Sensemaking in Complex Situations

-A case study of the
Emergency Service of Copenhagen

MSc in Strategy, Organization and Leadership
Copenhagen Business School 2013
Master Thesis

Ingrid Arem Gundersen
Johanna Fanny Elisabeth Hansell

Supervisor: Per Darme, IOA
Hand in date: July 12, 2013
Number of characters: 246,223 ≈ 108 pages
Executive Summary

The purpose of this thesis is to expand an already existing theory with an analytical and empirical contribution. Karl E Weick introduced sensemaking in organizations for more than 20 years ago. However, there has not been done much research on sensemaking in organizations that are characterized by working with complex situations, such as the Emergency Services. Within the Emergency Service, one finds professions such as Police, Ambulance drivers and Firefighters.

People working in these professions have to face complex situations on a daily basis when they are called out to a task, and their work is associated with having to work under ambiguity and uncertainty. They do not know what they are going to meet when they get the call from the dispatcher, and they have to solve tasks in all kinds of environment.

As we felt there were lacking research regarding how people working in such professions sensemake about their job, we wanted to contribute by investigating how employees working in Copenhagen’s Emergency Service sensemake about the decisions they have to make when they are faced with complex situations in their job.

To be able to investigate this, we have done a multiple case study on Falck and the Danish Police Force, as they are the major actors in the Emergency Service of Copenhagen. By interviewing employees in these organizations, we were able to gather empirical data that could be used to analyze the afore mentioned problem.
Acknowledgements

We would like to send a special thanks to our supervisor Per Darmer, for competent feedback and good support through the process of writing this thesis.

We would also give a warm thanks to the employees from Falck and the Police Officers from Copenhagen that gave us their time to interview them. Without their participation, we would not have been able to conduct this thesis.

Furthermore, we would like to thank family and friends for backing us up, and motivation us through the last six months. Special thanks goes to Peer Lund, for assisting us in the work of proofreading the paper.

Lastly, we would like to thank each other for the excellent corporation. It was a pleasure doing research, discussing and writing together.

// Johanna & Ingrid
Table of Content

1. Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 7
   1.1 Introduction to the Topic ................................................................................................. 7
   1.2 Background for Choice of Topic ..................................................................................... 9
   1.3 Research Area ................................................................................................................ 10
       1.3.1 Research Question ................................................................................................. 10
       1.3.2 Explanation of the Research Question .................................................................... 11
   1.4 Scope/ Aim .................................................................................................................... 11
   1.5 Thesis Outline .............................................................................................................. 11
2. Targeted Organizations ...................................................................................................... 13
   2.1 Falck ............................................................................................................................. 14
       2.1.1 The Ambulance Service ......................................................................................... 14
       2.1.2 The Fire Department ............................................................................................ 15
   2.2 The Danish Police Force ............................................................................................... 16
3. Methodology ..................................................................................................................... 17
   3.1 Research Design ........................................................................................................... 18
       3.1.1 An Analytical and Empirical Contribution ............................................................. 18
       3.1.2 An Deductive Approach ....................................................................................... 18
   3.2 Social Science .............................................................................................................. 19
       3.2.1 Epistemological Concerns .................................................................................... 19
       3.2.2 Ontological Concerns .......................................................................................... 20
       3.2.3 Social Constructivism ........................................................................................... 21
   3.3 Data Collection ............................................................................................................ 22
       3.3.1 A Qualitative Research ......................................................................................... 22
       3.3.2 Formulating the Research Question ...................................................................... 24
       3.3.3 Choosing Interviewees .......................................................................................... 25
       3.3.4 Designing the Interview Guide ............................................................................. 28
       3.3.5 Conducting the Qualitative Interview ................................................................. 29
       3.3.6 Secondary Data .................................................................................................... 31
   3.4 Data Analysis .............................................................................................................. 31
       3.4.1 Transcribing .......................................................................................................... 31
9.1 The Interview Guide ................................................................. 106
9.2 The Observation Chart ............................................................ 108
9.3 The Reflection Chart ............................................................... 110
9.4 Transcribed Interviews ............................................................ 111
1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Topic

Every day, both at work and at home, we are all faced with situations where we have to make decisions. Not all decisions are equally important, but regardless of that, a choice has to be made in order to move forward. Sometimes it might be difficult to fully understand the situations one are facing when the decisions have to be made, and other times one has to make choices under time pressure and with almost no information at hand. Making such decisions can be especially hard to do when the situations are difficult to comprehend, but often decisions have to be made regardless of the given context. One simply has to make sense of the situations with the information one has been given, in order to make the best possible decision at the time.

The terminology concerning giving meaning to what one is experiencing, are among scholars referred to as sensemaking, a concept many have addressed in different contexts. As this thesis is going to be a study of sensemaking in organizations, it is the work of Karl E. Weick that will be relevant to use, as he was the first to introduce the term sensemaking in the context of organizational studies. He has conducted several studies on how people in organizations are making sense of what they are experiencing in social contexts. Weick (1995) is an advocate for the need of structuring the unknown, in order for people in organizations to fully understand the decisions they have to make. One of his opinions is that sensemaking is a collective process where a group work together in order to make sense of situations.

In this thesis, we would like to explore sensemaking in organizations by investigating how certain employees sensemake about their decision making process in situations that may be perceived as complex for them. We will look more into how one is able to grasp situations if one is lacking information in order to make a decision, or if one finds oneself in a situation that is new and unknown. By further investigating sensemaking in complex situations, we hope to make an analytical- and empirical contribution to a theoretical field where much is still unexplored.
Both the concept of sensemaking and decision making are well addressed by other scholars in the past, but few have combined them in the same way that we wish to do. Sjöberg, Wallenius, & Larsson (2006) are some of the scholars who have contributed to the research of decision making in complex situations, which will be one of the main focus areas in this thesis. In their article, that we came across in the search for inspiration to this thesis, they aim to develop a theoretical understanding of decision making in stressful and complex rescue operations. One of their main arguments for conducting their research was that there is lacking research in this area. When concluding their findings, they acknowledged that much more research there has to be done within this field. This statement caught our attention, and was one, among other findings that lead to our interest in this particular field of research.

Sjöberg, Wallenius, & Larsson (2006) used four complex rescue operations in Sweden as the case for their study. The focus on rescue operation is highly relevant in regards to decision making in complex situations, as the employees in such organizations are exposed to complex situations where tough decision making is a central theme. People working in the emergency services are used to situations where it can be difficult to make the right decision. So what is it that enables them able to make such decisions under time pressure and with limited amount of information? This is what we want to investigate in the thesis, and the findings might be applicable for other people who find themselves in a complex situation, as decision making in complex situation is not only something that is relevant for the employees of the emergency service.

Weick (1993) has also contributed to the research on rescue operations. In his article “The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster” he focuses on how people sensemake when finding themselves in a cosmological episode, a situation that is unknown to them, and where they feel like it is something they have never seen before. He points out that by looking into the Mann Gulch disaster, one can learn how to avoid sensemaking collapse in other similar situations. He proposes four potential sources of resilience that makes organizational groups less vulnerable of disruptions of sensemaking. These four sources and the story of Mann Gulch is something that will be explained for, and deeper investigated later on in this thesis, as it is a case that has several similarities to our own research. As this thesis is more an exploration of a theoretical field where empirical data is missing, we do not want to investigate single events like Sjöberg, Wallenius, & Larsson (2006) and Weick (1993) did in their research. Rather, we wish to conduct an empirical
research where the focus is on a selected group of employees from some specific professions that is more likely to find themselves in complex situation than others might be in.

1.2 Background for Choice of Topic

As mentioned before, there were several reasons why we wanted to write this thesis, and one of the main events that turned our attention to how important the sensemaking- and decision making process is for people when they are challenged by an unfamiliar events, was the terror attack in Oslo 22nd of July 2011. This awful day lead to a massive criticism of the emergency service in Oslo, and especially the Police were criticized for their handling of the situation. One reason for this could be that in major catastrophes, the Police are given the role as the operational leader and therefore, they have to be accountable for the outcome afterwards. It is our perception that the reason why the situation was not managed in an optimal way is due to a possible sensemaking collapse that the people involved experienced in the situation. This was the first terror attack Norway had experienced, and none, or few, of the people involved in the rescue operation had ever faced similar events before. This may have led to a collapse in their sensemaking, which again can have resulted in bad decision making, or the lack of decision making, as they did not know what to do. It is possible that they were not able to make sense of what they were experiencing at that moment, which is essential in situations like this.

This event, in combination with the lack of focus in theory regarding sensemaking and decisions making in complex situation has led to our aspiration to contribute with some additional research in the field. Being inspired by Weick (1995) and Sjöberg, Wallenius, & Larsson (2006), we wish to figure out how the sensemaking process unfolds when people in organizations find themselves in a complex situation where there is a need for making quick decisions.

In order to explore this phenomenon we are going to use the employees of the Emergency Service of Copenhagen (ESC). This involves the ambulance emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and Firefighters working for Falck, and Police Officers from the Police Force working in, and around Copenhagen. We believe that these particular employees have experienced situations where they had to make difficult decisions in a split of a moment, and that we can learn much from their sensemaking about this.
By choosing to conduct a research on a group of organizations rather than doing a single case study, we believe that the findings will be more credible, as well as relevant as they all belong to the ESC. As these organizations often work together with different tasks, there is reason to believe that they will perceive certain situations quite similar, and that it will add value to the thesis by involving all of them.

1.3 Research Area
The essence is to combine sensemaking with decision making. We see decision making as an essential part of the leadership process, and that they are closely intervened. Decision making will always be an important part of leadership, but leadership in itself involves much more than just making decisions. Some might say that leadership is exclusive for appointed leaders, but we believe that leadership is, among other, the ability to make decisions when it is needed. Thus, as we see leadership as something that is socially constructed, we believe everyone can act as leaders and conduct leadership. Especially in the professions that we are investigating, the ability to make decisions under high pressure are very important. Both time and information is limited, and decisions often have to be made without the opportunity to consider all possibilities. In this sense, the sensemaking process that the employees go through to comprehend the situation can be critical in order to be able to make the best possible decisions at the time.

1.3.1 Research Question
In order to be able to investigate the aforementioned problem, the following question will be the research question in this thesis:

_How do the employees of the Emergency Services of Copenhagen make sense of their decision making process in complex situations?_
1.3.2 Explanation of the Research Question
By investigating how the employees’ of the ESC sensemake in situations that for them is perceived as complex, we hope to be able to find some general patterns of what is the underlying reasons for how they make decisions. We do not define the term complex situations for the interviewees, as we are more interested in what they see as a complex situation. Some might see it as situations that are more difficult to handle, others view complex situations as those events where feelings are involved due to the unexpected. As a sensemaking process is highly personal, we believe it is important to not influence the interviewees too much by defining this term.

When it comes to the term make sense in the research question, this refers to Weick’s perception of sensemaking in organizations. We will use his work to guide us through the analysis in this thesis. It was natural to put this empirical study in the context of Copenhagen and the areas around, as we know the area well.

1.4 Scope/ Aim
The aim with this thesis is to make an analytical- and empirical contribution to the existing sensemaking theory by conducting a qualitative research. Through the investigation of the employees at the ESC, we aim to figure out how people who deal with complex situations on a regular basis are able to make sense of these situations. We believe that this is something we will be able to do by examine the sensemaking process these people experience when they are out doing their job. As this is a relative unexplored area, the goal is to be able to make an empirical contribution concerning the relevant topic.

1.5 Thesis Outline
To make it easier for the reader to get an overview of the whole thesis, we have made a model to illustrate how the thesis is built up, and what is included in the different sections. The model can be used as a reading guidance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Organizations</th>
<th>• Presentation of Falck and the Police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>• Research Design: a deductive approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social Science: social constructivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Data Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limitations &amp; Credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>• Main Theories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sensemaking by Weick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supporting Theories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>• Part 1: The Seven Properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Part 2: The Primary Properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Part 3: Expanding the Properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>• If we were to rewrite the properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The creation of professional identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How generalizable our findings are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>• Concluding Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Main Findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1: Thesis Outline*
2. Targeted Organizations

As mentioned in the introduction, we wish to use the organizations that are part of the ESC for gathering empirical data to this thesis. The ESC is a collaboration between the Police Force, the Ambulance services and the Fire Department. These services are in general controlled by public organizations in the region or the municipalities, and it is these organizations that are responsible for making sure that there is a proper system for its citizens. Nevertheless, in some cases, the public service is not enough and the region needs help from private actors. In the Copenhagen area, the private organization Falck is helping the public actors with operating the ambulances and the fire trucks.

We have targeted both the public and the private organizations that collaborates on the emergency service as we wanted to look at the triangle that works together to assist the citizens living in the Copenhagen area. While the Police Officers we have talked to are working for a public organization, both the EMTs and the Firefighters are working for Falck, a private one. As one of the persons we interviewed puts it: “(...) normally we work in a triangle or what you call it, we have the Firefighters, the EMT’s and the police, and if you take one of those away it does not work.” (EMT1, 2013, p.6)

![Figure 2: The relation triangle of the ESC](image-url)
2.1 Falck
Falck is a Danish privately owned company dated back to 1884 that works towards preventing accidents, illnesses and emergencies, to rescue and assist people quickly, and to rehabilitate sick and injured people (Falck, 2013b). Today they are located in more than 31 countries with 24 400 employees worldwide. Their business segment is divided into four divisions: Assistance, Emergency, Healthcare and Training. In this thesis, we are focusing on the Emergency division, as both the Ambulance Service and the Fire Department are located here. The first rescue team was established back in 1906, and since then they have worked with both rescue operations and prevention of accidents. Falck has six values that are important for them, and guides them in how they execute their work: accessible, competent, efficient, fast, helpful and reliable (Falck, 2013a).

2.1.1 The Ambulance Service
Falck’s ambulance service is an important part of the pre-hospital care for the citizens of Copenhagen. Together with the municipalities own ambulance service, Falck is responsible for the transport of sick and injured people in the Copenhagen area. At the same time, they are a part of the emergency team that responds to calls, and are first at the scene when something has happened. In Europe, Falck is the largest ambulance operator, and they have in addition expanded to USA and Latin America.

In order to work at Falck as an EMT one has to go through several years of training. Falck educates its own employees, and once employed one get the position as ambulance assistant after having finished a theory course first. The next level at the ambulance service is the ambulance treater, which would refer to the level of paramedic in the English system (National Health Service, 2013). However, as the Danish system and the English system is not exactly the same, we have chosen to give it another name. In Danish, this level is called “ambulancebehandler”, and one can reach this level after one has worked a minimum of 1,5 years as an assistant. The last obtainable level, in the Danish system, is paramedic. This level requires that one has worked several years as both an assistant and a treater, and that one goes back to school for some months to expand the knowledge (Falck, 2013b). The difference in the three levels has mainly to do with experience, and which medications one is allowed to give the patients.
Falck has several ambulance stations in, and around Copenhagen, that each has responsibility for one specific area. The amount of assignments each station gets during a day varies a lot, but the station in central Copenhagen is the busiest station in all of Denmark. Here an EMT can have up to 12-15 missions in one 12-hour shift that they have to respond to, which is quite a heavy work load. Two people operate one ambulance, where at least one of them has to be on a higher level than assistant. The EMTs do not have a regular partner that they work with, but shift to drive with different people from the station, and they take on different roles in the ambulance. To begin with, there is the driver who has the responsibility to transport the patients to and from the hospital in the best possible way. Secondly, the person in the passenger seat is responsible for communication with the dispatch, take first contact with the patient and make the decisions that are needed. In other words, the driver has to follow the lead of the person in the passenger seat when they are out in the field.

It is the Alarm central 112 that delegates assignments, and operates as the link between the person, or persons, that needs help, and the ambulance that is assigned to the scene. When being called out to an accident, the EMTs get information from the dispatch about who is hurt, where they have to go to, how they are hurt and so on. Based on this information, the EMTs can prepare themselves for what they are going to meet when arriving at the scene.

2.1.2 The Fire Department

While as Falck is foremost a major actor in the ambulance sector, the Fire Department is a smaller part of their core business. Regardless of this, Falck is still the largest private fire brigade in Europe, operating in nine countries (Falck, 2013b). The reason for this could be that the fire brigade often is controlled by the municipality or the region, and that there is not a big need for private organizations in this particular field. In Copenhagen, it is the Copenhagen Fire Brigade, handled by the municipality, which has the responsibility for the central areas of the city, while Falck has stations a bit outside the main center, and is responsible for the areas around the city.

In the past, Falck’s education was organized in such a way that it gave the employees experience in all business areas that Falck operated in. This has led to many employees moving around in the organization, trying different jobs. Hence, many of the people working at the Fire Department today, have earlier worked either as an EMT or with auto rescuing. Now a days, the education is
structured differently, and one begins as a part time Firefighter, and one goes through intensive training in both fire extinguishing and first aid before moving up to a full time firefighter (Falck, 2013b). Falck has been able to keep its employees for a long time as they train their own employees. If one is not able to work in one unit, one is simply moved to another where one can still use ones expertise and contribute to Falck’s values.

The amount of people operating one fire truck at Falck depends on what kind of truck is called out to the scene. However, a six-man team operates the regular truck where one drives, one is the operation leader who talks with the dispatch, and communicates the information given to the other team members. The last four people in the back of the car, is shifting between being smoke divers and a regular Firefighter that controls the water hose. As with the EMTs, the Firefighters do not work in the same teams every day, so the group one works in changes for every shift.

2.2 The Danish Police Force

The Danish Police Force consists of 12 police districts in mainland Denmark, plus departments in both Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Approximately 14,000 people work in the organization, whereas 11,000 of them are Police Officials. The Minister of Justice is the Police’s chief authority, and all rules and laws are decided by the parliament. In all districts, there is a main police station that provides round-the-clock service and a number of local police stations that serve the citizens of the community in the daytime.

Back in 2007, the Danish Police went through a major reform change where 54 police districts were turned into today’s 12 districts. The objective was to achieve a more modern police service with sustainable police districts that on their own were able to carry out major investigations, provide large-scale emergency- and support services. Another goal was that over time, there would be more Police Officers in the street making the citizens feel more secure (The Police, 2009). During the change process in the Police, the politicians and the leaders of the Police Force got massive criticism for the reform as it backfired against them. Instead of shortening the distance between the Officers and the citizens, the reform led to more bureaucracy and paperwork, making less time for the Police Officers to actually be out on the streets fighting crime (TV2, 2008).
To become a Police Officer in the Danish Police Force requires a thorough education at the Police academy that is run by the Police itself. The training program runs over a period of three years and includes both theoretical practice at the academy, and time spent in the Police to get the practical training that is needed. After graduating from the academy, Officers are placed in one of the police departments, and guaranteed a job until they retire (The Police, 2013).

The objective for the Police Officers is to spend most of the time out on patrol in the streets. Two Officers are operating one car, and neither they have a regular partner that they work with. At the start of a shift, the teams are put together, and it is up to each team to decide who takes on which role. The roles are divided so that one drives and has responsibility for the car, while the other Officer is the passenger and has first contact with the situation they are called out to. This means that it is the passenger that is responsible for the communication with the dispatch, responding to the people they are called out to, and makes the main decisions at the scene.

3. Methodology

When conducting a research, scientists need to ask themselves many questions, and make several choices in regards to why and how their specific research should be conducted. It would be much easier to ‘cut to the chase’ and simply provide the reader with a result and a short summary of how it came to be that way. However, the practice of business research does not exist completely sealed off from the social sciences and the various intellectual commitments that their practitioners hold (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Hence, we need to explain the choices we have made throughout this qualitative research, since characterizing the link between theories and underlying worldviews, together with research, is by no means a straightforward matter. Therefore, a description of the choices and de-selections, the philosophy of science, type of data collection and approaches to analyzing the findings for this thesis, will be presented in the following. To make it easier to get an overview of the methodology section, the figure below can be used as a reading guidance.
3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 An Analytical and Empirical Contribution

This thesis should be seen as a multiple case study where the focus is to contribute with more analytical- and empirical data in regards to already existing sensemaking theory. The similarities between a single case study and this thesis’ type of contribution are many, especially throughout the data collecting process. The main components of such a study, which are relevant for this thesis, is the use of research question, theoretical propositions, units of analysis, the logic linking data to theoretical propositions and the criterion for evaluating the propositions (Lee, 1999).

3.1.2 An Deductive Approach

When approaching a subject, researchers always need to choose between two, or more, completely opposite reasoning in regards to the relationship between theory and research data. In other words, we as researches needed to figure out how we should work towards a result that provides us with the sufficient data and theory needed for this thesis. The two most common approaches used by researchers are often called the “top-down” and “bottom up”, and are also known as deductive and inductive theory (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In this thesis, we will have a deductive point of departure as we started out with Weick’s sensemaking theory, but there will be elements of an iterative approach as well. This approach turned out to be the most suitable one for this thesis, as it could be seen as a middle way between the two most known approaches.

The iterative approach involves a weaving back and forth between theory and data, since each new finding affects the next step of the process (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This weaving has to be repeated until all the data and theory is found. For us, it practically meant that we started out by using Weick’s theory about sensemaking as the main theory, and used this theory as guidance for the rest of the research. Based on that, we went on by conducting the qualitative interviews, which of course then were influenced by the theory choice we had already made. However, as the interviews went along, and data were collected, we started to see patterns. The patterns in the empirical data indicated that there were more theories than just sensemaking that would be suitable for this thesis. Therefore, one can say that in line with the iterative approach, there was a constant flow between theory and data throughout this whole thesis as illustrated in the figure below.
Theory regarding the iterative approach says that once the phase of theoretical reflection on a set of data has been carried out, the researcher might want to collect further data in order to establish the conditions in which a theory will or will not hold, more or less follow up on a hypothesis. This strategy resembles small parts of both the deductive and inductive approach. As mentioned, it mainly means that researchers are weaving back and forth between data and theory, as we have done throughout the data collecting process.

### 3.2 Social Science

#### 3.2.1 Epistemological Concerns

An epistemological issue, concerns the question of what is, or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline (Bryman & Bell, 2007). It reflects how people recognize the reality, and what assumptions one put into the foundation for the production of knowledge. The substance is looked upon as either objective: realism, or subjective: constructivism (Jordansen & Madsen, 2010). Throughout this thesis, we are working within the frames of the subjective side of the epistemology, and we are concerned with those values found within constructivism. As known, we are conducting a qualitative research, and we recognize the fact that when we as human beings are studying other human beings, we cannot stay objective. Quantitative researchers, on the other hand, commonly
assume their independence from the variables they study, whereas qualitative researchers as ourselves often assume that we must interact with the studied phenomena (Lee, 1999). Interaction between the interviewees and us took place from the first e-mail correspondence to the last farewell handshake. Our very presence in the interview room, the way we looked, smelled, sat, talked and the way we asked questions, everything effected both them, and us. Therefore, it is safe to say that we have chosen to conduct this thesis with a subjective and constructivist acceptance.

3.2.2. Ontological Concerns

Questions of social ontology are concerned with the nature of social objects. It is the study of the existence of the world (Jordansen & Madsen, 2010). The central point is the question of whether social entities can, and should be, considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered as social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors. These different views are often referred to respectively as objectivism and subjectivism (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Whereas quantitative researchers typically assume a single objective world, qualitative researchers as in this thesis, typically assume that multiple subjectively derived realities can coexists (Lee, 1999).

This thesis’ ontological beliefs belong to constructivism, thereby we challenge the thoughts that organizations, cultures and for that matter, sensemaking, is pre-given. Constructivism stresses the fact that social phenomena, and their meanings, are continually being accomplished by social actors. In other words, people, things, thoughts and meanings are socially constructed. It also implies that social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction, but that they are also in a constant state of change due to social interaction (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This constructive way of viewing the world goes hand in hand with the main theory of this thesis, namely sensemaking. Within sensemaking theory, a crucial point is that sensemaking has no clear beginning or end. Rather it is a constantly developing and changing process, always reacting to cues and social interaction (Weick, 1995). Hence, when studying human’s sensemaking process in complex situations, we consider the most logical ontological consideration to be the constructivism perspective, just as in this thesis.
3.2.3 Social Constructivism

“There is no one characteristic borne by all members of a family, but there are enough recurrent features shared amongst different family members to identify the people as basically belonging to the same family group.” (Burr, 2003, p.2)

The citation above is a metaphor for the same principles that are adaptable for social constructivism. Namely, that there is no single feature that could be said to identify a social constructivist’s perspective. Instead, one might think of social constructivism more as an approach that has its foundation in one or more of the following key assumptions posed by Gergen, who has a critical stance towards knowledge taken for granted, historical and cultural specificity, social processes sustain knowledge and knowledge and social action go together. (Burr, 2003)

When conducting this research with a social constructivist perspective, we take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, including ourselves. This approach invites researchers as us, to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematic yields its nature. Likewise, it encourages us to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observations of the world (Burr, 2003).

The underlying beliefs in this thesis is that there is no such thing as complete objectiveness. We believe that there is a strong possibility that the specific findings and outcomes of this thesis might have looked different if others where to have conducted the exact same research, since human beings studying the social world will always be subjective to some degree. Nor is it in our belief that the world, and the questions and answers towards it, can be divided into rights and wrongs. Rather, one should be ever so suspicious of assumptions made about how the world appears to be (Burr, 2003).

Depending on how one understands the world, if it is in terms of men or women, pop music or classical music, past or future etc. depends on where one lives in the world, and when one lived. This means that all ways of understanding the universe are historical and cultural related. Not only are the ways of understanding specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are also seen as products of that culture and history, and are dependent upon the particular social and economic conditions occurring in that culture at that time (Burr, 2003). Interpreting the last
sentence, one could suggest that “all ways of understanding the world” could be translated into “how people sensemake”. Likewise, one could suggest that “culture and time” could be translated into “Copenhagen in 2013”. Following those suggestions, it might be fair to assume that, based on a social constructivist approach, the way the interviewees’ sensemake, and understand their own sensemaking process, is partly due to the culture and the time they are living in. Hence, it might also be fair to suggest that since the interviewees and we as researchers are interacting within the same culture and time, there are good chances for similar understanding of the world and thereby a similar sensemaking process. However, this does not mean that we share the same sensemaking process, because that is something that would be individual for everyone. Yet it proposes that when belonging to the same socially constructed background, it might enhance the understanding for one another (Burr, 2003).

Finally, if the knowledge of the world is not derived from the nature of the world, where does it then come from? The social constructivist’s answer is that people construct it together. It is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our forms of knowledge become invented (Burr, 2003). This also goes for the sensemaking process, which is a constant creation and re-creation of knowledge in the world we live. Due to interactions among people and the extraction of cues that we react and enact to, we construct others and ourselves throughout a social process (Weick, 2001). Therefore, social constructivism is the social science within this thesis, and it should further be made clear that we regard objectivity as impossible when it comes to humans studying other humans’ behavior. Thus as Burr (2003) argues, no human being can step outside of their humanity and view the world from no position at all.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 A Qualitative Research

In general, qualitative research tends to be more concerned with words rather than numbers, just as we are in this thesis. The most common characteristics are as described above a subjective epistemological position and a constructive ontological position. When working with a qualitative research, there are a number of steps a researcher can choose to follow. Suggestively according to Bryman & Bell (2007), the process could look like this:
In this thesis, we have more or less followed the above mentioned structure for conducting a qualitative research. However, we have chosen to select new headlines for the steps and only used it as a guideline rather than following it blindly. To use theories and models more as a guideline, rather than as a fixed solution is something that Blumer supports (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Blumer have for a long time argued against the use of definitive concepts when it comes to social research. He means that the idea of definitive concepts is typified by the way researchers work in quantitative research. Meaning, once a concept is developed, it becomes fixed. Moreover, Blumer recommends that social researchers should recognize that the concepts they use are sensitive concepts in the way they provide a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances (Bryman & Bell, 2007), a recommendation we have followed all the way through this thesis. Furthermore, Kvale suggests that qualitative research most often focuses on the identification of meaningful categories, or parts of organizational phenomena (Lee, 1999). In this thesis, the organizational phenomenon that we are trying to identify, and give meaning to, is sensemaking and the category can be seen as complex situations. Additionally, Kvale suggests that the selection of appropriate tools to conduct a qualitative research depends upon the analytic situation (Lee, 1999). The main tool needed for this qualitative research was a semi-structured interview guide. This guide will be further explained later on.
Another underlying idea of many qualitative researchers is that the studied subject of the social sciences, people, and their social world, differs a lot from the subject of the natural sciences. A key difference is that in compare to atoms and molecules, people actually do attribute meaning to events and to their environment (Bryman & Bell, 2007). As a result, many qualitative researchers express a commitment to viewing events and the social world through the eyes of the people that they are studying. The argument is that the social world must be interpreted from the perspective of the people being studied, rather than as subjects that are incapable of their own reflections on the social world.

We have been highly observant on this matter, and therefore studied background information about the ESC before the interviews were conducted. We did this in order to get an idea of how the interviewees’ daily work looked like, and to understand which frames they are working within. By doing so, we believed that we would be able to understand their stories and worldviews better. However, even though we wanted to get familiar with their field of work, we did not at any time turn “native”, referring to becoming a part of the organization one studies, which according to some is considered a bias within the qualitative field of research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). There were far too little time spent within the organizations for that to happen, which is both positive and negative. The positive side to it was, as mentioned, that we did not turn native and were not too influenced by the studied employees. However, if we had spent more time within the different organizations, maybe we would have been able to get a wider understanding of their routines, culture and identities, and thereby develop a deeper understanding of their sensemaking processes.

Throughout the process of the qualitative research, we tried not to influence the interviewees’ sensemaking process too much in order to avoid biases. Although, merely our presence in the interview room have off course affected them since we are all social creatures and we influence each other also by “not doing anything” (Weick, 1995).

3.3.2 Formulating the Research Question
At the beginning of this research, we knew that we were interested in finding out more about how decision making in complex situations were carried out. Furthermore, we wanted to know the underlying reasons that affected the decision making process in such critical times. It was in our belief that the underlying reasons must come from peoples own sensemaking process, a process that
is very difficult to define. Many researchers, including the main theorist Weick, have already tried to explain sensemaking in organizations, also in regards to complex situations. Inspired by his seven properties, which is designed to cover most aspects of the sensemaking process, and which will be fully explained in the theory section, we defined the research question.

We wish to investigate how the interviewees themselves sensemake about their own decision making processes in their work as Police Officers, Firefighters and EMTs. Thus, one could say that the research question itself is closely related to Weick’s second sensemaking property, retrospective. Hence, much of the collected, and analyzed, data is based on the interviewee’s retrospective thinking.

We have chosen to work with a how-question, since how-research-questions is particularly asked by researchers who are keen to note trends in the analysis and to demonstrate ebbs and flows in the topic of interest (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Furthermore, within the field of sensemaking, the focus is on movement and the universal array of both internal and external communication, which people need to create meaning. Therefore, instead of focusing on static characteristics of human being, both we as researchers and sensemaking as a concept, are concerned with the hows of humans. How individuals define situations, how they bring past experiences to life, how they make connections and how they sensemake (Dervin, Foreman-Wernet, & Lauterbach, 2003). We consider this to be a good research question since it covers the areas that we want to study.

3.3.3 Choosing Interviewees

Since we decided not to do a traditional single case study where one starts a committed working relationship with one specific company, we did not have a direct line into the companies. We lacked what some might call a gatekeeper. After contacting the organizations, and their stations in different areas of Copenhagen, the progress was minimal. Some did not answer us, while others did not want to participate due to the media overload they all have had over the last couple of years. Consequently, we needed a new angle to contacting the wanted interviewees.

We started using our network and more specifically our social network, to see if we knew someone who worked as either a Police Officer, EMT or Firefighter, or if others knew someone who did. The first step towards finding the right interviewees were a name and an e-mail address to an EMT that
worked at Falck. When contacting this person, he turned out to be an undesignated leader. At least, he claimed the role himself, and was more than willing to help us set up the interviews with other EMTs. In other words, we got ourselves a gatekeeper into Falck. Whether this was a good idea or not, can be discussed. First of all, we did not ask him to help us select more interviewees from the beginning, he volunteered to the task. Since he did that, we gave him certain criterion in regards to whom we wanted to talk with. The criterion were that we wanted to talk to 4-6 EMTs, in different ages, with different time of experience, different titles and with different gender. After a few days, he contacted us saying that he had found three other guys that wanted to participate in the research, besides himself. He informed us that he had talked to both of the two women who worked at the station, however they did not wish to participate in the research, and thus there are no female EMT interviewees.

After receiving the EMTs’ names and e-mails, we sent them an e-mail where we presented the research, and ourselves. We chose to inform them that we were investigating how people in their field of work make decisions in complex situations. We intentionally did not want to use the word sensemaking, since we were afraid that it might scare them away as it perhaps was an unfamiliar concept to them. We also needed to make sure that they actually had experienced some more complex situations throughout their work life and thereby had some stories to tell. We did this by simply asking them if they considered themselves to have experienced some complex situations, however without defining the concept complex situations for them. Some wrote back asking what a complex situation covered, to them we answered that it depends, and that it was very individual what could be considered as complex. In other words, it could be any reason in the world, it just needed to be some experiences that felt complex for them due to some reason.

We ended up having four male EMTs working at the Falck station in central Copenhagen, all in the age of 28-40 with different years of work experience, and different titles. They were all very willing to participate and some of them even came in and talked to us during their vacation. They all requested to speak with us on the same day, and they wanted to conduct the interviews directly after one another. The reason for this is not clear, however it seemed to be a safety mechanism for them, in addition to being a group thing. After those four interviews were conducted, the EMT gatekeeper at Falck again voluntarily wanted to help us get in contact with some of Falck’s own Firefighters. This help was embraced with gratitude from our side, since we had received declined answers from
every station we had contacted. Still, regardless of his willingness to help us, there is always a risk of bias by having others choosing the interviewees. However, since we had a clear and open communication with him in regards to which requirements the interviewees needed to fulfill in order to be a suitable participant for the research, we do not find his assistance to be a bias. He only looked at the criterion, and based on them he gave us some names and e-mail addresses that we then again could contact on our own. We ended up with two Firefighters, age 40-50. They as well were males, as no female Firefighters at the station were willing to participate. One of them was an operational leader at the station, and the other one was a regular Firefighter.

When it came to selecting the suitable Police Officers, we faced the same issue as with the EMTs and Firefighters. The stations responded that they did not have time for us. However, a friend of ours who is a Police Officer gave us a name and an e-mail address to an Officer stationed in Copenhagen that he thought would be glad to participate, and so he was. This Officer then suggested that we also contacted a more senior Police Officer with a lot of experience both as an Officer and as a leader. We followed up on his suggestion and thereby we had two good interviewees ready. However, we wanted to talk to more people and got in contact with another young Police Officer, again by using our network. He then helped us find two more interviewees and even though he had asked around the whole station, no female Officers wished to participate. Therefore, we ended up having five male Police Officers, in the age between 26-60, with different titles and broad differences in work experience.

Finally, almost all of the requests towards finding the suitable interviewees came through. However, we could not find any women within the selected fields of work that were willing to participate in the study. The interviewees are therefore a total off eleven men, distributed over three professions, four EMTs, two Firefighters and five Police Officers. Originally, we wanted to interview four employees from each profession, as this would have been a good population as we find all of the professions equally important for this thesis. Nevertheless, the difficulties with finding employees that were willing to participate gave us this distribution of interviewees. We acknowledge that there may be some biases in regards to some of the empirical data, as we have not the same number of interviewees in each group. It is especially so for the Firefighters as it might be more difficult to get a general impression of their profession, since we only have two interviews to base it on.
3.3.4 Designing the Interview Guide
To be able to collect the empirical data in this thesis, we used a semi-structured interview guide. In fact, the term can simply refer to a brief list of memory prompts of an area to be covered. In preparing for a qualitative interview, it is suggest that one should ask oneself the question: what about this is puzzling me? (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This is exactly what we did, we asked ourselves, what in regards to sensemaking and decision making in complex situation really made us curious? The result of those questions was the semi structured interview guide that one can find in appendix 1.

During the process of creating the interview guide, we also kept in mind the basic elements that different scholars suggests for preparing one. Such as, remember to create a certain amount of order on the topic areas so that the questions would flow well, try to use a language that is comprehensible to the interviewees, do not ask leading questions and of course try to formulate questions that will help to answer the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Still, the formulation of the research question was not definite at the time, meaning that alternative possibilities of enquiry that might arise during the collection of empirical data were not closed off. In the end, we had an interview guide containing seven questions, which all were very open and large in that extent that they were written so that the interviewees would be able to answer them freely and for as long as they wished.

Furthermore, we have taken Brenda Dervin’s (2003) “gap” into consideration while designing the interview questions. We were curious about the gap since it is what Dervin (2003) would call “the core structure of sensemaking”. Her approach towards sensemaking concerns how people define and bridge gaps in their everyday lives. According to her, gaps are everywhere, when attending to messages, when relating to others, when attempting to pursue task or reach goals. She uses the gap as a metaphor for sensemaking by saying that whenever we stand in front of a gap, we need to build a bridge to be able to come across to the other side. The bridge in this case is the sensemaking process. Taking a closer look at her gap and bridge metaphor, one could argue that it is very similar to what Weick would call cues and enactment, two of his seven properties (Weick, 1995). We all receive cues from a message, or from someone or something, and depending on how we process those cues, we enact, or in Dervin´s words, build the bridge to overcome the gap. Using Dervin’s metaphor, we are interested in how individuals build these bridges and overcome gaps and
therefore, some of the interview questions have been influenced by her sensemaking theories as well.

![Figure 6 – Brenda Dervin’s Gap Metaphor](image)

### 3.3.5. Conducting the Qualitative Interview

To start with, the qualitative interview approach tends to be much less structured than in quantitative research. In qualitative interviews, there is much greater interest in the interviewees’ point of view, and rambling or going away from the original questions is often encouraged as it gives insight into what the interviewee sees as relevant and important (Bryman & Bell, 2007). These generalities for qualitative interviews are also something that we have used. We had prepared ourselves for the possibility that we might have to improvise a lot, and be flexible towards those issues that the interviewees find most interesting to share with us.
We also tried not to be afraid of small pauses, since we were interested in rich and detailed answers, which sometimes need a moment of reflection. There are many good suggestions to which type of interview a qualitative researcher should conduct, but in the end, it turned out that we were designing and conducting a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview looks like a list of questions pointing towards a specific topic or topics to be covered. Even though the list of questions has a direction towards where the interviewers want to go, the interviewees has a great deal of leeway in how to reply (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

When stories of a special interest were shared, we tried to encourage the interviewees to speak more about these matters by posing follow-up questions such as: could you tell us something more about that?, or why do you think that specific episode affected you? As the interviews went along, the interviewer sometimes needed to jump between the questions due to relevance and to create a flow in the interview. This type of improvisation made each of the eleven interviews unique from one another, which is something that goes in line with the theory of conducting a semi-structured interview: “Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule. Questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees.” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 475).

Overall, the semi-structured interview should maintain a balance between a free flowing and a direct conversation (Lee, 1999), something we believe that we managed to do. During the interviews, the second half of the research team, the one who did not conduct the interview, took notes in an observation chart that can be seen in appendix 2. These notes could then in the end be followed up on, since it was planned that there would be time in the end of every interview for additional- or follow-up questions. This type of teamwork was extremely effective since the interviewer had a lot to concentrate on while conducting the interview. Such tasks were for example to focus on eye contact, making the interviewee feel comfortable, listen well, make connections between previous and current answers, try to fit the seven questions in to the conversation in a smooth way and so on. Therefore, it turned out to be very valuable that the other researcher mainly concentrated on listening to the interviews and thereby could hear patterns or implicit hints that in the end could be followed upon. We divided the interviews equally so that both researchers would both conduct interviews and observe. After an interview was conducted, we each took 10 minutes to
write down our feelings and what we remembered in a prepared reflection chart that can be seen in appendix 3. This chart could be used later on to recall our thoughts about the interviews.

The settings and context where the interviews took place were quiet and familiar. All EMTs were interviewed in their own office at Falck, a place where they felt comfortable. The Firefighters were interviewed at their own office as well, it was only some of the Police interviews that could not take place at their station. Therefore, we booked group rooms at Copenhagen Business School, a central location that they all knew of, where we could conduct some of the Police interviews. One Police interview took place at København Vestegns Police station, where we also were taken on a tour around the whole building, and got inside information about the life of a Police Officer.

3.3.6 Secondary Data
In the analysis, one will see that the data we collected throughout the interviews will be the primary source of data in this thesis. However, we also used secondary sources like Falck’s and the Police’s home pages. Here we have been able to get information that were needed to write about the organizations as whole units. What we found most interesting were information regarding the history of the two organizations, organizational structure and their values. All information found through secondary sources is used in the section called Targeted Organizations.

3.4 Data Analysis
3.4.1 Transcribing
The recording of conversational interviews are rarely analyzed directly. Researchers usually have interviews transcribed (Lee, 1999), and this is also the case for this thesis. As mentioned earlier, we had a total of eleven interviews conducted. The first nine were all approximately one-hour interviews, whereas the last two only lasted half an hour due to their time schedule. After conducting the interviews, transcriptions took place. One single interview could result in almost 7-8 hours of transcription work and nearly 20 pages of text. This meant that we in the end had approximately 165 pages of empirical data to process and analyze which can be found in appendix 4.

When transcribing, it is crucial that it is done carefully and consistently. To avoid biases, we made a layout together and a set of rules for the way we were supposed to work with the transcriptions.
Since we wrote the transcriptions individually, we conducted a reliability check by having the other researcher who did not transcribe the interview listening to it while reading the fully transcribed text as suggested by Lee (1999). The transcription work were divided equally, and once all interviews where written down to text, we processed that text by starting to work with coding and categorization.

3.4.2 Coding & Categorization

According to Larsson and Lowendahl the grounded theory concept made by Glaser and Strauss has been the dominant qualitative method used in studies published in the organizational science (Lee, 1999). The main purpose of grounded theory studies is to generate new theory or conceptual propositions, and the main use of its techniques has occurred while examining phenomena that are not well understood. It is therefore argued that grounded theory is important to management scientists due to its broad applicability to many organizational issues and situations. Furthermore, there is an underlying assumption in regards to grounded theory saying that social phenomena are complex, an assumption we have no arguments against. Therefore, due to the complexity of social science, there can be no fixed rules about how to conduct grounded theory research (Lee, 1999). Regardless of its presentation here in the thesis, we do not wish to state that we have conducted grounded theory. Nevertheless, we have borrowed two of the method’s concepts in regards to data collection, namely coding and categorization.

On an operational level of data collection, researchers spends a great deal of time and effort creating categories that explains or underlines the empirical data, and codes these empirical indicators into these categories. Coding is the actual process through which the data are organized into some theoretically meaningful structures. Usually, coding is done in one of three ways: through open coding, axial coding or selective coding (Lee, 1999). We wish to argue that we in fact have conducted the two first mentioned coding methods, however not simultaneously, rather after each other.

First, we started out with what is called open coding. This process refers to an unrestricted approach in which the researchers identifies the “natural occurring” categories. In other words, the researchers can freely create as many categories as needed in order to organize, explain and assign the empirical data (Lee, 1999). At first, we simply read all the transcribed interviews without any
presumptions and just underlined whatever we found interesting. This process was done individually, so that we could eliminate the bias of influencing each other and thereby perhaps overlook some important parts of the text. However, while doing this coding process we could see a pattern taking form, and the natural occurring categories turned out to be similar to Weick’s seven properties of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Therefore, we continued the coding and categorization process by using axial coding, this time the work was done collectively.

Axial coding refers to the work where the researchers first proposes several categories and then secondly selects a single category and then judges all the data as to whether or not it fit within that selected category. This process is then repeated until all data have been evaluated against all categories and classified (Lee, 1999). We chose to have nine categories, Weick’s seven properties, one called unknown and one called examples. We then started to go through all of the data, and selected every part of the text concerning Weick’s first property, identity. Then we took the second property, retrospective and then we went on like this until all the data were put into categories and classified. We consider this data analysis work to be one of the most important moments of this thesis process, since it really provided us with clear examples and links to already studied theory.

3.5 Limitations and Credibility

3.5.1. Limitations

In the beginning of this thesis, we stumbled upon some difficulties in regards to creating an entry into the studied organizations. As mentioned earlier, we were not able to get any females involved in the research, this might be viewed as a limitation since men and women, or individuals in general, have different ways of making sense of the world. Moreover, a complex situation can be anything depending on the context, time and person who experiences it, just as a person’s sensemaking process cannot be duplicated. However, that does not mean that we do not believe that other organizations cannot learn something from the empirical data this thesis is contributing with.

Finally, the conclusions and findings are based on eleven participants, which might not sound as a sufficient amount of people to be able to say something general about the organizations sensemaking processes in complex situations. Although, that has never been the intention of this thesis either, rather we have tried to create thick descriptions, and rich accounts of details of the ESC employees’ sensemaking in complex situations. Even though the thesis is an intensive study of
a small group of people with contextual uniqueness, the sample and data that we do have, represents a broad part of the three studied professions. Taking the amount of time spent on each and every one of the participants, the age difference between them, the different quantity of experience they have, and the fact that we have taken the whole emergency triangle into consideration, we consider the findings to contribute with good empirical data to already existing theory.

3.5.2 Credibility

Normally, both reliability and validity are important criterion in establishing and assessing the quality of research in regards to the quantitative research. However, several qualitative researchers have discussed their relevance for qualitative research. Even if they could be used, the names in themselves, almost by definition seems to carry connections to measurement, and several researchers wants the names to change, since measurement is not a major call among qualitative researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Therefore, they are not considered important in regards to this thesis, which is built on subjective and qualitative standpoints.

However, credibility is a concern that we do need to address, since it says something about how believable the findings are. When dealing with multiple accounts of social reality it is especially evident that the trustworthiness of the collected data is at place. In other words, that the research is credible. It concerns both that we as researchers have carried out the research according to the good standards of qualitative research, as well as we have a responsibility not to mislead the interviewees and forcing our social world on them (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, as mentioned before, as good qualitative researchers we have off course engaged with the interviewees and to some extent effected their actions towards us.

Additionally, a main issue within the frames of a qualitative study’s credibility is that the researchers are supposed to be able to answer yes to this question: has the participants’ cognitive schema or worldview been successfully captured by the researcher? (Lee, 1999). To that question, we are sure that we can answer yes. Therefore, this thesis’ findings should be considered as creditable.
4. Theoretical Framework

In this section, we will present the theoretical framework that is going to be used to analyze the empirical data we have collected. As mentioned, Weick (1995, 2001) will be the main contributor of theories in this thesis. However, we found it necessary to bring in other supplementing theories to explain certain phenomena.

4.1 Sensemaking

For Weick (1995), the concept of sensemaking is about the notion of something that may surprise you, and the construction of meaning to this event by creating order, and put items into new frameworks. It involves placing items into frames, comprehend situations and interaction, in the pursuit of a mutual understanding of the event. However, he makes it clear that it is not the same as interpretation, because for him, sensemaking is what happens before one starts to interpret. It is about “the ways people generate what they later interpret.” (Weick, 1995, p.13) Sensemaking is therefore much more than interpretation, it is “talking about reality as an ongoing accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves and their creations.” (Weick, 1995, p.15)

In order to make the sensemaking process easier to comprehend, Weick (1995) implies that there are at least seven distinguishing characteristics that set sensemaking apart from other explanatory processes such as interpretation, understanding and attribution. These characteristics are identity, retrospective, enactment, social, ongoing, cues and plausibility, and are in a collective term called Weick’s seven properties. Even though Weick (1995) sees these seven properties as an important part in the understanding of the sensemaking process for people, he does not see them as a guideline in the inquiry of sensemaking. He rather sees it as an observer’s manual in order to understand how sensemaking works, what it is about, and where it can fail. In this thesis, the properties will work as a frame for the analysis. There will not be an evenly focus on all seven properties, as some of them are more significant than others based on the empirical data. However, as we see each of them as an essential part of this thesis, we will explain all seven in depth here in the theory section.
Identity

All sensemaking processes start with a sensemaker, and before he or she knows who they are, it can be difficult for them to know what is “out there”. This is because one’s definition of what is out there is depending on who one is. Even though the term sensemaker is singular, a person will never act like a single sensemaker as identities are constructed out of the process of interaction. Other people and the organizational culture one works within influences people’s identity. In regards to sensemaking and identity, being self-conscious is vital because one needs to know whom one is as a sensemaker in order to make sense of a situation. The reason why identity is the first property on Weick’s list is because sensemaking is always subjective and thus the person’s identity will influence it (Weick, 1995). People learn about their identities by projecting them into an environment and observe the consequences. The close link between individuals’ identity and organizations is evident as a person’s identity are partially formed by how they believe others view the organization they work for. Thus, there is a great interest in preserving a positive organizational image, and repair a negative if it exists.

Retrospective

People can only know what they are doing after they have done it. Hence, lived experiences can better be understood in retrospective. What is occurring at the very moment, will influence what is discovered when one glances back to a previous experience, at the same time as all past experiences will influence what is occurring now. Another important point is that retrospective sensemaking is an activity in which many possible meanings need to be synthesized, as many different projects are ongoing at the time the reflections take place. These projects can be seen as thinking processes (Weick, 1995).

There are some biases regarding retrospective sensemaking that one shall be aware of when talking about it. The first is that if there is a short amount of time between the act and the reflection, there is a risk that there is a misconception of the event as one is only mindful of a handful of projects at the time they look back. The second is that by glancing back, one can make the past clearer, but one can never make it transparent. Meaning that a glance of the past will never be exactly as it was. Lastly, the feeling of order, clarity and rationality is an important goal for the retrospective thinking. Consequently, when these feelings are achieved by the sensemaker, the retrospective sensemaking process will most likely stop (Weick, 1995).
Enactment
While identity and retrospective refers to the “sensing” part of sensemaking, enactment is about the “making” of what is sensed. As “making” is a central theme here, it is the actions of people that are interesting to look at within this property. It is important to notice that action in this property refers just as much to the thinking process as it does to the physical actions. In enactment, the environment is essential, and people often produce parts of the environment they face so they can deal better with the situation. These created environments can sometimes limit their actions, that are crucial for the sensemaking process, and they are most often created when people respond to other people’s actions. The problem with people creating their own environment can sometimes be that that people tends to create and find what they expect to find. These self-fulfilling prophecies are a typical pattern for humans’ sensemaking (Weick, 1995).

Social
Sensemaking is a social process, which will never be solitary because what is done internally is always contingent on others. When talking about sensemaking it is easy to analyze it at an individual level, but if one does so, one loses an important aspect of the analysis. In organizations, people are part of groups with common language that interacts socially every day. These interactions, and the shared meanings peoples possess, plays an essential part in their sensemaking processes. Talk, discourse and conversations can be example of such social interaction that influences a person. Nevertheless, the shared meanings one finds in organizations can also be evidence of such interaction (Weick, 1995).

Ongoing
A process is often looked at as something that has a beginning and an end. However, the sensemaking process differs from this traditional view in the sense that it never starts and it never stops. People are always in the middle of things, and only when these same people focus on the past from some point beyond, things can be given meaning. Even though sensemaking is an ongoing process, it can be interrupted. These interruptions are often a signal of important changes occurring in the environments, and these signals implies that one has to pay attention to the changes. When people conduct an action, and are interrupted, it can bring out both positive and negative emotions that influences their sensemaking process. Moreover, people have a tendency to remember the events that bring out the same emotional tone as they currently feel (Weick, 1995).
Cues

People extract cues to make sense of an event, which basically can be anything. The fact that we can sensemake about so many things makes it easier to study this phenomenon as it is found everywhere. What is important to focus on when studying sensemaking, is how people notice cues, how they extract them and how they add meaning to what they have extracted. The extracted cues are dependent on context in two ways: first, the context affects what is extracted as a cue, and second, the context affects how the extracted cues then are interpreted (Weick, 1995). In organizations, many forget that it is not what is planned that is important, it is rather what is done. Cues can help people to get some confidence in order to get them moving in a general direction. The extracted cues do not always have to be completely correct, but just sufficient to get them moving, both in a mental- and physical way depending on the situation (Weick, 1995).

Plausibility

This property indicates that one does not need to know everything, just enough to get on with the projects one are in. Accuracy could be a good thing, but it is not needed when it comes to sensemaking. It is rather sufficiency and plausibility that is important here. Hence, this seventh property says that what is needed in the sensemaking process is to reach a workable level of uncertainty that makes one able to move on with the projects (Weick, 1995).

Other important Weick concepts

Beside Weick’s seven properties, he has several other concepts concerning sensemaking that we find relevant for this thesis. In his article concerning the Mann Gulch disaster (1993), he talks about cosmology episodes. This terminology refers to an episode that “occurs when people suddenly and deeply feel that the universe is no longer a rational, orderly system.” (Weick, 1993, p.633). Some might translate these episodes into “the unexpected”, as we have chosen to do. These unexpected episodes can feel like vu jàdé, the opposite of déjà vu, a feeling of never having been there, or experienced something like this before. This terminology will be used when analyzing how the interviewees react to unexpected situations.

Furthermore, he goes on explaining how there are four potential sources of resilience that makes groups less vulnerable to disruption of sensemaking: improvisation and bricolage, virtual role systems, the attitude of wisdom and respectful interaction. As it is only the first source that is
relevant for this thesis, we will not explain the other three any further. The source concerning improvisation and bricolage underlines that when people are put under pressure, they fall back to their most habituated ways of responding. It is not expected of people to be creative under life-threatening pressure. However, Weick believes that some people are bricoleurs that are able to create order out of whatever materials they have at hand. If more people developed such skills, the collapse of the role systems would not necessarily result in disasters. By paying attention to the four sources, or some of them, there is a greater chance that people in organizations will be able to make sense of situations, and prevent them from turning into disasters, even though all formal structures collapses. In other words, by being resilient towards disruptions of sensemaking, one can avoid sensemaking collapse (Weick, 2001).

Moreover, Weick (2001) encourages the need for creativity and improvisation when it comes to both avoiding disruptions, and embracing new and unexpected scenarios. Bruner describes creativity as: “Figuring out how to use what you already know in order to go beyond what you currently think.” (Weick, 2001, p.110), and it is also this definition we will be referring to when using the word creativity throughout this thesis. Equally, improvisation is a terminology closely related to creativity and involves some of the same elements. However, the definition Weick himself supports regarding improvisation is the one given by Berliner: “Improvisation involves reworking precomposed material and designs in relation to unanticipated ideas conceived, shaped, and transformed under the special conditions of performance, thereby adding unique features to every creation.” (Weick, 2001, p.286)

Additionally, in regards to the collected data, it has been necessary to be familiar with a few more of Weick’s central concepts and knowing where he stands in regards to certain phenomena. These central concepts are committed interpretation, justification, and the collective mind. Lastly, it is important to define his take on decision making, and how he separates it from sensemaking.

When it comes to committed interpretation, Weick (2001) proposes that sensemaking as a whole can be seen as a process of committed interpretation, since commitment binds an individual to his or her behavior. The basic idea of commitment can be illustrated by using the garbage can model made by Cohen, March and Olsen (Weick, 2001). They suggests that organizations consist of four parts: streams of people, choices, solutions and problems. Furthermore, they say that organizational
order depends more on reasons of timing rather than logic. However, when explaining committed interpretation, Weick (2001) suggests that one should view organizations as consisting of only three parts: streams of people, solutions and problems, and that in fact the fourth part, choice, is the occasion when the other three becomes organized and creates order. In other words, problems, solutions, and people are all potential explanations that justify a binding choice, a commitment. Moreover, since most action is social, committed interpretation is also viewed as a social matter and Weick’s description of the subject is: “Committed interpretation is a sensemaking process that introduces stability into an equivocal flow of events by means of justifications that increase social order.” (Weick, 2001, p.15)

Since committed interpretation often can be seen as reasons for justification, these two concepts are closely related. Justification might be seen as a supporting factor to the committed behavior, since justifications is developed to rationalize different behaviors. People develop acceptable justifications for their behavior as a way of making such behavior meaningful and explainable. Weick (2001) emphasizes that justification is an important concept in the investigation of sensemaking in organizations, since people have a tendency to justify their actions in the sensemaking process. Moreover, under high levels of ambiguity, which the employees of the ESC most often deal with, justification is a necessary to both provide purpose for an organization’s membership and rationale for parties external to the organization.

When Weick (2001) talks about the group mind, he refers to it as social cognition. Group mind may take place when people in close relationships enact a single and common memory system, where a sphere for remembering common experience is created. This means that people sometimes only know the locations rather than the details of common events, and they therefor rely on each other to contribute with missing details, which can be seen as cues for their own memory. In other words, people make sense of past events, or of how to act in a situation, collectively. These are all traits that are relevant while analyzing the sensemaking process of the ESC, since they all work in groups with close relationships.
Lastly, according to Weick (2001), people first interpret, and then act. Interpretation involves creating cognitive maps that generates order, which then can facilitate action. This action can be among many other things, a decision. In other words, Weick (2009) sees decision making as a product of sensemaking rather than a part of it. Perhaps his clearest definition on this matter is: “Sensemaking is not about rules and options and decisions. Sensemaking does not presume that there are generic right answers about things like taking risks or following rules. Instead, sensemaking is about how to stay in touch with context.” (Weick, 2009, p.265) This definition is very useful for the analysis when examining how the ESC employees make sense of the tough decisions they make while wearing their uniforms. Weick (2009) makes another clear distinction between sensemaking and decision making by using a quote from the Firefighter Paul Gleason, whom Weick talked to during one of his researches. Gleason says: “If I make a decision it is a possession, I take pride in it, I tend to defend it and not listen to those who question it. If I make sense, then this is more dynamic and I listen and I can change it. A decision is something you polish. Sensemaking is a direction for the next period.” (Weick, 2009, p.266).

4.2 Supporting Theories
As we has chosen to look deeper into two of the seven properties in the second part of the analysis, we need some supplementing theories when analyzing these specific sensemaking processes for the employees of the ESC. Therefore, theories regarding identification, identity, leadership, decision making and storytelling will be used to support, and dig deeper into Weick’s work. By using these theories, we will able to categorize the issues that influences their sensemaking. According to the collected data, social and identity stands out as the most important sensemaking properties. However, many of the supporting theories fall under the label “identity theories” as these two properties are closely related. In the model below, one can see which theoretical framework that has been relevant to use to support Weick’s theories, and their relationship to each other.
All the supporting theories we have chosen to use in this thesis are related to categorization of the interviewees in some manner. The first two theories, regarding group dynamics and leadership construction, are going to be used to analyze how the interviewees categorize themselves. While the last three, concerning archetypes of leaders, decision making styles and storytelling, will support our own categorization of the interviewees. To underline why categorization is such an important aspect of the chosen primary properties, we are going to use elements of organizational identification theory by Pratt (1998). This theory focuses on how people through identification are able to figure out who they are in relation to others, and thus are able to identify with a group or an organization. Identification involves several of the characteristics that Weick (1995) sees as central to sensemaking as identification is grounded in identity construction, it involves the extraction of cues and it is social, retrospective and ongoing (Pratt, 1998). Furthermore, the reason why people identifies with others are grounded in four individual needs. These needs are driven by safety, affiliation, self-enhancement & holistic needs, and one of the explanation for these needs is bounded in categorization. Categorization is a basic cognitive process where it is enough for people
to be assigned as members to a group on a random basis (Pratt, 1998). The need for being assigned as members to a group is greater than the need to belong to the perfect group.

As many of the interviewees seem to have a strong group identity, Ellemers, De Glide and Haslam’s (2004) article regarding the social identity perspective will be used to explain such identity issue. Ellemers et alt. (2004) claims that individuals often want to align to some extent with a collective to feel belongingness. Such a collective could be a work team or the organization as a whole. They claim that identities are socially constructed, and that people’s identity change in regards to the environment, and the people one are surrounded with. When they talk about social identity, they explain how people favor the group that they belong to, due to categorization. Thus, one’s social identity is a part of the group that one considers oneself belonging to, which can be many at the same time since most of us belong to multiple groups simultaneously. The favored group that one wishes to identify with is called an ingroup. Likewise, there will also be constructed groups that one does not identify with, the outgroups. These outgroups can be a competitive company, another division of the organization or simply just people one do not agree with. All of these theoretical expressions will be used to identify how the EMTs, Police Offices and Firefighters positions themselves in regards to others, and they will help us explain the phenomena of group identity and group thinking. Important to note is that when we refer to group thinking we mean, the collective and similar thinking of people who belong to the same group and thereby share many equal thoughts, values and beliefs which influences their sensemaking process.

Moreover, when dealing with decision making, persuasion through influence is often a powerful tool to use to get one’s point through. However, to be persuasive is not enough, one also need to get other people onboard with the ideas, and create followers. Without followers, there will be no leader. When analyzing whom of the interviewees prefers to take the lead and who rather follow, DeRude and Ashfords (2010) article is relevant to use. They present a theory explaining the development of a leadership relationship that is composed of mutual reinforced identities as leaders and followers. They propose that a leadership identity is co-constructed in organizations when individuals claim and grant leader and follower identities in their social interactions, which is interesting to look at in regards to the ESC employees’ identity. Through this claiming-granting process, individuals internalize their identity as leader or follower, and these identities become relationally recognized through reciprocal role adoption and collectively endorsed within the
organizational context (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

Furthermore, since we consider leadership being a socially constructed matter, which all of the interviewees can construct in their own way, we wish to analyze in which way they are doing leadership. We do so by analyzing which archetypes of leadership they possess with the use of Johannes Steyrer’s article from 1998. Steyrer’s theory is based on Goffman’s identity theory where individuals possess the power to influence how others see them. By positioning themselves in certain ways, as a Father, a Hero, or a Saviour, people can build up their image throughout their verbal communication. The first three archetypes is a work done by Neuberger, however, Steyrer (1998) build on them and contributes to the paper by identifying a forth archetype of leadership, the King. These four archetypes can be used as tools to conduct leadership. Depending on what kind of leader one wish to be, and to which audience one is speaking, one might choose a specific archetype to fulfill that purpose. An interesting note to make is that all four archetypes of leadership are described as men, which suites this thesis since there is only male interviewees. However, had the interviewees also involved women, this theory could have had weaknesses as it originally only includes male leadership types.

Taking a closer look at the four archetypes of leadership (Steyrer, 1998), the Father stands for fatherly love, care and wisdom. This type of leader will most likely send signals of dedication, respect and confidence. The Father appears to his followers as someone understanding, forgiving, benevolent, protective and caring. Yet at the same time strict, demanding, punishing and predominant. The Hero tells the tale of a courageous fighter who always is well aware of what needs to be done, and he represents what the Father used to be, a Hero. He goes his own way and defeats all. He gains admiration and appreciation and do not subordinate himself to others. This type of leader considers himself to be mighty, strong and magnificent. The third archetype is the Saviour, which is described as a charismatic innovator. He possesses the magic to transform the existing situation to a better one, and likes to solve crises. The final archetype, made by Steyrer himself, is the King. To become King is the ultimate goal for a Hero, whom represents masculinity, wisdom, stability and nurturing for all people. As the analysis will show, all of these four archetypes of leadership have been used by the interviewees at some point while positioning themselves as leaders in the stories they told.
Throughout the collected data, there is moreover evidence of different types of decision makers due to their different personalities. As Weick (2001) highlights, most organizations have already a preferred decision strategy in place before interpreting situations and making decisions, suggestively so does also people. We find it interesting to examine which type of decision makers the interviewees are and by that, also come one step closer to understanding their individual sensemaking process. To be able to do so, Williams and Millers (2002) article became useful. In their paper, they present five different types of decision makers and suggestions for how to persuade these types of persons. We are not interested in learning how to persuade the interviewees, rather the article is used to define their decision making style. William and Millers (2002) claims that their categorization of decision makers says something about how people tend to make decisions. They, as well as us, acknowledges that people of course do not always make decisions in the same way, since much depends on the specific situation one are in.

The first style is called Charismatic decision makers, persons who are easily intrigued and enthralled by new ideas. However, experience has thought them to make final decisions based on balanced information, not just emotions. The second type of decision makers are the Thinkers, who follow arguments that are supported by data, and they tend to have a strong aversion to risk. Therefore, they can sometimes be seen as slow decision makers since they might want to rethink the situation one more time before making the final decision. The third decision making character is the Skeptics. These people tend to be highly suspicious of data and especially towards information that challenges their world view. They often suspect things to be untrue, and can almost possess a combative style, and are usually described as taking charge of people. The forth type of decision makers are called the Followers and is described as people who make decisions based on how they have made similar choices in the past. In other words, they rely on their retrospective sensemaking and experiences while taking decisions. If they have not faced a similar situation earlier, they make decisions based on how other trusted persons have made them before. The final group of decision makers are referred to as Controllers, and they dislike uncertainty and ambiguity. They will make decisions purely on facts, and only listen to scientific arguments. As mentioned earlier, if we can understand, and put words on what kind of decision makers the interviewees are, then we can also better understand why they thought or acted in the way they did in certain situations.
As one might have noticed, many aspects regarding how to better grasp someone’s sensemaking process refers to that we, as researchers, listens carefully to the interviewees stories and extract the cues that they are sending us. One of the biggest cues that we have picked up on, and which have influenced our sensemaking process about how others sensemake, is how people position themselves. Again, even though all of this relates to the interviewees identity, we also wish to argue that the interesting perspective of storytelling in organizations can be used.

While analyzing the collected data, it became clear to us that there were a lot of storytelling going on in the different organizations. Normally, it might be natural to use narrative theory to study organizational stories. However, in this thesis, we only need to explain the relationship between narratives, and stories to understand the storytelling. The difference between them is not much, but enough that it matters, and it can be explained by using the metaphor of a building. A narrative is the structure of events, the architecture of the story and comparable to the design of a building. The story is the sequence of events, the order in which the narrative occurs and in other words the tour through the building (Nichol, 2012).

Most of the stories told in the data refers to how the interviewees themselves want to be perceived, as well as how they view their co-workers or team. Therefore, we found it relevant to bring in Yiannis Gabriel’s (2002) theories regarding storytelling and organizations. Gabriel suggests that there are four main different categories of organizational stories, which then can be developed into hybrid stories. The four categories are Comic-, Tragic-, Epic- and Romantic stories. Within each one of these stories there is a main character, reflecting how the person who tells the story wants to be perceived.

The Comic story often contains misfortune of others, and it is seen as a deserved punishment. The person or persons in the stories are usually being presented as fools or deserved victims. The Tragic story regards undeserved misfortune or traumatic events. The storyteller often positions himself as a non-deserving victim. The Epic story involves great achievements, noble victory and general success. In this type of story, the storyteller sees himself as a hero. The fourth and final story is the Romantic one, which involves some sort of affection towards someone or something. An example of this could be the love one gives to one’s workplace or unit. The teller here can sometimes be the one that everyone loves or the one who loves something (Gabriel, 2000).
All of these main and supporting theories will be used to build up the analysis, and support the arguments in the discussion. There could probably have been chosen several other theories to support the data. However, the chosen theories were the ones we found most suitable for this thesis.

5. Analysis

We have chosen to divide the analysis into three parts because we feel that this division is needed in order to answer the research question properly. In part one, we will analyze Weick’s seven properties according to his theory. Here we will not use any other empirical data than the ones we find relevant in regards to Weick’s seven properties, and it is only his theoretical arguments about the properties that will be used. Moreover, in part two, we will take two of the properties one step further, and these two will be seen as the primary properties for the employees of the ESC. In this section, supporting theories will be used to highlight issues that Weick might not emphasize enough in his work. Lastly, in part three, an analysis of the findings that are not compatible with Weick’s seven properties will be laid out. The analysis of these findings will then lead up to the discussion section.

5.1 Part 1: The Seven Properties

When analyzing the empirical data in the following sections, the analysis will be structured in the order we interviewed the three studied professions. The reasons for doing this, is to get an overview of how the seven properties fits with each profession, at the same time as it gives us the possibility to compare the sensemaking processes across the three groups later on.

5.1.1 Identity

The first property Weick highlights as a distinguished characteristic that sets sensemaking apart from other explanatory processes is identity. The reason for this, is that sensemaking begins with a sensemaker, and that it is this individual that is doing the sensemaking. By exploring identity, one can analyze the individuals that are a part of the sensemaking process. Weick emphasizes that even though a sensemaker refers to an individual, no individual will ever act like a single sensemaker (Weick, 1995). Identities are constructed out of interactions, and it is thus important to analyze the identity of the individuals that are sensemaking as the process begins with a self-conscious
sensemaker. The empirical research shows that the interviewees found it important to show us who they are as persons, why they do as they do, and they underlined that the perception others have of them might not always be right.

For the EMTs, it was especially important to distinguish themselves as different from other professions and people, and they wanted to emphasize that they were a special group. The first indication of this was when they all told us that the personality they have at work might differ from the personality they have at home. As one of the EMTs explained us: “Well, at work I’m like the authority, if you could say so. When I come to a patient... it has to be me that decide what to do and control the situation, and so on. So I have to put on a deciding role, and I have to be strict with something, and so on. But in my private life, it’s like; it’s my girlfriend that makes all the decisions and so on. So it is quite different, yes.” (EMT4, 2013, p.12) Furthermore, they talked about how they changed character when they stepped out of the ambulance and that their professional identity first started to show itself when they arrive at a scene: “You kind of put on this persona when you have on the [ref. uniform], when you know you are going to have to make some decisions. You know you are responsible, and you know that when you arrive, people tend to give you the responsibility. You know, it’s a... it’s a persona, a character you put on when you arrive.” (EMT3, 2013, p.7) These two quotes indicate that when the EMTs put on their uniform and goes to work, they change their identity and it might change the way they handle situations. Since they talked about their different identity roles like this, the EMTs indicates that they felt that this kind of shifting between roles is unique for their profession. Furthermore, this role shifting can be seen as a reason for why their type of work is especially so complex, since they need to have two different identities, one professional and one private.

Another characteristic of their identity is that they see themselves as people that are triggered by not knowing what the day will bring. One of the EMTs expresses how he is driven by this uncertainty: “I think everybody will say that you are like a “trauma junkie”, you are like waiting for bad things to happen. (...) So I guess what drives me is waiting for the big one, waiting for the good call. That might be difficult for you guys, anyone else on the street, to corporate what I am saying, I am waiting for someone to get hurt. But that is my job, and I like that I can do a good job for them. As I said, they are going to get hurt anyway, so they might as well get hurt on my shift.” (EMT2, 2013, p.2) This statement can imply that an EMT needs to possess some specific characteristics in order to
be able to do their work. Some of the other EMTs mentioned a few other important characteristics like being able to stay calm, not take the job home with you, be open-minded, be confident, have a sick form of humor and not panic if you face an unexpected scenario as important in regards to this job. In other words, the EMTs beliefs that it requires a specific set of characteristics in order to be seen as an EMT since, according to them, it is a very unique profession.

Lastly, what stands out from the EMTs stories in regards to their identity was that they are very aware of what others might think of them, and finds it important to tell us that these perceptions might not always be correct. As one of them answered when asked about what it means for him to be an EMT: “I’m proud to be an EMT. But not in the sense people think I am proud. (...) I have a sense of pride in that. But ... when people ask me about being an EMT, I always say it’s not what they think it is.” (EMT3, 2013, p.2) This focus on what others might think of them might come from negative stories others have told them about their profession, since they feel a constant need to defend their professional identity. Weick (1995) is not unfamiliar with the identity issues that the EMTs seem to have. He underlines that people’s identities are partially formed and modified by how they believe others view the organization for which they work. Therefore, this issue is also an important part of people's identity creation.

In relation to the Police Officers, their identity can be seen as more of a unit, a committed group identity one might say. This is especially evident when they are out on a mission: “(...) but at the scene we have to be like one unit. We back one other up and if he is being more persuasive then I will back him up just as I hope that he would back me up if I was 100% sure that this is how it has to be done.” (PO3, 2013, p.9) However, at the same time as the group identity is important for them, they also acknowledge that Police Officers have different personal identities, and that there is not necessarily one persona that is more preferable than another when it comes to doing the job: “(...) your most dominant character flaws and strengths will come out. You won’t be able to in the long run to pretend you are something you are not. You can say I am, what is it called (...) Sympathetic, you are sympathetic, you are a good listener, you have good people skills, you are patient but after two years you will tear down your beliefs of yourself and you realize who you are and how you react to certain situations. I have one set of character, and another guy has another set of characters, and we just do stuff in different ways.” (PO1, 2013, p.8) As this quote shows, the
Police Officers emphasizes the importance of realizing ones true identity to be able to do their work.

Additionally, the Police Officers also recognize that different situations require different personalities. In one situation, it is the calm side that has to be shown, in another, it has to be the assertive authority that has control of the situation and are not afraid. Furthermore, the ability to put oneself in the shoes of the victim seems to be yet another characteristic that is needed: “I think it all, it depends on how you are raised mostly I guess, what values you have, how you can identify yourself with the victim or the other person or the situation in general. But the characteristics are basically understand what they are going through, but not necessarily except it, cause; stealing is wrong, but if you are homeless you have to survive, and you don’t need to except it but you can understand it.” (PO3, 2013, p.4) This open mindedness is something that the Officers finds important when meeting people, since they see it as their mission to help them get a better life than they had before. Thus, their aim is to prevent people from making crime in the future.

As mentioned, the group identity was central for all of the Police Officers. It seems to be essential for them that others can see that they are a unit, and that they stand together no matter what. The Police leader we interviewed emphasized that it is important that everybody behave when they wear the uniform, since they represent the whole unit: “(…) I always tell the Police Officers that we are the same shirt, if something, if one of us does something wrong it is on all of us.” (PO4, 2013, p.16) Also one of the other Police Officers stressed how the group identity can steer how they act when they are out on patrol: “(...) I would hardly never swear at him, I won’t talk down to him, because that is not how we are supposed to be. We are supposed to be above and we are supposed to work as a government device, as a system, and a system is partial and impersonal, that is why we all dress alike, and drives the same cars, we are the same pretty much. I mean obviously there is room for personalities, but we go buy the box we are put in and we are put into this box from day one.” (PO1, 2013, p.10) The fact that he uses the term “supposed to be” indicates that they have been told in the beginning of their career how they should behave, and what kind of identity a Police Officer should have. Moreover, it is not an option to break the norms that their profession entails, as this would be seen as breaking out of the group. This can sometimes be a sensitive and complex matter, since the younger Officers clearly do not always agree with the senior Officers.
Lastly, the Firefighters also expressed that the group identity was important, but at the same time, it is the individual that has to solve the tasks when one are out working. One of the interviewees indicated this by saying: “(...) the personal approach I have is the thing about it, that it’s not my incident. It’s not something I have caused, so if I will do something for them to help out, then they will end up being happy. No matter what I do.” (FF2, 2013, p.3), and then he continues by highlighting the importance of the group: “We try to be very much like a family when we are here, meaning that we approach the situations that are sort of everyday situations at home instead of just being the professional team workers here.” (FF2, 2013, p.7) What seems to be in common for the Police Officers and Firefighters is that they both emphasize human dualism (Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2011), which means that a person sees it as equally important to have a strong personal identity as well as a group identity. This could lead to an internal conflict when they have to choose between the group and one’s personal interests.

As one can see, the identities of the interviewees have been revealed in different ways. While the EMTs focused a lot on how they have to be a unique person in order to be able to fulfill what the job requires, the Police Officers was more focusing on how important it is that they are being perceived as a unit. The Firefighters also acknowledge the group, but they were also focusing on that one has to possess some certain personal characteristics in order to do the job. The common aspect of all the sensemakers is that they all underlines that it is important to keep calm and be able to make decisions when it is needed, no matter how complex the situation is. They all want to portrait their distinct profession, and it is clear that they continuously construct their identity in relation to their profession.

5.1.2 Retrospective
Retrospective sensemaking refers to making sense out of meaningful lived experiences. The key word here is lived, since it refers to the past. The assumption is that people cannot know what they are doing, before they have experienced it (Weick, 1995). George Herbert Mead explains the phenomena well by saying that: “We are conscious always of what we have done, never of doing it” (Weick, 1995, p.26)
Another important point to have in mind when analyzing retrospective sensemaking is that it is an activity where many possible meanings, thoughts and feelings may cross each other at the same time. This is because there are probably occurring many thoughts simultaneously when the reflections take place (Weick, 1995). Therefore, one might argue that the reason for some of the short answers collected in the empirical data, in regards to the retrospective sensemaking process, is due to confusion, and not because of ignorance.

Taking a closer look at the retrospective sensemaking made by the EMTs it is safe to say that they conduct their work based on their training and past experiences. When met with a routine job, the EMTs simply follow the same procedures as they have done previously with success: “Looking at so many patients over the years and I think most of us in 90% of the cases, are right when we say; okay so this is serious, this is not serious.” (EMT1, 2013, p.9) This is further underlined by another EMT who says: “You live and you learn (...) If we get a call to go to some kind of sickness, I try to remember the last time I saw that, or the medicines we had.” (EMT3, 2013, p.5-6) These statements indicates that the retrospective sensemaking process is important to them, since it enables them to do their job faster and better once they have gained experience, and therefore are able to use this experience when facing similar scenarios later on.

It is also clear that the EMTs learn, and improve, their working skills from the experiences they make along the way: “Any other things I wanted to do different the first time, I did right this time. I was much more secure on my own skills because I had tried it before in the real world, instead on a doll.” (EMT4, 2013, p.4) Likewise, another EMT says: “I think most of the time the experiences is going to harden you. So when you are in that situation again, let’s say with a burn victim like that one, or a car crash like this one, then it is just, then you know; I know this, and this, and this, and this is going to happen and so forth.” (EMT1, 2013, p.17) In other words, one can train as much as one like to, but it is the real life experiences that makes one able to solve complex tasks.

When standing in front of new and unfamiliar scenarios, or when their expectations did not match the reality, the EMTs try to create new meaning to the situation: “If a person is dying or anything. Then he is still dying, but he is not more dying from me moving away for 30 seconds getting a grip, trying to handle the situation and then moving back in. I have not got any problems with just cutting it of say: Okay, I got to have 5 minutes, just to figure this out.” (EMT3, 2013, p.14) For this EMT it
is highly valuable to be able to step back for a moment and think over how he has solved similar situation in the past. Thus, retrospective thinking affects his sensemaking in the given situation, and without being able to draw on past cases, he might not be able to solve the present situation in a good manner.

However, the data also shows that there have been situations where the retrospective sensemaking did not help them enough, since they had not experienced the situation before. Therefore, it might not always be possible to respond to, or change, ones sensemaking process when expecting something different than what the reality is presenting. This happened to an EMT when he was called out to a child with fever cramps: “Most of the time, they are awake when we get there. They have the cramps for like two minutes. That is when we are on our way, and then they wake up. But this time, he did not wake up. He was like, lifeless, I do not know. He was breathing, got pulse and all that, but there was no reaction to anything and his mom was just like handing him over and said: Help. And then I got this kid and I was like: Okay, I haven’t seen this before, because I was expecting something else.” (EMT2, 2013, p.10) In these so called vu jádáé situations (Weick, 1993), one need to decide to either create new knowledge, and do whatever one can in the situation with whatever resources are at hand, or face a possible sensemaking collapse. If such a collapse takes place, one might experience a moment of freezing. Within this state of mind, it will be difficult to move on and make decisions.

The Police Officers also emphasizes the importance of their training and experience when it comes to how they conduct their work, which most of the times involves managing complex situations. Moreover, even though they have the training and experience, complex situations might occur when they do not have time to think about their actions. Rather, they just react, and then reflect over what actually happened afterwards: “Some of them [ref. the situations] I have reflected on more afterwards. Most of the times, the decisions you make are snap decisions and you have to trust those decisions. I mean, the ones that are very important, you do not stop halfway through and think; “oh should I do something else”. We just have to continue at that path and finally at the end of it, you can evaluate what you did and what you did not do right and wrong.” (PO1, 2013, p. 7) The above mentioned example verifies the central point of Weick’s thoughts in regards to retrospective sensemaking, namely: “I look back at what I said earlier from a later point in time when the talking has stopped.” (Weick, 1995, p.12) In the Police Officers case, they sometimes find
themselves in situations where they must act first, and reflect on those actions later on. For them, the sensemaking process can sometimes be described as: how can I know what I did, before I see what I produced?

Furthermore, the Police Officers all seem to have a need to share the situations where they themselves were first at the scene. One Police Officer said: “The ones you remember are the ones when you are first at the scene. There is always the fear to freeze in those situations and not know what to do, and so, those things keep coming over and over again.” (PO3, 2013, p.3) Moreover, since their daily work often involves difficult decisions, where others lives depends on the choices they make, the Police Officers often reflect over what they could have done differently: “When you come home from your job then the movies still runs in your head and when you go to bed. You can’t sleep and all these things because you always think what could happened? And that is the biggest thing that you think what could have happened, not what really happened.” (PO4, 2013, p.2) Another Police Officer supports those thoughts by stating: “You know, you just play the scene over and over again, to think could I have done something different?” (PO2, 2013, p.7) In situation where they are first at the scene, they have to take the lead. This means that they have the responsibility to delegate tasks, and solve the issues that may occur. Hence, the decisions they make are crucial for the outcome, and thus, they spend much more time on reflection over what they could have done better in these situations.

The Firefighters bring up another important issue by claiming that most situations often appears worse than they actually are, especially when one are facing them for the first time: “In the beginning, I had situations that felt more complex than they actually were, because I did not have any experience.” (FF2, 2013, p.2) They also emphasize the importance of retrospective sensemaking, since it means that in complex situations, they can take a step back and evaluate the situation based on past experiences. However, as a rookie, they did not have that possibility: “You had not... you did not understand the concept of thinking it over again (...) you did not understand the concept of stepping back and thinking the situation through.” (FF2, 2013, p.3) As they are viewing the rookie years as a time where retrospective sensemaking was sometimes lacking in certain situations, they implicit say that it is a very important process for them, in order to be able to do their job in the best way possible.
Looking at all three studied organizations it is clear that retrospective sensemaking is very important for them as it helps them to understand the decisions they have made, and the situations they have previously engaged in. They all refer to their training and their experience as being the main factors to be able to do their job. A job that involves making hard decisions and quickly understand the situations they are in. One of them says conclusively: “Experience is a lot in this job, it is almost everything, you rely on it. Your experience is everything, so when you are new you have no experience so almost whatever you could imagine that could happen when you arrive, it almost never does.” (PO2, 2013, p.4)

It is noteworthy that when faced with a completely new situation, which they have not experienced before, patterns of sensemaking collapse and breakdowns of their cognitive frames are evident: “Everything you learn in theory, how things should play out, in reality it is totally different. So then again, loose ends; Do we need backup? What is it exactly that happened here? All those things and then you are a rookie and your mind is just exploding! Cause you want to do it as fast as you can, and all that information you have in your head, you don’t know what to do with it. So you just end up freeze” (PO3, 2013, p.5) In other words, supporting Weick´s theory on the subject, the data suggests that to be able to prevent ending up in a freeze-situation and not knowing what to do, one needs previous experiences that can be used through retrospective sensemaking. However at some point, there will always be a new first for everyone and then people have to choose between staying paralyzed or breaking down their old sensemaking frames and create a new ones (Weick, 2001). Some of the data indicates that it becomes easier to adapt to new firsts and unexpected events, as times go by: “There will always be a new first. It happens all the time that we have a new first. But I think, as I get more and more experiences, the firsts aren’t as...they don’t leave as big of an impact.” (EMT3, 2013, p.15)

Finally, there is only one significant difference between the three groups’ retrospective thinking. Namely, that it is only the Police Officers that acknowledge that the complex situations they meet in their work follows them home. For them, the retrospective sensemaking process is not only visible and important when solving a situation right here and now. In fact, they often think about what they could have done differently or better afterwards. Therefore, the Police Officers retrospective sensemaking process can be seen as a tool for acting, learning and coping with hard situations. Whereas the other two groups only talks about it in regards to acting and learning.
5.1.3 Enactment

Enactment is about the “making” of what is sensed (Weick, 1995). It indicates the fact that people in organizations can produce parts of the environment they face. They construct their own reality, and in some cases, the environment the employees create might even constrain their actions in some ways. What is special for the employees of the ESC, compared to other organizations, is that the environment they have to work in changes with every new assignment. They never know where their next job will be, and they have little control over the environment. Ambiguity and uncertainty are factors they have to take into account when doing their job, which is something that makes their job so complex. Hence, their action might be restrained compared to if they found themselves in an environment they knew well and could fully control.

Especially for the EMTs, who have to treat people no matter where they find themselves, it is important to be able to act within the environments they are in. Sometimes they have the option to change the environment, other times they do not. One of the EMTs told us how he reacts when he is called out to an incident in the nightlife: “So every time I pick up someone in at the nightlife or something, I always try to make my main evaluation or my main treatment of the patient in the ambulance because it’s an environment I can control.” (EMT4, 2013, p.11) As one can see, it is important for him to be in an environment that he controls in order to act. By taking the patients to the ambulance before he starts treating them, he actively creates a stable environment where he will not be affected by disruptions. The ambulance becomes his safe zone, where he knows how to act in every situation.

Since the job requires that they respond to whatever scenario they are called out to, the EMTs are well aware of the surprises they might face: “Because we know that should we even get caught by surprise and it’s not what we thought, we can act like that. [Ref: Snaps his fingers] We can change.” (EMT2, 2013, p.15-16) Nevertheless, as one can see they believe that they are still able to act in every situation. Should they for some reason not know what to do, then they just take one-step back, and re-evaluate the situation before they start extracting cues and thereby act again: “So sometimes we just take... what do you call it? Take a ten seconds time out and say okay that is not working, that is not working, this is working, so okay then we are in that box (...).” (EMT1, 2013, p.11)
In addition, the Police Officers are as the EMTs called out to many different situations where they have to adapt to the environment. As they do not know how the situation is going to unfold once they arrive, it is necessary to prepare for any possible action. One of the Police Officers told us a story where they were called out to a dorm where a person was going amok with a meat cleaver. In this case, the only thing they knew before arriving was that there was one perpetrator who was armed. They had no idea of how the dorm looked like, who the perpetrator was, or where in the building they could find him. Hence, the Officers that were called out, had to act in a way so they would be prepared no matter what happened: “And then we were standing on both sides of the door so if he had a gun or something like that, he wouldn’t be able to hit us. And if he opened the door fast, we wouldn’t be hit by the meat cleaver, or whatever. And we knocked the door, and we were yelling at him to come out, but nothing happened.” (PO5, 2013, p.4) Preparing for any possible outcome is a safety measure that in some cases can limit the Officers’ actions in the environment since their own safety has to come first.

Furthermore, the Police Officers are observant about how their actions will affect the offenders’ reactions. If they approach them in a rough way, it is more likely that they will respond to them in the same way. This is emphasized by one of the interviewees when he said: “Action equals reaction so that is a balance, and that is what you have to live with.” (PO3, 2013, p.13) It seems like this Police Officer has realized that one thing affects another. This goes in line with what Weick (2001) says, namely that organizations affects people and people affects organization. When the Police Officer realizes that his action will have an impact on how the offenders react towards him, it shows that he is self-conscious of how his way of working can affect others.

The Firefighters expressed that they have a similar approach as the Police when it comes to handling situations in unknown environments. For them it is important to get an overview of the scene before acting to make sure that they are prioritizing correctly. This was evident when we asked one of the Firefighters, how he makes decisions when he arrives at scene: “I try not to do it fast actually. I try to step back and say: Okey, guys this is something we need to plan, so make sure that we sort of assess. If we have four casualties in the same: who is the most important? So we take like two steps back and relax, and then say: okey, situation number one is that we cut it up to, that this person is the most important now. Balance the other people if necessary, but the one in the worst situation should be handled first.” (FF2, 2013, p.3) Just as with some of the EMTs, it is
important for this Firefighter to take a step back and assess the situation so he can make sense of how to react. This can be seen as an interplay between retrospective sensemaking and enactment.

In regards to this property, the common pattern is that the ESC employees often need to take a step back and assess the environment so they can make sense of it. It is also clear that they find it best to prepare for any possible outcome and any possible environment, since they seldom know exactly what they will experience. What stands out is the fact that only one EMT admitted that the environment sometimes constrains his actions, and thus, he prefers bringing the patients to his ambulance where he has the control.

5.1.4 Social

When working with sensemaking, the fact that human thinking and social functioning are essential aspects of one another is easily forgotten. Since organizations are networks with shared meanings, use of common languages and everyday social interactions, sensemaking is also a social process. Yet, this does not mean that sensemaking have to be about two-way communication, or communication at all for that matter. It rather indicates that sensemaking through a social perspective involves more or less everything and everyone. Meaning, that saying and doing something, or not saying and doing so, all aids the development of another person’s cognitive map. When claiming that sensemaking is social, Weick (1995) means that sensemaking is never solitary, because even what a person does internally is depending of others. Hence, all type of communication presumes an audience, which then changes as the audience changes.

When larger accidents have taken place, the triangle of the ESC often get together to discuss how each one of them experienced the complex situation they just faced. This helps the employees understand why others acted as they did: “We were called into a debriefing... we were there, all the fire department where there, all the police was there and (...) the dispatches were there also. And then we all set down and said: Okay, so you were first at the scene, tell us your story. And then it went around and that actually helped (...).” (EMT1, 2013, p.5) When they are not able to fully make sense of the situations themselves, inviting others that have a different view of what just happened is beneficial. It is clear that they feel that this collective sensemaking process helps their understanding of past events a great deal.
On the other hand, if they did not share their experiences, there is a good chance that they eventually would get really frustrated and mad at each other, as they might not understand each other’s actions. One Police Officer who have realized the importance of sharing experiences, and thereby getting a better understanding of his colleagues sensemaking said: “It feels like the puzzle and it makes sense to me why he was not at my place helping me. Why was he standing over there? And when he tells me later that he was making sure that no one was getting in the way, or that he was fighting with this other guy, it makes sense to me. And if we didn’t have these [Ref: debrief], I would probably, after a couple of times having the same experience with this guy for example, I would probably get a bad feeling about him. Maybe think he is not there when I need help, and he was just standing over there, doing nothing. But filling out these puzzles, it makes sense why he was standing over there, and it makes sense in my head so I can relate to it and understand why he did as he did.” (PO5, 2013, p.8-9) The implications of not being able to make sense of others action can be so major. Therefore, it can be a necessity to share explanations for ones sensemaking process, to avoid friction between coworkers.

Additionally, to have a strange form of humor and to joke a lot with each other is another important part of the daily routines for the EMTs. The jokes represent a common language, but it also works as a coping and debriefing mechanism: “There is a lot of talking, a lot of joking. We ventilate these things out by joking with one another. Talking about what happened, getting the details straight, it is always very important.” (EMT3, 2013, p.5) In other words, the social frames of sensemaking also generate space for coping with their job together.

Moreover, the non-verbal communication is an evident part of the EMTs social interactions, which influences their sensemaking: “Me and my colleague, you know, we can reflect all the things by just looking at each other. Have you seen this before? And then you know we move on.” (EMT3, 2013, p.16) The ability to respond to non-verbal communication can be a strength in many situations. However, it can be a bias to not express what one is thinking as people are not mind readers, and the interpretation of situations are highly individual. Furthermore, another non-verbal routine is that when they drive out to a scene, the EMTs do not really talk about the coming task: “Sometimes if it is a very routinely call, we just sit and talk, listen to the radio and do as, you know, as if we were going to lunch actually.” (EMT3, 2013, p.6) According to this EMT, they implicit know what they are driving out to and therefore, it is not necessary for them to discuss and brief each other in the
car. Furthermore, they seem to share a close bond, and they appear to have created a common memory system which makes them able to implicitly know what the other person is thinking. This kind of group thinking makes the need for talking and preparing commonly less important.

Likewise, the Police Officers also interact through non-verbal communication. A single look from a co-worker can tell if they should wait for more back up or address the task immediately: “And then you say to the colleague: are you ready? And you look in his eyes or her eyes, and if she looks to the right, then you are not ready. And then you have to wait for the next police cars, because it is my life and it is her life (at stake)” (PO4, 2013, p.4) Sensemaking through social interactions can therefore sometimes make the difference between life and death in their profession.

Additionally, the Police Officers explain how their identities have changed throughout the social processes at the Police academy, and how somewhere along the way their sensemaking process changed from being individualistic to collectivistic: “At the police academy you (...) come as a normal person, and go out on the other side as a police officer. You are a different person because you have learned some, a lot of things and you change your mind” (PO4, 2013, p.5) This collective mindset has a strong impact on how the Police Officers act, and how they make sense of the situations they are in. Often, even if they do not agree with their colleague, they simply adapt to the behavior and language of their partner. Hence, it is once again evident that it is more important for the Police Officers to be a part of the unit than to react solitary to one’s own sensemaking: “(...) my partner, he had first contact and he kind of set the bar of how to react and he was really, he reacted more... aggressive then I maybe would have. But then because he did that then I think I reacted so that we would be perceived as a unit (...) I was surprised by my partner’s reaction, but because he reacted the way he did, I just did what he did (...).” (PO1, 2013, p. 3-4) Weick (2001) would call this group mind, and it means that the Officers make sense of the situation they are experiencing together. They rely on their partner to contribute with missing details to understand the cues they extract. Hence, they follow each other’s thinking.

As mentioned earlier, social interactions does not necessarily involve two or more people, it can also be an interaction within one individual. One Police Officer has experienced this and explains: “I have talked to myself and if I get in some situation and I have to get my gun out, I would shoot. I will do that, and I would not think about it.” (PO4, 2013, p.14) Weick (1995) says, even though
reasoning and decisions goes on in one´s own head, it is always in relation to an audience and therefore considered social.

Moreover, an interesting finding is that the level of complexity in a task seems to depend on what kind of persons the employees of ESC are helping. For example, all three work forces found it more difficult to do their job when it involves kids. Therefore, children in need can be seen as a social implication that influences their sensemaking: “Whenever we have these situations (...) if I know there’s a kid involved... I don’t have kids of my own, but if one or two of the fire fighters have kids in the same age, it’s very important for me to pull them in here and talk to them.” (FF2, 2013, p.6) The implication of working with children in need is yet another factor that makes the ESC employees work more complex than other professions.

There is a shared feeling throughout all three professions that when a task is more difficult than during standard trips, they all wish to talk with their partner about what they are going to do. However, the tone and level of seriousness in the dialogs varies among the three studied groups. The Police and Firefighters have a more social approach to their work, they view their co-worker, as family, and they seem to put a great deal of value in the social interactions between colleagues in their daily work. The EMTs on the other hand seems to have a more individualistic and clinical approach to their work. Hence, they more or less only communicate when it is needed, and merely share feelings when something severe has happened.

5.1.5 Ongoing
Sensemaking does not have a beginning nor an end. This can be explained by the fact that people are always in the middle of things. Sensemaking involves constant flows, and in order to understand them we need to comprehend the ways people chop moments out of these continuous flows, and how they extract cues in the middle of things. In other words, sensemaking is an ongoing activity that can be referred to as: “There are no absolute starting points, no self-evident, self-contained certainties on which we can build, because we always find ourselves in the middle of complex situations which we try to disentangle by making, then revising, provisional assumptions.” (Weick, 1995, p.43) When claiming that people are in the middle of things, one might wonder what they are in the middle of in the first place. Weick calls them projects, meaning that when people are in the middle of them, what they see in the world are only the aspects that involves these projects.
However, even though people are within flows, they do notice things that passes them by. These notions can be seen as interruptions to the projects and might change the sensemaking process of it (Weick, 1995).

For the EMTs, the constant learning process is most meaningful in regards to the ongoing sensemaking process. They all mention how they always bring something from the past to connect with the present when solving tasks in their work. Likewise, they take those new experiences and storage them in their mind together with the old ones. In that sense, their sensemaking process regarding how to best do their work never starts or stops: “I think you normally take something with you from every call, for the next one. But it does not have to be in a bad way. You can (think); yeah I did that, that, and that before and that worked so let’s do that again. And then try; okay this can be a little bit better so let’s fix that, so you always put everything on top of everything.” (EMT1, 2013, p.17) As well described by the EMT, one always put things on top of each other, meaning that it is an ongoing process. Two other EMTs support this by saying: “You live and you learn. Every time you’ve been out on a job or an assignment, you take something with you.” (EMT3, 2013, p.5), and: “We always try figuring out could we have done anything different or could we have acknowledged…acknowledged the problem earlier on and so on. So it’s an ongoing process each time we have a patient.” (EMT4, 2013, p.10) To live and to learn is described as an ongoing process of lifelong knowledge creation, which is necessary for their type of work.

The Police Officers on the other hand, refers to the importance of mental preparation, which is an ongoing process as two tasks are never the same in their type of work: “Mental preparation. Yeah. It is not always the big shootings, it can be something very, very small, but you always get ready; What if something happens? What if the situation develops? So we just talk; Okay do we need the wests? Do we need to take care of loose ends? If there has been any miss abuse? Will he or she try to take us down? Will they try to run? Do we know the neighborhood? Do we need backup? So, all kinds of things.” (PO3, 2013, p.4) Based on the above quotation, one might argue that the different work tasks they are given can be seen as different projects (Weick, 1995). Hence, whenever their mental preparation for such a project does not match the reality, one might suggest that their projects gets disturbed with interruptions that may change the outcome of their sensemaking of the situation.
Lastly, the Firefighters indicates that they often need to adjust and change their immediate way of thinking and evaluating a task, because situations often develop into something else: “Today, the standard situations are when my first actions has to be adjusted, because I didn’t do enough or I didn’t do what was most efficient.” (FF1, 2013, p.2) In that sense, the change of event also demands an ongoing sensemaking process. These rapid changes can be a challenge for the sensemaking process, since this means that one has to be constantly willing to adapt to ongoing changes.

As shown above, sensemaking is an everlasting cognitive puzzle, and we acknowledge that sensemaking is an ongoing process that neither starts fresh, nor stops cleanly. Nevertheless, every time a project is "done", things seem to become clearer for the ESC employees, as they can bring those experiences with them further on.

5.1.6 Cues
This property refers to how people extract cues to make sense of them. The extracted cues help the sensemaker to develop a larger sense of what may be occurring. What these extracted cues will develop into, depends on the context in two ways. Firstly, the context affects what we extract as cues. Secondly, the context affects how the cue is then interpreted (Weick, 1995). Consequently, we can only make sense of events that are noticed. This means that if one does not extract cues, there is really nothing to sensemake about. In the section about enactment, we explained how the employees of the ESC have to deal with a new environment for every assignment, and that this can restrain their actions in some way. The extracted cues are highly relevant in these cases, because they are a big part of how the employees are able to make sense of the environment, and thus are able to act in these situations.

In the case of the EMTs, it is evident that the possibility to extract cues happens in two faces of their assignment. First when they get the call from the dispatcher: “(...) our dispatch have messaged us what it is we are driving to, so we have made a mental image of it on the way, and we have prepared.” (EMT4, 2013, p.7), and later when they arrive at the scene: “The doorway diagnosis, you call it. When you open the door and look at people and you: “Okey, it is bad or it is not bad”.” (EMT2, 2013, p.4) The cues they extract, and the interpretation of them, will then influence how the EMTs react to the environment and the situation.
The interviewees underline an additional complex aspect of their work when they express that the cues they get from the dispatch, and the reality they meet once arriving at the scene is rarely the same. One of the EMTs explains this phenomenon in the following way: “A lot of the time when people call 911 or 112 in Denmark, they think it is one thing and then it’s really another thing.” (EMT3, 2013, p.3) This uncertainty of what they are going to meet, even though they have been giving cues from the dispatch can be worrying for the EMTs. Another EMT elaborates on this issue further by saying: “(...) we write the journal, what the code is, if it is a car crash or heart attack or just pains and whatever, and then who is handling the trip and where we are going and after that we put the journal away and we just go to the scene. It is not like, because most of us have reflected and learned by now that what is standing on the screen does not fit reality. So okay, this was standing and reality is something totally different. Actually, I don’t look that much at the screen. Sometimes they are right but most of the time it is just like: Yeah, you say chest pains and so forth, then we come out, and it is pneumonia. (...) I have found out that it is just so much better just to go into it with an open mind and say: I do not know what I am going to, but it can be everything from a cardiac arrest to a cut on a finger.” (EMT1, 2013, p.8) It is visible that the EMTs no longer believe in the cues they are given on their way to the scene, which can be seen as a bias for their preparation to manage complex situations. They find it more beneficial to use the “doorway diagnosis”, and not extract and interpret cues before they meet the patient.

As with the EMTs, the Police Officers also get information about the incident they are called out to on their way out. The big difference is though, that the Officers were not as focused on how the information they were given might be correct or not. As they see it, they have no other option than to react based on the cues they are given, even though they sometimes might be misleading. One of the Police Officers told us a story where this was clear: “Well the situation was when I had arrested a guy. Really, for nothing, because we didn’t know what he had done at the time, but he was covered in blood and he ran his car pretty much in a wall in Copenhagen and we thought he was going to kill someone in there. And he was a little taller than me, but built like a machine and he was wearing a wife beater and he was covered in blood so we figured this guy has done something. And he runs (...)” (PO1, 2013, p.15) Here, the Police Officer says that he did not know if the guy had done something wrong. Nevertheless, the extracted cues such as being covered in blood, built like a machine and wearing a wife beater, signals that he should arrest him because “he has to have done something wrong” based on the cues he extracted.
Another example of how cues can mislead was given by an Officer who told a story of a perpetrator who supposedly had a meat clever in his hands: “No he didn’t have the meat cleaver, sorry. I just couldn’t see his hands, so I told him to get down and show me his hands. I was... I was... (L) that’s the funny part, I was sure that I had seen the meat cleaver, but I hadn’t. I was sure I saw it so (Hmm), I would have pulled my gun anyway, but I was sure I had seen the meat cleaver. And then we ordered him to get down on the floor, pulled out his arms, and then as my... as I was pointing at him with my gun, my colleague put him into handcuffs. And then I asked him where the meat cleaver was, and my partner asked him where the meat cleaver was, and he says there is no meat cleaver. But I was sure I had seen a meat cleaver (...)” (PO5, 2013, p.4) The cue the Officer extracted from the received message made him so certain that the person had a meat clever in his hand, that he acted as if he had. It took him quite some time before he realized that he was actually unarmed, and even when he tells the story in retrospective, he is certain that the perpetrator had it in his hand. This story is evidence of the importance of extracting cues in order to make sense of situations and at the same time, it shows how one can be tricked by the cues one extract.

In line with these misleading cues, one Firefighter told us a story where his lack of extracting cues almost made him overlook a harmed person in a fire: “In that camper there were laying a person, I thought first it was a mannequin, but... Then I went out (...) But then I came into the camper again and I saw the face. The face was burned off, and then I realized that it was a person.” (FF1, 2013, p.2) Since the Firefighter believed that there would not be any people within the burning camper, he almost overlooked a person that needed help. Since he did not notice the cues the first time, he did not find it necessary to interpret them and therefore he did not see that it was a real person lying there.

It is clear from the above mentioned stories that extracting cues is a big part of the sensemaking process for the employees of the ESC. They are aware that some cues might be misleading, and that it can be better to wait until they arrive at the scene to interpret the cues. At the same time, they highlight the importance of using the extracted cues to make sense of the situation. Even though the three groups talked about cues in a similar way, the EMTs was most suspicion towards the cues they were given, which might have something to do with their identities.
5.1.7 Plausibility
When Weick (1995) talks about sensemaking as being plausible, he means that when studying the phenomenon, it will not be a study of something accurate, rather something plausible. He says that accuracy is nice to have when it comes to sensemaking studies, but not necessary. The very strength of the sensemaking perspective lies in the fact that it does not rely on accuracy, and that its model is not an objective perception. Instead, sensemaking is about plausibility, pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, creation, invention and instrumentality. The argument for this is that, since sensemaking involves multiple cues, with multiple meanings, for multiple audiences, it seems unlikely that accurate perceptions can be made. Especially, when we are talking about people, which in themselves cannot be 100% objective towards anything, nothing can be accurate. In other words, making sense of something, or someone, is more a plausible matter, since when it comes to sensemaking, accuracy is nice to have whereas plausibility is needed to have (Weick, 1995).

Since sensemaking is not accurate or exact, one might often find oneself in situations where decisions need to be made even though information is lacking. In the work of the ESC, time pressure is a reoccurring issue. Therefore, the people within the ESC are often forced to make sense of situations that are highly complex, and where the solution is not obvious nor given in advance. In these situations, they do whatever they can, with whatever information and resources they have available. This means that they need to act based on plausibility, probabilities, past experiences and their instinct. One EMT stated: “When we are out on a call we just tend to make the decisions that are right. You know, we assess things and then do the decision, make a decision from what we know at the time. The best possible decision, with the facts available at the time.” (EMT3, 2013, p.8) He continues by trying to explain the phenomena: “So you have to have some sort of confidence in what you’re doing, and...that even though you don’t know exactly what you’re dealing with at this moment, you sort of know how to handle it anyways.” (EMT3, 2013, p.12) For them, and the other two groups of professions, to make plausible decisions is better than not making any decision at all.

A Police Officer also acknowledge that plausible decision making, rather than accurate, is often occurring in their kind of work: “In the beginning as a rookie, I had so many decisions going like this; Is this right, is this right, is this right, is this right? And then I just thought; Okay, the first two I thought of probably are right. So I just pushed the other two away and went for it. Now, I just try to remember everything leading up to the situation, chronologically, and then think; Okay, what is
possible and what is plausible that will happen. And then take the decision. Sometimes you have a couple of minutes, which is very good, sometimes you just have ten seconds, and then you have to take an educated guess. (PO3, 2013, p.12) His awareness of both possible and plausible outcomes can make him a better decision maker in some cases, since he knows that decisions has to be made even though information is not accurate. This Officer will rather make an educated guess, than wait for the possibility to make an accurate decision.

Even though plausibility is a necessity to sensemaking, the ambiguous decisions it sometimes leads to can result in a great risk. These risks can lead to devastating outcomes even though the intentions were good. As mentioned earlier, a Police Officer who truly and deeply believed that a man was running around with a meat cleaver in his hand is one example of such a dangerous event. His mind was already set, since the information he was given earlier while driving in the car said so. However, when the Police Officer arrived at the scene, the man did not carry a meat cleaver on him any longer. Still, the Police Officer kept on believing the previous information where true: “When you see a guy you have to decide is he coming at me? Or, does he have anything in his hands and what is he trying to do right now? So at the point I’m actually quite sure if he had leaped against me, if he had jumped against me or something like that, I would probably have shot him in his legs because I was so sure I saw a meat cleaver.” (PO5, 2013, p.5) Luckily, the Police Officer was never forced to use his gun since the event took a different turn. However, if the perpetrator would have ran towards the Police Officer, the Police Officer probably would have ended up by shooting an unarmed man due to his plausible thinking.

As the interviewees have shown throughout their sensemaking processes, plausibility regards knowing enough about what one is thinking, and having enough information in regards to the subject, is necessary in order to get on with the projects one are in. Enough information is needed, not more, which means that from that point on, plausibility overrules accuracy.
5.2 Part 2: The Primary Properties

In part one of the analysis, we analyzed Weick’s (1995) seven properties and how these properties influence the sensemaking process of the ESC employees. However, in his theory he emphasizes that the seven properties should not be used as an implicit set of proposition to be tested, but more like raw material that can be helpful in the investigation of people’s sensemaking. This can indicate that not all seven properties are necessarily equally important for all people in their sensemaking process. Therefore, one could divide them into primary and secondary properties in the search of what it is that influences the sensemakers’ understanding of complex situations. Based on part one of the analysis, we can draw the conclusion that it is social and identity that stands out as the most important properties according to the empirical data collected from the ESC employees. We could have chosen to highlight other properties than social and identity. However, the empirical data gives indications towards which properties are primary for each specific case. Thus, it was most essential to make a deeper analysis of social and identity in this thesis. Hence, we will take a deeper look into these primary properties, and expand the analysis of them by bringing in supporting theories that can help explaining some phenomena where Weick’s theory might fall short.

As mentioned in part one, the identity of the employees in the ESC is partially constructed through social interaction and since the two properties are so closely related, it can be difficult to separate the relevant theories concerning the two properties. In the social property, we will try to get an insight to how the employees identifies themselves with the organization, and which groups they want to be a part of. Moreover, in the identity property, it is more the personal identity of the employees that is possible to analyze. Since the properties are so correlated, we have chosen not to completely separate them when making this deeper investigation. We will rather distinguish between how they see themselves in the group: the social perspective, and how we see them as individuals: the identity perspective.

In the study of identity in organizations, Pratt (1998a) makes an important contribution when he distinguishes between the individual and the group in relation to identity. He defines identity as the question of “who am I", while the question of “how do I come to know who I am in relation to you” is seen as identification. In this part of the analysis, identification will be the social perspective whereas identity refers to the individuals in the organizations.
Furthermore, Pratt (1998) expresses that the social identity theory and the self-categorization theory is highly relevant for the understanding of the identity construction, and the two concepts will therefore be used in this thesis. In both these theories, the concept of categorization is seen as important for the process of identifying with social groups. Hence, we will firstly look into how the employees of the ESC categorize themselves into social groups, before we secondly will categorize their identity in relation to relevant supplementing theories. The categories that the supplementing theories contribute with can be used to acquire a better understanding of both the social and the individual identity that the employees construct. Moreover, this acquired knowledge will be important in relation to answering the research question of how the employees of the ESC sensemake in complex situations as their identity construction influences the sensemaking process a great deal.

5.2.1 Social Identification

If one wants to investigate how employees categorize themselves in relation to others, it is highly relevant to use organizational identification theory to explain the process that the employees are going through. According to Pratt: “organizational identification occurs when an individual’s beliefs about his or her organization become self-referential or self-defining.” (Pratt, 1998, p.172) This indicates that one identifies with the beliefs of who one think others are and what the organization stands for. In relation to the concept of organizational identification, there are two ways to identify oneself with others. Either, one can become more similar to the group one wants to identify with, or one can target groups that are perceived as similar to oneself. We will use supporting theories concerning the creation of ingroups and outgroups, and granting and claiming leadership to understand how the identification process unfolds for the interviewees in this thesis.

Part of the group

One of the reasons why people identify themselves with others is due to the need of affiliation (Pratt, 1998). This need of belonging to something bigger than oneself, drives people to be part of collective groups. These collectives can be found both inside the organization, as well as outside. Ellemers et. al (2004) uses the terms ingroups and outgroups to explain the creation of a social identity. The groups that one favor the most and wish to belong to are the ingroups, while the social groups that one do not feel belonging to will be seen as outgroups. We will use this theory to explore which groups the interviewees identifies themselves with.
As explained in the theory, people tend to belong to several groups simultaneously, and inside an organization, there can even be multiple identities that can be the target of identification (Pratt, 1998). If we look at the ESC as a whole, it is clear that most of the employees of the targeted organizations identify themselves as a unit that works together: “(...) we look at them [ref. the police and the fire brigade] as our colleagues. And they, I think they do the same for us.” (EMT1, 2013, p.5) To see the triangle as an ingroup is important so they are able to work well together in situations that demand that all three professions are present. Furthermore, throughout their education they have all been informed about the importance of being able to work together.

Regardless of the triangle being an important ingroup for the ESC employees, when it comes to the EMTs, they indicated that they see their ambulance partner as being their primary ingroup: “You are two in the ambulance, and you will always have your partner to lean against. Even if your partner isn’t that experienced, or... if they’re freeking out, then you can always find safe ground in each other. Just look at each other, take 10 seconds discuss what the hell is going on here and then you’ll find your ground again.” (EMT3, 2013, p.7) The reason for this can be that they normally work in small teams, and the same people rotates on operating the ambulances. When working shifts, one will not meet all colleagues on a regular basis and thus, subgroups amongst coworkers will easily be formed. These subgroups will for the people involved, often be looked at as the most important ingroup they are a part of, since it is these people they trust, and identifies themselves with.

It was also evident that the EMTs made a clear distinguish between EMTs and non-EMTs. Ordinary people, with ordinary identities is something that the EMTs do not wish to identify with when it comes to the creation of their professional identity: “Talk with colleagues, talk with people who know the feeling because we’ve all been there. (...) I found out pretty quickly that talking to my friends and family doesn’t work because they can’t... you know, if you haven’t seen a dead person all your life, then it’s hard to start sympathizing with somebody who just have seen five.” (EMT3, 2013, p.16) These ordinary people are seen as part of an outgroup which have no knowledge of what it means to have their profession. Therefore, the professional identity is one of the strongest indicators for belongingness when the EMTs are forming social groups.
Earlier in this thesis, it has been argued that the Police Officers have a collective mindset, and sees the whole organization as one unit. For them, wearing the same shirt have a deeper meaning than just being a simple dress code. It is also a code for belongingness and that they all stand together as one group. However, in the empirical data there were also indications of subgroups within the organization. These subgroups can be seen as other important ingroups: “(...) if it is bad or if it is fun we have beers at work. My shift crew we do not drink that much, other shift crews drink more and lets out more steam. But (...) the mentality of the group does not like... it is not an aggressive unit ours. We are not the ones in the bars we are not the ones using clubs and stuff we are kind of... we are the boring part.” (PO1, 2013, p.4-5). Each crew forms their own identity that the employees can choose to identify with or not. In that sense, there is different ingroups and outgroups within the Police as well.

However, if a Police Officer would ever be in danger, they all act as one big ingroup: “(...) he presses the alarm button on his radio and then all the Police of Copenhagen they get the signal that two colleagues are in danger in Tingbjerg (...). So driving to Tingbjerg, you are willing to take more chances in the traffic cause you want to get there as soon as possible. And when you get there, and you see this angry mob you know... you just RUSH out of the car and yell like hell. And take out your pepper spray and yell that they will have to get the hell out of there and so on. So in these situations, especially if a colleague is in danger, so then you will get aggressive if it is needed. “ (PO2, 2013, p.13-14) This example illustrates how several ingroups joins together to work as one. Suddenly, it is not important for an Officer which specific unit he belongs to, rather the organization as a whole becomes the most important group. Shifting between the relevant groups like the Police Officers do, adds to the complexity of their work and can confuse them of whom they should follow.

While it was obvious how the EMTs and the Police Officers uses identification to categorize themselves into certain ingroups, and how important social interaction is for the creation of their identity, it was not so clear when talking to the Firefighters. As we mentioned earlier, the Firefighters also found it important to be like a family at work since they spend so much time together. However, they did not give any indications on who they identify themselves with the organization. The only point that were emphasized by them, were the importance of working together as the triangle of ESC, and involve each other in the debriefing routines: “We actually
have more or less a standard of talking to each other afterwards (...) we will also often have the Police come down and have their feedback, and then we simply... We discuss the matter, one by one, we actually tell what we did so others can sort of relate to that, and what it meant to their role in this situation.” (FF2, 2013, p.5) At the station where these firefighters worked, there were also an ambulance department. Therefore, by inviting the Police into the debriefing they can all come together and help each other to make sense of the situation they have just experienced.

Who will lead?

The analysis of the creation of different groups gave us an understanding of how the employees use identification to feel belongingness to groups. However, it did not give any indications on how they positions themselves inside these groups. As mentioned before, only two of the interviewees in this thesis hold a formal leadership position that is given to them by the organization. The rest are all at the same hierarchical level, yet they all act as leaders and conduct leadership more or less every day. The different roles they have in the car forces them to sometimes take the lead, and be the leader at the scene. For the EMTs and the Police Officers it is the person sitting in the passenger seat that is the leader in the sense that they always have first contact with the people involved, and makes the primary decisions. The driver will follow their lead and help them out when it is needed. The way the roles are divided in the car means that both the EMTs and the Police Officers constantly goes in and out of leadership. The fact that they one day have to act as a leader and the other day as a follower, can be very complex, since some might favor one of the roles over the other. If one EMT or a Police Officer prefers the leadership role then these people might have a problem working those days when they are forced to be the driver. The other way around, some might not want to be granted leadership simply because they have to sit in the passenger seat. We will use the concept of granting and claiming leadership to analyze how they categorize themselves and others as leaders and followers.

Some might think it is obvious that the employees will rotate in being in charge, and that none of them are more leaders than the others, since they hold the same hierarchical position. However, it was evident that some of the interviewees preferred the leadership role more than others. DeRue and Ashford (2010) proposes that leadership identity is created through a social process in the organization. Hence, it is a two-way communication that requires both a leader and a follower. When a person claims leadership, he depends on a follower granting him this role. If not, the person
does not possess the position as leader for the group. Both granting and claiming leadership can be done in a verbal/nonverbal and direct/indirect manner.

All EMTs clearly wanted to claim the leadership role. In other words, they always prefer to be the person sitting in the passenger seat and being in charge. One of the EMTs explains: “(...) I prefer being the person in the passenger seat. I prefer to make the decisions, and have the responsibility.” (EMT3, 2013, p.13) If the situation allows it, they would all claim the role of a leader. One could imagine that there would be situations within this group of profession where they all claimed the role of the leader and nobody granted them it. Hence, they might find themselves in situations where both parties want to lead and solve the task, and where this alpha male issue might make their work even more complex. In this case, other factors as experience and tenure would play a role when solving the issue of who will drive and who will be in charge.

The Police Officers on the other hand seemed to care more about to get the job done in the best possible way, rather than having the need for claiming leadership. The Officers had a more humble approach to it, and several of them expressed that if someone knew a better solution, or had more experience than they had, it was not a problem to take the follower role even if they originally where supposed to lead. However, if the situation needed a leader, and no one were claiming the role, they would all step in and take charge: “If you decide to take the lead you have to be able to control all situations, and you have to be able to do it so well that everybody else trusts you. I have five years in the job, and I am not going to pretend that I can manage a murder scene, I can manage a lot of scenes, a lot of crime scenes but not a murder scene. So in that case I just follow what he says, but if I’m at a scene in the field where I feel that I can handle it, and if no one else is going to take charge, I will take charge. For the efficiency of it, I don’t have any ambitions towards leadership so I rather be a grunt than a leader.” (PO1, 2013, p.16) It is not the personal interest of this Officer that is seen as the most important goal, it is more the outcome of the task. This humble leadership approach can be related to the strong group identity that lies within the Police Force. Just as the unit is greater than the individual, getting the job done in the best possible way is more important than to lead.
Another Police Officer also emphasizes that it is not that important to claim the role of the leader. At least not every day, it depends more on their mood on that current day: “I don’t prefer, I have no first dibs on anyone. I don’t care, if I feel like driving I just take the keys and say “I start with driving” and other days I might have a headache and then I just say “do you mind driving”, so it is nothing set, it is just day to day. And we can just look at each other at the beginning of the shift and say “do you feel up for it or should I drive?”, and that is how it gets settled.” (PO3, 2013, p.2) This is a good example of how both verbal and nonverbal granting of leadership is used in organizations. Just taking the keys is a strong nonverbal action of granting leadership, while by saying “I drive” he verbally grants the role as well. Normally, these actions would be seen as strong indications of claiming leadership, but the nature of the role division in the police car makes them granting actions.

Lastly, what was interesting to see with the two Firefighters were that they both had the same educational background as crew chief, but they used it in two completely different ways. One of them expressed: “I got a… education as a crew chief as well, but I’m not using that in my… daily job.” (FF1, 2013, p.1) He chooses not to use his title in order to claim the leadership role when he is at work, nor does he identify with this role in relation to constructing his professional identity. He rather prefers to follow the lead of others. The second Firefighter was on the other hand using his position to claim leadership, and was granted the role as crew chief at the station as this was his official role.

As seen in this section of the analysis, the ESC employees can sometimes find it difficult to know what their role involves, and to which group they belong. The constant shifting of ingroups, and going in and out of leadership can make it problematic for them to know where they belong and whom they should listen to.

5.2.2 Personal Identity
Organizational identification has up until now been used to explain how the employees of the ESC categorize themselves into ingroups that they wanted to be identified with. However, we feel that only analyzing the identity at a group level is not sufficient to fully understand how the employees sensemake in complex situations. For this reason, we will expand the analysis by using supplementing theories that can be used to categorize what type of identity the interviewees have
according to us. The theories presents several categories that are relevant for getting a wider understanding of who the interviewees are, and how their identity influences their sensemaking process in complex situations. We will start out by categorizing their leadership identity, before we move on to their decision making style. Lastly, we will categorize their storytelling style to see how their identity influences the way they tell stories. The reason for categorizing the interviewees is because the choice of categories influence the creation of the interviewees’ professional identity.

**Leadership identity**

When asked about how they approach complex situations, the interviewees positioned themselves very differently. Some was humbled and said that it could be difficult to sometimes grasp such situations, others were more self-secure and did not see it as very difficult at all. As explained earlier, we see decision making as an important part of leadership, and we believe that all of the interviewees to some extent acts as leaders when they are performing their job. In regards to this, we believe that Streyrer’s article from 1998 can help us to get a better understanding of the employees’ leadership identity, which is highly relevant in regards to decision making. In his article, Streyrer proposes four archetypes of leadership that can be used to categorize leaders, and thereby get a better understanding of who they are. These archetypes, the Hero, the Saviour, the Father and the King, are explained for the theory section. It is important to underline that these categories are not fixed, they should rather give an indication to which archetype the interviewees possessed within the stories they told us.

The interviewees have different identities, and therefore it is not surprising that all four archetypes of leadership presented themselves in the empirical data at some point. Among the EMTs, we find several persons that view themselves as the Hero in certain situations: “(...) again not to sound arrogant, but they call us; we got no one to call so we have to solve it.” (EMT2, 2013, p.12) They see themselves as the person that comes and save the day, and they need to help people, since no one else can. Thus, it is up to them to save the person that has called for them. Another one sees himself as the King: “Oh, I... I prefer to be... to be the one that sits in the passenger seat, yeah. Definitely! (...) It’s just... I don’t know it’s... it’s because that it’s me doing what has to be done. It’s me who makes the decisions and it’s... I don’t know, it’s up to me to do it right and so on. If it was the other way around, it would be someone else who decides what I have to do and in what pace I have to do it, which order I have to do it and so on, and so on.” (EMT4, 2013, p.13) He does
not like to take orders, and enjoy his work the most when he is in control and acts as the leader at the scene, at the same time as he comes across as charismatic and well liked. However, even though these EMTs prefer to be Heroes and Kings, they cannot always act as such due to the role division in the car.

In the group of interviewed Police Officers, the archetype of the Saviour was most common when they talked about situations they had experienced. These Officers saw it as their duty, and mission, to guide the people they meet to a better life, and was often personally involved in cases where young people had problems and needed help. If they can relate to the people they are helping, they often see it as their mission to “save” them from the life they have. One of the Police Officers told about one time when he helped a young girl who had an alcoholic mother. One day, the girl found her mother drunk in front of the building where they lived and could not manage to get her inside the apartment on her own so she called the Police. After this incident, the Officer made sure that the girl was placed in foster care, and he has been in contact with her several times since then. When asked how it feels when he helps people in such situations, he replied: “It feels good! It feels good, you know it means that what I did for her, it meant something and that’s the main thing about this job I think, it is to do something for people if possible.” (PO2, 2013, p.4) This urge to help people that have fallen outside of the society fits well with the archetype of the Saviour. In addition, the ability to make people feel safe is a characteristic that is common for this archetype. As the Officer explained when he was asked why he chose this job: “I wanted to work with people, I find it interesting and I wanted to, because I have been in the military and abroad, it is almost kind of the same job. Just making sure that people are safe and that people are following the written laws.” (PO2, 2013, p.2) In this particular case, one could imagine that this Police Officer most of the time would conduct leadership with the characteristics of a Saviour. However, it is important to note that most people will change their leadership style, depending on the context.

Among the Police Officers, only one had an official role as a leader. What was interesting to see was that while the younger interviewees, which has no formal leadership role, often positioned themselves as the Hero or the Saviour, the leader we interviewed definitely saw himself as the Father when he talked about his work. He sometimes referred to himself as the Father in the organization, other times it was his way of expressing himself that made it resemble this archetype. For him, it is important to acknowledge and praise his employees: “And it is important for me to tell
them that they have done the right thing. They have done right. It was not wrong what they did.” (PO4, 2013, p.3) Regardless, it is not only towards the employees he acts as the wise Father. Also for the families that has lost a family member or has experienced other types of crises, he acts like this archetype: “But I think it was good for me that they come here to my office, and we talk together, and we talk about all these things. About the future, and how they would get over it and that they can always call me if they have some questions and all this.” (PO4, 2013, p.15) This quote refers to an incident where he helped a family after they lost their daughter in a traffic accident. For him it was important to follow up on them, and assist them if there was anything they needed help with.

The Firefighters did also show features that could be resembled with the Hero archetype. Many of them have a background from the ambulance service, so it is not strange that these two employee groups may have some common features in regards to the archetypes of leadership. One of the Firefighters presented himself as an adventure seeker that enjoyed saving people: “(…) you can’t see anything, you can only hear and feel, and you have to move around in the apartment and find the fire. So that’s, not funny, but it’s a good feeling afterwards.” (FF1, 2013, p.4) This passion for helping out, even though it can be dangerous, is something that fits well with the traits of a Hero.

As one can see, when it comes to their leadership identity, one of the common factors for all the interviewees is that they all want to do something good for the people they meet. Another thing that stands out is the need to present themselves as professionals that is doing a good job. Their professionalism is very important, and when they act as leaders, staying professional is one of their main goals.

Decision makers
The archetypes of leadership helped us explain how we consider that the interviewees identify themselves as leaders. However, what this classification does not tell us anything about, is how the interviewees make decisions in complex situations, and what they base these decisions on. To investigate this, we intend to use the five styles of decision making that Williams & Miller (2002) presents in their study of how people tend to make decisions. They argue that one can classify all decision makers into the Charismatics, the Thinkers, the Skeptics, the Followers and the Controllers. Each of these five decision making styles have some typical characteristics that people
holds in order to be classified as one of them. These characteristics are traits of the interviewees’ identity, and are thus important for the analysis of how they make sense of their decisions. As with the archetypes of leadership, these categories should neither be used as permanent classifications of the interviewees, as styles changes with context. However, the classifications we have made are credible in regards to their decision making styles in the scenarios they shared with us.

Some might argue that it would not be possible for us to analyze the interviewees’ decision making style, since we have not observed them making decisions in practice. However, they told several things in the interviews that gave us a clue to which style they use in complex situations. In the case of the EMTs, it was clear that even though they have the same educational background, and their personal identities are quite similar, their decision making styles differs a lot. While one is clearly a Thinker that is concerned with basing his decisions on facts and data: “Personally I read a lot and I practice. I have a teaching position in (P) the school where we teach EMT’s. So that keeps me sharp. I need to know the basics of my equipment at least, and then it’s natural to build on that by reading.” (EMT3, 2013, p.3), another came across as more of a Skeptic that does not always believe in the cues he is given: “And I am still expecting that every time we get out. I am pretty sure that nothing’s wrong, but I still have the index of suspicion.” (EMT2, 2013, p.11) The Skeptics, as this EMT is a good example of, are used to take charge and are often suspicious about the information presented.

When it comes to the Police Officers, several of them gave the impression of being more like a Follower. The reason for this can partially be that some of them have been in the Police Force for only a short amount of time, and that they therefore have not been able to build up a stronger decision making style. Moreover, it could also indicate that they simply have a more humble personality and bases many of their decisions on experience, or what others have done before them. This is evident in one of the Police Officer’s statement: “Experience is a lot in this job, it is almost everything, and you rely on it. Your experience is everything, so when you are new you have no experience (...).” (PO2, 2013, p.4) These experiences is gained both from previous assignments and the training they receive at the Police academy: “(...) the training from the police academy helps you in a big way so you are kind of prepared to whatever might happen in some way and you learn to react to whatever you see.” (PO2, 2013, p.7) By observing how other Officers handle situations, they can create knowledge of how certain incident should be handled. They then bring this
knowledge with them when making decisions later on. Based on the premises for this type of decision maker, one could argue that all of the interviewees at some point made decisions as Followers as they all have referred to their experience as an important component to be able to do their work.

The more experienced ESC employees seem to have developed their decision making style a bit further than the younger ones. It was clear that these more seasoned employees had another decision making style, especially the Firefighters. They expressed a more logical and unemotional style that fits well with the Controller: “I simply come up with something new. I have a general saying of: I will go into panic and do something constructive.” (FF1, 2013, p.2) This analytical way of orienting oneself in a complex situation shows that they have experienced a lot, and that they are able to make logical decisions even though the situation might be stressful.

These different decision making styles shows some of the underlying reasons that drives the ESC employees to make decisions. William and Millers (2002) theory is all about decision making preferences in regards to one’s personal identity and therefore, this gives us yet a broader picture of what the employees base their decisions on and more indications of who they are.

**Storytelling**

So far, we have used short quotes to show how we categorize the interviewees as leaders and decisions makers based on the stories they told. However, until now we have not shown some of the complete stories they told. These stories can help explain the creation of the individual and collective identities that we have analyzed. By identifying how the interviewees tell stories, we can bring the analysis of their identity a step further, as who the storyteller is as a person, influences the way he tell stories. As mentioned in the explanation of the storytelling theory, Gabriel (2000) divides stories into four groups: Comic, Tragic, Epic and Romantic.

Even though there were several good examples of complete stories, we needed to limit ourselves to only choose two of these stories. The fact that both stories are told by Police Officers is completely by coincidence, we just chose two good examples that illustrates different types of stories, and where the personality of the storyteller comes out. Regardless of the fact that the following stories have been classified in one specific way, one need to remember that the way stories are told can
easily change depending on the time, place and audience. As one person tells a story in a Tragic tone one day, he might tell the same story in a Comic way another day, which again reflects their identity. The reason for bringing in storytelling to the analysis is both to get an even better insight to how they identifies themselves, and to show examples of the type of stories we have gathered in the collection of the empirical data.

The first story can be classified as an Epic-Tragic story where the interview target tells a Tragic story and positions himself as the Hero in the story: “I met a homeless guy, around my age, who I thought first of all was an old friend of mine, from elementary school. And he looked like this guy and he had the same name and everything was pretty much the same, except he was a few years older which I didn’t realize at the time. I used to do gymnastics with him, and he was good, he was strong, he was quick and this guy was just the shadow of what he was. But then, five minutes later we found out it was not the same guy but I thought it was, and it made me really sad because I remember, I stopped seeing that guy cause he started smoking weed, and I thought that would have been the perfect way to end up the way he was. That kind of made me sad, and it still does when I think of it because I don’t talk to my friend anymore. But I gave him my gloves because it was winter, and we have issued gloves, they are leather gloves with fur and they are really warm, and I always sweat and I am always warm so I gave him my gloves cause I just use my summer gloves. And he was so excited, and I learned later on that he still have the gloves, he doesn’t have anything else probably but he still have the gloves and he is very proud of the gloves, and he thinks they are special. I mean they are probably very cheap but he is excited about these gloves and I talked to his father and he doesn’t do heroin anymore, just weed and he is most likely doing better. I mean he is probably dead now but he most likely was at the time. And that kind of made me happy, and sad.” (PO1, 2013, p.12)

This story is fundamentally a Tragic story about a homeless guy, involving a heroic action from the Police Officer. Moreover, since the Officer implies that it was his actions that saved the man, it also makes it an Epic story. The Officer tries to reduce the importance of his actions by saying that the gloves were cheap and that he has no need for them, but at the same time, it is evident that he enjoys the fact that the homeless guy has kept the gloves and that he is proud of them. This makes him the hero of the story that saves the day. This characteristic is in line with how we categorized the Police Officers earlier when talking about leadership.
The second story is a Comic-Tragic one where the story in itself is Tragic, but the storyteller recollects it as a funny incident that he will always remember: “(...) when people can’t come in contact with their relatives they often call the Police and get us to conduct the search, and we often start in people houses. And this one time we was sent to an apartment or a house down in Brøndby, where a locksmith was at the place and his sister wanted him to unlock the door to her brothers apartment or his house. And he wouldn’t do that without the Police. So when we came down there, I thought that we were just to go in there and make sure he wasn’t there, (L) (stands for laughter). And the, when the locksmith opened the door I could smell a very, very, very bad smell and something was totally wrong but it wasn’t like death, or dead people smell, or something like that it was something else and I quickly just thought it was something like a fart or something like that. So, just inside the house there was a small latter that was tipped over and I moved that and I tried to get some light, turn on the light but then there were no light in the house. And then I took up my flashlight and I was (L), I was using it over the floor so I was using it like this [showing his hand going around] and then when I was pointing at the living room, (L), the flashlight hit a man who was lying on his knees and his arms and he was but naked and he had his ass in the air and he was dead. So I was lighting him right in the ass (L) and I was like [showing a choked face], I didn’t see that one coming at all (L). So I ran in to where he were, and I looked at him and I was sure he was dead cause he was rotten in the stomach or something, and it had just spilled out on the floor and his arm was broken. Probably from a fall or something like that, and I quite quickly decided that he was dead but (L). I wasn’t expecting that, I wasn’t expecting to be lighting a guy in the ass and (L), finding a dead guy, so (L), it took me off guard a little bit(...)But the sister was waiting(...)and I needed to go out there and tell her that her brother is dead. So it was like a total surprise and then, I don’t know, I had to adjusting to the situation and then find another face cause I don’t know if I was scared by the surprised, and then I was a little bit laughing inside (L) and I was like; fuck! (L)(...) Well now I’m supposed to tell the sister that he is dead so it’s like a couple of faces, where I needed to change my face and to do something else. So from standing there and then have to do a quite sad job by telling her that her brother was dead. (PO5, 2013, p.15-16)

A story about finding a person dead is not something one would directly associate with a Comic story, yet the surprise of seeing something he did not expect made him laugh, and he found the position of the naked body to be funny. However, what also makes this a Tragic story is that the Officer knew that he was the one who had to manage the situation. He knew that he had to put his
serious face on, take the lead and go out and tell the sister that her brother was dead, which made him sad. The fact that he was able to do so shows a great deal of professionalism and empathy, which have been a common trait for the Police Officers throughout the whole data.

These two stories are not circulating in the organizations as far as we know. Moreover, they are not used as a managerial tool to create shared goals or values within the corporations as organizational storytelling often can be used for. Instead, these stories, and many more collected in the empirical data shows how individuals create stories and use them to make sense of what is going on around them. Storytelling are a lot like Weick´s term justification, in the way that it is a long and ongoing process that can change over time, and help them justify their actions (Weick, 2001). The stories might change depending on the audience, and as mentioned before, they are in this thesis used to highlight yet another tool for sensemaking.

This second part of the analysis has focused on using categorization to acquire a better understanding of how the primary properties in this thesis influences the sensemaking process for the employees of the ESC when they are creating meaning in complex situation. As categorization is an important factor in the creation of both the personal identity and the organizational identification process, we believe it has contributed with getting a step further in answering the research question. The last part of the analysis will take us the final step, as it looks deeper into some of the phenomena that is not highlighted within Weick’s seven properties.

5.3 Part 3: Beyond the Properties

Until now, the analysis has focused on Weick´s seven properties, and the two properties that are seen as the primary properties in this thesis. Even though we completely agree with Weick (1995) when he claims that he has found seven different phenomena that influences sensemaking, the empirical data indicates that there are especially two more issues that need to be highlighted when it comes to sensemaking in complex situations, namely justification and the unexpected. These two subjects have been brought up by Weick (2001, 2009) himself. However, according to the data, they have not been sufficiently reviewed, and demands more attention in regards to sensemaking in complex situations. Therefore, they will be analyzed and explained for in the following sections.
Moreover, as decision making is an important part of this thesis’ research question, we aim for summarizing the whole analysis with combining Weick’s concepts of committed interpretation together with his explanation of decision making. We have already mentioned decision making in part two of the analysis in regards to categorizing the ESCs decision making styles. However, its role and influence on sensemaking will be brought up again in the end of this part of the analysis as decision making involves much more than just the preferred decision making styles. What links these three concepts together is that they are all mayor subjects when it comes to understanding sensemaking, yet none of them is considered as a property of sensemaking according to Weick. Likewise, they all turned out to be reoccurring and important matters for the interviewees, and should therefore not be treated as minor subjects of sensemaking since they were so important for them.

5.3.1 Justification
Justification was a topic that quickly reviled itself as being important for the interviewees as they constantly felt the need to explain and justify their behavior. As known, Weick emphasizes that sensemaking occurs in a social context where norms and expectations affects the rationalizations for certain behaviors. Within this social context, people will always try to legitimize their behavior. In that sense, people develop acceptable justifications for their behavior as a way of making such behavior meaningful and explainable (Weick, 2001). In other words, we always feel a need to justify what we have said and done, and in that way, justification helps us understand events that have already happened. One might say that justification is one of the most important tools supporting retrospective sensemaking. Regardless, the need for, and the underlining reasons for justification, will depend on the context one is in: “Context affects the content of acceptable justifications and the choice of feature of the environment that support the rationalizing.” (Weick, 2001, p. 13)

After collecting the data, and reviewing it in written text, it is obvious that the interviewees constantly felt a need to justify their actions through the stories they told. For some of them, it was clear that the justification process has a huge influence on their retrospective sensemaking. This was shown by the way they often paused in the middle of their stories to either correct themselves or explain us why they acted as they did, or said what they said. Most of the EMTs felt a great need to justify that whatever the outcome of a task would be, it would never be their fault if something went
wrong. We never questioned their ability to do their work, however they often wanted to point out that they did the best they could: “I am doing what I have to do, and if the patient gets sick or ill or cardiac arrest, he would have done that anyway.” (EMT2, 2013, p.5) He continues by saying: “And I always know what to do because the worst thing that can happen, again it wouldn’t be my fault, which is if they stop breathing.” (EMT2, 2013, p.11)

As shown in the quotations above, it is very important for the EMT to tell us that nothing is his fault, and he stops in the middle of a sentence to declare his innocence. This type of justification can be seen as a coping mechanism, a way for the employees of the ESC to deal with all the strenuous things they experience in their work. It is not strange that people feel the need to justify their actions, especially when other people’s health, life and emotions are involved, since it is hard to cope with feeling constant guilt. Besides using justification as a coping mechanism, the reason why they all shared these justified retrospective stories could be that at the time we spoke with these employees they had the possibility to give an explanation of their actions, which they did not have at the time of the event. For some of them, it might have been the first time they told the story out loud. Telling the stories out loud can yet be another reason for why the EMTs felt compelling to constantly position themselves as professionals who always make professional decisions. This reoccurring issue will be elaborated on more in the end of the analysis.

Observing the language used by the interviewees, it was interesting to see that most of them used metaphors to illustrate their sensemaking. These metaphors were often based on justifications. One of the EMTs justified his, and another colleague’s rule-breaking by saying: “Some people could never walk over a pedestrian street if there’s a red light, even if it’s 3 o’clock in the morning and it’s dark and so on, because it’s wrong. It’s kind of the same principle for us; if it’s 3 o’clock in the morning and there are no cars, what’s the harm?” (EMT4, 2013, p.8) He is trying to justify that they can do their job in whatever way the want to as long as there is no harm done. Therefore, even if their methods might be against the general rules, he wants us to know that it is okay to do so. Again, this can be seen as a way of coping with the fact that they always have to live up to the flawless professionals they want to be portrayed as.

The Police Officers also used a lot of justification elements when talking about their retrospective sensemaking, however with a different focus than the EMTs. The Police Officers were very
protective of their organization, and often felt that if they had said something about it that might be interpreted negatively, they needed to justify it immediately. A Police Officer told us that there are some downsides of the job such as working nights in dangerous neighborhoods, dealing with unreliable people and seeing a lot of misery. However, right after he said so, he quickly comment on his own statement: “But you know, I wanted to move to Copenhagen, I wanted to be stationed in Copenhagen, I wanted to be here where it is fun and dangerous. I love it, but it has consequences.” (PO3, 2013, p.13) The Officers also defended each other, and acknowledged that it is okay to do mistakes within their line of work: “No matter how many years you have been in the Police Force, you will always be in those situations where you have to think fast and hopefully you will do it right. Not everybody or nobody is perfect, and you can make mistakes so that is a part of the job.” (PO2, 2013, p.7) The Police leader supports the above mentioned statement, and emphasizes that his Police Officers do the best they can when they face complex situations: “It is important for me to say that they did the right things, out from these things that happened.” (PO4, 2013, p.3) All of these justifications can be supported by the argument that meaning is created through social interaction as we have spoken of earlier in the analysis. These stories of justification told by the Officers, shows once again that belonging to an ingroup in the Danish Police Force is stronger and more important than their individual thoughts and identities.

As elaborated on many times before, the similarities between the EMTs and the Firefighters actions and reasoning are more evident than with the Police Officers. One logical explanation for this is of course that they belong to the same organization, and that most Firefighters have been an EMT earlier in their career. When arriving at a scene, the Firefighters are prepared for bad outcomes and they emphasize, as well as the EMTs, that whatever unpleasant scenario they might face, it is not their fault: “The experience still says that: okay, this is not our fault, but we should do what we can do best.” (FF2, 2013, p.4) The same Firefighter continues by again justifying how he is not responsible for the accidents he meet in his job and by doing so, he finds a way to distance himself from the many terrible events he attends to: “For me it’s, again with the approach that I have, that it’s never my fault that this happens. That’s sort of my distance, saying that: if I can end up sort of doing something better for these people, then it’s been a good day. If I couldn’t make a change, it’s still been a good day because I didn’t sort of... I didn’t initiate the incident.” (FF2, 2013, p.6)
The issue of who is to blame, or whose fault it was, seems to matter a great deal for all EMTs and Firefighters and is therefore considered as the main recurrent reason for justification of individual actions according to the data. The Police Officers were more focused on protecting and justifying the unit’s actions, and the organization as a whole. The common trait is that they all seem to love the exciting, and sometimes even dangerous work that they have and they do not mind taking hard decisions. However, what seems to hold it all together, and thereby makes it possible for them to do their work, is the knowledge that it is never their fault and that they always act as professionals. It is evident that they use justification as a coping mechanism, and thus feel the constant need to justify their actions so that others will understand that they did the right thing.

5.3.2 The Unexpected

The second phenomenon that appears to be important in order to understand the sensemaking process of the interviewees in this thesis seems to be the issue of the unexpected. No one can be fully prepared for an unexpected situation, just as no one can give one true definition of what makes a situation complex, since it varies from each person. Therefore, in this thesis, we have deliberately not defined what a complex situation is. It has been up to the interviewees to state what they see as such a situation. However, what has been a common thread throughout the stories they told is that unexpected situations were for them perceived as complex. Situations where they at first did not quite know what to do, and needed a few more seconds before they were ready to act, was for many described as an unexpected situation. There were many reasons why these situations could be classified as unexpected, such as that the information that were given did not match the reality, a sudden change of event, and that the environment was unfamiliar, to mention a few. Finding out how the employees of the ESC reacts, or reacted, to some unexpected situations enhances both the knowledge of their identity construction, as well as how they act in social groups under pressure. It helps us understand if they are these unique professionals that can handle everything, or if they also have moments of weakness and troubles with grasping unexpected scenarios. It might even reveal more about the different organizations group dynamics, as the unexpected is overall deeply connected to the two selected primary properties.

In Weick’s (2001) sensemaking research, he has acknowledged that uncertainty and crises can influence the sensemaking process for the people in organizations. Furthermore, he has presented several cases where the sensemaking process has collapsed because a sudden unexpected event has
occurred. In the theory section, we presented one of these cases, namely the Mann Gulch disaster. However, he has also written about other cases where people’s sensemaking was tested, such as the Tenerife Air disaster, The South Canyon fire and the lost soldiers in the Alps. In these cases, a sudden change of event led to disruptions of the sensemaking process for the people involved, and a sensemaking collapse where thus inevitable. What happens in these situations is that people are forced to sensemake more than usual, since they cannot only rely on their retrospective sensemaking. Rather, they need to break down their current frames and sketch new cognitive maps in their head and create new meaning.

As mentioned in the theory sections, episodes that are perceived as unfamiliar, where one does not exactly know what to do because one have never been in such a situation before, is by Weick (1993) referred to as a cosmology episode. In the empirical data, there were several situations that could be put under this category of events. One EMT expressed his feelings regarding one incident: “So, I had never seen that before, none of us had. It was like the craziest car accident ever, in here of course.” (EMT2, 2013, p.7) As explained, such situations can feel like a vu jàdè for the people involved. When this happens, the first thought that runs through people’s mind is that they cannot relate this to anything they have experienced before. When asked about how their reactions towards these episodes are, another EMT said: “Stressful, very stressful because you weren’t properly prepared. You know, I didn’t know what went in to. I didn’t know what to do about it. I just had to stand back and let my colleagues do the work. So that was stressful, I think.” (EMT3, 2013, p.15) As the quotation shows, it is not an easy task to respond to cosmological episodes and disruptions to sensemaking. When cues do not make sense, the environments rapidly changes and it might seem too dangerous to make a plausible decision, a sensemaking collapse might be the only outcome. Luckily, some of the interviewees seem to have constructed a way to cope with such events. Several interviewees, from all three professions, mentioned that the process of taking a step back, and re-evaluate the situation, were an important factor in order to be able to act throughout these cosmology episodes.

To avoid getting in these situations in the first place, preparations directed towards imagining the worst possible scenario, was seen as the most crucial element for some of the employees at the ESC, namely the Police Officers and the Firefighters. They believe that by preparing for the worst, it is less likely that they will be stressed in such unexpected situation. As one of the Police Offices
explained: “When you drive to whatever the situation is, you always mentally prepare. I think that is what most Police Officers would say, cause you always have to prepare for the worst. Then you can always, if it is not the worst then it is much easier to act on. And you won’t get as surprised so I think mental preparation is most important before you arrive to whatever it is.” (PO2, 2013, p.4)

When preparing for the worst, they are mentally set for a situation that might suddenly escalate, and will not as easily be surprised or choked when arriving at the scene. It was also evident that the dispatcher plays an important role in framing the employees’ expectations and thereby preparation. It is the dispatcher that they communicate with, and whom presents them with their first cues. Therefore, these people are very important for the sensemaking process. If the communications fails, or the information is misleading, there is a great chance that the ESC employees will end up standing in a vu jàdé situation when arriving at an unexpected scene.

Moreover, it is one thing if people manage to prepare enough in advance so that they do not get stressed out by the cosmology episodes, but what about those times they are not fully prepared? Weick (1993) propose that in such cases, improvisation is crucial in order to act and move forward. He defines the people who are good to improvise, and use the tools they have at hand, as bricoleurs. Among the interviewed employees, it was especially the EMTs that gave an impression of being good to improvise, and thus could be classified as bricoleurs: “So when I move them, I can take precautions to do the best that I can in this environment, to stabilize their spinal cord and neck and so on, or their hip or whatever. So it’s... in these cases it’s a matter of doing what you can with the materials that you have or the environment that you work in.” (EMT4, 2013, p.6) In this example, the EMT literally expresses what it is that is necessary to do when acting as a bricoleur, namely to use the materials one has at hand to do the job. There was also another example where this EMT used his improvisation skills: “Well old people have a tendency to fall in their bathrooms. And it seems like it’s a rule of nature that the bigger they are, the smaller bathrooms they have. And it’s not always that we can do things by the book when the environment doesn’t let us do it. Then we have to think outside the box. And that happens quite a lot.” (EMT4, 2013, p.6) His ability to think out of the box in complex situations makes him able to solve whatever situation he faces without feeling stressed or not knowing what to do. One hypothesis of why the Police Officers did not show significant signs of improvisation and creativity could be because they might want to discuss the situation with their unit first, before moving forward with solo actions. Because, acting on one’s
individual instinct seems not to be highly valued in the Police force, they stick to the plan and they never leave their group (PO1, 2013).

While the previous mentioned EMT gave good concrete examples of situations where he had acted as a bricoleur, there were also other EMTs that showed the ability to improvise: “You know, if I’m not allowed to move soda cans, then I can’t move that block of paper [Ref. The soda can he refers to is on the top of a pile of paper. His point is that without improvisation, he could not have moved the paper in order to move the can.] So sometimes we just do it, with in the frame of what’s responsible.” (EMT3, 2013, p.12) This quote can be seen as a metaphor for how the EMT uses creativity and improvisation in situations that are not standard textbook cases, which is a part of being a bricoleur.

Another reason why it namely was the EMTs that were found as bricoleurs, besides being very individualistic in their approach, can be that they do not focus as much as the other two groups on mentally preparing themselves before arriving at the scene. They explicitly say that there is no point in preparing themselves for rescue operations, since the cues they receive from the dispatcher never match the reality they end up meeting. In a way, they face unexpected situations every day, since they never prepare. In these situations, the bricoleurs’ way of thinking is more needed, and they therefore continuously train it. The Police Officers and Firefighters emphasized the importance of mentally preparing themselves, and most of them even see it as the solution to handle complex situations. However, it might be that their preparation works as a safety net, which means that they are less likely to experience unexpected situations. Yet, when they finally do so, they appear to have more difficulties handling those situations than the EMTs.

5.3.3 Making Decisions through Committed Interpretation

The reason why it has been so important for us to understand the interviewees’ identity, their social sensemaking process, why they justify their behavior and how they act in unexpected situations, is because we wish to learn more about how people think and behave in complex situations. According to Weick (2001), commitment to a cause like the ESC employees’ commitment to their work, binds an individual to his or her behavior. The behavior becomes an undeniable aspect of a person’s world, and when this person makes sense of the environment, behavior is created through interpretation, construction and commitment to a cause. Hence, since we want to understand how
the interviewees’ sensemake about the decisions they make in complex situation, we also needed to understand their typical behavior during such events, which presumably is bounded in their identity. Behavior and decision making is often based on committed interpretation, which in the end is not far away from how sensemaking is built up. One might even argue that decision making, and sensemaking is intertwined and that it is committed interpretation that in fact combines the two concepts.

Regardless of the connection, Weick (2009) makes it clear that there is a great difference between sensemaking and decision making. According to him, sensemaking is something a person needs to do in order to understand the world, the environment and the situations one are in. Decision making on the other hand, is something that follows sensemaking, and Weick defines it as a minor by-product of sensemaking. We do not disagree with Weick when he says that decision making comes after sensemaking. However, we would like to argue that everything leading up to a decision, and the reasons for its creation, is so important in regards to understanding people’s sensemaking that decision making should at least be considered as a more important product of sensemaking.

Just as Weick (2001), we believe that it is mainly after people have improvised, and then looks back over their actions to see what they might have meant, that they discover decisions that they made, although they did not realize it at the time. Ergo, the decision making process often becomes clear to people when they are doing retrospective sensemaking. Hence, it is these reflections that we are trying to learn more about throughout this thesis, and which implications such retrospective sensemaking have on decision making. One of the implications is as known justification, a tool used to make sense of, and legitimize ones previously made decisions. Decision making is a tricky matter in that sense that it is not often possible to directly know if a decision was good or bad. The outcome can first be analyzed after the decision is made, and at that time, everyone would justify their actions. Likewise, in complex situations where people sometimes needs to act as bricoleurs, and make fast decisions based on plausible information rather than accurate, one will probably never know at the time being if they did the right decision or not. The important thing is however that one commit to a decision, make a choice and follow it through.
There is no surprise that decisions often take form in an action. Weick (2001) suggests that action comes from interpretations and therefore, one might want to rename the matter to decision-interpretation. We acknowledge his underlying argument for this, yet we still prefer to refer to it as decision making. Looking at the empirical data, the interviewees share a common feeling that the decisions they make in their work, where the right ones at the time. Therefore, even though their decisions often are made under high levels of uncertainty, they feel afterwards that they made the right decision at the time: “There is a… an agreement in emergency medicine that the decisions that you make, were the right decisions at the time.” (EMT2, 2013, p.9) Another interviewee expresses the logic of decision making in almost exactly the same way: “You know, as I said before, this old line: the best decision made at the time with the information that you had at the time. You can always go and second guess a decision, but you have to make a decision. You can’t just stand around in a living room for two hours because you don’t have the guts to make a decision.” (EMT3, 2013, p.12)

One might wonder if the ESC employees still would make all of these “right” decisions at the time, if justification were not a major part of their retrospective sensemaking process. It is obvious, as Weick (2001) suggests above, that they make sense of these decisions after they have taken place. Therefore, since the decisions then becomes an ongoing and retrospective event, we argue that they construct their reasoning for these “right decision” in their mind afterwards. Because, when given the chance to re-evaluate and think about what one really did, already knowing the consequences, who would not want to legitimize and justify their decisions? What seems to be very important for all of the interviewees is the ability to say that they have made the right decisions, even though right or wrong is a subjective matter where there is not one true solution. Nevertheless, the importance of making the right decision might reflect their identities, as many of them declare themselves as being a Hero or Saviour of some sort. Another hypothesis could be that “the right decisions” is in fact their source of meaning, making them able to keep on doing their work. Because if they constantly felt that they did the wrong decisions, causing other people’s death or putting colleagues in danger, then their professional identity frames would break down and they would become just an ordinary person who could not live up to the expectations of their uniform.
Nevertheless, one of the interviewees goes against Weick’s thoughts on decision making, and claims that he most of the times knows the outcomes of his decisions before he makes them and can therefore evaluate the decision beforehand. He describes his decision making by using this metaphor: “It’s a professional decision, like the painter choosing to paint the wall white or black. He knows what is going to happen, and he knows what the consequences and his responsibility is, and then he just does it.” (EMT3, 2013, p.8) Weick might see this statement as a sign of ignorance, and probably criticize it as he believes that a person can first know his or her own actions afterwards. If Weick were to use the same metaphor as the EMT, he would probably say that the painter would know that he needed to choose a color. However, he would not know the color in advance, nor would he know the result of the job beforehand.

We want to emphasize that even though decision making follows sensemaking (Weick, 2009), it does not make it less important or interesting, since the first making is a result of the second making. Hence, even though Weick expresses that: “Sensemaking is not about rules and options and decisions” (Weick, 2009, p.265) and that: “To make decisions, you need a stable environment where predictions is possible” (Weick, 2001, p.340), we consider decision making to be an important outcome of sensemaking. We also consider the data as being supportive to the idea that sensemaking and decision making are intertwined through committed interpretation, especially in complex situations. The research question asks how the ESC employees make sense of the decisions they make in complex situations, and the results all seem to refer to the commitment the interviewees have towards their work. Committed interpretation is a choice, it is something one chooses to do, believe in, think or conduct. The interviewees commits to seeing themselves as heroic professionals that belongs to certain groups, and excludes themselves from others. They commit to believe in received cues or reject them, to either take charge of the environments they face or stay in them and to construct meaning out of plausible information. Some choose to be creative, improvise and manage unexpected situation by breaking down old frames and create new ones, while others commits more to being loyal to the group and will not take any chances. They are all committed to the beliefs that the decisions they make are the right ones, and it is not that hard to make decisions in complex situations, as they will never be blamed for the outcome.
6. Discussion

In this part, we would like to discuss some of the questions we found interesting in regards to the findings we have made throughout working with the empirical data in the analysis. Firstly, the data indicates that the studied interviewees require more than seven properties of sensemaking. Therefore, we will discuss how the sensemaking theory by Weick would look like if we were to rewrite his properties. Secondly, as the analysis has shown, identity and its creation have a huge impact on the ESC employees’ sensemaking process. However, the data suggests that the interviewees have contradicting ways of constructing their professional identity. Therefore, we wish to discuss this by asking ourselves the following question: Is their professional identity constructed during their education or is it their personal identity that makes them choose the specific profession? Lastly, we will discuss if any of the findings from the analysis are generalizable and applicable to other organizations or professions. If that is the case, then to which type of organizations, for what kind of purpose and in which geographical areas, can the findings from the empirical data then be used?

6.1 If we were to Rewrite the Sensemaking Properties

Throughout the analysis, it became clear to us that Weick’s work regarding sensemaking is legitimate. What we mean by this is that we could not find any mismatches, and the data we collected corresponded with all of his seven sensemaking properties. Therefore, it is difficult to contribute with any new theory. However, the empirical data strongly indicated that some of Weick’s concepts of sensemaking were so important for the interviewees, that they perhaps should be considered as additional properties of sensemaking in this thesis. It is important for us to make it clear, that we fully agree with Weick’s points concerning the factors that influences the sensemaking process for employees, and that his seven properties are highly relevant when conducting a sensemaking investigation. We merely want to highlight two of his already known phenomena and suggest that they as well should be seen as properties of sensemaking. These two phenomena are the concepts of justification and the unexpected. Therefore, if we were to rewrite a part of Weick’s sensemaking theory, justification and the unexpected would be presented as an eighth and ninth property. In the coming paragraphs, we will present the arguments for adding these two phenomena as additional properties when it comes to sensemaking in complex situations.
As known, we started out by analyzing the data in regards to all of the seven properties. After that, we narrowed them down to two selected primary properties, based on their relevance to the empirical data, and by doing so we were able to take the analysis one-step further. Moreover, we found it relevant to shed light on some of Weick’s less discussed concepts in part three of the analysis. This third part of the analysis has led us to believe that there could be a need for nine properties at least in regards to this study. We believe that this discussion, of bringing in two additional properties, is needed in order to fully answering the research question of this thesis.

Starting with what we call the eight property, justification, Weick (2001, 2009) acknowledges that it is something that is a part of the sensemaking process. Moreover, justification influences people’s thoughts and actions, especially when doing retrospective sensemaking. All of the interviewees gave examples of justified retrospective sensemaking and it was clear that this was important for them. Not only was justification important when recreating and sharing past events with us, it was also clearly used as a coping mechanism and it seemed to be the main tool they used to be able to overcome stressful thoughts. All of the studied sensemakers needed sometimes to stop up, and justify their actions to underline the importance of how they had done the “right” thing.

This reoccurring need for justifying what they said throughout the interviews, and what they had done in the past, makes us believe that justification should be considered as an eight property of sensemaking. This eight property seems to be especially important when analyzing the sensemaking process of employees in different kinds of organizations where they meet complex situation on a regular basis and where feelings of responsibility, guilt and damnation otherwise could take over and prevent them from doing their work. Hence, in these professions, where ones actions can be the differences between people’s life and death, the need to justify the decisions one made, might be higher compared to other professions.

The ninth property involves what we have chosen to categorize as episodes referring to change of events or unknown situations, in other words the unexpected. Weick (2001, 2009) has addressed the issue of the unexpected in his researches, however almost exclusively in his examples of major disasters such as the Mann Gulsh case. The difference between his approach to the unexpected, and the way this thesis collected data presents it, is that we do not believe that it is only when major disasters appears that people need to act as bricoleurs. According to the data, the employees of the
ESC needs to “drop their tools” in one way or another, almost on a daily basis. A good example of this is when they are arriving at a scene, and they realize that what where supposed to be a routine call, ends up being something completely new and unexpected. Another general example of these unexpected situations is when a routine task turns out to be nothing more than a routine task, but the environment or the external factors limits them from conducting the task as they have been trained to do. Then they need to break down their current frames and be creative, improvise and find a new solution to the task. The reason why the unexpected as a concept should be considered as a ninth property, is because it is mostly first when such situations occur that one are forced to do a lot of sensemaking. When everything goes as usual, we do not get surprised and we just act based on what we already know. Without disruptions and unexpected scenarios, how important would sensemaking then really be? What we are trying to say is, since the unexpected is what really makes us produce new meaning, breaks down old frames and tests the sensemaking process, it should get more attention in the literature and be considered as a ninth property.

To sum it up, the collected data indicates that both justification and the unexpected needs to be considered as more central aspects of the sensemaking theory. We suggest that the two concepts appears to be equally, if not more, important as the other seven properties when it comes to the studied employees. Again, we want to emphasize that the nature of the studied professions might be what makes it even more important to bring in both justification and the unexpected as additional properties, as they are constantly working under high levels of pressure and have to make decisions in complex situations.

6.2 How is their Professional Identity Constructed?

There are many reasons why people are attracted to work in a special organization or educate themselves in a special profession. Some choose a profession because they think the work tasks are exiting, others chooses based on working hours, salary or benefits. However, when the choice of profession is taken, how is ones professional identity then constructed? Do people choose to work for an organization that is similar to ones own identity, or does one’s identity become similar to the organization.
This discussion should be understood in the same way as the question of whether the chicken or the egg came first. What we questioned is if one’s personal identity makes one chose the profession, or if the profession one has chosen, shapes one’s personal identity? The reason why we raise this question is because the empirical data showed that there were big differences in the way the interviewees talked about the creation of their identity. We have addressed the creation of the interviewees’ identity, and the implications of it, in depth earlier in the thesis. Nevertheless, the many aspects of this property make it relevant to discuss the aforementioned issue further. It was especially the differences between the Police Officers’ take on their identity creation, and the other two professions’ view of themselves, which indicated that we needed to further discuss this presented dilemma.

As mentioned in the analysis, Pratt (1998) proposes that there are two paths of identifying with one’s organization or profession. The first path is identification through affinity, and the second is identification through emulation. We previously explained that the first involves individuals seeking organizations that are similar to themselves, and the second involves individuals incorporating the organizations values and beliefs into their own identity. These definitions are highly relevant when discussing the employees’ professional identity construction.

The employees from Falck seem to have chosen the first path, identification through affinity, as there was no evidence in the collected data that they had changed dramatically after entering Falck. They rather claim that the match between themselves and the organization was there all along. The empirical data suggests that both the EMTs and the Firefighters have a clear view of how they are a perfect match for the job, and that they have the characteristics and identity that is needed. Hence, it seems like they chose the profession, and the organization, because it fits with their personal values and beliefs.

The Police Officers on the other hand, gave statements of the complete opposite, and explained us how they had entered the Police academy as one person, and came out on the other side as a new and changed person. Hence, the Police Officers have gone through path two of identification, namely that they have incorporated the organizations values and beliefs into their own identity. One of the Police Officers who indicated that they went into the academy as one person, and came out on the other side as another person said: “When you come as a normal person, and go out on the
other side as a police officer. You are a different person because you have learned some, a lot of things... And you change your mind, you believe that yourself... and all these things. So it is a...physical thing who is... against us when you go to the academy.” (PO4, 2013, p.5) Furthermore, another Police Officer expressed that this transformation is something that is planned, and implemented, by the academy: “My academy teacher told me, currently you are round, and we are going to make you a square.” (PO1, 2013, p.10) At the time this was first told to the Officer, he did not believe his teacher. He told us that he was thinking that this was never going to happen, as he was not going to change. However, a few years later the change was evident, and he now consider himself to be a better version of himself because he has now become a part of the organization. Today, he is “one of them”. This adaptation of an organizational identity is exactly what Pratt (1998) calls identification through emulation.

Following what was mentioned above, several of the Officers experienced this kind of self-fulfilling prophecy throughout the academy years. As mentioned, the Officers were told that they were going to change from a square to a circle, and that everything unnecessary around the edges would be cut out. However, what they did not know at the time was that those cuts would also involve ending current relationships. They were told that they were going to change so much during the years at the academy that they would break up with their current girlfriends, and find new ones. Even though they did not believe this at first, they all said that this was exactly what had happened. In other words, it seems as if the Police Officers have done everything that were expected of them to be able to become a member of the Police Force.

If Weick were to listen to all of these interviewees stories of how they either were a perfect match for the company, or how they changed drastically to become the perfect match, he would probably greet them with a third suggestion. Weick (2001, 2009) would probably suggest that everything is not that black and white, and that phenomena will always influence each other in an ongoing process. Just as environments plays a part in steering organizations in different directions, organizations influences the environment. Likewise, as organizations affect its employees’ identity, the employees’ identity also shapes the organization. Furthermore, he would probably propose them questions regarding his discussion of organizational identity (Weick, 2009), where he suggests that who we are partially lies in the hands of others. This means that if others images of us changes, our identities may very well be disrupted. Hence, our own sensemaking partly lies in the hands of others.
and therefore, Weick would probably find it equally remarkable as us, that the ESC employees seems to believe that their identity construction only comes from one source.

Conclusively, it is clear that the ESC employees view their professional identity to be created either through emulation or through affinity. Hence, it is not possible to make a general conclusion on what comes first if one takes starting point in the ESC employees’ view of their identity creation. However, that might not even be the most important contribution to this discussion. Rather, the interesting thing here is that they show no signs of mutual understanding of how things influence each other, as Weick probably would suggest. Some of them believe so strongly in their own identity that they overlook the fact that they are also shaped by the organization. Others drops everything for the beliefs of the organizations and forgets that even though they do change in relation to the organization, they as well have an effect on the organization.

6.3 How Generalizable are the Findings?

One might wonder to which degree a study can be replicated. This is a difficult criterion to meet in qualitative research, since it is impossible to freeze a social setting, and the occurring circumstances of that specific study, to make it totally replicable (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This means that if someone else where to have done the exact same study at a different time the results might have been completely different. Therefore, since social settings are always in movement and never standardized, qualitative findings are not as generalizable as quantitative findings. Moreover, since this thesis’ main topic regards such a subjective and individual matter as sensemaking, it is difficult to estimate exactly how generalizable this research can be.

Hence, this thesis should not be seen as a guideline for general use of how to make decision in complex situations. Likewise, we do not wish to suggest that the findings about sensemaking in complex situations are applicable to every company and profession. However, there might be some key points and overall reflections that other similar organizations can benefit from. For example, it is clear that the research at least can be useful for the three studied professions, since they operate within the studied setting, have common educational background and share the same organizational culture. It is especially the fact that they have to make fast and difficult decisions under high levels of pressure that connects these professions.
Such similar organizations could for example be hospitals and the rescue forces within the military. What make these types of organizations similar to the ones we have studied are the uncertainty, ambiguous information, unstable environments and plausible decisions that reflect their daily work. The artifact of their uniforms also categorizes them into a certain group of professionals in a way that other organizations probably can identify with. Their uniforms stand for professions with authority, including specially trained skills, and is a signal to the outside world of their professionalism. Simply by wearing their uniform the pressure is on as it makes people believe that they can, and should, fix everything. For these mentioned organizations, complex situations are part of their daily routines, and therefore is it more likely that the findings from this thesis will be relevant to these types of organizations rather than to others.

An example of a key finding from this thesis that similar organizations could pay more attention to is how an employee’s personal identity influences how he or she will handle a complex situation. It was evident that the interviewees’ identity was characterized by their profession, and this again influences their way of acting. The concept of professionalism is something that is not only applicable for the type of organizations we have targeted, it is almost relevant for all organizations as people in general have a tendency to identify with their profession in some way. Moreover, the notion of groups, and group dynamics’ importance when handling complex situations, is as well findings that are possible to relate to other organizations.

Furthermore, since cues are a crucial matter in regards to the preparation process for the employees, there could be a need for focusing more on the interpretation process of extracted cues. Some organizations might not value the importance of good communication enough. The dispatcher’s role in each of the studied organizations plays a bigger part than one might have imagined before, and other organizations could learn from this. Another important finding that could be applicable for other organizations is the need for the employees to act as bricoleurs when doing their job. The collected data showed that when facing unexpected situations, some of the employees acted like bricoleurs and used whatever they had at hand to solve the matter. The data shows that they were able to do so, simply because their daily work puts them in such unexpected situations. It is thus important that the organizations gives the employees the possibility to act as such bricoleurs by forming the guidance and rules in a way that it gives them the clearance to sometimes bend the rules if it is needed.
Finally, it is also important to point out that although we believe that this thesis would most likely be successfully generalizable and useful for other types of rescue organizations, it would be in a certain geographical area, namely Scandinavia. The reason for this argument is that within the Scandinavian countries, we more or less share the same languages, we have similar culture and thereby also find it easier to understand one another and the way one is thinking. Even though this thesis have no proof of such an argument, history supports it. However, it would be an interesting topic for future research, to compare the sensemaking processes of emergency rescue services across the Scandinavian countries, or to expand the research to other parts of the world to see if this thesis finding would be the same.

7. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, we have tried to explain how the ESC´s employees make sense of their decision making process in complex situations. What we have found out, by first analyzing the empirical data in regards to Weick´s seven properties, is that all of his properties appears to be important in regards to the ESCs employees sensemaking in complex situations. Following that, we could see patterns in the data indicating that social and identity where the two most important properties. Therefore, these two properties quickly became what we in the second part of the analysis have called this thesis´ primary properties.

After going deeper into the primary properties with the use of supporting theories, we could see that there were still a lot of important data that was still unanalyzed, as it could not be categorized into one of Weick’s seven properties. Rather, much of the data concerned other related sensemaking concepts, such as justification, the unexpected and decision making. Hence, the third and final part of the analysis focused on these three subjects. This final part was then the starting point for the discussion, where we proposed that justification and the unexpected should be seen as the eighth and ninth sensemaking properties. Furthermore, we discussed that there is not one right answer to how the employees’ professional identity is constructed, and that the findings in this thesis can be applicable for other similar organizations in the same context as the ones that is used in this thesis. The results of the analysis and the discussion seems to be that it is people’s personal and social identification process that are the main reasons for why decisions within these professions are made as they are.
The fact that people’s identity effects their decision making process might not come as a surprise. Moreover, that they all sensemake very differently about decisions in complex situations, might also seem as an obvious observation as every person in unique. However, what is interesting in regards to this thesis’ findings are that all of the ESC employees have an extremely strong commitment to their professional identity, and that they all used more or less the same elements of sensemaking to create order in their minds.

On the one hand, we found that the EMTs and Firefighters have a strong and highly individualistic commitment to their work, where most of them live for the adrenaline rushes the job can give. These two professions were also the employee groups that resembles the most. The reason for this could be that they belong to the same organization, and therefore have been trained towards the same mindset. Alternatively, it could be that these two types of professions attract certain types of people with similar a highly individualistic identities. The Police Officers on the other hand showed that they committed strongly to the Police Force as a group. Their focus were on doing their job as good as possible as a unit, and make sure that the people they have helped is taken care of.

These professional identities and what they stand for is what enables the studied employees to make decisions in complex situations. They all indicated that they felt proud to wear their uniforms, and when they put it on, it changed their identity to some extent. By committing to their work, they become the type of person who can manage almost everything. When they identify with their professional identity rather than their personal as a husband, boyfriend, father or son at home, they become extraordinary people. As they have mentioned several times, people lacking their training and experience could not do their work. Hence, these people would not be able to make hard decisions in complex situations.

Since complex situations have been interpreted very differently among the employees, it is difficult to say something general about how they exactly make decisions in complex situations. Regardless, it is evident that all of Weick’s seven properties of sensemaking are important factors when it comes to sensemaking in such situations. Moreover, the empirical data strongly indicates that these specific employees demand two additional sensemaking properties, namely justification and the unexpected. The reasons why these two specific concepts should be brought in as additional sensemaking properties, is because they are often occurring in the sensemaking process of the ESC
employees when they are out doing their unique work. Most of the employees meet unexpected situations on a daily or at least weekly basis, and when something unexpected happens, people are forced to sensemake more than usual, since new meaning has to be created in order to solve the task. Therefore, as the unexpected seems to matter a great deal for the ESC employee’s sensemaking process in complex situations, we felt a need to embrace its importance, and bring it forward as a possible additional sensemaking property. Moreover, as their work most often includes ethical and moral dilemmas, and since the decisions they make can be the difference between life and death, it is natural that they constantly feel the need to justify their actions. Justification is an important coping mechanism for them, and probably one of the main reasons for why they can continue to do their job. Hence, since justification is what gives their work meaning, it is evidentially such a big part of their professional sensemaking process that it as well should be considered as an additional sensemaking property.

Conclusively, one can note that what makes the ESC employees’ work so complex is the need for constantly belonging to several ingroups at the same time, which sometimes can lead to not knowing whom, or which group, they should follow. Furthermore, they constantly go in and out of leadership and they are forced to make plausible decisions rather than accurate ones, which involves taking huge risks upon themselves. However, they are able to do all of this because they have such a strong commitment to their unique professional identity.
8. Reference List


9. Appendix

9.1 The Interview Guide

1. How would you describe your work as a PO/FF/EMT?
   - What does that mean to you?
     - You often work in pairs/teams, could you tell us about that relationship? Who does what?
     (How they see their work and how it reflects on them)

2. Why did you choose to become a police officer/ firefighter/ EMT?
   (In order for us to get an understanding of how they value their profession and who they are as a person.)

3. In your work, have you ever experienced to be in a situation that was more complex/critical/dangerous than the assignments you normally respond to?
   - Why do you think you experienced this event as more complex than others did?
   - How did you react to this?
   - Could you tell us more specific what happened in this case?

4. What do you do up until you arrive at the scene?
   - Same routines every time?
     - Where the ritual ever broken?
     - Was the preparation ever unnecessary?

5. How do you process the incidents you face?
   - Fixed routines?

6. Have you ever experienced to arrive at an incident and the expectations you had of the assignment before you arrived did not match the reality you faced, and the plan you had could not be used? (First time experience where you could not follow the book)
   - How did you react?
   - Did all of your colleagues react in the same way?
7. For you, what has been the most difficult decision to make in your work experience?
   - Why?
   - How did that make you feel?
## 9.2 The Observation Chart

Date: __________________________
Name of researcher: ______________________
Name of interview person: ______________________
From which organizations: ______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+ Signs</th>
<th>- Signs</th>
<th>Additional Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Describe your work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Why a police /EMT?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) A situation that was more complex normal?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) What to do until arriving at the scene?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) How to process the incidents you face?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Expectations did not match the reality?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) The most difficult decision to make</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.3 The Reflection Chart

Date: ____________________________
Name of researcher: ________________
Name of interview person: ________________
From which organizations: ________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>?</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How the interview went: (was the interviewee talkative, cooperative, nervous, reserved…ect.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The settings: (Busy/quiet, big/small room etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience of the interview:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other feelings:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other observations:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.4 Transcribed Interviews

The transcribed interviews can be found on the attached CD together with the recording of the interviews.