Tampereen yliopisto

Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetarskyddsfonden
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PSR
PALOSUOJELURAHASTO

Is Occupational Identity the Butler

Organizational Identity, Organizational image and (Strategy Implementation) Affected by Firefighter´s Occupational Identity

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Corley, 2004

- Builds on discussion whether there are one or many organizational identities
- Empirically shows on four levels how the organization's identity is structured, depending on the hierarchy level
  - Nature of Organizational Identity
  - Discrepancies Identity Is Most Sensitive To
  - Identity Change Based In
  - Indentity Change Implementation
- Middle management has capability to translate different views

Organizational culture

- ”How we work?” (Stinchcomb & Ordaz, 2007; Schein & Schein, 2017)

- Unified organizational culture (Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983)
  - Long history
  - Stable memberships
  - Minimal influence from other cultures
  - Regular interaction among group members

- The emergence of subcultures is a normal development, alongside a deeper organizational culture (Schein, 1990)

- Subcultures can be contrary to the organization's goal (Alvesson, 2013)

Organizational identity

- "Who we are?" (Hatch & Schultz, 1997)

- Classical definition: (Whetten & Albert, 1985)
  - *"the criterion of claimed central character"*
  - *"the criterion of claimed distinctiviness"*
  - *"the criterion of claimed temporal continuity"*

- Socially defined (Hatch & Schultz, 2002)

- Constructed in relation to others (Jenkins, 2014)

- Build in the minds of organizational members (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991)

- Is based on organizational culture (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, 2002)

Occupational identity

- Socially defined (Nelson & Irwin, 2014)

- Individual perception of themselves as a worker (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011)

- Collective perspective: who are we and in what field? (Lee Ashcraft, 2013)

- Roles, requirements of the work and meanings related (Nelson & Irwin, 2014)

- Multiple identities possible (Leavitt ym., 2012)

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Defined by our strategy or our culture? Hierarchical differences in perceptions of organizational identity and change

Top of the hierarchy		Bottom of the hierarchy
Related to organizational strategy, purpose and philosophy	**Nature of Organizational Identity**	Related to organizational culture
Construed external image discrepancies	**Discrepancies Identity Is Most Sensitive To**	Temporal identity discrepancies
Language (indentity labels)	**Identity Change Based In**	Behaviors and emotions (identity meanings)
Formal through new labels and images	**Indentity Change Implementation**	Emergent through shifting meanins and changing behaviors

Corley, 2004

Ethnographic data

- During **2022-23** almost 5 monts of observation at 3 firestations in 1rescue department

- Observation duration between 55min -> 24h 43min

- Observing mostly inside station, meetings and finally 15 group and single interviews

- Over 30 meeting

- Data collection total duration 254:30 hours

- Data finalizing for analysis aprox.250 hours

- Additional data history books rescue departments, autobiographic firefigther novels, socialmedia

Personnel groups based on data

Subcultures

Organizational culture

Organizational identities
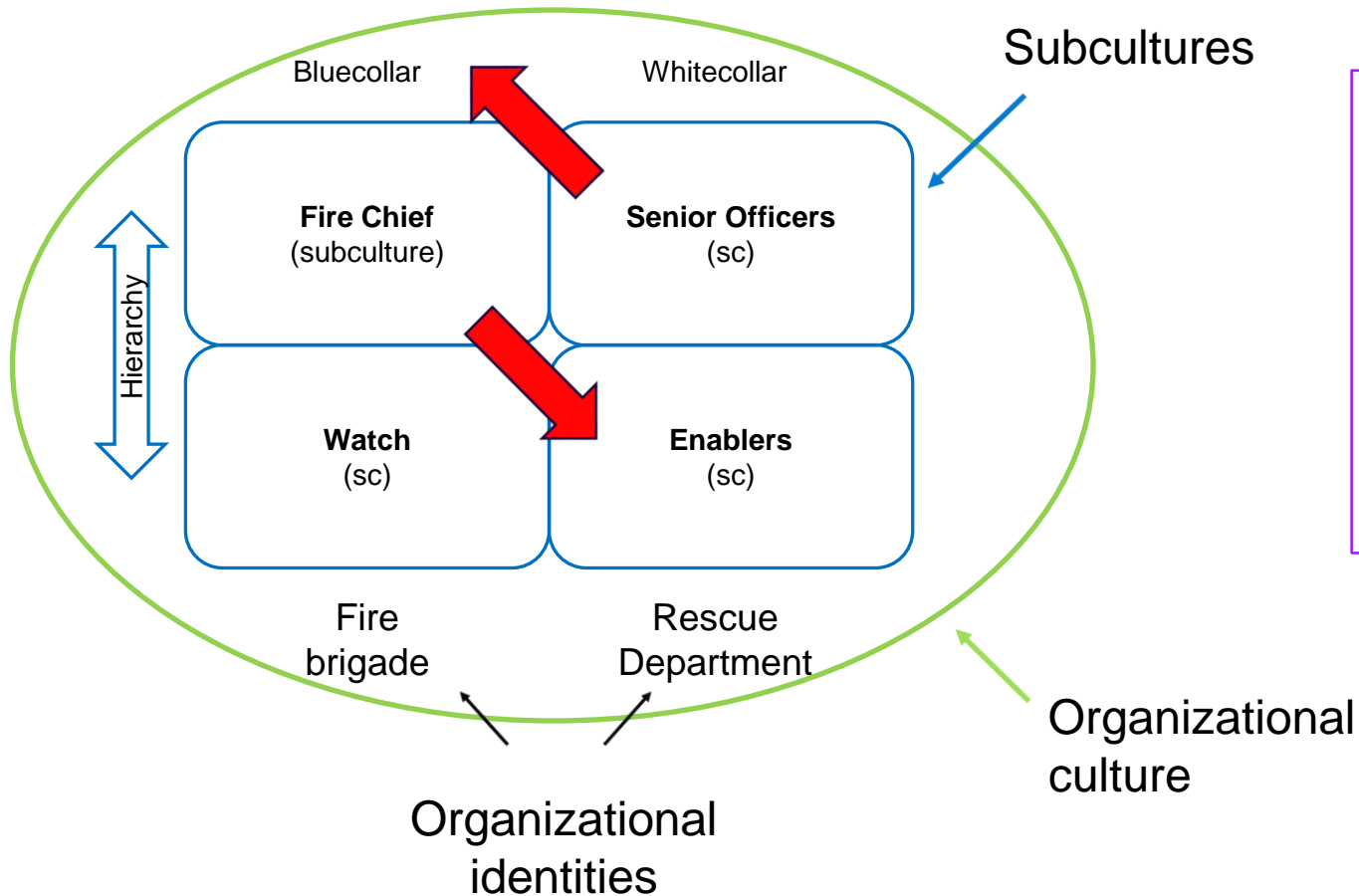
- Four subcultures within an organizational culture
- Subcultures have their own understanding of the essential content of work (identity)
- Subcultures are not stable, but may move from one identity to another
- The view from one subculture to another is not fair

Results

In data (senior officers)	Top of the hierarchy		Bottom of the hierarchy	In data (watch)
"Our work here is based on these guiding documents and laws"	Related to organizational strategy, purpose and philosophy	Nature of Organizational Identity	Related to organizational culture	*"Our historical job description is the most essential"*
"What will people think of us if we don't meet the requirements of the documents" (operative)	Construed external image discrepancies	Discrepancies Identity Is Most Sensitive To	Temporal identity discrepancies	*"if people think we are not meeting hero-standards"*
"Document based, what we are supposed to do"	Language (indentity labels)	Identity Change Based In	Behaviors and emotions (identity meanings)	*"If the newcomers do not accept the traditions ... External change is not seen as possible"*
"New organization charts and job descriptions" Top-down	Formal through new labels and images	Indentity Change Implementation	Emergent through shifting meanins and changing behaviors	*"Old ways are not accepted by newcomers"*
"Everything can be discussed in relation to operative work / fire brigade"		Occupational Identity Effect on Organizational Identity		*"We are visible to outsiders from the fire brigade"*
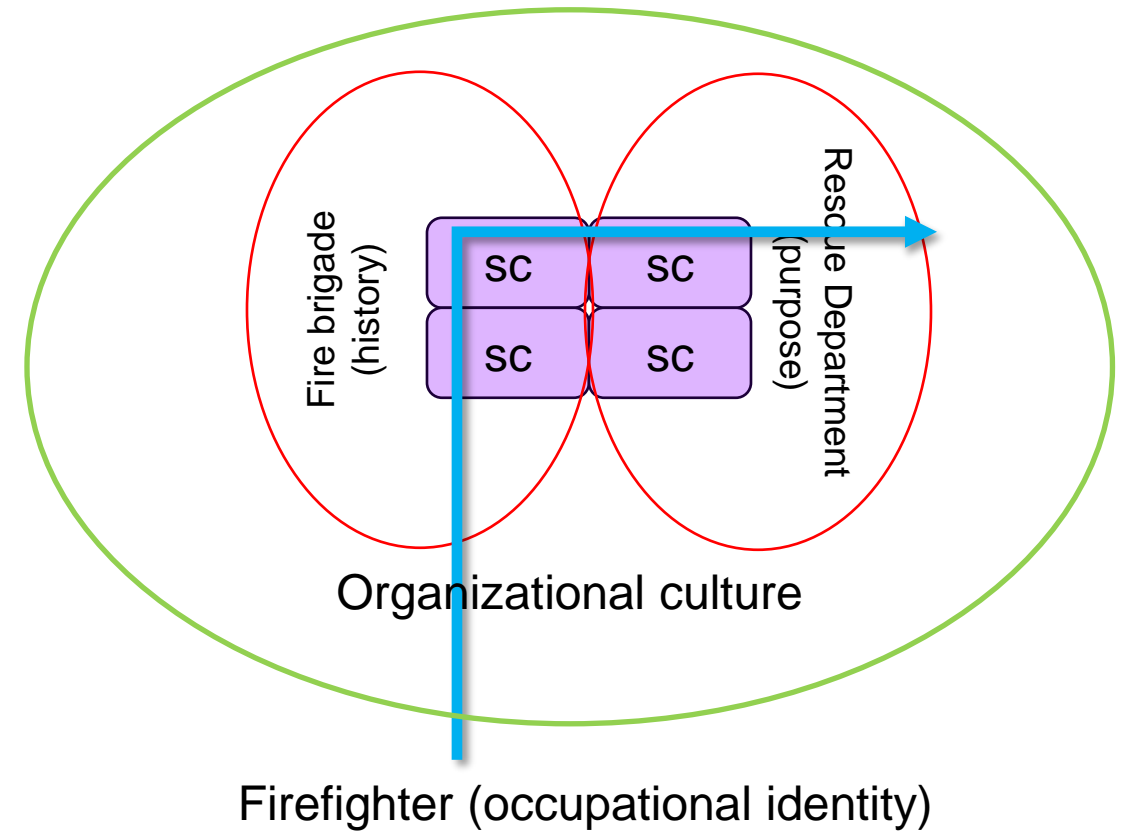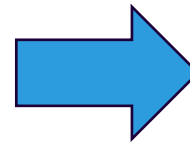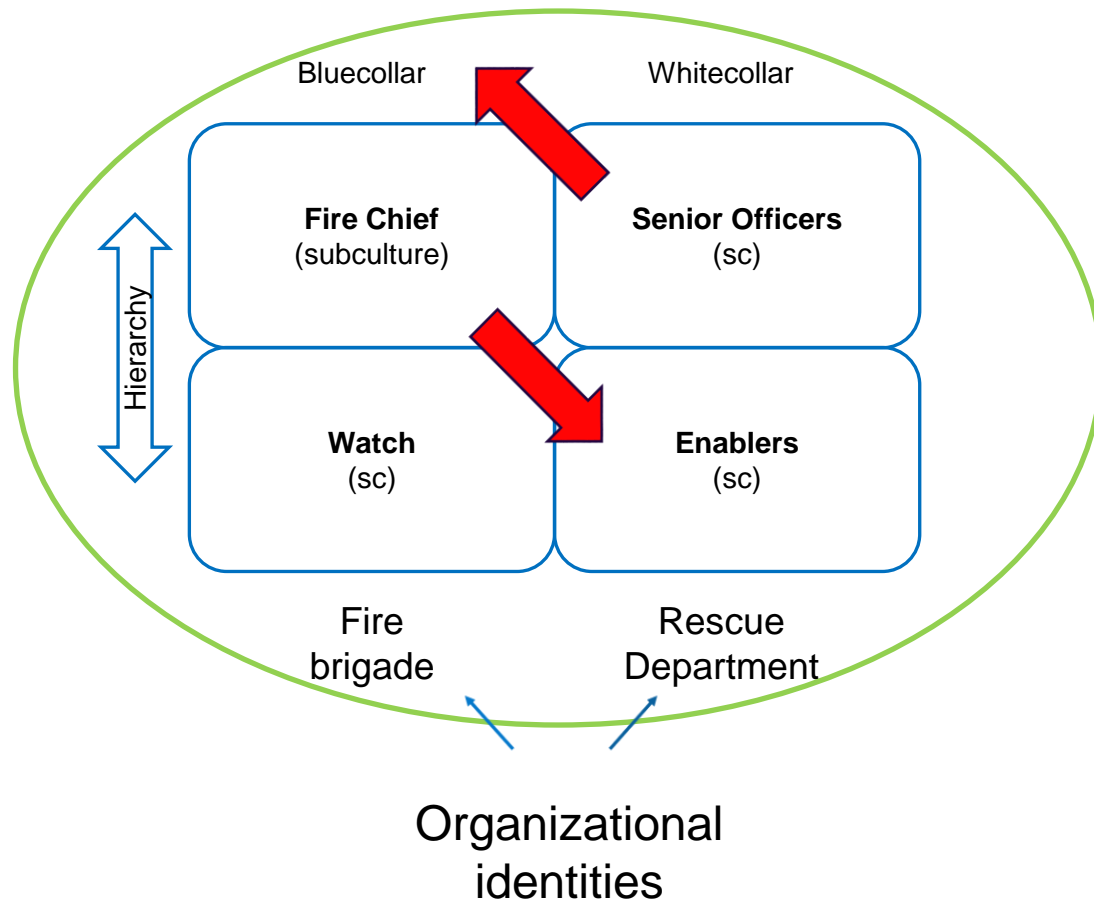
Discussion

- The data supports Corley's theory, but when the time comes, the occupational identity prevails.
  - Talks about the rescue department's issues in relation to the fire brigade
  - The "real" jobs of a firefighter / fire brigade
  - The most important thing is to take care of matters related to the fire brigade, others can wait

- In practice:
  - According to a report by the Regional State Administrative Agency, Several wellbeing services counties discussed the service level mainly from the perspective of the service level of rescue services
  - CEO of emergency services department can be laid off and rehired as a firefighter

- External goals do not necessarily lead to action

- 20/22 CEO´s of rescue service have background as a firefighter

Conclusion

- Corley´s theory could benefit use of fifth evaluation criteria, occupational identity, especially at fields of strong occupational identities e.g. police, healthcare…

- At its best, the rescue department is able to take responsibility for all its tasks

- At a time of lack of resources, prevention and preparedness work are the first to be discontinued

- Talking about a modern rescue department is a little premature