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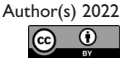
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Emotional Pasts in Swedish Rescue Services: Bringing Temporality to the Fore in the Field of Emotional Regimes

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Abstract

This article centres on emotions within the Swedish rescue services in terms of the concepts of emotional regime and emotional pasts, partly with a focus on the role of emotional pasts in emotional regimes, partly on how the (re)construction of emotional pasts relates to the organisation of the workplace. The empirical material consists of qualitative interviews with five female and 13 male firefighters in Sweden, aged 28–58. Results show that individual experiences are used as emotional pasts to define work situations in the present and that work teams, through informal conversations and formal debriefing, create stories out of central events, thus constructing shared emotional pasts. All in all, the analysis shows that temporalities and their narrative expressions are a vital part of how emotional regimes are sustained within the rescue services, which has implications for the understanding of the rescue services as an organisation.

Keywords

emotion management, emotional past, emotional regime, firefighters, temporality

Introduction

Our approach to emotions in the rescue services in this article is based on the assumption that they do not simply exist, ready to be released, but are rather born, managed, changed and expressed in and through social interaction. This means that individuals have to

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work with their emotions and that many occupations include emotion management; that is, managing situations involving emotional challenges (Hochschild, 1983). Like other employees in various types of human service occupations, firefighters also engage in emotion management in their work situation (Fineman, 2000).

The starting point is the concept of 'emotional regime', defined by Reddy (2001: 129) to call attention to the normative elements of emotions and that official practices 'express and inculcate them'. This embraces emotions conditioned by socialisation, which means that emotional displays vary according to context and that new recruits learn these norms – what Hochschild (1983) refers to as feeling rules – through socialisation. Emotional regimes do not, however, constitute a determining factor for individuals' feelings, but rather work as guidelines for actions (Jantzen et al., 2012). Socialisation to the feeling rules means that different occupations and organisations are characterised by different emotional regimes.

Conceptions and rules of emotions are not easily transferred via formal policy documents in a work organisation. Rather, it is the more informal parts of the organisation that are central in this process – for example, interaction between employees and the existing organisational narratives – which previous studies also show to be important for understanding emotions as well as the organisation itself (cf. Czarniawska, 1998). Narratives are linked to the identities of people and organisations (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994) and human emotions have a fundamental narrative dimension (Kleres, 2010). The collective narratives, in which shared assumptions of right and wrong regarding emotional expressions and practices are chiselled out and transferred, are therefore pivotal to the socialisation of the prevalent emotional regimes. This assumption is in line with research demonstrating that stories are effective tools and central to firefighters' emotional socialisation (see e.g. Scott and Myers, 2005). In this way, narratives become an important part of learning about an organisation and its rules and norms, emotional regimes included.

Emotional narratives are based on a temporal logic with sequences of 'before' and 'after' (Kleres, 2010). Emotions, consequently, have a basic temporal dimension. This is consistent with Mattley's (2002) argument that the emotional past is an important tool that can be used in the interpretation and construction of current emotions, and Nussbaum's (2003) observation that emotions should be understood in relation to their history. This indicates that the connection between emotions and temporality is necessary to fully understand emotions in general and emotions in organisations in particular.

Against this backdrop, this article contributes to the research field of emotional regimes by clarifying central temporary aspects of emotional regimes through qualitative interviews in the context of the Swedish rescue services especially. More specifically, the study is based on two questions: how do emotional pasts emerge in the emotional regimes in question? and how does the organisation of the workplace relate to (re)constructions of emotional pasts? Drawing attention to the centrality of emotional pasts and collective storytelling in the emotional regimes concerned also means highlighting how these are constructed in relation to the organisational characteristics of the firefighting occupation in particular.

In the following, we first present our starting points regarding emotional regimes and temporal orders and emotional pasts, respectively, followed by a description of our methodological considerations. By examining emotional pasts as both challenges and resources and how these are sustained through storytelling, the ensuing two empirical

sections demonstrate the intertwining between emotionality and temporality, as well as how this is related to the organisation of the workplace in question. The concluding discussion reflects more thoroughly on the meaning of results for the understanding of workplace emotional regimes.

Emotional regimes in responder organisations

The study is based on the theoretical assumption that in all human relationships there is some kind of management of emotion, in which the feelings of oneself and of others are handled (cf. Bolton, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). This handling does not take place in a vacuum but within a specific emotional regime (Reddy, 2001). The concept of emotional regime is used to refer to the emotive structure producing a certain mode of organising social processes at the micro and macro levels. It can also be used to refer to the local practice of emotion management within an organisation. The concept is similar to what Hochschild calls feeling rules (1983), as it attempts to capture something outside the individual, conditioning and affecting emotive patterns and emotional behaviour. An emotional regime consists of three aspects: emotional goals shared by a group, formal and informal recommendations for controlling the individual's cognitive and bodily expressions, and ideals that lend meaning to collective goals and individual control (Jantzen et al., 2012; Reddy, 2001). Feeling rules and emotional regimes are thus linked to different contexts, providing at least partly different emotional regimes and feeling rules (cf. Jantzen et al., 2012).

An important analytical component in emotional regimes is to consider group processes and socialisation processes (cf. Godfrey and Brewis, 2018). The group inculcates the emotional regime in the individual and teaches the individual the appropriate ways of managing emotions and their expressions. Professional practice usually requires knowledge of and skills to navigate in the local emotional environment (Flower, 2018; Yanay and Shahar, 1998). This takes place through a socialisation process, which, through its grounding in narrative iterations, by definition indicates that time and temporality are significant. Learning a profession or an occupation means gradually learning a local emotional regime in the organisation and the way that emotions are normally managed in that specific context.

In a study of wildland firefighters, Desmond (2006) notes the centrality of the socialisation processes among firefighters by arguing that becoming a firefighter not only involves acquiring knowledge of professional practice and the use of tools but also learning to think and communicate as a firefighter. This aspect includes, for example, learning to like or dislike certain things, and to develop opinions of policies and persons previously of no concern to them. A further example is given by Scott and Myers (2005), who show how older firefighters function as socialisation agents for the younger generation when it comes to practical as well as emotional labour. They argue that emotional socialisation also takes place through learning to concentrate on the practical work that they learned during training (Scott and Myers, 2005).

Previous studies of feeling rules and emotional regimes among members of responder organisations emphasise the importance of understanding them in their local organisational context; that is, what we explore through the concept of emotional regime. In a

discussion of the emotional labour that soldiers reported doing on combat operations, Godfrey and Brewis (2018) show that the military maintains special feeling rules that encourage prescriptive emotion management, including emotions of fear, delight, regret, excitement and intense pleasure. These feeling rules, characteristic of the profession, are, they argue, necessary in the training of soldiers to equip them for the risks and demands of war, including killing enemy combatants and risking their own lives. Hunter (2007) observes that this broad range of emotions, including intense experience of pleasure, can be understood as a consequence of (finally) performing the tasks trained for. In her study on firefighters, Chetkovich (1997) gives examples of existing feeling rules by illustrating how leadership and trust are based on firefighters' acting without fear while putting out a fire. This suggests that persons in risk-related occupations such as firefighting can be expected to exhibit a limited range of emotions. Further, Ely and Meyerson (2010) demonstrate that changes in emotional regimes, for example, occasioned by openly sharing emotional stress related to family problems, showing fear of certain situations or showing some level of vulnerability, also affect the way in which masculinities are staged in work organisations. This shows that emotional regimes are also related to the organisation as well as to co-workers' identities.

Feeling rules and emotional regimes in occupations such as the police, military and fire and rescue services have furthermore been described as marked by their different types of emergency responses, in which they are expected to shift between different emotions depending on situations that may quickly change. An example is given by van Gelderen et al. (2007), who illustrate that police officers express anger when correcting an offender, at the same time as they are expected to simulate sympathy for a crime victim. Shifting between different emotions is, the authors argue, one of the things that characterise responder organisations in contrast to other service organisations. In a comparative study of firefighters and correctional officers, Tracy and Scott (2006) show that firefighters can make use of the positive emotions that arise in one situation in order to manage negative and unwanted parts of work in another. They also illustrate that firefighters use a technique that they refer to as 'double-faced emotion management', which means that they neutralise their own emotions to calm the victims they meet in their work, something which could be understood as maintaining a 'professional face' (Bolton, 2001: 91).

Overall, previous research on emotional regimes and feeling rules draws attention to the importance of the local organisational context and of understanding its different dimensions and processes. The studies above also indicate that temporalities play a part, but *how* this works concretely in work organisations is not specifically addressed and therefore further study is called for.

Temporal orders and emotional pasts

In our analysis of temporal dimensions of emotional regimes, we align with previous observations that time is an ever-present dimension of human life (Adam, 1990; Zerubavel, 1981). In human and social life, time is foremost meaning, a specific mode of experience and an intrinsic dimension of subjectivity and sociality (Leccardi, 2014). According to Luckmann (1993), individuals' subjective experiences in the present are delimited by the horizons of the past and of the future. From such positioning in the present, individuals look back reflexively on experiences, or anticipate them in their

imaginations. The fact that human experience is based on a temporal, sequential order can, according to Kleres (2010), be seen as an expression of its fundamental narrative dimension, thus drawing attention to the intertwining of narrative and temporality.

With the concept of emotional past, Mattley (2002) argues that temporal processes in which experiences of the past form the basis for interpretations of events in the present also apply to individuals' emotional experiences. According to her, emotional pasts are used when individuals construct their current emotions. Similarly, Katovich and Couch (1992) argue that the past can create a sense of community as well as problems in everyday life. They use the term social past to describe the shared experiences that enable expectations and intentions based on mutual understanding. By moving backwards in time, individuals can symbolically reconstruct past emotions to make the present emotion meaningful and also create a mythical past emotion to explain the present emotion. This mythical past can be applied to support or justify an emotion in the present and to understand how previously experienced emotions are invented to support or justify an emotion in the present within a particular emotional regime (Maines et al., 1983).

Similar to how the concept of emotional regimes includes the idea that emotions are enveloped by common local rules and based on socialisation, Zerubavel (1981) uses the concept of temporal orders to highlight the temporal patterns informing society and organisations. Temporal regularity such as rigid sequential structures, fixed durations, standard temporal locations and uniform rates of recurrence are some examples of temporal organising (West-Pavlov, 2012; Zerubavel, 1981). Zerubavel (1981: 2) distinguishes between sociotemporal order, on one hand, and biotemporal and physiotemporal orders, on the other. The former frames the temporal regulation of social entities such as families, professional groups and organisations, while the latter involves living entities and are described as natural. Our analyses are confined to the sociotemporal order as a socially constructed aspect highlighting the meanings that individuals and organisations ascribe to time and temporality. Like emotional regimes, temporal orders can be understood as expressions of disciplining, thus sustaining order via socialisation and everyday practices. Below, we refer to this as temporal regimes.

Studies of temporal organising and related meaning-making in work organisations primarily demonstrate the presence of timetables – for example, in the form of age-graded career steps, which individuals are expected to follow, and being ahead of the timetable is seen as positive and being behind is regarded as negative (Lawrence, 1988). Such dichotomisation of on- and off-time (Zerubavel, 1981) shows that sociotemporal orders are based on assumptions about norms and deviation, and can, consequently, be understood as parts of a work organisation's unwritten rules. Previous studies arguing that emotions have temporal dimensions (e.g. Kleres, 2010; Mattley, 2002; Nussbaum, 2003) indicate the potential benefits of extending the study of the temporal organising of work organisations to include its interaction with emotional aspects and to clarify the interaction between emotional and temporal regimes.

Organisational context, material and method

The Swedish rescue services, the organisational context of this article, is an organisation in transition. It has been described as the last male bastion in Sweden (Glans and Rother, 2007), and the low proportion of women firefighters has recurrently been discussed as a

gender equality problem at the national level. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were no full-time employed women firefighters, which was the reason for a long-term national pursuit to recruit women. This resulted in a certain increase, and in 2015, women made up 4% of the employed firefighters in Sweden (MSB, 2016). Efforts to increase the proportion of women also met with resistance, both from firefighters and the general public, mainly based on the argument that women were assumed to be too weak, physically, to take part efficiently in rescue operations, which could jeopardise the safety of a third party. In the same period, there was also a shift in emphasis from fire responses to preventive action, concurrent with the transformation of fire stations into more general rescue service stations. Despite this, the Swedish rescue services are still male dominated, but, like Swedish society in general, to a lesser or greater extent influenced by the national gender mainstreaming strategy, which means that this organisation too is characterised by expressions of so-called equality masculinity (for the concept, see Christensen and Qvotrup, 2014; Messerschmidt, 2012). It is against the backdrop of this more general context that the results should be read.

The organisation of working time for firefighters in Sweden is based on shifts covering several days and nights, followed by days off. This means that firefighters share living quarters and everyday activities, as well as exercise together, so the work team is often described as a second family (Ericson, 2011).

This study draws on material collected for a larger research project on gender equality in the rescue services, collected through a survey, interviews, observations and text analyses. The empirical material for this article was based on qualitative interviews collected at the turn of 2016, with 13 men aged 28–58 and five women aged 32–37 working full-time as firefighters at two different fire stations in Sweden. The informants were recruited in connection with the observations conducted. The number of women and men in the sample and their respective age distribution reflect the current demographic composition in the rescue services, where women, because of the late recruitment, are not only fewer in number, but also younger than the men.

The interviews, conducted by the first author, lasted just over an hour and mostly took place during working hours in office rooms at the fire stations. In some cases, this meant that an interview was interrupted due to a fire emergency. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. On the premise that emotional regimes apply to all operations and activities, this article primarily centres on the parts of the interviews that involved narratives of emotions at work, how to prepare and manage these situations, the emotional regimes of the work organisations and the significance of social contact in the service. In the first step of the analysis, all remarks relating to emotions and how these arise were identified, and in the second step, we thoroughly examined the statements involving the temporal aspects of these processes.

The analytical process was informed by narrative analysis; firstly, in terms of the theoretical premise that human beings create meaning in their social and emotional lives through stories and that human life has a narrative character (cf. Kleres, 2010), and secondly, in terms of the method of paradigmatic analysis of narrative (see e.g. Oliver, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1995) in which the aim of analysis is to discover central elements of theoretical significance in the narratives and themes common to several narratives, rather than in-depth analysis of an individual narrative.

The analysis of the empirical material was an interpretative process conducted in several steps, starting with an identification of the stories of emotions, and strategies on how to manage them. Data collection and analysis were throughout aimed at highlighting the processes in question from the informants' perspective, with a view to finding a pattern in their narratives on emotions, in particular central types of emotion and their descriptions of how these were managed. The analysis, therefore, followed an abductive logic, alternating between theory and empirical information (Blaikie, 2007). More concretely, this means that the concepts of emotion management and feeling rules were part of the initial analyses, while themes such as emotional pasts were included in the analysis along the way as the centrality of their role emerged.

Emotional pasts augmenting individual challenges

When the informants described the presence of emotions in performing their duties, emergency responses were at the centre of attention. These were described as challenging since they included situations that were unpredictable and because the firefighters, in these situations, came to view the persons involved as human beings rather than abstract victims. When they talked about these emotional experiences, they used the narrative present tense. The narratives on major incidences were often detailed and followed a clear temporal logic, describing events in what Kleres (2010) calls a linear structure, in clearly structured sequences with beginning, middle and end. The temporal dimension was thus central to the narrative structure as well as to the way they used emotional pasts to create meaning and handle emotional challenges at work. Below, we demonstrate the importance of emotional pasts and temporality in the identified emotional regimes and how this affected the firefighters at work.

The organisational changes that the Swedish rescue services have undergone and continue to undergo have affected the emotional regimes. This was, for instance, clear in statements saying that *nowadays* talking about feelings is acceptable, which it was not *before*. This means that the emotional regimes described below should not be taken as constants but as frozen expressions of ongoing processes, as in data collection.

Emotional pasts challenging the professional role

In the empirical material, there were recurring narratives on how the informants' private rather than work-related experiences (e.g. being a father) were present in the emotion management taking place. A 49-year-old male firefighter exemplified this when talking about their team searching for the remains of a teenage girl, who had thrown herself in front of a train: 'I often think about what she looked like when we found her. I have children of the same age. How would I feel if something happened to my children? There's a lot going through your mind.' In the same vein, there were narratives about how situations involving children were more difficult to manage once they had children of their own: 'What's [emotionally taxing] I guess is when there are young children involved and you become more vulnerable after having children and terrified that something would happen to them' and 'I don't know how I would have reacted 10 years ago but today I would react completely differently since I have children of my own'. The informants

thus revealed that their experiences in their private lives may appear as an emotional past in these work situations, triggering empathy, because the presence of emotional pasts enabled identification, which made the situation emotionally taxing. This relates to research highlighting that experienced closeness and identification with other persons can trigger an empathic reaction (Clark, 1997; Cuff et al., 2014); in addition, our analysis highlighted the central role of emotional pasts in these processes. This recurring theme in narratives by both women and men, indicated that emotional pasts based on social positions and experiences beyond working life created challenging work situations and that this was an accepted way of talking about and understanding their own professional role. These narratives, in other words, had an established place in the workplace emotional regimes.

The firefighters' narratives further indicated that emotional pasts did not only surface when the victims were young but also more generally when they identified with next of kin. The incidents that the firefighters described often took place in other people's private spheres – for example, in their homes or cars. An emergency response could therefore entail being confronted with information about the victims' lives outside of the actual incident; they saw family members and artefacts such as baby bottles and toys and were faced with mobile phones ringing, and were thus reminded that the victims were real people. These statements indicated that the artefacts mentioned were associated with emotional pasts, used to place the impressions in a context, thus ascribing meaning to them. The following extract from a 36-year-old female firefighter may serve as a case in point:

> The [emotionally taxing experience] is accidents and what you see, what you are exposed to, and when you meet injured or dead people and next-of-kin. Some fatal incidents don't affect you so much, but on other occasions they can affect you a lot. It could be little things. I know that I was at a fatal accident site. It's a job you do. He was dead on site and there was nothing to do, there was no stress. Then you dissociate from the idea that it is a person until his mobile phone starts ringing in his pocket. Then you react. When we drove home afterwards, we saw his father at the roadside, and I think he had realised that it was probably his son. This is the stuff that affects you.

The interviewee above neatly summed up the perception that artefacts or grieving family members reminded the firefighters of the reality of the afflicted persons and their individual lives, which evoked their empathy, made possible through an emotional past linked to an artefact, for instance, with perceptions of a human being behind it, generating a sense of proximity and identification. Taken together, the reflections above illustrated the close interweaving of past and present in the firefighters' emotional regimes: something having happened in the firefighters' lives before the emergency response – that is, emotional pasts – contributed to meaning creation in the present situations.

Interwoven emotional and temporal regimes

A response for a firefighter can always involve potential exposure to a challenging situation. The material showed that it was seen as favourable to get this experience early on in the career. A 32-year-old female firefighter reflected as follows on her first experience of a fatal incident:

> It actually felt pretty good that a fatal incident happened so soon. And there were many who said that it was a good thing, because *otherwise you would have been waiting for it to happen*. Because at some point *you will be in a situation where you need to take care of a person who has died*. So that was a really good thing. But then again, it's sad of course. (Our emphasis)

As we can see, two reasons were given for why it should be advantageous to experience this emotionally challenging experience at an early stage. First, the idea of waiting for this kind of event to happen indicated the importance placed on actually performing what they were trained to do, which was mentioned earlier in connection with soldiers, for example (Godfrey and Brewis, 2018; Hunter, 2007). Second, the ensuing remark on having the experience of taking care of a deceased person highlighted such an experience as a professional asset, in the form of an emotional past that can be used in future emergency responses. The suggestion that firefighters may be expected to gain these emotional pasts 'early' and logically speaking also 'late', in relation to expectations and norms, indicated that emotional pasts had a central place both in the firefighters' emotional managements and in the actual emotional regime.

In the extract below, a 29-year-old male firefighter described his first encounter with a dead person in a similar way:

> I could just tell you about the first time I was affected, and that was my first fatal fire, it was the first time I saw a dead person. I carried that with me for a rather long time and I still think about it from time to time. I guess it has to do with it being the first time, and it was a child, and I was the one who found her.

This extract and others indicated that the recounted incident had become an important part of the firefighter's professional experiences and used on later occasions as a point of reference when making sense of other incidents. The iteration of living with the challenging situation could be interpreted as creating an emotional past to use in constructions of emotions in the present; for example, to interpret new work situations (Mattley, 2002). The passage also indicated that circumstances involving being confronted with emotionally challenging situations for the first time laid the foundation for new emotional pasts that could play a special role in these processes. The reasoning showed that emotional regimes were interwoven with the temporal regimes regulating activities and perceptions of what is appropriate and fitting, and, not least, *when* it should be done (cf. Zerubavel, 1981).

The interweaving of emotional and temporal regimes also emerged from the material in narratives suggesting that there was a correct timing for emotion management. One of the interviewees, for example, a 32-year-old female firefighter, reflected on the difference between being on an incident site and later thinking about it at home, clearly showing the interweaving process:

> And I think that is because you put on the uniform and assume a role on site, although it's immensely tragic and terribly boring. But then, later on that night [when we had handled an incident with a tragic outcome], I started to think that, oh my God, someone had actually lost a life partner, parents, grandparents. And it's utterly terrible. And I could start crying immediately when thinking in a wider perspective that someone is never coming home again and will always be missed.

The quote illustrates that the emotional regime encompassed a perception of a *now* and *then*, respectively, where some emotions were expected to be harboured until the completion of the response, when individual emotion management can be expected to take over. Emotional regimes were, in other words, based on sequential structures (West-Pavlov, 2012; Zerubavel, 1981).

Summing up, in this section, demonstrating the role of emotional pasts in emotional regimes and how previous personal emotional experiences (i.e. emotional pasts) were used to define the work situations, we can also see how emotional regimes were interwoven with temporal regimes, which supports the previous observations (Kleres, 2010) on emotions as temporal narrative.

Emotional pasts as resources for emotion management

In parallel with the presence of individual emotional pasts, the empirical material also involved collective emotional pasts of importance to emotion management. This section centres on emotional regimes in which collective processes were used to manage individual emotions through shared stories. This was related to a form of collective emotional pasts, which tied in with individual emotions, interactions between teammates and the creation of collective stories of central incidents (cf. Mattley, 2002).

Storytelling creating shared emotional pasts

Our material showed that some emergency responses, for example, major fires or serious car accidents, turned into shared stories of collective memory at a fire station. These stories were used as support to manage severe incidents in the present and to prepare the firefighters for incidents in the future. In other words, they were used to merge previous experiences with future practices (cf. Luckmann, 1993). At the studied stations, there were recurring stories of certain incidents that even informants who did not partake in the response, or perhaps were not even employed at the time, would talk about. The following was a case in point:

> Others have told me the story. There was an incident a few years ago where two children died in a fire. The mother stood outside screaming and the father had tried to run upstairs to save them but he had bad burns and couldn't make it up the stairs to them. When they [responders] arrived at the scene, they [parents] are screaming and it's hysterical. At the same time, you need to focus. After that incident, if you have children of your own, of course it makes you think. (28-year-old male firefighter)

The informant who did not participate in the response recaptured the situation in a temporally structured narrative of what happened, of what those involved had done and the injuries they had sustained. His description of how difficult it was to be a firefighter in this situation showed that he identified with the firefighters who were on the site at the time. There was a hint of the presence of a story that had been retold so many times that even those who were not there could make it their own and in detail give an account of events and their consequences. This use of certain emergency responses indicated that

collective storytelling had turned into an important strategy, creating an emotional past for the firefighters' emotion management. The collective stories also became a framework for how future situations should be managed and defined, practically as well as emotionally, or as a 38-year-old male firefighter put it: 'Old past incidents are of course talked about sometimes, if we train a special area they can crop up'. Historical events were thus used to create meaning in the present, which further demonstrated the presence of temporal dimensions in the emotional regimes at the fire stations. The shared narratives, in other words, were not exclusively manifested as a retelling of previous events, but rather as a socialisation practice transmitting directives on what the expected feelings would be in the events concerned, thus constituting central aspects of the local emotional regime.

Overall, the construction of shared emotional pasts appeared to be an essential part of the firefighters' emotion management and a tool used in their training for future emergency responses. This supports previous research demonstrating that emotion management among firefighters is learnt in the team and that socialisation into the occupation in the rescue service organisation includes the emotional sides of the job (Desmond, 2006; Scott and Myers, 2005). In addition, it was clear that the collective stories of previous emergency situations and what happened created a foundation for how to act in future situations and how to manage their emotions. This illustrates the key role played by collective narratives in the socialisation into emotional regimes, as also noted previously (cf. Kleres, 2010).

Social contact and organisational practices as the basis of storytelling

The empirical material highlighted that various forms of conversation created the storytelling leading to shared emotional pasts, especially the informal conversations described as taking place at the fire station. Through interpersonal interaction, the firefighters ascribed meaning to events and thus, to some extent, constructed the events retrospectively into something useful in the present, as a 46-year-old male firefighter described it:

> A lot of it is when we're sitting and talking after the shift and realise that we couldn't have done things that differently. We could have done little things, but the fire was rather aggressive when we arrived and given what it looked like it was probably already a dead heat when we arrived.

As can be seen from this description, ongoing conversations created social solidarity in the group, or as one firefighter very aptly put it: 'we are a family'. This can be understood to indicate that sharing events and processing them together through conversations created a social glue that is essential for emotion management and for maintaining emotional regimes. The particular organisation of this occupation with firefighters 'living together', as mentioned before, greatly facilitated shared storytelling with a narrative (re) construction of shared emotional pasts.

Besides informal conversations, there was a more organised way of following up serious incidents – debriefing, as exemplified in statements such as: 'We usually have debriefings sometimes after more serious things. I also think that we have become better at looking after the younger ones and those who are new.'

Debriefing was mainly about creating a whole out of the fragmentary experiences that everyone brought to the conversation (i.e. creating a shared picture of the incident in question), as described by one informant:

> You sit down as a group and you talk and everyone gets to tell their part of the story, everyone who took part in the response and who dealt with things. You get to describe, often in chronological order, the course of events. Who did what and how we did it and things like that. And that's to get an overall picture in your head. There are lots of things that you didn't see happen, what others did and saw that you didn't experience yourself. It's pretty useful to get an overall picture like that. (29-year-old male firefighter)

Another informant provided a similar description of conversations, highlighting the role of narrative when their individual experiences were given a temporal form and structure:

> Sometimes we respond to tragic things, you know. But I have always felt great support from my fellow-fighters and that I'm safe and comfortable in my work team. [. . .] Then everyone has had the opportunity to tell us what they have seen and what they have done in turn: the first person arriving at the site, the second person, the third person. And then the gaps in everyone's story are filled in and then we get a bigger picture and better understanding of how things happened. (32-year-old female firefighter)

As can be seen from the two extracts above, the shared construction of a formal narrative on an incident was based on a structured linear narrative recounting individual efforts in sequences through which everyone could see their own contribution, not only in relation to what was achieved, but also to their temporal position in the story.

As shown above, narratives were created at the fire stations through informal and formal conversations, and these provided shared emotional pasts that appeared to be an essential part of the firefighters' emotional regimes. It was also pointed out that the storytelling constituted a strategy to manage and cope with emotions, thus exemplifying how new members were socialised into the occupation (cf. Desmond, 2006; Scott and Myers, 2005). It was also made clear that the collective stories of previous emergency situations and what happened created a foundation for how the firefighters could act in future situations and how they could manage their emotions. These descriptions highlighted that both the close contacts with frequent informal conversations and the formal debriefings were central in the processes, where shared emotional pasts were created. Taken together, this emphasises the importance of the formal and informal organising of the workplace in the establishing of emotional regimes.

Concluding remarks

In this article, we examine emotional regimes in the Swedish rescue services by particularly focusing on their temporal dimensions. The intertwining of emotions and temporalities is clarified through illustrations of the presence of individual and collective emotional pasts in the emotional regimes studied. By showing the presence of shared conceptions of best timing regarding developing individual emotional pasts, as well as when emotions

should be managed, we also show how temporal dimensions are central to emotional regimes. This is in line with previous research arguing for the temporal dimensions of emotions (see e.g. Kleres, 2010; Mattley, 2002; Nussbaum, 2003) and pointing to the value of further analysis of emotions as temporal narratives (cf. Kleres, 2010).

Results show that emotional pasts appear in emergency responses and can contribute to creating emotional challenges. At the same time, it is shown that emotional pasts shared by a work collective are also used together and individually to manage the emotional challenges of work. They are, in other words, a resource in the employees' emotional management. Emotional pasts, in this material, emerge as both something *contributing to emotional challenges* in emergency responses and as something that *can be used as resources* by individual employees in emotional management. Expressions of this as recounted above should not be seen as a theoretically founded distinction, but rather as an outcome of the empirical material in this study. In other organisational contexts, emotional pasts as challenge or resource may take other forms. The consequences of individual and collective emotional pasts should, in other words, be the subject of further analysis in different work organisations.

Our results also illustrate that there are shared conceptions at the fire stations of what is assumed to be the best time to *both* experience difficult emergency responses to develop individual emotional pasts as resources, *as well as* manage emotional challenges. Generally speaking, this shows aspects of organisational conceptions of timing and how these form part of emotional regimes. The temporal order of the rescue service is characterised by distinctive features – for instance, gaining an emotional past early in the career – thus, strengthening employees' ability to manage work-related challenges, is, not surprisingly, regarded as a positive thing since such challenges are what firefighters train for (cf. Hunter, 2007). A central contribution, however, is the exposure itself of the *presence of* conceptions of timing concerning acquiring relevant emotional pasts. This shows that the temporal organising of work organisations does not only involve when individuals are expected to make a career or perform various duties (Krekula, 2019; Lawrence, 1988), but also that conceptions of disciplining through dichotomisation of on–off time (Zerubavel, 1981) involve emotional regimes and individual emotion management. This is a further example of the value of further analysis of both emotional regimes and organising work from a temporal perspective.

The disclosure above that emotional management takes place even *after* the response, also shows that emotional management is based on temporal orders, which reasonably can be expected to vary between work organisations. The sequential structuring of what emotional management should preferably be carried out in the workplace and home, respectively, suggests that emotional management is not restricted to the workplace but something individuals harbour and manage beyond working hours (cf. Montgomery et al., 2006; Wagner et al., 2014). In addition, we can see new aspects of the temporal organising in work organisations and that these merged spatiotemporal aspects are further factors contributing to blurring the border between work and home. This is thus a central aspect of the difficulty of maintaining a work–life balance (Sirgy and Lee, 2018).

In addition, the findings that emotional experiences gained outside of work may be present in work-related emotion management and that emotional work challenges may be managed privately show that the emotional past can also function as a bridge between

individuals' various life spheres. This is in line with Mattley's (2002) argument that emotional pasts are crucial in the interpretation of contemporary emotions. Previous studies link narrative to collective memory – for example, as a tool for groups to process the past (see e.g. Wertsch, 2008). This is consistent with our observation above that emotional pasts play a crucial role in emotion management, in individual and collective constructions of emotional regimes and in definitions of various situations at work.

Previous research on emotions and emotional regimes in responder organisations commendably shows the presence of delimited emotions (see e.g. Chetkovich, 1997; Hunter, 2007), and how their emotional management can be understood based on the different types of emergency responses (Tracy and Scott, 2006; van Gelderen et al., 2007). Our results are consistent with these studies and specifically contribute by highlighting the role of informal processes in establishing emotional regimes, processes in which storytelling is the fundamental agent for creating shared emotional regimes. Being socialised into emotional, we regimes is to internalise a culture where informal conversations and storytelling are central formative practices. This further strengthens the contextual and organisational basis of emotional regimes.

Two characteristic features are central in the construction of emotional pasts in the studied work organisation, and thus also in the (re)construction of emotional regimes. The first feature is based on the fact that work teams spend so much time together beyond responses and training, which means that they have informal time, greatly enabling the construction of a shared emergency response narrative. The second organisational feature concerns the fact that the acknowledged emotional challenges that come with the job have meant that debriefing after tragic incidents has a formal place in this organisation. The two features account for the fact that this organisation provides space *both* for elaborate storytelling related to developing shared emotional pasts, *and* for ensuring that emotional challenges in the past are organisationally employed to establish shared understandings of how duties are best performed in the present and the future. This indicates that the context provided by the organisation constitutes an important resource for emotion management, which has also been pointed out earlier (Ely and Meyerson, 2010). The intertwining of emotional regimes and temporal dimensions, demonstrated in this article, should be understood against the background of the characteristic organisational features. As a result, findings are not directly transferable to other/all organisations; rather, they indicate the need to further clarify *how* the temporal dimensions of local emotional regimes relate to the characteristics of a specific work organisation.

As mentioned above, the Swedish rescue service field has undergone and is undergoing continued extensive organisational changes. Among other things, these concern the transition from being a 'fire station' to being a 'first responder station', with more time for prevention duties and parallel efforts to recruit more women as firefighters. As pointed out above, these changes affect emotional regimes. This means that even in delimited operational areas (like the Swedish rescue services), there may exist several emotional regimes, again indicating the need of contextual analysis.

In previous studies, the close contact for days between the firefighters in their shared daily life of cooking, sleeping and fitness training is emphasised as central to professional socialisation in many career areas, arguing that socialisation does not only pertain to skills and competences, but also to the acquisition of values and taste (Scott and Myers, 2005;

Yarnal et al., 2004). In addition, this article makes clear that socialisation into an occupation also includes the acquisition of shared emotional pasts and conceptions of correct timing regarding acquiring functional pasts and when and where to manage emotional challenges. Summing up, this article demonstrates that a temporal perspective contributes to a deeper understanding of workplace emotional regimes as well as to the complex emotion management of this specific occupational group.

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