Emotional Intelligence as an Attribute of Fire Service Leadership

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS AN ATTRIBUTE OF FIRE SERVICE LEADERSHIP

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

BY

PAUL D. FROMAN

2019
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Abstract

Emotional intelligence is a critical attribute of successful leaders. Kastros (2014) and Hustoles (2017) present an argument that there is a lack of leadership within the modern Fire Service. Research to date has demonstrated a direct link between emotional intelligence and successful leadership. This principle applies to hierarchical organizations at large. The present study was designed as a qualitative evaluation of the extent to which emotional intelligence is found within the leadership of the United States Fire Service. The instrument used to conduct this research was a set of questions that were asked during personal interviews. On average, each interview lasted 50 minutes. The population sample was ten career firefighters from ten different career departments. The primary finding revealed a paucity of emotional intelligence within the leadership of the firehouses sampled. In addition, participants preferred authoritarian leadership in emergency operations, but a democratic style in the firehouse. Each participant expressed the desire to work for a leader who clearly practices emotional intelligence. This was true in the context of emergencies and routine work within the firehouse. In conclusion, the present work further characterizes the problem within Fire Service leadership that can be changed for the greater good.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, fire service, leadership, fire service leadership, firefighter.
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Chapter I

Introduction

From the beginning of the Boston Fire Department in 1679, the Fire Service has always adapted to take on new challenges that faced the community. Fire Service leadership has led the way through ever-growing dangers that face communities. The Fire Service would not have been able to take on these challenges without solid leadership practices. However, more challenges are yet ahead of the Fire Service as Jenaway and Gardner describe: “Powerful trends will shape the fire service over the next ten years, changing department structures and roles in the community, and altering the demands placed on fire service personnel” (as cited in Carter, 2007). The demands are not only changing externally but internally as well. A new generation of firefighters and paramedics are joining the workforce. This means hierarchy management practices of the early 1950’s will no longer be effective management tools.

Emotional intelligence is a critical component of contemporary leadership theory. Chen, Jacobs, and Spencer (1998) reported that close to 90 percent of success in leadership positions is attributable to emotional intelligence (as cited in Anand & UdayaSuryian, 2010). Current Fire Service leadership will have lasting effects on the outcome of the modern Fire Service. Kastros (2014) and Hustoles (2017) believe that there is already a shortage of leaders. In regard to the Fire Service, Paulsgrove (2003), Cote (2003), Carter (1985; 1989), and Coleman (1978) suggest “a correlation between diminished leadership skills and an increased danger to the members of the fire service as well as the citizen who expects to be protected by the fire service.” (as cited in Carter, 2007). “Emotional intelligence empowers the manager with the ability to grasp intuitively
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what others need and want and develop strategies to fulfilling those needs and wants.” (Anand & UdayaSuryian, 2010). If Fire Service leadership is to be improved, then emotional intelligence should be a clear component of a fire administrator’s skill set. Exploring this possibility is the basis for this study.

Numerous studies link the benefits of emotional intelligence with effective leadership (Mayer and Salovey 1997, Anand and UdayaSuryian 2010, Cavazotte, Moreno, and Hickmann, 2011, Mittal and Sindhu 2012, Panait 2017, Panait and Buconschi, 2018). Additional studies categorize the leadership styles within the Fire Service. However, there appears to be little literature addressing emotional intelligence in relationship with Fire Service leadership. The existing disconnect between the importance of emotional intelligence for effective leadership and the leadership selection criteria of hiring practices, as well as consequences of that for long-term job performance is unfortunate. In other words, emotional intelligence should be among the criteria in which Fire Service leaders are hired and then periodically evaluated thereafter for job performance.

Therefore, this qualitative study investigates the extent to which emotional intelligence has been experienced by firefighters. This study explores by way of personal interviews, the extent to which emotional intelligence of Fire Service leadership affects the attitude and job performance of rank and file of firefighters.

Research Questions:

- Determine if emotional intelligence is present in current Fire Service leadership.
- Determine the effects of emotional intelligence on attitude and job performance of firefighters.
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Chapter II

Literature Review

A literature review was completed to better understand emotional intelligence in the relationship with Fire Service leaders. There is an abundance of research on emotional intelligence and leadership styles. However, such research in the context of the Fire Service is limited. Existing literature affords an interesting context (Fire Service) to which the emerging field of emotional intelligence can be applied. The review of the literature leads to three primary categories within research: 1) leadership styles, 2) emotional intelligence, and 3) Fire Service leadership.

Leadership Styles

One leadership style repeatedly found in the literature on emotional intelligence and leadership is authentic leadership. Leaders with higher emotional intelligence exhibit a more authentic leadership style than those without. Those with less emotional intelligence demonstrate more authoritarian styles and in general act more as managers rather than leaders.

Authentic Leadership

According to the majority of existing research, an authentic leader has more self-awareness than others. This aspect of leadership originates with the ancient Greeks who believed leaders must "know thyself." Since authentic leaders have a more in-depth knowledge of their inner self, they tend to have a strong moral and ethical code and believe in doing the right thing. Avolio et al. (2005) argue authentic leadership is the "root construct" for other leadership processes (as cited in Duncan, Green, Gergen, & Ecung, 2017, p. 14). An emotionally intelligent leader will be more self-aware which will
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allow better understanding of their own emotions and the emotions of others. This explains why those who are more authentic leaders would show higher levels of emotional intelligence.

Servant Leadership

The literature concerning the Fire Service, leadership styles, and emotional intelligence was limited in the area of servant leadership. Servant leadership, as Robert Greenleaf first described it, means "to serve first." It would be expected that research on public safety professions in regard to servant leadership would be more prevalent. Servant leadership shares traits with authentic leadership including self-awareness, empathy, and listening. A servant leader has a greater concern for the greater good than other leaders. Anand and UdayaSuryian (2010) concluded: “Emotional intelligence empowers the manager with the ability to grasp intuitively what others need and want and develop strategies to fulfilling those needs and wants” (p. 497). By this definition, it could be concluded that servant leadership should be prevalent among leaders with high emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

Emotional intelligence is a primary area of study within modern leadership theory. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and comprehend another person's emotions. Furthermore, it is the ability to know how a leader's own feelings will impact those of their followers. The literature supports the importance of possessing emotional intelligence as a leader (Cavazotte, Moreno, and Hickmann, 2011, Diwan and Swami, 2016, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 2013, Mayer and Salovey, 1997, and Oginska-Bulik, 2005). One study by Panait and Bucinschi (2018) concluded that “56% of
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(military) students have an under average level of emotional intelligence” (p. 497). At present, no study was found in which the emotional intelligence of Fire Service leaders was measured.

Fire Service Leadership

An argument was found within the literature that Fire Service leadership is in trouble. Kastros (2014) said "Simply put, we are suffering a leadership pandemic" (p. 129). Hustoles (2017) believes this is due to a regular changing of Fire Service leadership. However, data is limited in support of this claim. Kastros also argues “Leadership is one of the most overused words in the Fire Service. There is no shortage of discussion, theory, books, articles, and philosophies on leadership” (p. 129). However, the leadership dilemma persists. The literature leads to a few possible reasons for this within the Fire Service.

Management vs. Leadership

“A Fire Service weakness commonly cited is that there is not as much focus on leadership as there is on management” (Hustoles, 2017, p. 60). One of the primary leadership styles used in today’s Fire Service is autocratic leadership. Fiaz, Su, Ikram, and Saqib (2017) state autocratic leadership “places more emphasis on performance and low emphasis on people” (p. 146). In an emergency, this style of leadership becomes the primary method for the safe mitigation of the situation. However, this style of leadership outside of emergency situations creates an environment that reduces creativity and productivity within the workplace.

The Fire Service is a para-military (autocratic) organization with regard to structure. Managers give orders in an autocratic fashion, and those orders are expected to
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be followed. Hustoles (2017) and Kastros (2014) both agree that this method of management is no longer effective in today's Fire Service. In the past, leaders could get away with a "Do what I say, because I said so" approach to interacting with subordinates. Perhaps at one point, it was an effective method to generate compliance, but it is not the best approach in the modern Fire Service.

**Education vs. Experience**

Over the last several decades, the entry-level firefighter has changed from a high school graduate to a college graduate. In the 1970s, people with limited education could find jobs in the Fire Service. Prior training was not required. On-the-job experience was more valuable than a formal education at the time. Today, a professional certificate, a license, and/or a college degree are required for an entry-level position within the Fire Service. In part, this is due to changes in safety requirements created at the legislative level. Leadership positions traditionally went to the most experienced firefighter. In some cases, the most senior firefighter had no choice in the matter and was promoted only because of longevity within the department. Changes in Fire service training standards now require a higher level of training and education before starting in the profession. This situation has created an education versus experience leadership dilemma. Many previous Fire Service leaders held ranked positions with no more than a high school education. As explained above, many entry-level firefighters are hired with associate degrees at present.

Kastro (2014) states "Leadership is too nebulous and esoteric for the average firefighter- not because of lack of job intelligence but because of a lack of emotional intelligence" (p. 130). Regardless of experience or education, without emotional
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intelligence it is impossible to be a good leader. Emotional intelligence is the ability of individuals to understand the emotional impact of their actions on other people. Emotional intelligence, like many skills, is acquired through a combination of training, experience, and education. According to Brunacini (2013), “For many organizations (like ours), if we want to improve our emotional capability, we should, first, send the bosses to school to prepare them to manage the workers who deliver service in the street” (p. 57). This prompts a question: should focus shift from current management programs to courses that stress emotional intelligence as a leader?

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a critical attribute of successful leaders. Leaders with higher emotional intelligence more commonly use authentic leadership, which focuses on doing the "right thing" for the group or organization. A qualitative study on emotional intelligence and Fire Service leadership will add to the current limited information pertaining to its leadership. Further research will be needed to explore the level of emotional intelligence found in current Fire Service leaders and the leadership styles they use.

Chapter III

Research Methods

The present work is a qualitative study with a phenomenological research design. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state phenomenological research is a form of inquiry derived from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants (p. 13). Information for phenomenological research is primarily collected by interviews.
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Therefore, one-on-one interviews were the primary research instrument used in this study.

Sample

Criteria for participant selection were as follows. Firefighters were sought with more than three (3) years of career experience and who held a rank at or below that of Lieutenant. The rank of Captain is considered the entry level for firehouse management. Therefore, those holding the rank of Captain were excluded from this study. Sample size was intended to be 10 to 30 participants from at least ten different departments. Departments were selected based on their having career firefighters and being within a reasonable driving distance from the researcher. Letters asking for participants were sent to departments that met these criteria. These letters provided a brief description of the purpose of the study and its importance to the Fire Service. The researcher contacted each firefighter that responded in order to schedule a date and time most convenient for an interview.

Data Collection

A questionnaire was developed in order to gather data on the emotional intelligence of Fire Service leaders from participant firefighters. This questionnaire contained open-ended questions that pertained to Fire Service leadership and emotional intelligence. Questions were designed to gauge emotional intelligence and describe leadership traits. The questionnaire was designed principally for rank-and-file firefighters. Descriptions of leadership styles and traits were withheld in order to allow participants to give unbiased answers to questions.
Sample interviews were conducted at the discretion of the participants. Locations included firehouses and off duty locations such as coffee shops. Participants were offered the option of completing the interview by video conference or phone. The interview location was selected to create an environment where a participant felt the most comfortable answering questions openly and honestly. An interview protocol was developed and used for each interview. Interviews were conducted over a three-month period.

**Data Analysis**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) outline a five-step process for analyzing data from a qualitative investigation: 1) organize the data for analysis, 2) survey the entire data set, 3) code the data, 4) verbalize themes, and 5) explain the importance of these themes.

Prior to the first step, the researcher transcribed each interview, peripheral observations and any field notes. All hand-written copies were scanned into digital format and saved electronically.

**Ethical Considerations**

Each participant was treated fairly and ethically within the guidelines of the University of Southern Maine and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This study involved no identifiable risks for those who participated in the study. Participant names are confidential and no other demographical information was collected for this study. It should be noted that the researcher is currently an active member of the Fire Service. The department in which the researcher is currently employed, and all others he was ever employed were removed from the list of potential departments involved in the study. Questionnaires are kept to the highest level of confidentiality possible. No individual
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information will be given out or included in this study. Data has been stored on a computer whose content is available only to the researcher.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that “validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and is based on determining whether findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account” (p. 199). This study included multiple validity procedures. Creswell and Creswell (2018) reference a list of options to improve validity of a study. This study included three of those options: clarifying bias, peer debriefing, and external auditor. Upon completion of the study, the researcher included any possible bias information that could be included such as being a firefighter. Peer debriefing was the second step of validation, and edits were made to correct errors. Final review was completed by a third-party auditor, who was not involved in the study itself.

Summary

This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological research design. The participants included career firefighters. The primary method of gathering data was administering interviews based upon a questionnaire. Data was analyzed using the five-step process described by Creswell & Creswell (2018). A multiple tier process was used to improve the validity of this study and all ethical considerations were addressed prior to initiation. This study could have several implications for those within the Fire Service community. It could prove or disprove the arguments made by Kastros (2014) and Hustoles (2017) that Fire Service leadership is currently lacking. If this argument is found to be true, then steps can be taken to improve the level of emotional intelligence within the Fire Service.
Chapter IV

Findings

Participants

Twenty career fire departments were asked to participate in this research study. At the completion of the research period, ten career firefighters having three or more years of service had volunteered to be interviewed. Each participant represented a different department from around New England. Participant years of service ranged from the minimum of three to the highest of 37 years of Fire Service experience. The average length of service was 11.5 years. Eight of ten participants plan to undergo the promotional process within their respective departments at the next opportunity. When surveyed, three of the ten participants held the rank of lieutenant. Eight of the ten participants held the position of at least lieutenant as a volunteer firefighter before becoming a career firefighter. Participants were asked to provide examples of their experiences within the Fire Service in regard to their leaders. They were asked questions that ranged from identifying traits of leaders they most enjoyed and providing examples of poor leadership. In addition, participants were asked to explain situations in which conflict occurred. As part of these questions, participants were asked to describe how working for a good leader made them feel as opposed to their emotional response to poor leadership. Finally, participants were asked to explain how leaders affected their behavior as followers.

Themes

For evaluation purposes findings were divided into two main categories. The first category was a leader's behavior in an emergency situation and the effect this had on a
follower's attitude or subsequent behavior. The second category pertained to leadership traits in a routine firehouse setting and the effect this had on a follower's attitude or behavior. Therefore, these two categories addressed distinct contexts in which a follower could be affected by the interaction with his or her supervisor.

**Emotional Intelligence**

The primary findings of this study revealed a paucity of emotional intelligence in Fire Service leadership within the firehouses sampled. That said, emotional intelligence was described. For example, two of the ten participants have experienced a leader who demonstrates a high level of emotional intelligence. Specifically, these two participants work in an environment that is supporting, trusting, and positive. This was true even in difficult situations. This finding corroborates the observation of George (2000) who said "because leaders who are high on emotional intelligence are better able to understand and manage their own emotions, they may be more likely to engage in constructive thinking to build and maintain high levels of cooperation and trust" (p. 1042). Trust and cooperation in emergency situations are critical elements for positive outcomes.

At the other end of the spectrum, three of the ten participants reported experiences where leaders became angry if not irate. In fact, two of these three situations escalated to physical conflict. In both of these situations, the relationship between leader and follower was destroyed. Moreover, this not only affected the individuals involved but also had lasting negative impact upon the entire crew. Consequently, poor leadership eroded cooperation and trust. It is noteworthy that these negative experiences had a long-lasting impact on the attitude and behavior of these three participants.
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Emergency Context

All participants expressed the desire to work for leaders who could routinely manifest a high level of emotional intelligence. Two primary leadership styles emerged from participant input, i.e. authoritarian leadership for emergency operations and democratic leadership for non-emergency operations. Whereas authoritarian leadership was not questioned in emergency operations, it was, however, not appreciated in non-emergency, routine work. In regard to emergency situations, the top five desired traits for leaders, as reported, were as follows:

1. Cool
2. Calm
3. Collected
4. Confident
5. Communicator

In other words, Participants want leaders who can communicate orders effectively, who are confident and composed when they do so, and have a calm command presence. Similarly, George (2000) found "when leaders know and manage their emotions, they may be better able to flexibly approach problems, consider alternative scenarios, and avoid rigidity effects in decision making" (p. 1043). In short, leaders with emotional intelligence not only improve group dynamics but also enable their own critical thinking when making tactical decisions. In contrast, when leaders did not manifest these desired traits, participants were tempted to operate outside of the command structure and experienced heightened anxiety.
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Non-Emergency Context

In non-emergency situations, desired traits shifted slightly to more intrapersonal skills. Participants desired leaders who used a diplomatic approach, who got to know them on a personal level and who helped them reach their goals. Anand and Udaya Suryian (2010) stated: “Emotional intelligence empowers the manager with the ability to grasp intuitively what others need and want and develop strategies to fulfilling those needs and wants” (p. 65). The top five desired traits in a non-emergency situation were as follows:

1. Integrity
2. Honesty
3. Humility
4. Communicator
5. Approachable

Overall, participants reported a higher level of productivity and better attitudes when working for a leader they felt expressed the above traits. In contrast, the opposite happened when a leader was narcissistic or no longer seemed to be engaged with the individual’s needs, such as an interest in additional professional training. Several participants questioned the motivation of individuals seeking promotion or who already held a higher rank because of their narcissistic behavior relative to those whose behavior reflects servant leadership.
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Chapter V
Discussion

This study was conducted in order to assess the emotional intelligence of leaders within the Fire Service and evaluate the impact of such intelligence on rank and file firefighters. Emotional intelligence was described by a few of the participants interviewed in this study. However, emotional intelligence was not a characteristic of leaders for whom the majority of participants had to work. Nonetheless, this research project confirmed the positive effects of emotional intelligence on the part of those in leadership positions within the Fire Service. In addition, several other observations emerged from the project’s data. Two of these are outlined below. Each topic warrants further discussion within either the Fire Service or the municipalities that define position descriptions for Fire Service officers. Also, each topic may warrant future research.

Fire Service Leadership Education

In this study, 100% of participants reported they do not believe the Fire Service does enough leadership education. Unfortunately, what little is provided does not meet the needs of rank and file firefighters. In fact, several participants asserted that leaders are not even required to take what leadership education is available to them. For example, one participant stated that it is standard operating procedure for all officers in his department to attend 40 hours of leadership education each year. However, since being promoted to the rank of lieutenant, he has yet to be allowed to attend training to meet this departmental requirement in leadership education.
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Promotional Practices

Are promotional practices advancing the best candidate based upon leadership skills? To date, the answer appears to be negative. For example, the majority of promotional practices involve a written exam, a practical exam, and a panel oral board. This traditional practice serves to advance those candidates who possess excellent technical skills. Whereas such skills are critical to the Fire Service, the examination process does not address a candidate’s emotional intelligence. As discussed above, such intelligence is critical to effective teamwork in either an emergency context or daily firehouse life. This poses a problematic question: how can those who cannot enable effective teamwork by virtue of their personalities really be leaders in spite of their rank and pay grade? This question, in turn, leads to two additional questions: 1) should instruments be used in the hiring process to measure emotional intelligence, and 2) should the expectation of emotional intelligence be included in position descriptions for Fire Service officers?

Limitations of Study

The sample of participants was small relative to the population of full-time firefighters within the firehouses sampled. Another limitation of this study was that it only investigated the perspective of rank and file firefighters as opposed to those who hold middle and top-level leadership positions within the Fire Service. Furthermore, this study only included one female participant because the Fire Service is predominately male. However, this study was not designed to evaluate gender as a factor. It may be noteworthy, however, that the female participant’s response was consonant with those of
the male participants. Finally, the budget for this study was limited to the researcher’s personal funds.

**Potential Future Research**

The present research constitutes only an initial, qualitative assessment of the extent to which emotional intelligence is found within Fire Service leadership. The outcomes of this study provide a reason to explore this problem further. Specifically, outcomes warrant exploring attributes of emotional intelligence within the Fire Service using a large-scale quantitative study. An increased sample size would define firefighter attitudes towards those in positions of leadership and how such attitudes affect job performance. In addition, querying Fire Service leaders themselves could serve to confirm the perception firefighters have about those in leadership roles or help rank and file firefighters better understand the demands placed upon their leaders. Finally, a critical review of Fire Service promotional practices with respect to emotional intelligence might serve the common good.

**Conclusion**

Emotional intelligence is a critical attribute for Fire Service leaders. It is impactful due to its direct effect on firefighters’ attitude and work performance. Furthermore, emotional intelligence affects a leader’s ability to adapt to a situation and in doing so make sound decisions in a complex, high stress environment where the lives of civilians as well as firefighters are at stake. Emotional intelligence is equally important to leadership within the day-to-day operation of a firehouse. In fact, the importance of emotional intelligence increases with rank because of the number of subordinates affected. Fire Service leaders in top management positions make policy decisions on a
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regular basis. These decisions, in turn, affect firefighter attitudes, evaluation of job performance, and promotion. Therefore, long-term improvement of the Fire Service warrants recognizing the importance of emotional intelligence to Fire Service leaders and firefighters alike.
We hereby recommend that the thesis of Paul D. Froman entitled Emotional Intelligence as an Attribute of Fire Service Leadership be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Leadership Studies.

Advisor

Second Reader

Accepted

Director, Leadership Studies Program
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My name is Paul Froman, and I am a graduate student from the Leadership Studies program at the University of Southern Maine. I am writing to invite your department to participate in my research study about Fire Service leadership. The purpose of this research study is to discover the common leadership styles being implemented in the Fire Service within the area of Maine and New Hampshire. It also is to explore the connection between these leadership styles and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a person's ability to understand and show empathy for the feelings of those around them. Firefighters who are eligible to be in this study must have at least three (3) years of career service and must not be above the rank of Lieutenant. I obtained your contact information from the city's website.

I am asking for permission to contact the employees of your department to take part in my research study. Participating in this study will include an oral interview answering questions regarding leadership. The interview is expected to be less than 60 minutes. The conversation will be audio recorded for accuracy to the responses to the questions, however, participate names and departments will not be recorded or shared.

Remember, this is entirely voluntary. Eligible firefighters can choose to be in the study or not. Your department's participation is essential for a successful study. I would ask that you forward this request to your employees and have them reach out to me if they are willing to participate. If you have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at paul.froman@maine.edu or (207) 294-2285. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

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Appendix B

RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many years have you been a full-time firefighter?

2. Have you ever held a leadership role within this department?
   a. What was it?
   b. Have you had the opportunity for promotion?
   c. Are you interested in promotion?
   d. Why?

3. Have you held a leadership role in another department?
   a. What was it?

4. What is your highest level of education?
   a. Do you have plans to continue your education?

5. Explain whether education or experience is more important for leaders?
   a. Why?

6. Please define what leadership means to you?
   a.

7. What are the character traits you find most important with a leader?
   a. Why?

8. What are the character traits you find the least important for a leader?
   a. Why?

9. Could you describe an instance when you observed true leadership?
   a. How did this situation make you feel?
   b. Did it have an impact on your behavior?
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c. Can you explain?

10. Can you describe an instance when you observed bad leadership?
   a. How did this situation make you feel?
   b. Did it have an impact on your behavior?
   c. Can you explain?

11. What are your expectations of a leader on an emergency scene?

12. What are your expectations of a leader at the station (non-emergency)?

13. Can you describe the differences (if any) between a manager and a leader?

14. How should a leader handle conflict?

15. Do you feel that the fire service does enough leadership education?
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Emotional Intelligence in relationship to Fire Service Leadership.

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Introduction:

General requirement language:
- Please read this form, you may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this research study is to discover the common leadership styles being used in the fire service within the area of Maine and New Hampshire. It also is to explore the connection between these leadership styles and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a person's ability to understand and show empathy for the feelings of those around them. To investigate these questions further requires formal research. This research will sample 10-30 firefighters within the designated area of study.

Who will be in this study?

Requirements to participant in this study:
You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.
You must be a career firefighter.
You must have at least three years of full-time service.
You must be employed in the States of Maine or New Hampshire
Must NOT be of higher rank than Lieutenant.

What will I be asked to do?

Participants will be asked by means of an interview to answer a set of prepared questions that relate to leadership and emotional intelligence. Participants will also be asked to share some of their experiences within their fire service career. These questions are not random but targeted to further gather additional information on the research subjects. There will be no physical interventions, experimental, or unusual procedures within this study. The interviewer will simply read the questions and allow time for your response. Prepared clarification questions may be asked by the interviewer to further gather information of your responses. Interviews for this study are expected to last anywhere from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Time will vary based on each participant's answers. However, the questions will be the same for each participant.

- This study is completely voluntary and there will not be any form of reimbursement or compensation for participation.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There may be a benefit to others, such as the fire service leadership community and the fire service as a whole.

What will it cost me?

There are no expected costs to you for participating in this study.

How will my privacy be protected?

This research is a capstone project the researcher's graduate study of leadership at USM. Part of this requirement is to share the completed research project. This can include a USM program called "Thinking Matters" presentation, a journal article and a report to a third-party agency. However, participants, information will be kept private and confidential.

How will my data be kept confidential?
This study is not designed to be anonymous, however, all steps will be taken so that no one can link the data you provide to you or identify you as a participant. Participants names will not be recorded or saved outside of the consent form. The consent forms will not be released unless legally required. The fire department of the participant will also not be recorded or saved. The State in which it was conducted will be the only identifying information connected to the questionnaire. However, by the nature of a personal interview complete anonymity for the interview process is not possible.

Confidential steps include:

- Research records will be kept in a locked file in the locked office of the Principal Investigator.
- Digital data will be stored and secured on the investigator's computer which will remain password-protected.
- Please note that the USM Institutional Review Board may review the research records.

A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least 3 years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location that only members of the research team will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.

An audio recording will be made of all of the interviews. This is to ensure that answers are collected completely and factually from each participant and will be used for the purpose of transcribing each interview. Audio files will be kept secured on the primary researcher's password-protected computer. At the completion of the research project, all audio recordings will be permanently erased/destroyed.

There is no immediate intent to use information collected from this study for a further research at this time. However, additional study may be developed based on research findings. Research findings will be made available for any participant upon request of the primary researcher.

What are my rights as a research participant?

- Your participation is 100% voluntary. You may end the interview at anytime.
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.

Whom may I contact with questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Paul Froman and he is the primary investigator. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact him at paul.froman@maine.edu or 207-294-2285. Paul’s faculty advisor is Elizabeth Goryunova elizabeth.goryunova@maine.edu or 207-999-6015.
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If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call the USM Human Protections Administrator at (207) 228-8434 and/or email usmorio@maine.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

- You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant’s Statement
I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

________________________________________________________________________

Participant’s signature                                      Date

________________________________________________________________________

Printed name

Researcher’s Statement
The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

________________________________________________________________________

Researcher’s signature                                      Date

________________________________________________________________________

Printed name
This is to certify that:

Paul Froman

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of Maine System

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/7wfl#{Record ID}
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Biography of the Author

Paul Froman is a graduate student at the University of Southern Maine in the Leadership Studies program. Professionally, Paul is a firefighter/paramedic with over a decade of public safety experience with the City of Biddeford. Paul teaches emergency medical services courses at Southern Maine Community College as an adjunct instructor. Paul hopes to pursue a doctorate in leadership studies and further advance leadership research and education in the public safety community.