people will apply is a fundamental expectation of communities rich in social capital. Membership within the emergency services in rural areas, are usually closely tied to one another, often intimately. Consequently they are able to keep a general 'account' of the cooperative nature of members of the community or the use of the collective pool of social capital within that community. Reciprocity, being expected of each resident, is generally 'enforceable' through a community's norms and values and peer sanctions may apply for failing 'to do one's share'. Being closely aligned to each other, rural residents interact on a number of fronts such as firefighting, fence building, water carrying, local stock work and childcare. These actions can be considered reciprocal activities. These examples of reciprocity bond people by reinforcing the belief that others will help when required because of their sense of goodwill and connection to one another (Stukas et al. 2005). Their relationships can therefore be considered to be intricately woven into the larger communal lifestyle. Part of rural life commitment is a 'parity of burden' (Sturgess 1997, p. 69), 'each doing their bit' for the betterment of the community which, if surveyed might be interpreted as 'the norm'.

The nature of personal interactions among emergency service volunteers varies according the locations of the branches. These variations are particularly marked for the SES because RFS branches are all located in rural or semi-rural environments, whereas SES

units are found in urban areas as well. The motivations of urban members for becoming emergency service volunteers and their connectedness to their communities and peers are as strong as they are for rural emergency service volunteers. However the personal relationships they have with their wider local communities and their residents are not as close (Personal Communication 2003, urban SES participant). This is because the strong, almost intimate relationships that are experienced in small country towns are not as prevalent among urban residents who typically do not know their neighbours as well.

Volunteers in urban locations may rarely see or speak with one another except during unit or brigade training or when responding to an incident (Personal Communication 2003, urban SES participant). Their lifestyles are often different even though they clearly live in relatively close proximity. As a result their interactions with each other may not have the same sense of closeness and quantity of social activity experienced and instigated by rural membership. This is understandable given that they tend not to be aligned or connected in the same way as rural community members are – the community they live in is often not the same as the community in which their unit or brigade is located (Personal Communication 2003, urban SES participant). An SES unit in a metropolitan area is often comprised of members who live in different suburbs and experience 'suburban isolation'; a lack of interconnectedness with other brigade or unit volunteers is not uncommon.

A lack of qualitative data inhibits our understanding of the emergency service volunteer and this continues to be problematic. Until a greater understanding of these women and men is available so that recruitment and retention numbers are at least maintained, the present rate of attrition in some services will greatly reduce their ability to respond with sufficient numbers of professionally trained volunteers when the next disaster occurs (Cowlishaw et al. 2008; McLennan et al. 2009). The contextual section above has provided the information required to provide the reader with sufficient background to enable an understanding of the organisational 'roots' of the services involved in this research. Having an understanding of the background of the NSW RFS and NSW SES will provide some appreciation of the influences their development has had on the

subjective world views of emergency service volunteers. In order to describe the convergence from the past to the present day, the following contemporary section will provide data about volunteering as a whole and then highlight what is currently known about the emergency service volunteers.

3.4 A contemporary view of the Australian emergency service volunteers

3.4.1 Introduction to the contemporary view of Australian emergency service volunteers.

The first section of this chapter presented a contextual outline of voluntary action in Australia. This provided a base from which to develop an understanding of the voluntary action and process as it is experienced today. This contemporary section will now examine NSW emergency services, detailing their positioning within this industry. This section will also uncover areas relevant to what is currently known about the NSW SES and the NSW RFS emergency services and will show that this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge about the emergency services, particularly the NSW SES. It will provide evidence about the paucity of knowledge about the NSW SES and show that recent research has significantly added to the extant knowledge about the fire services in Australia in recent years.

This section will also discuss how emergency service volunteers are recruited and discuss the alleged decline in emergency service membership. An investigation of the differences and similarities between rural and urban emergency service volunteers provides insights into their recruitment practices and the close affiliations volunteers have with each other and with their communities. This widens the investigation into emergency service volunteers' motivations for joining and considers ethnicity, volunteer numbers, economic factors, payment and gender issues.

3.4.2 What is currently known about the emergency service volunteer?

There is a shortage of information about the NSW SES as few authorities have comprehensively researched this significant area of voluntary action although some research has been undertaken into the NSW RFS over the last decade (McLennan 2008). McLennan and colleagues' research has predominately focused on rural voluntary firefighters throughout Australia. Their quantitative research includes, to some extent, NSW rural firefighters. However, this research describing NSW emergency service volunteers covers new and unexplored ground and provides a qualitative focus.

Recent world events have thrown into high relief the vital importance to society of those who form the tactical response to natural and human-made disasters. Many of these people are paid emergency response professionals. However, many more are also volunteers. In Australia during the early 1990s, it was already known that 2 percent to 3 percent of the volunteer population were registered as emergency service volunteers and that organisations such as the NSW State Emergency Service had 200 registered volunteers to every paid emergency response professional (Britton 1991, p. 408). In 2008 the NSW SES claimed a membership of '…approximately 10,000 volunteers, including reserves…' (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006-07, p. 11). On the other hand, the NSW RFS claimed '…just over 70,000' volunteers (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2008/2009; NSW Rural Fire Service 2008, p. 1). The estimated percentage of the volunteer population who chose the emergency services as their preferred agencies was 4.4 percent in NSW and 4.1 percent nationally (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, p. 44).

Over 80,000 volunteers make up the NSW RFS and the NSW SES emergency services (New South Wales State Emergency Service, 2006/07; New South Wales Rural Fire Service, 2008/2009). It is only during recent years however that any authoritative knowledge about these volunteers has been provided that expands our understanding of

their motivation to serve the community. A synopsis of the literature is provided below that demonstrates this assertion.

3.4.3 The relative paucity of knowledge about emergency service volunteers

Britton (1991), one of the few early scholars who studied the paid emergency response professional and emergency service volunteer in NSW, reported there was little available information about emergency service volunteers. He stated that, '[v]oluntary action scholars and disaster researchers have paid little attention to the permanent disaster [emergency service] volunteer'. He said that studies have been conducted which explore the personality profile of paid emergency response professionals but that there were few studies focusing directly on the emergency service (disaster) volunteer. He went on to say '…little practical material is available dealing with the management of permanent volunteers as a specific emergency worker group' (Britton 1991, p. 395). Researchers have made advances in addressing this situation over the last decade by reporting their quantitative findings in relation to Australian rural fire services. However, few advances have been made over the last twenty years in relation to the state emergency services (McLennan 2008).

Pearce (1993, p. 69) claims a volunteer personality profile is characterised by 'optimism concerning the future, more social confidence, more dominant' and having a greater 'positive image'. There is some evidence to suggest that volunteers display these attributes but they also exist in members of the paid workforce (Brown, Kirpal and Rauner 2007; Merriam and Courtenay 2003). These profiles have limited value because there is no evidence to show whether these personality traits are inherent, or have been developed and subsequently reinforced as a result of the voluntary effort, or both.

Pearce (1993) compares employees with volunteers, suggesting employee staff turnover is constrained by environmental forces and influenced by the need for employment as it

takes time to find another job if dissatisfied. Pearce argues that volunteers tend to differ. If they '…experience insufficient justification for their work', this may well lead them to '…develop favourable attitudes to justify their actions' (Pearce 1993, p. 91). She suggests that the volunteer who receives few tangible extrinsic rewards for working may develop a strong personal feeling of fulfilment from the action. On the other hand, she argues that the paid employee who receives adequate extrinsic and intrinsic rewards may be expected to experience 'over-sufficient justification' and so devalue the fulfilment experienced (Pearce 1993, p. 91).

The implications are that if volunteers were paid or received substantial reward for their efforts they may substitute their existing 'insufficient justification' feelings for ones of 'over justification' and so reduce their positive feelings about their voluntary actions. Liao-Troth (2001), although recognising Pearce's work, critiques it by pointing out the limitations of her study. Liao-Troth's main criticism is that Pearce studied organisations that were staffed exclusively by volunteers and organisations that were staffed exclusively by paid workers. Liao-Troth suggests that studying an organisation that used a combination of volunteers and paid employees may have proved more beneficial (Liao-Troth (2001).

The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) (1996, p. 3) agrees that '…there is a dearth of data on the extent and nature of volunteering in Australia'. Scott, (1998, p. 10) concurs, reporting that voluntary action continues to attract 'only limited scholarly attention, both internationally and within Australia'. Oppenheimer, (1998, p. 5) reports that '[o]verall, information about voluntary work is still lacking…' and Oppenheimer and Warburton, (2000, p 1) conclude that, '[v]olunteering as an activity has long been underestimated, under-researched and undervalued'. Other literature concludes there is '… little research that focuses directly on … the provision of volunteer emergency services' other than the volunteer firefighting services (McLennan, Acker, Beatson, Birch, Jamieson 2004, p. 3). Birch and McLennan (2007, pp. 17-18) claim that emergency service numbers are declining and surveyed a number of communities to try and establish the underlying reasons for this decline. McLennan and Birch (2007, pp. 1-3)

researched the ongoing concern about the decline in volunteer firefighters and argue that 'research is sparse, not in-depth, and largely confined to the last decade'. These statements lead one to conclude that while the ABS provides statistics and data about volunteering there was little qualitative research into the NSW SES between 1991 and 2003. This is not the case for voluntary rural fire services. Significant quantitative research has been undertaken by McLennan and colleagues at La Trobe University and the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre.

Since the turn of the century, interest in emergency service volunteers, particularly Australian volunteer firefighters, has gained momentum. McLennan and colleagues have developed an impressive knowledge base. For example they have researched issues that Australian emergency services are currently facing. These include the decline in the numbers of rural firefighters and emergency service volunteers (Branch-Smith and Pooley 2010; McLennan 2008; McLennan et al. 2008; McLennan et al. 2009).

Having considered what is known about the emergency services it is necessary to reflect on the number of volunteers who are available to respond in an emergency situation and whether these numbers are sufficient. It has been suggested that there are insufficient emergency service volunteers and that recruitment is becoming increasingly problematic, but is this the case?

3.4.4 The difficulty in maintaining sufficient emergency service volunteer numbers

Other areas of research include the need to keep more accurate records of numbers so that adequate estimates can be made. McLennan claims that currently, 'the poor quality of agencies' record keeping and data base management made it impossible to quantify the declines' (McLennan 2008, p. 8). McLennan points out that since 2005 the supposed decline in numbers within the CFA and NSW RFS had been reversed following more effective recruitment practices. However, the major operational problems remain

diminishing brigade numbers in many rural areas, and the paucity of numbers of volunteers able to respond to call-outs during business hours (McLennan 2008).

Birch and McLennan (2007, pp. 17-18) claim that emergency service numbers are declining and surveyed communities in order to try and establish the reason behind this. Their survey included a questionnaire about the levels of interest in volunteering within the population. They found that of the 1,046 respondents, '26%...reported that they were *interested* in a firefighting role, whilst nearly twice as many reported being *interested* in a non-firefighting role [original italics]'. This research considered the likelihood of volunteering, the impact of gender, age and the barriers to volunteering. Beatson and McLennan (2005, p. 18) discuss the declining and ageing male firefighting population and how this threatens the viability of the service. Leonard (2002) researched human services volunteers and, although a world apart in many respects from emergency service voluntary action, her findings have very similar themes. Leonard stresses the need to understand the differences between stakeholders with the '…constructions of the volunteers themselves of central focus' (Leonard 2002, p. 31). Leonard suggests that the numbers of volunteers are actually rising and that within the Australian human services, volunteers provide an '…equivalent of 50,000 paid employees' (Leonard 2002, p. 31).

3.4.5 Rural and urban emergency service volunteer numbers

An Australian Emergency Management Institute report (Australian Emergency Management Institute 1996, p. 9) highlights the problem of low volunteer numbers, revealing '[m]any volunteer organisations are finding it difficult to recruit and hold on to volunteers'. McLennan (2004) states that the three major reasons for leaving the emergency service are time demands, negative brigade issues and training requirements. The study by McLennan, Acker, Beatson, Birch and Jamieson (2004, p. 3) '…provides the first comprehensive review of research relating to recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters in Australia'. This valuable work examines issues such as how communities perceive their volunteer firefighters and whether geographic location

influences recruitment patterns. It also examines the reasons for the small numbers Indigenous volunteers, volunteers from non-English backgrounds and women volunteers. It also explores issues pertinent to retention, including the role leadership plays and the needs of employers and the families of volunteers.

McGill (1996, p. 27) points out some obstacles to recruitment: '[s]mall communities that simply don't have the population to draw on…; People unavailable for day staffing; The reluctance… to recruit women; Employers' reluctance to release staff; [and] Rural decline'. The South Australian CFS makes similar observations. Palmer (2003, pp. 12-13) observes '…that the population in the outer-metropolitan area will decrease…' and that the decrease will strongly affect the rural area encompassing the Flinders, Mid North and Pastoral Areas of the State. Reinholdt and Smith (1998, p. 2) reported that the problem of increased mobility within both rural and urban areas is a reason for the '…decline in numbers of volunteers'.

Palmer (2003, p. 13) reports that recruitment practices are adequate within urban areas of South Australia . This, combined with the fact that rural migration to cities is occurring, suggests a decline in emergency service volunteers in rural Australia and may reflect an increase in some urban areas. An assumption is being made in this work, given the overall rural migration issues facing many communities, that this phenomenon may also be applicable to other states. Wherever the emergency service volunteer resides, however, the basic concept of assisting others in times of need exists and this construct connects individuals within a community and develops trust and a 'psychological sense of community' (Stukas et al. 2005, p. 37)

3.4.6 The recruitment and retention of emergency service volunteers

The literature suggests that recruitment of emergency service volunteers tends to be accomplished through informal methods. Moran, Britton and Correy (1992) suggest that local SES units recruit new members from their knowledge of their communities. Further, those invited to join have a propensity to be people who hold similar views and outlooks

to the existing membership. Therefore, '[t]here is the possibility that current members seek out like-minded colleagues, from the same locality or township' (Moran, Britton and Correy 1992, p. 209). Moran, Britton and Correy suggest that prevailing 'machismo' image of the SES is due to the way in which the service acquires new members (Moran et al. 1992, pp. 209-210). This perspective is supported by other research and research organisations (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000; Thoits and Hewitt 2001; Thompson and Bono 1993; Tidwell 2005; Wauty, de Ville de Goyet and Chaze 1997; Williams 1998).

Lovat (1999, p. 3) referring to the Northern Territory Emergency Service (TES), claims that the most effective method for recruiting someone is to ask them directly. Her data shows that 29 percent of those who volunteered did so because '…their family were [sic] already involved'. This claim is supported by ABS data (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007). She also maintains that volunteers were rarely recruited through the media, with only 4 percent becoming involved in response to a media report or an advertisement (Lovat 1999). That word of mouth recruitment is the most effective medium for recruiting emergency service volunteers should not be surprising as the initial exposure to social norms and customs often originates from within the family structure. The tendency to emulate a relative by joining an emergency service is an example of drawing on the strengths and assets of role models. This form of the 'chronological dimension' of social capital development is, according to Kerka, '…fundamental in the process that transmits social and cultural norms' (Kerka 2003, p. 1).

Social capital is described here as the interaction between community members which results in the development of social networks, and the establishment of the norms of reciprocity and trust-building through the creation of these codes (Leonard 2002; Putnam 1995, p. 19; Stukas, Daly and Cowling 2005, p. 35). The attributes of trust, respect and social cohesion are necessarily vital to the health and wellbeing of any community and the manifestations of social capital are the features of social networks that enable people

to interact effectively and to pursue shared meaning. It is the social and civic participation of people that assembles the human resources available within a community.

This can be demonstrated in a number of ways. It is the volunteers themselves who invite friends and relatives to join their emergency service organisation; it is she or he who demonstrates the positive values to the community and the potential volunteer. Feelings of trust and respect are demonstrated by the in-group and are inculcated in the new membership; and it is the ideology of mutual support imparted by the membership which exemplifies the strengths the group has available to enable positive action. This is very similar to the armed services where your life can be dependent on your mates' actions. There are situations in the military when ones mates' safety 'rely less on drills, [but is determined by] reacting to enemy fire or applying first aid and [being dependent upon] knowledge and judgement' (Lessard 2003, p. 42) The emergency services' constructs of social capital formation may be aligned to 'collective efficacy, psychological sense of community, neighbourhood cohesion and community competence' (Lochner et al. 1999, p. 260). It is the emergency service volunteer who develops social relationships and it is these relationships that produce the resources which form social capital in the context of this work. Other studies (Commonwealth of Australia 2002; Fukuyama 1995; Latham 1997; Lochner et al. 1999; Norton 1997; Onyx and Leonard 2000; Sturgess 1997; Wenger and Snyder 2000) consider social capital and how this resource enhances the trust within the general community and within groups, in this case the NSW RFS and NSW SES.

Recruitment by word of mouth however does not utilise the current and emerging technologies being used to communicate. A number of websites encourage generic voluntary action such as GoVolunteer, Volunteer Match, Seek and Fido. Young people under 25 are more likely to use this medium (McLennan 2008). Screen culture mediums have the potential to increase the numbers of people volunteering for emergency service organisations and the use of Facebook and Twitter are potential recruitment aids and should be considered. Understanding the motivations of those joining volunteer firefighting services remains as important today than it has in the past. McLennan (2008,

p. 23) considers the results of a survey he conducted and finds that younger people are 'increasingly likely to use web-based materials to make decisions about life activity choices' and that the important motivating factors to join a voluntary fire service are diverse. Currently, both the RFS and the SES are using a number of websites to communicate their activities and to encourage recruitment. However no research has emerged which might shed light on the effectiveness or otherwise of these instruments. For this reason, further research into the effectiveness of the various forms of media and communication vehicles on recruitment is suggested.

McLennan, Acker, Beatson, Birch and Jamieson (2004, p. 3) provide 'the first comprehensive review of research relating to recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters in Australia'. McLennan, King and Jamieson (2004, p. 45) examine some of the reasons why people volunteer for firefighting and their results show that they are predominantly community-orientated reasons followed by individually orientated motives. McLennan (2004) also provides valuable insights into the profiles of our volunteer firefighters. He claims that there is very limited demographic information available about them and that there are indications that the volunteer population is an ageing one. He claims that there is a considerable variation among voluntary firefighting agencies in the rates of female membership and that there is generally a paucity of information about the attrition rates within these services.

McLennan and Birch (2007, pp. 1-3) conducted a study to investigate what people knew and thought about the RFS, whether they had an interest in volunteering for this service, the likelihood of their deciding to volunteer and the barriers that were preventing them from doing so. The members of 29 communities were surveyed and 1200 questionaries were completed by people who were not current members of this service. The survey results showed that an interest in volunteering declined with age and that people who were parenting or establishing careers were also more reluctant to volunteer. Of those who considered volunteering for firefighting activities, '65 percent were male and 35 percent female'. Of those who were prepared to consider non-firefighting duties, '40 percent were male and 60 percent were female'.

The barriers to volunteer firefighting identified by those surveyed by McLennan and Birch (2007, pp. 1-3) included time constraints (50%), higher priorities (45%), age or disability (35%), fear and concerns about the potential danger (30%), child care issues (25%) and the belief that a local fire brigade was unwarranted (17%). In addition, age differences were considered and conclusions made about the alleged reluctance of Generation Y to volunteer because they are considered to be less community orientated. Evidence supporting this conclusion, this study claims, is '…at best, limited'. However, when motivations to join the service were considered the study revealed differences in age cohorts with the Generation Y cohort having significantly more self-orientated motives compared to other age groups. In an endeavour to combat the decline in volunteer numbers it was suggested that a number of considerations should be implemented including: educating the public about the RFS and the advantages of the services it provides; reducing the time imposts on volunteer firefighters; increasing brigade numbers to allow for sufficient numbers for call-outs; educating the community about the measures in place to mitigate danger and resultant harm; minimising the financial costs volunteers experience, helping the service become more female friendly and providing child care facilities for volunteers.

The challenge of recruitment and retention remains and given the economic advantages rural fire service volunteers provide, this challenge is a crucial one. The ramifications of failing to maintain the numbers of emergency service volunteers are dire because if the state and federal governments assumed total responsibility for the levels of community protection currently provided by emergency service volunteers, the taxpayer would probably find the 'financial impost intolerable' (Birch and McLennan 2007; McLennan 2005, p. 52; McLennan 2008).

McLennan (2005, pp. 52-53) provides the results of research aimed at determining improved recruitment and retention of voluntary firefighters. This work estimates that volunteer firefighters saved the Victorian State Government in the vicinity of $480 million in the financial year 2000-2001. The challenges he considers paramount in order

to maintain these savings to the public purse include the decline in membership in new housing development close to capital cities resulting from a 'degree of social dislocation', the difficulty volunteers have in being available to respond to a call-out during business hours resulting in the 'disproportionate workload' being expected from volunteers who are either shift workers or self-employed and the reluctance of employers to release their employees for firefighting duties.

McLennan (2004, p. 2) considers the cost involved with recruiting and training emergency service firefighters and the associated costs involved in replacing lost volunteers. He argues that it is necessary to understand the reasons for the separation and reports that the only Australian voluntary fire service that conducts exit interviews is the NSW RFS. McLennan conducted a survey of volunteers who had resigned from the Country Fire Association and found that about one third resigned because they had left the district, and the other reported reasons, in order of prevalence were '(1) time demands (work, family, personal), (2) negative Brigade issues (lack of recognition, conflict, lack of opportunity), and (3) training requirements (time, lack of access)'.

McLennan (2008, p. 4) argues that adequately addressing the problem of retaining volunteers is the solution rather than the expense of replacing them and that extensive research in this field continues to be required. He claims that '…almost all the available Australian research has focused on the volunteer-based **fire services** [original bold] and comes from the work of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre Volunteerism Project team'. Enhanced female recruitment will also increase the effectiveness of voluntary emergency services and address the ageing population of male volunteer firefighters (Beatson 2005). Beatson (2005, p. 3) argues the need for further research into the factors that influence the recruitment and retention of female volunteer firefighters. In this work she investigates the traditional male occupation and the reasons women are under-represented in the volunteer firefighting agencies and she reflects on the Australian and US firefighting cultures. She claims that some overseas research indicates that the perception is that '…women do not belong, are not physically capable… and are unaware of the range of activities available'.

3.4.7 What motivates the emergency services volunteer?

There appears to be a growing amount of information about why emergency service volunteers join and why they stay. Moran, Britton and Correy (1992) report that what the volunteers considered motivationally significant was helping others, a concern for others and to learn skills. Further is the assertion that intrinsic rewards were likely to be positive factors for remaining a volunteer. McLennan, King and Jamieson (2004, p. 44) report on the findings of three surveys of volunteer firefighters' reasons for volunteering. The main reasons for joining were a sense of community, social interaction and mateship, interest, satisfaction and to gain new skills. These motivational considerations are supported by the ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007) data which suggests the main reasons for joining were to benefit the community, for personal satisfaction, to learn new skills and to ultimately gain permanent employment. McGill (1996, p. 30) supports the above, reporting that altruism does play a part in the decision to volunteer but the 'pleasure' of fighting fires – which involves adventure, using the body, the 'rush' of danger, saving property and lives and social activities produce the most satisfaction. Vellekoop-Baldock (1990) also considers altruism as a motivator for voluntary service. However, statistical data suggests that other reasons also exist.

Wherever they reside, emergency service volunteers don't diverge when service to their community or any other community requiring assistance is judged. Their considered motivations including altruism, their interpretation of the Australian ethos of service to their community, their need to serve their community and to 'give something back' were often similarly articulated and were consistent with the literature (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007; Cowlishaw et al. 2008; McLennan et al. 2009; Paull 2009; Personal Communication 2003, rural RFS participant; Personal Communication 2003, urban SES participant)

Understanding the motivations of those joining volunteer firefighting services remains as important today than it has in the past. McLennan (2008, p. 23) considers the results of a

survey he conducted and finds that younger people are 'increasingly likely to use web-based materials to make decisions about life activity choices' and that the important motivating factors to join a voluntary fire service are diverse. The responses indicate that protecting and contributing to the community, learning new skills and because the new recruit knew their local brigade were looking for new members were the top three motivators (McLennan 2008).

There is also a lack of information about the motivational behaviour of emergency service volunteers – why they join and why they stay. Moran, Britton and Corry (1992) report on what emergency service volunteers consider motivationally significant. The major themes identified are helping others, concern for others and, to learn skills. They also emphasised that intrinsic rewards are positive factors for remaining a volunteer. McLennan, King and Jamieson (2004) expand on these findings, following three surveys of volunteer fire-fighters' reasons for volunteering. The foremost reasons for joining, they found, were the sense of community, social interaction and mateship, interest, satisfaction and to gain new skills.

A caution is provided here in relation to suggesting rewards are powerful motivators. There are some suggestions that if extrinsic rewards are given for behaviour that is intrinsically motivated the result could well be that performance levels fall (Howard 2009; Metzer 1996; Turner 2003). Frey and Goette (1999, p. 5) agree, suggesting that if rewards are considered either infrequent or excessive the agency may experience difficulties such as 'crowding out' which refers to a marked reduction in effort for rewards for actions that are intrinsically motivated. Deci (1975) contends that positive verbal reinforcement increases intrinsic motivation in males but decreases it in females. He suggests that females may view positive feedback as a form of control whereas males' feelings of competence and self-determination are improved by positive feedback.

McLennan, King and Jamieson (2004, p. 45) consider some of the reasons why people volunteer for firefighting and their results show that the predominant reasons are community-orientated motives followed by individually orientated motives. They argue

that in order to recruit volunteers, agencies should 'activate' a personalised sense of community'. To demonstrate the value of this approach the authors describe a recruiting campaign in Victoria that dealt with the brigade culture and effected 'societal changes', an increase in female volunteers in operational roles and an increase in volunteers from non-Anglo-Australian backgrounds'. This campaign incurred a direct cost of only $6,600 and resulted in the recruitment of 80 volunteers.

The findings of all the above studies are supported by the ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006) data which describe the main reasons for volunteering as wanting to benefit the community, for personal satisfaction, to learn new skills and to gain work. Cox (2000, p. 146) however cautions researchers who put too small a price on the explanations made by volunteers about why they undertake this type of voluntary work. She claims that '[m]any writers tend to under-value responses from volunteers, who state their desire to 'put something back', 'help others' or 'do my bit''. She reports that one assumption is that these responses are socially sanctioned and other, more self-interested reasons may exist. McGill (1996) in part, agrees with Cox about the part altruism plays in the decision to volunteer but his findings demonstrate that fighting fires and social activities produce the most satisfaction. Vellekoop-Baldock (1990), supports Cox as does McLennan (2008) in reporting that altruism as the most commonly cited reason for joining the voluntary fire services. The ABS emergency service summary on voluntary work reports 57 percent of people gave altruistic reasons for volunteering but 93 percent of them also reported auxiliary reasons which included 'social contact, to be active, to use skills and experience (and) learning new skills and gaining work experience' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, pp. 10-11).

3.4.8 The rewards of being an emergency service volunteer

McLennan and Bertoldi (2005), identifying the importance of recognition, research the Australian fire services and the service awards they provide. They conclude that there was a considerable difference between services and the variety of awards. McLennan and Bertoldi provide a comprehensive list of awards offered. They include: the ACT

Emergency Services Authority which has three awards, the NSW Rural Fire Service which has five awards, the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency services which has four awards, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service which has one award, the South Australian Country Fire Service which has sixteen awards, the Tasmanian Fire Service which has three awards, the Victorian Country Fire Authority which has eleven awards and the West Australian Fire and Emergency Services Authority which has six awards.

Other studies (Nisbet 2005; Nisbet and Wallace 2007), indicate that volunteering is sometimes seen as preparation for and as a precursor to paid employment but whether this is the case in the emergency services needs further investigation. Swan (1995, p. 69) avows that emergency service volunteers embark on this community activity in order to meet '…their own individual psychological needs'. Clowes' (1994) earlier views coincide with this premise reporting that personal motivation is the key to volunteering. Steiner's (1997, p. 80) views are in accord with the preceding statements in suggesting a need to 'identify what motivates individuals … to ensure that you meet their needs and expectations…'. It is vital to the continued process of recruitment and retention of emergency service volunteers to understand what they think about their roles and how volunteering is associated with their resultant identity formation.

It is critical to establish the extent to which intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards and altruism motivate people to become emergency service volunteers. In order to do this the needs, satisfactions, reasons for commitment and the identity formation of volunteers bear close examination. If one accepts that altruism is a driving force for volunteering, there remains the need to ensure that the satisfaction, and the perceived opportunities and benefits offered to the volunteer by the organisation, are delivered. To accomplish this, those who recruit emergency service volunteers must try and understand the volunteer's key motivators – for example, the desire to learn employment related skills, the need for a social experience, the desire to develop self-esteem, and the desire for personal recognition. These needs and reasons underpinning the decision to volunteer constitute the perceived promissory nature of individual psychological contracts (Montes and Zweig 2009). The combination of these needs and expectations form accepted normative

psychological contracts (Montes and Zweig 2009). Understanding these constructs will aid in the maximisation of an agency's ability to recruit and retain emergency service volunteers. This central consideration has been extensively explored in this research and an outline of the most frequently cited recruitment methods, identified by the participants, has been described.

3.4.9 An examination of the barriers to joining an emergency service organisation

Cowlishaw, McLennan and Evans (2008, p. 22) observed that emergency service volunteer numbers were in decline and analysed the effects family life had on this decline. Their thematic analysis showed that firefighters experienced difficulties prioritising voluntary action with family commitments, leaving the household and business responsibilities with other members of the family, and the interruption to normal family and household routines. In addition to their core emergency service roles firefighters also had the burden of training. Their study categorises these two imposts as 'strain-based', a term which refers to the strains imposed by volunteers not contributing to family life and responsibilities as they believe they should and 'time-based' a term which refers to the time demands required to maintain the significant ongoing training required to maintain their professional competence.

Cowlishaw, McLennan and Evans (2008) examine the negative effects emergency service voluntary action has on family life. They include: interference with annual family holidays; frequent and extended periods being on call which interfere with the routines of normal family life; the high volume of responses to emergencies including road accidents for some brigades resulting in a very real risk of levels of psychological stress; the added time demands in addition to full-time employment; and the decreased ability to perform normal family roles. Developing strategies to minimise separation rates by distinguishing between avoidable and unavoidable reasons for separation is explored. Some of the avoidable reasons for separation include health problems, and age which accounts for '…between 30% and 50% of annual volunteer resignations' (McLennan et al. 2009, p.

45) and moving away from the area. Examples of avoidable reasons are leadership difficulties, friction within the group and a lack of child care.

McLennan, Birch, Cowlishaw and Hayes (2009, p. 45) make a number of suggestions that have the potential to adequately address many of these problems. They include assisting brigade management to reduce the time demands placed on volunteers, educating employers about what volunteer firefighting entails and the advantages and benefits they provide to the local community, providing information or 'induction kits to families of new volunteers' to ensure they have a far better understanding of what being a volunteer means to them, and the need to develop policies aimed at reducing the financial burden of volunteers, employers and families. Adequate consideration of the avoidable reasons for volunteers leaving the organisation has significant potential for reducing separation figures (McLennan et al. 2009).

Some of the demands of being a human services volunteer are also similar to those experienced in emergency service volunteering and include the need to balance family life with their voluntary actions, the need to maintain a distinction between voluntary life and private life and the need for volunteers to prioritise their time to provide for themselves and their needs (Leonard, 2002).

3.5 Response by emergency services and functional and welfare agencies to disaster situations

Barton (1969) suggests that in America '[T]he problem of organizational effectiveness proved to be highly dependent on the ability of many organizations to coordinate their work to deal with the unusual and pressing requirements of disaster' (Barton 1969 p. 48). As can be ascertained above, Australian emergency services have no such difficulty. Australian emergency service agencies are predominantly paramilitary organisations. Therefore, volunteers are subject to a degree of authority and discipline. The volunteers of the NSW SES and RFS emergency service agencies are also required to regularly take part in simulated emergency situations in order to hone their response capabilities. These

volunteers are also frequently 'called out' or activated during the year and attend numerous storm and tempest, fire incidents, respond to road accidents, search and rescue and assist other agencies as requested. This frequent activity develops rapid response times. They also provide 'training in working under stress in small emergencies' (Barton 1969 p. 95).

Other organisations such as functional and welfare agencies are less frequently called to respond to emergency situations and so their response times are likely to be slower than those of the emergency services. However, all of these functional agencies are required to regularly take part in simulated all-agency responses to emergencies. This results in awareness of the need to respond in a timely manner. Each response agency also holds regular internal exercises that improve their particular skills and capabilities as required under the state Displan. This research did not consider agencies other than the NSW RFS and SES and as a result, no documented evidence was considered that discussed their response times. From personal experience, on the other hand, I have observed that the functional and welfare agencies respond to emergencies with admirable efficiency and within the expected time frame. This efficiency applies equally to local response and outside assistance.

3.5.1 Issues of payment and emergency service volunteering

Birch, McLennan and Surrey (2007, p. 1) consider the likelihood of employers paying their employees who are volunteer firefighters. They discuss media reports which suggest 'isolated reports of volunteers being threatened with dismissal … because of their firefighting activities'. They report that about 8 percent of employers asked job applicants whether or not they were emergency service volunteers, and only around 3 percent of employers had a policy to cater for the needs of any emergency service firefighters they employed.

3.5.2 The economics of emergency service volunteering

McLennan (2004, p. 2) reports on the expense of recruiting and training volunteers to replace those who separated from their organisation. He suggests that there is '…an annual total volunteer turnover rate of approximately 8%'. He estimates that annually the seven participating fire agencies incurred a total cost of around $12.5 million recruiting and training new recruits. He argues that it is necessary to understand the reasons for the separation and reports that the only Australian voluntary fire service that conducts exit interviews is the NSW RFS. McLennan conducted a survey of volunteers who had resigned from the Country Fire Association and found that about one third resigned because they had left the district, and the other reported reasons, in order of prevalence were '(1) time demands (work, family, personal), (2) negative Brigade issues (lack of recognition, conflict, lack of opportunity), and (3) training requirements (time, lack of access)'. McLennan (2008, p. 4) provides further evidence of these issues when he considers the context of the Australian emergency services. He argues that adequately addressing the problem of retaining volunteers is the solution rather than the expense of replacing them and that extensive research in this field continues to be required. He claims that '…almost all the available Australian research has focused on the volunteer-based **fire services** [original bold] and comes from the work of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre Volunteerism Project team'.

McLennan (2005, pp. 52-53) provides the results of research aimed at determining improved recruitment and retention of voluntary firefighters. This work estimates that volunteer firefighters saved the Victorian State Government in the vicinity of $480 million in the financial year 2000-2001. The challenges he considers paramount in order to maintain these savings to the public purse include the decline in membership in new housing development close to capital cities resulting from a 'degree of social dislocation', the difficulty volunteers have in being available to respond to a call-out during business hours resulting in the 'disproportionate workload' being expected from volunteers who are either shift workers or self-employed and the reluctance of employers to release their employees for firefighting duties.

McLennan (2008) also considers issues relevant to the recruitment of emergency service volunteers, the barriers faced by potential volunteers, retaining emergency service volunteers, the economic contributions made by these volunteers, the associated direct costs to emergency service volunteers for the privilege of being a volunteer, the recompense issues of the volunteers, gender and culturally and linguistically diverse issues, Indigenous volunteering, volunteer–staff relationships and the factors impacting upon the families of emergency service volunteers. Lyons (2001) also reports on issues such as the costs involved in recruiting new volunteers and the financial contribution volunteers provide to the nation. Lyons (2001) also reports on the economic, political and social implications of volunteering and Lyons and Hocking (2000, p. 44) discuss Australia's 'highly committed' volunteers who are those who contribute in excess of six hours a week and they detail which voluntary sectors they serve.

McLennan, Birch, Cowlishaw and Hayes (2009, p. 41) revisit the challenging issue of separation from the volunteer fire services and again find that poor leadership was a major contributor to resignations in 2007. These resignations were estimated to cost the public purse in the vicinity of $13 million. McLennan, and his colleagues conclude that separation from voluntary agencies is a 'negative indicator of organisational effectiveness'. They stress the urgent need to begin to recognise and address other potentially rectifiable reasons for separation, include lack of recognition, time demands, negative brigade issues particularly associated with female volunteers, and training demands.

Vellekoop-Baldock (2000) outlines the importance Australia, the United States and the Netherlands place on their aged volunteers and their subsequent positioning in society. In Australia, state and federal governments use the voluntary agencies for which they are the chief funders as a way of reducing unemployment figures. In the United States, *The Older Americans Act (1971)* (Vellekoop-Baldock 2000, p. 89)) recognises the potential of older people and the contributions they have to offer their community. The Netherlands holds the view that volunteering is about caring; therefore it is perceived to be generally the work of women and is ignored as an area to research (Vellekoop-Baldock 2000).

Although a sociological study it is also of interest to social psychologists as it involves the self-perceptions of the people being studied and the actions of the state that may have an impact on those perceptions.

3.5.3 Emergency service leadership

Volunteer leadership practices are also an important issue. Lovat (1999, p. 4) argues that leadership is the answer to effective recruitment and retention and that '[t]he key to the success of recruiting and retaining volunteers is effective and dynamic leadership'. An emerging theme is the critical need for volunteers in positions of leadership to be trained and for them to possess management and people skills. Research has shown that volunteers frequently express the intention of separating from their chosen organisation as a result of poor leadership or a lack of leadership (Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and Australasian Fire Authorities and Emergency Services Council 2008; McLennan et al. 2009).

Other studies claim that nearly all retention failures can be attributed, either directly or indirectly, to leadership shortcomings (Aitken 2000; Branch-Smith and Pooley 2010; Du Boulay 1996; McGill 1996; Nisbet 2005)Leadership issues and the resultant separation of many volunteers from voluntary fire services are of considerable concern. A significant factor that requires attention by the parent organisations are volunteers' decisions to separate from the brigade because of dissatisfaction with the leadership (Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and Australasian Fire Authorities and Emergency Services Council 2008; McLennan et al. 2004; McLennan et al. 2008; McLennan et al. 2009).

McLennan, Birch, Cowlishaw and Hayes (2008) discuss the problem of the resignation of volunteer firefighters as a result of leadership issues. They claim that 6–10 percent of separations are the direct result of poor brigade leadership. Their survey found that volunteer satisfaction with their organisations and their resultant intentions to remain in them was strongly associated with feelings of inclusiveness and belonging to an harmonious well-led group. Leadership issues were not confined to the brigade level

however; they also included poor or strained leadership relationships with paid professional career officers. Resignations of volunteers were associated with negative feelings about the brigade and leadership, dissatisfaction with the brigade experiences, excessive time demands, the work, the bureaucracy and 'red tape', excessive training imposts and the perceived lack of interest and recognition from the local community. It was concluded that career staff received little or no leadership training that was pertinent to the management of volunteers and addressing this problem would assist in mitigating this issue.

Leonard, Onyx and Hayward-Brown (2004, p. 215) examine management styles which are applicable to emergency service volunteers and volunteers' views about the issue. They conclude that there are three common types of management styles in play within the voluntary human services sector: horizontal, nurturing and managerial. Horizontal management is the most empowering and maximises volunteer 'autonomy and initiative' and was the preferred management style reported by the volunteer respondents in their study. Nurturing management focuses on personal development and assumes the manager has more knowledge than the volunteer. Nurturing management could lead to people who are well educated or have extensive experience feeling they are being patronised.

The managerialist approach is the least attractive style of management from the volunteers' point of view because it focuses on controlling personnel through strict policies and practices and ignores the perceived advantages of the other two styles (Leonard et al. 2004). Leonard et al. argue that one of the most important attributes for an organisation is sound management practices based upon the volunteers' perspective of what these practices are. As they observe, the 'freedom of a volunteer to leave a position without financial loss is the most significant difference between their management and the management of paid workers' (Leonard et al. 2004, p. 205). Although the human services voluntary sector is predominantly female, their conclusions are not specifically gendered as they apply with as much validity to the male-dominated emergency services sector.

Birch, McLennan, Beatson, Cowlishaw and Hayes (2009, p. 5) discuss the role leadership plays in the retention of emergency service firefighters. They argue that between 6 precent and 10 percent of volunteer firefighters resign annually and one-third of the volunteer population will leave within five years. Of those who resigned 25 percent reported their reason for doing so as dissatisfaction with the volunteer role. The reasons for this dissatisfaction included 'conflicts, factionalism, exclusion or bullying… leaders who were autocratic, used favouritism or were incompetent [and] other volunteers who were lazy, unsafe or troublemakers'. The NSW State Emergency Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service are both in a position where they can increasingly cater for the needs of their volunteers. In order to enhance volunteer 'job' satisfaction organisations must recognise issues such as the need for self-esteem, self-worth, the need to achieve, the expectation of skills development, and adequate and appropriate equipment. The obligation to fulfil these and other expectations of volunteers is part of the organisation's psychological contract with the volunteer. With current volunteers, who are already willing to serve, it is vital that elements of their volunteer psychological contracts are acknowledged and understood. This will maximise the retention rate.

To retain these vital people the state, as the employing organisation, must encourage the social connectedness at the local level and respond in an authentic way to the perceived psychological contracts of their volunteers. Any perception on the part of volunteers that the system is failing to fulfil its obligations, or that it is guilty of phoniness, manipulation or a lack of understanding, will result in them feeling that their psychological contracts have been violated. Negative perceptions will result in a marked decline in membership (Farmer and Fedor 1999). It is not being suggested here that either organisation engages in any form of manipulation or phoniness or untrustworthiness. However the volunteers' perception of these behaviours requires constant attention. Cohen and Prusak (2001, p. 38) convey this observation clearly when they observe '[w]hen people say life in their firm is "very political", they often mean that trust is scarce'.

3.5.4 Gender and emergency service volunteering

Beatson and McLennan (2005, p. 18) discuss the declining and ageing male firefighting population and how this threatens the viability of the service. They argue that the recruitment and retention of female firefighters would mitigate this situation. Research is sorely needed to determine the barriers women face so that this under-representation can be addressed. Lack of systematic research, they claim, '… is a serious impediment to redressing the under-representation of women volunteers'.

McLennan and Birch (2006) undertook a mail survey of women volunteer firefighters in order to find out about their experiences. They found that the predominant barriers to volunteering were 'concerns about the physical demands of firefighting; child and family responsibilities; and time constraints associated with paid work'. A significant number of women reported difficulties with the fit of various items of clothing issued and accessing equipment stored in high places. Others reported that the lack of privacy and facilities created difficulties and, in some cases gender discrimination and harassment was reported. On the positive side however many respondents reported a pleasant social experience, positive training experiences and the opportunities to develop skills and to grow personally.

McLennan, Birch, Beatson and Cowlishaw (2007, p. 59 and 68) describe the perceived and experienced difficulties reported by female volunteers. They include a belief that they would not be welcomed into the brigade by the male membership, child care issues associated with volunteering, and beliefs about not being suited to the occupation. The authors conclude that there are few differences between male and female motivations to join the voluntary fire service and that serving female volunteers felt welcomed and accepted by the male population. However, there were reports of discrimination and harassment. Other issues cited include the difficulties with the suitability of personal protective equipment such as uniforms and the 'usability of equipment'. The authors believe that many of these difficulties can be addressed with some cost being incurred. Examples include educating the public about our voluntary fire fighting services,

including female fitting patterns and sizes in uniform contracts, and developing as a high priority through human resource management and senior operational management ways of addressing discrimination and harassment issues.

Branch-Smith and Pooley (2010, p. 12) researched the experiences of women firefighters in Western Australia. They also argue that the numbers of volunteer firefighters are declining and found during their research that many women reported that they '… were told by at least one man in the brigade that women do not belong in the fire service and/or are not capable of the work'. Their results indicate that female firefighters experience significant gender related challenges and issues including '…intimidation at training and dissatisfaction with opportunities for leadership and advancement, not being taken seriously, covert discrimination and unfair allocation of tasks' (Branch-Smith and Pooley 2010, pp. 13 and 15). They argue that improved recruitment and retention of female firefighters would mitigate this situation. Research is sorely needed to determine the barriers women face so that this under-representation can be addressed. Lack of systematic research, they claim, '… is a serious impediment to redressing the under-representation of women volunteers'. These experiences result in women having a poor sense of self and a low perception of their abilities. Not all experiences were negative however. Branch-Smith and Pooley found that the majority of women reported a 'positive, encouraging and supportive environment' (Branch-Smith and Pooley 2010, p. 14) which resulted in a strong positive sense of self and their abilities.

Leonard (2002) researched human services volunteers and, although a world apart in many respects from emergency service voluntary action, her findings have very similar themes. Leonard stresses the need to understand the differences between stakeholders with the '…constructions of the volunteers themselves of central focus' (Leonard 2002, p. 31). Leonard suggests that the numbers of volunteers are actually rising and that within the Australian human services, volunteers provide an '…equivalent of 50,000 paid employees' (Leonard 2002, p. 31). As is the case with emergency service volunteers Leonard reports there is an increasing expectation that human services volunteers develop knowledge and skills and that many volunteers feel frustrated that training was often not

directly relevant to their voluntary actions. The majority of human services volunteers are women and it is suggested that the potential exists for their exploitation because women are constructed as being altruistic and that their availability is '…predicated on the division of labour into breadwinner and homemaker' (Leonard 2002, p. 34). This predication is also manifest within the emergency services voluntary ranks to some extent. Another similarity between rural human services volunteers and emergency service volunteers is the sense of and focus on community rather than an individual client or job.

3.5.5 Ethnicity within the NSW RFS and the NSW SES

Although there is some discussion about the low numbers of volunteers who originate from backgrounds other than 'Anglophone cultures' (Cox 2000, p. 143), the available data is for volunteers in general rather than for emergency service volunteers. The ABS (2007) reports that, of the total population, 5.2 million people over the age of 18 years said they did some sort of voluntary work during 2006. Of these persons, 26 percent were born in countries other than those in which English was the main language, however no specific ethnicities were given. ABS data for 1995 data shows that 2.6 million people over the age of fifteen years reported volunteering and of these 9 percent were born in countries other than those in which English was the main language. Once again, no specific ethnicities were cited (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996, pp. 1 and 9). Therefore in the 12 years between 1995 and 2007, the proportion of volunteers who were born outside of Australia and in countries where English is not the main language rose from 9 percent to 26 percent.

The emergency services throughout Australia recognise that their volunteers are predominantly Anglo-Australian. For example, a report on the South Australian Country Fire Service reveals that '[s]ociety is increasingly becoming more multicultural yet the diverse range of cultures is not evident in the CFS' (Palmer 2003, p. 15). An opportunity exists for emergency service agencies in all state's to consider the motivations of potential volunteers from other cultures, and '…to look at ways of developing an

organisational culture that is inclusive of minority groups, including women' (Palmer 2003, p. 15). Other scholarship makes similar observations. McLennan (2005) for example notes the decline the numbers of emergency service firefighting volunteers in rural areas and the concerns firefighting agencies hold about the under-representation of women in the volunteer fire services and the low numbers of people from backgrounds other than Anglo-Australian ones choosing to join the volunteer firefighting ranks. He advances his arguments and calls for urgent research into: identifying the barriers potential rural firefighters face; the issues associated with the low rates of volunteering within new housing developments; the concerns employers have about rural fire service volunteers; the barriers women face in becoming operational volunteer firefighters; and the barriers faced by people from non-Anglo-Australian backgrounds which inhibit their likelihood of becoming volunteer firefighters. McLennan points out the need to conduct longitudinal studies of new emergency service volunteers.

McLennan, King and Jamieson (2004, pp. 44-45) also consider the motivations of volunteer firefighters and suggest the 'key to volunteer recruitment is to first activate a personalised sense of community responsibility' in order to direct this emotive response into joining their local brigade. Similarly, the Australian Emergency Management Institute (1996, p. 14) identifies some of the 'weaknesses of volunteer involvement' in the emergency service industry. According to the Institute, these weaknesses include the '[l]ack of participation by non-English speaking people/ethnic groups'. McLennan is one of the few scholars to suggest reasons for the under-representation of people from non-Anglo cultural backgrounds. He suggests that, in many countries, there appears to be no '…tradition of formal, organised, emergency service volunteering – with the military normally responsible for emergency and disaster response (McLennan 2008, p. 9). No definitive data could be found that relates the ethnic makeup of either the NSW SES or the NSW RFS.

This 'weakness' referred to above is also apparent in the New Zealand Voluntary Fire Service. It is reported that the ethnic makeup within the New Zealand Voluntary Fire Service during 1994 was similar to Australia in 2007 in that Indigenous people and other

ethnic groups are underrepresented in the emergency services. In New Zealand, 88 percent of all volunteer firefighters, were of European backgrounds and only 6.2 percent were Maoris, 0.3 percent were Pacific Islanders and 0.01 percent were from other backgrounds (McGill 1996, p. 23).

3.6 Sociological theoretical perspectives of the Australian emergency service volunteers

The two preceding perspectives above have discussed the contextual and contemporary contexts of volunteering in Australia and provided an outline of the extent of knowledge about the NSW RFS and the NSW SES emergency services. The following will discuss the theoretical perspectives that inform an understanding of the subjective experiences of emergency service volunteers.

The theoretical perspectives of this literature review will inform the reader through an exploration of the theoretical perspectives pertinent to the research. Concepts in relation to gender, ethnicity, class, social capital, social identity, and neo-institutional theory will be explored. Psychological theories relation to motivation, self-actualisation, uncertainty-identity, the psychological contract and human resource management will also be examined. It will be argued that these theories can inform and expand current knowledge about voluntary emergency service action.

3.6.1 Class

Class is classified in this research as being structurally determined (Ritzer 1992). Marx predominately defines class as one's relationship to the means of production (Bulbeck 1993). Weber identifies three major sources of distinction within society; 'class, status and party' (Bulbeck 1993, p. 103). Class can be determined by one's income in relation to occupation, status relates to the 'honour, prestige or esteem of one's occupation' and

party refers to groups of individuals with common backgrounds or interests. Class can be considered as the hierarchical distinctions between groups or individuals and their 'identity or similarity in the typical situation in which others find their interests defined' (Henderson and Parsons 1964, p. 424). This descriptive definition is considered important because it helps develop an understanding of emergency service volunteers, and how they view themselves as belonging to homogenous groups who are likely to recruit from within their localised community in order to maintain this position. Weber maintains there are three main classes: a 'property' class, those predominantly determined by the differentiation of property held; an 'acquisition' class that is determined by the members' opportunities to exploit market services; and a 'social' class which is a composite of class and status (Henderson and Parsons 1964, p. 424)

Class is also central to Marx's writings and he alludes to the inculcation of an ethos within a society when he remarks '[m]en [sic] make their history themselves, only they do so in a given environment, which conditions them' (Lee and Newby 1989, p. 116). Marx refers to work and production, saying that only through the development of meaningful relationships with others can dynamic activity occur. He refers to the 'base' and 'superstructure' of society. He defines the base as 'the sum total of … productive activities of society…the sphere of economic relationships'. The superstructure, he says, 'consists of the cultural ideas, or "ideological" aspects, of society' (Lee and Newby 1989, p. 115). Although clearly not speaking specifically about voluntary work, Marx's observations may be used to reinforce the financial necessity for using volunteers in Australia and the concomitant cultural beliefs and practices inculcated by our forebears.

Weber claims that Marx's explanation of class is limited as it is unable to explain the status of the worker or the significance of her or his skills and occupational rewards. Weber argues that a number of factors promoted inequality. He particularly emphasised status, honour and prestige. Weber's schema lends itself to stratification theory which categorises individuals into cohorts like age, ethnicity, occupation and education; all of which can be a source of power (Bulbeck 1993). Weber's emphasis on education is important because it is a central pathway to occupational status and the rewards this

brings. Thus, within a meritocratic society individuals are able to move within class definitions. This theory is important to our understanding of emergency service volunteers because it offers one explanation that relates to all three of the themes of this research: affiliation, commitment and identity. Identity can in part be attributed to the occupational status of emergency services. The majority of the emergency service volunteers interviewed were either employed in unskilled occupations, semi-skilled occupations or were unemployed. Most were also recruited by word of mouth and were known by existing members within the primary group. This method of recruiting like minded persons results in the formation of both self and primary group identification. 'Honour, prestige and esteem' (Henderson and Parsons 1964 p. 424) is a contributory factor in identity formation. These feelings are initially developed within the primary group and further developed through the positive recognition afforded emergency service volunteers by the public, the media and through organisational recognition.

Volunteers in a particular group have feelings of belonging with other members of that group and display the traits of loyalty, trust and emotional attachment. This strong affiliation volunteers have for the membership of their group strengthens their assumed role and positioning with one another, resulting in close bonds. These bonds extend to other emergency service volunteers but they are more robust and durable with members of the primary group. The assumed identity and enduring affiliation with the membership of the primary group, the public and the parent organisation provide the dedication to continue their voluntary action, and consequently, their commitment to the primary group and their chosen organisation.

3.6.2 Ethnicity

Bruni and Gherardi (2002) suggest that the production of individual subjectivities is a socio-political manifestation of Western culture and the ideas of sexual category, sexuality, ethnicity and gender are cultural artefacts endorsed through societal practices resulting in an impression of reality (Bruni and Gherardi 2002). These value laden

symbols and representations are evident and sustained through all forms of social interaction including the arts, literature and films and they represent historical socially structured power relations (Hearn 2002).

Ostrom and Ahn (2009) argue that judgments about a person's trustworthiness are often based on characteristics such as appearance, gender, age, language and ethnicity. These attributes may be seen to have a negative aspect if one considers the demonisation of some ethnicities and the resultant 'transmission of information across individuals about who is trustworthy and who is not' (Ostrom and Ahn 2009, p. 28). Any negativity felt or expressed by a group about individuals with these perceived differences could deter people from culturally diverse backgrounds from volunteering for the emergency services. It might be assumed that the problem of recruiting volunteers from these groups may lie in the assumption that people from non-Anglo-Australian backgrounds are often identifiable as members of a different group or out-group. The dominant group may automatically impose stereotypical labels that inhibit social interaction and offers of group membership, thereby reinforcing in-group identification and encouraging discrimination in favour the dominant group (Worchel et al. 2000). Theories of ethnicity potentially hold a key to the claimed lack of emergency service volunteers from ethnic groups whose native tongue is not English (McLennan et al. 2004). My study suggests that the majority of emergency service volunteers are Anglo-Australian. One explanation for the paucity of volunteers from other ethnicities could be the propensity of groups to recruit like minded people who are generally known to existing members. These recruits tend to be of the same ethnic backgrounds and hold similar beliefs. Emergency service volunteer identity is in part based upon the traditionally held notion of service to one's mates, trust in the membership and loyalty to the primary group's values. People who are members of other ethnicities could be stereotyped as being untrustworthy with the result being that offers of membership and acceptance of membership may not be forthcoming or accepted (McLennan et al. 2004).

Being predominantly Anglo-Australian, the identity of the primary group may reflect the ideology of sameness and community. People from other ethnicities may be considered to

be members of an out-group (McLennan et al. 2004) in which case the volunteers within the primary group would be less likely to develop the trust necessary for being accepted into the group. Cultural diversity may also challenge the identity that has been formed by the group and the individuals within the group, requiring a reconstruction of the sense of self and one's beliefs. The sense of affiliation members have for each other may result in in-group fragmentation if there was conflict about issues of discrimination. A reluctance to accept a non-Anglo-Australian volunteer may be reflected by public opinion about the ethnicity of the person, particularly if the new recruit has little history within the local community.

3.6.3 Gender

Gender as defined in this literature review does not refer to sex, which is a biological classification, but to 'the cultured knowledge that differentiates' males from females and the values and ideals originating from that culture (Aaltio and Mills 2002, p. 4). What is being observed here are not the psychological traits of women and men but rather, the cultural ideologies of specific groups as shown in their assumptions about the actions and values considered typical or natural for men and women (Alvesson and Due Billing 2002). Gender refers to classifications that are socially constructed. These classifications commonly overstate differences and maintain gender inequality (Alvesson and Due Billing 2002). Therefore individuals develop their identity in accordance with a gender-based ideology. This ideology in turn can be used to construct organisational identities.

Often occupations are classified as being either masculine or feminine and are dominated by a particular gender. Women continue to be grouped in a restricted occupational range which

> 'evidence horizontal occupational gender, more so than many other developed countries. It is claimed that Australia's workforce is the most gender segregated of all OECD countries' (Wallace 1999, p. 19).

This categorisation is manifest and expressed through social conditioning and is maintained by the particular gender which regards the activity as normal and sees engaging in it as conforming to their normal preferences (Alvesson and Due Billing 2002). The literature suggests some differences in the classification of men and women – on one hand reference is made to the biological differences, such as the ability to give birth, which results in women having an orientation different to that of men. On the other hand the predominant conclusion is that gender –'men/women, masculinity/femininity' can be explained by social processing 'irrespective of biological gender differences' (Alvesson and Due Billing 2002, p. 73). Gender is therefore a (male) social construction and can be explained by the designated positions and external social conditions assigned them and that they find themselves occupying.

Organisational identity and symbolism create and re-create gender based difference or 'reality' through the transference of the social construction of gender into an organisational construction of gender (Aaltio and Mills 2002, p. 6). The social practices within an organisational setting that are representative of the organisational type reflect the gendered subjectivities which become accepted as customary, resulting in an 'appearance of being entirely 'natural'' (Bruni and Gherardi 2002, p. 21). These subjectivities have been developed and imposed through power relationships.

Power has been described as the 'processes and mechanisms that shape our ideas, values, will and identity' and disciplines people by signifying normality (Alvesson and Due Billing 2002, p. 78). If gender is a socially constructed phenomenon, how are constructions such as masculine and feminine determined? Alvesson and Due Billing (2002, p. 81) contend that that there are four elements to gender construction:

> *1. The percentage share of the two bio-sexes.*
> *2. The gender aura or image of the activity (i.e. the ideas that people in the surroundings of the activity have about the work).*
> *3. The values and ideas that dominate the activity (within the work area).*
> *4. The form, in which the activity is conducted (e.g. is it private or public, exposed to competition or 'protected').*

Organisational (Western) cultures are usually accepted as male cultures and this locates them and the resultant identities of both the males and the organisations within the 'context of patriarchy and patriarchal social relations' (Hearn 2002, p. 43). The lack of public consciousness of the existence of these gender-laden manifestations and the issues they represent may be one reason for the continued persistence of this inequitable situation. When analysed it can be seen that the discursive construction of females has not been produced by females but rather by men who are also controlling them and the organisational setting contributes significantly to this state of affairs. The result is that "women's work" and experiences have historically been dictated and sanctioned by males (Prasad and Prasad 2002). It is claimed by Bruni and Gherardi (2002, p. 23) that Western ideology has imposed itself as male ideology. It follows therefore that language and symbolism are also predominantly male. These male dominated rules that govern a given society may deny females their particular view of their world. This view of gender from the perspective of organisational culture has particular application to the NSW SES and the NSW RFS.

The history of Western culture can provide us with an explanation for the difficulties some non-Westerners have in identifying with the prevailing culture. Prasad and Prasad (2002, p. 61) argue that colonialism's legacy has resulted in preconceptions about non-Westerners and resulted in 'a fundamental *ontological* [original italics] distinction between the West and the non-West'. Colonial discourse regards non-Westerners as inferior; they are often demonised, and considered weak and effeminate savages (Prasad and Prasad 2002). Considerations such as these could explain the hesitation of immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds to volunteer. However this is not the only possible explanation. In addition, understandings of gender and the socially constructed elements that determine gender based occupations, both from the point of view of the indigenous parent culture and the dominant culture, have important implications for the gender imbalance within the ranks of emergency service volunteers.

A number of scholars consider the gendered nature of work and voluntary action. McLennan (2007) concludes that between 12 and 24 per cent of volunteer firefighters are women and that women therefore remain an untapped resource that requires more effective recruitment strategies. Some of the reasons for the reluctance of women to volunteer include fears of not being made welcome by male volunteers, beliefs about not being suited for firefighting and child care responsibilities. Others studies on the role of women in emergency service organisations include McLennan (2004), McLennan and Birch (2006) and Branch-Smith and Pooley (2010). Issues of gender are made evident in emergency service organisations by the small number of females who volunteer. The apparent reluctance for male emergency service volunteers to recruit females could be explained in part by issues of identity and masculinity (Faludi 2007; McLennan et al. 2004). Emergency service combat duties have traditionally been the realm of males. The introduction of females into these combat roles could be viewed by some males as a threat to their masculine identity and abilities (Faludi 2007). Concerns may result about the feminisation of this traditionally male occupation resulting in the redefinition of loyalties, affiliations and the commitment to serve. From a female's perspective, issues of identity may become confused. As one interviewee stated, she is expected to 'be one of the blokes' when volunteering. This notion denies her the opportunity to develop her own sense of self as an emergency service volunteer. Issues of affiliation are also at risk of becoming blurred.

If a female displays a strong affiliation to the accepting male members within a primary group and less affiliation to other male members who are discriminatory, she may be viewed negatively by the discriminatory members. Discrimination by male members towards female members may result in fracturing of the group or separation by some members from the organisation. Other Western cultural preconceptions tend to preclude female volunteers' wanting to join an emergency service. These include the lack of child care, thoughts of neglecting children when away from home and considerations of having to maintain a family home, all of which are issues of male power (Branch-Smith and Pooley 2010). Discrimination, harassment and an organisational failure to fully consider

the needs of female volunteers all contribute to the reduction of motivation to join an emergency service and the failure to commit to remaining an active member.

3.6.4 Social capital

In Australia and overseas social capital theory has become of great interest to researchers, research institutions, government departments, industry, social planners and welfare organisations and has the potential to make a positive contribution to outcomes in a variety of social fields (Commonwealth of Australia 2002). Social capital has been defined as 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arises from them' (Putnam 1995, p. 19). Leonard (2002, p. 33) describes social capital as focusing on the 'process value rather than the product value' and defines it as the features within society that generate trust, and develop norms and significant networks. Stukas, Daly and Cowling (2005, p. 35) similarly describe social capital as individual connections through social networks that enhance the 'norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness'.

Therefore the group focus is on robust, trusting relationships (Leonard, Onyx and Hayward-Brown 2005). Once these accepted codes are acknowledged by a given group they are able to be enforced by the use of sanctions. Those who do adhere to the norms of the group receive rewards such as recognition and status (Ostrom and Ahn 2009). To put this in the context of collective action the three types of social capital that are particularly important are '(1) trustworthiness, (2) networks and (3) formal and informal rules or institutions' (Ostrom and Ahn 2009, p. 20). All of these attributes provide endogenous means for individuals within a group to solve collective action issues.

Social capital embraces a wide variety of interactions between community residents. The term 'social' refers to the interactions between people and their relationships with one another, whereas 'capital' can be thought of as the productive capability and, like human or physical capital it can be converted into something of value (Norton 1997). Social

capital has two particular features. The first feature is labelled 'bonding social capital' and the other is 'bridging social capital' (Ostrom and Ahn 2009). Bonding or horizontal social capital encompasses many forms of interaction such as friendships, a family unit, the relationships people have at work, neighbourhood interactions and the interactions within institutional associations such as bowling and sports clubs (Norton 1997). Bridging social capital refers to the relationships that people have with the outside world; that is, the people, ideas and issues that are outside the '"space" in which they normally operate' (Bolatti and Falk 2002, pp. 286-287). This includes informal acquaintances, and even relationships people have with others they do not know, as can be the case with emergency service volunteers. Social capital is a rubric. Therefore, its role is the fundamental process of transmitting social and cultural norms.

Onyx and Leonard (2000, p. 18) also characterise and distinguish the two major types of social capital, bonding and bridging. They describe bonding social capital as having '... dense, multi-functional ties and strong but localised trust' and bridging social capital as being '... characterised by ... weak ties ... as well as a thin, impersonal trust of strangers'. There are other generally accepted meanings for the terms bridging social capital and bonding social capital. Bonding social capital has been defined as the relationships we have with people who are like ourselves; and bridging social capital has been defined as the relationships we have with people who are unlike ourselves such as people from different cultures or socio-economic backgrounds (Onyx and Leonard 2000). There is a third form of social capital referred to as linking social capital which is the relationships we have with those in positions of power in order to use leverage to gain resources (Commonwealth of Australia 2002). Clearly, social capital encompasses a relational aspect in that it does not exist in and of any one person; rather, it must by necessity include groups of individuals working together to invest time and effort in the relationship and '…is the result of historical, cultural and social factors which give rise to norms, values and social relations'. This results in co-operative collective behaviour (Commonwealth of Australia 2002, p. 4).

Trust is not in itself considered a form of social capital but is seen as a product of social capital (Ostrom and Ahn 2009). On the other hand trustworthiness, respect and social cohesion are vital to the health of any community and it is claimed that these forms of social capital are the features of social networks that enable people to interact effectively and to pursue shared meaning. This is particularly so in close communities and the closer the community 'the greater the development of social capital' (Leonard and Onyx 2003, p. 190). It is argued that volunteering contributes immeasurably to the development of social capital within communities. Indeed, Onyx and Leonard (2000, p. 114) describe voluntary work as 'the glue that holds society together'. Their study asserts that sincere and collaborative behaviour, based on collectively shared norms in all their forms develop trust (Onyx and Leonard 2000). Their scholarly contribution identifies the value of volunteering as being a significant component of social capital but warn that it is not a 'proxy' for social capital. They issue a caveat about volunteering, saying that although it augments social capital, other developmental forms exist.

Onyx and Leonard (2000, p. 121) claim that a decrease in volunteering has resulted in a decline in the '... stocks of social capital in the USA since the 1960s' and that this trend is also evident in Australia. There are other variables that may explain this decline however. Some considerations may be the influence of television as an increasing avenue for non-participatory entertainment and the demise of local shops which are being replaced by larger department complexes. It is suggested that in the US, for every ten minutes' travel time to work there is a reduction of 10 percent social capital (Onyx and Leonard 2000). Another argument espoused by Latham (1997, p. 7) is that the '…welfare state has crowded out civil society', referring to the willingness of governments to undertake the many functions that have, in the past been accepted by the community. This assumption suggests that as a result people have felt less inclined to undertake voluntary activities.

If these arguments are valid it may explain the often claimed significant decline in Australian volunteer firefighters (McLennan 2005; McLennan et al. 2009) particularly in rural areas where unemployment is high, requiring people to travel long distances to find and retain work. A further problem is the tendency for young people living in rural

locations, particularly more isolated rural areas, to migrate to urban areas looking for work and social opportunities. This urban migration removes people from familiar surroundings, placing them into an unfamiliar community which inhibits feelings of trust and acceptance, at least in the short term. The result of may be a reluctance to volunteer, particularly in view of the fact that most volunteers are recruited through friends or relatives.

Social connections in urban areas take some time to develop (McLennan 2005) and this is becomes problematic. A rapid response to disasters by volunteers has become the expected norm and has enhanced the positive profile of emergency service volunteers who, having gained the trust of their communities have developed a culture of pro-social behaviour and professional service; a culture that must endure. However the transition from being 'new' to being accepted in an area and the need to develop social connections can reduce the numbers of volunteers. The (re)creation of social capital is the cornerstone of the organisational reputation and management of emergency services.

Social capital also has a strong relationship with human capital in the context of emergency service volunteers. Human capital is described here as one's abilities and knowledge used to acquire or generate commodities and services (Bolatti and Falk 2002). These skills and knowledge base are then utilised in times of emergency or need. This 'expenditure' of human capital enriches social capital through the interaction and engagement with the community. For us to trust, to cooperate and to recognise social norms, we have to have relationships with others and we have to have accepted these ideals as worthy and desirable. This acceptance has been the result of historical and cultural factors that have been handed down and accepted by those following. Social capital is the result or product of the investments made by people who invest their time and human capital in the interests of society. Social capital theory provides one explanation that gives us an understanding of identity formation, affiliation and the commitment to join and remain active in an emergency service organisation (Leonard 2002; Putnam 1995). Bonding social capital is one of the most common instruments of recruitment because it relies on the interaction between people who are known well by

other emergency service volunteers and who are generally hold the same or similar views and opinions (Ostrom and Ahn 2009). Groups of people who hold similar beliefs and values develop a sense of personal and group identity. They identify with the concept of emergency service and this identity is enhanced through positive public opinion and positive portrayals in the media. These common beliefs and values engender trust and loyalty and other attributes that lend themselves to the development of a strong affiliation of volunteers with the members of their primary group and, to a lesser extent, with the membership of sister groups and allied emergency service members. This affiliation between members of a primary group is further strengthened by the interaction between members, the interaction with members of the local community and the common experiences and difficulties experienced when undertaking their combat roles. The assumed identity with the primary group and the development of feelings of belonging and attachment to the members of the group and the relationship enjoyed from local residents increase the emergency service volunteer's commitment to her or his chosen emergency service organisation.

Bonding social capital can be more difficult in urban areas than in rural ones and this is considered particularly so for young people migrating from rural areas to urban areas (Onyx and Leonard 2000). It takes time to locate people with similar values and beliefs and further time to develop trusting relationships. The propensity for emergency service groups to recruit like-minded people may inhibit an offer of membership in the short term. However, if the prospective member has a history of membership with a similar group the process of recruitment and acceptance is likely to be easier. This is because an assumption can be made that the potential recruit already holds the values and beliefs that the membership of the primary group feel are important.

3.6.5 Social identity theory

Issues of identity theory and social identity are complex and in this literature review efforts have been made to consider social identity as a separate piece of the puzzle incorporating self-categorisation theory. It is recognised that identity theory and social identity theory have similarities and an overlap between the two exists (Stets and Burke 2000). Efforts will be made to confine the literature to social identity theory but at times this may be problematic. Concepts of social identity can be traced back to the formation of an identity of the self as described by Erickson during the 1950s and to the sociological tradition of associating the symbolic interactionist perspective of examining the self in relation to its social positioning and content (Reza 2009). Norbert (2000, p. 284) suggests that identity is often separated into the personal (and therefore 'real') and the social (and therefore 'unreal') aspects of human life instead of the personal and social realms being understood as being two different aspects of the same person. In fact, social identity theory holds that people categorise themselves and others into groups according to 'memberships, affiliation, age, gender, culture and others' (Tidwell 2005, p. 450).

'Social identity' was introduced into the sociological dictionary to situate an individual's identity within the sphere of social relationships and to explain the way in which the process of making salient the distinction of 'us' and 'them' changes the way in which people view each other (Reza 2009, p. 82). This distinction suggests that social identities are based upon the idiosyncratic nature of the individual's contribution to a group being identified as being significant and upon the pre-existing social elements or characterisations of that group (Postmes, Spears, Lee and Novak 2005). Reza (2009) argues that social identity is one's self view derived from the knowledge of one's acceptance by the membership of that group.

Social identity is also described by Deaux (2000, p. 1) as a composite of self developed through the identification with a group within society and the relationship the person has with the membership of the group and the 'broader social structure'. She sees social identity as being associated with the symbolic interactions and concepts within the

workplace or with a significant group. Hall (2000, p. 16) describes social identity in a similar way. He suggests that identity is a construct developed through the recognition of a common background or 'shared characteristics' with others. This includes commonly held beliefs or ideologies creating allegiance and a sense of oneness, a solidarity.

In social identity theory these descriptions can be classified as self-categorisation and it is through self-categorisation that a social identity is developed (Stets and Burke 2000). The establishment of a salient social identity following self-categorisation begins to operate when one is psychologically attuned with a group and begins to convince the membership that one holds similar opinions and accepts and mimics their behaviour (Postmes, Spears, Lee and Novak 2005, p. 229). Social identity theory therefore concludes that a person's social identity is the knowledge they have of belonging to a group.

A group is defined here as being a number of individuals who hold a common view of themselves, who are similar in outlook and who identify, through a comparative process with the other group members or the in-group, or by comparison with individuals who hold dissimilar views or normative codes or out-groups (Stets and Burke 2000). Therefore there are two important aspects of the formation of social identity: self-categorisation and social comparison. The consequence of self-categorisation for the individual is an emphasis on the perceived resemblance between the self and the in-group and correspondingly, an emphasis of the perceived differences between the individual and others or out-groups. These differences may include such things as the 'attitudes, beliefs and values, affective reactions, behavioral norms [and] styles of speech' (Stets and Burke 2000, p. 225).

Self-categorisation is also more complex than one would initially think. Reza (2009, p. 82) divides it into three separate but interwoven levels. The first is described as 'a supra or human identity', the second, 'an intermediary or social identity' and the third a 'personal identity'. The 'supra' or human identity is described by Reza (2009) as the ideal image one holds of oneself. The social identity is variable and relies upon group identification and the salience of the group or groups. Personal self-categorisation is

determined by interpersonal comparisons and by the accessibility of the category of the group which is a 'fit' for the individual. This 'fit' improves one's self-esteem through the positive evaluation of the in-group in relation to a less positive or negative evaluation of an out-group. Overall, the functions that are served by social identification include personal insights and greater understanding, social comparison, a collective sense of worth, in-group cooperation, out-group and inter-group comparison and competition, 'social interaction, and romantic involvement' (Deaux 2000, p. 12).

The social categories one identifies with exist in the structured society the individual is a part of and her or his identity or sense of self is largely derived from these categories (Stets and Burke 2000). Self-identification with a particular group signifies an individual's consensual and distinctive position within society. Group categorisation reflects the concrete representation of the group identity by claiming, through out-group interaction, distinctiveness not held by out-groups (Postmes et al. 2005). By taking on this distinctiveness the membership of the in-group adopt individual and collective meanings and expectations and act to preserve these significant codes. Brown, Kirpal and Rauner (2007) agree and stress the close connection between work and social relationships in identity formation. They claim that socialisation into a work group not only inculcates the necessary skills required for the occupation but also instils and internalises the code of conduct and, resultantly, the world's view of that group.

The three composites of identity described by Reza (2009) require further consideration however. Durkheim made a distinction between 'personal' identity and group identity. He labelled personal or individual identity as 'organic solidarity' which 'arises out of differentiation within the group, between individuals … and out of the roles, attributes, and skills' that an individual bring to the group (Postmes et al. 2005, p. 748). Group identity is defined by Durkheim as 'mechanical solidarity' which becomes evident through the similarities an individual has with members of the group. This perception of similarity with the group takes priority over the individual (Postmes et al. 2005, p. 748). This argument is further advanced when Durkheim claims that organic solidarity, or diversity, strengthens mechanical solidarity; this highlights the symbiotic nature of

‘individualism and collectivism’. Both the individual and the collective have the capacity to achieve shared aims and so, by extension, ‘individualism does not preclude solidarity’ (Postmes et al. 2005, p. 748). In other words, individualism introduced into the in-group can make changes that are accepted by the membership and this results in strengthening the attributes, knowledge base and attitudes of that group – the group continues to grow.

On the other hand, although group participation may produce a social identity through the sharing of a common cognitive category, an individual’s strength of identification with the category may vary resulting in behaviour deemed uncharacteristic for the group. Individuals who identify very closely with the social group are less likely to cause unrest or to leave the group. This characteristic will have a significant impact on volunteer retention issues as highly identifying individuals are more likely to enjoy inter-group activities and are more likely to ‘engage in outgroup derogation’(Deaux 2000, p. 5). The membership who strongly identify with the group therefore goes through a process of ‘self-stereotyping’, a process of socially derived meanings, and claim the categorised membership and the subsequent characteristics of the group (Deaux 2000, p. 5). The emergency service agency’s pro-social characteristics have an impact on society as a whole. If the community believes in the characteristics of the group are worthy of praise, this will reinforce the social identity of the group who will, in turn, repeat and continue to re-shape their pro-social behaviour. The group identity, and therefore the assumed social identity, is enduring and ‘outlives the individual members’(Worchel, Iuzzini, Coutantand Ivaldi 2000, p. 21).

When considering ethnicity, it might be assumed that the problem of recruiting volunteers from these groups may lie in the assumption that people from non-Anglo-Australian backgrounds are often identifiable as members of a different group or out-group. The dominant group may automatically impose stereotypical labels that inhibit social interaction and offers of group membership resulting therefore in reinforcing in-group identification encouraging discrimination in favour of one’s group (Worchel et al. 2000).

3.6.6 Neo-institutional theory

Neo-institutional Theory as it is understood sociologically is described by McDonald and Mutch (2000) as the way an organisation develops its own way of operating within the manufactured framework of the 'rules of the game' and in doing so delineates the manner '…by which institutionalisation occurs' (McDonald and Mutch 2000, pp. 126 and 129). Membership within the organisation discursively constructs the institution through the development of idiosyncratic characteristics that create a common meaning. These common meanings include the language used, the social patterns of interaction, norms, values, beliefs and generalised expectations. Through the use of these cultural artefacts which are often unacknowledged as holding 'rule-like status' the institution is constantly recreated (McDonald and Mutch 2000, p. 127). Applying this concept to emergency service volunteers, it is possible to see that they, as active agents interacting within the brigade or unit and with their respective parent organisations, create and recreate the organisation and are in turn created in part by the organisation(McDonald and Mutch 2000).

As a result, emergency service volunteers can be perceived as submissive, conforming and amenable. It could be argued that his process both creates and recreates the organisation in a 'subconscious and routine way' (McDonald and Mutch 2000, p. 129) and that the forces created in this way are constricting individuality. This theory argues there is the capacity for the human agency to effect organisational change through determination and re-determination of the organisational dynamics. McDonald and Mutch consider volunteering from a neo-institutional theoretical perspective and discuss how voluntary action is fundamental to the creation of civil society and the development of social capital. When referring to civil society and social capital they place a high value on social relationships and social capital and on the willingness of people to assist and trust each other. These attributes imply an expectation that others will obey laws and norms. This perspective holds that institutions have an identity, a status with an

unquestioned set of practices and considers replication and maintenance of the organisation through the socially constructed actions and expectations developed through the participants' actions and ongoing interaction. Organisations respond to the above norms, values and beliefs because they are the elements that make up the institutionalised myths which in turn are accepted as truths. The economic value of this is evident. An organisation that has a well developed set of truths that conform to the legitimised form of authority – for example the emergency service volunteer's parent organisation, has a distinct advantage over an organisation whose symbols or beliefs do not conform.

3.7 Psychological theoretical perspectives of the Australian emergency service volunteer and their motivations to volunteer

One of the few theory-based research projects into volunteering is the study by Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen and Miene (1998). This work contributes significantly to our understanding of volunteer motivations and addresses these motivations using a functional approach. It argues that sustained volunteering is a planned activity that enables an individual to sort out their personal priorities and match their capabilities and interests with the type of voluntary intervention under consideration. Accordingly, volunteers are said to '(a) actively seek out opportunities to help others; (b) may deliberate …whether to volunteer [and] the extent of their involvement; and (c) may make a commitment … that may extend over a considerable period of time' (Clary et al. 1998 p. 1517).

The questions being asked by Clary et al. (1998 p. 1517) are 'Why do people volunteer? and 'What sustains voluntary helping'? The functional approach to motivation claims to offer an understanding of the 'phenomena and processes … of attitudes and persuasion, social cognition, social relationships, and personality' and thus provides the means of separating the complexities of the motivations to volunteer. The theory explains three conditions which are served through voluntary action. The first is argued to be 'to serve a knowledge' that helps the individual understand their world, the second is a 'value

expressive function' that enables people to express their values and convictions and the third serves 'an ego defensive function' which cushions people from 'undesirable or threatening truths about the self' or it helps people fit in with personally important primary groups (Clary et al. 1998 p. 1517).

The result of this research by Clary et al. is an insightful Volunteer Functions Inventory that proposes six motivational functions for volunteering. They are: values, understanding, social, career, protective and enhancement functions. The *values* function relates to an individual's altruistic and humanitarian ideals and concern for others; the *understanding* function relates to new learning experiences and the opportunity to utilise skills and expertise or in order to benefit through self-development and learning opportunities thus providing variety in life; the *social* function relates to developing close relationships with others and offers the advantages of being with friends who engage in an activity that is favourably viewed by others; the *career* function is concerned with career-related benefits obtained through the voluntary action; the *protective* function centres on protecting the individual from negative feelings about themselves or may serve to reduce guilt about believing they are more fortunate than others; and finally, the *enhancement* function provides for feelings of satisfaction related to personal growth and development (Clary et al. 1998).

Its creators claim the Volunteer Functions Inventory is an instrument 'that reliably and validly taps a set of motivations of generic relevance to volunteerism' (Clary et al. 1998 p. 1519). Table 3.4 below provides a succinct description of these motivations in a modified format:

Table 3.4. Volunteer Functions Inventory

Values function
I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself.
I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving.
I feel compassion toward people in need.
I feel it is important to help others.
I can do something for a cause that is important to me.
Understanding
I can learn more about the cause for which I am working.
Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things.
Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands on experience.
I can learn how to deal with a variety of people
I can explore my own strengths.
Social
My friends volunteer.
People I'm close to want me to volunteer.
People I know share an interest in community service.
Others with whom I am close place a high value on community service.
Volunteering is an important activity to the people I know best.
Career
Volunteering can help me get my foot in the door at a place I would like to work.
I can make new contacts that might help my business or career.
Volunteering allows me to explore different career options.
Volunteering will help me succeed in my chosen profession.
Volunteering experience will look good on my résumé.
Protective
No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it.
By volunteering I feel less lonely.
Volunteer work relieves me of some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others.
Volunteering helps me work through my own personal problems.
Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles.

Enhancement
Volunteering makes me feel important.
Volunteering increases my self-esteem.
Volunteering makes me feel needed.
Volunteering makes me feel better about myself.
Volunteering is a way to make new friends.

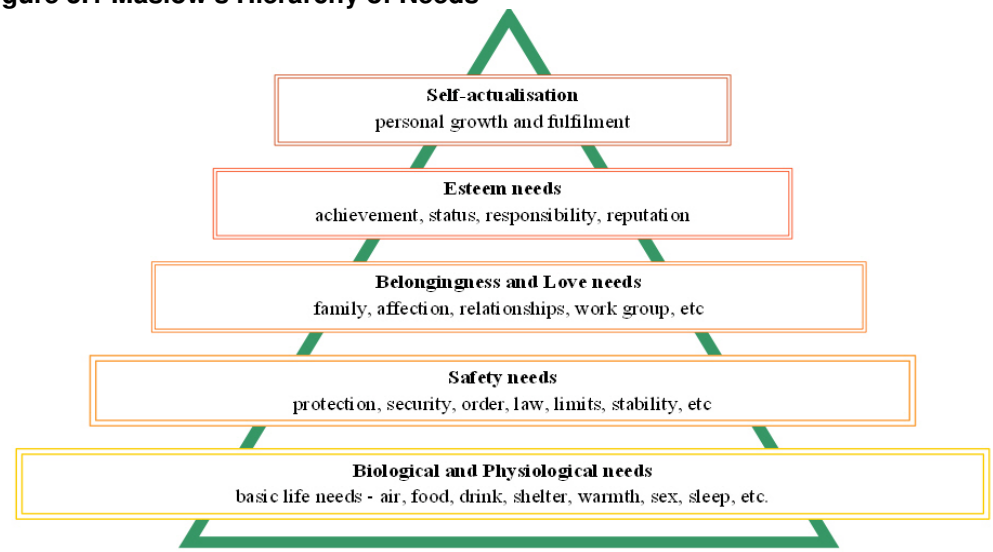
Source: Adapted from Clary et al. (1998 p. 1520)

3.7.1 Motivation theory

Motivation is defined in a number of ways including the 'predisposition to behave in a purposive manner to achieve specific, unmet needs; an internal drive to satisfy an unsatisfied need and as the inner force that drives individuals to accomplish personal and organizational goals' (Green 2000, p. 2).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in Lefton (1985) claims humans strive to progressively fulfil a series of needs. This progressive fulfilment is represented through a five-stage growth hierarchy. The first stage is considered the most fundamental and includes the fulfilment of the biological and physiological needs that consist of the basic life needs of food, air, drink, shelter, warmth, sleep and sex (Lefton 1985). Many of these needs are homeostatic needs whose satisfaction is required to maintain the constant and normal state of the blood stream (Green 2000). These stages are diagrammatically represented below:

Figure 3.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Source: adapted from Cloninger (1996), p. 436

The second stage is the need for safety, at work, in the family, within one's group and by the application of laws. These safety needs are therefore met through an ordered, predictable society. Safety needs arise from time to time during emergencies such as war, human made or natural disasters, and illness (Cloninger 1996). The third stage of the hierarchy of needs is the need for belongingness and love. At this level the individual seeks and reciprocates love, affection, belongingness and friendship. The individual will endeavour to develop affectionate relations with people generally. This will generally involve creating positive relationships within her or his chosen group or groups (Cloninger 1996; Green 2000).

Esteem is the fourth stage of the hierarchy. According to Maslow, all people have a need or desire for a stable and high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect and for the esteem of others. The needs on this level include the desire for strength, achievement, confidence, adequacy, prestige, recognition, attention and appreciation (Green 2000).

The final stage of the hierarchy refers to the desire for self-fulfilment and 'to become everything that one is capable of becoming' (Cloninger 1996, p. 438; Green 2000). When

the first four stages, the 'D-motivations', are met an individual's motivation is directed toward self-actualisation. Maslow defined this as the

> ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities and talents, as fulfilment of mission (or call, fate, destiny, or vocation), as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person's own intrinsic nature, as an increasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy within the person (Cloninger 1996, p. 441).

The first four stages of the hierarchy described above are referred to by Maslow as '**deficiency motivation'** [original bold] or *D-motivation* and can be understood as motivations to overcome feelings of deficiency and must be met to an adequate degree before an individual is able to move into the higher level (Cloninger 1996, pp. 436 and 439). The fifth level, self-actualising, is referred to as *B-motivation* or '**being motivated'** [original bold], the stage in which the individual is no longer motivated by deficiencies but by 'the need to "actualize" or fulfil his or her potential' (Cloninger 1996, p. 438).

A criticism of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is that he de-emphasises the importance of the individual's social world, emphasising the real self as being predominantly biologically determined (Cloninger 1996). An emphasis on the individual also raises the question of ethnocentricity. The hierarchy may have implications within a relatively individualistic society such as Australia but the emphasis on the individual restricts the applicability of the model in a collective society.

Green (2000, p. 370) explains that according to the hierarchy, the advancement from one stage to the next 'rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more pre-potent need'. He also claims that while behaviour is almost always motivated, it is also almost always biologically, culturally and situationally determined as well. Lindner (1998) reports on five studies which put forward theories that can be applied to the needs of employees. The first is Maslow's Hierarchy with its five levels of needs, the 'physiological, safety, social, ego and self-actualizing' (Lindner 1998, p. 1).

The second theory discussed by Lindner is Herzberg's two-factor theory which identifies two types of motivational factors: motivators and 'hygienes'. Motivators are the intrinsic

factors within the employment relationship and include a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. Hygienes are the extrinsic factors of employment such as pay and job security (Lindner 1998, p. 1).

The third study cited by Linder (1998) is Vroom (1964). Vroom proposes a theory which is based on an assumption that an employee's effort will produce performance and this performance will result in rewards, both positive and negative. The greater the positive reward, the more likely it is that the employee will be motivated. The more negative the reward, the less likely it is that the employee will be motivated (Lindner 1998, p. 1). The fourth theory cited is Adam's (1965) theory which argues that employees strive for equity with their colleagues. This is achieved when their ratio of production to input required is equal to that of other employees (Lindner 1998). Finally, Lindner cites Skinner (1953) who believed that positive reinforcement causes individuals to repeat behaviours. Managers should therefore positively reinforce positive behaviour and negatively reinforce negative behaviour (Lindner 1998).

These studies suggest that interesting work and good pay are the primary motivators for employees. They also imply that employers should design the conditions of work to incorporate reward systems such as job enrichment, promotional opportunities and forms of non-monetary compensation (Lindner 1998). Williams (1998) believes volunteers can be expected to experience a decrease in satisfaction if their motivational needs are not being met.

Metzer (1996, p. 21) provides some insight into volunteer motivation, citing the ABS (1996) report that 41.5 percent of the respondents volunteered 'to help others or their community, 33.5 percent personal or family involvement … 26.5 percent personal satisfaction and 23.3 percent to do something worthwhile'. These motivations have been supported by McLennan (2008), McLennan, King and Jamieson (2004) and Beatson (2005). Given the above statistics, it can be concluded that 83.3 percent of volunteers do so for other than simply altruistic reasons. Vellekoop-Baldock (1990) supports the notion of egoistic motivation, suggesting that volunteers' claim altruism as their motive because,

in part, altruistic motives are the accepted ones and the ones volunteers have historically given. In these circumstances, volunteers may be loath to claim or articulate any other personal reason for volunteering. An explanation for this is offered by Green (2000) who suggests that motivation is often 'unconscious rather than conscious' and that the unconscious motivators are more important than the conscious motivators (Green 2000, p. 380). This suggests that volunteers may simply be unaware of their true motivations and so, when asked must refer to the accepted motives of altruistic behaviour.

Comparing the 1996 ABS data with that of 2006 volunteers we find:

- 56.6% said they volunteered to help others or their community, an increase of 15.1%
- 37.2% said they did so for personal or family involvement, an increase of 3.7%
- 44% said they did so for personal satisfaction an increase of 17.5%
- 36.2% of volunteers said they did so to do something thought to be worthwhile, an increase of 12.9% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007)

.

Metzer (1996, p. 21) believes distinctions can exist between extrinsic and intrinsic volunteer motivation. He believes that although the ABS survey data does not provide a clear separation of the reasons given for voluntary work '…it is nevertheless instructive to observe the distinction of extrinsically versus intrinsically driven activities'. Metzer concludes that the qualitative nature of volunteer activity could be different from the nature of the activity undertaken by a paid person – different but not necessarily better or worse.

3.7.2 Alienation and self-actualisation

Thompson and Bono (1993, p. 326) believe people engage in voluntary activities in order to mitigate feelings of alienation experienced in capitalist economies. The voluntary action reduces feelings of alienation by affording the opportunity for self-actualisation. Thompson and Bono also believe motivating factors contribute substantially to the effectiveness and stability of the volunteer unit. Fostering a commitment culture within the emergency service volunteer depends on the activities undertaken by the members. Their understanding of the significance of the activity, its importance to the community

they serve and (although possibly not understood) the nature of the labour/capitalist characteristics. all inspire a highly motivating sense of pride. Capitalist relations of production, on the other hand, foster '…individualistic and competitive behaviour' which is the antithesis of social exchange, indeed it is 'dis-integrative' (Thompson and Bono 1993, p. 330). The commitment culture of emergency service volunteers is enhanced by their symbols such as badges, marks of rank, the vehicles with coloured warning lights, the colour of the vehicles and the quasi-militaristic distinctive uniform, also apparent in occupations such as the police and correctional officers. Thompson and Bono's (1993) survey support the contention that distinguishing features enhance and promote prestige and status and are a reasonably strong motivator.

According to Thompson and Bono, worker alienation results in a sense of social isolation, powerlessness, meaninglessness. They argue that volunteerism, on the other hand, provides an alternative to the sale of labour to the capitalist (Thompson and Bono 1993, p. 327). Voluntary labour provides an opportunity to participate in self-actualising, non-alienating activities that promote self-esteem and the redevelopment of the inner self. Blauner's (1973) insight into alienation and specifically into the role of self-estrangement, may be of value if it can be demonstrated that most NSW SES and NSW RFS members are recruited from a blue collar socio-economic background. However this research has not determined this. Blauner claims there are four types of alienation: '"powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, and self-estrangement"' (Blauner 1973, pp. 22-32) .

3.7.3 Psychological contract theory

The concept of the psychological contract was introduced more than four decades ago in order to provide a useful framework with which to better understand relationships between employers and full-time employees. However the topic has received relatively little empirical attention until recently (Montes and Zweig 2009). Psychological contract research into volunteers, and our understanding about their drives and behaviours from this perspective, have received even less attention (Farmer and Fedor 1999).

In order to better understand the concept of the psychological contract it is necessary to provide some commonly used definitions. These definitions revolve around two generalisations: beliefs and promises based on expectations. Half of the definitions referred to in the literature hold that beliefs and belief systems are the fundamental cornerstone of the psychological contract, for example: psychological contracts are '…the belief systems of individual workers and employers regarding their mutual obligations'. These obligations are adopted either from promises made during recruitment and following employment or from promises made '…through day-to-day interactions' (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 1). Other scholars express similar views when referring to the psychological contract (Coyle-Shapiro and Neuman 2004; De Vos, Buyens and Schalk 2003; Farmer and Fedor 1999).

Aligned with beliefs are expectations. Makin, Cooper and Cox (1996, p. 4) aptly describe an expectation within the psychological contract framework as an '…*unwritten set of expectations operating at all times between every member of an organization and the various managers and others in that organization'* [original italics]. These sentiments are also echoed by a number of contemporaries (Guest and Conway 2001; Kim, Trail, Lim, and Kim 2009; Montes and Zweig 2009). In order to understand the implications of psychological contract theory for the study of emergency service volunteers, it is necessary to investigate the relevant concepts in more detail.

3.7.3.1 The communication process and subsequent formation of the psychological contract

A psychological contract is in part shaped by the law, society and the individual in which the contract operates and by how the parties to the contract understand the terms of the perceived agreement. In order for the psychological contract to exist there must be a degree of mutuality. However, the interpretation of the contract may not be the same for all the parties involved because each party is striving for their independent goals

(Rousseau and Schalk 2000). The interpretative nature of the contract relies upon whether it is to be construed as a belief, an expectation, a promise, an obligation or a combination of all of these personal and organisational factors. A belief is conceived of here as being the perception of reality held by both parties. These beliefs provide an interpretation or 'cognitive schema' about the terms and conditions of employment at the level of the individual (De Vos, Buyens and Schalk 2003, p. 539). This perception of the active construction of reality underscores the commitments of both parties within the employment relationship.

An expectation is a form of belief. However, an expectation is formed through such experiences as past employment, social norms, friends' comments and implicit and explicit promises made by the employer (Montes and Zweig 2009). Promises are understood as different things by different people. This is particularly so from a cultural perspective. Does a promise mean '…to *do* something or to simply *try?'* (original italics) (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 6). From a workplace perspective, Australians tend to establish their trust in a person based on a perception of their commitment and loyalty and their overall estimation of that person's commitment to honouring promises (Kabanoff, Jimmieson and Lewis 2000, p. 39). Naturally, not all promises can be honoured; for example during the financial economic downturn it would be difficult to honour promises to raise wages, pay bonuses or provide promotions. Under these circumstances broken promises may be overlooked in the short term. However, they would be expected to be honoured when conditions improved.

Promises are constructed from verbal agreements, for example agreed work hours, and through inferences such as observing how other employees are treated and rewarded. Promises therefore refer to the commitments made by the parties, the implicit or explicit undertakings made by the employer, promises of some future course of action such as ongoing training opportunities (Montes and Zweig 2009) or, from the perspective of the employer, the assumption that the employee will demonstrate flexibility and loyalty and do unpaid overtime and other duties not specified in the job description (De Vos et al. 2003). An obligation is considered to arise from the provisions as stipulated by law

(Rousseau and Schalk 2000) and from the combination of the beliefs held by each party in the employment transaction. Thus, in the mind of employer and the employee, both parties are duty-bound by a '…set of reciprocal obligations' (Farmer and Fedor 1999, p. 350). Obligations are therefore beliefs about what must be undertaken by each party and each party will judge the other according to how completely it fulfils these undertakings. It can be seen that the separation of these components is difficult and that psychological contracts rely on a combination of these elements.

3.7.3.2 Types of psychological contracts

The extant literature generally refers to two basic types of psychological contract: transactional and relational. A transactional psychological contract is one based primarily on economic interests; they are 'specific, close-ended' [and] easily definable' (Farmer and Fedor 1999, p. 351) or they have materialistic foci 'which are finite, static, observable and tend to be short-term exchanges' (Kim, Trail, Lim and Kim 2009, p. 555). Therefore this type of contract is likely to focus strongly on financial incentives which are contingent upon performance-based results. Consequently they rely '…on monetary exchanges that are shorter in duration but entail well-specified performance standards' (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 34). Clearly, this seems to apply to most paid employment but would be difficult to attribute to voluntary action.

Relational contracts pertain to open-ended exchanges that are 'nonspecific in terms of time' (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 33). They involve considerable investments by both parties. They are more 'developmental … socioemotional [sic] and value-laden in nature' and are embedded in social concerns that include individual relationships, organisational and personal reputations and integrity (Farmer and Fedor 1999). An employer engaging in this type of psychological contract is far more likely to make significant investment in skills training and the acquisition of knowledge in order to develop staff in the areas that are of value to the organisation. In accepting this employment relationship, staff generally

understand and accept that reciprocal obligations regarding performance exist (Rousseau and Schalk 2000).

Emergency service voluntary action, as with all voluntary action, seems to fall into the relational psychological contract category. However, the question that must be asked is 'who is the emergency service voluntary relationship with'? Does the volunteer make the contract with the organisation, with the paid career management, with their primary group that includes and embraces other secondary primary groups, with the local community, with other emergency service volunteers or with a combination of all of these? In order to answer this question it in necessary to consider the psychological contract in more depth. The above dualistic view of the psychological contract is considered insufficient because combinations of psychological contracts must be acknowledged. Other forms of psychological contracts are described as 'balanced', 'transitional' (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 33) and 'ideology-infused' or 'transpersonal' (O'Donohue, Sheehan, Hecker and Holland 2007, p. 5), the latter describing a contract driven by a cause and the connection to the individual with that cause.

A balanced contract tends to be a more relational type of contract that has clearly defined outcome-based components. A transitional psychological contract is one which has no guarantees of ongoing employment and has 'no explicit performance demands' (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 34). Whatever the type of psychological contract formed, there are two main requirements for their formation: a degree of personal freedom to form the contract and social stability which informs both parties of their respective trust, intention and ability to keep their commitments (Rousseau and Schalk 2000).

3.7.3.3 Functions of psychological contracts

The social norms in Australia recognise the need for people to have reciprocity in their dealings, whether the relationship is of a social nature or employment based. If it is

employment based, the employee expects and seeks to create a psychological contract which provides a 'shorthand way of representing the employment relationship' (Farmer and Fedor 1999, p. 351). A psychological contract has several functions that are considered positive and empowering. One function reduces individual uncertainty through the agreed-upon conditions of their employment or voluntary activity. A second function relates to how employees tend to self-monitor their behaviour which reduces the need for supervision. This in turn provides a third positive function: the feeling that they are able to influence their own future (Farmer and Fedor 1999, p. 351).

The ideology and function of empowerment referred to above has far-reaching positive attributes. These are articulated by Kim, Trail, Lim and Kim (2009) who define empowerment as encompassing four cognitive processes. They argue that empowerment orientates the employee or volunteer to their work through meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Meaning refers to an individual's congruent association between their work role and their personal beliefs, values and behaviours. Competence is the individual's sense of self and their belief in their ability to perform the tasks required. Self-determination relies on the individual's ability to make choices that provide the autonomy to instigate and regulate their workplace actions and behaviours and impact refers to the impact an individual has on the organisation's strategic planning processes (Kim et al. 2009).

3.8 Human resource management theory and the nexus with psychological contracts

Human resource management has been developing for almost a century. However, the recognised contemporary strategic approach to this discipline has developed and is characterised in light of the '*industrial capitalist* [original italics] type of society and political economy…' (Watson 2005, p.9) which are typologised through a market-based approach in which a relationship is formed between the organisation and the individuals who are to supply the human resources or labour. It constitutes an agreement, a contract

between the organisation and the individual to work for agreed upon incentives or rewards such as remuneration in exchange for the individual's productivity and skills to achieve the organisation's goals. The workplace, in this context therefore, is most often a bureaucratised institution where the providers of labour are assigned tasks. These tasks are allocated to people who are considered qualified to perform them and they are controlled and managed by others who have been given the authority to either develop or implement the institution's policies and procedures.

Human resources can best be understood by the concept of understanding and managing the potential and capabilities that individuals bring to an organisation that are strategically necessary for the organisation to flourish (Leopold, Harris and Watson 2005). It has become a central tenet that in order to more effectively manage and mobilise these resources, that is, the capabilities and potential of employees, employers must come to understand the reciprocal psychological contract that binds the organisation and its employees (Holland, Sheehan, Donohue and Pyman 2007). The term 'psychological contract' was first used in 1960 by Argyris and has come to describe the employment relationships categorised as reciprocal obligations as detailed above (Sarantinos 2007).

Psychological contracts are expectations, beliefs and promises believed to exist by both the employer and the employees. Should any of these contingent conditions cease to exist or should they be perceived to have ceased to exist, a number of repercussions will result such as a psychological breach. The term 'psychological breach' is used here to describe a perception by a contract holder that the promised obligations have not been satisfactorily met (Holland et al. 2007). It is stressed here that an individual's concept of breach is subjective and not necessarily based on reality and that there are two factors which will give rise to this. Firstly, there is the 'reneging' which occurs when the organisation, or its authorised agents such as managers, knowing that an obligation exists, intentionally fails to meet the obligation. Reneging may occur as a result if prevailing economic conditions, for example, mean that the organisation is unable to meet its obligations. The second condition that would constitute a breach of the psychological

contract is ‘incongruence’ which would arise when the employer or its authorised agents hold views which are different to those of the employee about whether an obligation exists at all (Holland et al. 2007, pp. 89-90; Sarantinos 2007). An employee’s perception of a breach of her or his psychological contract and their cognitive response will result in a number of negative outcomes such as reduced levels of organisational behaviour, reduced trust, a less cooperative approach and increased levels of absenteeism (Holland et al. 2007).

The second factor for a perceived breach of an individual’s psychological contract is ‘violation’ (Holland et al. 2007, p. 90). Violation is distinct from breach and represents an emotional experience of dissatisfaction which will manifest through frustration, anger and resentment. The two factors are interrelated and sequential; that is, a perceived breach will always occur prior to violation. It does not follow that feelings of violation will inevitably result however, as it will depend upon the extent of the perceived breach. Should the individual perceive the breach to be small and, if the relationship is strong, feelings of violation will not necessarily follow (Holland et al. 2007; Sarantinos 2007). Sarantinos (2007) suggest four principal reactions to violation of the psychological contract: the self termination of the working relationship or resignation, efforts to voice discontent and renegotiate the violated agreement, the use of silence which is a passive response used in the hope that more favourable conditions will prevail and, neglect which results in either a passive resistance or more active counter-productive behaviour (Sarantinos 2007).

The challenge for human resource practitioners and managers is to develop a balance between the perceived needs and expectations of the employee, the employer and the organisation. It is vital, in order to achieve this balance that the information provided to new recruits and existing employees is realistic. Providing unabridged realistic information will enable employees to determine whether their perceived reality matches the policies and procedures of the organisation. If the espoused benefits provided by the human resource practitioner are congruent with the employee’s expectations, positive psychological contracts and trust will develop. If they fail to appeal or are incongruent

with the employee's perceived expectations, a 'mismatched' psychological contract is likely to be the result. This will engender poor performance, lower organisational citizenship and a reduction in motivation (Holland et al. 2007, p. 93; Sarantinos 2007).

Of importance are the organisation's managers, particularly those with whom employees come into regular contact and with whom they interact. Managers are considered by many employees to be the representatives of the organisation; therefore, it is likely that frequent perceptions of breaches or the recognition of feelings of violation of psychological contracts will originate at this level. An added challenge to human resource management is to ensure managers are conversant with the organisation's perceived psychological contract and that they reflect its human resource policies and practices, are conversant with the employees' contracts, have the ability to judge whether there has been miscommunication, have the skills to manage employee perceptions whilst at the same time being receptive to feelings of perceived breach and have the ability to intercede in a positive way (Bowen and Siehl 1997; Holland et al. 2007; Sarantinos 2007; Tipples 1996). This challenge can be met through consistent two-way communication from the most senior level down through the levels of the organisation and, through the human resource practitioner, back to the senior management level.

Proactive communication can also be enhanced by performance management practices. These provide valuable benefits to both the employer and employee through the transmission of mutual expectations and obligations and by providing a conduit for positive feedback on performance. They provide an opportunity for employers to identify and provide required training, clarify standards, highlight future rewards and monitor employees' perceptions of psychological contract fulfilment. All of these objectives can be achieved largely through the use of carefully prepared open-ended surveys that allow employees to express themselves, their idiosyncratic expectations and their interpretations of the human resource management practices (Holland et al. 2007).

The process of a formal induction of new employees will also reduce the likelihood of perceived breaches of the psychological contract. This induction should include early

socialisation which results in the beliefs, expectations and obligations of the organisation being inculcated. Other means of reducing perceptions of breaches or feelings of violation include the development of small sections of cross-functional staff in order to build interdependence, teamwork and a social atmosphere. The provision of challenging work with a level of independence also reduces the likelihood of perceptions of breach. The alignment and re-alignment of human resource practices that reflect the altering nature of social change is another mitigating option and so is providing assistance training or counselling to employees who, for one reason or another, have to leave the organisation. This will develop respect, a measure of trust and will assist in maintaining the morale of those remaining (Sarantinos 2007).

3.9 Human resource management theory and the voluntary sector

3.9.1 Recruitment and retention

Human resource practices of staffing, training and development, motivation, and retention (DeCenzo and Robbins 2005) can be applied to the volunteer sector as volunteer organisations need to attract and retain productive, committed and reliable volunteers to achieve their mission. Recruitment and retention of skilled paid workers is a 'hot topic' in the management literature due to the impact of lower unemployment and the skills shortage (Dychtwald and Baxter 2007) and similarly, because it is important to maintain or increase volunteer hours, attracting and retaining volunteer workers is also likely to become more pressing. This is indicated by Birch and McLennan (2007), McLennan, Birch, Cowlishaw and Hayes (2009) and Branch-Smith and Pooley (2010).

Frey and Stechstor (2007) indicate that retention management examines the connection between employees and their organisation and comprises a range of actions that can be taken by organisations to keep their employees satisfied. Typically these include monetary rewards such as pay, bonuses or share options. These are obviously not of

relevance to a volunteer workforce. Non-monetary rewards include the degree of interest and challenge in the work involved, responsibility, recognition, advancement, performance feedback, good human resource policies and practice, congenial colleagues, fair treatment, opportunities for learning and development, open and frequent communication, career security and organisational support (Stone 2005). Arguably, with the exception of career security, all of these factors may come into play in the retention of volunteers and an absence of these factors could lead to a higher turnover of volunteers than is good for the organisation.

3.9.2 Paid and unpaid relationships in human resource management

A comparison of organisations where employees are paid with organisations in the volunteer sector highlights both similarities and differences relating to the identification, attraction and retention of potential employees (De Ciere, Kramar, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright 2008). It appears that in the volunteer sector there is less overt advertising for 'workers' than in the paid work sector. It is noted though that that some businesses actively use the word-of-mouth pronouncements of current employees to attract a pool of applicants (Stone 2005). It also appears that the reputation of an organisation is of importance in attracting paid and unpaid workers, as are non-monetary conditions such as the nature of the work, social networks and intrinsic rewards such as job satisfaction. The main point of difference between the two sectors is monetary compensation and opportunities for advancement, although some recent research indicates that volunteer work can be a path to paid employment within or beyond the not-for-profit sector (Nisbet and Wallace 2007).

Sound human resource policies and practices may also require vigilant consideration of the emergent multi-generational makeup of today's workforce. Today's workforce is made up of four distinct generations, the Traditionalist or Mature Generation (born 1927–1945), the Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1976) and Generation Y (1977 – present) (Green 2007). These generational differences raise important

considerations for those responsible for human resource management. Paid and unpaid workers may view their intergenerational work obligations differently. It is argued that emergency service volunteers and volunteers generally, may be driven by a new set of values, particularly Generation X and Y recruits. Green (2007) claims that in America, unlike the traditional workforce, the 'Emergent Workforce' (a term which refers to generations X and Y), tends to move from job to job and does not believe that loyalty can be measured by the length of time spent in an organisation. These new generations of employees are 'family focused' and seek '…a more spiritual workplace that emphasizes personal integrity and accountability' (Green 2007, p. 17).

The Australian experience shows that the ageing volunteer population poses challenges that must be met if emergency service provision is to be sustainable (McLennan et al. 2009). Sustaining this vital service will rest on the willingness of Generations X and Y. Our Traditional or Builders and Baby Boomer generations are generally thought of when volunteering is considered and only a few supervisors speak of Generations X and Y as having distinct needs and expectations. Managers of volunteers must begin to try and understand these challenges (Cowling 2007).

Members of Generation X tend to be far more autonomous, self-motivated and self-contained and they typically place a high emphasis on personal satisfaction and the opportunity to improve their skills. Members of this generation are, in general, not loyal to their professions or their employers. They tend to be far more individualistic and so reject any notion of a need for strong leadership. Members of Generation X tend to be comfortable with technology and are able to cope with the availability of vast amounts of information (Yu and Miller 2005). Qualities that members of Generation X tend to look for in leaders are: a synthesis of skills and knowledge, experience and an education they believe to be commensurate with theirs. Generations X and Y both tend towards the view that they are associates rather than employees. They value friendship and relationships and they respond best to competent and engaging leadership (Cowling 2007; Yu and Miller 2005).

Generation Y, also referred to as the 'dot.com generation' (Yu and Miller 2005, p. 2) are likely to maintain part-time employment. They are considered to be the best-educated, best-entertained and most materially affluent generation. They consider positive relationships, interesting work and ongoing training or educational opportunities from employment more important than salary and are community and socially driven (Kane nd; Queensland Tourist Industry Council 2007). Leadership qualities considered necessary by this generation include the provision of job variety, constant feedback, rewards, responsibility, flexible work, a life/work balance and an opportunity to utilise their knowledge (Kane nd; Queensland Tourist Industry Council 2007).

3.9.3 Leadership styles preferred by different generations in the workforce

In order to realise an individual's potential, managers must view the relationship between the individual and the organisation as a reciprocal exchange (Coyle-Shapiro 2001). Therefore, managers and human resource practitioners need to have an understanding of the roles psychological contracts play in the effective leadership and management of employees (O'Donohue and Nelson 2007). Different leadership styles are appropriate for different sectors of the workforce. Members of the Traditional or Mature generation, as followers, are generally happy under a directive style of leadership and as leaders they tend to take charge and make decisions alone; the Baby Boomers, as followers, generally expect a participatory leadership style and as leaders they typically operate in a mutually respectful and consensual way, displaying a general concern for the workforce. Members of Generation X as followers do not respond well to an authoritative leadership style and as leaders they tend to display adaptability, fairness, competent participatory processes and sensitivity to diversity. Members of Generation Y as followers also do not respond well to authority and as leaders behave with tolerance for others and they are value centred and culturally sensitive (Green 2007).

It can be seen that a gradual change in expectations and values has taken place within the workforce beginning with the Baby Boomers and continuing to the present. These

expectations and values are considerations that will demand greater and greater recognition and so must become part of human resource management both within the paid and unpaid workforce.

3.9.4 Volunteer psychological contracts and human resource management

Employee psychological contracts are certainly a challenge for the future and it will be particularly difficult to manage each individual's needs and perceptions. However the normative psychological contracts of groups or sections within the organisation, those that are developed by the membership and that reflect their beliefs, values and standards, will be manageable. 'Normative' psychological contracts in this context refers to the dualistic nature of the contracts in force; the first type of normative psychological contract is the 'covenantal form of relationship' (Farmer and Fedor 1999, p. 360) held by the membership with the primary group. The types of commitments in these covenants can be expected to include loyalty, trust and recognition. They involve adherence to the primary group's values and norms, a safe and secure working group, a sense of community and shared beliefs. The second type of normative psychological contract is the contract held by the primary group with the parent organisation. These contracts might include such concepts such as obligations to provide equipment and training, to recognise the volunteers' contributions, to provide service rewards, to ensure sound leadership and to display organisational concern for the groups' wellbeing. Each party will judge the other according to whether they fulfil their obligations under these contracts. This, it is argued, is of particular importance to the voluntary sector.

3.10 Uncertainty-identity theory

Uncertainty-identity theory considers the reaction by people to uncertain conditions that impact on themselves. In response to this individuals will make every effort to reduce or

protect themselves from feelings of personal uncertainty '…and about their social world and their place within it' (Hogg 2007, p. 38). Uncertainty-identity theory explores the reactions of people to uncertain conditions that impact on them. In response to these conditions, individuals will make every effort to reduce adverse impacts or protect themselves from feelings of personal uncertainty 'about their social world and their place within it' (Hogg 2007, p. 38).

People have a need to locate themselves within a world they understand and to associate with groups that assist them to understand who they are and how they and others are expected to behave. Defining these prototypical needs results in effective reductions of feelings of uncertainty and promotes identity formation with groups that have a high degree of distinctiveness (Hogg 2007). Under conditions of uncertainty, people tend to identify with in-groups rather than an organisation; for example, one may identify with a professional group or specific occupation. This tendency may become more pronounced in the technology industries because work is not necessarily situated in a workplace. People are now working far more from home, the car or other locations other than at the parent office. This 'virtual' workplace removes the organisational life and social interaction. Being isolated in this virtual workplace may induce individuals to seek a more orthodox group with whom to identify (Hogg 2007).

Working to reduce feelings of uncertainty, individuals may place themselves in a world with a more reliable sense of certainty. Being uncertain about one's sense of self '…is the most potent motive for identification' (Hogg 2007, p. 39). Given the general uncertainty about the world of work, increasing unemployment, the increasing need for qualifications, the growing need for technology and the increasing feminisation of traditionally male dominated occupations, may be catalysts for some individuals to locate themselves and identify strongly within a group that exhibits what Hogg (2007, p. 41) refers to as 'entitativity'. 'Entitativity' is the idiosyncratic nature of a group that has clear boundaries, an unambiguous structure, a belief in a common goal and that quality 'which makes a group appear to be "groupy" and to act like a unitary agent'.

The clear structure of such a group is fertile ground for an orthodox and more essentialist character that engenders attitudes and opinions which affirm that the focus of the group is worthwhile. This sense of naturalness and having positive feelings within the chosen group re-asserts strong feelings of identification with it and its membership and reaffirms a sense of social identity which plays a significant part in an individual's sense of self and in-group social identity (Hogg 2007). Often these groups, as a result of their essentialist focus, attract a hierarchical style of leadership among individuals who are elected or allowed to lead if they display the strong attributes of the group. Members who identify on a marginal basis with the goals of the group are seldom accepted and seldom assume leadership roles. This means that members who are well liked and who display a strong affiliation with the goals of the group will tend to assume leadership positions. The orthodoxy of the group suggests that a regime of strong leadership with concrete rules, processes and structures results in a leader–follower system. This may be highly significant in the application of the structural styles of paramilitary groups such as the emergency services.

In the previous chapter it was suggested that little qualitative information is available that provides a nuanced view of the way in which the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) and the New South Wales State Emergency Service (NSW SES) volunteers, experience their roles. The case for further research into these particular NSW emergency service organisations was argued and the focus on the New South Wales (NSW) Rural Fire Service and the New South Wales State Emergency Service was justified. This chapter justifies and expands on those suggestions through analysis of the relevant literature and subsequent identification of research gaps.

3.11 Conclusion

This literature review has identified and explored a number of themes that are pertinent to this research. The contextual view of volunteering describes the introduction of voluntary action in Australia and the subsequent acceptance of this altruistic ideology. The early

themes identified from the literature review include the generally accepted definitions and extent of voluntary work in Australia, the development of the NSW SES and NSW RFS and considers whether the number of emergency service volunteers is declining. This was followed by a snapshot of recent natural disasters in New South Wales which prompted an investigation into the economic implications of emergency service volunteers.

The contemporary view of emergency service volunteering provides information about what is currently known about emergency service volunteers and informs the reader of the paucity of this knowledge. Much of what is known about emergency service volunteers is the result of quantitative research within the firefighting services and little research has been conducted about the NSW SES. This research contributes to the body of knowledge by providing a qualitative appraisal of both the NSW RFS and the NSW SES and offers new insights into their subjective world. Many of the themes that emerged from the literature review have been consistent with those of this research and a number of the findings provide support for previous assertions. However, other findings fail to support previous studies and this research identifies and examines research gaps. A summary of the literature review will be provided and brief comments made about the conclusions of this research.

Some of the extant literature concludes that advertising is the most effective method of recruiting emergency service volunteers and web-based material is a growing medium for young people. Other literature claims advertising to be of little value and contends that word of mouth is the most effective method. Word of mouth includes being invited to join by relatives or friends who are existing members of the organisation. This research supports the latter claim. The literature acknowledges that retention of volunteers once recruited poses some issues. The literature asserts that it is necessary to understand the reasons for separation. Barriers to retention reported in the literature include changes in employment situations and the need to travel away from the local area for work opportunities, the migration of young people from country areas to urban areas, child care responsibilities, discrimination and health and family commitments. Much of the

literature makes the claim that poor leadership is a significant for the decision to resign. This research fails to support this general claim and makes a contribution to the body of knowledge by classifying leadership and the impacts each has on the decision to separate.

The motivation to join an emergency service was described in the literature as being predominately altruistic. The literature also acknowledged other motives such as to learn new skills as a precursor to employment and for social interaction. The results of this research were consistent with these findings. The rewards experienced by emergency service volunteers was also considered in some of the literature which outlined the formal rewards such as long service and commendations. This research failed to find evidence that these formal acknowledgements were of importance. However, it did find that public acclamation, particularly from members of the local community, out of area deployment and skills development is of significant importance. This is claimed to be a contribution to the body of knowledge.

The literature addressing issues of payment for emergency service volunteering was found to be sparse. All of the literature that did consider this issue claimed that payment would be refused by emergency service volunteers and would, if considered, results in a decrease of voluntary action. The results of this research do not support these assertions and the findings make an important contribution to the body of knowledge.

Gender issues within the emergency service were considered in the literature in some detail. It describes concerns about the physical demands of firefighting and not being suited to the occupation, the lack of appropriate clothing, privacy issues at the units or brigades, child care issues and in some cases, discrimination. This research generally supports these findings. However, few females were interviewed during this research and this is considered a limitation. This limitation also extends to the issue of ethnicity. Volunteering by people from non-English speaking backgrounds is rising steadily within the voluntary sector. However, the literature concludes that very few people from non-English backgrounds volunteer for the emergency services. This shortage is despite the increasingly multicultural nature of Australia. The literature considers it imperative that

the emergency services consider ways at improving recruitment of people from non-English backgrounds and to develop an organisational culture that is more inclusive.

The final section explained the theoretical perspectives that underpin and inform this work. The theories are grouped into sociological and psychological perspectives. The sociological theoretical perspectives include constructionism which details the creation of knowledge and 'truth' based upon the subjectivity inculcated into the individual by past experience and societal forces. This theory provides a platform from which to better understand the emergency service volunteers' feelings, experiences and reasons for remaining volunteers or for why they choose to separate from their chosen organisation. They also assist in connecting with the opinions and nuances provided about the services, what they liked and enjoyed, and what they did not like or enjoy about their organisation. The conclusions reached in this respect are claimed to be contributions to the field.

Class is considered and assists in developing an understanding of emergency service volunteers and how they view themselves as belonging to homogenous groups. It assists explain why they are likely to recruit from within their localised community in order to maintain this position. Social capital theory was used because it provides a theoretical explanation of the nature of volunteering and is another conduit for determining the answers to questions such as what motivates people to join an emergency service, what makes them stay, and what would make them consider leaving? It also provides an explanation of the importance they assign to their service provision within their local communities, and how their communities feel about them and their contribution.

Social identity theory is particularly important in the examination of emergency service volunteers as it provides important insights into their behaviour within the unit or brigade, their in-group and their relationships with other units and brigades, their local community and their focal organisation. The drive or motivation to participate in voluntary emergency service agencies such as the NSW SES and NSW RFS suggests that issues of identity and identity formation are significant. Social identity theory

encapsulates the need for people to seek out and associate themselves with like-minded people through for example membership, affiliation, age, gender and culture

Neo-institutional theory was considered in order to provide insights into the formation of institutional 'rules of the game.' It provides insights into the use of language, social patterns of interaction, norms, beliefs and expectations. Neo-institutional theory offers an explanation about how an institution is formed and re-formed and how the volunteers are, in turn, created by the institution. This theory suggests that emergency service volunteers have the agency to effect organisational change at the unit and brigade level and at the organisational level.

Alienation and self-actualising theory argues that people volunteer in order to mitigate feelings of alienation and to satisfy the need for self-actualisation. This theory has the potential to provide insights into emergency service volunteers' motivations for joining an emergency service and for better understanding the intrinsic rewards they receive as members. Psychological contract theory is examined in some detail and is considered vital in the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Their motivational considerations are not only important to them but they are closely linked to the ideology of service to their community. The construct of psychological contracts used in this research must be considered if 'employers' of volunteers are to achieve the best possible balance between agency and organisational goals. The concept of psychological contracts developed in this research is argued to be a major contribution to the field.

This is followed by human resource management theory that considers fair and equitable treatment, training and development, motivation, retention and the close connection these have to both parties within the relationship. It also takes into account the policies and practices human resources partitioners require to adequately communicate with the emerging younger generations within the workplace and to understand how generations X and Y respond to management. Finally, an examination of uncertainty-identity theory was undertaken. This theory considers the reaction of people to conditions of uncertainty, particularly with respect to their identity, their social world and their places within it. All

of the above themes, findings and contributions to the field will be expanded upon in Chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 4 will now provide an in-depth analysis of methodology used to gather the data from the emergency service volunteers interviewed and will recount my positioning within the scope of the interviews and overall process

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

'…every investigation has a distinct methodology, and every researcher employs his or her methodology, which might vary from study to study. By definition, it would seem that there are as many methodologies as there are projects, since most projects are unique in nature and approach. I tend to perceive this as a research model rather than a methodology' (Sarantakos 1998, p. 33).

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 provided a review of the relevant literature and highlighted significant research gaps specific to the lived experiences and perceptions of emergency service volunteers in the NSW RFS and NSW SES. These research gaps include the shortage of research into: emergency service volunteers' views of the organisations they work for; their opinions about their relationships with emergency service professionals; why they join and why they leave their chosen organisation; their sense of an emergency service self-identity; their affiliation and commitment; and how these factors have the potential to have a major impact on the future of these services.

The main method employed to gather the data was the use of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were supplemented by personal observation during training nights, document analysis of the recruitment material provided to potential volunteers, media analysis and the use of a modified Delphi technique to check the accuracy and currency of the research findings. I reproduce the research questions below for ease of reference:

- How is emergency service recruitment generally effected?
- Does an 'emergency service identity' exist, and if so, how is it formed, how is it enacted/accepted by the volunteers and how is it sustained?
- Within the field of emergency service response, what part does affiliation play in the identity formation and commitment of volunteers?
- Given the dangerous and often stressful nature of the voluntary work, what maintains the commitment of these women and men?

This research does not claim to address the above issues exhaustively; rather, it assumes and acknowledges the constructionist stance of '…a relativist ontology, a subjectivist epistemology and a naturalistic set of methodological procedures'(Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 21). In adopting a constructionist paradigm I aim to further our understanding of emergency service volunteers from the point of view of a number of these volunteers. It is not being claimed however that the findings represent the perceptions of all volunteers.

The literature review confirmed to me that the subjective views of the volunteers of the NSW RFS and the NSW SES are an under-researched area. I show that the paucity of research has only recently been addressed and that a relatively large body of quantitative knowledge has been produced by researchers such as McLennan and his colleagues. However, much of this research has been confined to the study of rural fire services in a number of states and almost no research has been done about the NSW SES. This research partly addresses this omission.

This chapter begins with a justification of the workplace analysis, the time frame of the research and its purpose and justify my choice of research paradigm. I then address the gaps in the literature. The conceptual background adopted is defended through the claim that the constructionist paradigm offers a sound foundation for investigation. I follow this by situating myself in the research paradigm. The research and design procedures are then discussed. I follow this by discussing the procedures used in the major study. The data collection process is then described. Key informant feedback is outlined and so is the subsequent need for the application of a modified Delphi technique to recruit subject matter experts to provide further feedback.

The delimitations of the research are considered next. This is followed by a discussion of the geographical delimitations. The final delimitation presented is that only volunteers from the NSW SES and the NSW RFS were considered. The ethical considerations are then considered. I then detail the techniques used for data analysis.

4.2 Justification for workplace analysis

My research began in 2003 with the literature review. This was followed by the pilot study during late 2003 and into early 2004. The major study began in 2005. The purpose of the research was to ask what the personal realities were for emergency service volunteers in relation to why they volunteer, why they stay in their organisations and how they perceive their voluntary activity. Using a constructionist approach, this research provides individual perspectives about the reasons for becoming an emergency service volunteer.

In 2007 it was reported that there were around 10,000 NSW SES and 71,000 NSW RFS volunteers in the state (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2007; New South Wales State Emergency Service 2006-07). However this figure was difficult to establish because of the paucity of records kept at the unit and brigade level. As a consequence records kept at divisional and regional centres can only reflect these figures tentatively and the fact that no conclusive organisational records are kept centrally exacerbates the inconsistency.

4.3 Justification for the research paradigm

The constructionist framework assumes that there are multiple realities which are dependent upon the person, the social construct, the use of language and the interpretation of this language and the prevailing cultural norms and symbols. Therefore the person being introduced into a social world becomes acquainted to the language, symbols and cultural norms of that world through individuals who are already conversant with that world view. At the same time however, the person also brings with her or him information that is significant to the knowledge givers which is subsequently adopted. In this subjectivist epistemology, 'the knower and respondent cocreate understandings' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 21). This process reflects the ongoing nature of discovering truth and understanding from this perspective. There are also components of an acceptance of aspects of the naturalistic world (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). In order to

substantiate findings using the constructionist approach, the realist terms, internal or external validity, reliability and objectivity are replaced by '*credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability'*[original italics] (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 21). A constructionist approach provides a framework to form an understanding of:

> the meaning of gestures in the social act. Mead explains them as '…movements of the first organism which act as specific stimuli calling forth the (socially) appropriate responses of the second organism' (Ritzer 1992, p. 196);
>
> an explanation of how we create our world as we interact with others. 'The reality of the world is not merely something that is "out there" waiting to be discovered by us, but is actively created as we act in and toward the world' (Hewitt 1997, p. 7);
>
> the provision of a medium to examine people and the '… social and physical "objects" that they encounter in the world according to their use for them' (Ritzer 1992, p. 188), and;
>
> one development in the understanding of 'truth'. 'Truth is … not absolute, but is always relative to the needs and interests of organisms' (Hewitt 1997, p. 7);

I define a constructionist framework for the examination of the effects of this 'truth' in regard to culture, identity, motivation, ethnicity and gender and as a means of critical analysis of the discourses of others. The mental constructs in this framework can be of a local and specific nature or shared between many people and across cultures. The use of a constructionist paradigm provides the medium to explore the individual's subjective world.

The paradigm adopted for this research therefore is a qualitative one and incorporates a '*multi-method approach'* (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander 1997, p. 14) to research design and methodology. It is described as a multi-method approach because four methods of data collection are incorporated in the design. They are: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, limited document analysis and key informant feedback. The integration of multiple methods is referred to as 'triangulation [which] highlights different dimensions of the same phenomena, to compensate for shortcomings of each method or to validate the findings by examining them from several vantage

points' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 14). The reason this research fits this paradigm is explained below.

4.3.1 Ontological and epistemological position

There are a number of definitions of a paradigm, two of which are offered here.

> A paradigm is a set of beliefs, values and techniques which is shared…and acts as a guide or map, dictating the kinds of problems scientists should address and the types of explanations that are acceptable to them (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).
>
> A paradigm…is a basic set of beliefs that guide action. All research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 19)

Paradigms can be grouped under two categories: quantitative and qualitative, 'both with their roots in 20th century philosophy'(Cameron 2009, p. 150). In addition to the traditional positivist paradigm other examples include post-positivism, critical theory and constructionism. These two sets of paradigms, qualitative and quantitative, each have there own sets of assumptions: 'ontological, epistemological, axiological, the rhetorical and methodological' (Cameron 2009, p. 151). Cameron (2009) also points out that others have labelled these paradigms as being either 'subjectivist (anti-positivist)' or 'objectivist (positivist)' (Cameron 2009, p. 152). My chosen qualitative paradigm, in contrast to quantitative paradigms that are primarily concerned with statistical analysis, provides data that are studied for themes provided through the natural language of the participants (Minichiello et al. 1997). Table 4.1 below maps these two paradigms and their associated assumptions.

Table 4.1 Quantitative and qualitative paradigm assumptions

Assumption	Question	Quantitative	Qualitative
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	Objective and singular, apart from the researcher	Subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study
Epistemological	What is the relationship of the researcher to what is being researched?	Researcher is independent from what is being researched	Researcher interacts with what is being researched
Axiological	What is the role of values?	Value-free and unbiased	Value-laden and biased
Rhetorical	What is the language of research?	Formal. Based on a set of definitions. Impersonal voice Use of accepted quantitative words	Informal. Evolving decisions. Personal voice. Accepted qualitative words
Methodological	What is the process of research?	Deductive process. Cause and effect. Static design – categories isolated before study Context-free. Generalizing leading to prediction, explanation, and understanding. Accurate and reliable through verification	Inductive process. Emerging design. Mutual simultaneous shaping of factors. Emerging design – categories identified during research process. Context bound. Patterns, theories developed for understanding. Accurate and reliable through verification.

Source: Adapted from Cameron (2009, p. 151).

The epistemological approach taken in this research can be described as a multi-method approach to qualitative research and was designed to create two-way communication through the use of semi-structured interviews, and an observational technique that developed insights that identified and minimised shortcomings. In this way close interaction between the participants and myself occurred, generating discussions which resulted in the respondents thinking about their experiences, skills and perceptions of their voluntary world. My ontological stance is that reality is subjective and therefore many realities exist dependent upon who is considering the question. Believing that many realities exist, I also recognise that other forms of reality also exist and that researchers adopt a method either because they have been trained to believe that their ideology and therefore their method is superior and more scientific than the other methods. The

characteristics of the researcher's beliefs and methods will influence what the researcher will see or come to understand. These characteristics are shown below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Traditional characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research approaches

	Qualitative	***Quantitative***
Conceptual	• Concerned with understanding human behaviour from the informants perspective. • Assumes dynamic and negotiated reality	• Concerned with discovering facts about social phenomena. • Assumes a fixed and measurable reality.
Methodological	• Data are collected through participant observation, unstructured interviews. • Data are reported in the language of the informant	• Data are collected through measuring things. • Data are analysed through numerical comparisons and statistical inferences. Data are reported through statistical analysis.

Source: Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1997, p. 10)

Qualitative investigation engenders its own methodological paradigm providing answers to and explanations about human activity and experiences, which are inadequately accessible through quantitative enquiry alone (Ritzer 1992). Hewitt (1997, p. 9) concurs with this claim and contends that '[t]o abstract the individual's part of an act from a more extensive social act is to attempt to explain far less than what we can and must explain'. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that no definite criterion for determining knowledge exists; that 'truth', 'knowledge' and the 'real world' exist in the minds of the agent. It is only by those criteria 'that we can agree upon at a certain time and under certain conditions' that the world can be determined (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 176). Twomey Fosnot (1996) agrees with this statement when she argues that there is no pre-existing world that is independent of mental activity. The world as we see it is a product of our minds and the symbolic processes we develop to interpret, organise and transform periodically to construct new meaningful symbols.

4.4 Addressing gaps in the current knowledge base

Studies about emergency service volunteer motivation have included a variety of methodologies yet they provide only a partial insight into the volunteers' personal relationships, sense of affiliation, commitment and the development of an emergency service identity. Additionally, researchers are only beginning to provide significant insights into the processes by which such variables influence the meanings that volunteers attach to emergency service participation.

There is a voluminous body of literature related to generic volunteering and in the last ten years a relatively large body of quantitative studies have investigated emergency service volunteers. However, there are few studies about the NSW RFS and the NSW SES that approach this subject from a constructionist perspective that provides insights into their subjective experiences and beliefs. This partial understanding includes the many personal perceptions and experiences about the meaning emergency service volunteers attach to their actions and how these meanings are developed and sustained. These personal issues are complex and often contradictory. Therefore, research methods are required that allow for these contradictions and multiple levels of self interpretation or significance to be accessed (Minichiello et al. 1997).

In order to allow these complexities to be shown, I needed to be aware of the interactions between the participants and myself in light of the procedure and content of the conversations, the context in which the interactions took place, the goals of both parties and the meanings that were articulated. The methodology needed to provide sufficient access to the lived experiences of the volunteers in the situational setting under investigation. A substantial number of studies support the contention that qualitative methodology is particularly suited to research that addresses the types of issues outlined above (Cahill 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Gubrium and Holstein 2002; Minichiello et al. 1997).

4.5 The adopted conceptual background

To 'know' something is determined in part by a number of issues such as our socio-ethnicity, shared community understanding of meaning, a consensus of action/s that relate to that understanding, traditions, artefacts, practices and language. Constructionism is a theory and epistemological study of 'knowing' and how one comes to know. It describes knowledge as an internally constructed phenomenon that may be temporary, may be descriptive of one's developmental stage and is socially and culturally decided (Twomey Fosnot 1996).

Therefore the constructionist's goal is not to detect or determine the 'real' or 'pre-existing' world because '[t]he validity of a knowledge claim is not to be found in … an independently existing world' but by having the ability of acting and thinking that produces the required results' (Schwandt 1994, p. 127). This claim is substantiated by Von-Glaserfield (1991) who demonstrates this assertion by describing a study undertaken in an educational setting where the teacher is not focused on results but rather on the students' thought processes and why they are convinced that their actions will provide results. The study concluded that where this process has been adopted as 'generalizable coherent models of the …cognitive processes and the heuristics to influence them', the students have achieved highly significant successes. The most extensive effect has been achieved by '…the very simple constructionist principle…' that accepts the production of what makes sense to the student (von Glaserfield 1991, p. 24).

Culture and the production of 'sense making' are a continually evolving, collaborative understanding and conception of the world. This cultural acceptance, or culturally agreed-upon symbolism, imparts the socio-cultural rules that are created and which shape the social self of the individual (Twomey Fosnot 1996, pp. 24-25). A constructionist paradigm therefore offers explanatory foundations about why certain people volunteer, why they volunteer for a given agency and how their self image and their identity are developed. This research provides an insight into these interpretative and exploratory inductive foundations through the interviewees' accounts of their personal lived

experiences and views of a number of volunteer members of the NSW RFS and the NSW SES. These accounts focused on their life histories and their membership of an emergency service volunteer organisation.

These volunteers provide emergency responses in times of natural and human-made disasters. This research provides some understanding of the subtlety of individuals' interpretations of how they come to comprehend and develop knowledge that gives meaning to their lives. The premise of this research is that each of us constructs our own 'realities' in order to make sense of our world. Through the interpretation of the interview responses from the participants it was possible to illuminate an otherwise largely unknown aspect of volunteering. Whilst it is the personal perspective that is accessed, some policies and procedures of the organisations under investigation are also considered. Therefore, there are also structural implications that can be drawn.

The process adopted by the emergency service volunteer to understand and contribute to their social world is referred to here as nominalist pragmatism (Ritzer 1992) which relates to the notion that although phenomena exist at a macro-level, they do not independently determine the consciousness and therefore the '…behaviour of individuals … as existentially free agents who accept, reject, modify or otherwise "define" the community's norms, roles [and] beliefs…' (Ritzer 1992, p. 189). This paradigm therefore espouses the individual's free will to accept or modify this general view of the world in line with personal interests and approaches. The individual has the ability to synthesise action and structure which fashions social processes whilst simultaneously being influenced and shaped by existing social structure. This is in contrast to social realists whose emphasis is on society and how it '…constitutes and controls individual mental processes' (Ritzer 1992, p. 189). Social realists subscribe to the notion that individuals are not free agents and that '…their cognition and behaviours are controlled by the larger community' (Ritzer 1992, p. 189).

Using this constructionist approach, the intention was to gain insights and provide information about the actions, beliefs and strategies of small groups of emergency service

volunteers. The data has application for further comprehending the actions of the broader emergency service population. This understanding was achieved through the identification of common themes useful in understanding processes and dialogues that were analysable at the micro-level of individual motivation for action, but also understandable at the macro-level as the individual actions, and the reasons for these actions, contribute to the group focus and drive within the emergency service volunteer cohort. In saying this however, I am not implying a social realist ideology. Rather, I am saying that an individual's mind actively constructs meaning and knowledge; '…that is, the mind does something with these impressions, at the very least forming abstractions or concepts' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 197). The formation of abstractions and interpretations does not occur in isolation however; they are constructed '…against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices [and] language' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 197). This sharing of interpretations and abstractions, in turn, manifests in the formulation or re-formulation of others' perspectives. If this does not occur they will be discounted.

The research was based on the central conviction that the essential realities are those that are perceived by the individual. Holding this belief, I was therefore committed to trying to understand these social phenomena from the respondents' perspectives and experiences. The intention of this research was to isolate and identify the personal meanings the participants assigned to their actions and their views about personal and group commitment, affiliation and the development of an 'emergency service' identity. An 'emergency service identity' is referred to here as the assumed identity, both of the individual and the group, as part of the emergency service volunteer population and its ideals, rather than the social identities assumed outside of the emergency service voluntary action. In order to take these parameters into consideration, it was necessary to determine what was important, in these contexts, to the emergency service volunteers and to understand how their assigned meanings translated into behaviour.

In order to achieve this it was necessary to explore the volunteers' self-reflexiveness, and self-insight and how they described themselves and their actions in relation to their

experiences as volunteers. It was necessary therefore that I acknowledged the participants' thinking processes and explored both verbal and non-verbal aspects of the conversations, recognising them as dynamic, incomplete and continual rather than unvarying components of the interaction. This process involved a combination of observation, participation, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. It was recognised that observation alone could not produce explanatory contexts. However it could provide evidence of affiliation, homogeneity within the unit or brigade and indicate an individual's psychological commitment to their role and their colleagues. The thematic analysis was developed from recurring or related topics which appeared during the interviews which described similar perceptions and opinions.

I have used the terminology 'thematic analysis' to refer to the process of '…investigating …language in social contexts' (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates 2001, p. i). The interpretation of language in this sense refers to the patterns of 'talk', the 'topic'; the themes within the text rather than the language itself, the 'resource' (Wetherell et al. 2001, p. 15). Therefore, the interpretation is data-driven and is not about speculation concerning what might have been really meant. It is not my intention to claim 'the truth of reality' but to offer, using this methodology, an '…interpretation, or version which is inevitably partial' (Wetherell et al. 2001, p. 11).

As a result of the diverse perspectives motivating research about emergency service volunteers, a variety of methodologies has been utilised to research this phenomenon. Yet the available studies provide only a partial insight into the volunteers' personal relationships, sense of affiliation and commitments and the development of an emergency service identity. Additionally, researchers are only beginning to provide significant insights into the processes by which such variables influence the meanings that volunteers attach to emergency service participation. Although there are numerous studies about emergency service volunteers it is only recently that anyone has tried to understand them. An understanding of these volunteers must include the meaning emergency service volunteers have for their actions and how these meanings are developed and sustained.

4.6 Situating myself in the research paradigm

As outlined in Chapter 1, I have been involved with emergency service provision both as a paid emergency response professional and as a volunteer for over 30 years. In the early 1970s it was a requirement that prior to being accepted as a career ambulance officer the candidate had to undertake voluntary ambulance service. I was also the Executive Officer for a NSW SES Division and have been a volunteer with the RFS for some years. During this time I came to know many volunteers within the NSW SES and RFS and my admiration and respect for the work they do steadily grew. It became important for me to undertake a study of these men and women. I wanted to understand how their commitment is generated and sustained, their affiliation, and their sense of identity and how this was developed. I was also interested in their recruitment process and what they liked and did not like about their organisations and I felt it important to convey any understanding I developed to others.

An initial problem when designing the study was that of having an 'insider' view of the world of the emergency service volunteer, having been both a volunteer and a paid officer. Being able to 'see inside' this world gave me a dual perspective which generated preconceptions about heterogeneity, for example, and it was necessary to focus carefully on what it was I was trying to discover and to acknowledge my biases. A set of carefully constructed research questions and a methodology that sought a wide range of volunteer perspectives helped maintain some objectivity. By acknowledging this difficulty and maintaining a strict objective stance, it was possible to design the study in such a way as to gather the participants' narratives with minimal unintended mediation. Recognising the potential for unintended mediation of data through the design of the study, a pilot study was conducted and modifications made which better addressed the specifics being sought. One concern was that the development of themes from the participants' narratives meant that they were reported in my language which resulted in a ' shift in discourse from the original text' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 13) – away from their idiosyncratic way of describing their situation to my own. To mitigate this I have used numerous participant quotations in Chapter5, which presents the findings and analyses them by

themes. I do this in order to better convey the sense of reality and portray their viewpoints and accounts faithfully. Objectivity was maintained, firstly by admitting that it posed an issue, and secondly by transcribing the participants' texts meticulously and finally by having the key informants review the results of the work in order to ensure credibility and reliability and to test, from their perspective, its objectivity.

4.7 Research design and procedures

This research was informed by a number of important methodological and theoretical considerations, including: the broad topic of investigation; the questions being addressed; and my intention to address gaps in the literature and therefore increase the knowledge base; and the framework that has been used to examine the area of interest in line with participant observation, participation, document analysis and a semi-structured interview process. Other central considerations included my own world view and experience, my biases that could distort the findings, the practical time considerations and the resource constraints.

The constructionist paradigm rejects the assumption that qualitative research is unscientific because of its exploratory and subjective nature. However, I acknowledge positivist theoretical perspectives and recognise them as alternative methodologies. Positivists allege that reality is a stable and unchanging phenomenon and that truth can only be discovered by utilising '…the same scientific techniques as were used in the natural sciences' (Ritzer 1992, p. 13). Section 3.7.1 below outlines the reasons for selecting a qualitative methodology for this research and the underlying principles of a constructionist paradigm which assumes a relativist ontology which subscribes to the concept of multiple realities, and a subjectivist epistemology in which the '…knower and the respondent cocreate [sic] understanding' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 21).

My chosen paradigm and its principles and ideology therefore informed the research methodology. The sampling process, data analysis procedure, the participatory and

observational technique and interview development are discussed in light of this paradigm and the way in which it was implemented. Descriptions of the participants and myself are provided. The sampling limitations are also discussed in an endeavour to explain how the sample was selected, as are the personal generalisations made about the expected heterogeneous nature of each brigade and unit and how this heterogeneity might extend throughout the State. The ethical considerations and risk management plan are also outlined.

4.7.1 Research strategy

This research involved eight interviews in the pilot study and seventy two interviews in the major study each of approximately one hour's duration. An equal number of NSW SES and NSW RFS participants were interviewed located within both urban and rural settings across a wide area of the State of NSW. The research began by undertaking a literature review which identified research gaps and informed the development of the pilot interview questions. The literature review was therefore instrumental in determining the extent of current knowledge about the subjective world of emergency service volunteers within the NSW SES and the NSW RFS. I then focused on the general area of enquiry by defining and re-defining the questions for the semi-structured interviews based upon the initial responses from the participants who undertook the pilot study. It was necessary during this stage of the research to collect and analyse data concurrently. The process of 'analytical induction' allowed the research questions to evolve and provided greater understanding of the emerging themes and conceptual insights (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 13).

The next step after the interview process was the transcribing. I then developed a coding system which is a 'means of reorganising the data according to conceptual themes'(Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 256). The coding system included a number of general features about the emergency services and the volunteers' experiences which in turn helped create an impression of the organisations. These general features were then

adapted to include the responses given by the participants about particular topics, about their perspectives regarding their circumstances and about their relationships with the membership of their primary in-group. Further, their perceptions about their secondary in-groups or 'sister' units and brigades, their local community and their respective organisation were included. This coding was achieved by categorising the transcriptions into units of data, providing each with a name and placing these units of data into sub-files using Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (NUD*IST) (Richards 2002) so that they could be easily retrieved from the database. This developmental process was further facilitated through the observation of the volunteers during training nights, taking note of the responses received from the participants when they were asked about the training and obtaining key informant feedback by either mailing or e-mailing their transcriptions to them for comment.

4.7.2 Key informants

Obtaining key informant feedback was considered vital for the verification of each individual's transcription. Of the eight participants in the pilot study only three responded to my request for verification. The individual's transcription from the major study was sent to each of the seventy two participants but only fifteen responded. Subsequently, six Subject matter experts were asked to review an Executive Summary and offer their comments. No changes to the transcriptions were required. Two subject matter expert participants suggested other areas of investigation for consideration in future research.

4.7.3 Procedures

Theoretical sampling is a reflective mode of data collection, analysis and theory development that employs non-probability sampling and is one of the central processes for implementing qualitative research (Minichiello et al. 1997). This method of sampling will never, and does not seek to, obtain a representative sample in the 'statistical sense'. However, participants are representative in the 'colloquial sense' because they help

develop a theory and highlight important ideas and experiences which have wide-ranging implications for 'understanding the social phenomena' being researched (Gubrium and Holstein 2002; Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 168). The aim, therefore, was to acquire, within the bounds of the research topic, as full a range of possibilities and discrepancies as possible (Gubrium and Holstein 2002; Minichiello et al. 1997). Building on the insights gained from the pilot study, the research questions were modified in order to further clarify the analysis in respect of the identification of negative organisational aspects which shed further light on a wider range of emerging concepts and themes. This was considered necessary because predictable gaps in knowledge would surface showing contrasting categories such as a lack of a relationship or strong affiliation with the group, a satisfaction with conditions within the organisation or a rejection of being perceived by the wider community as being 'special'.

This purposive sampling, or '…judgmental sampling' (Sarantakos 1998, p. 152) provided alternative views confirming that the view of a particular issue was incomplete or that there was insufficient evidence for the data to be considered '… precise, explanatory and predictive'. In this way, the presence of alternative views increased the rigour of the research (Gubrium and Holstein 2002, p. 689). These contrasts and gaps became apparent because of the variations in people's characteristics, beliefs, knowledge bases and attitudes within the emergency service organisations and through the inferences obtained from the scholarly literature.

The following sections describe the decision-making process for determining which participants would be included in the research, the process of accessing the organisations, how I obtained an initial pilot sample and subsequently how the participants for the major study were recruited. This process will include highlights of any problems encountered. I began my field work by obtaining the required permission from the executive officers of the NSW RFS and the NSW SES, obtaining letters of permission and outlining my research protocols and supplying them with a copy of Southern Cross University's ethics approval. I then developed my initial and tentative research questions, obtained the required permission from the local SES and RFS to undertake a pilot study, selected a

sample of participants and subsequently refined my research process and questions in light of the results. Once satisfied that the modifications were complete I progressed to the major study. The first step was to interview enough participants to allow for a comprehensive analysis of the data. The analysis of the data followed that produced an interpretation of the results and findings and finally I produced an executive summary of the findings and requested key informant feedback. This process is clearly shown in the following table.

Table 4.3 Outline of research procedures

Process	Desired Outcomes
Obtain initial Ethics Approval from Southern Cross University Graduate Research College	• Obtain ethics approval
Literature review Undertake a media review	• Identify other similar research from the literature • Identify central themes and issues to be explored
Preliminaries, organisational permission and letters of authority, research protocols, ethics approval	• Obtain organisational permission to undertake the research and contact divisional and local consent • Obtain divisional and local consent • Obtain volunteer participant consent
Develop the research questions	• Semi-structured interview questions developed • Competent framework for research and analysis
Undertake pilot study	• Improve interview instrument validity
Undertake the major study	• Obtain a sufficient number of participants to allow for a comprehensive analysis of data
Analysis of data using NUD*IST for analytical results	• Application of appropriate qualitative data analysis
Interpretation of the results and findings	• Assessment of the central issues and themes
Obtain Change of Protocol Approval from Southern Cross University Graduate Research College	• Obtain Change of Protocol Approval
Produce an executive summary of the findings	• Provide feedback and preliminary findings to key informants for comment and further research directions

Source: Adapted from Cameron (2009).

A detailed outline of the above procedures will now be provided.

4.7.4 Southern Cross University ethics approval

In 2002 Southern Cross University Graduate Research College was asked to consider an application for an ethics approval to undertake this research. Approval Number ECN-02-42 was granted.

4.7.5 The gatekeepers

For this research to proceed it was necessary that I first obtain permission from the headquarters of the NSW SES and the NSW RFS. I initially telephoned both organisations and spoke to a senior officer. The senior officer for the NSW SES was the Deputy Director General and the senior officer for the NSW RFS was the Deputy Commissioner. Next I was required to speak with the Division Controllers and the Fire Control Officers responsible for the area of the state in which I was planning to conduct my pilot study. Following this it was necessary to consult with the local RFS brigade captains and the SES unit controllers. This process is explained below.

4.7.6 Recognising the power and importance of the gatekeepers

Having an interest in researching the world views and lived experiences of emergency service volunteers required that I consider the gatekeepers – their needs, expectations, concerns and willingness to condone an investigation into their organisations. Initially it was necessary to speak with the executive career officers responsible for the operation of the services. Secondly, it was also essential that I approach the volunteer brigade captains and unit controllers of the groups chosen for the pilot study. Without the agreement of

these officers it would have been impossible to conduct this research in any meaningful manner.

4.7.7 Headquarters career executive officer gatekeepers

In gaining provisional access to the emergency service volunteer base, the power of the gatekeepers, those people within an organisation who have the power to withhold access to researchers was considered (Minichiello et al. 1997). Whether they were inclined to provide easy or difficult access was critical. However, accessing the NSW State Emergency Service was not difficult partly I suspect because I held a relatively senior position within that organisation and the executive was also interested in the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Permission to conduct the research within this organisation was readily given one the condition that all ethical steps were adhered to during the process. I was fortunate that the Deputy Director of the NSW SES was well known to me and he, holding a PhD qualification, fully understood the strict requirements incumbent on a researcher. After he had been given a research proposal, briefing correspondence from my supervisor at Southern Cross University outlining her contact details, plus an assurance that the Southern Cross University Ethics Committee had approved the research, the Deputy Director gave permission for the research to proceed. It could be claimed that I had 'insider status' that I used to smooth my way (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 172).

The process for gaining permission from the NSW Rural Fire Service was a little more complex, although not overly so. The member of the NSW Rural Fire Service executive office whom I gained access to was initially reluctant to grant permission for this research. His objections centred on the belief that this research was similar to recent research the NSW RFS had conducted relating to the effectiveness of volunteer training. After explaining the proposed research and what it hoped to achieve, and being given 'in principle' approval, I was asked to formally write to his office requesting permission to undertake the research and to supply a reasonably comprehensive outline of the reasons

for the research, the methodology being considered, a brief outline about how it might inform policy development and the assurance that Southern Cross University had approved the topic to be researched. After gaining approval from these senior headquarters career officers it was necessary for the research to be accepted by the senior volunteer officers at a Divisional and Fire Control District level and to seek permission to conduct the pilot study. Following this I was required to consult with the senior volunteer officers at the local levels. However I could not talk to these officers until I had selected the units and brigades whose volunteers would be asked to assist in the research.

4.7.8 Division and fire control headquarters volunteer executive officer gatekeepers

In order to gain access to the units and brigades, which in the pilot study were selected using purposive sampling and in the major study were randomly selected it was necessary that I contact the Division Controllers and Fire Control Officers in the areas chosen. For clarification purposes I must point out at this juncture that the NSW SES Division Controllers at the time of my field work during 2003 and 2004 were also volunteers; this is no longer the case. The Fire Control Officers were paid career staff. I explained my purpose and advised these controllers and officers that their respective executive staff had authorised the research, on the condition that the Division and Fire Control executive staff were also comfortable with my request and authorised the research.
After some discussion about the research and its aims, authorisation was given, but once again, only on condition that the local executive voluntary officers, the unit controllers and the brigade captains, were also prepared to authorise the research.

4.7.9 Local headquarters volunteer executive officer gatekeepers

Gaining access at the local NSW SES and NSW RFS level for the pilot study was more involved. After an initial telephone conversation with the Unit Controllers and Brigade

Captains I was invited to travel to their locations, a six-hour return drive in one case and a five-hour return drive in the other, to be interviewed in more depth about what it was that I wanted to do, who it was that I was working for. For example, I was asked 'are you doing this for headquarters?', and 'how is this going to help us?' and how did I intend to go about interviewing potential participants. It was incumbent on me therefore to explain that I had not been sponsored by either service, that I was only interested in the thoughts of the volunteers and that I believed the results might influence policy decision-making. It was also made clear that I was very much a beneficiary as the research was being conducted for admission to the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Very similar questions were asked of me when I approached the local volunteer executive officers for the major study and the same full explanation was provided. However, I was not obliged to attend interviews as was the case for the pilot study.
Without exception, the brigade captains and unit controllers agreed to assist, but with a stipulation that they received a copy of the final 'report'. Similar questions and requests for a copy of the final document were repeated later by a number of participating units and brigades during the major study. I agreed to these requests. Should a unit or brigade have refused to take part in the research a further selection would have been made until the required number of participants was obtained.

It was necessity for me to travel relatively extensively during the pilot study and very extensively during the major study. This often resulted in over-night stays in some locations for up to three days because, although the units and brigades were located in the same general area, the training nights for the NSW SES and the NSW RFS did not correspond. Unit and brigade routine training generally did not take place during the day. Day-time training was usually reserved for specialist training such as road accident rescue or confined space training and these training sessions only took place on weekends. Often the volunteers from the NSW SES and the NSW RFS trained nights apart, requiring me to take annual leave or accumulated rostered days off so that I could be away for a number of days at a time. During my visits I asked for and received permission to take part in their training activities. This provided me with an opportunity

to observe their interactions. Being aware of and having undergone much of the training that took place enhanced their acceptance and trust of me.

4.7.10 Interview guide

The development of an interview guide was a multi-stage process. Some initial preparation was required to determine the way in which the interviews might take place and I had to develop a rather brief set of exploratory questions which were intended to guide the progress of the pilot study. This preparation was then explored and refined during the pilot study as emerging themes from the conversations guided the research topics. The pre-determined objectives were then modified and reviewed in order to include pertinent issues raised by the participants. The analysis of these conversations provided the pathway for developing the final semi-structured interview guide, a copy of which is attached as Appendix A. The interview guide was used in both the pilot study and the major study with some modifications allowing me to use a general outline of questions during all of the conversations in order to reproduce the same open-ended questions about relevant topics. A recursive model of interviewing was used which allowed the interviews to follow a naturalistic mode of conversation providing an unaffected progressive method of introducing topics as they were raised (Minichiello et al. 1997). The topics which were not raised during this natural progression of the conversation were broached either towards the end of the conversation or introduced as an ordinary flow-on from other statements or themes.

The first few minutes of the conversation was used to put the respondent at ease. Each was once again thanked for their willingness to participate and there was some general chat about their role in the organisation, their family and hobbies, for example. These social aspects led into issues of a demographic nature such as occupations, age, ethnicity and the number of years they had been involved in their emergency service organisation. Income was introduced carefully, sometimes not until very late in the conversation or at the end. This was done if I felt that we required more time to develop a trusting and

reciprocal relationship; it was a matter of judgement. All participants were willing to specify the range within which their income fell, although I took pains to point out that there was no obligation to answer any personal questions, or indeed, any questions.

In the final interview guide the questions were reorganised into major segments for the conversations. These included likes and dislikes about the organisation, issues that would make them consider leaving their organisation, their affiliation to colleagues, their belief system regarding public perception of themselves and their organisation, how recruitment was effected and how they viewed themselves as members of an emergency service. Female participants were also asked whether they believed they were treated as equals and if they were expected to carry out the same range of duties as their male colleagues.

This quite extensive list represents the wide-ranging topics identified as important to explore in order to gain an insight into their experiences as emergency service volunteers. As detailed above, many of these key topics were explored as they were raised or alluded to by the participant rather than excessively directing the conversation. During the interview process field notes were also used to describe my observations such as facial and physical expressions, to write down any ideas that came to mind and to note my impressions of each participant and her or his interview (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander 1997). This inductive process resulted in concepts being developed either from the participant's use of particular words as descriptors or from their sentences which indicated particular ideas.

4.8 The pilot study

A sample of eight participants was interviewed during the pilot study. The SES sample consisted of two females and two males and the RFS sample consisted of four males. The mean age of the SES group was 49 years 3 months (range 41 years to 53 years). The mean age of the RFS group was 35 years 3 months (range 18 years to 55 years).

A pilot study was designed to test the questions and general process to be used in the semi-structured interviews and subsequently make whatever modifications were necessary before the major study was commenced. The process consisted of the following:

> *Developing a general statement about the research topic*
> *Developing the questions*
> *Observing the participants during training*
> *Conducting the semi-structured interviews*
> *Collecting the data*
> *Modification and revision of the questions*
> *Searching for responses that provided an opportunity to improve the level of understanding obtained*
> *Developing a satisfactory explanation* (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 249).

Therefore the process involved developing an idea, translating it into a proposition and then determining whether it would work as a provisional explanation for the research to be conducted.

4.8.1 Recording the interviews

The use of an audio tape recorder was the preferred method of recording the interviews. It was considered that the advantage of an audio tape recorder was that the recorded material could be transcribed with relative ease and would provide a reliable yet unobtrusive version of the participant's story. The use of a tape recorder also provides for 'greater rapport by allowing a natural conversational flow [and] validity is enhanced by the preservation of authentic data' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 98). It was considered that note taking as the sole medium of recording the participants' responses would have been a distraction that would have interfered with the attention it was necessary to give to the participant's story.

During the pilot study interview phase and after the funnelling activity or 'descriptive questioning' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 88) the emergency service volunteers provided their opinions about a range of focus questions that were predetermined but introduced

into our conversation as the opportunity arose. I then undertook the participant observation process. Participant observation occurred at the unit and brigade local headquarters during training sessions. I described myself as a "complete-member researcher'' using "'focused observation"' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 677) because I was a voluntary member of both organisations. Taking part in their training and observing the volunteers enabled me to examine the actions of the volunteers and relate them to their statements so that an opinion of the 'consistency of talk with action' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 32) could be gauged. The results of our conversations were coded for different aspects of the way they viewed their voluntary service. The process used in the pilot study was adopted for the major study also.

4.8.2 Modifications from the pilot study

The overall aim of the double-stage data collection design was to investigate the results of a pilot study in order to better understand and so refine the emerging themes and then conduct a major study based on these emergent themes and acquired insights. The selection of the participants for both studies, which was done by the brigade captains and unit controllers, was based on their varied experience and familiarity with the emergency service. As will also be explained below, the sample for the pilot study consisted of members from both genders, various age groups, a variety of social settings and diverse years of experience in the emergency services. These demographics helped to identify the issues being researched because they provided a number of different perspectives and viewpoints.

For the pilot study I selected one SES unit and one RFS brigade from each of the two Divisions and Fire Control Districts in the northern area of the state. For ease of access, the units and brigades selection was based on the proximity to my residence, but were not 'local' because my knowledge of the membership and my social standing with the volunteers within my own area would have resulted in an unacceptable bias. I chose the services by selecting two towns within an area which were relatively close, within three

hours' drive, but where I had no personal contacts. Of importance to this pilot study was the need to access emergency service volunteers from both rural and urban areas because the major study would consider this variable. I achieved this by selecting an SES unit and an RFS brigade located in a major regional centre. The remaining unit and brigade were located in a rural area. The chosen areas were in the north-west of the state.

I faced three issues following the agreement of the brigades' and units' executive to participate and these issues were to be repeated during the major study. The first issue concerned how the volunteers would be chosen. Both the brigade captains and unit controllers in the pilot study insisted that they would recommend the participants rather than allow me to outline my purpose and ask the membership for volunteers. By insisting on this, the issue presented was the possibility of 'card stacking' in order to portray the best of the unit or brigade by people who would 'toe the party line'. This problem did not however occur; indeed the local volunteer executive officers actually helped me by ensuring a balanced view by making available a mix of longer serving members and those who had recently joined and by trying to secure both male and female participants.

The second issue concerned the venue and where the participants would feel most at ease. The local volunteer executive officers of the units and brigades felt that the most appropriate venue would be at the local headquarters during a normal training night. The consideration here was whether the participants would be comfortable undertaking an interview whilst their colleagues were in a room close by, whether they would feel disloyal if they were to speak negatively about some of the issues being explored and whether they might feel 'pressured' by the proximity of their colleagues or their controller or captain to provide a positive picture of their organisation. These issues did not become apparent as each respondent was afforded privacy during the interview and in some cases the other members elected to participate in training away from the building to ensure we were not distracted by noise.

The third issue concerned the trust and rapport, or the 'productive interpersonal climate' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 79) that was required. I was adamant that the research process

would be transparent. For the volunteers to provide informed consent, each one had to be informed about the process which is designed 'to protect respondents, informing them of the possibility of harm in advance and inviting them to withdraw if they so desire' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 113). The potential participants knew that I had been in contact with the various gatekeepers in order to access them. This presented me with the dilemma of developing sufficient trust and rapport with each person for them to be confident about their decision to assist. It was therefore necessary to impress upon each person that their decision about whether to assist would no way involve pressure being applied by any superior officer and that I was not being sponsored by anyone and therefore I was able to answer the 'inevitable question … who's side are you on?'(Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 172). Each respondent was also assured that their conversations would be kept strictly confidential, that any excerpts of their conversations used in the research would not identify them and that only my supervisor would have access to the tapes and transcripts which would be kept under lock and key in a filing cabinet at my home.

Following the above process the analysis also required a form of deduction which was essential for the testing of my reasoning in the field. After transcribing the interviews it was necessary to verify that I had faithfully represented the participants. A member check or 'key informants' (Sarantakos 1998, p. 251) check was carried out. This was done by supplying the participants with a copy of their transcripts in order to validate their remarks. The participants were also encouraged to refute any part of the conversation that they disagreed with.

The results of the pilot study enabled me to clarify and a refocus the questions and enhanced my interview technique for the major study. I developed for the major study in line with this finding. Secondly, the interviews were intentionally informal and this resulted in becoming distracted in the 'why' answers rather than the 'how, when or what questions' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 80) and at times I failed to ask all the questions. Being a conversation, the questions were introduced when they were relevant to the issues that arose. This resulted in less emphasis being placed on a question for one

participant than another. However, to do otherwise would have inhibited the conversations and consequently the informality of the process. I was able to moderate this recursive model of interviewing by using '*transitions* [original italics] to refocus the informant's attention on the topic or issue' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 81) enabling greater concentration on the relevant issues. As a result I was able to channel the exchange more effectively without detracting from the informality and conversational style.

The coding of the conversations could also have been better refined, making them more specific and relevant. The questions about identity and self-esteem provided an example of this. I had to decide whether they represented the same theme or meaning for coding purposes. In the major study the system was further developed to codify the strict sense of meanings rather than assuming that similar meanings were identical. This meant, for example, distinguishing between '…*virtual social identity'* (Stone-Romero, Stone and Lukaszewski 2006, p. 411 original italics) in the case of assumed public opinion and a '…self concept'. This approach accepted that from a constructionist theoretical perspective identity is '…fluid … across situations (reminiscent of role changes)' (Prasad, Pringle and Konrad 2006, pp. 16 - 17). Similarly, self-esteem, is defined here as a good opinion of oneself or a sense of self worth (Brown, Kirpal and Rauner 2007).

4.9 Recruiting procedures: the volunteer sample for the major study

After receiving permission to conduct the research from the headquarters of the respective organisations, preparation for the major study began. All of the SES units within the State of New South Wales were afforded a number, eighteen were randomly selected electronically and the respective Division Controllers and Unit Controllers were contacted by telephone and the purpose and process of the research was outlined and their permission to visit their unit, observe the volunteers during training and to recruit participants was sought. No objections were received although varying degrees of

curiosity were expressed, ranging from an unqualified agreement to a more hesitant concurrence requiring a more in-depth explanation.

Similarly, the selection of eighteen NSW RFS brigades was made by contacting those who were located in or close to the locations of the selected SES units. This was not always possible however, because SES units within the metropolitan area do not always have an RFS brigade close by; fire protection in inner urban areas is the responsibility of the NSW Fire Brigade. In these cases the closest RFS brigade was approached, for example an SES unit in the inner suburbs of Sydney would not have an RFS brigade nearby; therefore one located in the closest outer suburb was approached. As with the SES, contact with the RFS fire control officers and brigade captains was made by telephone. I explained the research and requested permission to speak with willing participants. No objections were received from either levels of authority with the exception of one brigade captain who insisted on speaking with his Fire Control Officer to confirm my authorisation and then to discuss the proposal with his membership. The captain said he would contact me once he had done this. He telephoned the following day and agreed to participate.

In all cases a mutually convenient time and date was negotiated to visit the brigades and units. This negotiation was necessary because not all the RFS and SES brigades and units routinely train every week, and therefore, in order to minimise travel and accommodation expenses and time away from work which also had to be negotiated, dates were agreed to that generally corresponded, within a few days, of the organisation's respective training nights. Two emergency service volunteers were interviewed from each unit and brigade resulting in a total sample of seventy-two participants. If agreement to participate had not been received from any unit or brigade, the closest agency to the original location selected would have been approached. The interview and observation process began during April 2003 and concluded in July 2004. The brigades and units were located throughout New South Wales. Some were located in the far west of the state, others in the south-eastern sector and the central west and still others along the central coast. The cities

visited included Newcastle and Sydney. During the research I travelled in excess of 5500 kilometres. The demographics are shown below in Table 4.4

Table 4.4 Demographic variables according to gender

Age	Female	Male	Both
18 - 30	3	7	10
30 – 40	6	10	16
40 – 50		21	21
50 -60		18	18
60 >		7	7
Total	**9**	**63**	**72**

Ethnicity	Female	Male	Both
Anglo-Aust	9	63	72
Total	**9**	**63**	**72**

Income 000's	Female	Male	Both
5-10		7	7
10-20	1	10	11
20-30	1	25	26
30-40	5	19	24
50 >	2	2	4
Total	**9**	**63**	**72**

Location	Female	Male	Both
Rural setting	6	32	38
Urban setting	3	31	34
Total	**9**	**63**	**72**

Years of Service	Female	Male	Both
<1	1	1	2
1-5	7	15	22
5-10	1	23	24
15>		4	4
Total	**9**	**63**	**72**

4.10 Observation techniques

Everyday interaction requires a vast range of skills which are learned and used unconsciously but which are 'implicit in our social practice' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 33). Consequently, the social sciences do provide insights which shed light on the experiences of emergency service volunteers. The problem with a constructionist approach is providing an account that is '*valid*, (based on sound reasoning) and '*rational*' (based on sound examples) (Minichiello et al. 1997, pp. 33-34). Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1997) argue that:

> The overall rationality attributed to an individual's mind is, of course, just what validity amounts to in this kind of explanation … [and] attributing rationality to someone implies an assumption that they have more or less the same conceptual scheme as ourselves (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 34).

Generalising explanations is another challenge because it is assumed that each individual's mind is creatively different. This challenge can be overcome if it one assumes, as Minichiello et al. do, that social practice and social interaction inculcate individuals with the means to make them intelligible to others. Generalising is possible, if this assumption is accepted, by finding out what it is about individuals and their conceptual schemes that can be generalised and what cannot (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 35).

Discourse is fundamental to the above assumptions. Making any statement provides an association with particular meanings, intentions, beliefs and may be used to 'inform or deceive' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 32). Saying you are going to do something is not the same as doing it, and describing certain conditions is not necessarily that same thing as conveying conditions as they are. One of my considerations was to observe the actions of volunteers to show the relationship with their statements. This is important because conducting an interview as the only means of understanding people excludes the possibility of checking whether what they say agrees with what they do. On the other hand, simply making use of participant observation to understand behaviour also has

limitations, 'usually because there are far too many possible stories consistent with what we manage to see of others' actions' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 33). In practice however, researchers listen to the dialogue associated with actions and ask questions about those actions in a similar fashion to an interview (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 33). This provides us with intelligible conceptual schemes. It has generally been accepted that participant observation 'does not interfere with the people or activities under observation (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 674). Indeed, Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 674) cite Adler and Adler (1994) who suggest that

> observational research will be found as 'part of a methodological spectrum', but that in that spectrum, it will serve as 'the most powerful source of validation'.

Validation requires adherence to the discipline of objectivity and reporting the objective findings. Sound objectivity is said to be achievable if an agreement between the participants and the observer is reached about what is really happening in a given situation. This agreement is attained through feedback from those persons whose behaviours are being observed and reported (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). A major criticism of this method of enquiry is whether the researcher has 'lived up to the expected standards of objective scholarship' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 674). This criticism also questions whether observational objectivity is 'either desirable or feasible as a goal [and] objective truth about a society… cannot be established, because there are inevitably going to be conflicting versions of what happened' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, pp. 674-675). Other criticisms include the suggestion that a researcher who is removed from the setting and conducts the observation without interaction can change individuals' natural behaviours in ways that may not have occurred in the absence of the researcher's interaction and that observer bias is problematic (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

I argue here that a collaborative approach to research using the 'observer-as-participant' approach is an acceptable compromise and Denzin and Lincoln (2000) outline three categories of observer. The first is the observer who does not interact with the participants and who does not form any friendly relationships with the participants, the second is the 'active-member' observer who becomes involved in the activities of the

group but who does not necessarily accept the group's values or goals and the third category is that of the 'complete-member researcher' who studies situations in which they are members or 'with which they become fully affiliated in the course of the research' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 677). I belong to the third category of researcher. However I made every effort to use my membership in such a way that it did not change the interaction process unnaturally (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). As a member of both emergency services I have some knowledge of the general culture of the agencies being explored and therefore my goal was to use 'focused observation' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 677) which necessarily involves interviewing during the process because the insights of the participants were the focus of attention.

Each unit and brigade provided me with the necessary personal protective equipment for the activities to be taught that evening. The lesson plan was made clear to the volunteers and they divided into groups for the activities. A variety of training was conducted, some of which included chainsaw operation and maintenance, basic fire fighting, tarping roofs, the use of foam in firefighting, search and rescue techniques in both urban and rural settings, road accident rescue, the use of the 'jaws of life' which cut vehicles apart to enable extrication of injured persons and basic village firefighting. I was included in all aspects of the training sessions and given varying degrees of responsibility. During these activities I observed the behaviour of the group and drew inferences about the sense of camaraderie, interaction and homogeneity and asked general questions about such things as the brigade or unit's social interactions outside of training, why things were done the way they were and what sort of issues they were consulted about.

Throughout the observation stage I developed a general mental schema of the group, taking note of the management style, who made the decisions and who wielded the influence. I asked questions about the activities, their routines, their training programme and general expectations of the primary group and the organisation and took notes of my impressions and the answers to the questions asked. The observation phase was followed by the interview process with the participating volunteers.

4.11 Data collection process

Semi-structured interviews using focused interview questioning, this relies on an interview guide in which topics are listed but without any form of ordering, was the instrument used in this research. The interviews focused on the issues I considered important but flexibility was 'in-built' in order to structure the questions as the conversation progressed rather than deliver them in sequence (Minichiello et al. 1997). This process was chosen to allow for '…a more valid explication of the informant's perception of reality'(Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 65). This form of semi-structured in-depth interview, and participant observation and participation, were selected as the only forms of data collection as they are particularly useful for the research questions addressed by this research. This allowed me to obtain vital information about each person's experiences, values and perspectives and to compare and contrast this information with data on other emergency service volunteers. These narratives were compared in a way that produced detailed information and valuable insights into the social contexts and meanings that underlie human reality and the resultant behaviours under consideration; therefore it was a process of '…seeking the "insider's" viewpoint on the life being lived' (Gubrium and Holstein 2002, p. 134).

The fundamental principles for 'seeking the "insider's" viewpoint' are provided by scholarly literature for accomplishing successful in-depth interviewing (Gubrium and Holstein 2002; Minichiello et al. 1997) and these were the adopted pathways for this research. These principles include: the important, effective management of the respondent's physical needs; determining the respondent's preference of venue; developing a collaborative approach which results in a more 'team effort' result; and the consideration of the social context. These principles and my own interpersonal skills were used to obtain the data required. These measures greatly assisted in developing a mutually positive relationship with all participants.

When considering the venue for the interview, each emergency service volunteer chose where she or he would feel 'most at home' and comfortable. In all cases, the participants

elected their unit or brigade headquarters, presumably because I was 'on their turf' and it was a place in which they felt comfortable. Each respondent was asked to consider an interview of approximately one to one and a half hours. Only on one occasion did a shorter interview take place and that was because of a participant's previous commitment. This interview lasted 45 minutes. The use of a small but effective tape recorder was quickly accepted by the participants and posed no detected negative feelings. The participants were advised prior to beginning the interview that they had the power to either refuse to take part or, in the event of wishing to say something they would rather not have taped, request that the recorder was turned off. At the conclusion of the interviews all responses were transcribed and a copy of the individual's statement was forwarded to that person for comment for verification of what was said.

Fifteen participants from the major study either telephoned to thank me for their transcription and to verify that their statement 'looked okay' or wrote making similar remarks. Two participants suggested other areas pertinent to the emergency services that should be considered for further investigation; one suggested remuneration and the other the need for counselling at the local level. The issue of remuneration had been addressed by a number of participants. A further follow-up with the participants was done after my findings had been collated. An executive summary of these findings was also forwarded to each person in 2010. This was to verify that a 'valid picture of the structure and process of the cultures and groups under study' had been obtained (Sarantakos 1998, p. 251). However, this time only sixty-one participants were able to be located because the other eleven were either no longer volunteers or they left the area and an address for them was not available. Of these sixty-one participants, only seven responded to my request for comment. Five of the comments received had a common theme which was that they had not thought about their actions in this way before but on reflection the information, as one person remarked 'seemed to make sense'.

The lack of responses caused some concern and so I submitted a Change of Protocol to Southern Cross University. This Change of Protocol outlined my intention to develop a modified Delphi technique by speaking to six subject matter experts (SMEs). I asked

them to review the executive summary of my findings. All of the SMEs provided positive feedback and reported that conditions in their brigades and units were basically the same. One SME offered new information for consideration. An analysis of the recruitment material found on each organisation's website was also undertaken which provided up-to-date data about the amount and type of information available for potential volunteers.

4.12 Techniques for data analysis

Data analysis involved the detailed examination, interpretation and drawing out of the data, collected firstly through observation and then as conversation and subsequently converted into text. The component parts of the data were developed into descriptive subjective concepts through a process of 'Typologising' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 266). This thematic analytic procedure involves systematically examining what was said and arranging the data, or coding it, into the emerging themes identified during the semi-structured interviews. Coding refers to refining the classifications or themes in line with the analytical model; this by inference requires the production of linkages between the concepts, thereby identifying and substantiating the core themes. The goal of this thematic analysis was to reconstitute the interpreted data and then produce a synthesis of that data (Ritzer 1992).

By definition, qualitative researchers reject any notion of there being an objective truth, however 'objectiveness' can be implied from the participants because, for them, a personal truth can be said to exist, and therefore through data analysis a version of these truths can begin to be understood. The data was collected and interpreted utilising this methodology until adequate explanations began to emerge through a process of 'saturation' at which point the analysis can be said to be complete (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 13). The data was analysed by systematically arranging the information so that participants' thoughts and statements could be categorised into themes. These themes were then refined in light of the emerging themes from subsequent participants. Understanding that a common methodological concern is that what is said might be

misunderstood, I frequently checked with the participants by paraphrasing what I thought I understood as detailed by Minichiello et al. (1997). The responses were coded during the analysis and represent a balanced picture of the participants' views. Therefore any data collected through my observations and the semi-focused interview technique used in this research reflects the varied beliefs and feelings of the participants; they hold the clues to understanding and the development of knowledge (Minichiello et al. 1997).

4.12.1 Analytical software

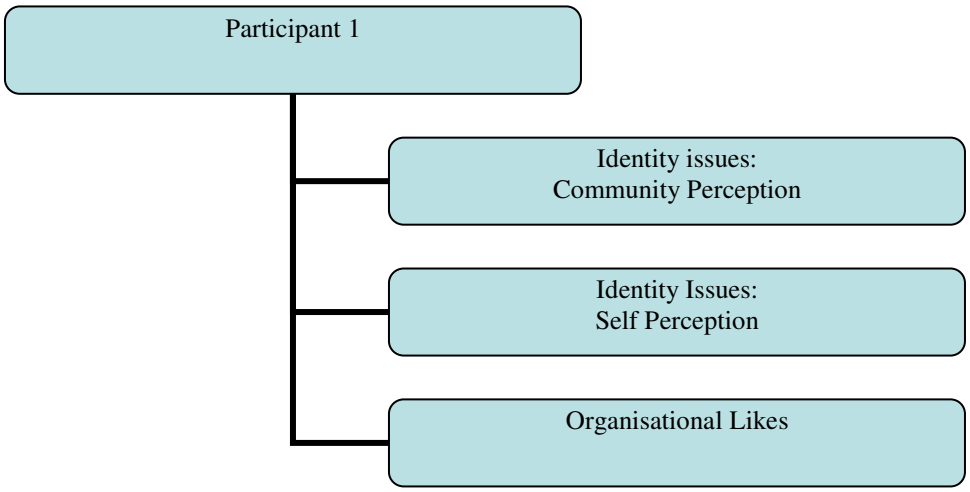
The collation and organisation of the data incorporated the Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing software package or NUD*IST® (Richards 2002) which was used to assist with the data analysis and reproduce the information in a manageable way.

In order to effectively use the power of the software it was necessary to compartmentalise the text derived from each of the conversations or 'documents'. These documents were placed in a Rawfiles Directory ready for introduction into the various nodes created. A determination had to be made about what data was to be read and stored as text units within these nodes. Text units are segments of data and can include single words, sentences or phrases; in this case a combination of these units was used. The texts stored in this way consist of significant words, sentences or phrases which signified relevant thematic data. Once a text unit had been selected it was organised into a hierarchical structure or 'tree structure' which was subsequently used to explore and analyse the data. This method means that the process is an inherently interactive one because only the data that is deemed significant is selected.

Once the required text material was selected I assigned codes to the themes being developed and placed them into nodes, or an index system. From each of these nodes sub-categories were developed which were variations of a particular theme, thus creating what is termed a 'tree structure' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 289). Tree structures display

their own nodal information which refers to a specific title, for example a tree structure for this research contained nodes with titles such as 'identity', 'commitment', 'likes', 'dislikes'. References made during the interviews which mentioned these categories were coded in the tree structure for the particular participant. The data was also arranged into separate tree structures for each of the organisations so that a comparison of data for the RFS and the SES could be developed. These data were then further refined into 'logical clusters' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 292). The software therefore helped me to develop a cognitive process for the structuring of ideas and for identifying the relationships within the themes and concepts. An example of this is shown below:

Figure 4.1 An example tree structure using NUD*IST ®



4.12.2 Modified Delphi technique

The lack of responses when I asked for feedback caused some concern. As a result, and after speaking with my supervisor, I applied to Southern Cross University for a Change of Protocol and submitted it to the Graduate Research College for approval. The Change of Protocol outlined my intention to develop a modified Delphi technique by speaking with six subject matter experts (SMEs) and asking them to review the executive summary of my findings. These volunteers were chosen either for their senior position, their length

of service or because they were trainers for their organisations. Because of the small number of participant responses the inclusion of subject matter experts who are experts in the area of research and who 'offered information, passed judgement and made relevant predictions' (Sarantakos 1998, p. 251). Three of these SMEs were recruited from the SES and three from the RFS. A specific set of questions was developed which asked:

1) Have things changed over the last few years?
2) If changes have occurred are things better or worse?
3) If better, how are they better?
4) If worse, how are they worse?
5) Are there any issues that I have not considered that you believe are important?

A copy of the request for information from the SME is attached as Appendix D. There was a high level of concurrence between the seven participants and they agreed that my findings were an accurate representation of the current situation. There were small variations offered for consideration and these will be reported in the next chapter.

The use of a multi-method approach through participant observation, semi-structured interviews and the modified Delphi technique produces triangulation, in this case 'inter-triangulation (employing) two or more methods of different methodological origin and nature' (Sarantakos 1998, p. 168) which is employed to allow the researcher:

- to obtain a variety of information on the same issue;
- to use the strengths of each method to overcome the deficiencies of the other;
- to achieve a higher degree of validity and reliability; and
- to overcome the deficiencies of single-method studies (Sarantakos 1998, p. 169).

A multi-method approach addresses the problems of the effect an interviewer's presence may have on the participant's creation of data, and therefore the study's internal validity. It also confronts considerations of external validity by determining 'whether the data that are obtained in studying one situation can be generalised to another situation' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 187). The use of triangulation enhances the probability that the deficiencies in one method can be overcome by the use of multiple methods and thus

takes advantage of their individual strengths. It is therefore a means of increasing validity and decreasing possible bias (Minichiello et al. 1997). One criticism of triangulation however is that it assumes a positivistic stance by assuming a single reality exists rather than conforming to an interpretive, qualitative framework if this ontological and epistemological stance is adopted (Minichiello et al. 1997). A second criticism claims that there is no evidence to suggest that research based on triangulation necessarily results in more valid results (Sarantakos 1998).

4.13 Delimitations

The delimitations of this research were predominantly the conscious resolve to exclude the opinions of paid professional emergency service staff within the NSW RFS or the NSW SES. My research interest was in the emergency service volunteers and their views of their world and I believe that to have included the career officers' views as part of this research would have been inappropriate. I argue that career officers would have a different point of view because of the transactional nature of the relationship they have with their organisation and so excluded them from the research.

The geographical delimitation was my conscious resolve to undertake this research within New South Wales, Australia rather than including the other states and territories. The decision to restrict my field research to NSW was determined by the research gaps identified, the time constraints imposed because of being employed full-time, the concomitant practicality issues and the associated cost this would have entailed. In addition, no consideration was made of other arms of voluntary emergency service agencies such as the Volunteer Coastguard, St John Ambulance, surf lifesaving organisations or welfare services.

These services and the value of their commitment and efficacy to the community are acknowledged; however they were excluded from the research for reasons of organisational differences. These volunteers often work rostered hours rather than being

regularly expected to be available twenty four hours a day, seven days a week and secondly, an assumption was made about perceived group cultural differences. These agencies were also excluded for practical reasons. However, systematic research into these other emergency service agencies could provide useful data, particularly in regard to the recruitment and retention and strategic human resource management of volunteers. The above considerations determined my focus and methodological process.

4.14 Ethical considerations

This research was approved by the Southern Cross University Research Advisory Committee on Ethics in Experimentation on Human Participants on the 23rd May 2002. The approval number is ECN-02-42. A copy of the research protocols, research instruments, draft correspondence including interview guides, information papers and Informed Consent Forms were included in the application to this Advisory Committee. Application for approval, along with all associated documentation was provided to the NSW SES, the NSW RFS and personnel managers of each organisation. This was done as the research was undertaken on departmental property and, as participants were recognised as being on duty, a duty of care and subsequent obligation for their wellbeing were assumed by the 'employers'.

The principles which constitute the moral standards for research involving human subjects as outlined in the Belmont Report originating from the 1978 US National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioural Research were preserved and respected. The ethical considerations of this research therefore acknowledged and complied with the doctrine of *Informed Consent, Deception, Privacy and Confidentiality and Accuracy.* A copy of the Information Sheet (Appendix B) and Consent Form (Appendix C) are attached.

As with any other interview setting, the sensitivity of the data was acknowledged and strict attention paid to the ethical and confidentiality issues. The ethics of research, both

covert and overt, is well documented (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Gubrium and Holstein 2002; Minichiello et al. 1997) and were adhered to as was the counsel offered to me about how much information could or should be conveyed to the participants and others. This research adopted a collaborative approach resulting in each respondent being not only able to ask questions about the topic or any related research issue, but actively encouraged to do so. In this way the interactions became far more of a 'team effort' and encouraged greater honesty and each participant was fully informed about the purpose and the process of the research (Gubrium and Holstein 2002, p. 20). I provided full personal career information to each participant, revealing to them that I was an Executive Officer, therefore a paid career officer, with the SES located in a rural division and that I knew many of the gatekeepers on a professional basis. I also again assured each participant that whatever they chose to speak about would remain totally confidential and would not be relayed to other career staff or volunteer participants.

As is required, great care was taken to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants and each was assured that the focus was the identification of general issues related to the personal experiences and opinions of emergency service volunteers and not the individual. No participant's name, unit or brigade has been used in this research. Each person was given a written information sheet about the research, its goals and purpose and contact names and telephone numbers in case further information was required or if participants felt that the research failed in its ethical obligations in any way. They were asked to read and sign a plain language consent form, a copy of which was retained by each respondent. The original consent form is kept with the raw data, tapes and transcripts of the tapes in a locked cabinet at my home and will be retained, observing all reasonable care, for a period of five (5) years and then destroyed utilising appropriate security protective measures. Access to this material is limited to myself and my supervisor.

Participants were informed that the research would be published in the form of a thesis, that it was expected findings/results would be disseminated in academic journals and might, in whole or part, be submitted to departmental policy committees. Only after

providing all relevant information about the research and only after the participants' questions were answered to their satisfaction was agreement to participate in the research obtained. Trust was established with the participants through open and honest disclosure of the project, through participation in their world at the unit and brigade level and by ensuring they understood that their respective state headquarters were aware of and consented to the research. The participants were also informed that their state headquarters had details of my supervisor and her telephone number should it have any concerns about the conduct of the research. In addition, the right of any respondent to withdraw at any time was outlined and these conditions would have been honoured had a request been made. If a participant had withdrawn any information he or she might have provided prior to her or his withdrawal it would not have been used unless permission to do so was provided. It was further agreed that any respondent requiring a summary of the findings on completion of the research would be provided with one.

At no time was the emergency service headquarters or any of their staff involved in the design of the questions posed and they were not made conversant with any answers provided by any particular participant, unit or brigade. Any suggestion of an unequal power relationship was dispelled, as much as it can be dispelled, by insisting that the participant was in total control of anything she or he decided to impart. Standard risk management issues were also addressed including physical risks during the interviews and any psychological risks were considered. The physical risk management relating to possible injury included the use of a safe venue, the safety of any furniture used, consideration of noise injury and the general environment. When considering any possible psychological injury I understood that I could be perceived as holding a position of power. I minimised this perception as much as possible by the way I presented myself, my mannerisms, my use of language and by selecting venues where the participants would feel the most comfortable and in control of the proceedings, for example their unit or brigade headquarters.

My involvement in observation and participation at the units and brigades also had the potential for both physical and psychological risk; physical risk because I could have had

an impact on the membership's concentration during training and a potential psychological impact because the volunteers had been informed that I held a senior paid executive position in one of the organisations. This knowledge had the potential to cause some anxiety or to undermine my assurances that all information, obtained by observation or verbally, would be kept confidential. On the plus side my 'insider' status also helped me gain access and establish empathy. As mentioned above, I took great pains to reassure each respondent that their conversation would be kept confidential. An ethical dilemma however was the fact that, as each respondent had been selected or asked to participate by their brigade captain or unit controller, absolute confidentiality was not achievable and could not be guaranteed, at least as far as the identity of those interviewed. This problem was addressed by asking the local volunteer executive officer to agree to honour the concept of confidentiality and to ensure, on the participant's and my behalf that all conversations were kept confidential as detailed above.

Other concerns of importance involved issues of my values and perceptions, 'who is the research for', and my interest in this research. Although my values include a strong commitment to community service, the dedication and portrayal of an 'above and beyond' obligation demonstrated by emergency service volunteers ignited in me an intense desire to better understand what I believe to be extraordinary commitment. Following the conversations it was also vital that, as was done following the pilot study, a member check was conducted to ensure the accuracy and transparency of the research. A personal concern was the inherent biases and pre-conceptions I held at the beginning of the research. I understood that I could inadvertently superimpose my beliefs, preconceptions and 'translations' upon the information collected. Understanding and acknowledging this risk resulted in adhering as strictly as possible to the process developed and to my recording what was said faithfully. I also understood that, despite my best efforts, it was likely that personal 'reading into meanings' was problematic. This real risk was partly mitigated through member checks, through strict adherence to the process and through self examination and reflection during the analysis.

This process not-withstanding, my views and any observations made or conclusions reached must by definition reflect an incomplete understanding and they are expressed in the language of the researcher not the participants (Minichiello et al. 1997). Other issues must also be taken into consideration such as why the research is of interest, my knowledge of the emergency service agencies, assumptions about the research topic and the 'insider–outsider controversy' which makes the claim that 'insiders' have an insight that may otherwise be obscure to an outsider and that only an 'unprejudiced knowledge about a group' is accessible to outsiders (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 182). The 'crisis of representation' therefore is that I am unable to propose an objective knowledge of the world of the emergency service volunteers but rather, only a biased subjective explanation (Wetherell et al. 2001, p. 12). Accepting this subjectivity as necessarily extant the data can only at best offer a generalisation of the world views of emergency service volunteers. However, primarily through this process of generalisation, the identification of patterns, features or themes (Minichiello et al. 1997; Wetherell et al. 2001) provides insights of a common understanding or belief system when obtained from a number of participants.

Being a member of both the RFS and the SES and being therefore accepted into their social worlds, I have an understanding of the two emergency services and my 'insider' status also greatly assisted gaining access and developing trust with the membership. This insight into the cultures, artefacts and the language used by these emergency service organisations provided a basis from which to develop a better informed understanding and appreciation of the meanings of the responses provided. I understood during the interview process that a bias existed as a result of personal lived experiences, my position within these services and the resultant power imbalance. Therefore, extreme caution was taken to faithfully record the participants' conversations and to examine them for their content values and not to impose meaning.

The reason for the research was twofold; firstly it was done in the interests of the volunteers in order to highlight their dedication, the importance of their efforts to our society and my belief that their conditions of 'work' could be improved. This therefore

presupposed that the information would be made available to both organisations represented. The second reason, which is not subservient to the first, is that it was done to increase my status in the academic community through the acquisition of a PhD. This was made clear to each participant. The information may also play a political role through empowering the emergency service volunteer. All of the above was articulated in plain language prior to each interview.

4.15 Conclusion

After intently researching the scholarly literature it became apparent that some areas of emergency service voluntary action required further investigation. These included the volunteer's subjectivity and personal relationships with her or his peers at the local and other levels. Considerations included such as things as affiliation, again at the local and organisational levels, commitment to voluntary action and the concept of an emergency services identity and how, if one exists, is it developed. This research investigates these very personal and subjective issues and draws on a constructionist perspective to provide views and knowledge of these personal truths. These personal truths were investigated using four interrelated lines of enquiry: personal recruitment methods; whether an emergency service identity exists and if so, how is it accepted and sustained, the part played by affiliation in the identity and commitment of volunteers; and the structures and beliefs that maintain their commitment.

A qualitative research method was used involving a two-phase process to recruit a complex sample of participants. The sample for the pilot study consisted of eight participants who were recruited equally from the SES and RFS. The major research had seventy two participants who were also recruited from a diverse range of SES units and RFS brigades located in both urban and rural settings. Research participant observation and semi-structured interviewing was used to collect the rich data and the research focused on the issues raised in the research questions. The conversations were progressive and the questions were not delivered in sequence. This enabled a more valid

exploration of the respondent's perceptions and allowed greater respondent control over the process. I interpreted conversations to mean the transcription of the spoken word into text and identifying the messages conveyed. In the context of this research I have used thematic analysis to convey and report on the meanings of the themes and topics developed during the conversations. In this sense therefore, the process is data driven and is not about the discovery of a single truth.

The research was based on an interest in the workplace setting and subsequent perceptions of that workplace and its members. The organisations chosen for the research were the NSW State Emergency Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service. The purpose of this research was to develop insights into volunteers' explanations of their motives, the extrinsic and intrinsic reward system, the likelihood that the rewards are sufficient to sustain the action and the dissatisfactions experienced. This information is important to emergency service agencies if they are to continue to attract new volunteers. However it appears that no formal exit interviews are done of departing volunteers and therefore little formative knowledge is known about the realities of emergency service voluntary activity and the reasons for remaining a volunteer or for resigning.

The participants for the pilot study were purposively selected from SES units within a three-hour drive from my home. However, I had no personal knowledge of the units or participants. The participant sample for the major study was randomly and electronically selected from a list of all NSW SES units in the state of NSW. The RFS brigades were then selected for their proximity to the selected SES units. If the area selected did not have an RFS brigade, the closest one was approached. Two emergency service volunteers were selected from each of the eighteen units and brigades to make up the seventy-two participant sample for this research.

It was necessary to negotiate with my workplace for time off work, and with the gatekeepers of the respective organisations in order to gain access to the proposed participants. The latter were the ones who had the power to allow or disallow entry. In this case the gatekeepers were numerous, beginning with headquarters staff that had to be

satisfied that the research was likely to be beneficial, followed by the division or fire control senior staff, who again required sufficient information on which to base their decision and finally, the senior voluntary staff at the local levels. This process however proved to be an uncomplicated one. The data for this research was analysed with the assistance of NUD*IST® software (Richards 2002) to collate and organise the data into manageable information packages.

The vital issue of ethical considerations was addressed methodically by taking into account the possible perceptions of power, the moral standards as detailed by the Belmont Report, the settings, a risk assessment, both physical and psychological, and the absolute guarantee of the personal confidentiality as far as it was in my power to provide it. This research was not sponsored in any way by any organisation, particularly the RFS or SES, and each respondent was advised of this, and of the fact that their participation was totally consensual and voluntary. It was also necessary that I acknowledged my values and preconceptions, who the research was for, my personal interest as a candidate for a higher degree and what this may mean to both the participants and myself.

This chapter has detailed the methodology used for this research and the reasoning behind the decisions made. Chapter 5, Analysis by themes, will now unpack the plentiful data developed, highlighting the themes which emerged, what they meant to the volunteers and how this information can be positively used in the future.

Chapter 5: Findings: the world of the emergency services volunteer

The horrors of having to remove a deceased body, to locate and contain body parts, seeing a dead baby (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 outlined the constructionist paradigm used to inform this research and detailed the qualitative methodology adopted. This framework is developed using a constructionist paradigm and assumes that there are multiple individual realities dependent upon social constructs, the use of language, the interpretation of this language, and cultural norms and symbols. This is referred to as a 'relativist ontology'(Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 21). The recruitment of research participants and the delimitations of this research were outlined; the interview development, observational procedures and document analysis process were described. The thematic data analysis and the ethical considerations adopted were also explained.

Chapter 4 also described the introduction phase of my visits to the brigades and units, my efforts to be transparent about who I was and what it was I was proposing to do, why I was conducting the research and who it was for. This was necessary in order to conform to the tenets of informed consent that included the participants having the right to be informed that they were being observed and researched (Minichiello et al. 1997). I obtained permission to train with the volunteers and observe their action and interactions with one another.

I detailed how the major study had seventy-two participants who were randomly selected from within the state of New South Wales, Australia. I explained how the selection process involved allocating a number for each NSW SES unit in the state and

electronically selecting a random representation of eighteen of these. I detailed how the NSW RFS brigades were selected by their proximity to the NSW SES units and how if an NSW RFS brigade was not available in the area, as in the case of urban areas, the closest brigade to the selected NSW SES unit was chosen.

5.1.1 Restating the research questions

The four research questions posed are reproduced below and an argument will be made later in the chapter about whether or not they have been answered as a result of this research.

- How is emergency service recruitment generally effected?
- Does an 'emergency service identity' exist, and if so, how is it formed, how is it enacted/accepted by the volunteers and how is it sustained?
- Within the field of emergency service response, what part does affiliation play in the identity formation and commitment of volunteers?
- Given the dangerous and often stressful nature of the voluntary work, what maintains the commitment of these women and men?

It will be shown in the analysis below that all questions have been answered. Some conclusions confirm findings in the literature, others contradict findings in the literature and some are considered not to have been addressed in the extant literature and so represent new knowledge.

5.2 Theoretical frameworks

Sociological and psychological theoretical frameworks have been used to inform this research. Chapter 5will now introduce the themes from the corpus of texts obtained from the interviews, through emergency service participant observation in the context of voluntary action and an analysis will be provided of the media portrayal of emergency

service volunteers and the effects this portrayal has. The themes will be introduced in a logical sequence. It will become apparent that a number of these categories naturally overlap.

5.3 Coming to grips with the subjective world views of emergency service volunteers

The qualitative data derived from the interviews, my personal observations and participation during this research and an interpretation of the data is offered below which will provide insights into the subjective world of the emergency service volunteer. In order to accomplish this, it will be necessary to illustrate the emergent themes provided by the emergency service volunteers and link them with the extant scholarly literature and pertinent theoretical perspectives. Another vital consideration is the need to demonstrate the credibility of this qualitative research. This is achieved through the provision of sample quotations from the participants interviewed as evidential support of the themes developed from the data.

Consideration of the answers to the research questions introduced me to the emergency service volunteers' subjective views of their worlds. These views provide both theoretical and practical applications as it affords us the capacity to better understand previously obscure personal perceptions and subjectivities. This knowledge now provides a unique opportunity to scrutinise the impact of and resultant responses to emergency service volunteers' adopted belief systems and subsequent behaviour within their respective organisations or 'communities' (Sigmon, Whitcomb and Synder 2002, p. 30). These belief systems and behavioural responses, which are assignable in many respects within the wider emergency service community, are inculcated firstly within the brigade or unit at the local level. They are developed through the relationship between an individual and her or his group. Each person within the group is known to be a member by the other members. They have a shared purpose which in turn affects the development of a shared identity.

I speak of units, brigades and their membership, but what is it like to be an emergency service volunteer? What is it like to be a member of a brigade or unit? The following description of emergency service life is derived from the participants' personal accounts. These primary groups are predominantly formed by a group of individuals who know one-another and new volunteers are usually known to an existing member. This is particularly so in rural areas. They meet either weekly or fortnightly, in some cases within the NSW RFS monthly, and undergo training, engage in social activities, and strengthen their ties though mutual storytelling over cups of coffee, tea or soft drinks. These narratives include past actions, difficulties, humorous times and problems encountered with equipment, administrative requirements, other agencies or paid career staff, the likelihood of impending incidents during the storm season, the preparations thought to be necessary and general gossip about local people and events. Diverse training takes place at the local level and subjects include first aid, basic firefighting techniques, the use of the 'jaws of life' that cut vehicles apart in order to extricate the occupants, rope use and the knots required for various purposes, fire appliance pumping operations, the use of the many different hoses and chemicals required for different fire situations, cliff rescue, rescue from heights and breathing apparatus practice. All of these core skills and many more are routinely and systematically taught and practised at the local level.

I observed the volunteers during their training activities. This provided me with the opportunity to understand how they worked together as a team, how they interacted with one another, who was controlling the activities, how the members responded to directions from the team leader and the overall management of the activities. I observed that a hierarchal structure exists within the units and brigades. Team leaders are responsible for small groups of volunteers and direct the allocated tasks. These tasks are supervised by a SES deputy controller or RFS deputy brigade captain and the unit controller or brigade captain is responsible for the overall command and control of the operation. An example will illustrate the procedure. A unit or brigade may be called upon to attend a road accident. This operational response requires considerable coordination; members of the

team are required to secure the incident site to ensure the safety of their colleagues and members of the public, team members are required to assess and undertake the necessary vehicle extrication techniques and others are responsible for treating the injures until the ambulance officers assume this responsibility. I was advised that team leaders were regularly changed during training activities to ensure the necessary team succession requirements were met and to provide leadership skills. I was also advised that the volunteers were rotated from one activity to another. This provides the volunteers with the full range of competencies required of the unit or brigade.

These activities suggest continual excitement, adventure and action. However meetings can also be boring and slow. It may be that the training begins late or that the activity cannot support total group involvement but must be done in small groups resulting in some volunteers looking on and becoming bored. These challenges face the volunteers when they are required to perform their combat duties also. The NSW SES may be requested to do traffic control whilst the NSW RFS volunteers are rescuing people from a vehicle or the NSW RFS volunteers may be asked to hold ropes, fill sandbags or provide the welfare needs of the NSW SES volunteers at a flooding incident. It is not all action and excitement; a good deal of time can be spent 'standing down' waiting for something to do. Emergency service is not all fun and excitement. Often it can be undertaking the mundane tasks that are necessary to assist other professionals complete the task.

When they are busy responding to an incident it can also be very dangerous. Consider the NSW RFS volunteers fighting fires in the bush. It is hot, dangerous and they are often surrounded by obstacles and trip hazards. A burned tree can fall at any moment; a foot can be placed in a fiery stump burned to ground level, the fire can whip up and engulf them, heat exhaustion is an ever present threat – it is dangerous and frightening. The NSW SES volunteers face no less danger when they are rescuing flood victims, victims caught in flooded motor vehicles, walking on wet rooftops tarping them against the ravages of wind and rain, abseiling down cliffs to a person who requires assistance, rescuing people trapped in vehicles or under debris during and following cyclones such as those experienced in January and February 2011. These activities are inherently

dangerous and fear, although rarely spoken of, is an added consideration. I spoke of this fear to one participant and he replied

> *I just acknowledge the fear and then get on with the job* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

These incidents do not all happen during 'business hours' either; many happen at night under difficult weather conditions. Consider a winter's night and our emergency service volunteers receive a telephone call in the early hours of the morning. They have been summoned to respond to a road accident or a flash flood or a village house alight. They are tired and cold, their partners and possibly their children are awakened, they have to dress and respond in a matter of minutes. The 'adrenaline rush', which a number of volunteers stated they enjoyed the most, begins to take hold and the mental pictures they have are always of the worst case scenario. Once at their headquarters they have to ready their vehicle, report over the radio or telephone to their control centre, they may have to wait a short time for the minimum crew to arrive and then travel at some speed under lights and siren to the unknown. Other variations to being disturbed regularly occur. They could be attending a social function, their children's birthday party or a family picnic; they respond nevertheless.

It is not all fear, excitement and boredom however; there can be a lot of humour also. I observed that the membership of the group frequently play practical jokes on one another, salt in a mate's coffee rather than sugar, a soaking with water from a hose or hiding someone's boots. As is the case with many emergency service personnel such as ambulance and police officers, 'black' humour is often used to assist in coming to grips with the stressful nature of the task. For example, a fellow SES volunteer hanging from a roof by her or his harness after being blown off or slipping can be thought of to be an hilarious incident that will be recounted during training nights over the years, often at the expense of the victim. Major road accidents are often similarly reported with a candour that, to the uninitiated, sounds uncaring although this is far from the truth. Camaraderie is strong and when a hose bursts soaking a mate or someone slips into the creek or is almost bitten by a snake, the 'unfortunate' member is always made fun of. The above is an

insight into the sense of family within the primary groups comprising the NSW SES and the NSW RFS.

These groups of emergency service volunteers work, and often live, close together. They train hard, socialise, make fun of each other, provide support, and respond to incidents twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. The paramilitary nature of these combat agencies instils a sense of discipline and camaraderie that seems to take precedence over personal considerations such as attending family gatherings or children's birthday parties. The volunteers' families are resigned to attendance at service-related events interfering with personal obligations in ways very similar to other emergency service officers such as police and ambulance officers. The issues of 'role conflict' (Barton 1969 p. 67) between volunteers' family obligations and their combat roles are addressed by volunteers and their families. Understandings are reached and compromises are made.

The close contact and the strong bonds that emergency service volunteers have with each other during training and 'at work' provide the foundations for a strong sense of individual, primary group and organisational identity – an identity that is proudly adopted. Volunteers' close social and primary group identity connections with each other mean that strong affiliations develop between members and these relationships are further strengthened and tested during their responses to incidents and the danger and adventure they experience. An individual's closeness to the other members of the group and to his or her local community inculcate feelings of being an important part of the community which, in turn, strengthens their commitment to serve as an emergency service volunteer.

The relationships emergency service volunteers have with each other and with their local communities are consistent with Weber's theory of class which, in part, suggests that volunteers' identity is formed under conditions of perceived similarity with others and within an environment in which their interests align with the other membership of the group (Henderson and Parsons 1964). Emergency service volunteers' need to serve their local community also corresponds with bonding social capital theory. The group's

strength lies in the trust built between its members and their local communities (Leonard et al. 2005). Emergency service volunteers' relationships is also pertinent to social identity theory which suggests that people compartmentalise themselves and others into groups according to 'memberships, affiliation, age, gender, culture and others' (Tidwell 2005 p. 450).

A group is defined here as being a number of individuals who hold a set of common beliefs, who are similar in outlook and who identify, through a comparative process with other group members or the 'in-group', or with individuals who are members of other service groups or 'out-groups'. Out-groups do not hold the same shared views or normative codes as an in-group such as attitudes, beliefs, norms, values, behavioural patterns, language and expectations for behaving in a certain way (Napier and Gershenfeld 1998; Stets and Burke 2000). Group identities convey an impression to others outside of the primary group which subsequently result in opinions being formed about the group by the local and wider community. In the case of emergency service volunteers the individual and collective primary group's sense of identity is strengthened by positive social opinion (Thomas 2005) and meaningful symbolism.

The following section will re-acquaint the reader with the research population by providing an outline of their demographic variables.

5.4 Participant demographic data

As previously stated in Chapter 5, the sample for this research consisted of seventy-two emergency service volunteers from the New South Wales State Emergency Service and the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. In order to provide a comparison of these services two volunteers were interviewed from each of the eighteen NSW SES units randomly selected and each of the eighteen NSW RFS brigades within the same locations. The two services were equally represented in number and a geographical

balance was achieved by selecting nine brigades and units from rural locations and nine from an urban setting. The demographic variables of the population are produced below:

5.4.1 Age demographic of the volunteer sample

The age of the volunteers in the sample varied considerably from eighteen years to over seventy years. The females in the sample were on average significantly younger than the males and consisted of three people aged between eighteen and thirty years or 4.2 percent of the total sample and six people between the ages of thirty to forty years or 8.3 percent of the total sample. Females comprised 12.5 percent of the sample.

The male population was more varied with seven or 9.7 percent aged between eighteen and thirty, ten or 13.9 percent aged between thirty and forty, twenty-one or 29 percent aged between forty and fifty, eighteen or 25 percent aged between fifty and sixty and seven or 9.8 percent aged over sixty. It can be seen that the majority of the male population was considerably older than the female population with 64 percent over the age of forty. The above data is shown in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1 Age demographic of the NSW SES and NSW RFS emergency service volunteer sample

Age	Female	Female %	Male	Male %	Both	Both %
18 - 30	3	4.2%	7	9.7%	10	13.9%
31 – 40	6	8.3%	10	13.9%	16	22.2%
41 – 50			21	29.1%	21	29.1%
51 -60			18	25.0%	18	25.0%
60 +			7	9.8%	7	9.8%
Total	**9**	**12.5%**	**63**	**87.5%**	**72**	**100%**

5.4.2 Ethnicity of the volunteer sample

All participants were of Anglo-Australian origin despite my having asked brigade and unit leaders for participants from diverse backgrounds. Although this research failed to reach participants from backgrounds other than an Anglo-Australian, other nationalities are represented within the emergency services. However, there is a lack of organisational information about the diversity, ethnic make-up and numbers of people from other backgrounds within the services. Other scholarship supports the view that fewer non-Anglo-Australian people tend to volunteer for the emergency services (Australian Emergency Management Institute 1996; McGill 1996; McLennan 2005; McLennan et al. 2004; Palmer 2003). People from non-English speaking backgrounds do volunteer in significant numbers within the voluntary sector generally however. In 2006, 26 percent of people from non-English speaking backgrounds reported having undertaken voluntary action within the previous year, only an 8 percent difference from the Anglo-Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, p. 4). This overall diversity in the volunteer population does not appear to be reflected in those involved in emergency services volunteering.

The ethnicity of participants in this research was 100 percent Anglo-Australian and 87.5 percent of them were male. This result is probably partly the result of the selection process and partly because ethnic diversity is thought to be low within the emergency services as detailed above. It has also been shown that the emergency service units and brigades recruit like-minded people and so they have a propensity to maintain a homogenous ethno-racial group. This is shown in Table 5.2 below:

Table 5.2 Ethnicity of the NSW SES and NSW RFS emergency service volunteer sample

Ethnicity	Female	Female %	Male	Male %	Both	Both %
Anglo-Australian	9	12.5%	63	87.5%	72	100%
Total	**9**	**12.5%**	**63**	**87.5%**	**72**	**100%**

5.4.3 Years of service of the volunteer sample

The number of years that the volunteers in the sample had been involved in their organisations varied considerably. The female members of the sample recorded the lowest number of years of service. A presumption could be made, given that this a traditionally masculinised occupation, that female years of service would be less than that of the male volunteers. However, given the low number of female participants interviewed this can not be generalised over the total emergency services population. Of the female members of the sample only one or 1.4 percent had less than a year's service, 7 or 9.7 percent had between one and five years' service, and one or 1.4 percent had between five and ten years' service. The male population was more diverse. One or 1.4 percent had less than a year's voluntary service, fifteen or 20.8 percent had between 1 and 5 year's voluntary service, twenty-three or 32 percent had between five and ten years' service, twenty or 28 percent had between ten and fifteen years' service and four or 5.6 percent had in excess of fifteen years' service.

Mahan, Garrard, Lewis and Newbrough (2002) claim that studies have shown that length of service was not a predictor of differences a volunteer's sense of community (SOC) within the workplace with the exception of male managers. They cite Burroughs and Eby's (1998) results which 'indicated no length of service or workgroup size differences in SOC' and that '…length of service in the workplace has only been found to be associated with SOC for male managers' (Mahan et al. 2002, p. 126). This claim requires very careful consideration when referring to the emergency service volunteers interviewed. It is strongly argued that a sense of community does exist and length of service is an indication of this. However, as outlined above, the term 'community' necessitates thought about which 'community' is being considered.

The data detailing the participants' years of service are shown in Table 5.3 below:

Table 5.3 Years of service details of the emergency service volunteer sample

Years of Service	Female	Female %	Male	Male %	Both	Both %
-1	1	1.4%	1	1.4%	2	2.8%
1 – 5	7	9.7%	15	20.8%	22	30.5%
5 – 10	1	1.4%	23	31.9%	24	33.3%
10 – 15			20	27.8%	20	27.8%
15 +			4	5.6%	4	5.6%
Total	**9**	**12.5%**	**63**	**87.5%**	**72**	**100%**

As stated earlier the total female population within the organisations is not known and it cannot be assumed that the proportion of females in the sample is indicative of the proportion in the population. It is considered however that female representation in the emergency services is far lower than the male representation. This presumption is supported by eminent scholarship (Beatson 2005; McLennan and Birch 2006; Palmer 2003). Palmer (2003) and McLennan and Birch (2006) suggest emergency service units and brigades '…were viewed as "boy's clubs" or "cliques" which inhibited the involvement of "outsiders"' (McLennan and Birch 2006, p. 7). Other possible reasons for the paucity of female emergency service volunteers include feelings they will be discriminated against and that they would have to work harder than men to be successful in order to be recognised as competent by males (Beatson 2005). Also cited by the female participants were child care responsibilities, feelings of being isolated, lack of personal privacy at the brigade or unit and difficulties in accessing female friendly clothing such as gloves, footwear, and overalls. A good example of this was from a female participant located in a rural brigade who eloquently observed during an interview that

> *We now have two-piece overalls but they're certainly not made to fit our boobs or bums* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

This sentiment is similarly expressed by McLennan and Birch (2006, p. 13) who report a female volunteer's comment as 'It's amazing that CFS can get pants to fit men's beer guts, but they can't get pants to accommodate women's bottoms'.

The subject matter referred to above adds to the body of knowledge in respect of the NSW State Emergency Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service about the gendered nature of the workplace and concurs with McLennan and colleagues' research into the rural fire services in other Australian states (Beatson 2005; McLennan and Birch 2006; McLennan et al. 2007). Other studies investigate the psychological barriers of female volunteers which include the membership history of the local brigade or unit, rituals and leadership style (Britton 1991; Du Boulay 1996; Garnham 1995; Williams 1998).

Males seek 'peer support from and involvement with others within the primary group. The realisation of these needs tend to be the primary predictors of sense of community for' males (Mahan et al. 2002, pp. 125-126). Individuals will make every effort to minimise or protect themselves from feelings of personal uncertainty, their uncertainty about their social world and their location and categorisation within it (Hogg 2007). These sentiments are consistent with Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) assertions about the need for feelings of security within the primary group. In contrast, for women, 'influence in decision making, formal work support … and family supportive policies were more important' (Mahan et al. 2002, p. 126).

By volunteering for emergency services, males can satisfy their need to become part of a world they understand and to associate with groups that help them understand who they are and how they and others are expected to behave. This results in the effective reduction of feelings of uncertainty and promotes identity formation with groups that have a high degree of distinctiveness (Hogg 2007). Being uncertain about one's sense of self 'is the most potent motive for identification' (Hogg 2007, p. 39). The workplace has become less secure due to increasing unemployment, the need for increased qualifications or certification, the growing need to be familiar with technology and the increasing feminisation of traditionally male dominated occupations. It could be argued that that this provides an incentive for some individuals to locate themselves in, and identify strongly with, a predominately male group. Hogg (2007, p. 41) refers to this association as 'entitativity', which he defines as:

> the 'property of a group, resting on clear boundaries, internal homogeneity, clear internal structure, and common fate, which makes a group appear to be "groupy" and to act like a unitary agent.

'Entitativity' provides group members with emotional security.

I suggest that within the emergency services the concept of masculinity and the male work culture has an important part to play in expressions of feelings of a lack of emotional safety for women. This supposed lack of emotional safety is demonstrated by the following comment:

> *Oh, honestly, you can feel it the tension but as far as I'm concerned if they've got a problem with me, it's their problem, so they'll just have to get over it* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Although it is claimed that masculinity is a social construction (Edwards 2006, p. 23) it nevertheless has a profound effect on many males. The apparent low representation of females within the emergency services could be explained by considering what the occupation means to the male membership. Rather than providing emotional support, membership of an emergency service group answers males' need to reduce their uncertainty about themselves and their experiences as a males in this 'new world' and to determine their place in society as males (Edwards 2006). Historically work has been the foundation stone for successful masculine identity, particularly for working-class males. This foundation has been eroded as more and more males are finding themselves unemployed and the stigma of being unemployed has resulted in men who now '…feel emasculated without work and, more particularly, the loss of "men's" work' (Edwards 2006, p. 8). Their social stratum can be said to have been eroded and changed by the loss of their occupational identity (Henderson and Parsons 1964). This can be demonstrated by the following comment:

> *I feel sort of left behind being unemployed* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

In order to realise '*self-verification'* [original italics] (Stets and Burke 2000, p. 232) and to reduce uncertainty a person will associate with a group which promotes self-esteem and enhances 'their self-evaluation' (Stets and Burke 2000, p. 232). Du Gay (1996) believes that people have 'innate needs for belonging' and a way in which this can be realised is through the work they perform. Self-actualisation and self-fulfilment may, for some people, be achieved through involvement and participation in the emergency services. These services offer a combination of attributes that lend themselves to identity formation and satisfy the need to belong. For those who are not unemployed I argue that membership of an emergency service provides the security needed to overcome any insecurities they may feel in their paid occupations.

> *We do all sorts of different jobs in our daily life and this work gives us a different perspective on life, it's just different here* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

Edwards (2006, p. 9) argues that these feelings of insecurity are quite often 'demographically specific and tend to be most strongly related to certain groups of men in specific employment … such as manufacturing industries'. Emergency service provides a contrast to the routines of everyday life.

Almost two thirds of the men who took part in this research were either unemployed or worked in blue-collar occupations. Membership of an emergency service also alleviates the negativity of males as portrayed by the media; it provides the imagery of the heroic male that dominates some films and magazines and provides feelings of a 'brotherhood' (Faludi 2007, p. 81). These 'feelings of brotherhood' are socially constructed concepts of the masculine and their assumptions about what actions and values are considered normal and natural is the process of 'en-gendering' persons (Aaltio and Mills 2002, p. 7). These male normalities are 'sets of signs that someone is a man' and these are the dominant discourses linking identity to organisational culture. As Hearn points out, 'cultures that are routinely taken for granted as men's cultures' (Hearn 2002, p. 39 and 42). These socially constructed and imposed assumptions classify occupations as masculine and feminine, thus providing concepts of separate male and female domains. As a result,

these male dispositions will have a detrimental effect on feelings of intimacy and emotional safety that females are said to require within an organisation and this will result in a lower recruitment and retention potential for women.

5.4.4 Volunteers' income from paid employment

The occupational status of the participants varied considerably. These variations indicate separate class distinctions and can be classified as an admixture of 'working class' 'lower middle class' and the 'intelligentsia' (Henderson and Parsons 1964, p. 427). I have analysed class simply in this research by only considering employment status. I place the unemployed, unskilled and semi-skilled participants within the working class structure, the self-employed in the lower middle class structure and the professional participants such as teachers and information technology professionals into the 'intelligentsia' class. These classifications are reflected to some degree in their respective incomes.

Income details of the emergency service volunteer sample varied widely, as would be expected with any diverse group of people. Income in this context is described as paid employment and discounts welfare benefits. From the data provided below, it becomes apparent that in general the female members of the sample had higher paying occupations than did the male members. Of the nine females (12.5 percent of the total sample) who were interviewed, the income data reveals that seven (or 77.8 percent of the total number of women in the sample) were employed in occupations earning in excess of $30,000.

By comparison, twenty-one males with occupations earning similar amounts equated to 33.4 percent of the males. Further, 9.7 percent of the sample population earned between $5,000 and $10,000, and all of them were male. Those with an income of between $10,000 and $20,000 included one female and ten males. Those with incomes of between $20,000 and $30,000 included one female and 25 males. The data cannot however be generalised in any way; they are simply the results from this particular set of participants. This data is detailed in Table 5.4 below:

Table 5.4 Income, paid employment details of the emergency service volunteer sample: females and males

Income $1000*	Female	Total %	Female %	Male	Total %	Male %
5 – 10			0.0%	7	9.7%	11.1%
10 – 20	1	1.4%	11.1%	10	13.9%	15.8%
20 – 30	1	1.4%	11.1%	25	34.7%	39.7%
30 – 40	5	6.9%	55.6%	19	26.4%	30.2%
50 +	2	2.8%	22.2%	2	2.8%	3.2%
Total	**9**	**12.5%**	**100.0%**	**63**	**87.5%**	**100.0%**

* Indicates income from paid employment

5.4.5 Occupations of the volunteer sample

In the sample, occupations were as diverse as incomes. The data suggests that the female volunteer sample was more likely to be in paid employment than were the males. However, as with the income data, the occupational status cannot be generalised. No females within the sample population were employed in what is described here as an unskilled occupation. The data from the male volunteer sample however shows that twenty-two, or 34.9 percent, were employed in unskilled occupations at the time of the interviews. Females were better represented in professional occupations. Five females, or 55.6 percent, said they were professional people compared to six males, or 9.5 percent of the male volunteer sample. Three of the male volunteers (4.8 percent of the total number of males) said they owned businesses; no females were self employed. Three females (33.3 percent of the total number of females) and twelve males (19.1 percent) worked in clerical occupations. The unemployment data showed a significant variation. Only one female, (11.1 percent, of the female population and 1.4 percent of the total population) claimed to be unemployed at the time of the interviews compared to twenty males (31.7 percent of the male population or 27.8 percent of the total population). Table 5.5 below illustrates the occupational status of the volunteer sample.

Table 5.5 Occupational status of the volunteer sample

Occupations	Female	Female %	Male	Male %	Both	Both %
Unskilled			22	34.9%	22	30.6%
Professional	5	55.6%	6	9.5%	11	15.3%
Own Business			3	4.8%	3	4.2%
Clerical	3	33.3%	12	19.1%	15	20.8%
Unemployed	1	11.1%	20	31.7%	21	29.1%
Total	**9**	**100.0%**	**63**	**100.0%**	**72**	**100.0%**

5.4.6 Geographic locations of the volunteer sample population

The geographical locations included rural and urban areas in equal numbers. This can be seen from the data in Table 5.6

Table 5.6 Geographic locations of the volunteer sample population

Location	Female	Female %	Male	Male %	Both	Both %
Rural Area	6	15.8%	32	84.2%	38	100.0%
Urban Area	3	8.8%	31	91.2%	34	100.0%
Total	**9**		**63**		**72**	**100.0%**

5.5 Findings and analysis by research issues

In order to adequately unpack the findings of this research it is necessary to progressively list the themes which were developed from the participants' accounts during the interview process. These themes will be linked to the theoretical frameworks used to inform my research and provide the substance of my arguments about the contributions this research makes to the body of knowledge about NSW RFS and the NSW SES emergency service volunteers.

Both sociological and psychological theories will be examined and will be 'isolated' where possible. However it is an inescapable fact that both sociological and psychological elements are often intertwined and, in these cases, both aspects will be discussed as the particular theme requires.

5.5.1 Thematic analysis

5.5.1.1 Emergency service volunteers' motivations to join their chosen organisation

What motivates people to volunteer for the NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW State Emergency Service is rather more complex than would initially appear. Of the seventy-two participants in this research, sixty-one or 84 per cent reported a sense of community in some form, for example

> *We just wanted to help the community and we thought it was a jolly good thing to do* (female NSW SES volunteer – urban area).
>
> *You're helping a neighbour out and helping the community* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

This finding largely confirms the findings of other research (Aitken 2000; McLennan 2008; Palmer 2003). The latter description of community is very important to emergency service volunteers. The volunteers' stories about their beliefs and experiences all included the personal need to protect their local community; this consideration was particularly salient with rural volunteers. Their commitment to the people with whom they live and work and their commitment to their peers were the most significant factors for continued service. This is strengthened by the positive recognition received from members of their community; people with whom the emergency service volunteer has close connections and feelings of attachment. Once again, the above story from the participants aligns well with social identity theory, social capital theory, and motivation theory which describes the need for people to behave in a manner consistent with realising their personal needs (Green 2000), and theories to do with alienation and self actualisation which suggest that volunteering reduces '"powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, and self-estrangement"' (Blauner 1973, pp. 22-32).

Conceptualising these motives leads to a consideration of social capital formation and maintenance within communities. It becomes clear that personal connections and the

recognition of accepted social norms of providing assistance coupled with the expectation of reciprocal action is evident in the descriptive motivations to join the emergency services. In the above quotations it is evident that the volunteers exhibit notions of both 'bonding and bridging' forms of social capital (Ostrom and Ahn 2009). In the first quotation the volunteer refers to community and the accepted ideology of community action as being praiseworthy or the norm in society. This brings with it a notion of bridging social capital – the relationships that people have with the outside world, that is, the people, ideas and issues that are outside the '"space" in which they normally operate' (Bolatti and Falk 2002, pp. 286-287). However 'community' could also involve a reference to the volunteer's local community and her subsequent affiliation with the neighbourhood.

The remaining eleven participants reported motivations ranging from developing employment opportunities through skills learned to seeking excitement, the challenge and social interaction. These results also largely confirm the above scholarship. These motivators support Thompson and Bono's (1993, p. 326) contentions about alienation and self-actualisation which argue that people engage in voluntary activities in order to reduce feelings of alienation, and promote self-esteem and the re-development of the inner self.

One of the difficulties was to isolate motivation to join the chosen organisation, the desire or ideological drive to join, from the recruitment processes, or the 'how' it was accomplished. Seventy-eight per cent of the participants reported that along with an ideological position, their motivation to join included having been asked by a friend or relative. This refers to the 'how' or recruitment process.

Group membership provides a sense of safety and security derived from the application and observance of norms and codes of conduct. The third level of Maslow's (Cloninger 1996) Hierarchy of Needs claims the individual seeks and reciprocates love, affection, belongingness and friendship and the fourth level suggests a need for a high evaluation of themselves, for self respect and for the esteem of others. These needs include the desire

for prestige, recognition, attention and appreciation (Green 2000). The claim of service to the community provides these 'D-motivations' which can be understood as motivations to overcome feelings of a deficiency (Cloninger 1996, pp. 436 and 439). Actions which meet individual, previously unmet needs satisfy personal drives and so become strong motivators (Green 2000, p. 2).

5.5.1.2 How are emergency service volunteers recruited?

The emergency services are often very stressful and involve the real danger of personal harm, so why and how is recruitment effected? Being asked to join featured predominantly as a very strong inducement to join an emergency service organisation. Of the seventy-two participants interviewed for this research, fifty-six (or 78 percent) joined as a direct result of having personal contact with someone in the service such as a family member or a friend. This finding is in contrast to McLennan, Acker, Beatson, Birch and Jamieson (2004) however it is largely confirmed by later research (McLennan 2008) who reports that 25 percent of males and 31 percent of females joined because a relative or friend did so.

One of the suggested reasons for this is the propensity for existing members to recruit like-minded people such as friends or relatives and this can be explained by social identity theory. Social identity theory holds that self-categorisation is important to one's identity and is based upon the classification a person identifies with (Stets and Burke 2000). This identification with a classification is contingent upon the self adopting and occupying a role that is similar to the roles of others within one's sphere of experience (Stets and Burke 2000). Thompson and Bono (1993), McGill (1996, p. 45) and Williams (1998), support this claim by concluding that emergency service volunteer units and brigades recruit new members by selecting people similar and known to those already in the group.

Recruiting from the same locality or township, particularly in rural areas where people generally either know most people or who know people who know a likely recruit, is hardly surprising considering the vast distances between towns in rural and remote areas. I did not assume the same would apply in urban areas because emergency service volunteers, located within a number of suburbs, come to train and work out of their unit or brigade of choice. However it became clear that, of those volunteers who lived in various suburbs within an urban area, all but one said that they were asked to join by another member or that they had a friend or relative already a member. It is reasonable to assume therefore that in both rural and urban settings there is a strong need to 'consolidate individual and categorical identities, to reinforce self-sameness' (Calhoun 1994, p. 9).

Recruitment within the NSW RFS and the NSW SES emergency services is often achieved through this type of informal method as was demonstrated in my research. This confirms the findings of other research (McGill 1996; McLennan 2008; Stets and Burke 2000; Thompson and Bono 1993; Williams 1998) who, with the exception of Stets and Burke (2000) make reference to the voluntary fire services. I make the claim that the results of this research contribute to extant knowledge about the NSW State Emergency Service in particular and the NSW Rural Fire Service to some degree.

5.5.1.3 Personal contact as the motivator to join an emergency service organisation

As detailed above, seventy eight percent of the participants in this research were asked directly to join the organisation of choice by someone who was a member of the organisation. This finding can be substantiated by a sample of quotations from emergency service volunteers from both the NSW SES and the NSW RFS:

> *…it goes back quite a few years actually, my father was in it. He was always a deputy captain of the brigade and being on the land most of my life- if there was a fire you went* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *…well they hinted for a few years [laughs]. 'We're going to have an SES meeting next week, would you like to come along and we'll show you what we've got?'* (female NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

The meaning of 'community' continues to be subject to a great deal of debate which 'has long been recognised for its slipperiness' and there are also contested meanings surrounding locality and 'common interests and identities' (Mayo 2000, p. 36), I have chosen to establish a link between both locality and common interests and identities. This is because this research shows that the geographic location of a unit or brigade has a profound impact upon the personal identity and willingness to serve of local emergency service volunteers. Similarly, these volunteers exhibit, to a large extent, common interests and adopt the common identity. This identity is developed through their association with the primary group and, particularly for rural members, the identity bestowed upon them by the local community and media. This collective identity and ideological stance is underpinned by their mutual set of work values and beliefs (O'Donohue et al. 2007). This is the case with urban members who also adopt the collective identity and ideology and reflect upon the larger community's perception of them. However, the larger community in urban settings is further removed geographically and emotionally than is the case in smaller rural communities.

5.5.1.4 Emergency service volunteer recruitment via the media

There are disparate opinions about the worth of the media when considering a recruitment campaign. Some eminent studies praise the media when it comes to recruiting new volunteers (Halpin 1998; Volunteer Centre of New South Wales 1996). Other scholarship avows that the use of the media is of little value (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006; Lovat 1999; McGill 1996; Wauty et al. 1977). The latter scholars state that only between 4 percent and 5 percent of volunteers are recruited through the media. However, in the case of emergency services operations during declarations of disasters or major incidents, the media do play a role in recruiting volunteers, sometimes unwittingly.

During times of natural or man-made disasters the belief in the emergency service organisations and their volunteers is at its highest and the press and television play a significant role in this. At these times of need the intrinsic identity of the organisation is clear and unambiguous and, as a result, 'casual volunteers' come forward to offer their assistance. The *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* (NSW State Government 1989) describes such a volunteer as 'a person who assists, on his or her own initiative, in a rescue operation or otherwise in response to an emergency' (NSW State Government 1989, p. 26). This phenomenon has been amply illustrated in the January 2011 floods in the eastern states of Australia and the February 2011 fires in Western Australia.

I used media reports as one source of documentary evidence for this research. The portrayal by the media and various forms of advertising promoting the idealism of 'community' and the 'Australian way of life', arguably forms part of the 'Australian ethos'. These are the attributes both organisations stand for above all else in the eyes of the public, their consumer. Details of heroism depicted in the newsprint (Wilkie 2004), graphic images of floodwaters (ABC News and SBS News 2010) or fire and the often repeated images of emergency service volunteers in uniform all assist in the recruitment of spontaneous or 'casual volunteers' (NSW State Government 1989, p. 26) but further research is necessary to establish whether they have significant effect on overall recruitment although a number of new recruits are obtained this way.

> *Well I made the decision just after the '98 floods here and I noticed when the floods came I wasn't doing anything. I was sitting at home and watching everything happen …* (male NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

This research found that of the total research sample only three were initially recruited as casual volunteers through the media and subsequently remained with their chosen organisations. This fails to confirm McLennan's (2008) and Kan's (2003) findings. In order to further validate the details outlined above, other quotations from emergency service casual volunteers who initially volunteered during or following a major disaster or event follow.

> *Well actually, '91 I think it was when I joined. They had volunteers going out off the street to big fires…* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *Basically the call over the radio* [requesting assistance] *and that was the start of it* (female NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

Naturally, not all volunteers were recruited as a result of knowing an existing member, having a member of the family involved or as a result of having initially experienced voluntary action by having become a casual volunteer. A few people volunteered for other reasons and it may assumed that after the 2011 floods in eastern Australia there may be an increase in emergency volunteer membership.

5.5.1.5 Personal reasons as the motivator for joining an emergency service organisation

Only three people out of the volunteer population volunteered for reasons other than those described above. One wanted to become accredited in chainsaw operations so that he could apply for work:

> *I want to look at possibly deputy captain or even higher in the future. Those qualifications assist with things like National Parks jobs or the State Forest* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Another thought membership of an emergency service would 'look good on [his] resume':

> *…it's another thing for the resume and it's always a leg in, put it that* way (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

One thought emergency service membership would assist him when applying to enlist in the armed forces:

> *I always wanted to join the army and when I turned 16 I found out that I could join the SES. I thought it was one step closer to joining the army and would teach me leadership skills* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Skills development that aids employment is clearly a consideration for some emergency service volunteers. This confirms findings in other studies (Nisbet and Wallace 2007).

5.5.1.6 Affiliation

I have chosen to define affiliation as the attachment or connectivity of a member of the emergency service with her or his brigade or unit colleagues. In examining the literature, no studies were located that examined emergency service volunteers' feelings of affiliation. It became very clear from my observations and the comments from the volunteers that all participating emergency service members were very strongly affiliated with their fellow unit or brigade membership:

> *I like the family that we've created amongst ourselves and the extended family* (female NSW SES volunteer – urban area).
>
> *It is mainly the camaraderie with these people and doing a like minded job* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Affiliation and connection with the membership of 'sister' units or brigades was strong but not as strong as the connections within the groups. These other 'sister' brigades and units were recognised as allied groups who held similar values and beliefs, however they did not provide the close sense of family volunteers experienced in their own groups. The inter-group connection was however strong.

Feelings of family, a sense of belonging to a team, camaraderie, friendships, being part of a group, trust and being one of the locals are the emotive responses to the question about their affiliation with one another at the unit and brigade level. The reasons these emotions are important are situated in various theoretical explanations. One explanation is that

human beings need to belong and identify with groups in order to satisfy their need for prestige, self respect and recognition (Zeggelink et al. 2000, p. 2). Another is that belonging to a group is satisfying and 'enjoyable for its own sake' and the smaller the group, the more affective members become with each other, and therefore the greater the homogeneity which produces solidarity within the group (Bulmer 1987, p. 41; McGill 1996; Thompson and Bono 1993; Williams 1998).

People also need to situate themselves in a world that makes sense to them, that develops an understanding of who they are and, through the inculcation of expected group behaviours, a maintenance of this connection results. The conviction of belonging reduces feelings of uncertainty and promotes group identity (Hogg 2007). Feelings of family and belonging are aptly described by the following volunteers from both NSW RFS and NSW SES primary groups. Both volunteers are from different locations:

> …*local people are your friends as well* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).
>
> *I guess there's a sense of belonging, both inside and outside the organisation* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

Feelings of connectivity with out-groups, such as with other emergency service groups, for example a NSW SES unit's connectivity with the local NSW RFS brigade, varied from location to location. This locational connectivity, I observed, largely depended upon whether or not both services were co-located in a communal local headquarters. The consensus from the participants was that the other emergency service members were well respected. On the other hand, members' affiliations with their organisations' paid career officers was lower and at times caused some friction. A partial explanation for this strong group identity and only relative affiliation with career staff was that paid workers were not considered to be part of the group. The variation in the feelings of affiliation or connectivity was conveyed by the participants and can be explained as being due to the differing levels of trust, loyalty and identification compared to those feelings with one's primary group. The participants conveyed their sense of family with their own group whereas other groups, although organisational peers, were considered to have their own

culture which led to a perception of their "being different" (Reza 2009). Career staff were not considered to be at all the same as the volunteers; they are paid for their efforts for protecting the community. They were not considered to hold the same commitment of service, were not viewed as being "family' or as peers and, as a result, they were not trusted and accepted to the same extent as other volunteers. These perceptions of 'us and them' (Reza 2009 p. 82) further developed the sense of group and individual identity, the affiliation and bond between group members and strengthened their belief that volunteers had a more acute sense of commitment than career officers. This is consistent with social identity theory which contends that individuals examine the self in relation to their social positioning and the extent of their effort and the behaviour patterns they exhibit (Reza 2009).

These manifestations of self and social identity can be explained by social identity theory. This theory argues that social identities are contingent upon the idiosyncratic nature of the individual's belief in and subsequent contribution to a significant group with whom they identify (Postmes, Spears, Lee and Novak 2005) and upon the knowledge of their acceptance by that group (Reza 2009). Individuals' self categorisation and their categorisation of others into groups by 'memberships, affiliation, age, gender, culture and others' (Tidwell 2005, p. 450) help explain the way these close social relationships make distinct the concept of 'us"' and 'them' (Reza 2009, p. 82) and assists people determine how they regard each other. Self categorisation therefore establishes a social identity resulting in the individual developing and maintaining a psychological stance in accordance with the chosen group's opinions and behaviour (Postmes, Spears, Lee and Novak 2005, p. 229).

Social identity theory therefore concludes that one's social identity is the knowledge a person has of belonging and feelings of 'fitting' in with a group. This 'fit' with the significant group improves one's self-esteem through the positive evaluation of the in-group in relation to a less positive or negative appraisal of an out-group. One's adopted group identify, through a comparative process, emphasises the affiliation and resemblance to the chosen group and correspondingly emphasises the perceived

differences of others or out-groups who hold dissimilar views or normative codes (Stets and Burke 2000). Therefore the two important aspects involved in the formation of social identity being enacted by the members of the two emergency services, those of self-categorisation and social comparison, provide a perception of self and group and distinctiveness from others.

These feelings of connection with the membership are important if the member is to remain an active emergency service volunteer. This assurance of membership and acceptance by the group is provided through the construct of the psychological contract that is unconsciously formed by each member with the group and the unconscious psychological contract offered by the group. In the case of most emergency service volunteers, a psychological contract is instinctively developed prior to joining. This comes about through knowing an existing member; they may be a friend or relative, who has 'sold' the advantages and benefits to the prospective member before formal membership is advanced. In this way an instinctive acceptance of the group's psychological contract with each other is formed (Rousseau and Schalk 2000).

The innate psychological contracts of the emergency service volunteer at the brigade or unit level are shaped by the social norms of the primary group and are based on the beliefs, promises, expectations, and obligations imposed by the group and expected of the membership by the individual volunteer. These social norms are inculcated through an acceptance of the group's values, norms and beliefs and are often initially shaped through close contact with someone the prospective member knows and respects. In this manner the new recruit readily accepts the conditions of membership. In the case of a new member not having had close contact with an existing member, the beginning of the group psychological contract construct exists as a result of holding similar values to those believed to be held by the group. I was fortunate to observe the way in which the membership of an SES unit welcomed a new recruit from another area and concluded that the person held similar views to the group. I also observed the way in which the new member was inducted into some of the ways and beliefs of the unit. This was done by explaining the core activities of the unit, who their mentor would be for the probationary

period and by providing some history of the unit. Once introduced into the group these perceptions either develop in a positive way and the decision to become a member is affirmed, or they are rejected, resulting in separation.

These are the ingredients of a successful and meaningful relationship, the foundation of which is mutual trust and loyalty (Rousseau and Schalk 2000). This process provides for the personal freedom to form the contract and provides the social stability by which it is maintained. Loyalty and trust within the primary group is paramount for emergency service volunteers because they insulate the group from out-groups and provide personal safety, both emotionally and practically. Practically because it is necessary that each member can be trusted to perform their voluntary action whilst ensuring that their 'mate' is safe from harm when working at a dangerous event or incident. This is similar in a number of ways to the armed forces in which many of their 'situations rely less on drill, such as reacting to enemy fire or applying first aid' (Lessard 2003, p. 42). Good examples of this are two statements made by a female and a male emergency service volunteer from different locations:

> *I have to trust them with my life and they have to trust me with theirs* (female NSW SES volunteer – rural area).
>
> *I've got people I can rely on…I have complete faith that they know how…to save my life* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Loyalty and trust also engenders emotional safety for the members of the primary group. This provides the belief that all members have the group's best interests at heart and promotes group solidarity, identity preservation and continued growth. The development of group solidarity and identity results from each member's unconscious psychological contract with the group and its norms, values, behaviour and expectations; this is described as the normative psychological contract (Montes and Zweig 2009). A good example of this emotional loyalty and adherence to the normative psychological contract is shown below.

> *I'm not over close to any of them* [but] *it would be automatic, I'd stick up for them* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

This statement was made by an emergency service volunteer who had recently moved into the area and who had been a member of the organisation elsewhere for some years. Being new to the group, the psychological contract formation with the group had yet to sufficiently develop for him to feel 'at home'; nevertheless he exhibited the loyalty that would have been expected in the normative psychological contract that is so important.

Although little research into volunteers and their psychological contracts has been undertaken (Farmer and Fedor 1999), I argue that, as is the case for psychological contracts in paid employment, they are dependent upon an individual's beliefs and promises based on expectations. That is, the belief systems of individuals and the in-group regarding their mutual obligations. These obligations are assumed as a result of the promises made during recruitment and 'through day-to-day interactions' (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 1). This identification with a significant group provides stability and boundaries and engenders positive feelings which in turn create attitudes and opinions that produce and reaffirm a strong sense of social identity. This social identity is further enhanced through an 'ideology-infused' mutually strong commitment to a cause (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5).

5.5.2 The complexity of emergency service volunteers' psychological contracts

At this point it is vital that an explanation of the construct of the emergency service volunteers' psychological contracts, for there are a number, is explained. The emotive attachments volunteers have to their primary groups, their communities, their 'sister' emergency service groups and their focal emergency service organisations are different. One therefore needs to ask, 'Who is the emergency service volunteer's conceptual psychological contract with exactly'? In order to provide an answer to this question it is necessary to differentiate between the relationships with the various groups, and then

analyse the components of the psychological contract types and apply them with careful consideration. The tenets of psychological contract theory support my argument that the relational psychological contract (O'Donohue et al. 2007; Rousseau and Schalk 2000) bestows an awareness of identity, affiliation and commitment that can be traced to the beliefs of the chosen primary group and the expectations the members have of each other (Rousseau and Schalk 2000). Many participants said they felt wanted and needed prior to joining and that, having joined, they believed they were supported and were treated as equals. They said that their expectations were generally met and their desire to contribute to the primary group and their community was fulfilled. These perceptions consolidated early feelings of group identity resulting in a growing affiliation with the membership and strengthened their commitment to the unit or brigade.

This research concludes that there are combinations of emergency service volunteer psychological contracts and they apply in a number of ways. However, I must make it clear that these contracts are theoretical constructs and that the volunteers would be unlikely to view their actions in this light. It is necessary to explain my concepts here so that the analysis and findings below are comprehensible. The first and principal form of psychological contract is between the member and the primary group; the second is with the leadership of the group; the third is with the local community; the fourth is with 'sister' groups; the fifth is with the parent organisation; and finally, psychological contracts exist with other emergency service agencies or 'out-groups'.

An exploration of the recruitment literature for both the NSW RFS and NSW SES reveals a substantial amount of information that constitutes an organisational psychological contract. Both agencies clearly outline how to join, the minimum age one must be to join and the need for a criminal history check. Both services provide information sheets on their websites which state what training is mandatory and what is available, that a job exists for everyone regardless of background, culture or disability and that each service has a probationary period. Links on the website are available which discuss the equipment a volunteer will learn to use, the varied roles volunteers undertake, the availability of critical incident counselling, how volunteers are recognised and what will

happen should a volunteer suffer injury, illness or death whilst volunteering and how they or their family will be looked after.

The concept of the volunteer's psychological contract is not as well developed but it is made clear that volunteers are expected to attend training nights on a regular basis, undertake the mandatory training and the printed material suggests how the volunteer is vital for the safety of her or his community. I observed unit and brigade leaders reiterate these requirements to their volunteers during training nights. The latter remark suggests therefore a commitment to their local community (NSW Rural Fire Service 2010; NSW State Emergency Service 2005). Information available from the websites of both organisations is discussed in greater detail below.

The NSW RFS website explains that the NSW RFS is 'made up from all walks of life – men and women from different cultural backgrounds, age groups and professions'. The advertisement goes on to state that 'becoming a firefighter is easier than most people think' and it offers 'training ranging from bush firefighting, village firefighting and first aid to breathing apparatus operation' (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2010, p. 1). An initial, cursory examination of the early text in the document suggests that a new recruit will be expected to fight fires; this is clarified later when the document outlines the other possible duties a prospective member may choose to become involved in. These duties include 'communications, catering, logistics, [and] planning and aviation support' (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2010, p. 1).

The documentation provides an application form which states that a criminal history check will be required, prospective members will be invited for an interview and that a six month probationary period applies. This information is supplemented with a '10 steps to becoming a volunteer' brochure, a guide to insurance protection, an indemnity statement and the 'legal protection for volunteer rural firefighters' statement (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2010, pp. 2-6). The supplementary guides to insurance, indemnity and legal protection are not 'reader friendly' as they are written in a very small font. However the information is easy to locate.

The NSW SES provides similar information beginning with a statement saying their 'volunteers come from all walks of life and each contributes to the NSW SES and their local community in their own way' (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2008, p. 1). The website states a person must be over sixteen years of age to join, although cadet programmes may be located in some areas. The document states 'you must be keen to train in rescue, operation, training and/or community education/media [and] there is a commitment to training and updating skills' (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2008, p. 1).

There are a few testimonials provided from active volunteers, a mission statement and links to the following pages: Join us; Critical Incident and Counselling Services (available to volunteers); Training (in the NSW SES), Recognition (of service and achievement); Occupational Health and Safety; Commissioner's Newsletter, Equipment (used by the NSW SES); and Vehicles and boats – an organisation on the move' (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2008, p. 2). The promotional material outline the roles NSW SES volunteers undertake and declare that 'not every volunteer is required to do physical tasks' by directing the reader to the Flood Preparation and Response, Storm Preparation and Response, Urban Search and Rescue, Land Search and Vertical Rescue links (New South Wales State Emergency Service 2008, p. 3). Information about how to join is available and a feedback form is provided but information about insurance, indemnity and legal protection is not made clear in the limited information to be found on the website. The documentation is easy to read and follow.

5.5.2.1 Primary group psychological contracts

At the primary group membership level the conceptual psychological contract is very much a relational psychological contract (Rousseau and Schalk 2000) as its focal point is the social cohesion, trust, loyalty and reciprocity of the group. Thus, it reinforces the individual's and the collective group's identity. On the other hand however, the

membership of local primary groups is parochial and has a high degree of commitment to their local community. They are committed to the ethos of giving something back and helping others; these are common reasons provided in the literature about the reasons people volunteer. This motivation to volunteer therefore provides 'emotional labour' (Barrett 2004, p. 93) or 'ideology-infused contracts' to their communities which can also be classified as a 'transpersonal' psychological contract because it acts as a conduit for volunteers to connect with 'something outside themselves'(O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5).

I mention this concept because I believe that the predominantly dualistic framework of psychological contracts as outlined by Rousseau and Schalk (2000) is too simplistic to adequately conceptualise the complexities of the multiple relationships emergency service volunteers have with their varied 'other groups'. I argue as a result of the comments made during the interviews, that strong 'ideology-infused', 'transpersonal' (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5) psychological contracts exist between the volunteer and her or his community. Participants report their ties with and commitment to their local community and insist that they volunteer to protect them; they hold strong views about the ideology of looking after their part of the world and their neighbours who inhabit it. The emergency service volunteer's conceptual psychological allegiances and relationships require constant re-negotiation and are dependent upon the situational context.

Another form of psychological contract that primary group emergency service volunteer members conceptually hold is the contract they have with their parent organisation. In many ways, the contract is relational. Firstly, the organisational ethos and ethical standards are identified with and the greater membership is part of a larger 'family' of people, who are considered to generally think alike. Secondly, the perceived contract by both the 'employers' and the volunteers requires conditions, which enhance ongoing training and personal development which will be of benefit to both parties and regular communication through briefings and the formal 'downward communication method' (Guest and Conway 2001, p. 18). The accepted need for ongoing training is demonstrated by the following quotations from a number of participants:

> *We do competency based training now, and I've had the opportunity to compare what we do here and what we used to do in QLD. I'd say it comes as close as you'd get to that professional service* (male NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

> *I really think that the machinery and the training we have now has improved 10 fold, we can do anything* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

A transactional relationship can also be said to exist. The transactions referred to here are the supply of vehicles and equipment, their tools of trade, without which the primary group cannot function. The exchange component of the transactional contract is to respond to disasters or events as required and to undertake the duties competently:

> *They've got to get more and get better gear in the bush, they've got to get it out here and see what we actually go through. They want us to do all these things with the gear we've got; it's got to be improved* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *We can't get any gear, we send in our equipment bid but if they don't think it's important then it goes right down on the bottom [of the list]. When we order new stuff it goes to [a larger town] and [that town] sends us all their rubbish and keeps the new stuff* (female NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

The statements above indicate the importance of and sense of pride volunteers have in their equipment. They also convey the unconscious feelings that their psychological contract with the parent organisations has been violated. Symbolically the provision of new, state of the art and adequate equipment to units or brigades signifies that the parent organisations 'care about' their volunteers. Good equipment provides an indicator of belonging and re-enforces feelings of having 'a legitimate purpose' (Johnson 2001, p. 6). Inadequate equipment or not having enough equipment therefore suggests to volunteers that they are being taken for granted and are viewed as unimportant (Howard 2009). The fulfilment of the transactional relationship (Rousseau and Schalk 2000) in the psychological contracts volunteers in the emergency services is considered vital for the sustainability of the organisation. Volunteers frequently told of their pride in their uniforms, the vehicles and their equipment and how these made them feel more like

professionals (Johnson 2001). Delivery of these needs also underpins their commitment to the organisation.

Emergency service volunteers also have to interact with paid career officers. This adds another dimension to a volunteer's psychological contract although they are unlikely to be aware of it. These contracts intersect at the transactional, balanced and relational levels (Rousseau and Schalk 2000) – transactional because paid career staff hold the power of supply of uniforms and equipment. At the same time it is balanced because, although it is primarily a relational contract, it does have clearly defined outcome-based components. Some of these components include maintaining training levels, attending the group's training nights, completing the administrative requirements and, to some extent, travelling away to out-of-area locations. Travelling to out-of-area locations is an individual voluntary decision; however staff have expectations that units and brigades undertake these activities if possible and as required during extreme emergencies and this causes some concern. Relational contracts are also present and are manifest through reciprocity and a general loyalty, through them, to the organisation.

5.5.2.2 Primary group brigade and unit leaders' psychological contracts

With the purpose of teasing these combinations out, I began at the primary group level. The membership of the units and brigades has a hierarchy and each has either a unit controller or brigade captain and they hold a conceptual relational psychological contract with the members of the primary group and a conceptual transactional psychological contract with the parent organisation because the contract is 'specific', 'close-ended' and definable (Farmer and Fedor 1999, p. 351). The leadership of the primary groups must, in part be focused on a materialistic exchange to ensure the volunteers are adequately trained for their roles and are able to respond during disasters or emergencies to adequately achieve the required result. The other side of the psychological contract is the one perceived by the 'employer'. Should the leadership fail to provide the basic employer psychological contract components such as develop and adhere to a training programme

and encourage volunteers to honour their commitment to train, they are highly likely to be replaced. If this were to occur it would affect their status, power, influence and identity within the group.

5.5.2.3 Emergency service volunteers' out-of-area response and their psychological contracts

Emergency service volunteer's conceptual psychological contracts remain service to one's local community and, in the case of out-of-area responses, service to the larger community. This I argue qualifies as a balanced psychological contract because it is characterised by both economic and social considerations within the exchange relationship. This exchange relationship involves leaving one's local area, travelling to another and often results in lost wages, income or the use of paid leave such as annual holidays:

> *There should be something there to protect people's income while they're working. Say you go away for a week; there should be something to ensure that you still get paid by your employer instead of taking annual leave or whatever else* (female NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

This impost generates arguments from some volunteers for adequate reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, which include lost wages and income or recompense for lost annual leave entitlements. Although the volunteers would not couch this claim in terms of it being a transactional psychological contract I argue that this is what it amounts to.

> *We've talked amongst ourselves; people have been away at fires for 3 and 4 weeks and there should be something made available through a tax cut or something like that. You are a volunteer, some guys have been away and they haven't been able to see their kids or anything like that. If they haven't got a good boss* [they will lose their wages] *or even if they're their own boss, their business has suffered so I think something has got to be done. I can see in the future; the younger people might start to look at it and say no, no. If you do go away you should be reimbursed or something, there's got to be a way around it* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

An emergency service volunteer's transactional psychological contract is a construct that has rarely been considered in the extant literature. Indeed the accepted belief is that any consideration of an economic component would be dismissed by the volunteers (Howard 2009; Turner 2003). My findings do not confirm these scholars' findings.

5.5.2.4 Newly recruited emergency service volunteers and their psychological contracts

Because newly recruited emergency service volunteers are yet to fully develop their affiliation and commitment (their psychological contracts) to the organisation, they are in a transitional state where 'no explicit performance demands' are being made (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 34). I argue that it is vital at this juncture that the newly recruited volunteer has a positive in-group experience in order for the conceptual psychological contract to progress to a relational one. To facilitate the development of the relational contract the new recruit must realise that he or she has a responsibility to uphold the values, beliefs and the normative expectations of the primary group as communicated through written material and the operational ethos of the emergency organisation. As detailed above, I observed a new member induction process and described the instructions the individual was given. In return the primary group is expected to supply the needs of the new member. Some of these needs include the need for self-actualisation, social interaction, friendship, inclusiveness, feelings of belonging, acceptance and intrinsic rewards.

The more often a person is ideologically rewarded for her or his actions, the greater the propensity exists that the action will be repeated (O'Donohue et al. 2007). When an individual emergency service volunteer is recruited she or he is inducted into the activities, the norms and culture of the given brigade or unit. As long as these accepted forms of behaviour are adhered to, the membership will reward the individual in the ways articulated above.

5.5.2.5 Emergency service volunteers' pride in their primary group and organisation

The social virtues which are deemed desirable for members of an in-group are inculcated by the other members of the group and through the documentary information provided about the organisation. These structures and values are therefore subsumed into the make-up of the personal, in-group identity being continually formed and re-formed.

> *I take pride in being an SES member* (female NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

This allows for a pleasant experience, an understanding of the other members and their values and enables new members to adopt an appropriate way of conducting themselves. These important first steps in self and in-group identification are exhibited in a number of ways. One example I observed was the promise of a uniform once the probationary period had been completed. This promise symbolised the acceptance of the new member as a full member of the group. Once adopted the resultant identity with the primary group instils a sense of pride; pride in themselves, pride in the primary group and pride in the chosen organisation. The validating statements provided underscore the sense of pride felt by emergency service volunteers from both the NSW RFS and the NSW SES.

> *I'm proud to be part of the organisation…* (female NSW RFS volunteer – urban area).

These feelings of pride are inherent in an individual's concept of self and group identity. Hall (2000, p. 16) claims that identity is created by acknowledging a common background or 'shared characteristics' with others. This acceptance of the groups' beliefs or ideology creates an allegiance and a sense of oneness, a sense of pride in being a member of a team.

> *…they're a very proud group…I'm proud to put on the orange* [NSW SES uniform] (female NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

Brown, Kirpal and Rauner (2007) claim that socialisation into a group instils and internalises the normative psychological contract and the sense of shared pride in the world view of that group. Other aspects of pride development are both sociological and psychological and they are the artefacts of the organisations. Both organisations wear distinctive uniforms and these are worn with some pride. Johnson (2001) claims organisational structure and distinct uniforms provide a powerful medium for how people are perceived and Zeggelink, de Voss et al. (2000) suggest that identifying with groups is known to be linked with prestige and recognition. Most, for example, adopt a uniform that is recognisable by the public who in turn attach meaning to it. The State/Territory Emergency Services and the Rural/Country Fire Services are examples of this.

> *You're not heroes to yourself, you're heroes to the people you save. That's my opinion* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

When operational the NSW SES volunteers wear orange overalls which have reflective orange and white checks sewn to their cuffs, lower legs and 'NSW SES (or) NSW State Emergency Service' in reflective tape across their backs. Their NSW SES badges are displayed on their upper arms near the shoulder of each arm and badges of rank are displayed on the shoulders similar to the police, ambulance service and the military. When not operational they wear either a dark blue T-shirt with the insignia sewn onto the left breast and blue trousers (usually with no indication of rank), or a light blue shirt with the NSW SES name embroidered on the left breast above the pocket with marks of rank on the shoulders and blue trousers.

The NSW RFS volunteers wear yellow overalls which have reflective red and white check around the cuffs, lower legs and 'NSW Rural Fire Service' in reflective tape across their backs when operational. The NSW RFS badges are displayed on the upper arms close to the shoulder of each arm and badges of rank are worn on the shoulder in the manner described above. When not operational they either wear dark blue T-shirts with the insignia sewn onto the left breast and dark blue drill trousers or light blue shirts and drill trousers with marks of rank on each shoulder. Both of these uniforms have been associated with risk taking, teamwork, group cohesiveness, excitement and shared values.

> *The kids will come up to me and they respect you* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

The psychological influences uniforms provide are varied. However, those that represent altruism, commitment to the community, bravery and assistance – for example, the 'helping' agencies such as police, ambulance and emergency service volunteers, instil a general respect and they convey a certain power and authority. Johnson (2001, pp. 1-2) asserts that '[r]esearch has suggested that clothing has a powerful impact on how people are perceived' and uniforms stand 'as one of the most important visual representations' of the organisation. This perception applies to both those who wear the uniform and those who do not' (Rhode 2007). Uniforms also serve to establish order, conformity and pride and they indicate a sense of belonging within the members of the organisation.

Order and conformity are important aspects of militaristic organisations and they serve to reinforce identity formation. Uniforms serve a function not normally experienced in civilian life. They can provide the conduit for living in a narrative and to put on certain clothing 'is to assume a character not your own' and provides the wearer with a certain degree of respect (Fussell 2003, p. 2). An example of pride in an organisational uniform is provided below:

> *The photo of when we did it was in the paper so I was important. It makes you really feel that the people were glad that they had these volunteers here to do what they did* (female NSW SES volunteer –urban area).
>
> *A lot of people see us as heroes especially in big fires. They know houses and things are in danger and you put your life on the line to save them* (male NSW RFS volunteer –rural area.

Just as with uniforms there are other objects that provide instinctive responses such as colours. The colour red is generally associated with an emergency, excitement and stimulation and the colour blue is associated with safety and security, as for example, when represented on emergency vehicles (Johnson 2001).

> *…little kids running out on the footpath and wave to the fire truck… it makes you feel really good* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Both organisations' vehicles also have distinctive livery. For example the NSW RFS vehicles are red and therefore suggest danger and excitement and the NSW SES vehicles are white suggesting stability with orange checked flashes along the sides. Both types of vehicles exhibit blue and red flashing lights and have sirens. Each organisation has specialist equipment that is unique to the organisation such as fire hoses and breathing apparatus for the NSW RFS and the Jaws of Life and cliff rescue equipment for the NSW SES. However they also have a range of identical equipment which includes such things as fire extinguishers and chainsaws.

I argue that these sources of pride have a significant impact on the conceptual relational psychological contract volunteers have with their primary group, the organisation and the community. Examples of pride in the emergency service volunteers' vehicles have been described above. There is an expectation of adequate provision of uniforms, equipment and vehicles. These expectations were clearly articulated during the interview process. If these are not provided as promised in the organisation's documentary evidence or are second-hand the volunteers react in ways that suggest a violation of their psychological contract by the parent organisation. Violation of the psychological contract may well result in volunteers feeling that the relationship has become untenable.

As an extension of pride, both emergency services provide a personal sense of confidence and satisfaction in the volunteers and the work they undertake. As a result, their sense of empowerment, achievement, stimulation, self direction, security, conformity and tradition (Rousseau and Schalk 2000) is enhanced by providing meaning to their '…ideology-infused contract' or the fit between the individual, the in-group and the community (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5). Meaning refers to the varied work expected of them by their organisations and their personal values and beliefs about these actions; these values and beliefs also align with the volunteer's understanding of those of her or his in-group (Kim et al. 2009). These reflections of pride in their volunteers are enhanced and

encouraged by the parent organisations with whom the have a strong public relations protocol.

5.5.2.6 The media portrayal of emergency service volunteers

In conjunction with the local community, the media play an important role in emergency service volunteer identity formation. This documentary evidence portray emergency service volunteers in a very positive light and promote the concepts of heroism, courage, respectability and trustworthiness. Illustrations of this are frequently heard on television, on local radios and in the newsprint. A few examples of these accolades are justified:

> HAIL OUR RURAL FIREFIGHTERS everyday heroes' (Wilkie 2004).
>
> Terror Marshals: Civilian volunteers to evacuate Sydney. State Emergency Service volunteers given responsibility for directing people to safety, (Mcilveen 2005).
>
> They are really the unsung heroes of this – volunteers putting their own lives at risk, (Connolly 2005).
>
> The SES received more than 100 distress calls from homes left without roofs… (Trute and Massoud 2005).
>
> How can we express our admiration for people who go out into the bush and return…the life of a child? asks the Australian newspaper, reporting the search for a child lost in the bush (2005).

Part of my document analysis involved researching the media for examples of their portrayal of emergency service volunteers. Local newspapers such as the *Mount Druitt/St Marys Standard* (2011), the *Northern Star* (2009) and national newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph* (2005) and the *Australian* (2004 and 2011*)* were researched. No negative comments were located. Excerpts of comments in the newsprint promote the emergency service volunteers as self-contained professionals who have the ability to cater for the required meals

everyone concerned with the event require and the ability to supply lighting equipment so that the efforts could continue after dark (Dwyer and Masters 2005). Reports also include the heroic efforts by emergency service personnel whose 'selfless actions' saved the life of a child missing in bushland (Penberthy 2005). Frequent congratulatory remarks are offered for their efforts as are expressions of appreciation (Editor 2011; Penberthy 2005).

The *Mt Druitt/St Marys Standard* (2011) exalts the emergency service volunteers by encouraging the public to remember when they see the volunteers training, or visiting schools to approach them and pat them on their backs to say thank you for putting their lives at risk. This particular encouragement emanates from reports of the tragic death of a NSW RFS volunteer who lost his life fighting a fire in the Mt Druitt/St Marys area (*Mt Druitt/St Marys Standard* 2011). The *Northern Star* (2009) writes about pride, professionalism, courage, dedication, and calls for the public to acknowledge the efforts of our emergency service volunteers.

The above examples demonstrate the positive publicity and esteem the emergency service volunteers receive. These accolades serve to reinforce the emergency service volunteer's sense of worth, self-esteem, feelings of satisfaction in their actions and bring into consciousness the commitment a volunteer has for her or his community. This praise reinforces the emergency service volunteers' psychological contract that I argue exists between them and the community. The praise they receive and positioning as heroes within their communities all contribute very strongly to their sense of an emergency service identity and galvanise their commitment to continue to serve their communities.

5.5.2.7 The community's portrayal of emergency services

Volunteers reported that the accolades from the community are less frequent but when they are received they are just as appreciated as the comments in the press. A few

examples of community appreciation and an indication of the volunteers' responses are shown below.

> *It's just the feeling of the* [the community] *saying "thank you" that I enjoy* (male NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

> *We're certainly well thought of by some sections of the community…mainly the land owners* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Over the last decade a number of parades have also been organised in recognition of emergency service volunteers. Although arranged by the state, it is evident that the public see these events as an opportunity to celebrate and show their appreciation of the work these volunteers do for the community. These demonstrations by the community were identified during many of the interviews as a significant source of pride and serve to further the volunteers' sense of group identity through their recognition and acceptance of positive social opinion. They are also experienced as significant rewards. Examples of the emergency service volunteers' exhilaration at these displays of support are shown below.

> *When we were coming up the street it was fantastic to see the people yelling to you and waving and throwing the tickertape all over the place* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *When I come back from the Christmas fires in Sydney in 2001… , we were almost home and there's about 4 cars with people in them. They pulled up on the side of the road and they got out and clapped us as we went past. I still think about that now and it still gives me a bit of a kick you know, and we'd travelled all the way from Sydney, all the way back to our home area and we get that, made me very proud* (male NSW RFS volunteer –rural area).

It has been suggested that the traditional community based upon kinship and shared values are 'largely imaginary' (Mayo 2000, p. 39). I argue this is not the case with emergency service volunteers; take for example the above comments and reflect on the need for the 'feeling of place, with those around us knowing and caring about us' which may be, in part, a natural reaction to the growing urbanisation and even globalisation

being faced by most people today (Bess, Fisher, Sonn and Bishop 2002, p. 3). Rather than accept that *Gemeinschaft* did not exist in Australia, as Bess , Fisher, Sonn and Bishop (2002, p. 4) surmise is the case because 'the densities of population did not allow for the formation of such closely knit communities', consider firstly our historical need for a cooperative approach during the colonial formative years.

Consider further the real need for cooperation within Australian Aboriginal societies in order for them to survive in excess of sixty thousand years. Now consider the relatively sparse population of Australia, particularly rural Australia, and reflect upon the development of kinship ties, close friendships and the culture of helping one another when in need (Cathcart 1994). Having established this argument for a more positive view of community, as slippery as it remains, I will consider the pressures brought into play on potential volunteers to finally consent to become a member of one of the emergency service organisations.

Belonging to a group, particularly an emergency service one, involves personal investment, the sharing of common symbols, becoming part on an historic past, thus preserving and perpetuating traditional values and receiving emotional support coupled with feelings of safety. The sharing of these common attributes and responsibilities provides feelings of belonging (Bess et al. 2002). This growing sense of community, either that of a NSW SES group or a NSW RFS group, provides positive outcomes or benefits. These include being able to draw on the group identity, receiving the necessary social support and being able to provide their own contribution to the common good of the primary group and of the local and larger communities (Bess et al. 2002). This identification with the in-group and community tends to promote self-monitoring behaviour which reduces the need for supervision. This in turn provides the feeling that they are able to influence their own future (Farmer and Fedor 1999, p. 351). Through feelings of being able to influence their own future, and by association, the future of their primary group, volunteers are able to assume some sense of power; power of holding some authority or presence within the community which resultantly reflects favourably

on themselves and their colleagues within their primary group (Rousseau and Schalk 2000).

One of the strong stimuli or drives to belong to the group is the affiliation and subsequent influence one feels from significant others, a family member or friend within that group. This was made very clear during the interviews. This influence that significant others have on the potential recruits provides a sense of approval and gratification of needs, a hedonistic experience (Miller and Dollard 1973; Rousseau and Schalk 2000). They are able to legitimately use the common language and their efforts are rewarded and reinforced (Miller and Dollard 1973, p. 11).

5.5.2.8 The development of a sense of empowerment in emergency service volunteers

The ideology and function of empowerment has far reaching positive attributes. These are ably articulated by Kim, Trail, Lim and Kim (2009) who define empowerment as encompassing four cognitive processes. These scholars argue that empowerment orientates the employee or volunteer to their work through 'meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact' (Kim et al. 2009, p. 554). Meaning in this sense also refers to an individual's congruent association between their work role and their personal beliefs, values and behaviours. Competence is the sense of self and their belief in their ability to perform the tasks required. Self-determination relies on one's ability to make choices and provides the autonomy for individuals to instigate and regulate their workplace actions and behaviours and impact provides the conceptual degree to which an individual has on the organisation's strategic and other planning processes (Kim et al. 2009, p. 554). These four cognitive processes align well with a number of Rousseau and Schalk's ten individual value types exhibited by Australian emergency service volunteers which are *'power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security'* [original italics] (Kabanoff, Jimieson and Lewis 2000, p. 38). For the purpose of this work, these determinants are equated with volunteers

having a sense of confidence in themselves and their capabilities and the resultant satisfaction this brings.

The articulated strong sense of satisfaction and confidence the participants acknowledged demonstrates the sense of empowerment the individual volunteer feels at the local level. These perceptions also reinforce the 'Person-Organisation Fit' concept (Kim et al. 2009, p. 553) that describes the compatibility of the individual with the attributes, beliefs, values and 'organisational' climate, particularly the primary group, and so further enhances the growth of individual and group identity. The 'Person-Organisation Fit' (Kim et al. 2009, p. 553) also has a profound impact upon an individual's commitment and affiliation to the membership in the primary group and the parent organisation. I argue that the following sample statements adequately validate this claim.

> [I experience] …*satisfaction that you're doing something and teaching the up and coming* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).
>
> *They've got a lot more confidence and skill* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).
>
> *The whole idea of being there is to save and help people… so you've got this outside focus* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

As stated above, the female membership within the sample of emergency service volunteers in this research was small. Nevertheless, the sense of empowerment, satisfaction and confidence articulated by this female sample was generally as evident as that of the male population. Gender issues however were of some concern to two female emergency service volunteers.

5.5.2.9 Gender issues within the emergency services

No estimate of the number of female emergency service volunteers can be offered from the results of this research. Whatever the actual number, the issue of gender within the

emergency services must be considered. The emergency services have a traditional image of being a male-dominated occupation and an influx of women could provoke male responses that try and maintain this traditional footing. Indications of this occurring included personally observed male chauvinistic behaviour, gender distinction detected through the use of language, reports of harassment and, as mentioned above, the lack of uniform issue which is considered by female volunteers as suitable, and the allocation of work.

Until early this century female participation mainly consisted of 'auxiliary' units within the NSW SES who were responsible for the welfare of the operational volunteers. Auxiliary duties consisted of preparing food and non-operational duties such as radio and telephone communication, and some fundraising (Keys 2005). This discriminatory form of participation ceased in the mid 1960s and as a result more female volunteers were accepted as 'full members'. A similar situation existed in the NSW RFS, and to some extent continues although they are not referred to as auxiliaries. In both services a number of female members continue to volunteer their skills as support members but they may not attend or undergo formal training. For example, wives of members normally stay at home or work and come forward with their skills in food preparation and communications in time of need as explained by an NSW RFS participant who reported:

> *Our wives are very active, my wife is the secretary and quite a few other girls involved with it* (male NSW RFS participant – rural area),

An 'un-gendered' emergency service has yet to be realised or adopted by some of the male contingent. A question that requires some consideration therefore is whether the conceptual psychological contract of the male emergency service volunteer is different in some ways to that of the female.

Faludi's (2007) comments about how it is popularly thought in the United States that American 'men had gone soft' and reports that it is believed by a growing number of males and male policy makers that females occupying the position of 'heroes' may seriously damage 'morale, discipline, recruiting, retention and overall readiness' of

emergency response agencies including the military (Faludi 2007, pp. 6, 8 and 26). She is specifically referring to the new wave of anti-feminism within emergency services following the September 11th 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre and the resultant objection to the feminisation of the military. The impact of this ideology may have ramifications for Australian emergency services.

Almost all comments about gender from both male and females during this research referred to benevolent forms of chauvinism although overt prejudice was mentioned by one female who addressed this practice in her own way.

> *Frankly, I don't care what he and his mate thinks. I'd like to see other women join up now and I hope this will make them think a bit more* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *The girls, they do most things. We look after them though* (male NSW SES volunteer –urban area).

The remarks cited above generally reflect the leadership of the units and brigades. However, it must be stated here that not all the brigades and units were controlled by males.

Female responses to these behaviours tend to reflect a willingness to fit in with the male perception of the voluntary world of emergency service, which means that the masculinist culture tends to remain in a modified manner. For example, inappropriate masculinist material displayed on unit or brigade walls is not tolerated. But this type of modification is insufficient because for women to be accepted by their male colleagues they still commonly have to fit into the local male culture rather than being the co-developers of a new and inclusive culture. Female operational experiences, however, are the same as males and include a vast variety of incidents.

5.5.2.10 Leadership within the NSW SES and NSW RFS

The leadership and other executive positions within local units and brigades are unpaid volunteer positions. The voluntary leadership structures within both the NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW State Emergency Service are quasi-military and operate within the confines of a strict ranking system that requires recognition and observance of discipline. However they differ in some significant ways. The NSW RFS elect their volunteer captain and other local volunteer officials annually from within the ranks of the brigade. The election process involves a standard practice found in many organisations. Prior to the annual general meeting each NSW RFS member is provided with a nomination form on which their preferred candidates for the positions available are indicated and a vote is then taken during the annual meeting. The elected volunteer usually is often qualified as a crew leader or group captain and so holds the most extensive knowledge of fire behaviour and mitigation. Indeed this requirement is not uncommonly found to be detailed within a volunteer brigades' constitution. The captain also requires an ability to

> *get on well with his men* [sic] (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

This statement indicates that he or she must have a relaxed leadership style when not operational but must also have the skills required to effectively manage her or his fire crew when required. It also reflects the masculinised nature of the service demonstrated by the use of the term '*his men*'.

The unit controllers within the NSW SES, on the other hand, are appointed by the director general of the service after a recommendation has been received from the local division controller. The executive level of leadership also differs between the agencies. The executive officer in the NSW SES has traditionally been recruited from within the ranks of the military. However there were a number of exceptions to this, relatively short lived as they were (Keys 2005). On the other hand, the executive officers of the NSW RFS traditionally rose through the ranks as volunteers of the Service (New South Wales Rural Fire Service 2007).

Both services have similar difficulties with leadership issues. It must be made clear here that leadership cannot be grouped into a single category; the volunteers interviewed clearly differentiated between local leadership and organisational leadership. Within the NSW RFS, for example, no negative responses were heard from volunteers about their local captain; this is unsurprising as they are elected by the membership as stated. However, as Hogg (2007) points out this also means that members who are well liked and who display a strong affiliation for the goals of the group will tend to be elected to leadership positions:

> *Probably the best thing would be the leadership. Everybody respects his opinion because he's had a lot of dealings with fire control* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

The NSW SES volunteers interviewed recorded only one negative statement about their unit controller. In this case it was felt that dissatisfaction with the chain of command was openly displayed and the lack of positive leadership had failed to instil a sense of accountability in the young. This open display of dissatisfaction was also thought to have had a negative impact on the way the community thought of the unit. With the exception of this instance, local leadership was considered adequate. This may have been for a number of reasons such as the leader being a member of the in-group and as such loyalty is an important part of the unconscious normative in-group psychological contract. It may not have been prudent to voice negative statements during the interview and risk a breach of confidentiality resulting in estrangement and friction within the group. A concept of a normative psychological contract exists which directs and controls acceptable behaviour within the in-group. Formal discipline may not have been a factor within the group allowing for a democratic form of internal decision making reducing the importance for strong leadership or, the controller's abilities were simply considered sound.

This absence of negativity at the local level is in contrast to the findings of other studies with an interest in emergency services. For example Du Boulay (1996) has a firm belief in the necessity to recruit volunteers with essential leadership qualities if they are likely to play a leadership role. Noble (2000) calls for the development of better management

practices for volunteers. Garnham (1995) states that poor management causes significant problems for volunteers whilst Britton (1991) claims that there is little practical information about the management of emergency service volunteers. Birch, McLennan, Beatson, Cowlishaw and Hayes (2009) argue that some of the major reasons for volunteer firefighters leaving their organisation were autocratic leadership, leaders who showed favouritism or leaders who were incompetent. The participants in this research reported they were content with the local leadership. They believed that their local leaders upheld their unit's or brigade's beliefs and provided the support required to maintain their sense of personal and group identity. All participants reported that their affiliation with their local leader was as strong as it was with the other members. Their relationship with the local leadership strengthened their commitment to their group. However, their views on organisational leadership were different. They told of their lack of trust and reduced commitment to the organisation. The principal story provided by the participants conveyed the belief that unrest or conflict within the group would be the only circumstances which would make them consider separation. These comments indicate that a member's relationship, feelings of belonging and subsequent identity and commitment to the primary group did not depend upon outside influences. These considerations are consistent with the concepts of social capital, particularly bonding social capital. Motivational theory can also be used to explain the overwhelming affiliations with and commitment to the local group rather than the organisation. Participants' stories told of local conditions and how they provided for the psychological needs of the group – organisational conditions satisfied these needs to a far lesser extent.

5.5.2.11 Emergency service volunteers' operational experiences

The personal experiences of emergency service volunteers are an important consideration because they have a significant impact on the 'service identity' within the brigade and unit at the local level and the wider organisational level. Many of these experiences have a significant influence on the individual's psyche. Being operational confers a measure of '*power'* upon the volunteer and provides a strong sense of '*achievement'* and

'*stimulation'* through the variety of exciting and interesting work. Operations also reinforce the '*tradition'* of voluntary action that includes notions of devotion intertwined with feelings of '*security'* in knowing they are an important part of the primary group and social order. This in turn provides a sense of '*universalism'* from experiencing a state of equality with their colleagues (Kabanoff et al. 2000, p. 38). These experiences provide many of the unconscious and probably unspoken expectations of individual and group psychological contracts that results in a measure of '*hedonism'* and '*self-direction'* [original italics] (Kabanoff et al. 2000, p. 38). All of these emotional rewards assist in the development of both the individual and group identity.

As has already been stated, both the NSW SES and the NSW RFS have separate 'core' or 'combat' activities; the NSW RFS is responsible for fire fighting within the rural setting (NSW State Government 1997, Sec 9) and the NSW SES is responsible for floods, storm and tempest. The NSW SES is also called upon and acts as the principle combat agency for other incidents that have no delegated authority such as earthquakes (NSW State Government 1989, Sec 8)**.** However, this simplistic picture does not provide a true reflection of the activities that each organisation actually responds to. The NSW RFS is also, in some rural areas, responsible for the primary response duties associated with road crash accidents; in other rural locations the NSW SES is the primary response agency, in still others, the Volunteer Rescue Association assumes these duties (NSW State Government 1989). It is important to realise however that it is impossible to isolate these duties because the emergency service agencies readily respond to assist each other. By way of example, if the NSW SES is the primary response agency for road crash accidents in a given area, the NSW RFS responds as a support agency.

The NSW RFS emergency service volunteers may or may not be trained in the required rescue techniques of road accident rescue but they respond to provide fire safety for the NSW SES at the scene. They will also assist with welfare needs such as food and water if required. In the event that the NSW RFS is the primary response agency for this type of accident in a given area the NSW SES volunteers will provide whatever assistance is

required (NSW State Government 1989). A statement by a participant further testifies to this cooperative spirit:

> *The NSW RFS was at a truck accident a month ago and the SES came out and everybody confirmed that the two blokes that turned up were fantastic. They couldn't do enough for us and they fed the recovery team. They said "you're going to be here for dinner; we'll bring it out". You're standing there at 4 o'clock in the morning, there was no time to have breakfast and to have a service like that come up behind you and help back you up it's brilliant. It's just a fantastic service* (male RFS volunteer – rural area).

I argue that these acts of service cooperation assist in the unconscious formation of the psychological contracts one emergency service develops with other 'sister' agencies. Although the assisting emergency service may be considered an out-group by many of the members of the 'combat' service there is an existent expectation of mutual cooperation. This cooperative model reinforces the group identities of both agencies. From the perspective of the 'combat' agency the group assisting is undertaking a secondary role. From the other perspective the assisting agency is providing a necessary and important function that enables the successful completion of the operation.

As both volunteer agencies assist one another on a regular basis the experiences reported are generally not dissimilar. Many experiences commented upon by the participants relate to the horrors of emergency service. Emergency service volunteers had a great deal to say about their experiences. They believed that many of their more horrific duties could not have been accomplished without the support of their peers. This sub-section has provided participant statements that convey some of their thoughts. Other stories conveyed to me by the volunteers included expressions of their total trust in each other, the need and willingness to depend on their fellow members and the sense of achievement they felt as a result of their activities. It became apparent that the more support the group provided, the more an individual bonded with the group. This relationship consolidates the commitment to the primary group and the ethos of service. These emotions also confirm their identity with the group. Motivational, social capital and social identity theories adequately explain these concepts of belonging and contributing.

Some of the events that emergency service volunteers have experienced and have reported substantiate the above claim.

> *I've been at road accident sites, I have seen a few aircraft accidents and I had to help remove and transport bodies…. I also had to identify my friend who died in an aircraft. I went to a triple fatality in the role of a police chaplain, only once* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

> *The initial call out; your feel responsible, you've got to get the members here, you've got to get them out in the truck, you've got to give them the information, you've got to ensure their safety and all that sort of thing. So the responsibility hits you when the pagers go off…* (female NSW RFS volunteer – urban area).

In order for the emergency service volunteers to competently undertake these duties it is necessary that they are trained and have the required equipment. Training, as it is a function of the relevant organisation, is treated here as a sociological aspect.

5.5.2.12 Emergency service volunteers and the need for ongoing training

Emergency service volunteers train for their duties regularly at their units and brigades. Some train on a weekly basis, others on a fortnightly basis depending upon the membership's preference. Supporting this local training are regular service training commitments volunteers are expected to undergo by the parent organisation as outlined under statutory guidelines (NSW State Government 1989, Sec 10). These training weekends are generally held at a location pertinent to the specific course, for example, chainsaw training may be held on a local property with the permission of the landholder or flood boat training on a dam. Road accident training may be held in a central location within the state in order to facilitate member training from a wide area. For many emergency service volunteers, this means considerable travel, particularly for rural volunteers.

Time to commit to emergency service voluntary action is a growing concern for some volunteers and emergency service agencies. The necessary training that is required of them also raises concerns for some. Most volunteers in this research realised that ever-evolving training was necessary; indeed, they considered it is an important part of emergency service. With the advent of new technology, OH&S legislation and the growing specialisation within the NSW RFS and NSW SES as a result of emerging technology, it is incumbent on the state to ensure the best equipment is available and that the volunteers who will use the new equipment are well trained in its use and so increase the professionalisation of the volunteer role. Many rural volunteers have significant distances to travel to attend the required ongoing training but only a small number of emergency service volunteers voiced concerns about this. Examples of these comments are provided below.

> *Travel time is a major factor. We took one of our vehicles and 5 of our people and went to* (a large town*) and that's an eight hour trip to do a weekend course* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).
> *Training! Football posts change. You do one module and 6 months later that one's obsolete. They shift the posts. It's just wrong 'cause then you have to do everything again.* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

> *I like the SES better than the fire brigade because there's too much training. You do enough training in the SES without doing fire brigade training* (male NSWSES and NSW RFS volunteer – urban area).

Training, although of concern for some volunteers, was generally felt to be desirable, and indeed necessary, in order to maintain skills development. Skills development also had 'value adding' components which provided positive benefits such as gaining qualifications leading into employment opportunities (Nisbet 2005; Nisbet and Wallace 2007).

> *Oh yes, you can carry it* [training] *through into other work – its excellent* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

> *People join for all sorts of reasons. Some join because of free training* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Individual and group identities of professionalism are also developed and strengthened. The 'value adding' component of training is an example of some of the extrinsic rewards emergency service volunteers receive. There are however many other intrinsic rewards volunteers experience which are significant and help sustain the voluntary action.

5.5.2.13 Emergency service volunteers and the rewards they receive for their voluntary action

Rewards can be described as either extrinsic or intrinsic. Intrinsic rewards for the purpose of this research refers to internal psychologically defined rewards such a sense of satisfaction, the perception of being worthy of respect or having a valued status and providing a valued service to one's community. Extrinsic rewards are those with a more materialistic form such as remuneration or gifts. The results of this research strongly suggest that extrinsic rewards were relatively rare and that it was the intrinsic nature of the rewards that sustained the voluntary action. Altruistic action was the main reason cited by the emergency service participants for deciding to volunteer which supports the conclusions of eminent studies' conclusions (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007; Leonard and Bellamy 2006; McLennan 2008; Millican 1997; Noble 2000; Oppenheimer 1998).

Emergency service volunteers have an expectation of ongoing training and the parent organisation, the 'employer', has an expectation of willingness on the part of the volunteer to undertake this training and to use it in a professional manner in order to achieve the organisation's core responsibilities. These expectations are constructs of the psychological contracts held by both parties. Examples of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as perceived by the participants are advanced below.

> *They* [the volunteers] *get a sense of satisfaction once they've received a certificate. It does give them a sense of importance in life* (male NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

> *Because he's been Captain of the brigade he now works for the Parks and Wildlife* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *The training they receive helps them get a job and keep a job* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

The training emergency services volunteers receive vary from organisation to organisation in a number of ways but is similar in others. The NSW SES are competent in the use of flood boats, a major core activity, the use of chainsaws, 'turfers', which winch vehicles from hard-to-access locations or lift other heavy objects, cliff rescue and abandoned mine rescue, removing trapped people from vehicles, road accident rescue, tarping roofs, sandbagging to prevent flood water from entering buildings and felling damaged trees that pose a threat, radio communications and first aid. The NSW RFS are competent in the use of various water pumps, their major core activity, village firefighting, grass and 'wildfire' containment, fire hazard reduction, the use of self-contained breathing apparatus, confined space work and chainsaw use. Competencies for some brigades includes road accident rescue, the use of heavy lifting equipment, ladder work, the use of some heavy machinery, aerial supply and coordination, communications and first aid.

Training and skills development common to both organisations include first aid training and chainsaw use, ladder work, roof work, search and rescue and, if road accident accredited under the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* they are trained to the same high standard as all other rescue accredited agencies (NSW State Government 1989, Sec 3 and 10). These commonalities and the strong stimulus to serve their community lend themselves to attracting many emergency service volunteers to join both services.

5.5.2.14 NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteer joint membership

Being a member of one emergency service organisation does not preclude a volunteer from becoming a member of another service. The specialist activities that each voluntary

organisation performs – for example, in the case of the NSW SES, floods, storms and tempest and in the case of the NSW RFS, fires of all descriptions but particularly bush fires, usually allows a volunteer to participate fully with each organisation. This is because if the area is flooding it is highly unlikely that there will be a bush fire in the same area. A caveat must be made here however: both the NSW RFS and the NSW SES do not encourage executive volunteers such as brigade captains or unit controllers to join another emergency service, particularly as an executive member:

> *They told us it would be a conflict of interest to join both units because if both units go on a call out at the same time you've got to decide whether your going as SES or RFS* (female NSW SES volunteer – rural location).

> *We were told that we had to decide who we wanted to volunteer for – the SES or us* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

The rationale behind this is to protect the integrity of the service in the event of an incident occurring out-of-area at the same time as an event happening locally. In order to clarify this, an example might be a local flood in a given location; the NSW SES is the 'combat' agency and will become active. If however, the unit controller was also a member or executive member of the NSW RFS and a large fire was raging elsewhere in the state requiring volunteers from outside that immediate area, the unit controller might delegate his or her NSW SES responsibilities in order to attend the fire. The result of this would be the loss of a vital NSW SES volunteer in the flooded area. Although joint membership is not uncommon, there are differences in behaviour and group norms that do cause some friction from time to time between NSW SES and NSW RFS members, with each advancing and protecting their individual, group and organisational identity.

5.5.2.15 Friction between the NSW RFS brigades' and NSW SES units' voluntary membership

Working closely together, I thought, would result in a close relationship between the different emergency service volunteers and their organisations and very often this is the

case. However, a small number of participants, particularly in rural areas, expressed discontent and friction between the services. This attitude has a multiplicity of origins and could be the result of in-group and out-group rivalry, historical anecdotes, the different personalities within groups, or the rumoured amalgamation of emergency services. Amalgamation of the services was first suggested by Air Vice Marshal Townsend in 1975 (Keys 2005) and considerable unrest ensued. In-group loyalty and attitudes of superiority continue today but they are generally not overt. The result of the close interaction between the NSW SES and NSW RFS by and large provides a strong basis for support and friendly cooperation but pockets of friction surface from time to time. It was unusual to hear that the NSW RFS, for example, experienced difficulties with the NSW SES or that the NSW SES experienced difficulties with the NSW RFS, indeed many volunteers are members of more than one emergency service as has been reported.

At times, members of different groups have a tendency to devalue one another and this can be understood by realising that in-group members' psychological contracts, although they are unaware of them, are likely to be distinct from out-group members (Rousseau and Schalk 2000). Parker (2000) supports this assertion by suggesting that identification with and an inclination for associating with 'like-minded people' helps preserve positive in-group and social identities. This inter-organisational competition often occurs when there is a common set of limited resources. The result is greater identity-based loyalty to the group and an intensification of feelings of distinctiveness, pride, prestige and the salience of out-groups. These emotions increase the social bonds, primary group bias and their 'ethnocentric orientation'(Spataro and Chatman 2007, p. 181). Differentiating in this way restates the uniqueness of the primary group and emphasises the groups' values and beliefs, thus enhancing a member's identification with it. The participants confirmed that identity-based loyalty, feelings of distinctiveness and the perceived prestige of their primary group and their organisation in comparison to how they perceived out-groups further established their commitment to their group and reinforced their relationships with the membership.

The friction that was identified was predominantly manifest where services' local headquarters were co-located. There was animosity between local people with personal differences or could be found in expressions of loyalty and affiliation for a volunteer's primary group. These findings support Spataro and Chatman (2007). Of those people interviewed, only a few had obvious antipathy with the other emergency service organisation.

> *The ones we get on with the least it's probably the SES* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *We've had a couple of really bad incidents down there. We have to work in with them though, the RFS* (male NSW SES volunteer –urban area).

> *Years ago it was sort of them and us but now I think we're all mates. We've had so many disasters, we all learned to sort of bury our grievances and get along together* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

The last statement shows that historically there have been issues between the groups but a cooperative approach is now the norm.

5.5.2.16 Emergency service volunteers and perceptions of positive recognition

The strong and enduring commitment to the primary group, the parent organisation and communities throughout the state are recognised in a number of ways; some perceived as positive and some as negative. A number of positive forms of recognition have been detailed above under various headings such as community pride in the volunteers and the thank you parades that are now conducted. Public opinion also plays an important role in the development of an emergency service identity. The volunteers' stories of pride and commitment to their local communities have been repeatedly told. However, all participants believed that recognition, particularly recognition from their local community, provided the motivation to continue to serve and intensified their sense of

emergency service identity. The result of these feelings was an increase in an individual's loyalty to the primary group because, as all participants affirmed, the primary group's principal aim was to protect their local community and their 'mates'. Opinions such as these are able to be understood through the application of social identity, motivational and social capital theories. Community opinion is heard by emergency service volunteers directly from members of the public during shows, demonstrations or during their voluntary action.

Only two participants, or 2.8 percent of the sample, thought that public opinion was poor. Both based this belief on historical anecdotes that described the NSW SES in less than favourable terms; however they also thought this previously held public opinion was changing. Positive recognition is most significant to the emergency service volunteers because, often symbolic, it provides much of the expectations perceived to exist within the construct of the individual and primary group normative psychological contract. At this juncture some other positive examples of recognition will be discussed:

> *They think I'm a hero (male NSW RFS volunteer –urban area.)*

> *He says we're heroes because we go out and fight the bushfires and they stay in town* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *I can guarantee 99% of the people know I'm a Controller* (female NSW SES – rural area).

> *When I first joined we used to be thought of as Dad's Army, still do, but not as bad now. People are more interested and they appreciate what you do* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

5.5.2.17 Emergency service volunteers and perceptions of negative recognition

It became clear during the interviews that the volunteers firmly believed in their acceptance by a grateful community. A major issue for some rural brigades and units was

a lack of equipment as described above. This can be described as a serious perceived breach of the psychological contract volunteers have with the parent organisation. It is less understood how serious the volunteers consider this breach using the concept of an 'inadvertent', 'disruptive', or a 'breach of contract' (van de Ven 2004, p. 5) as is evident in the statement provided below which refers to budgetary constraints.

> *I went out in the truck just to drive it and the speedo was still in miles an hour. It goes 50 miles an hour that's only 80k's (*male NSW SES volunteer –rural area).

> *To be efficient with fighting fires you need the most up-to-date and best, you shouldn't grovel, go fundraising or chasing to try and find it. We've got equipment on these trucks here that we buy ourselves* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *They say that NSW stands for Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong – the big brick wall – nothing exists on the other side of it* (female NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

> *It's slow getting the equipment, slow getting uniforms…at one stage I was fighting fires for about nine months in my own boots…a couple of times I only had sneakers on* (male NSW RFS volunteer –rural area).

Clearly, these statements are very pertinent to the concept of individual and groups normative psychological contracts with the parent organisation. If the volunteers are to uphold their obligation to the parent organisation, the organisation is expected to uphold its obligations also. Both organisations are paramilitary in origin and, having researched the literature on psychological contracts, I found only one account by van de Ven (2004) of a generic military model. He claimed that 'there appeared to be little or no empirical military data available' (van de Ven 2004, p. 1). I argue that what has been described as negative recognition constitutes a breach in the emergency service volunteers' psychological contracts. Rousseau (1995) advances the concept of three forms of psychological breach: ' "*inadvertent",* the organisation is willing but has conflicting interpretations about the contract; "*disruptive",* the organisation is willing but unable to fulfil the contract and "*breach of contract"*, the organisation is able to fulfil the contract

but is unwilling to do so [italics added] (van de Ven 2004, p. 5). Some of the ramifications of this failure to honour a perceived psychological contract, van de Ven concludes, include an increase in the intention to leave the organisation, an increase in taking the initiative with 'supervisors' in order to mitigate the conditions, a decrease in organisational citizenship, an increase in absenteeism and a decrease in effort. These reactions were not supported by the results of this research, with a possible exception being an 'increase in absenteeism' which may explain the number of 'non-active' members of both organisations.

The reason van de Ven's reactions were not evident in emergency service volunteers is claimed to have resonance with a 'traditionality' psychological contract model described by Chen, Tsui and Zhong (2004, p. 9). This model's defining characteristic is respect for authority. 'Traditionality' would theoretically appear to have a place in the emergency services as most psychological contract theory examines the employee perspective and an integration of both contracts is required. These scholars suggest that traditionalists, in this case emergency service volunteers who have been inculcated into a military model, are 'less sensitive to injustice' and are 'less likely to react negatively (Chen et al. 2004, p. 9).

Although 'traditionality' is likely to be pertinent in some respects to emergency service organisations, nevertheless psychological contracts also exist and are experienced by emergency service volunteers in 'normal' employment situations, even though this may not be understood by those involved. The ramifications of violation as described by van de Ven (2004) in this 'normal' situation are therefore likely. Breaching an emergency service volunteer's individual expectations (psychological contract) or the primary groups' expectations (normative psychological contract), also assumed to be relevant to individual members, would be potentially unwise for the parent organisation. Feelings of violation of one's psychological contract construct by emergency service volunteers may result in them considering themselves as 'working' for an employer, who cannot be trusted and has little concern for their wellbeing (Chen et al. 2004). This could possibly

result in decreased recruitment rates and increased intention to separate from the organisation.

5.5.2.18 Emergency service volunteers and their intention to separate from their organisation

I argue that emergency service volunteers' psychological contracts are multi-dimensional. They are conceptualised by conditions such as those within the primary group, the social environment, the work content, voluntary action and private life balance, the organisational commitment to them and cost/benefit considerations. These complex considerations all have the potential, if not adequately met, to determine whether a volunteer will continue to offer her or his services or whether they will separate from the organisation. There were a number of serious concerns volunteers thought problematic and requiring attention but very few of these were considered a sufficient reason to resign from their chosen organisation. For example, one participant, when asked what might make her consider leaving, replied:

> *Death probably. They bury me out back anyway* [in the NSW SES yard]. *I can't think of anything that would make me leave the SES* (female NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

One primary reason for deciding to resign became apparent. Participants reported that feelings within the unit or brigade about not fitting in or experiencing negative internal politics constituted serious a breach of their offered commitment and expectations (psychological contract). This condition results in individual feelings of anger, betrayal or resentment and have a negative effect upon the relationship with subsequent thoughts of separation (Coyle-Shapiro and Neuman 2004; Farmer and Fedor 1999; Kim et al. 2009; Montes and Zweig 2009). A number of examples are provided in order to exemplify this claim.

> *You'd want to leave if you didn't fit in* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *Internal politics within the group I think* (female NSW RFS volunteer – urban area).

There is a wealth of literature that focuses on why people volunteer but little about what they do or how they react once recruited (Farmer and Fedor 1999). This particularly applies to the NSW SES emergency service volunteers (McLennan 2008). Emergency service volunteer reactions to psychological contract breach are dependent upon the origin and agency of the breach, the most significant agency being the primary group:

> *There's too much back stabbing and bitch fighting in the fire brigade* (reason for leaving the NSW RFS) (male NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

There are other concerns volunteers have with their organisations; however, it was rare to hear a suggestion that these concerns would prompt thoughts of separation. The reason for this, I claim, is that volunteer behaviour is difficult to direct and the individual is more likely to respond by limiting her or his participation. A volunteer would renegotiate his or her perceived agreement with the organisation, their psychological contract, and they would make an adjustment to their concept of reciprocity in line with the changes to the individual's initial interpretation and experiences of the employer's delivered obligations (De Vos, Butens and Schalk 2003). The first of these concerns is the growing demand on volunteer administrative requirements.

5.5.2.19 The increasing need for administrative work at the brigade and unit level

The administrative requirements are time consuming enough, some volunteers say, and when they are combined with their core combat activities the voluntary action becomes very difficult. This impost particularly applies to captains and controllers unless, like many brigades and units, they have volunteers who are responsible for the paperwork. The demand for reports and associated paperwork is mostly generated during events and incidents. Therefore, not only are the emergency service volunteers busy assisting their

community, demands on them are increased by the amount of administrative work required by their fire control officers, division controllers and headquarters staff. Comments from participants about this perceived imposition highlighted their discontent.

> *I come in and do the paperwork; I'm in before work and after work nearly every day. That's about two hours a day just doing the paperwork and sorting out the politics* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *Sometimes you'll come in here and there'll be memos and faxes about stuff I consider not to be important right now. But to State and Division they are and they need it to be done now. Sometimes I just don't have the time* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

> *…the paperwork is getting heavier and heavier…* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

As can be seen, both emergency service volunteer services at a local level are concerned, not only about the increasing amount of administration required, but also about when this administrative work is required. I have mentioned above that the heavy requirement for this work occurs during busy periods. It is at these times that the incident reports and situation reports are of importance to paid emergency service staff but the demand for immediate attention is problematic. On the one hand, headquarters staff needs to be fully conversant with the event in order to ensure sufficient resources are made available. On the other, emergency service volunteers often find it difficult to process the paperwork and deal with the local problem at the same time.

5.5.2.20 Emergency service volunteers' concerns about litigation

Although only voiced on two occasions during this research, the subject of potential litigation is of importance. Both the NSW SES and NSW RFS have protection from 'any action, liability, claim or demand' (NSW State Government 1989, Sec 25) or '[a]ny matter or thing done or omitted to be done… does not if…done in good faith subject such person personally, or the Crown to any action, liability, claim or demand' (NSW State Government 1997, Sec 128) under their respective legislation. However, as the

volunteers below observe, emergency service volunteers cannot be fully protected if they fail to adhere to the OH&S legislative requirements; at least that is the general perception. The first statement is noteworthy because, as can be seen, the NSW RFS volunteer membership of this particular brigade is discussing the 'recovery boys', generally meaning those who are the road accident rescue accredited agency, in this case the VRA, and their difference of opinion with WorkCover staff.

It will also be noticed that the first participant's statement is not critical of the NSW RFS and the legal protection the organisation affords its volunteers. Howard (2009) advocates the introduction of tighter legal safety nets to protect our volunteers such as a Good Samaritan Act similar to that of the United States. This call by Howard is most relevant as, although every state has enacted legislation that limits the exposure of volunteers to liability there remain significant gaps in their protection and cover. One of these major gaps is the issue of gross negligence. In the case of the Northern Territory, volunteers are protected under the Personal Injuries (Liabilities and Damages) Act *2003.* However, should gross negligence be proven this Act may be no protection because it has yet to be tested in the courts. In NSW the relevant legislation is the *Civil Act 2002* and similar concerns apply (Volunteering Australia 2010, p. 7).

> *If they started to come around, work and safety, and fine us for not having our jackets done up for example. That's one issue that's been brought up about the recovery boys. The OH&S people have been following them around and fining them if they haven't got their ID cards. If that sort of thing came into it I think you'd find people leave very quickly. I might be in the ute on the way to pick up a pipe fitting and I mightn't have my overalls and my hard hat with me. The accident near the pub for example, I hopped out and if someone saw me without my protective clothing they'd sit there and write a fine and it's not on* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

On the other hand, the second NSW SES emergency service volunteer who made a statement about this issue is not at all sure about his or other members' and new recruits' legal standing.:

> *But I'm really concerned. I'm more concerned that the legals will scare people away down the path* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

It would appear that greater awareness of the legal protection afforded volunteers by their respective legislation would allay members' fears about their legal standing. Further clarification about their individual responsibilities such as the requirement to wear protective equipment when active would be useful.

5.5.2.21 Emergency service volunteers' concerns about paid professional career staff

Negative comments during the interview process about the leadership at division and headquarters levels were common. The belief that the leadership of paid career staff was poor was the second-most frequent reason for emergency service volunteers to consider leaving their organisation. Opinions about the leadership of paid career staff most commonly centred on feelings of not being respected:

> *…they're paid and so they try and push people around and think they know everything about everything. But a lot of the time they don't know what they're talking about - it's just too many of them trying to do the same thing* (female NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

> *I think they've* [paid staff] *lost touch with what we need and what we don't need out here and that's a pity because this is where it all started from* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Being treated with a lack of courtesy:

> *They talk down to you. I'm a volunteer so I sort of expect to be treated with some sort of courtesy* (male NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

Having an arrogant attitude:

> *He's* [paid staff member] *got the idea divide and conquer, but it won't work'* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Some other organisational issues are of concern to volunteers. When asked about whether the organisation's treatment of them would initiate thoughts of separation it became clear that it was unlikely to have an appreciable negative effect on retention.

> *No it wouldn't make me leave;* [the management] *gets me cranky sometimes but wouldn't make me leave* (female NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

> *The total loss of support from the Rural Fire Service; not caring about the way volunteers feel. I'd stick with it as long as I could but if I was feeling like I was being treated like a bit of cow dung out in the paddock, I'd end up saying something and possibly either handing in my resignation or being asked to* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

Control of the emergency services is a 'top down' process whereby paid emergency service professionals direct policy, training and, to a certain degree, procedures over the volunteers and their actions. A relatively common theme that was identified was the acrimony voiced by some, particularly older serving emergency service volunteers, about these officers. Paid officers were not generally thought well of for a number of reasons. The most common feelings expressed were those of not being respected, being pushed around, not being consulted or listened to and their autocratic manner. Volunteer contact with paid emergency service professionals occurs at the local level through NSW SES Divisions or NSW RFS Fire Control offices, and directly from the respective State Headquarters who disseminate policies, procedures and administrative requirements and during Declared Disasters for the NSW SES, or Section 44 incidents for the NSW RFS. In these cases, it is common for the state headquarters of both emergency service agencies to dispatch paid emergency service professionals to the area to assume control.

Some of this negative contact with paid staff results in ill-feeling and the alienation felt by these volunteers as a result of these relationships further strengthens the relationships within the primary group. It can be seen therefore that the conceptual psychological contracts between the primary groups and the parent organisation are divergent. Their commitment to the parent organisation is strong but this strength is reliant upon the intense commitment, affiliation and sense of identity within the primary group. However,

although this research shows that the fundamental relationship lies within the primary group initially, the emergency service volunteers hold a relational contract with the organisation of choice and, although this commitment is strong, it is less robust than that with the primary and associate primary groups.

An exception to this claim would be the unparalleled respect the NSW SES volunteers had and continue to have for Major General Brian (Hori) Howard, Director General 1989–2001. This is substantiated by the support shown to Major General Howard by NSW SES volunteers when the media criticised him for his operational response to the storm of 14 April 1999 (Keys 2005). This criticism threatened the volunteers' perceptions of their organisation by calling into question the merit and importance of the organisational identity (Elsbach and Kramer 2004).

Divergence between psychological constructs and work practices occurs when two 'ideological schemas' differ (O'Donohue and Nelson 2007, p. 4). Firstly, I will consider the paid officer. His or her mental schema is one based on a '*bureaucratic'* (original italics) stance that is founded on traditional management beliefs and values. In order to do justice to the paid staff, at this juncture I point out that their views are also relevant. However, I was only concerned with the subjective world of the emergency service volunteer in this research.

The emergency service volunteer's mental schema is one of *'community service'* (original italics) that reflects their professional beliefs and values (O'Donohue and Nelson 2007, p. 4). This divergence may, in part, also reflect on the location of the organisations' headquarters. Many of the NSW RFS emergency service volunteers believe paid staff are out of touch with the conditions and difficulties of working in rural areas. The belief that country emergency service volunteers are not understood is indicated and expressed with some feeling.

> *'State', when they first started coming out here I think they just thought we were country bumpkins. But once they just got to know us a bit they found out we are people and we are intelligent. There's no need to pull*

> *the wool over our eyes because we'll see through it* (female NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

> *I think they've* [paid staff] *lost touch with what we need and what we don't need out here. That's a pity because this is where it all started from. The office would be better if it was in Bathurst or Orange instead of Sydney – send them out to the country. Actually I think there would be a lot more volunteers, more on their side if they did that. It should be out in the country not in the city* (male NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

The above comments indicate the alienation from the parent organisation felt by many emergency service volunteers. These volunteers are suggesting that the administration, being located in the city, is losing contact with the roots of the service and, as a consequence, it loses the 'oneness' with the volunteer movement. Career staff are salaried officers, not volunteers and do not have the perceived status many volunteers believe they themselves hold. The loss of 'contact' by the organisation's headquarters and the feelings of alienation have strong implications for volunteers' feelings about perceived breaches of their 'working' conditions; their psychological contract. These sentiments indicate the perception that headquarters and its staff have little concern for the wellbeing of the volunteers which is demonstrated by a lack of knowledge about 'what's going on'. The belief that the sense of 'oneness' has been lost also suggests that their perceived organisational obligations are not being addressed adequately.

5.5.2.22 Emergency service volunteers' reimbursement of expenses and the need for a re-evaluation

Volunteering has an undisputable tenet: it is unpaid (Cordingley 2000). Emergency service volunteers however, like many other volunteers, are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses incurred whilst undertaking their duties. These expenses are commonly for fuel and meals when travelling. My research has revealed there are calls for these expenses to be reviewed. It is an accepted view that the intrinsic rewards volunteers receive, with the exception of the re-imbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, are sufficient to sustain the action. Any other form of payment would redefine the activity, altering the relationship

into that of a paid employee (Cordingley 2000) thus contradicting the voluntary nature of the activity. Payment in the context below refers to either a wage for services; resulting in the action becoming non-voluntary, or reimbursement of expenses.

The question of whether there should be payment for the voluntary work undertaken by emergency service volunteers resulted in some conclusions that are worthy of serious consideration. The responses were unanticipated because a categorical rejection of the concept was expected. The majority of the volunteers firmly believed in voluntary action up to a point; however after that point was reached, a different set of conclusions emerged. Out-of-area response 'obligations' are particularly highlighted by some volunteers.

> *I do* [think I should be paid], *yes, especially when we're called out of area. Our local stuff no, because that's why we're doing it. But I think when we are away from home we should be paid* (female NSW RFS volunteer – rural area).

> *I do yes* [believe volunteers should be paid] *when we're called out of area especially. Our local, our local stuff no* (male NSW SES volunteer, urban area).

Of interest here also is the concept that 'the local stuff' does not require recompense. Their loyalty to their local communities is strong and suggestions of payment for services are rejected but payment is considered warranted, by many volunteers, when serving 'out of area'.

> [They should] m*aintain your wages. That's the only thing I worry about and they should pay you from day one* (male NSW SES volunteer –urban area).

> *There should be something there to protect people's income while they're working. Say we go away for a week; we should still get paid by our employer instead of taking annual leave or whatever else. I can't afford to pack up for 4 days and not get paid for it. Government employees get paid. We should be paid, some re-imbursement put in place like a tax incentive or something* (male RFS volunteer, rural area).

> *Why can't they set up a superannuation policy fund?* (male RFS volunteer, urban area).

In order to better understand the data, a more refined examination of the responses about 'payment' or reimbursement was carried out. Initial responses demonstrated that 55 percent of the respondents believed that they should be paid, 39 percent believed they should not be paid and 6 percent were unsure. Following up on the initial responses, a more probing discussion took place during which a clearer nuanced picture emerged. When the above responses were considered in more detail it became apparent that the issue was more complex because many volunteers qualified their opinions. The responses were re-examined in light of this. Taking into consideration these qualified answers, the results now showed that only 22 percent of the interviewed population was in favour of being paid a wage, 36 percent were in favour of being paid under certain circumstances, 36 percent said definitely no to being paid and 6 percent were unsure. Indicative comments from those who reject the idea of payment are illustrated for purposes of clarity.

> *No I don't think that I want to be paid because I'm here just because I want to be. I just don't want to be here for the pay. If I started to be paid I'd probably not put the interest into it as much as I do now. You're just here to help people out; you're not here for pay* (male NSW RFS volunteer, rural location).

> *Just the concept of being paid takes away the 'volunteer', you join to be a volunteer not to get a pay cheque* (female NSW SES volunteer – urban area).

> *If they were paid I would have people coming in hand over fist. But I don't think the quality of the members would increase; if you get me?* (female NSW SES volunteer – rural area).

The refined results now revealed that 58 percent of the sample population believed they should be paid, that a payment was legitimate and it should not impact upon their claim to being volunteers. A closer analysis of these data revealed that a much stronger case was being put for payment under certain circumstances. When asked to leave their place of work to respond to an emergency within the immediate area, that is, within their own

local community, 36 percent of those who advocated payment rejected the idea under these circumstances. This position supports my contention that emergency service volunteers hold divergent psychological contacts. The stance taken by these volunteers clearly shows that the unconscious 'ideology-infused' (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5) psychological contract they have with their own community is very strong and that this commitment takes precedence after that of the primary group commitment.

However, when asked to travel away from their community for an extended period, which can vary from a three or four day tour to a number of weeks, such as the NSW Christmas Fires in 2001/2002, payment was considered necessary. The reasoning is clear: volunteers who forego their annual leave entitlement or simply lose their wages during the time they are away are asking for their lost wages to be reimbursed. This same argument applies to taking annual leave because although the volunteers have not lost wages they have lost the opportunity to take their family away on holiday and the money with which to do so. Self-employed people had similar concerns about ensuring an adequate living was earned and the effect extended periods of time away had on their income and businesses. All of these examples are considered by a significant number of emergency service volunteers to be 'out-of-pocket' expenses. The divergent psychological contracts of emergency service volunteers again come under the spotlight; under these circumstances the psychological contract is with the parent organisations. The voluntary action is no longer the protection of one's own community; the action has now become one of working for the state. These out-of-area expectations 'alter the employee's perceptions of what they owe the employer and what they are owed in return' (Maguire 1999, p. 4).

Most volunteers who are employed by the private sector are not paid when away volunteering and 'employers are generally less happy to release their volunteers for operations in someone else's patch, than they are for those which occur close to home' (Howard 2009, p. 12). Furthermore, unless the state declares the incident a disaster, in which case employment is safeguarded, a volunteer could jeopardise her or his job if excessive amounts of time are taken. It must be stated here however that a number of

employers do pay their employees when they are away from work volunteering for the emergency services but the extent to which this occurs is not known.

A number of volunteers believed that an extended 'out-of-pocket' expenses scheme would result in an increase in volunteering. This claim is supported by Frey and Goette (1999) who argue that direct tax subsidies, for example, would encourage voluntary action. The volunteers' reasoning behind this was that future generations of emergency service volunteers will not be as civic minded about giving their time unless some form of incentive is forthcoming. A recent media report (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2011) supports the call for the payment of SES volunteers. This article reports the Deputy Mayor of Tumut Shire Council, Councillor John Larter, as saying that emergency service volunteers should be paid considering the inordinate amounts of time they contribute to their community and the life and death decisions that have to make. Other scholarship has the opposite opinion, claiming that volunteers do not want payment (Howard 2009) and that any form of payment would decrease the propensity to volunteer and destroy the ethic (Turner 2003). These sentiments are echoed by the Executive Director of the Rural Fire Service Association, Peter Olah, in an ABC radio report in which he says that the volunteers reject any consideration of pay and that to introduce payment would result in the loss of volunteers.

The argument for a form of remuneration is supported by Gledhill (2001, p. 9) who cites various American incentives for volunteer firefighters and other emergency service volunteers such as tax incentives in some states, state pensions for volunteers, legislation for time off work for training and low interest loans. Conversely, Frey and Goette (1999, p. 3) claim that 'only very few agreed [that they] should be rewarded …either through tax deductions …or public pensions'. Frey and Goette argue that the 'hidden cost of reward' such as being paid for actions that were previously intrinsically motivated, would reduce voluntary effort; they refer to this reaction as the 'crowding out effect' (Frey and Goette 1999, pp. 4 - 5). Nevertheless, given the mounting fiscal restraints being experienced by employees, employers and self-employed people, the costs incurred by most volunteers are considerable and rising each year.

Clearly there are implications that are pertinent to the emergency service volunteers' expectations (psychological contracts). Many are suggesting that, if the state expects participation for extended periods during which communities other than their own are requiring protection, it then has an obligation to adequately reimburse these genuine out-of-pocket expenses. It follows that if 'ordinary' out-of-pocket expenses are considered part of a volunteer's expectations (their psychological contract) then these extraordinary expenses should also be reimbursed. Many of the complex issues the emergency service volunteer participants have identified require considerable thought and attention. Perceptions of psychological contract breach and subsequent feelings of violation may well be addressed through strategic human resource management.

5.5.2.23 Human resource practices and the emergency service volunteer

The focus of human resource (HR) management within the emergency services must be aligned with the perceived psychological contracts of the volunteers and not simply with those of the 'employing agency' and its staff. In my extensive personal experience working for emergency services I found little evidence of human resource management as it relates to volunteers. On the other hand, the psychological contracts perceived by the 'employing' agency must also figure strongly because few studies have been made from the perspective of the employer (Holland, Sheehan, Donohue and Pyman 2007). This is important because a perception of breach and resultant feelings of violation on the part of the volunteer is very much a subjective view.

Currently, the NSW RFS has its human resource management function located in Sydney and the NSW SES has its HR office in Wollongong. These human resource offices are public servants and are employed to serve the interests of the organisation's paid career staff and not specifically those of its volunteers.

5.5.2.24 Comments received from the subject matter experts

I reported in Chapter 4 that six subject matter experts (SME) were requested in 2010 to consider the responses provided by the participants. They were each provided with a summary of the participants' responses and asked to offer their opinions about whether the responses continued to reflected current conditions. They were also asked to offer any further information or comment about current conditions within the services should they wish to do so. Five of the SME responses agreed that the summary was 'spot on', 'dead on', 'pretty good' and 'accurate'. One SME disagreed with my understanding of a procedural matter.

A second SME reported a rumoured change in both emergency service organisations regarding the need to renew all training certificates every three years. Another change that is occurring within the NSW RFS, as reported by this SME, is the full-time employment for a period of twelve months of a local senior fire officer to facilitate hazard reduction burning in trial areas. This officer will have at his or her disposal three or four firefighters who will also be employed to undertake this work for a period of six months. The SME believed that there will be four trial areas of this nature in New South Wales. Two other comments received from SMEs suggested that local firefighters should be on the interview panels for paid positions. The rationale for this is to reduce the rapid turnover of paid career staff in inland rural areas.

5.6 Consolidated Findings about the affiliation, commitment and identity of emergency service volunteers

The deep-seated affiliation emergency service volunteers have with their primary group is predominantly manifest through the belief that the members of a brigade or unit constitute a 'family unit'. Feelings of family, a sense of belonging to a team, camaraderie, friendship, being part of a group, trust and being one of the locals were some of the emotive responses to the question about their affiliation with one another at the unit and brigade level. Their extended family included their 'sister' units or brigades.

These ‘sister’ brigades and units were recognised as allied groups who held similar values and beliefs. However they did not provide the close sense of family volunteers experienced in their own groups.

This close connection and reliance upon one another strengthened kinship ties, close friendships and the development of a culture of helping one another when in need. Positive public opinion of emergency service volunteers, particularly at the local level articulates a public affiliation with the emergency service volunteer that is in turn reciprocated. This positive public opinion has a profound influence on the commitment of emergency service volunteers. Media reports during serious events or incidents and the public parades for emergency service volunteers strengthened volunteers’ belief in the merit of their actions and consequently their sense of affiliation with their chosen emergency service organisation.

This research found that an emergency service volunteers’ commitment is largely parochial and is influenced to a high degree by their identification with their primary group, their local community and the parent organisation. Their responses during the interviews clearly indicated a commitment to the ethos of giving something back and helping others; these are common reasons provided in the literature for why people volunteer (Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and Australasian Fire Authorities and Emergency Services Council 2008; McGill 1996; McLennan 2008; McLennan et al. 2004; McLennan and Birch 2007). Volunteers’ responses were closely aligned to their feelings of kinship with their local community and to a lesser extent with the wider community in the second. Emergency service volunteers therefore provide labour based upon ideology-infused contracts with their communities (O'Donohue et al. 2007). Participants report their ties with and commitment to their local community and insist that they volunteer to protect them; they hold strong views about the ideology of looking after their part of the world and their neighbours who inhabit it.

The primary group’s individual and collective sense of identity is formed and strengthened by positive social opinion and meaningful symbolism. These positive

intrinsic rewards can satisfy volunteers' needs to become part of a world they understand, a world in which they understand how they and their peers are expected to behave. This results in a reduction in feelings of uncertainty and promotes identity formation with groups that have a high degree of distinctiveness (Farmer and Fedor 1999). Almost two thirds of the men who took part in this research were either unemployed or worked in blue-collar occupations. For reasons of self-affirmation and to reduce uncertainty, emergency service volunteers associate with a group which promotes self-esteem and enhances their self-evaluation (Hogg 2007). There is a strong propensity for existing members to recruit like-minded people such as friends or relatives. Social identity theory holds that self-categorisation is important to one's identity and is based upon the social category of person a person identifies with. This identification with a social category is contingent upon the individual adopting and occupying a role that is similar to the roles of others within one's sphere of experience (Postmes et al. 2005). Membership of an emergency service also alleviates the negativity of males as portrayed by the media; it fits with the imagery of the heroic male that dominates some films and magazines and provides feelings of a brotherhood (Faludi 2007).

A number of theoretical perspectives from within the disciplines of sociology and psychology have been used to inform this research. Each perspective provides evidential support for the findings. From a sociological perspective they include class, ethnicity, gender, social capital, social identity theory and neo-institutional theory. The psychological theoretical perspectives include motivation theory, alienation and self-actualisation and psychological contract theory. This research advances the proposition that a construct of multiple psychological contracts exists, each with its own exchange component. These contracts shape the individual's sense of affiliation and commitment and strengthen their strong sense of emergency service identity.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated a wide range of responses from emergency service volunteers about their subjective world and the issues they feel strongly about. The research questions were outlined and I have argued that each one has been addressed.

My conclusion to the question, 'How is emergency service recruitment generally effected?' shows that the majority of the participants in this research were recruited by a friend or a family member. I also show that media advertising had only a very limited impact on the participants' decisions to volunteer. The second area of enquiry asks, 'Does an emergency service identity exist, and if so, how is formed and how is it sustained?' No specific literature about emergency service volunteers' identities and their formation was located during the literature review. I have suggested in this research that a strong emergency service identity does exist and have argued that it is developed through the relationship an individual has with people who have similar beliefs, values, customs and cultures. I argue that this finding contributes to the current knowledge of the NSW State Emergency Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service because no studies were located that specifically examined these emergency service volunteer's feelings of affiliation.

Question three asked about the part affiliation plays in the identity formation and commitment of volunteers. The participants in this research avowed that affiliation with the membership of their primary group was particularly strong and that their affiliation with the parent organisation was less strong. An argument is made that this contributes to the current knowledge of affiliation and identity formation within the ranks of the NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers.

Finally, my question about what maintains the commitment of these emergency service women and men was considered. I have suggested that the volunteers' strong affiliation, sense of identity, the belief in the primary groups' values and norms, the importance placed on the social ties they have with the membership and the perceived positive opinions of the public provide the motivation for their ongoing commitment to the particular ideology of service and the primary group.

Twenty years ago Britton (1990) reported on a study of the NSW SES but it was not until relatively recently that emergency service volunteers have actively been researched. Most of this research has concentrated on Australia's volunteer firefighters. McLennan (2008) reports a lack of research into other emergency services, particularly the NSW SES and how this constitutes an important gap in the extant literature. I therefore claim that this research addresses this problem to some extent and therefore constitutes a contribution to knowledge about the NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service experience.

An insight has been provided about the profile of the voluntary membership within the NSW RFS and the NSW SES which shows a diverse range of people, the age cohorts, their ethnicity, years of service, income and gender. These demographics introduce concepts of class and the fluidity of class and class status between individuals and groups who share the same identity and interests and who enjoy a distinctive level of prestige. I claim that this contributes to the extant knowledge about the subjectivities of the NSW RFS and the NSW SES.

After describing the demographic nature of the population the findings and analysis by themes is reported. When asked about their reasons for joining their chosen organisation, the most common response was that they were asked by someone they knew, they spontaneously volunteered or they did so in order to gain employment related skills. When questioned about the rewards they received, volunteers responded by providing largely affective reasons such as friendship, a sense of family, satisfaction, feelings of status within the community and feelings of pride. Other rewards mentioned included trips away to other areas to assist with emergencies and small gifts and thank you letters.

Loyalty and affiliation for the primary group is of considerable importance. The most crucial consideration for remaining an emergency service volunteer was the sense of family and friendship volunteers feel toward her or his fellow members within the group and, in many cases the social interaction. These feelings extend, to a certain extent, to the organisation but the focus is very much on the primary group. Positive public opinion is another area that has an influence on the commitment of emergency service volunteers.

Media reports during serious events or incidents and the public parades afforded emergency service volunteers strengthened this belief.

I have shown that transactional, relational, balanced, transitional and 'ideology-infused' or 'transpersonal' (Barrett 2004, p. 93) psychological contracts all play a role in the maintenance of commitment and the retention of emergency service volunteers. I further claim that the construct of an 'ideology infused' psychological contract or a psychological contract based on emotional labour is the principal philosophy underpinning an emergency service volunteer's motivation to join her or his chosen organisation. This philosophy is primarily formed with the best interests of both the primary group and the volunteer's local community in mind. However it does, to a certain extent, extend and apply to the greater community.

This research has focused on the subjective world of the emergency service volunteer and concludes, in part, that psychological contracts must be understood as they apply to the varied contexts in which they have meaning. I have argued that if the unconscious and therefore unacknowledged psychological contracts of the emergency service volunteers are violated, negative consequences can be expected. This is especially so when the strong relational psychological contract an individual has with his or her primary group is violated. No comparable information about the construct of multiple psychological contracts pertinent to the NSW SES and the NSW RFS emergency service volunteers could be located in my literature review. Therefore, these conclusions are claimed to contribute to extant knowledge about these New South Wales emergency service agencies' volunteers.

The experiences that volunteers report as part of their duties are extensive. In many cases, particularly in units and brigades who are road accident accredited, stories of maimed and deceased people are a common theme along with stories of attending horrific fires. Others relate the difficulties and risk of tarping buildings during storms or the challenges of flood work, and an occasional volunteer described rescuing animals. These experiences

also play an important role in nurturing their primary group relationship and service identity development.

Although both the NSW RFS and the NSW SES have different core activities or combat roles, the members of the two services interact closely with one another. This interaction generally provides a strong basis for support and friendly cooperation although pockets of friction surface from time to time. Volunteer leadership qualities and abilities at the local level were not an identified issue with one exception within the NSW SES. This finding fails to confirm the findings of other research (Birch et al. 2009; Britton 1991; Du Boulay 1996; Garnham 1995; Noble 2000).

Central leadership however was an issue for a number of emergency service volunteers who believed the paid emergency service professionals required training in leadership skills. Many volunteers voiced concerns about the autocratic nature of these officers and others spoke about not being consulted during serious events, particularly in regard to local conditions and topography which play an important role in mitigating an event. Poor leadership displayed by career officers and the belief that volunteers were not respected and 'that they are taken for granted' (Howard 2009, p. 14) was thought to be one reason for volunteers considering resignation. The findings from this research confirm this conclusion.

Resignation from their chosen organisation was reported as something most volunteers had not seriously considered. When pressed for a possible problem that might induce consideration to leave, almost all of the volunteers interviewed reported that unrest within the unit or brigade as the most likely reason – conflict within the primary group. Another issue that was voiced as a possible reason for considering resignation was the lack of equipment or poor equipment.

The most frequent grievances about training related to the distances many volunteers, particularly those from rural areas, had to travel; the perceived continual changes in training modules that 'shift the goalposts'; and the growing technology requirements.

Positive responses to training were that in enabled volunteers to gain employment skills and also that it resulted in community recognition as a professional emergency service 'worker'.

Recognition for the service provided, particularly from the paid career staff, was high on the list of needs of emergency service volunteers. They reported that very few letters of thanks were received. However, some of the other forms of recognition were applauded such as the issuing of nationally accredited certificates for competencies, the 'thank you' parades and those provided by the media and the public during or following particularly disastrous emergencies such as the bush fires of 2001 and the floods of 2011.

Litigation was an issue for a minority of participants. It was of significance because there is a perception that, although emergency service volunteers are protected whilst on duty, this is not fully understood. A concern exists that outside agencies such as WorkCover have the power to penalise volunteers should they not wear the prescribed personal protective equipment.

The largest area of contention was related to out-of-pocket expenses incurred during voluntary action. Most volunteers believed that payment was not required when responding to local incidents. However, over one-third of respondents called for reimbursement of expenses or some form of payment when they were asked to serve 'out of area'. The payment they proposed took on a number of forms including tax incentives, an honorarium, a superannuation scheme and a set wage. Recompense was called for under these situations because the volunteers considered they were now working for the state.

Human resource practices were considered and a statement made claiming that they must be aligned to the construct of volunteer psychological contracts. It was acknowledged that implementing this strategy would be difficult. However, considering and addressing the normative psychological contracts of brigades or units would be a clear signal that the

organisation was trying to meet expectations whilst at the same time honouring the psychological contracts the organisations have with their volunteers.

Chapter 6 will now develop the conclusions and discuss the implications of this research. The chapter will begin by providing the links between the chapters which will illustrate the progressive expansion of the subject under review, beginning with review of the pertinent literature. This is followed by briefly revisiting the parent theories that have informed this work and restating the argument for their adoption. The methodology adopted for this research detailed in Chapter 4will then be summarised and an overview of the findings and analysis described in Chapter 5 will then be provided. This material will be highlighted in order for the reader to become re-acquainted with the arguments and data prior to considering the conclusions and implications this research proposes.

Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusion

> (Meno speaking with Socrates) *How will you look for something, Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? What sort of thing will you set as the target of your search, among the things you do not know? If you did meet with it, how would you know that this was the thing that you did not know?(Williams 2000, p. 22).*

6.1 Introduction

In this research I have analysed, from a constructionist perspective, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and the New South Wales State Emergency Service emergency service volunteers. I commenced this research by asking broad questions about the facets of their volunteer role, what motivates them to join, methods of recruitment, whether an emergency service identity existed and how it was formed and what role affiliation plays in sustaining their actions and maintaining their commitment. I indicated that there is a dearth of qualitative material in Australia that focuses on emergency service volunteers, specifically those in NSW. On the other hand I also acknowledged the significant advances in quantitative knowledge made in recent years about the volunteers of Australian emergency service rural firefighters.

However, I argue that previous studies into Australian firefighters have been predominately quantitative. The qualitative approach used in this research provides a new perspective to our understanding of emergency service volunteers. I also established that discussion of the above issues has rarely been analysed in the context of the construct of psychological contracts as they pertain to volunteers and the impact psychological contracts have in their 'workplace' social environment. I argue that the extant literature about emergency service volunteers has not fully explored the recruitment practices, motivations, commitment, retention and volunteer identity formation from a constructionist perspective.

In attending to the gaps in these bodies of knowledge I explored, in Chapters 3 and 4, the types of knowledge currently available about emergency service volunteers. Using a constructionist framework I then interpreted, in Chapter 5, their views of their world and subsequent subjectivities. In the first section of this chapter I encapsulate and synthesise my findings. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss the theoretical frameworks of this research. A constructionist epistemology was used to present specific interpretations that offered an understanding of the emergency service volunteer's social environment. I 'made sense' of these views by drawing upon sociological and psychological methodological paradigms. Finally, in the third and fourth sections of this chapter, I suggest the ways in which this research has made a contribution to our understanding of the volunteers of NSW RFS and the NSW SES and ways in which the issues this research examines could further be advanced. Below I summarise the findings of my interviews with the emergency service volunteers and pull together the themes and issues that emerged.

This research has analysed the subjective views of volunteer emergency services workers. It provides important insights into their beliefs, values, social identity formation, their varied affiliations, commitment and provides a reading of these characteristics through the theoretical perspectives of a construct of their psychological contracts, class, ethnicity, gender, social capital, social identity theory, neo-institutional theory, motivation theory, alienation and self-actualisation, human resource management theory and uncertainty-identity theory.

I argue in Chapters 3 (3.5.5 and 3.5.12), 5 (5.3) and 6 (6.2.1 and 6.2.14) that this knowledge will be pertinent to all emergency volunteers and those who manage them. This knowledge will also be of value to those who are responsible for the development of policy, training and the administrative aspects of the two organisations studied in this research. I show how this research affords an original conceptualisation of emergency service volunteers and their actions which produces a unique understanding of these men and women, their volunteer activities and how their perceived obligations are generated and sustained.

Sociological theories were examined in Chapter 3 which was followed by the psychological theoretical considerations. The sociological literature drawn upon to inform my research deals with class, ethnicity, gender, social capital, social identity and neo-institutional theories. The psychological literature drawn upon to inform this research deals with motivation, alienation, self-actualisation, psychological contracts, human resource management and uncertainty-identity theories. I argued that this literature, whilst providing some useful insights, did not adequately address the specific issues of subjectivity and identity as they relate to emergency service volunteers. I concluded that the literature did offer the necessary constructionist techniques through which the subtleties and multi-faceted subjectivities of the emergency service volunteer could be analysed. This analysis provided a way of understanding the seemingly unnoticed and little understood elements of the nuanced world of emergency service volunteers.

Prefacing my analysis, I acknowledged my own spatial situation, living and working in a regional area of Australia for most of my life. I divulged how during this time I have been a volunteer of both emergency services under consideration, for much of that time serving in both capacities simultaneously, and that I have been employed as a paid career officer with the NSW Ambulance Service and the NSW SES. Having been so closely involved with these emergency service volunteers, I also explained how this motivated me to explore the scholarship about these women and men and subsequently to examine what materialised at the local level of service provision. The purpose of this research is therefore to examine and compare the extant literature with the volunteer's individual and collective worlds in order to explain what it means to be an emergency service volunteer. In my analysis of the responses from the participant population, derived from both rural and urban locations, I conclude that a complex range of subjectivities exists and they have important ramifications pertinent to the questions being investigated. I make it clear that the construction of themes developed from the volunteers' responses and informed by the constructionist theoretical positions was done by the researcher and they were not created by the participants themselves.

6.2 Themes and their contributions to the field

A number of the findings from this research confirm the conclusions from the extant literature. However, because this is the first time a constructionist approach has been used in relation to volunteers in the NSW SES and the NSW RFS, these findings may be viewed as *advances*. They are of importance because they provide a greater depth of understanding of the issues investigated but these advances will not be considered contributions because I will focus on the following more noteworthy contributions and additions to the knowledge base:

- My contributions to the field developed from disconfirmations of previous research presented in the literature review in Chapter 3 will follow. These contributions will be indicated within this chapter by categorising them as *Contributions on previous research (disconfirmations)* within the table.

- The next categorisation of contributions to the field will be those that further address areas which have only been speculated about in previous research and not empirically tested. These contributions will be indicated within this chapter by categorising them as *Contributions on previous research (addressing research speculation)* in the table; and

- My final categorisation of contributions to the field will be knowledge about which no comparable research could be located. These contributions will be indicated within this chapter by addressing them a *Contributions on previous research (emerging issues not raised in the literature)* in the table (Perry 2002, p. 35).

My findings conclude that a complex range of subjectivities contribute to the world of emergency service volunteers. It was necessary to incorporate the range of themes provided by the research sample which, considered in the context of the specific

questions, provided a wide-ranging and more detailed understanding of the complexities of those specific questions than any investigation advanced in the scholarship cited.

6.2.1 How is emergency service recruitment generally effected?

General confirmations

The recruitment process

This research found that being asked to join by a friend, relative or a significant person was the most common recruitment method reported by the participants. These findings are in accord with extant scholarship. However, I found that recruitment and motivation were thematically linked and difficult to separate.

The primary articulated motivations to join were altruistic; this is also in accord with the extant literature in Chapter 3. I have used social capital theory to inform the concept of altruism. Social capital theory holds that the strong connections between people form social networks. The social networks within the NSW SES and the NSW RFS develop a sense of trust in the accepted norms of reciprocity which are governed by the formal and informal rules of the primary group, the local community and the institutions. Predominately, bonding social capital is demonstrated by the volunteers of these two emergency services. This form of social capital exhibited by the dense ties the individuals have with their primary group and local community strengthens the friendships, the sense of 'family' within the unit or brigade and the connectedness the volunteers have with their local community. Emergency service volunteers also engage with other communities when deployed out of area. This form of social capital can be described as bridging social capital. When serving out of area the volunteers' interactions are with people outside of their usual space and realm of operations and their personal relationships with them are different.

In addition to altruism, for the majority of the sample, the attraction of belonging to a group of like-minded people, people with whom the recruit had a strong bond and existing affiliation, provided significant incentive to join the service of their choice. During this research I found that recruits are generally asked to join the group by someone they knew. Personal contact provided the motivation to become involved. This contact suggested to the individual that she or he was accepted by the group and offered the distinctive social identity that was valued by the individual. This was particularly so in rural areas where the close ties of a small local community provided a sense of kinship, although the volunteers in urban areas also exhibited a propensity to join a group with whom they had existing bonds with friends or relatives who were existing members. Social identity theory assists explain this phenomenon.

Social identity theory suggests that like minded people categorise themselves into groups who exhibit similar affiliations, age structures, cultural dispositions, shared characteristics and commonly held beliefs and ideology. This self categorisation operates when the individual is psychologically attuned with the group, has similar opinions and begins to mimic its behaviour. The consequence of an individual's self-categorisation is an emphasis on the perceived resemblance between the individual, the chosen group and the perceived distinctions between the chosen group and other groups. This categorisation has a strong connection with an individual's sense of social identity. An individual's sense of social identity within an emergency service is developed and strengthened through self-classification with a group and the positive community and media perception of that group.

The customary decision by RFS and SES group members is to encourage new recruits to join, who are known to them and who can be expected to accept the prevailing norms and collective ideology of the group. This tendency to recruit like-minded people also suggests that a concept of class prevails although like-minded people can transcend class classifications. However, meaningful relationships tend to be developed through the mutual historical and environmental aspects within the society from which one originates. This sense of identity or similarity helps define the homogeneous group. This tendency

has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that new recruits will readily accept the expectations and values of the group, thus maintaining its most salient aspects. The disadvantages are that the group becomes steadily stagnant in its beliefs, attitudes and expectations because few new ideas are being considered and adopted. These disadvantages become evident when one considers the deficiency of female emergency service volunteers and volunteers from non-English speaking backgrounds. The perspectives of female volunteers and people from non-English backgrounds have the potential to add significant value to the group however these potential advantages are currently being lost to the emergency services. Thus, collective meanings and expectations change slowly and the dynamic activity of the group is restricted.

The concepts of class, social capital and social identity are insufficient to adequately explain the motivations to join an emergency service. Other theoretical perspectives have been used to inform this research about the reasons people join an emergency service. Motivation theory describes the predisposition to act in such a way that unmet or unsatisfied needs are realised. I have used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Lefton 1985) to classify the stages of need and concentrate here on the second, third, fourth and fifth stages. They are in order, Safety, Belongingness and Love, Esteem and Self-actualisation. The Safety stage identifies the need for an ordered society and feelings of safety within the family, at work and within one's chosen group. The Belongingness and Love stage considers the need for affection, friendship and a sense of belonging. The Esteem stage suggests that all individuals have a desire for a stable and high evaluation of themselves and the Self-actualisation stage refers to the desire to become everything one is capable of becoming.

Belonging to an emergency service brigade or unit provides many of these needs. Safety is provided through a stable homogenous group of like-minded people. The individual has often been recruited by either a family member or friend and has an existing positive relationship. These existing relationships further enhance the sense of a safe and welcoming group. The needs of belongingness and love have partially been met through the initial safety needs described above. The group then offers affection, acceptance and a

positive relationship in return for an adherence to the group's normative expectations and values. Esteem needs are met through the adoption of the group's values, modes of behaviour and customs. This provides a sense of achievement, status and responsibility which are accentuated by the group's reputation and positioning within society being attributed to the individual. Operational experiences also provide a sense of achievement. The final stage, Self-actualisation is developed through the sense of personal growth and fulfilment. Personal growth and fulfilment can result from becoming a member of the chosen group, through the ongoing training received, the operational experiences encountered and the public recognition the group receives. When these motivators are met it is likely that the individual will remain an active member. If the individual's needs are not met it is likely that separation from the group will result or the individual may become an inactive member.

Recruitment and motivation to join an emergency service can also be explained through alienation and self-actualisation theory. This theory advocates that voluntary action reduces feelings of alienation from the capitalist world of 'individualistic and competitive behaviour' (Thompson and Bono 1993, p. 330). Voluntary action provides a self-actualising and non-alienating environment that promotes self-esteem and provides the opportunity for the re-development of the inner self. Self-actualisation can be realised through being accepted by a significant group, developing skills and abilities, and through the belief that the activity is of vital importance and valued by the community. Voluntary action for an emergency service also promotes feelings of prestige and status; feelings an individual may not experience in the workplace or if unemployed.

Uncertainty-identity theory also plays a role in recruitment and motivation. An individual may experience feelings of personal uncertainty about their place and role in the world. For this reason people tend to locate themselves in a world they understand and a group that accepts and appreciates them can be an ideal opportunity. The membership of the group provides information about an accepted behavioural pattern and it inculcates its values and norms. These attributes promote identity formation with the chosen primary group. Having an existing relationship with the primary group provides the sense of

reliable certainty. Being uncertain about one's sense of self is a potent motive for developing an identity based upon a primary group's values, ideology and social position.

The growing uncertainty about the workplace and employment opportunities, the growing demand for qualifications and certification and the increasing feminisation of traditionally male dominated occupations may be one catalyst for some individuals to strongly identify with an emergency service group. Emergency service groups have, to a large extent, maintained their traditional male role and have maintained their 'heroic Australian ethos'. Further, few people from non-English backgrounds appear to be members of the NSW RFS and SES. The statement requires qualification; however the extant literature supports this assertion.

The lack of emergency service volunteers from other than Anglo-Australian backgrounds could be partly explained by the concept of social capital theory. A significant factor of social capital is trustworthiness which is often based upon individual characteristics such as their appearance, their gender, age, language and ethnicity. Stereotypical assumptions about people from other than Anglo-Australian backgrounds remain problematic. Suggestions about the untrustworthiness of people from some ethnic backgrounds and the emerging implications of the demonisation of some ethnic groups could re-enforce the 'Australian' identity of a primary group. The primary group has a significant impact upon the question about who is trustworthy and who is not. Any discriminatory considerations results in the protection and homogeneity of the primary group identity. A further consideration may be that some people from ethnic backgrounds may not view voluntary action in a similar way. It may be that the military, for example, is responsible for disaster response or that assistance is offered when required and that a formalised disaster response group is not considered necessary.

Implicit with membership of an emergency service group is the construct of a psychological contract being held by both parties although neither party is likely to be conscious of this. At this initial stage the psychological contract the individual holds is based upon beliefs and expectations based upon promises. These beliefs, expectations

and promises are conveyed to the individual by word of mouth during the recruitment phase and the day to day interactions with the group following recruitment. However, for a psychological contract to exist it must be considered in terms of an exchange relationship. The relationship between the new recruit and the members of the group is one in which the new recruit exchanges a willingness to endorse the groups' norms, values and expectations, observe appropriate group behaviour, accept its code of conduct, provide support and loyalty and promote the image and culture of the group. This commitment provides the source of the group's prolongation and social identity. In return, the group exchanges security, friendship, support, loyalty, the opportunity for increased social networking, training and the prospect of serving the community. The mutuality implicit in this relationship satisfies both parties if the recruitment is successful. The new recruit assumes the status of the groups' social identity and a desire to remain in the relationship is a likely consequence. The motivation to join and subsequent recruitment are largely dependant upon the conditions expected and the likelihood of the individual realising the particular need he or she is seeking.

I have argued in Chapters 3 and 5 that a number of types of psychological contracts exist for members of the emergency services and they are dependant upon the agency with whom they interact. The psychological contract with the membership of the group is a relational one. A relational psychological contract is an open-ended exchange that is 'socioemotional and value-laden in nature' (Rousseau and Schalk 2000, p. 33). The exchange is concerned with individual relationships, organisational and personal reputations and integrity (Farmer and Fedor 1999). However, each party may have its own interpretation of the contract because 'mutuality is not necessary for psychological contracts' to exist (Conway and Briner 2005, p. 29). Therefore, the unconscious interpretation of the psychological contract by the parties has an influence on whether the individual remains with the group or separates from it.

Table 6. 1 How is emergency service recruitment generally effected? Advances on previous research (general confirmations)

Advances on general confirmations	Theoretical perspectives	Supporting scholarship
How are emergency service volunteers recruited?	Class, Social Capital, Social Identity,	McGill 1996; McLennan 2008; Stets and Burke 2000; Thompson and Bono 1993; Williams 1998
Motivations to join	Class, Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, Uncertainty-Identity theory, Psychological Contract theory	Aitken 2000; McLennan 2008; Palmer 2003
Personal contact as the motivator to join an emergency service	Class, Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, Uncertainty-Identity theory.	McLennan 2008

The above findings are claimed as advances because they, to a degree, broaden the general conclusions and because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. The conclusions are also underpinned by my readings of a number of theoretical perspectives, particularly psychological contract theory, that advance our understanding of the emergency service volunteer's desire to commit to a primary group. Prior to this research, the volunteers of these two New South Wales services, particularly those of the NSW SES, had not been researched in any depth, (McLennan 2008).

Disconfirmations

Recruitment via the media

Some recent scholarship concludes that the media plays a significant role in the recruitment of emergency service volunteers (Kan 2003; McLennan 2008). McLennan (2008) cites McLennan and Birch (2006) who report that 16 percent of males and 15

percent of women who joined the Country Fire Authority (CFA) did so as a result of advertising. McLennan (2008) cites McLennan and Birch (2007) who report that advertising for Western Australian SES volunteers accounted for 50 percent of male and 20 percent of women recruits. Kan (2003, p. 8) reports 'television documentaries, showing women firefighters and word of mouth' as the most effective techniques for recruitment.

The findings of this research report that only three participants (or 4.2 percent of the sample) were recruited by this method. I acknowledge that the results of this research cannot be generalised across the total NSW RFS and the NSW SES volunteer population and that a number of considerations can be made that may explain this inconsistency. Firstly, no data is available that indicates the number of recruits obtained from electronic advertising through mediums such as *GoVolunteer* or other websites. Secondly, the extent and content of the Victorian and Western Australian advertising is unknown and therefore cannot be compared to that of the NSW advertising. I also acknowledge that recruitment by the media does occur, particularly under special circumstances, and will address this phenomenon under the description of *spontaneous recruitment* below.

Although the sample population for this research was small I argue that the participant's responses suggest that significant numbers of emergency service volunteers being recruited by the media is not as widespread in NSW as suggested by the above scholarship. I argue that motivation theory can partially explain the findings of this research. As detailed above, motivation theory advances the need for safety, the need to belong, the need for positive self esteem and the need for personal growth. It could be argued that recruitment by the media would satisfy these needs. Media advertising as a method of recruiting volunteers does suggest the potential for achievement, the development of one's self esteem and responsibility. However, I claim based upon the responses received from the participants of this research, that recruitment is largely dependant upon an existing personal relationship an individual has with members within the primary group. Recruitment by the media fails to convey the sense of 'mateship', status, or the affective attachment individuals experience at the unit and brigade level.

Motivation theory advances these needs and other significant needs such as the need for safety, security, order, affection and positive relationships.

Also mentioned above is the construct of the individual holding a relational psychological contract with the membership prior to the decision to join the group. Recruitment by the media does not convey the affective contents of such a contract. Recruitment by the media does provide information about the opportunity for excitement, service to one's community and the 'conditions of employment'. This information can constitute an assumed psychological contract but it fails to emphasise the full nature of it. Advertising fails to adequately convey the assumed mutuality of the exchange relationship implicit within the psychological contract with the parent organisation. It also fails to convey the exchange relationship the new recruit will be expected to honour with the host primary group. I have stated that mutuality is not a requisite condition of a psychological contract however, if either party is dissatisfied it is likely that the relationship will fail. If the conditions of the psychological contract with the membership of the group is not meaningfully conveyed the individual will be unaware of her or his obligations. A failure on the part of the potential recruit to understand the expectations of the group could result in the individual's decision to separate from it or to minimise the voluntary action; the individual becomes an inactive member.

Table 6.2 How is emergency service recruitment generally effected? Contributions on previous research (disconfirmations)

Contributions on previous research - disconfirmations	Theoretical perspectives	Scholarship
Recruitment by the media	Motivation theory, Psychological contract theory	Halpin 1998, Kan 2003, McLennan 2008, Volunteer Centre of New South Wales 1996

The above findings are claimed as contributions on previous research because they describe the importance volunteers place on personal contact and the effect this has on subsequent recruitment. I also claim these findings as contributions because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. I contend that my findings reveal that the strong local sense of kinship and community that is found

and nurtured in most Australian rural communities, and to a lesser extent in urban surrounds, provides the stimulus to engage in primary group selection and the voluntary action rather than information offered by the media. I have argued that the formation of an individual's psychological contract with the parent organisation and the primary group fails to be adequately articulated through this medium. This finding is in contrast to previous findings. Finally, no comparable research has been made that describes the experiences or conditions within the NSW SES (McLennan 2008).

Addressing research speculation

An RFS and SES sense of affiliation

My examination of the literature failed to locate any studies related to emergency service volunteers' subjective experiences of affiliation, commitment or pride in their chosen organisation. However contemporary authoritative scholarship (Kan 2003; McLennan 2008; McLennan et al. 2009) intimates that a sense of affiliation and commitment exists for volunteers when they report feelings of friendship, being a member of a team, the social environment and the belief that the RFS has an important community function. This sense of affiliation and commitment to friends, relatives and the local community has an important part to play in the decision to join an emergency service.

A number of theoretical perspectives have informed this research pertinent to the subjective nature of emergency service volunteers. I have referred to the notion of class above. I have shown in Chapters 3 and 5 that a high percentage of volunteers can be classified as 'blue collar' workers. I argue that emergency service volunteers view themselves as belonging to an homogenous group. They are most likely to maintain their numbers with people who identify with and whose interests are similar to there own. Therefore, the membership generally occupies the same graded status. Social capital theory explains the connectedness among individuals, the important social networks and trust experienced by members of a given society. Emergency service units or brigades significantly focus on robust trusting relationships. The social component of social capital

describes the interaction between members and the capital describes the human capabilities that produce the valued services. The bond between members of the group enables effective interaction and produces the shared meanings that are important to them.

Social identity theory within the emergency services must be considered together with the social positioning and context of the membership. The results of this research found that the members of each group identified themselves as having a similar ideological stance and similar pre-existing social connections with very few exceptions. All participants therefore self-categorised themselves as being part of the team, having a strong sense of 'mateship' with members of the group and as having the same social identity as the membership. This self-categorisation emphasises the perceived resemblance with others within the group and as having the same attitudes, beliefs and values, behavioural norms and affective reactions. By adopting these attributes and reactions each individual accepts the collective meanings and expectations of voluntary action and act to preserve these significant codes of behaviour.

The conditions that have been inculcated and accepted that preserve the integrity of the unit or brigade have a significant impact of the motivation to join the group and to remain an active member once recruited. Motivation theory above outlines the importance of trust and the individual needs that are satisfied by belonging to a primary group. Membership of an emergency service primary group provides an ordered, predictable society that ameliorates feelings of worthlessness, poor self esteem, the feeling of a lack of affection or a lack of self respect. The group replaces these feelings with acceptance, providing a positive place within the group, feelings of self-fulfilment, achievement and confidence in one's self and in the membership of the group. These feelings often begin to be experienced prior to recruitment and are progressively strengthened once recruitment has occurred.

This research found that an emergency service volunteer's affiliation to the membership of the primary group was strong. The strength of this affiliation was manifest through the

close ties they had with each other; the readiness to protect and support each other and the profound sense of 'family' that was conveyed during the interviews. There exists an unacknowledged psychological contract within the membership that upholds the tradition of loyalty, support, mateship and service to one's community. It became apparent during this research that the implicit and explicit promises existent within the groups were being honoured and that the individuals were generally satisfied with their relationship. This satisfaction was based upon trust which was evident by the degree of mutuality and the affective nature of the partnership. The primary group exchange relationship between members of the primary group has been advanced above. In this way the sense of social identity is reinforced and the motivation to sustain the voluntary action is strengthened.

Table 6.3 How is emergency service recruitment generally effected? Contributions on previous research (addressing research speculation)

Contributions – addressing research speculation	Theoretical perspectives	Scholarship
Sense of affiliation	Class, Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Psychological Contract theory	Kan 2003, McLennan 2008, McLennan et al. 2009

The above findings are claimed as contributions on previous research because they address the subjective nature of emergency service voluntary action and because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. The studies by Kan and McLennan cited above were quantitative and therefore did not harvest the rich subjective data that this research provides. I have provided my readings of a number of theoretical perspectives including psychological contract theory and applied them to the concept of emergency service volunteer's sense of affiliation. No comparative research has been located that illustrates the theoretical perspectives consulted that communicates the subjective sense of affiliation, commitment, or pride NSW SES and NSW RFS volunteers experience. Finally, no comparable research has been made that describes the experiences or conditions within the NSW SES (McLennan 2008). It is for these reasons that I conclude that these findings are contributions to the field.

Emerging issues not raised in the literature

Spontaneous recruitment

Recruitment of emergency service volunteers can certainly occur as a result of media depictions of emergency situations. An example of this form of recruitment could be observed during the recent 2011 floods in eastern Australia. During this period hundreds of people spontaneously volunteered to assist those in need. The media was a significant factor in this recruitment process. It depicted the horrors of the flooding, the need of those suffering and pleaded with the population to come forward and assist. Incidents such as this one are unfortunately not uncommon in Australia. Bush fires such as experienced during the Christmas period of 2001 is another example. Spontaneous volunteers are described as 'casual volunteers' (NSW State Government 1989, p. 26) by the State of NSW and are protected by the same insurance provisions as 'permanent' emergency service volunteers. Although unknown, it is considered likely that a number of these spontaneous volunteers will seriously consider joining an emergency service organisation. Thus, a 'spike' in emergency service volunteers would not be unexpected.

I have referred to the theoretical perspectives of social capital and motivation theories to assist explain why people spontaneously volunteer for emergency service work. Social capital assists by describing the need for a 'connectedness among individuals' (Putnam 1995, p. 19). A connectedness to those people who suffered during the diasters mentioned above develops social cohesion and respect. The shared experience of a disaster situation, based upon collectively shared norms, is an example of collaborative behaviour that is expected to be reciprocated should disaster strike again. Spontaneous voluntary action generates trust and the culture of pro-social behaviour. For us to trust, co-operate and recognise social norms people have to have a relationship with one another. Spontaneous volunteering provides these vital social investments.

The motivation to spontaneously volunteer satisfies the need to belong to a community, to feel a sense of worthiness, to feel a sense of accomplishment and provides the sense of

self-esteem individuals seek. It shows an affective response to those in difficulty and it fulfils the sense of community and acknowledges the responsibility a member of a community is expected to have for others. The motivation to spontaneously volunteer also fulfils the need for safety. Disasters are not an uncommon event in Australia and can occur anywhere. People need to believe that if a disaster strikes and they are in need of assistance others will come to their aid. Therefore a notion of reciprocity is suggested.

NSW SES and NSW RFS joint membership

As discussed in Chapter 5, joint membership of the NSW RFS and NSW SES is not uncommon but is strongly discouraged, particularly for executive members of a brigade or unit. Being a member of both organisations does not generally cause unrest or conflict because the primary groups' normative psychological contracts are generally similar. Both agencies at the local and organisational levels have similar expectations such as loyalty to the primary group, a commitment to ongoing training, trust in the membership and expectations of support. At the individual and group level there is a consistent expectation that the parent organisations will supply adequate equipment and resources. The parent organisations have an expectation that the equipment and resources will be cared for and used in a professional manner so that it serves its intended purpose.

A number of reasons exist for emergency service joint membership. Of those participants who held joint membership, a number explained that the 'other' emergency service agency had difficulty in recruiting new members, particularly during quiet times. Others spoke of being 'head hunted' by the other service. This is not so surprising considering the claimed shortage of volunteers and the size of many local communities where the NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW State Emergency Service are located. The volunteers who participated in this research and who were members of both emergency services reported that they joined to 'help their mates out'. This shortage of volunteers was demonstrated by one participant who reported he and other members of his family joined the NSW SES because it was so short of volunteers that it was likely to be disbanded. No literature could be located that examined joint emergency service

membership or provided first-hand explanations of why this practice was prevalent. Although joint membership is not uncommon, there are some differences in behaviour and group norms that do cause some friction from time to time between NSW SES and NSW RFS members, with each advancing and protecting their individual, group and organisational identity.

Social identity, neo-institutional and motivation theories have been consulted to inform this research on the subject of joint membership within the NSW RFS and the NSW SES. Social identity has been described above as the self-categorisation into groups and the categorisation of others into separate groups. The social identity of an emergency service is developed by an acceptance of and an adherence to the groups' norms, values, culture and expectations. Although both voluntary agencies undergo similar training in a number of skills, other skills are considered sacred and specific to the organisation. Both volunteer agencies wear distinctive uniforms that clearly identify the organisation. This uniform and the specific training they undertake form part of the social elements and characteristics of the group. Thus, a distinctive social identity is reinforced. The distinctive symbolic nature of the relationship and interaction each emergency service has with its community also provides the knowledge that the individual belongs to a particular group. Thus, the two important aspects in the formation of social identity exist; those of self-categorisation and social comparison.

Neo-institutional theory also advances the question about joint membership and offers an explanation about why little friction between the services was reported by the participants. Neo-institutional theory describes the way in which organisations develop its own way of operating within the framework of its 'rules of the game' (McDonald and Mutch 2000, p.126). Each organisation develops its own idiosyncratic characteristics that create common meaning. These common characteristics include the use of language, the social patterns of interaction and the organisational norms. However, the values and beliefs of the members of the NSW RFS and the NSW SES are very similar. Both agencies have a strong commitment to and affiliation for the membership of the primary group and the local community. These values and beliefs re-create the organisational

myths which are subsequently accepted. Because both organisational values and beliefs are similar each one must maintain a distinction between the services. This is accomplished by the expectation by each organisation that its membership will be compliant, conforming and amenable. These requirements restrict individuality. Conversely, each unit and brigade, through the use of cultural artefacts, constantly creates and re-creates the parent organisation. This results in the preservation of their specific social identity.

The motivation to join a group other than their primary one can be explained through the use of motivation theory and social capital theory. The motivations to join are fundamentally the same as described above.

Individuals are often asked to join by a significant person and they acknowledge an avenue to realise their basic needs of safety and security within a group. The primary group predominately provides these needs and the volunteers are able to further develop a sense of achievement, belongingness, personal self-esteem and personal growth. Social capital theory has also been discussed above as it can be applied to recruitment. The connectedness between an emergency service volunteer and the community, the generation of trustworthiness and reciprocity and the strengthening of social ties and networks have been described.

Table 6.4 How is emergency service recruitment generally effected? Contributions on previous research (emerging issues not raised in the literature)

Contributions – emerging issues	Theoretical perspectives	Scholarship
Spontaneous recruitment	Social Capital, Motivation	No comparable research located
Joint membership	Social Identity, Neo-institutional, Motivation, Social Capital	No comparable research located

The above findings are claimed as contributions on previous research because they address the subjective nature of emergency service voluntary action, the issue of spontaneous recruitment and joint membership and because they specifically refer to

NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. I have used a number of theoretical perspectives that have informed this research. No comparative research has been located that describes the subjective sense of joint membership NSW SES and NSW RFS volunteers experience. Finally, no comparable research has been made that describes the experiences or conditions within the NSW SES (McLennan 2008). It is for these reasons that I conclude that these findings are contributions to the field.

6.2.2 Does an 'emergency service identity' exist, and if so how is it formed, how is it enacted/accepted by the volunteers and how is it sustained?

General Confirmations

Gender issues within the emergency services

The issues of gender reported in this research confirm the literature outlined in Chapter 3. The female volunteers, who comprised 12.5 percent of the sample population, expressed similar difficulties and feelings of alienation from the membership of the primary group and the parent organisation. The masculinised culture of the volunteer emergency services remains strong and has a relationship with a perceived male emergency service volunteer identity. This culture is evident internationally and is described in the United Kingdom (Thomas and Davies 2002), the United States of America (Faludi 2007) and New Zealand (Kan 2003).

The masculinised culture of Australian emergency services fails to adequately address equitable conditions and standards for its female membership. This research has been informed by a number of theoretical perspectives that provide insights into why this problematic continues. Gender theory advances the argument that occupations are classified as being either masculine or feminine. This is the result of social conditioning and is maintained by the particular gender when it regards the activity to be 'normal'. However, what is considered 'normal' is the result of the cultural ideology observed by groups and the assumptions these groups make about the values and actions that are 'natural' for women and men. Gender is claimed to be a manifestation of male social

conditioning and subsequent positioning of women into the roles designated by men (Alvesson and Due Billing 2002, p. 73). Therefore, the classification of gender has been socially constructed to overstate the perceived differences; it maintains gender inequality and enables individuals to develop their identity based on gender based ideology.

It follows that, within the emergency services, a masculine identity is considered a necessary and vital component of the voluntary action. Social identity theory encapsulates this apparent need through its reference to self-categorisation theory. The male membership can be considered to be examining themselves in relation to the social positioning of women and women's (previously) accepted roles. People self-categorise themselves, in part, by membership, affiliation, age, *gender*, culture and other shared characteristics. The male population within the emergency services, by disallowing or failing to offer what could be termed the normative group psychological contract enjoyed by male members, may be said to be acting to preserve their individual and collective meanings, expectations and significant codes. These collective meanings, expectations and significant codes all have an important role in their perception of their social identity. These discriminatory practices reinforce group identification. This failure to advance the normative psychological contract applies equally well for the parent organisation. An example of this is the failure to produce and issue appropriate female protective clothing.

Equally applicable is the concept of alienation and self-actualisation theory. The voluntary action affords males the opportunity to self-actualise by undertaking activities that are non-alienating. Alienating factors include the sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. Being uncertain about one's sense of self '…is the most potent motive for identification' (Hogg 2007, p. 39). The general uncertainty within the workforce may be the catalysts for some individuals to locate themselves and identify strongly within a (male) group. Emergency service work is a non-alienating activity that promotes self-esteem and restores feelings of power, meaning, and inclusion and promotes a sense of social identity. This action protects males from feelings of uncertainty and locates them within a world they understand, strongly identifying with the masculinise nature of the service.

There is an important role for human resource management if gender issues within the emergency services are to be addressed. I have stated that recruitment is predominately achieved through word of mouth. If follows therefore that the parent organisation must inculcate the advantages of recruiting female volunteers to the host primary groups. It must also stress the unlawful nature of discriminatory practices through its policies, leadership training practices and by example. Volunteer leadership positions within units and brigades must include management training. Management training must include the recognition that the challenge to the survival of the organisation lies with the recognition, advancement, fair treatment and equitable opportunities of female volunteers. The current apparent lack of meaningful management training for all voluntary leadership positions within the emergency services reflects the way in which institutionalisation occurs. Neo-institutional theory contends that the membership within an organisation constructs the organisation through the development of idiosyncratic characteristics. These characteristics create and re-create common meaning. All of these meanings hold a gendered balance that discriminates against female emergency service volunteers. The parent organisation, through its active agents, creates their volunteers' meanings as they interact with them. Strategic human resource management has the potential to reverse this cycle of discrimination and neglect and advance the positive attributes female volunteers are able to contribute.

Table 6.5 Does an 'emergency service identity' exist, and if so how is it formed, how is it enacted/accepted by the volunteers and how is it sustained? Contributions on previous research (general confirmations)

Advances on general confirmations	Theoretical perspectives	Supporting scholarship
Gender issues within the emergency services	Gender, Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, Uncertainty-Identity theory, Human Resource Management theory, Neo-institutional theory	Beatson and McLennan (2005), McLennan and Birch (2006), McLennan, Birch, Beatson and Cowlishaw (2007), Batlin (2008), Luft (2008) and Branch-Smith and Pooley (2010)

The above findings are claimed as advances because they, to a degree, broaden general conclusions and because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. The conclusions are also underpinned by my readings of a number of

theoretical perspectives that advance our understanding of the emergency services' masculinised culture. Prior to this research, the volunteers of these two New South Wales services, particularly those of the NSW SES, had not been researched in any depth, (McLennan 2008).

Emerging issues not raised in the literature

Emergency service volunteers' sense of identity

In answering my second question about whether an emergency service volunteer identity existed, I concluded that an 'emergency service identity' does exist and that its construction was involved and complex. I showed that it is contingent upon the meaning and significance volunteers attribute to the primary group, their local communities and their parent organisation. They make meaning of their voluntary action, the obligations they feel they have to their primary group, their individual communities and their parent organisations in a number of ways. This meaning and sense of identity is predominantly spatially orientated and is derived from and sustained by the volunteers' primary group and its values and beliefs, their communities' perceptions of them, the media reports of their actions and their parent organisation's mission statement. Emergency service volunteers engage in a process of 'self-stereotyping' and claim the social categorisation that membership of their primary and secondary groups affords. They subsequently adopt the beliefs, norms, values, characteristics and behavioural patterns of these groups (Deaux 2000, p. 5).

I have described my readings of the theoretical perspectives used to inform my research above. I have argued the concept of a class structure within the units and brigades and how the ideology of emergency service volunteers is service to one's community with the resultant advances and contributions to social capital in those communities. This discussion has described volunteer's motivation to join the primary group of choice and how, using the concepts of alienation and self-actualisation theory and uncertainty-identity theory poses arguments why the voluntary action is considered salient. These theoretical perspectives combine to produce the emergency service volunteer's sense of

social identity. Class positions individuals within a comfortable and known sphere within society; social capital theory provides the sense of trustworthiness the volunteers seek and enable the strengthening of significant social networks and provide the expectation of reciprocity in the future. Social identity theory conceptualises the necessity for people to examine themselves in relation to their social positioning and the need to categorise themselves into groups. Emergency service volunteers are highly regarded by the communities they serve. Therefore, positive recognition promotes an individual's perception of social identity.

Motivation theory explains the needs individuals have and the phases that assist acquire them. As emergency service volunteers realise their needs a social identity is also developed. This process is further enhanced through committing to a culture that provides prestige, status and reverses feelings of powerlessness, isolation and meaninglessness. Emergency service groups provide the means by which volunteers can operate in a world of stability and where a masculinised culture predominates. The masculine culture re-asserts the perception of the 'heroic male'. This atmosphere and environment provides the certainty that may otherwise be missing from an individual's life style. I have briefly examined psychological contract theory however the complex nature of an emergency service volunteer's requires further consideration. I have argued a number of distinct emergency service volunteer psychological contracts exist. Each of these contributes to their sense of social identity.

The first construct of a psychological contract is that held between the volunteer and the primary group. This contract has been described as a relational one and has been advanced under the recruitment process above. The second psychological contract I am arguing is the contract held between the volunteer and the local community. This psychological contract is a synthesis of relational and 'ideology-infused' (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5) contracts. The relational component is derived from the strong sense of affiliation the volunteers feel for their local community and the ideology-infused component is derived from the mutual sense of commitment and service to others. Maintaining the provision that all psychological contracts have an exchange component I

argue that the exchange relationship between the volunteer and the local community has been developed through the positive image the community affords the emergency service volunteer.

Contemporary scholarship (Conway and Briner 2005; Guest and Conway 2004; Rousseau and Schalk 2000) contend that all psychological contracts are developed from beliefs and expectations based on promises. Promises can be said to exist if an explicit promise is made. An explicit promise is defined here as a 'verbal or written agreement made by the organisation or its agent' (Conway and Briner 2005, p. 26). A promise can also be said to exist if an implicit promise is perceived to have been made. An implicit promise is defined as being the 'interpretations of pattens of past exchange' (Conway and Briner 2005, p. 26). An example of the implicit promise perceived to exist between the volunteers and the local community (or communities if serving out of area) are the public accolades following a serious event. Expressions of gratitude have come to be expected based on past experiences. The construct of a psychological contract being held between the volunteer and the local community increases the individual's sense of status and social identity. I argue that the psychological contracts held between the individual emergency service volunteer and the primary group and local community are equally as strong although the individual is probably unaware that they exist.

I have argued emergency service volunteers hold a third construct of psychological contract. This contract has been made with the parent organisation and is founded upon the explicit and implicit promises made by the agents of the organisation. The explicit promise is to provide the necessary personal protective equipment required to do their duties safely and to provide the necessary equipment required to accomplish their duties efficiently and effectively. The implicit nature of the promise is to dispatch new and modern equipment to the units and brigades. This promise is implicit in nature because experience has shown that patterns of past exchange exist where units and brigades have received new equipment. The exchange component of this contract from the volunteer's perspective is to become familiar and proficient in the use of the equipment and to maintain a professional service to the community. This type of psychological contract

enhances an emergency service volunteer's sense of social identity through the relationship with the parent organisation that holds a place of esteem within the state and by developing professional competency in the use and application of modern, and not uncommonly, life-saving equipment. I suggest that the psychological contract held between the emergency service volunteer and the parent organisation is less strong than the contracts held with the primary group and the community.

I argue that a fourth form of psychological contract is held by emergency service volunteers. This is the psychological contract held between individuals of a primary group and the membership of other emergency service groups. To clarify, I am suggesting that a psychological contract exists between NSW SES units and NSW RFS brigades. I have described these as 'sister agencies'. I have described above how joint membership of the SES and the RFS is not uncommon. The exchange components of this psychological contract can be described as explicit and implicit. It is explicit because a promise exists within state legislation to provide assistance to other emergency services as required (New South Wales State Emergency Management Committee 2006). It is implicit because the assistance that has been provided has been extended to include general welfare needs. This type of psychological contract enhances the individual's sense of social identity in two ways. The first is that it identifies one service from another thus defining a sense 'we' and 'them' and secondly, it defines a sense of social identity as a generic emergency service volunteer. I argue that the psychological contract held between 'sister' groups is less strong than the preceding three.

Media portrayal of emergency service volunteers

The study population reported that the media plays a significant part in their sense of self and self-worth although no specific questions about their perception of the media were asked. Media reports promote positive identity formation, commitment and pride in an emergency service volunteer's primary group and parent organisation. Media reports on television as recently as February 2011 reported emergency service volunteers being sourced from interstate and overseas. There are reports of television programmes about NSW RFS volunteers which depict heroism and unselfish commitment to their local

communities (Wilkie 2004) and radio reports about Australian's 'mud army' (Colvin 2011, p. 1) . Newspaper, radio and television laud their generosity, their Australian volunteer spirit, their proud Australian ethos and applaud how emergency service volunteers 'shoulder more than their fair share of the burden when disaster strikes' (Colvin 2011, p. 1). Newsprint and electronic media refer to emergency service volunteers as unsung heroes who put their lives at risk for their communities (Connolly 2005). The media report the saving of children lost in bushland (The Australian 2005) and the number of calls for assistance during floods and storms (Trute and Massoud 2005).

All of these depictions reinforce the emergency service volunteers' perceived individual and primary group's sense of identity, commitment and affiliation. Reports such as these reinforce volunteers' pride in themselves, their sense of satisfaction (Kim et al. 2009; O'Donohue et al. 2007; Rousseau and Schalk 2000), their pride in their uniforms (Johnson 2001), their vehicles with their distinctive livery and equipment and promote the concept of unselfishness, courage in the face of adversity and fearlessness. The attributes can be likened to the Australian spirit of the ANZACS, heroism and the mythical Australian ethos of service (Adam-Smith 1984). Reports such as these further strengthen commitment and bolster relationships which, in turn, increase feelings of affiliation and connectedness volunteers experience for one another.

Accolades such as the above strengthen an emergency service volunteer's sense of social identity. This is achieved through examining one's self in relation to their social positioning. Rather than distinguishing and characterising one's self as a member of a primary group in order to assume a social identity the media makes the distinction for the individual. The emergency service volunteers are identified as being significant and as having a valued position within society. This distinction is further strengthened when the media authenticates the composite self by its classification of the group in relation to the broader social structure. Thus, the motivation to sustain the voluntary action is strengthened. The media provide many of the needs an emergency service volunteer seeks. It provides the security of knowing that their actions are required, it validates the

belief that they belong and are appreciated, it provides a sense of affection and further develops social relationships. The media also satisfies the need for self-esteem, confirms the sense of achievement, status and reputation. These needs having been realised the media provides the sense of personal growth and fulfilment. Achieving these needs accentuates the commitment an individual feels. These feelings are accentuated by the symbols of their particular organisation which enhance and promote prestige and status. Pride in their primary group and their organisation is further developed.

Community portrayal of emergency service volunteers

Mayo (2000) referred to in Chapter 5, contends that the idea of a traditional community based upon kinship and shared values is an invention. This work is American and does not refer to Australian conditions, and therefore consideration must be given to the conditions and culture of that country as they may exhibit characteristics not experienced here. Bess, Fisher, Sonn and Bishop (2002) argue that the densities of populations studied by Mayo prohibited the formation of a sense of community. I also acknowledge that these studies are not referring to Australian conditions or Australian emergency services and contest their wide-ranging conclusions.

This research found that a sense of community and the reciprocal nature of the community's respect for the emergency service volunteers had a most profound effect upon recruitment, commitment and retention of these volunteers. Indeed, positive community perception was shown to be one of the strongest reasons for remaining an emergency service volunteer. I argue this is strongly linked to an emergency service identity. This emergency service identity includes the social standing a volunteer enjoys, the status of the primary group and the perception of undertaking masculine activities. The theoretical perspectives of social capital, social identity, motivation and psychological contract theory as they apply to the community perceptions of emergency service volunteers have been offered above.

Friction between emergency service volunteer services

Primary group and out-group rivalry has been widely reported in the extant literature (Postmes et al. 2005; Reza 2009; Stets and Burke 2000) and the rivalry reported by this scholarship is pertinent to the NSW RFS and the NSW SES although reports of conflict are rare. As described in Chapter 5, rivalry and some conflict resulted from the proposed amalgamation of the two services (Keys 2005) but relationships have improved over time. The rare reports of conflict concerned the issue of co-habitation. These instances were reported to have arisen following disputes about equity of space and the lack of privacy.

I have argued in Chapter 5 that social identity self-categorisation provides concepts of self-esteem through a positive evaluation of a primary group compared to the less positive evaluation of an out-group. The conflict reported can be viewed as asserting the collective sense of worth. Emergency service volunteers make a distinct social comparison between the two groups thus reinforcing the collective (Deaux 2000). Conflict and rivalry are manifestations that accentuate the groups' individualism and assists in sustaining a durable social identity (Worchel et al. 2000). Issues of social identity formation and the construct of a psychological contract with 'sister' groups have been discussed above.

Table 6.6 Does an 'emergency service identity' exist, and if so how is it formed, how is it enacted/accepted by the volunteers and how is it sustained? Contributions on previous research (emerging issues not raised in the literature)

Contributions – emerging issues	Theoretical perspectives	Scholarship
Emergency service identity	Class, Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, Uncertainty-Identity theory, Psychological Contract theory.	No comparable research located
Media portrayal of emergency service volunteers	Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, Uncertainty-Identity theory.	No comparable research located
Community portrayal of emergency service volunteers	Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Psychological Contract theory	No comparable research located
Friction between emergency service volunteer services	Social Identity, Psychological Contract, Human Resource Management theory	No comparable research located

The above findings are claimed as contributions on previous research because they address the subjective nature of emergency service voluntary action, the issue of an emergency service identity, media and community portrayal of the volunteers and friction between emergency service 'sister' groups. I also claim these findings as contribution on previous research because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. No comparative research has been located that describes the subjective sense of an emergency service volunteer's sense of identify, the impact the media and community portrayal has on the volunteers or the issue of inter-group friction NSW SES and NSW RFS volunteers experience. Finally, no comparable research has been made that describes the experiences or conditions within the NSW SES (McLennan 2008). I argue that the conclusions reached in my findings are contributions to the field of knowledge because they add a new dimension to the personal world of the emergency service volunteer.

Within the field of emergency service response, what part does affiliation play in the identity formation and commitment of volunteers?

Addressing research speculation

Emergency service volunteers' concepts of affiliation

Scholarship such as Kan 2003, McLennan 2008, and McLennan et al. 2009 have touched upon the affective nature of emergency service volunteers and their primary group and organisations however these studies were predominately quantitative. This scholarship's findings reference concepts of mateship, camaraderie, social networks and leadership however the responses were in response to a questionnaire. Therefore, although this scholarship acknowledges that a sense of affiliation existed; their research sought other specific data. The responses and consequent findings of this research was developed as a result of interviews designed to specifically probe the question of emergency service volunteer's sense of affiliation and what this meant to the individual.

As detailed in Chapter 5, I define affiliation as the attachment or connectivity of a member of the emergency service with her or his brigade or unit colleagues. As with all aspects of social life, the degree of affiliation emergency service volunteers have with different groups is graded. The initial attachment is an emotive, and probably a relational one. I make a distinction between the relational feelings of affiliation from the feelings of affiliation developed as a member of the primary group. This relationship is developed through my construct of a relational psychological contract. This research has shown that an emergency service volunteers' closest attachments are their primary group. I have made an argument above citing a number of theoretical perspectives including class, social capital, social identity, motivation, alienation and self-actualisation and the construct of an individual psychological contract that describes the sense of affiliation with the membership of the primary group.

Descriptors like ‘family’, extended family, camaraderie, the sense of belonging, friendship, trust and reliance on each other all indicate the positive feelings members have for one another. These emotive and subjective descriptions refer to feelings of belonging and the sought-after identity with the chosen group. This sense of identity satisfies the need for prestige, self respect and recognition (Zeggelink et al. 2000). I have explained this affective process predominantly by consulting social identity theory and psychological contract theory and by showing how social identities are contingent upon the idiosyncratic nature of the individual, the group membership and the process of inculcation and acceptance into a unique world (Postmes, Spears, Lee and Novak 2005; Reza 2009).

I have shown how emergency service volunteers’ affiliations extend to other groups within the organisation and throughout the emergency service industry. This was achieved predominately through reference to the construct of psychological contract theory outlined above. However, the strength and keenness of the relationships vary. Feelings of connectivity between ‘sister’ emergency service units or brigades certainly exist but these feelings are less intense than those for the ‘family’ brigade or unit. Affective responses from the participants about the ‘other’ emergency service were generally positive but it became evident that the ‘other’ group were considered out-groups. This was instructive because, as detailed above, dual membership is not uncommon and yet a more significant primary group connectedness was evident in these individuals. Individuals who were members of both groups had a distinct preference for one primary group.

Addressing the feelings of affiliation the study population had for the parent organisation, I found this relationship was limited and strained. This could be explained by my findings in regard to the volunteers’ opinions about paid career staff and their alleged treatment by them, the claimed lack of equipment and resources and the feelings of being disconnected or alienated from headquarters. I have shown in Chapter 5 and in this chapter how the above concepts of affiliation have strong implications for the formation and strengthening of individual social identity perceptions. This social identity provides the underpinning

foundations of commitment to the primary group, its goals and activities and the parent organisation. A positive social identity provides the inherent pride emergency service volunteers have for their chosen agency.

Table 6.7 Within the field of emergency service response, what part does affiliation play in the identity formation and commitment of volunteers? Contributions on previous research (addressing research speculation)

Contributions – addressing research speculation	Theoretical perspectives	Scholarship
Emergency service volunteers concepts of affiliation	Class, Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, Uncertainty-Identity theory, Psychological Contract theory	Kan 2003, McLennan 2008, McLennan et al. 2009

The above findings are claimed as contributions on previous research because they address the subjective nature of emergency service voluntary action and because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. I have provided my readings of a number of theoretical perspectives and applied a new dimension to the discussion of the concept of emergency service volunteer's sense of affiliation. No comparative research has been located that illustrates the theoretical perspectives consulted that communicates the subjective sense of affiliation. Finally, no comparable research has been made that describes the experiences or conditions within the NSW SES (McLennan 2008). I argue that the conclusions reached in my findings are contributions to the field of knowledge because they add a new dimension to the personal world of the emergency service volunteer.

Emerging issues

Emergency service volunteers' operational experiences

I have shown in Chapter 5 that an emergency service volunteers' operational experiences have a noteworthy impact upon her or his social identity and sense of affiliation for the community and the primary group. They provide a sense of power, feelings of stimulation and excitement, and a sense of achievement. These positive emotions sustain an individual's motivation by gratifying unmet or unsatisfied needs and are conveyed to like-minded people within the community. Thus, potential new recruits are further encouraged to become members. Social capital is strengthened through the connection between individuals as are the social networks that instil the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness.

The primary group's norms and values are strengthened and historical, cultural and social factors are maintained. The maintenance of these structures further strengthens group identity, provides the conduit for positive self-categorisation and provides the necessary significant group that an individual needs to develop a composite self. The self – actualising result of the sense of power, stimulation, excitement and achievement reduces the sense of alienation that can be experienced within the workforce. The voluntary action provides an opportunity to participate in stimulating activities that promote self-esteem, prestige and status. These stimulating activities may not be available to the individual through other means. By locating themselves within a world they accept and are able to identify with, emergency service volunteers protect themselves from feelings of uncertainty about their world and their place in it.

Positive operational experiences afford a reliable sense of certainty and the structure of boundaries and rules. I have explained above how neo-institutional theory assists explain how the parent organisation developed the idiosyncratic nature of the service. The historical nature of the social patterns of interaction, the norms, values and beliefs and the use of cultural artefacts have resulted in a perception a male dominated occupation. This

perception validates an emergency service male identity. The positive feelings that result from operational experiences also conform to the ideology of the Australian 'traditional' voluntary action (Kabanoff et al. 2000).

The voluntary experience also confirms to the individual that they are meeting their obligations to the community, and that they are appreciated. Each volunteer comes to understand that they are an important part of the primary group and social order. The rewards of operational experiences, I have argued, reinforce the construct of a 'transpersonal' (Barrett 2004, p. 93) or 'ideology infused' (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5) psychological contract the individual, probably unknowingly, holds with the community they serve. Operational experiences are also gained when working out of area. Working out of area refers to being asked to travel away from one's own community to assist another community in time of need. This issue will be discussed below under *unexpected emergent themes.*

I have shown in Chapter 3 how the divergent types of psychological contracts have been extensively commented upon in the literature (Barrett 2004; Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002; Coyle-Shapiro and Neuman 2004; Maguire 1999; O'Donohue et al. 2007; O'Donohue and Wickham 2008). However, they are almost consistently referred to as being independent of one another. I have argued in Chapter 5that constructs of multiple psychological contracts are held by emergency service volunteers. The type of contract is dependant upon the situation and the person or the organisation with whom the volunteers are interacting. I have shown how a number of these types of contracts become pertinent in relation to situational and operational circumstances.

Table 6.8 Within the field of emergency service response, what part does affiliation play in the identity formation and commitment of volunteers? Contributions on previous research (emerging issues not raised in the literature)

Contributions – emerging issues	Theoretical perspectives	Scholarship
Emergency service volunteers' operational experiences	Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, Uncertainty-Identity theory, Psychological Contract theory, Neo-institutional theory	No comparable research located

The above findings are claimed as contributions on previous research because they address the subjective nature of emergency service voluntary action and the influence these subjectivities have upon their operational experiences. I also claim these findings as contribution on previous research because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. No comparative research has been located that describes the subjective sense of an emergency service volunteer's operational experiences. Finally, no comparable research has been made that describes the experiences or conditions within the NSW SES (McLennan 2008). I argue that the conclusions reached in my findings are contributions to the field of knowledge because they add a new dimension to the personal world of the emergency service volunteer.

Given the dangerous and often stressful nature of the voluntary work, what maintains the commitment of these women and men?

General Confirmations

Emergency service volunteer rewards

The intrinsic rewards of emergency service described in this research confirm the findings of previous studies (Leonard and Bellamy 2006; Leonard et al. 2009; McLennan and Bertoldi 2004; O'Donohue et al. 2007; Onyx et al. 2008; Paull 2009). These include satisfaction, empowerment, friendship, service to one's community and organisational

service awards. These rewards fulfil many motivational needs, they substantiate an individual's abilities resulting in feelings of self-actualisation and provide feelings of certainty in an otherwise uncertain world, they re-enforce the construct of an ideology-infused psychological contract a volunteer holds with the local community and develops the sense of social identity through their self-categorisation with a primary group. Finally, the parent organisation through its human resource management practices provides recognition for years of service. This recognition contributes to one's sense of social identity and sense of achievement. These are detailed in Chapters 3 and 5. Contributions of this research include other forms of subjective intrinsic rewards not previously considered in any depth. These include the many forms of positive recognition received from the media, the public, and the supply of equipment. These rewards will be considered below under *unexpected emergent themes.* This research also confirms the findings of other scholarship who identify a number of extrinsic rewards (McLennan 2008; McLennan et al. 2009; Nisbet 2005; Nisbet and Wallace 2007). Some of these include the development of skills that are useful in obtaining paid employment, nationally recognised qualifications and gifts for services rendered. These rewards also have an impact upon an emergency service volunteer's awareness of their social identity and self-actualisation and bolster the construct of an ideology-infused psychological contract. However, the findings from this research suggest extrinsic rewards have a minor impact upon the commitment of emergency service volunteers.

Ongoing training

Ongoing training was considered by many emergency service volunteers in this research as desirable and this confirms my readings of the literature. The desirable aspects of ongoing training include the satisfaction of self-actualisation and a confirmation that their abilities are recognised by their community. This provides an impression of social standing, social identity, status and prestige. It confirms to an individual that their actions further reinforce their primary group standing and conforms to the organisational 'rules of the game'. Enhanced training skills also enable an emergency service volunteer to maintain their professional skills and service to their community. This further enhances the construct of their ideology-infused psychological contract with the community, the

construct of their relational psychological contract they hold with their primary group and the transactional psychological contract the hold with the parent organisation.

However, training was also considered onerous by some participants; this also confirms previous research (McLennan 2008; McLennan et al. 2009). Volunteers complained that the training 'goal posts' were constantly changing. Changes in training techniques and the requirement for some of them to be re-assessed periodically causes some concern and unrest. A major concern for many emergency service volunteers located in rural areas was the vast distances they had to travel in order to access the training. Travel time to and from the training course added many hours to the commitment. This time is often difficult to commit therefore access to training is restricted. The balance of family and social life and the emergency service commitment was difficult for many volunteers to reconcile.

Table 6.9 Given the dangerous and often stressful nature of the voluntary work, what maintains the commitment of these women and men? Advances on previous research (general confirmations)

Advances on general confirmations	Theoretical perspectives	Scholarship
Emergency service volunteers' rewards	Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, Uncertainty-Identity theory, Psychological Contract theory, Human Resource Management theory	Bureau of Statistics 2007, Leonard and Bellamy 2006, McLennan 2008, Millican 1997, Noble 2000 and Oppenheimer 1998
Ongoing training	Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, Uncertainty-Identity theory, Psychological Contract theory, Human Resource Management theory, Neo-institutional theory	Lee and Brudney 2009, McGill 1996, McLennan 2008, Nisbet 2005 and Nisbit and Wallace 2007

The above findings are claimed as advances because they, to a degree, broaden general conclusions and because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. The conclusions are also underpinned by my readings of a number of theoretical perspectives that advance our understanding of the emergency service volunteers' commitment. Prior to this research, the volunteers of these two New South Wales services, particularly those of the NSW SES, had not been researched in any depth, (McLennan 2008).

Disconfirmations

Reasons for emergency service volunteers' intentions to separate from their chosen organisation

The contemporary Australian scholarship reported in Chapter 3 argues that the reasons emergency service volunteers resign from their chosen organisations include work and family commitments, moving away from the area, age and health concerns, poor leadership and dissatisfaction with emergency service volunteering (Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and Australasian Fire Authorities and Emergency Services Council 2008; McLennan 2008; McLennan et al. 2008; McLennan et al. 2009). Although these considerations are considered valid, my findings do not fully support these explanations. The findings from this research conclude that the foremost reason for considering separation was conflict within the primary group. McLennan (2008) makes some reference to this when he discusses volunteer dissatisfaction and conflict within the brigade membership. He reports that being unhappy with the brigade and/or higher management is the most important reason for resignation. Although this is confirmed to a small extent, it fails to adequately describe the specifics of the dissatisfaction.

Group conflict rather than a dispute with an individual member was the predominant response to my question 'what would make you consider resigning?' This reason applied equally to both emergency services. I have conceptualised this as being a perceived breach of the volunteer's relational psychological contract with the primary group. A

volunteer has expectations of acceptance, camaraderie and stability within the unit or brigade. These expectations form part of the relational psychological contract. Breaching these expectations also breaches the construct of the primary group's normative psychological contract with its members. I have categorised internal conflict as a breach of these psychological contracts because such conflicts result in emotive reactions, or feelings of violation, such as dissatisfaction, frustration, anger and finally separation (Holland et al. 2007; Sarantinos 2007).

Volunteer leadership

The issue of leadership was found to be important and this research found that it is not as clear-cut as suggested in other studies. A number of scholars cite poor leadership as a major contributing factor for considering separation (Branch-Smith and Pooley 2010; Kan 2003; McLennan 2008; McLennan et al. 2008; McLennan et al. 2009). These studies make no distinction between leadership at the brigade and organisational level. My findings strongly indicate that two distinct types of leadership should be examined: local unit and brigade leadership and organisational leadership. The participants in this research clearly showed that local leadership was not an issue; indeed no volunteer interviewed had any concerns with her or his local brigade captain or unit controller. A number of reasons can be provided why this finding fails to confirm those of other studies. Firstly, the participants may have displayed a sense of loyalty to their leader which conforms to my construct of a primary group's normative psychological contract and its implications. Secondly, the participants may not have wanted to risk the consequences of a possible breach of confidentiality. A breach of confidentiality would initiate feelings of violation of my construct of an individual's relational psychological contract with the membership of the primary group. Finally, they may have been genuine when they reported not having an issue with their local leadership. I did not probe the study population about this issue for two reasons. The first reason was my wish not to question their statements and risk the perception that I did not take their word. The second reason was my wish to maintain a trusting relationship with them.

A perception of poor leadership at the local level has implications for the social identity of group members. The significance of the group's social elements and valued characteristics are undermined if the membership has little faith or respect for their leader. Therefore, the character of the primary group will change. Classification with a group in order to develop a positive composite self holding shared values and beliefs would become impossible. The trusting relationship enjoyed by groups with positive leaders would not be as discernable and the values and normative behaviour of the group would disintegrate. Motivation to sustain the voluntary action would falter and the social networks within the group would fragment.

The sample population however did have serious issues with the organisational leadership. This issue was the second-most likely reason for considering separation and was equally applicable in both agencies. Reports of poor leadership in respect to paid career staff confirm the reports in the literature described in Chapters 3 and 5 and were commonly associated with feelings of a lack of respect, authoritarianism, arrogance and a lack of consultation, particularly about local conditions and topography. It could be that a perceived class distinction exists between emergency service volunteers and paid career staff. The volunteers in this research predominately came from a blue collar background. They were 'hands on' people rather than white collar workers.

Career staff were not considered by the participants in this research to be members of the primary group but members of an out-group or 'other' group. The psychological contract I suggest exists between emergency service volunteers at the local level and career staff is described as a transactional one. The exchange relationship with the organisation's agents pivot around the supply of equipment. The volunteer's exchange relationship with the organisation is to train in the various skills required to operate the equipment and to respond and perform in a professional manner as required. The findings of this research relevant to leadership issues support my contention that emergency service volunteers hold various forms of psychological contracts, although these are my constructs and not those of the volunteers. Emergency service volunteers would undoubtedly refer to these difficulties as aspects of difference in their dealings with career staff.

McLennan and colleagues' conclusions about brigade dissatisfaction must also be considered in light of issues not considered in this research. For example, no data was available that shed light on the number of volunteers who resigned soon after recruitment. Early resignations could be explained by the new recruit not experiencing the expected satisfaction or rewards of volunteering. In other words, my construct of their relational psychological contract within the primary group was not realised. Another issue not explored is the rate of 'inactive' volunteers. Little is known of the number of inactive volunteers within the two agencies but Perovich, Bennet and Handmer (2004) estimate that approximately 60 percent of reported numbers of the NSW SES were active. Making the same calculations for the NSW RFS I showed that similar numbers of inactive members could be expected. These reported inactive volunteers could therefore be classified as being dissatisfied with the brigade or unit and may not be an indication that there is conflict in the primary group.

Table 6.10 Given the dangerous and often stressful nature of the voluntary work, what maintains the commitment of these women and men? Contributions on previous research (disconfirmations)

Contributions on previous research - disconfirmations	Theoretical perspectives	Scholarship
Reasons for emergency service volunteers' intentions to separate from their chosen organisation	Psychological Contract theory	Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre and Australasian Fire Authorities and Emergency Services Council, 2008, McLennan 2008, McLennan et al. 2004, McLennan et al. 2008, McLennan et al. 2009
Leadership issues	Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Psychological Contract theory	Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre and Australasian Fire Authorities and Emergency Services Council, 2008, McLennan 2008, McLennan et al. 2004, McLennan et al. 2008, McLennan et al. 2009

The above findings are claimed as contributions on previous research because they describe the importance volunteers place on their relationship with members of the primary group and their subsequent reasons for considering separation. I also claim these findings as contributions because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. I have argued that the formation of the construct of an individual's psychological contract with the parent organisation and the primary group fails to be adequately articulated in the literature. Finally, no comparable research has been made that describes the experiences or conditions within the NSW SES (McLennan 2008). I argue that the conclusions reached in my findings are contributions to the field of knowledge because they add a new dimension to the personal world of the emergency service volunteer.

Unexpected emergent themes

Emergency service volunteers' perceptions of positive recognition

This research has detailed, in Chapter 5, the strong and enduring commitment of emergency service volunteers. This commitment is sustained by a number of particularly significant factors, some of which include the perceived community pride in their actions, the public accolades (which are also rewards) demonstrated by parades in their honour, media portrayal of their operations, and the supply of adequate and up-to-date equipment. I have argued that although generally symbolic, positive recognition satisfies most of the expectations and promises believed to exist as a condition of service. These expectations fulfil my constructs of their psychological contracts. They include the ideology-infused, relational, normative primary group and transactional psychological contracts.

The ideology-infused psychological contract is the contract the emergency service volunteers hold with their communities about 'helping others', to 'do their bit' and to 'give something back'. My construct of their relational contract is the one held between members of the primary group, although it extends to a volunteer's affiliation with their local community. This relational psychological contract relies upon an exchange of socially sought after conditions such as friendship, acceptance, trust and support. A normative psychological contract is constructed as being the relationship, the shared beliefs, values, norms and behaviour of members within the primary group. This exchange is dependant upon all members of the primary group adhering to the required conditions and standards. This contract maintains the commitment to serve. My construct of an emergency service volunteer's transactional psychological contract refers to the exchange relationship between the parent organisation and the emergency service volunteers. This exchange relies upon the adequate supply of up to date equipment and the volunteer's obligation to train and respond to events.

The pride shown by the public, the accolades and the supply of equipment can be said to honour the inherent conditions of 'employment' and they reinforce the construct of mutual reciprocal obligations (Farmer and Fedor 1999). These forms of positive

recognition reinforces a sense of social identity, sustains the motivation and commitment to continue to volunteer, provides the necessary social capital required for healthy communities, engenders feelings of self-actualisation, provides a positive image of aspects of organisational human resource management and promotes the ideology of an 'Australian ethos' of assisting those in need. Validation of this claim is derived from my readings of participants' reports of their subjective world.

Emergency service volunteers perceptions of negative recognition

I also presented, in Chapter 5, my findings about perceived negative treatment by the parent organisation. The emergency service volunteers' primary concerns were the lack of new or adequate equipment and problems with career officers. The participants reported that although these issues were considered a very serious failure on the part on the parent organisation and therefore a breach of my construct of the psychological contract it holds with the volunteers, they were not considered sufficient reason to seriously consider separating from the organisation. However, as mentioned above no research was undertaken that provided information about the significant number of inactive volunteers or their reasons for remaining inactive or their reduced levels of organisational citizenship behaviour. This research therefore can only provide the responses of active members.

My construct of the organisation's psychological contract with its volunteers is considered in light of a number of prevailing conditions. The study population reported instances where the parent organisation may not have been able to uphold its perceived psychological contract. An example provided by one volunteer suggested that the parent organisation did not have the budget to be able to supply the equipment requested. In this instance the failure can be construed as incongruence on the part of the parent organisation because of the economic climate rather than reneging which is deliberately breaking a promise. Incongruence is the condition where the parent organisation holds a different view of the psychological contract than that held by the volunteers (Conway and Briner 2005; Holland et al. 2007). I argue that an organisation that experiences conditions

beyond its control and is unable to fulfil its psychological contract can also be classified as incongruence.

The responses from the study population suggested that the failure of their parent organisation to meet its obligations as a result of reneging would result in the perception of breach and feelings of violation of their psychological contract. A breach is defined here as the discrepancies between what has been perceived to have been promised and what has been delivered. A violation is defined as the emotive responses to the perceived breach (Conway and Briner 2005). The lack of new and adequate equipment was generally considered to be reneging by the study population and therefore a perceived breach of the transactional psychological contract between the emergency service membership and the parent organisation. This view is strengthened by a perceived inequality. Inequality refers to the comparison between the advantages received by one group over those perceived to have been received by another. Equality was raised by emergency service volunteers from rural areas. They believed that urban based services received the new equipment and the second-hand equipment was delivered to the rural areas. Issues with career staff who are rude, arrogant, disrespectful and who failed to consider the opinions of local volunteers were also regarded as significant breaches of my construct of the volunteer's psychological contract. The resultant feelings of violation will result in anger, frustration, decreased organisational citizenship behaviour and withdrawal.

Reimbursement of volunteers' expenses

According to Australian studies, emergency service volunteers reject the notion of payment for services provided (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2011; Cordingley 2000; Howard 2009; Turner 2003) and that introducing payment would destroy the fabric of emergency service voluntary action. However, there is little doubt that the costs incurred in volunteering for the emergency services are considered to be high by many volunteers and scholars (Howard 2009; McLennan 2008; McLennan et al. 2009). Other reports referred to in Chapters 3 and 5 (Frey and Goette 1999; Gledhill 2001) favour a

form of payment and indeed, an Australian Shire Council Deputy Mayor recently did so (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2011).

Contrary to much of the extant research this research showed there was strong support among the participants for a form of payment. The forms of payment considered appropriate included an emergency service volunteer superannuation scheme, an honorarium, tax concessions and an increase in out-of-pocket expenses. On the surface this appears quite straightforward. However, implementing these suggestions would be extraordinarily complex. This complexity is revealed in the relationships emergency service volunteers have with their organisations and their local communities. My findings show that 58 percent of the study population believed in some form of payment under certain circumstances. However, my research also found that, of the 58 percent who believed a form of payment was warranted, 36 percent of them rejected any suggestion that they should be paid for attending incidents in their local community. Therefore, 62 percent of those who favoured a form of remuneration would reject payment if their service provision was to the local community.

This finding is noteworthy as it supports my contention that primary group normative, relational and 'ideology-infused' psychological contracts exist between the volunteer and the primary group and between the volunteer and the local community (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5). These relationships can be thought of as bonds between the individual volunteer and the members of the primary group, and between the volunteer and the local community. These bonds are significant reasons for the action; the motive is to look after one's own. The intrinsic rewards resulting from a volunteer's operational experiences described above, coupled with their personal understanding and concern for their local community, have a strong bearing on and sustain individual and primary group commitment and social identity.

I argue that looking after one's own community is a principal motivating factor for emergency service volunteers. However, when asked to serve 'out-of-area', in a location

other than one's local community, the circumstances drastically change and under these circumstances a form of payment was commonly considered justified. There are two contributing factors for this. Firstly, when asked to 'work' out-of-area it is always for a minimum of three to four days and during extreme events volunteers could be away for weeks. I argue that under these conditions a different construct of a volunteer's psychological contract comes to the fore. Under these conditions a significant number of volunteers have stated that they should be re-imbursed for their actions. They cite lost wages, lost business opportunities and the use of annual leave entitlements as examples for the need to be re-imbursed. When working away from their local area the volunteers consider they are working for the State. Their claim for the reimbursement of their financial and social losses indicates that a more transactional construct of psychological contract operates.

Litigation issues

My conclusions about the litigation concerns of the participants, and the potential impact these have upon commitment, also supports previous speculative findings (Howard 2009). However, no comparable research was located that reported these concerns from the emergency service volunteer's perspective. I have indicated in Chapter 5 how the NSW RFS and the NSW SES protect their emergency service volunteers from 'any action, liability or demand' or 'any matter done or omitted to be done…(NSW State Government 1989, Sec 25; NSW State Government 1997, Sec 128). Howard (2009) calls for improvement to these legislative provisions seeking a form of Good Samaritan Act similar to that in the United States. Howard also concludes that emergency service volunteers are inadequately informed of the provisions of their respective legislation. This research found that a small number of volunteers were concerned about the prospect of being fined for not adhering to occupational health and safety regulations. Their claim was that it was impractical to do so at times and to do so would result I considerable time lost responding to an incident. They felt that this untenable situation would adversely affect the future of the emergency service organisations because they believed potential recruits would not be motivated to join for fear of litigation.

I have explained the exchange relationship between an emergency service volunteer and her or his community. A decrease in the number of future volunteers would breach my construct of the primary group's psychological contract with the local community. Service is provided in exchange for positive acknowledgement. The threat of litigation by a 'community group' fails to acknowledge the voluntary action. Failing to acknowledge the primary group's 'special circumstances' preventing strict adherence to legislative requirements breaches the normative expectations of the group thus breaching the reciprocal nature of the relationship. Restoring and strengthening the reciprocal nature of the exchange relationship between the volunteers and the community will require discussions between the organisation's human resource management personnel and relevant government departments.

Table 6.11 Emerging issues – Contributions on previous research (emerging issues not raised in the literature)

Contributions – emerging issues	Theoretical perspectives	Scholarship
Emergency service volunteers' perceptions of positive recognition	Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Uncertainty-Identity theory, Alienation and self-actualisation, Psychological Contract theory, Human Resource Management theory	No comparable research located
Emergency service volunteers perceptions of negative recognition	Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Alienation and self-actualisation, neo-institutional theory, Psychological Contract theory, Human Resource Management theory	No comparable research located
Reimbursement of volunteers' expenses	Social Capital, Social Identity, Motivation, Psychological Contract theory, Human Resource Management theory	No comparable research located
Litigation issues	Motivation, Psychological Contract theory, Human Resource Management theory	No comparable research located

The above findings are claimed as contributions on previous research because they address the subjective nature of emergency service volunteers' perception of positive and negative recognition, the payment of out-of pocket expenses and fears of litigation.

Further, no comparative research has been located that describes the construct of an emergency service volunteers' psychological contracts or the various exchange relationships the volunteers have with their primary group, their communities and parent organisations. I also claim these findings as contribution on previous research because they specifically refer to NSW RFS and NSW SES emergency service volunteers. Finally, no comparable research has been made that describes the experiences or conditions within the NSW SES (McLennan 2008). I argue that the conclusions reached in my findings are contributions to the field of knowledge because they add a new dimension to the personal world of the emergency service volunteer.

6.3 Reflections on the theoretical frameworks

In this research I endeavoured to contribute to the understanding of emergency service volunteers and to critique the more practical stance reported in the extant literature. My intent was to situate these volunteers, utilising a constructionist paradigm, within the subjective realm of voluntary action. In this section I re-evaluate my use of constructionist theory and comment on some of the challenges this has posed. I particularly contemplate how constructionist theory can shed light on particularly intricate social situations. Finally, I clarify the ways in which this research is specific and bounded.

In this research I chose to employ a constructionist epistemology to locate emergency service volunteers within their subjective worlds and to inform my own constructionist point of view. I have chosen not to adopt a totalising environment such as positivism. I advocate an 'anti-foundational' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 177) approach that provides meaning and depicts 'reality' from the perspective of the agent and argue that figurative rhetoric allows for the formation of a normative, valid 'truth' and knowledge within groups. In doing so I have analysed the subjectivities reported by the participants and I have used this material to present a reading about how emergency service volunteers can be positioned within the extant literature and by their parent organisations.

A foundational (realist) view of emergency service volunteers is put forward by some literature and is seemingly assigned to them by their parent organisations. This research repositions them in a non-foundational (relativist) paradigm as subjective entities in a constructed and negotiated world. It presents their discursive 'reality' from their point of view. This technique enabled me to present a construction of the unique world of emergency service volunteers, a world that has scarcely been investigated.

This reading also prompted me to reflect upon other theoretical perspectives that I discussed in Chapter 3. In that chapter I discussed how a social identity, uncertainty-identity, alienation and self-actualisation, psychological contract and human resource perspectives had the potential to adequately engage with the concept of the emergency service volunteers' subjectivities and throw new light on their resultant demonstration of motivation, affiliation, commitment and identity formation. This research has demonstrated how the subjective world of emergency service volunteers has yet to be acknowledged to any meaningful extent within the literature, or by the NSW RFS and the NSW SES emergency service organisations. The lack of acknowledgement of these subjectivities has resulted in a paucity of understanding of the 'realities' of their worlds with a resultant lack of understanding of how to improve recruitment and retention.

I am mindful of the implications of utilising a constructionist epistemology. For most epistemologies the convention is that firm conclusions are necessary and that they present an explicit view from, about, and for emergency service volunteers. In many respects, and from a particular point of view, conclusions can be considered to have been reached. However, given that the conclusions are open to counter conclusions and criticism, all of which could be argued as valid. I acknowledge that there are boundaries to this research which in part relate to the number and type of emergency services investigated, the number of interviewees and the specificity of the research parameters and this may be seen as a limitation. Conversely these factors may also be viewed as strengths as they have enabled a close scrutiny of an otherwise little researched group within the state of New South Wales, Australia.

This workplace analysis can also be considered unbounded in many respects as it focused on a variety of brigades and units located in both rural and urban areas from around New South Wales. The findings developed from the themes provided by the participants reflect congruence that I consider compelling and demonstrates what I will refer to as 'collective consciousness'. It is for this reason, although a sweeping generalisation cannot be made, that I maintain that the reading I have produced of the subjective world of emergency service volunteers makes an original contribution to an understanding of their motivation, commitment, identity formation and affiliation in ways which will be outlined in the following section.

I have added to social capital, social identity, motivation, class, gender, neo-institutional, alienation and self-actualisation and uncertainty-identity theories by applying them in a new setting – emergency service volunteer work. This application has provided new insights to the applicability of the theories. I make the claim of making a contribution to psychological contract theory. Previous studies (Herriot, Manning and Kidd, 1997; Guzzo et al, 1994; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994) have in the main failed to discuss the contents of the psychological contract and '…have been largely concerned with describing dimensions of the psychological contract, rather than explaining what causes or shapes the content…' (Conway and Briner 2005, p. 61). A general weakness of all previous studies reported by Conway and Briner (2005, p. 42) is that they fail to '..assess the *exchange* (original italics) aspects of the perceived promises.

This research has added a new dimension to psychological theory by applying the theory to emergency service voluntary work, by assessing the exchange relationships of the psychological contract and through the identification of multiple psychological contracts which are dependant upon the agent with whom the contract is made. I argue that a contribution to current knowledge has been made as a result of this research. This is demonstrated by the new knowledge about the important factors of psychological contracts. I have shown how the diverse range of influences combine to shape and change the contents of a psychological contract as it applies to the NSW RFS and the NSW SES emergency service volunteers. I have provided research that assists fill in the gaps in our

knowledge by capturing the fundamental exchange relationships of emergency service volunteers' psychological contracts. 'The gaps in our knowledge are because the widespread use of survey methods means it is not possible to adequately capture the fundamental exchange-based nature of psychological contracts' (Conway and Briner 2005, p. 61).

I argue that a contribution has been made to human resource management theory as it applies to emergency service volunteers. I have shown how an understanding of the construct of multiple psychological contracts with the emergency services has the potential to provide an understanding the links between strategic human resource management practices and emergency service volunteer attitudes and behaviour. I have also shown how the emergency service volunteers' psychological contracts can shape human resource management policies, practices and procedures. Finally, the findings of this research have detailed the subjective nature of the emergency service volunteers of the NSW SES and the NSW RFS.

6.4 Contributions to the field

In synthesising the findings of the sections above, it can be seen that this research has made contributions to several bodies of knowledge. In the broad sense it has added to the knowledge base regarding the 'work' of the NSW SES and the NSW RFS emergency service volunteers. More specifically, it has added an understanding of the issues of emergency service volunteers' subjectivity and the fields of recruitment, motivation, commitment, affiliation and identity formation. In attending to the latter issues, it has increased our understanding of the importance emergency service volunteers place on the need for close personal primary group relationships. The foundations for these relationships are established and sustained through a method of careful primary group selection.

I have shown how recruitment and motivation are addressed separately in the literature and how the findings from this research generally confirm this approach. However, I have also shown that the two issues are rather more complex. The emergency service volunteer participants, with few exceptions, viewed recruitment and motivation as being synonymous in many ways. Recruitment was generally effected through being asked to join. However, it was also shown that like-minded people were invited. Thus, recruitment and motivation to join often involve an existing relationship and a pre-existing ideology of service to one's community. Similarly, commitment to the chosen organisation and a sense of affiliation were found to be closely related. I showed how an affiliation with the membership of the primary group was the principal reason volunteers remained in service and, without this sense of affiliation, how the commitment would be difficult to sustain.

I demonstrated how an emergency service volunteer identity does exist and how it is initially formed through an acceptance of the beliefs, values and norms of the primary group. I also showed how this identity was further strengthened and maintained through other strong influences which include positive local community opinion and the positive reports in the media. This research throws light on the under-researched area of emergency service volunteers' actual workplace experiences and the subjective nature of these experiences. It reveals the volunteers' conceptualisations of the many demands imposed upon them and the way in which they react to them. This was done using a methodology involving interviews, participation and observation. Thus, it has contributed to an understanding of the way in which emergency service volunteers' experiences have an effect on the ways in which they view their world which in turn affects how they respond to these experiences. Furthermore, this research has contributed to an understanding of emergency service volunteers by showing that urban and rural volunteers view their subjective worlds in very similar ways.

Arguably, a major contribution of this research is the way in which it provides a detailed analysis of the complex and nuanced subjective nature of the world of the emergency service volunteer. In doing so, this research has made a contribution to the diminutive field of Australian qualitative 'workplace' studies of emergency service volunteers and to

a constructionist view of their world. I have shown how these subjectivities shape the emergency service volunteers' sense of identity and how they have a profound bearing on their sense of affiliation and commitment. These findings are important implications for the recruitment and retention of these vital volunteers.

This research has contributed to the growing body of psychological contract theory. It demonstrates how a synthesis of psychological contract types is applicable to emergency service volunteers and details how they apply within specific contexts and situations. This knowledge provides a new insight into the complexities of psychological contract formation and, in the case of emergency service volunteers, provides an insight into my construct of the different types of contracts they hold and the exchange relationships perceived to exist within each. The descriptions provided about the nature of the exchange relationships of my construct of the various psychological contracts held by emergency service volunteers adds an important new dimension to our understanding.

The practice of assessing the exchange relationship within psychological contracts is rarely seen in the literature (Conway and Briner 2005). Understanding the exchange relationships facilitates an appreciation of the discrete psychological contracts I claim a volunteer holds with the primary group, the local community, 'sister' agencies and the parent organisation. This research has also demonstrated that a constructionist perspective can be usefully exploited to investigate the social settings of emergency service volunteers and offer an understanding of their lived experiences. Arguably, its main contribution to methodology is that it has demonstrated how a constructionist paradigm can be applied to effectively provide explanations of the subjectivities of social settings.

This research has made a contribution to the theories consulted to inform this work. The application of these theories in this novel context has made it possible to focus on and provide the basis for a new understanding about the subjective nature of emergency service voluntary action. It provides the foundation for effective operational management and human resource management practices within the NSW RFS and the NSW SES

emergency services. This research has opened up for discussion issues that have application for policy and practice within the NSW SES and the NSW RFS emergency service agencies. In the following section I discuss some of these applications that could, in effect, contribute to a paradigm shift for them both.

6.5 Implications for policy and practice

There is a debate in Australia and overseas about whether changing circumstances will have a detrimental affect of the future of emergency service volunteering. These changing circumstances include: changing lifestyles, urban migration, the apparent reluctance of employers to release emergency service volunteers for operations (Howard 2009), the ageing volunteer population, the lack of female volunteers and culturally diverse volunteers and an increased need to travel away from the local area for employment. Other issues include calls for wage re-imbursement, the need for acceptable leadership standards, the provision and maintenance of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, and the recognition of the construct of emergency service volunteer's psychological contracts.

Addressing recruitment issues could involve an annual internal organisational recruitment drive that would inspire existing members to expand their horizons and specifically approach females and individuals from culturally diverse populations. This would necessitate a paradigm shift in current recruitment ideology and would require significant physical and educational resources from the parent organisation. It is suggested that the administrative arms of the NSW RFS and the NSW SES re-evaluate their advertising campaigns. One possible change to their publicity is that they point out and explain in explicit and simple terms that in addition to 'active' operational service other activities are available to volunteers including radio communications, administrative support and catering for the welfare needs of the organisation.

This research illustrates the negativity the NSW SES and NSW RFS emergency service volunteers express for career officers and their leadership skills. It is considered important that these officers are trained in contemporary non-militaristic styles of volunteer management. Management training should include an understanding of the theory of psychological contracts and how they play an important role in recruitment and retention of emergency service volunteers. This training would provide information about the contents, the assessment, the factors that shape the perspectives and the possible consequences of a perceived breach of psychological contracts.

Considerable argument has been provided for the reimbursement of lost wages and calculated lost earnings for self-employed volunteers. Serious consideration should be given to accommodating these claims. It has been made clear in this research that the state obtains considerable economic benefits from the actions of our emergency service volunteers and a candid appraisal of these claims is considered warranted. Much of the extant literature makes the claim that emergency service volunteers reject the notion of any form of payment. The results of this research fail to confirm this view. I believe that further exploration of my findings by emergency service organisations would prove beneficial given the claimed decline in volunteers. Progressive initiatives that reduce the inherent cost emergency service volunteers currently tolerate could result in 'turning around' the recruitment and retention challenge.

The concerns expressed by a small number of emergency service volunteers about the potential risk of litigation are considered valid. It would appear that greater awareness of the legal protection afforded volunteers by their respective legislation would allay members' fears about their legal standing (Howard 2009). Educating emergency service volunteers about their legal responsibilities and the responsibilities of regulatory bodies would provide the necessary information required to reduce feelings of hostility. Issuing a second set of personal protective equipment to emergency service volunteers could be one measure that would mitigate the need to respond to an incident without the required protective equipment. This issue could be located in personal vehicles making it more readily available when required.

This qualitative research is needed because it expands our current holistic knowledge of volunteers' psychological contracts and makes innovative generalisations that could be incorporated into the ways in which their workplace behaviours are explained and accommodated through imaginative and strategic human resource management practices. In this way the research highlights the need for diligence in human resource management (HRM) strategies and practices which are modelled on an understanding of the ideological concepts of 'emotional labour', 'transpersonal' (Barrett 2004, p. 93) or 'ideology-infused' psychological contracts (O'Donohue et al. 2007, p. 5).

The policies and practices of an emergency service agency's human resource section should clearly signal its expectations of the volunteer; remembering that '…non-standard employees may be more sensitive to psychological contract violation than their fulltime counterparts' (Holland et al. 2007, p. 93). It is recommended that emergency service organisations seriously consider the sections of this report that details the construct of the diverse psychological contracts their volunteers hold and incorporate this knowledge into their human resource 'ensemble' of policies and practices. Doing so will provide an understanding of the links between human resource practices and emergency service volunteer attitudes and behaviours (Conway and Briner 2005). I argue that the need for more robust strategic human resource practices within emergency service organisations currently has a negative effect upon their volunteer's behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Strategic human resource management could be better comprehensively administered if each NSW SES Division or NSW RFS Fire Control District provides a human resource partitioner who was also trained in mediation. These people could be specifically recruited by the organisation or they could be recruited from the existing complement of volunteers and suitably trained. Mediation would have the potential to defuse primary group disquiet and so reduce separation figures.

6.6 Limitations of the research

This research was specific to the volunteers of the NSW SES and the NSW RFS emergency service agencies and I acknowledge that the population was small relative to the total population of these services. Therefore, a generalisation cannot and should not be offered. On the other hand, I argue that the findings are specific enough to allow for tentative recommendations regarding policy and practice to be advanced. The strengths of this research are to be found in the subjective views of the NSW RFS and the NSW RFS emergency service volunteers. I was unable to locate previous research into this area of investigation and this supports McLennan's (2008) contention that a major gap exists into volunteer-based emergency services, particularly the NSW SES. However, some limitations are evident and will now be discussed.

One limitation is that these insights into the subjective world of the New South Wales State Emergency Service and New South Wales Rural Fire Service volunteers were provided from a purposive sample and so cannot be generalised. Although not representative of the emergency service volunteer population the study population has provided important aspects of people's ideas and experience which have a general applicability to understanding the phenomena. Therefore, conceptual insights are able to be developed. A further limitation and criticism of the constructionist paradigm adopted is the claim that the experiences gathered during the research are 'made to appear stable, factual, neutral, independent of the speaker, and merely mirror aspects of the world' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 197) when in fact they are simply representations and interpretations of the individual's 'real world'.

A second limitation was that I was unable to obtain a sample which included volunteers from a range of cultural backgrounds and a significant representation of female participants. As a result, this research was unable to provide any insights into the subjectivities of emergency service volunteers from backgrounds other than Anglo-Australian and it provides only a limited subjective view of female emergency service volunteers. The lack of female participants results in a lack of insight into their

institutional explanations about their treatment, the culture of the emergency service organisations, their subjective views of their world and their experiences. These insights would have provided valuable information about their needs, values, mode of making value judgements, beliefs and their constructions of achievement. Research into these areas of importance could also have provided information about their sense of identity, their sense of self, their interests and a characterisation of their sense of self-actualisation. This information would be invaluable to the emergency service organisations as it would enable institutional changes to policy, practices and the prevailing masculinised culture. Changes such as these would result in the development of equality and begin to address the socially constructed 'differences' currently imposed and assist in recruitment and retention.

The lack of people from non-English speaking backgrounds severely limited this research in a number of ways. This research fails to examine the 'meaning of culture' within the units and brigades I visited. By this I mean that the study population's views about ethnicity and their relationships with people from other backgrounds were not available for discussion. Representation from other than Anglo-Australian populations would have provided important insights into concepts of identity, beliefs, values and the complexity of their social customs, expectations and norms. These expectations and norms would assist in developing an understanding of the way they affect the individual's way of working and interacting. This research was unable to consider their concepts of mateship, sense of community, sense of belonging, achievement, self-actualisation and the sense of self within the organisation. It fails to consider how a person from a another background developed a knowledge of themselves as a member of a primary group, their sense of identity and how the primary group changed, if at all, as a result of their influence. Knowledge of how the voluntary action is viewed by people from various cultural backgrounds would assist in recruitment and importantly, enable the development of strategies best suited to interact with various communities in the event of a disaster.

Finally, while the approach provided the ability to identify key components of the subjective world of emergency service volunteers and the qualitative methods facilitated

an understanding of the depth and richness of the idiosyncratic viewpoints reported, the constructionist methodology used has some inherent limitations. These limitations are acknowledged but they do not detract from the significance of the findings or the contribution to the field of extant knowledge; indeed they provide robust platforms for future research. It can be argued that my personal knowledge of these agencies could have resulted in researcher bias. I would argue however that this relationship was an advantage as my knowledge enabled me to better understand the issues and themes that emerged from the research. An argument can be made that the judgements made were subjective and coloured by personal experience. This argument may have some measure of validity because being an 'insider' it may be claimed that I could not present an unbiased and unprejudiced account of the information provided. A claim may be made that only an 'outsider' can have an unbiased and unprejudiced knowledge about groups; that unprejudiced views are only 'accessible to non-members of the group' (Minichiello et al. 1997, p. 182). It may also be claimed that 'insiders' pose questions based upon their insight into the various nuances of behaviour. An 'outsider' may interpret these nuances as typical of the study population (Minichiello et al. 1997). This observation assumes that an 'outsider's' views are value free.

6.7 Implications for further research

This research has introduced a multiplicity of issues and highlighted gaps or insufficiencies in the knowledge base on the subject of emergency service volunteers' subjective views of their 'workplace' and identity formation. Related areas that could be the subject of future research include: divergent methodological paradigms, management concerns, and the usefulness of a broader examination of the topic. While the theoretical perspectives used in this research are useful for a broader range of social research, I limit my discussion here to emergency service volunteers and their views of their world.

This research has contributed to the growing body of knowledge about the constructionist paradigm and has provided illustrative insights into the subjective world of NSW SES

and NSW RFS emergency service volunteers. It has shown that there has been little research into the subjective world experienced by Australian emergency service volunteers. I acknowledge that other methodologies are applicable such as a positivist epistemology. Research using a positivist methodology could shed further light on the experiences of emergency service volunteers by providing alternative explanations.

Further, similar qualitative readings of the subjective views of paid career officers would provide an enhanced understanding of how their views and constructs of psychological contracts either complement those of emergency service volunteers or are divergent from them. Further research is also needed into the construct of the psychological contract of emergency service volunteers. As indicated, the only two issues that have seriously been considered in psychological contract theory research have been the contents of the contract and what might constitute a breach of the contract (Conway and Briner 2005). No studies have been located that conceptualises the exchange relationship in the way this research does. Such research will develop a more complete understanding of the necessary exchange relationship that underlies the 'employment' of volunteers and will further inform a positive volunteer recruitment and retention management policy.

Other research needs include an examination of emergency service volunteer's opinions of the exchange; how do they determine whether their expectations are being met? This knowledge would assist emergency service organisations regulate their own and their volunteers' behaviour patterns and provide them with a 'benchmark' to determine if promises are being honoured. Further research is also required that will determine under what circumstances and conditions do emergency service volunteers' psychological contracts change. Finally, research into the claimed diverse constructs of emergency service volunteer's psychological contracts would shed new light on whether they do exist or are simply a way of trying to understand human behaviour.

Research into the gender and ethnicity issues raised in the literature requires attention. It is vital for the sustainability of the NSW SES and the NSW RFS emergency service organisations to address the paucity of representation from these two groups of people.

Understanding the subjectivities of these groups, the way they feel about the voluntary action, how best to recruit and what organisational changes are required to accommodate their needs. Other considerations that must be addressed include how best the organisations can offer the motivational needs these two groups of people require to make the organisations sufficiently attractive to join them and how do the organisations promote and accomplish a 'cultural change' from the masculinised Anglo-Australian one they appear to be into a more inclusive one?

This research offers a limited understanding of the subjective nature of the emergency service volunteers' world. The issues and themes developed have also been limited and specific to the NSW RFS and the NSW SES. Further research is required to determine whether the findings from this research are applicable to other emergency service agencies for example, St John Ambulance, the Volunteer Rescue Association or surf lifesaving organisations. The results of future research into these volunteer agencies will further contribute to our knowledge of our emergency service volunteers.

6.8 Concluding observations

In concluding this research I realise that its implications, both nationally and internationally, are more topical now than ever before. Therefore, an examination of a greater cross section of emergency service volunteers from a broader sample and variety of emergency service organisations would be beneficial. Research of this kind would shed light on and provide useful data about the findings of this research and their transferability.

This research has offered ways to examine the current knowledge about the emergency service volunteers of the New South Wales State Emergency Service and the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and has shown its relevance to disaster management today and into the future. The findings from this research have provided valuable insights into the subjective world of emergency service volunteers. It also provides new insights into the construct of an emergency service volunteer's diverse psychological contracts, the content of the exchange relationships of each contract and how these contracts can be

perceived to have been breached. The findings pertinent to affiliation, recruitment and retention, identity and commitment make a contribution to our current knowledge of these volunteers. The research has valuable positive implications for policy development and strategic human resource management and opens the way for further qualitative enquiry into the world of our vital and under-researched emergency service volunteers.

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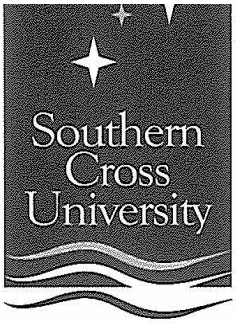
Appendix A: Interview guide for the semi-structured interviews



Baxter-Tomkins
Student Number 21073630

Inside the world of the disaster volunteer: Affiliation, commitment and identity.

Proposed indicative questions for face to face interviews

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview and for giving up your valuable time to do so. You understand that anything you say will be kept strictly confidential and that you can withdraw your consent to continue at any time?

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PO Box 157
Lismore NSW 2480
Telephone (02) 6620 3000
Internat. 61+66+20 3000
Fax (02) 6622 1300

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Hogbin Drive
Coffs Harbour NSW 2457
Telephone (02) 6659 3777
Fax (02) 6659 3051

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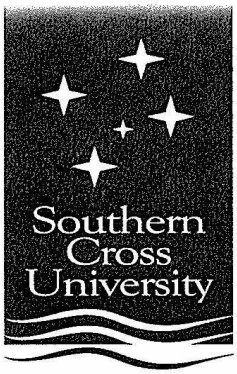
- I am interested in hearing from you about how and why you decided to join the (SES/RFS); will you tell me about that?
- What is it you like about the volunteer work you do?
- How would you describe yourself in relation to the other members of your unit/brigade – to other members of the SES/RFS?
- Tell me how your beliefs about the SES/RFS are different or similar to the other members.
- Describe what you think the community thinks about you and your mates and your volunteer work.
- How does what the community think of you make you feel about yourself?
- When you are working as a volunteer how do you fel about yourself?
- You've told me what you like about the SES/RFS but what do you dislike about it?
- Have you ever thought about leaving your unit/brigade – giving up your volunteer work?
- What sort of things made you think about leaving or what sort of things would make you consider doing so?
- How important are the members of your unit/brigade to you – the other members of the service?
- Can you describe how your attitudes about yourself and the world in general have changed since you joined the SES/RFS?

- What sort of person do you think you need to be to be a good SES/RFS volunteer?
- Is there a mental attitude that is important to have to become an SES/RFS volunteer?
- Tell me about what you would be looking for in a person who wanted to join – how would you decide if that person was suitable?
- Has the person you thought you were before you joined the SES/RFS changed since you joined – (if yes) how do you see yourself now?
- Demographics.

Appendix B: Participant information sheet

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

31 July 2002



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LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

31 July 2002

Dear Volunteer

My name is Tony Baxter-Tomkins and I am a PhD student at the Southern Cross University.

My area of research is the Permanent Disaster Volunteer, people like you who volunteer with the SES or RFS to help our communities in time of need. I would like to try and understand why you decided to join your organisation, what makes you continue to do the difficult work you do, why some Volunteers decide to leave your Service and how you personally view the work you do.

Not everybody is the same so your personal view of the world of volunteering is important to try and understand. Gaining some understanding of your feelings and beliefs will provide valuable insights into your world and so contribute to knowledge about what type of person it takes to do your job.

I am asking your permission to join you in your training activities tonight and that you agree to take part in a recorded interview later. The interview will take about 1 hour and be recorded on an audio tape recorder so that I can write down what you tell me later on. Once that has been done the audio tape will be kept at Southern Cross University for 5 years and then destroyed. Should you agree to help me you retain the right to withdraw your consent at any time.

At no time will your name or any other details that might identify you be made available to anyone.

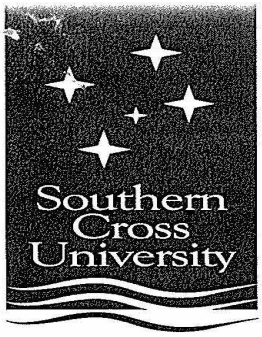
I understand that I am asking even more of your valuable time and I appreciate your willingness to help should you do so.

Thank you in advance for allowing me to see and hear what it's like for you to be a Disaster Volunteer.

Yours faithfully

Tony Baxter-Tomkins.

Appendix C: Participant consent form



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Appendix A
Informed Consent Form: Inside the World of the Disaster Volunteer: Affiliation, Commitment and Identity.

The purpose of this research is to help explain why Members of the New South Wales State Emergency Service (SES) and the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer. It will explore their commitment, how they view their volunteer work and the reasons why they leave.

The research will centre on your views and beliefs about the SES and RFS and so will reflect a personal point of view. This research will produce useful information about your work and provide valuable insights into your reasons for choosing to volunteer for the SES or RFS.

In this study you will be asked to accept me as an observer into your Unit or Brigade for a brief time. I will be observing the way in which you act as part of a team, the way you interact with each other and the way in which normal processes are negotiated within your Unit or Brigade. I will also ask you to take part in an interview that will explore, in your own words, what you think about the SES or RFS and the part you play in protecting your community. The interview will take approximately 1 hour and I will be recording what you say on an audio tape recorder. These audio tapes will be kept at Southern Cross University for 5 years and then destroyed. I may also take some notes during our conversation.

The information obtained in this study will be used to prepare a research report, however your information in connection with this study will be kept confidential and be available only to my Supervisor and myself. If the research is published, your name will not be disclosed and you will not be identified at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. I will answer any questions you may have regarding this study.

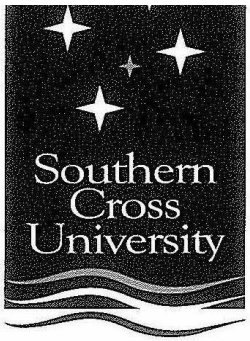
If, at any time you feel the study has/is being conducted in an unethical manner or you have any other complaint about my attitude or behaviour you should contact my Supervisor, Dr Michelle Wallace, Southern Cross University, telephone number 0266 203 000. Any complaints or queries regarding this project that cannot be answered by the person responsible for this research project should be forwarded to: Mr John Russell, Graduate Research College, Southern Cross University. 'Ph: (02) 6620 3705 Fax: (02) 6626 9145 Email: jrussell@scu.edu.au

Permission for this study has been given by the Offices of the Director General, NSW State Emergency Service and the Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service.

You are over the age of 18 years and you are making a decision whether to participate or not and your signature indicates that you agree having read the information provided above. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Participant	Date	Researcher Tony Baxter-Tomkins

Appendix D: Subject matter expert review questions



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Appendix D: Subject Matter Expert review questions

Affiliation, commitment and identity of volunteers in the NSW Rural Fire and NSW State Emergency Services

Permission for this study was given by the Director General, NSW State Emergency Service and the Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service.

The purpose of this research is to help explain why members of the New South Wales State Emergency Service (SES) and the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer. It explored a vast range of issues including their commitment, how they view their volunteer work and the reasons why they might leave.

The research centred on their views and beliefs about the SES and RFS and so reflects personal points of view. This research will produce useful information about your work and provide valuable insights into your reasons for choosing to volunteer for the SES or RFS.

In this study I asked seventy two volunteers to take part in an interview that explored, in their own words, what they thought about the SES or RFS and the part they play in protecting your community. Each interview took approximately 1 hour and was recorded on an audio tape recorder.

The information obtained in this study will be used to prepare a research report, however your information in connection with this study will be kept confidential and be available only to my Supervisor and myself. If the research is published, your name will not be disclosed and you will not be identified at any time.

I am trying to obtain feedback from a number of volunteers who are able to provide considered comments about my findings. You have been chosen because you are regarded as senior volunteers who have had many years experience and have a good understand the organisation you volunteer for and have an understanding about the way other volunteers think about their organisation. Attached you will find an executive summary of my findings and I would welcome your comments, particularly in regard to

1) Have things changed over the last few years?
2) If changes have occurred are things better or worse?
3) If better, how are they better?
4) If worse, how are they worse?
5) Are there any issues that I have not considered that you believe are important?

You are encouraged to contact me on 0267 526 117 or tony.baxter-tomkins@mpsc.nsw.gov.au if you have any questions about my