

NÄRA INPÅ

Maskulinitet, intimitet och gemenskap i brandmäns arbetslag

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Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i sociologi vid sociologiska institutionen, Göteborgs universitet, som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden läggs fram fredagen den 10 juni 2011 kl 13.15 i sal Sappören, Sprängkullsgatan 25, Göteborg

Abstract

Title: Up Close. Masculinity, Intimacy and Community in Firefighters' Work Teams
Written in Swedish, summary in English. 204 pages.

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Doctoral Dissertation at the Department of Sociology, University of Gothenburg

Box 720, SE 40530 Göteborg, Sweden

ISBN: 978-91-979397-3-7

ISSN: 1650-4313

Gothenburg 2011

This study explores the profession of firefighter, in which the progression of gender equality has been particularly slow compared to many other professions in Sweden. The aim of the study is to explore constructions of masculinity in the firefighter profession and how they are related to specific forms of community among men in this profession. The starting point of the thesis is that one of the central mechanisms of gender segregation is male homosociality, which is men's search for community with other men. Based on field notes and recorded interviews the study explores how affectionate and intimate relations between men are supported and upheld in this occupation.

The analysis is presented in three parts that explore different aspects of firefighters' life in the work teams. The first section explores that firefighters' put value on spatial and temporal settings that demanded that they lived family life at work. They thought that if women were included in the work teams it would become more difficult to share that kind of intimacy. The second section focuses on the joking manner and jargon among firefighters. Being able to respond to brutal jokes and raw jargon confirmed their sense of being close, which was not thought to be able to uphold if women were included in the work teams. The third section focuses on how firefighters relate to the fact that their work is associated with notions of masculinity. It is argued that their ability to both support and criticise their profession's association with masculine stereotypes enforced these men's commitment to each other in the teams.

The main contribution of the thesis to a deeper understanding of how men's hegemony is maintained within this profession is exploring how the notion of homosociality and intimacy between men relates to the concept of masculinity. The thesis concludes that the concept of homosociality makes it possible to highlight other forms of inclusion and exclusion mechanisms than does the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The concept of masculinity emphasises the conflicts and hierarchies between men. The concept of homosociality however emphasises belonging and loyalty among men. It can be used to explore how gender is constructed, through the expectation that homosocial relationships would make possible an exclusive intimacy. That homosociality is valued as a guarantee for exclusive intimacy seems especially important in this profession, where this exclusive intimacy provides men with a sense of belonging and confirmation of having what it takes to be a real firefighter.

Keywords: firefighters, profession, gender equality, masculinity, homosociality