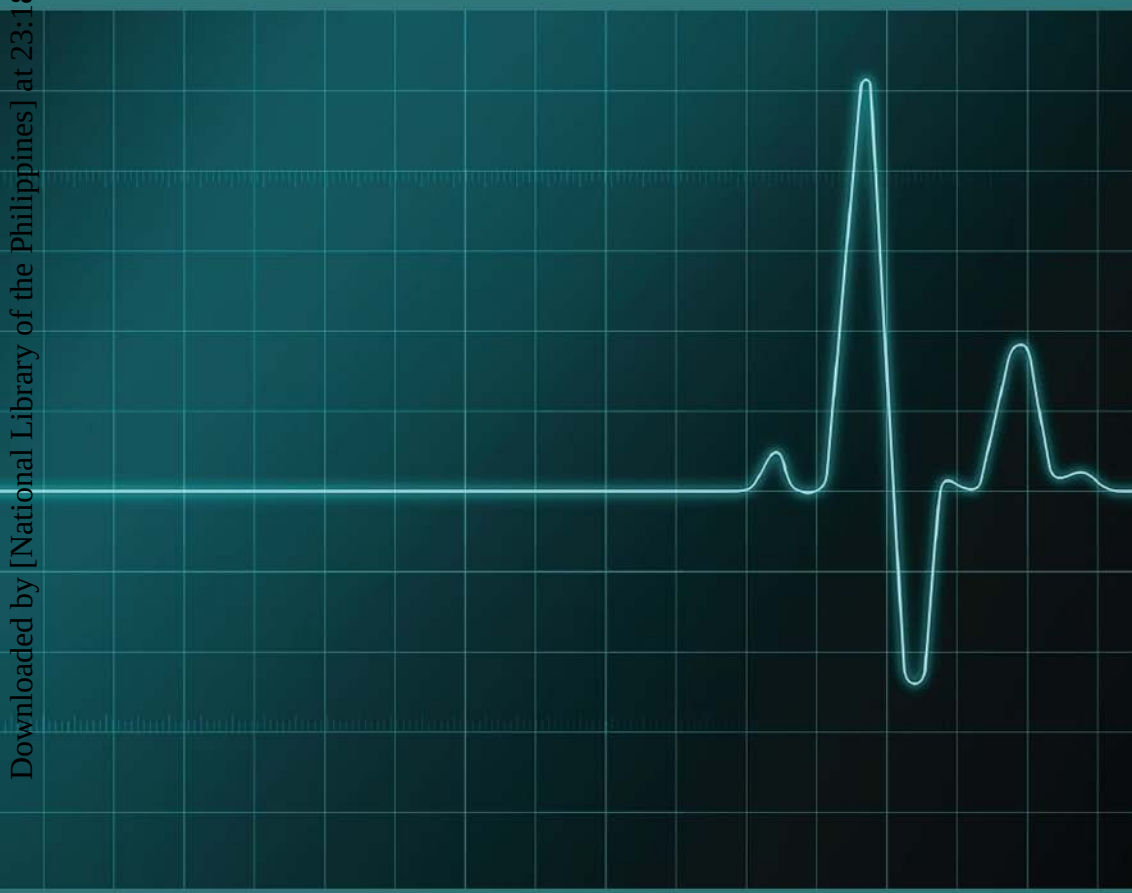
Masculinities, Gender Equality and Crisis Management



EDITED BY MATHIAS ERICSON AND ULF MELLSTRÖM

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Masculinities, Gender Equality and Crisis Management

The overarching mission of the rescue services comprises three main areas of responsibility: protection against disasters and accidents; crisis management; and civil defence. This mission covers a long chain of obligations in trying to improve societal prevention capabilities and manage threats, risks, accidents, and disasters concerning generic as well as individual safety. It follows a reactive social chain of threat-risk-crisis-crisis management-care-rehabilitation. The authors in this book show that the interesting occupational characteristics of these duties are their connection to gender and crisis management in a wider sense.

Gendered practices, processes, identities, and symbols are analytical lenses that provide a particular understanding and explanatory base that has received far too little attention in the academic literature. This book identifies four major themes in relation to a gendered understanding of the rescue services, and more generally emergency work:

- Masculine heroism.
- Intersectional understandings of sexuality, class, and race.
- Gender and technology.
- Gender equality and mainstreaming processes.

This book shows how the rescue services constitute a productive ground for contemporary gender studies, including feminist theory, masculinity and sexuality studies. Its critical perspective provides new directions for emergency work and crisis management in a broader sense, and in particular for scholars and practitioners in these areas.

Mathias Ericson currently works as an Associate Senior Lecturer and researcher at the Department for Cultural Studies, Gothenburg University, Sweden. He holds a PhD in sociology with research interests in masculinity, risk and professions. His doctoral thesis, 'Up Close. Masculinity, Intimacy and Community in Firefighters' Work Teams', is an ethnographic study of homosocial practices among male firefighters. He has worked with research projects on gender implications of educational restructuring within the fire fighter profession and the shift from reactive to proactive modes within the rescue service. His current research interest concerns masculinity, vulnerability and risk management.

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Kristina Lindholm, PhD in gender studies, is a researcher at the Centre for Feminist Social Studies, Örebro University, Sweden. Her research interests and expertise are within the fields of public policy, governance, gender equality policy, political representation and public administration.

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Sarah O'Connor is a doctoral student in the sociology department (SSPSSR) at the University of Kent, Canterbury, UK. Her research interests center around the ways in which 'work identity' emerges in various workplace

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environments and the way discursive practices of gender emerge and influence types of work culture. What is particularly interesting is the way that social processes and power forces play out within everyday working experiences of individuals in 'The Job' and ways that informal power operationalises in opposition to formal bureaucratically defined structures.

Jennie Olofsson (PhD) works as a senior assistant lecturer at HUMlab, Umeå University, Sweden, where she investigates management of electronic waste. Jennie holds a PhD in gender and technology (the Department of Business Administration, Technology and Social Sciences Luleå University of Technology, Sweden). In her doctoral thesis, *Taking Place – Augmenting Space. Spatial Diffusion in Times of Technological Change* (2010), she argues that the spatial differentiations that are set and negotiated in times of technological shifts clearly affect the bodies at play, something that has gendered consequences.

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Abbreviations

BA	Breathing Apparatus
CFS	Community Fire Safety
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician
ESF	European Social Fund
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MSB	Myndigheten för Samhällskydd och Beredskap
PPE	Personal Protection Equipment
RFSL	Riksförbundet för Sexuellt Likaberättigande
RSYD	Räddningstjänsten Syd
SBB	Swedish Association for Fire Officers
SCCA	Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (English translation for MSB)
SFI	Svenska för Invandrare (Swedish language courses for immigrants)

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Introduction

Masculinities, Gender Equality, Crisis Management and the Rescue Services

Contested Terrains and Challenges

Ulf Mellström, Mathias Ericson, Anne-Charlott Callerstig, Katherine Harrison, Kristina Lindholm and Jennie Olofsson

In this introduction we provide an overview of research on gender issues in the rescue services in combination with introducing the different contributions in this book. The overview is primarily concerned with three national contexts, the US, the UK and Sweden, and we focus on the most prevalent themes in the literature as well as pointing out under-researched areas. The empirical contributions in this volume draw on empirical work from Sweden, the UK and Denmark.

Our aim in this book is to show how the rescue services constitute a fertile ground for epistemological and methodological concerns in contemporary gender studies, including feminist theory, masculinity and sexuality studies. We also believe that the critical perspective offered by interdisciplinary gender studies can provide new perspectives on emergency work and crisis management in a broader sense. As this area of research is still in an early stage, and this book is (to our knowledge) the first collected volume dealing with gender and rescue services, we also want to introduce prevalent themes in the academic literature as well as pointing out neglected areas.

The overarching mission of the rescue services comprises three main areas of responsibility: 1) protection against disasters and accidents, 2) crisis management and 3) civil defence. This mission covers a long chain of obligations in trying to improve societal prevention capabilities and manage threats, risks, accidents and disasters concerning generic as well as individual safety. It follows a reactive social chain of threat-risk-crisis-crisis management-care-rehabilitation. The interesting occupational characteristics of these societal duties are, from our perspective, their connection to gender and crisis management in a wider sense.

The reactive crisis management chain from threat to rehabilitation concerns the fundamental organisation of society, as many ethical, practical and intellectual issues are at stake in connection to emergency management. The occupational organisation of the broad mission of the rescue services concerns (in principal at least) everything from collective military actions to individual

rehabilitation connected to crisis management more generally. As such, this also illustrates how gender is stratified in complex and entangled ways in contemporary society in relation to social and cultural core values.

Currently, we observe a gradual transformation of the rescue services in Sweden, UK and the US. We witness how an organisation that has been characterised by a reactive task orientation is gradually shifting focus and, to a greater extent, emphasising proactivity. In the light of this ongoing reactive-proactive change we argue that different forms of gender analyses are powerful tools to understand the contemporary transformation of the rescue services. From our perspective, gendered practices, processes, identities and symbols are analytical lenses that provide a particular understanding and explanatory base that has received far too little attention in the academic literature. We identify here four major themes in relation to a gendered understanding of the rescue services, and, more generally, emergency work that we regard as of particular importance. These are also relevant to a broader understanding of gender and crisis management, risk and safety, although in this introduction we are primarily dealing with literature on the rescue services. These themes connect to the contributions in this volume, which specifically deal with the rescue services in one way or another. The major themes are:

- Masculine heroism,
- Intersectional understandings of sexuality, class and race,
- Gender and technique,
- Gender equality and mainstreaming processes.

A recurrent 'leitmotif' that cuts across the different topics is the 'doing of masculinity'. Questions of masculinity dominate much of the existing literature on gender and the rescue services and will be given considerable attention. Baigent (2005) pinpoints that "the work of fire fighting is extremely masculinised" (Baigent, 2005: 45) to the extent that the accomplishment of effective firefighting is conflated with the achievement of masculinity (Baigent, 2005: 47). The rescue services are accordingly extremely male dominated all over the world. In Sweden for instance, women compose 2.8 percent of the firefighter squad. There are, therefore, good reasons to begin with the theme of heroism.

Masculine Heroism

The masculine heroism of firefighters is the most common theme that can be observed in the literature on gender and rescue services (cf. Baigent, 2001; 2008; Cooper, 1995; Ericson, 2004; Kruse, 2007; Lorentzi, 1997; Mc Williams, 2007; Olofsson, 2011). There are few, if any, occupations that carry the same particular symbolic weight of classic masculine heroism. Cooper has focused on the question of why the fireman has been so celebrated historically and brings out the "interconnecting qualities of ideal manhood to which he was assimilated: manliness/masculinity, chivalry and heroism" (1995: 141). This also

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forms the core of much writing on, and analysis of, how classic masculine core values are re/produced within the fire service. As such it connects closely to what Whitehead (2002: 123) sees as a constituting feature of almost all forms of masculinity: "For most men, any 'heroic project' begins when they leave for work." The conflation of heroism, masculinity and firefighting is also, according to Baigent (2001; 2008), the explanatory key for why women are directly and indirectly excluded from the fire services. From an intersectional perspective, he further points to the interrelation between masculinity and class, where the occupational skills of firefighters are closely connected to an ethos of white working class masculinity (see also Desmond, 2006; 2007).

The heroic masculine men preventing accidents and rescuing people are also commonly associated with a deeply rooted metaphor of masculine achievement as a cultural imaginary of national unity and protection. As Faludi (2007) demonstrates in her book *The Terror Dream. Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America,* male strength and the performative ethos of masculinity were first and foremost symbolised by the firefighters who rescued people from the Twin Towers after the attack (see also Chetkovich, 2004; Lorber, 2002; Sargent, 2002; Tracy and Scott, 2006). As a resource for mobilising public support, firefighters epitomise a cultural ideal and possibly the last bastion of a particular good-hearted masculine heroism:

> As fire-fighters picked their way through what remained of the World Trade Centre, they, and the rest of the world, paused to realise that once again fire-fighters have become a symbol of all that is good in the world . . . New York's 'finest' are indeed a shining symbol of the very best in courage and humanitarian selflessness.
>
> (Baigent, 2008: 1)

The cultural production of this particular form of masculinity in the fire service stands in contrast to other forms of masculinities. The heroic firefighters in the tragic scene of 9/11 came to represent and symbolise the glory and bravery of a whole nation against the evil-minded terrorists aiming at the very heart of the American nation. The heavily loaded symbolism of such gendered representational practices is consequently what gives the occupation its prominent aura and elevated status but also points to the inertia of change in gender relations in the rescue services. The gendered irony in relation to the tragedy of 9/11 is described by Baigent (ibid.):

> Fire fighters are indeed a masculinity that needs to be celebrated but in that typical irony that is the group who are proud to call themselves men, many of those firefighters who are acting out this masculinity were female.

Sites of resistance in regard to change in a highly gender-imbalanced organisation can usually be identified at various organisational locations. According to Dekker (2007) and Dekker and Jonsén (2008), rescue service organisations

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are generally slow to adapt to organisational change due to a long tradition of hierarchical structures. If there is a key moment at which resistance against any gendered change in the rescue services can be seen, and where the core of firefighters' masculine heroism resides, it is entering, without hesitation, buildings that are on fire and conducting smoke diving operations (cf. Baigent, 2001; Chetkovich, 1997; Ericson, 2004). Smoke diving constitutes the ultimate test of a specific occupational skill and represents the crystallisation of heroic expectations. Baigent has coined the notion of 'fitting in' as a metaphor to illustrate the importance of smoke diving in the profession of firefighters. It is here where the ideal masculine firefighter is tested and consequently where women's occupational capabilities are put in doubt. Several researchers (cf. Baigent, 2001; Chetkovich, 1997; Ericson, 2004; Lorber, 2002; Sargent, 2002; Tracy and Scott, 2006) have shown how this situation is regarded as the ultimate test of trustworthiness among male colleagues. The basic question is thus whether a woman can be trusted or not.

In this discourse on gender complementarity, physical strength and biological differences between men and women are essentialised. Physical strength is something that is naturally given while fitness is something that can be achieved through physical exercise (Ericson, 2004: 42ff). Despite the large variations within the group of men and within the group of women, the – on average – twenty percent muscular difference between men and women is the symbolic marker of these essentialising gender complementarity discourses. For instance, Johansson (1997) showed that there were significant variations between different local rescue services, and between part-time and full-time fire services, with regards to use of different tests and demands on "the same test". In Sweden, the fire services in metropolitan areas have the most demanding tests while rural areas have less demanding tests. Despite this, there is no observable difference in efficiency between urban and rural fire services (see also Ericson, 2004). As Ericson (2004; 2011) points out in his work, the different criteria for physical tests was not a problem until women started to enter the rescue services. Trying to agree on a national standard has proven very difficult (see Jansson, this volume). This perhaps suggests physical tests and the predominant view of firefighters' work as physically demanding is contested, although still central to upholding masculine homosocial practices. We interpret this as a fear of occupational feminisation with the accompanying consequences of losing status and respect. Such a demasculinisation can also be interpreted as a threat to given privileges and the heroic self-image. The 'fitting in' metaphor coined by Baigent is used for describing this masculine homosociality.

The homosocial processes identified in the fire service parallels what have been observed in other male dominated professions such as engineering or typesetters (see Berner, 1989; 1996; Cockburn, 1983; 1985; Mellström, 1995; 1999). Similar arguments and exclusionary processes resting on gender complementarity and essentialising discourses are here used to protect certain forms of exclusively male homosociality. The balancing point of such discourses is often

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recognised in masculine heroic images, celebrating courageous deeds and bravery mythologised in stories of occupational heroes, which are retold and mediated through collective remembering practices that exemplify the core values of the occupation (Mellström, 1995; Olofsson, 2011). As such, the longstanding gendered 'leitmotif' in western culture of risk taking and mastering fear can be seen as closely connected to the masculine heroism (and accompanying cultural imaginary) of firefighters. Whitehead (2002: 413) even conflates this with masculinity as a gendered configuration where the 'doing' of masculinity equals acts of courage, mastering fear and risk 'management'. As a performative ideal for such an image it seems that the masculinity of firefighters, or firefighting, *as* masculinity is a firmly entrenched gender construct in the midst of transformative sexual politics and gendered change in contemporary societies based upon a legacy of ultimate masculine heroism.

However, the construction of masculinity in the profession is complex and ambivalent. In Ericson's (2011) study we can see how the mechanisms of homosocial practices included dis-identification with the dominant notion of masculinity among firefighters. In order to be included in the strong homosocial comradeship, men were required not to be fooled into thinking that masculine bravado had anything to do with being a good firefighter. The macho image is rather used to point out that real firefighters know that professionalism is about teamwork and not putting yourself or your colleagues at risk. As Sarah O'Connor argues in her chapter in this book, it may be possible to add another twist to this dynamic if we shift focus from firefighters to their closest managers, the watch managers. She argues that there is a dynamic between managers and their team that requires a more situational and interactional view of hegemonic masculinity in order to understand when a more calm and humble stance is preferred in homosocial practices.

Thus, dis-identification with regard to macho images can also become an essential part of strengthening homosocial bonds between men in the watch. Men and firefighters can dis-identify with, and even ridicule, this macho image but still defend their use of this imaginary when needed, as for instance to secure unconditional trust at accident sites (Ericson, 2011). This resembles what Jennie Olofsson (2012) found in her study of firefighters in northern Sweden. She proposes that men in the rescue service use infantilisation as a strategy to reproduce homosocial practices and at the same time resist being responsible for those practices. Baigent (2001) also describes practices of image management where male firefighters by "denying their heroism, actually accentuate the image of the heroic firefighter" since "shy heroes are more popular than brash ones" (Baigent, 2001: 66). The issue of how men in the profession handle or cultivate this symbolism is developed further in Ericson's chapter in this book. The chapter targets how men in this profession may be uncomfortable talking about the sexualised aura of firefighters, and that this discomfort intensifies as firefighters are required to do more proactive work. The proactive turn may challenge but also strengthen the way that silence on these issues is part of the construction of masculinity within the rescue service.

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Intersectional Understandings of Sexuality, Class and Race

Following from what we have indicated above, we interpret the rigid and bounded image of masculine heroism in the fire service as currently being in a contradictory state. On the one hand, we see a form of masculinism clinging on to classic values of a segregated gendered stability; on the other, there are indications of a more divergent picture emerging with different understandings of masculine heroism as well as 'new' social categories intervening into, or intersecting with, the dominant white male working class community of the rescue services. We can observe openings and possibilities for change, as well as rigid and reproducing mechanisms, working alongside firmly gendered dichotomies in regards to hetero- and homosexuality.

In the few studies that exist in the US, UK and Sweden on sexuality and heteronormativity in the fire service, we observe that sexual orientation can have directly opposite effects on men's and women's opportunities to be included in the community. The gate-keeping functions of masculine heteronormativity are directed towards both men and women but are no doubt more strictly patrolled for men. Both Chetkovich and McCarl show, for instance, that the dominance of men is reproduced as much through sexualising women as it is through homophobia (Chetkovich, 1997: 79; McCarl, 1985: 177). In these studies, homophobia and sexism are viewed as absolutely essential to the construction of masculinity and homosociality, and consequently are key to male dominance (Ericson, 2004; 2009; 2010; 2011). Baigent adds that the fire service, at least in the UK, could be labelled as "institutionally racist, sexist and homophobic" (Baigent, 2001: 136). Through interviews with gay men and women, Ward and Winstanley (Ward, 2008; Ward and Winstanley, 2003; 2005; 2006) describe how homophobia has a particularly important gate-keeping role within the occupation, due to the demands for trust, private commitment and physical intimacy in practical work. To come out as a gay man is especially troublesome for firefighters in light of the need for close relationships between co-workers. Both direct harassment and the possibility of being excluded from intimacy between colleagues were perceived as possible threats. Besides direct harassment the authors argue that the subtle feeling of being left out and becoming insecure in intimate situations (for example, not receiving hugs after workouts or not staying together naked in the shower and dressing rooms was especially devastating). Ward (2008) shows how the working environment at the fire station is strongly founded on expected heterosexuality. The belief that the physical relations between firefighters had to be close also supported the assumption that none of their male colleagues could possibly be gay (Ward, Ibid: 146).

As such, homophobia and heteronormativity is an essential part of doing gender and sexuality within the fire service (Ericson, 2010; 2011). Homophobic 'policing' is primarily directed towards gay men, while homosexuality has other consequences for women. According to Ward and Winstanley, it seemed impossible to imagine that a male colleague would be gay, while female firefighters soon become used to answering the question if they were gay or straight (see

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also Chetkovich, 1997; Ericson and Rutström, 2000). Wright's (2008) study that compares heterosexual and lesbian women's experiences from working in the fire services indicates that lesbian women who did not fit with the general notion of femininity sometimes were more accepted provided they were not too open with their sexuality (Wright, 2008). She found that this depended on the stereotype that lesbians would be masculine or less feminine women. Being perceived as a masculine woman provided an opportunity not to challenge but rather partake in the reproduction of homosociality. As a lesbian it was possible to be perceived as less of a threat to the jargon among the men that was built upon sexualisation of women. While heterosexual women felt themselves to be objectified, lesbians could be perceived as "one of the lads" (Wright, 2008: 108). According to Wright, passing as a lesbian could even be a strategy for women regardless of sexual orientation (Ibid: 110). In her chapter, Olofsson investigates how sexuality is a constitutive factor for social practices in the rescue services. She shows how sexualisation and space intersect in providing the fire station as a place for masculine homosocial practices. The fire station secures an internal space of homosocial bonding and this also seemed to condition the possibility of doing research as a woman within these spaces since women are targeted as sexual objects of homosocial practices. In her study of firefighters Olofsson also describes the changes at the fire station as a space for male homosocial heterosexual gaze and surveillance. Within critical race studies, studies have shown how racism and sexism intersect to reproduce exclusionary practices within the rescue services. For instance McCarl (1985) and McWilliams (2007) describe the hostility experienced by black men. McWilliams also highlights how the heroic image of firefighters was used to give legitimacy to racism and segregation. This issue is further developed in Carroll's (2011) study, which draws on critical whiteness studies and masculinity studies to focus on representations of white masculinity in the US post-September 11 popular culture. According to Carroll, firefighters became central in a US context not just because of their heroic status per se, but by way of an association with Irishness. In contrast to the finance and banking staff of Wall Street, the firefighters association with Irishness opened for cherishing white ethnicity that "flattened the complexity of the post-September 11 sociopolitical landscape" and would make it possible to "whitewash U.S. citizenship" (Carroll, 2011: 58f).

The study of Yoders and Aniakudos (1997) focuses on ethnicity in relation to gender in minority groups within the rescue service. Their study examines the situation of African American female firefighters and compares it to the situation of white female firefighters and black male firefighters. The study was conducted through interviews with twenty-two Black female firefighters across the US. The results of the study showed persistent and pervasive patterns of subordination though the exclusion of black women, reflected in insufficient instruction, co-worker hostility, silence, close supervision, lack of support and stereotyping. The study also indicates that perceived differences of black women from white and black men as well as from white women created strained relations, especially when black men and white women gained some

acceptance by virtue of their gender and race, respectively, and thus reportedly distanced themselves from black women. The conclusion was that the experience of African American female firefighters highlights the intertwining of race and gender (Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997). In what is regarded to be an important contribution to the understanding of processes related to both gender and race (Epstein, 1999; Lapointe, 1998; Williams, 1998), Chetkovich (1997) followed the men and women of the Oakland Fire Department Class 1–91 during their training and eighteen-month probation. Chetkovich explored the question of how successful affirmative action has been in traditional blue collar work using ethnographic and interview data. The Oakland Fire Department was chosen in part due to their intensive work with affirmative action. One of Chetkovich's conclusions is that ethnic integration has been more successful than gender integration. In the predominantly male culture, men regardless of racial background face fewer problems than women. The entry of women into the group represents a threat to self and group definitions concerning gender identity and male superiority. The 'real heat' for the women began after they had demonstrated physical prowess, and they had to prove themselves in the male culture of the fire service.

Baigent, Ericson and Kyed have all shown how firefighters are not just masculine heroes but also working class heroes. They are possibly the last example of this, something that Baigent in particular emphasises (cf. Baigent, 2001; Ericson, 2011; Kyed, this volume). The hostility experienced by women is in this respect also connected to class. Women are not supposed to share the same working class values (Ericson, 2004; 2009). Ericson (2009) describes how this is reinforced by management claims on working with gender mainstreaming. Supposedly, women who enter the profession pose a challenge to masculine heroism, machismo and sexism. Gender mainstreaming is regarded as a middle class project. As such it blurs the distinction between gender and class, leaving little space for the question of what is at stake when working class men are positioned as the root of the problem, thereby placing the power of defining the proper words for and the necessary steps to be taken into the hands of the middle class. This theme is further developed in Kyed's chapter. Kyed stresses that the case of "communities of coping" within emergency work calls for a more dynamic view on emotions and vulnerability and the necessity of challenging the notion of working class men as "emotionally inarticulate". The emerging research field of gender, emergency work and rescue services here connects to the discussion of intersections of gender and class in critical studies of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2001; Gottzén and Jonsson, 2012; Hearn, 2004; Hearn et al., 2012; Mumby, 1998; Whitehead, 2002).

Gender and Technique

In the first two sections, male dominance within contemporary rescue services has been highlighted as part of homosocial practices, manifested through heroism, heterosexuality and class. In this we can observe stability as well as certain

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openings in terms of organisational gender roles and norms. Another constitutive feature of such practices, but less discussed, is how male bonding is also enacted through technological use and handling of tools. This section specifically seeks to elaborate on how the profession of a firefighter works in tandem with technological use and development. We rely here on a broad definition of 'technique' as a starting point for our enquiry into technologies, technique management and development, rather than understanding 'technology' as referring to only material tools. 'Technique' is therefore understood here as comprising both tools and practices, taking into account the uniforms, vehicles and technologies as well as the processes and guidelines related to work practices in the rescue services.

In the field of gender, organisation and technology, techniques are commonly framed as the new factor which provokes change, or is implicated in broader organisational changes (Liker, Haddad and Karlin, 1999; Venkatesh and Morris, 2000; Zauchner et al., 2000). It is often emphasised that techniques *cause* changes in an organisation, including shifts in gender roles. This leads to techniques becoming responsible for organisational shifts whose roots may be more complex than introduction of a new technique alone.

The hostility and resistance towards women is in many cases directly related to the use of tools and different techniques. The handling of technology and testing of technical know-how is described as key situations for harassment and exclusion (Baigent, 2001; Chetkovich, 1997; McCarl, 1985). One of the key themes described in the research literature (Baigent, 2001; Chetkovich, 1997; Engström et al., 2012; Ericson, 2004; McCarl, 1985; Olofsson, 2011) is smoke diving, which means entering smoke filled environments using breathing apparatuses (BA). Baigent (2001) describes resisting new tools and technology as part of reproducing masculinity, where the term 'leather lungs' points to the masculine bravado inherent in rejecting new kinds of technology that offer the possibility of safer operations. Firefighters can thus be seen as selective in their choices of technological equipment, to the extent that in order to pass as a man one has to select certain items at the same time as rejecting others. Gender then is negotiated and enacted in processes of selecting the appropriate technique. It is important to note that in contexts such as the rescue services only some techniques appear to be coded as masculine. This coding is influenced by several issues, including selection of particular tools and techniques, gendering of space and group dynamics.

Callerstig and Lindholm's contribution illustrates the implications of uniforms in processes of collaboration with other public authorities and security businesses. They discuss the symbolic value of uniforms and how they could be used to 'flatten' differences between various uniformed occupational groups. However, the rescue services distance themselves from this kind of collaboration by claiming that their uniform is rather to be considered as protective garments in contrast to the uniforms of the private security businesses.

In the case of the fire service, the prevailing heroic image of the firefighter is sustained through reliance on the physical strength/technique required to carry

out that role. This includes the physical strength necessary not only to be able to drag a body from a burning building, but also to handle much of the equipment (for example, fire hoses) (Baigent, 2001; Chetkovich, 1997; Desmond, 2006; 2007; Ericson, 2004; McCarl, 1985; Olofsson, 2011). Men are considered as the 'norm' in this part of the rescue service operation, as demonstrated by both the prevailing image of the firefighter, and also through more practical issues such as a standard uniform for all firefighters based on the male body (in contrast with national wartime uniforms which are provided in different sizes and tailoring for men and women) (Baigent, 2001; Chetkovich, 1997; Engström et al., 2012). At the same time the chapter by Jansson points out that there is a tendency to reduce gender equality to issues of providing excluded groups with suitable tools and uniforms, thus sidestepping a bigger question about dominant power asymmetries.

Thus, the question of gender and technique in the rescue services is complex, often involving a number of collaborative relationships and responsibility for a wide variety of activities. Furthermore, there exists a huge variety of techniques employed at municipal, national and international levels. For example, at municipal level rescue services techniques may comprise the equipment used by local fire services, while at international level this includes the ways in which disaster relief is coordinated and provided.

Inevitably, questions of gender and technique operate differently in the case of the municipal fire service as compared with, for example, coordination of international disaster relief. This is due to not only the different kinds of techniques employed, but also the different organisational structures within which these interactions take place. Techniques can range from fire trucks, to software used for disaster planning, to sharing of processes across different groups. While it is relatively easy to examine the more 'obvious' techniques employed for disaster planning or fire prevention, considerations of technique should also include the everyday use of office software, including databases and information sharing programs. These kinds of techniques, which may appear not directly related to the work of rescue provision, nevertheless play a key role in organisational development, information dispersal, categorising, planning and coordinating in ways that are inevitably influenced by gender dynamics. This is a theme developed in the contribution by Harrison based on a study of the development of the database IDA. It could be suggested that the performance of masculinity is given an added twist by the increasing use of software and office technologies by rescue services with a view to predicting and preventing incidents. This shift brings 'indoor' office technologies into the spotlight alongside the 'outdoor' technologies used by firefighters, and raises questions about how what kinds of gendered bodies and behaviours are produced and made intelligible through development and use of these very different types of rescue service techniques. For instance, what kinds of masculinity are allowed or disallowed by software, and who chooses (or refuses) to use it?

The increasing use of software by rescue services thus further highlights the intersection between gender, technique and space (where outdoor work has

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traditionally been associated with men, while interior work has been encoded as a female domain). Studies on the introduction of technologies in various jobs (Mellström, 2009; Sundin, 1998) show that, in environments where traditional gender roles still apply (such as the rescue service), the implementation of new technology will challenge the use of space and in turn will change the way gender is created.

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Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Processes

A vast number of books and articles have been published on gender mainstreaming in general in Sweden, the UK and the US (Lindholm et al., 2011; Mackay and Bilton, 2003; Sainsbury and Bergqvist, 2009; Veitch, 2005; Walby, 2005). Although much has been done in relation to gender mainstreaming on a policy level in the individual countries, there has been little research on the processes of gender mainstreaming within the rescue services. In Sweden, for instance, new legislative measures emphasise the prevention of accidents, and various stakeholders have a defined responsibility for safety and protection. This has important implications for efforts to gender mainstream work processes and strengthen the work on gender and diversity issues in the rescue services. We currently observe a growing interest in how to implement gender mainstreaming and find tools for proactive gender equality measures in the rescue services. This proactive approach, together with a prescribed goal of gender and diversity management in the rescue services, includes increasing the representation of men and women from various backgrounds and with different expertise in emergency management (Lindholm, 2011).

Considering this growing interest there is surprisingly little research on gender equality implementation and diversity initiatives. Gender mainstreaming is mostly discussed in practical 'handbooks' about how to achieve gender equality (see for instance Glans and Rother, 2007; Wong and Olson, 2008). The literature often offers action plans, particularly checklists of recommendations. In some cases these handbooks draw on research on mainstreaming processes in the rescue service. For instance, in 1999, the Fire Service Inspectorate in the UK released a report on the status of equal opportunity issues in the British fire service (Equality and Fairness in The Fire Service, 1999). The report is based on a study that lasted several months including questionnaires, interviews and visits by inspection teams to ten fire brigades. The conclusion was that the fire service continued to win public support for its external activity but that its lack of ability to change and modernise internally was found troubling by the Inspectorate.

Another example is the project "Fire Works: For Equality in the Fire Service" where researchers, working alongside EO practitioners and other members of the fire service community, strived to identify areas that required immediate attention and suggested strategies for improving the recruitment, retention and promotion of minority groups and women in the service. The research findings indicated that there was a lack of organisational alignment in terms of integrating equality and diversity issues within the services. The general lack

of understanding of the central targets, in combination with the opinion that they could not be reached, led to a lot of activity with no real commitment to change. Overall, there was a widespread lack of understanding of evaluation in general. There was also no common understanding of the roles of the equality practitioners, including responsibility and authority (Lilly, 2005). Yet another study in the UK (Clark and Fox, 2006) found that all fire and rescue services had made some progress in promoting equality/diversity, but only a handful of services were making progress across the board. The study recommended that equality and diversity should be seen as an integral part of how the service relates to the whole community and not just as internal recruitment and employment issues (Clark and Fox, 2006). This is also indicative for the gradual shift to a more proactive rescue service.

In sum, there has been little research on the implementation of gender equality objectives in Sweden, the UK and the US. This anthology provides results from two research projects on gender mainstreaming in the Swedish rescue service. Callerstig and Lindholm's chapter explores how gender mainstreaming could be enhanced by way of collaborative processes. Through collaboration with other professions and agencies, it becomes evident for the participants that obstacles and resistance are not unique to the organisational context. The collaborative process also reveals possible ways of strengthening the legitimacy of gender mainstreaming work. The chapter by Jansson focuses on the joint institutional interpretative practices of national gender equality and diversity developers in Sweden. Jansson followed eight developers who represented the municipal rescue service and described how they interpret the action plan commissioned by the national agency. The study illuminates how the rescue service is far from unique and shares many of the problems highlighted in critical research in the field of gender mainstreaming. In the process of interpreting and struggling to put documents into action it seems that the main problem lies with methods of increasing representation of women, thereby making women both problem and solution.

Drawing on a number of studies and having the experience of working as a firefighter for thirty years, Baigent provides some critique of the limited possibility of gender mainstreaming in terms of challenging masculine hegemony and the harassment of women within the rescue service. He points out that the struggle to fulfil gender mainstreaming may actually educate men in harassing more efficiently and secretly. Using the notion of resilience he points at the possibility of targeting male misogyny at a structural rather than the individualistic level that is endorsed within gender mainstreaming.

Concluding Remarks

In this introduction we have provided an overview of the literature and themes concerning gender and rescue services in the US, the UK and Sweden. With regards to the ongoing proactive change within the rescue services in the different countries, we argue that an analytical gender lens can provide new insights

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into an organisational area well known for its resistance with regards to gender equality and diversity issues. We have outlined four themes: masculine heroism; intersectional perspectives; gender and technique; and gender equality and mainstreaming processes. We have also identified areas of gender stability and indications of possible change in the rescue services. The two former themes have been the most heavily researched ones to date, with a number of key texts that in different ways confirm the fire service as a bastion of masculine heroism with a well-established ethos of a white working class masculine community. Consequently, the rescue services remain an almost exclusively masculine social space resisting gender reform, a situation true across the different national contexts. Another foundational dimension of this space is heteronormativity. Homophobic 'policing' of gay men is, for instance, a constitutive part of the occupational culture, and part of the prevalent 'fitting-in' norms. However, sexuality also opens up possibilities for various people and social categories in the rescue services. Lesbian women seem to be less of a threat to the male occupational community in comparison to heterosexual women and could even pass as 'one of the lads' occasionally. At stake more than anything else is a heterosexual constellation resting on a certain image of masculine bravery and stoic heroism. Key research, (cf. Chetkovich, 1997) departing from an intersectional perspective, has shown that open sexism is considered more legitimate than open racism and that ethnic integration meets less open hostility than gender mainstreaming. Another set of studies, mostly US based, have furthermore shown the complex intertwining of gender and race, but a general observation is that all women (regardless of race or ethnic group) face more problems being accepted in comparison to black men, for instance.

The two themes of gender equality/gender mainstreaming processes and gender and technique have been less researched but are becoming increasingly important as the rescue services move towards a more proactive style. In this introduction we have given special attention to gender and technique as this theme brings out the classic questions of technical dexterity and masculine prowess as a co-constitutive force that shapes gendered inclusion and exclusion in the rescue services. At the same time, however, it also poses new questions around space and new technologies that can challenge ingrained notions of masculinity and femininity. On a similar note, gender mainstreaming measures, gender action plans and implementation are crystallising prevalent gendered features of the rescue services. This theme has so far primarily been expressed in different forms of practical guides and handbooks about how to promote change in gender relations within the organisation. Equality and diversity issues are furthermore often perceived as top-down managerial initiatives facing considerable resistance in the lower ranks of the organisation. As such they are becoming progressively more in focus for studies of how gender equality implementation is carried out in practice.

The different gender and diversity projects we have covered are often part of imposed organisational renewal and need to be addressed at different layers of the organisation. Identifying change and stability at individual, organisational

and societal levels with regard to gender is consequently part of the research challenge. A recurrent feature of these efforts, past and present, is combining theoretical insights in gender studies with applied knowledge of transformative politics and organisational diversity. We are convinced that the contributions in the volume at hand are a step towards such a scholarly development.

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1 Masculinity, Sexualisation and the Proactive Turn in the Firefighter Profession

Mathias Ericson

The subject of this chapter is how firefighters negotiate the masculine aura and heroism that is associated with the profession. As previous studies of this profession have shown, male firefighters tend to have an ambivalent relationship with the expectations on them to express masculinity. It has been stated that male firefighters consider heroism and the masculine heroic image useful resources in some respects, for instance, by being respected and trusted when arriving at accident sites (Baigent, 2001; Engström et al., 2012; Ericson, 2004; 2011; Häyrén-Weinestål et al., 2011; Olofsson, 2012; Tracy and Scott, 2006). At the same time these stereotypes also make male firefighters vulnerable to being positioned as too concerned with masculine bravado and cultivating machismo, as if they are outdated and in desperate need of support in becoming respectable and modernised (Ericson, 2010; 2011). In other words, it seems that heroism and masculine idealisation could also position male firefighters as in need of social intervention, rather than the other way around.

This dilemma is important to acknowledge when accounting for the impact of recent institutional changes in the rescue service. Reformed legislation and training for firefighters, introduced in 2003, have pushed firefighters in Sweden to do and identify more with proactive work. This means that firefighters are supposed to be more open to and engaged in empowering the local community. But as openness becomes central to a new sense of professionalism this also implicates increased demands on firefighters to respond to public expectation and stereotypical images of their profession as masculine and heroic. Even if proactive work such as educating school children and students in fire prevention may seem less masculine than reactive work such as entering burning buildings, it seems that making use of the heroic and masculine shimmer of the figure of the firefighter is still, if not more, important when doing proactive work. Therefore, it is important to consider how masculinity, heroism and not least sexualisation may become resources as well as a distraction in doing proactive work. Based on ethnographic studies in the rescue service, I suggest that we should not make the mistake of just assuming that institutional changes towards more proactive professionalism would bring about destabilisation of institutionalised masculinity within the rescue service. Rather, we need to consider how such changes may be a matter of contingent and rather messy processes of masculinity construction.

Outline

The first part of the chapter presents the context of changes within the rescue service and firefighter profession in Sweden in recent years. It also discusses the material used in this study as well as the ethical implications of elaborating an interactive approach to ethnography. After this follows the empirical part of the chapter. The first section presents how firefighters are required to relate to and make use of their profession being subjected to heroic and masculine imagery in more public contexts. The second section shows that this imagery is not just a recourse in proactive work but may also make firefighters vulnerable and discomforted. The third section presents some examples showing that although it is evident that firefighters have to confront heroic and masculine imagery when doing proactive work, these aspects of their job are subjected to silence and taboo. In the concluding section it is argued that this silence may convey key explanations for the resistance to proactive work as well as for how masculinity may rather be reaffirmed than subverted when reactive professionalism is replaced by proactive professionalism.

Educational Reforms and Proactive Turn in the Swedish Rescue Services

There have been major changes in local emergency services during the last ten years in Sweden. A new agency (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency) was established in 2008. New legislation (Lag om skydd mot olyckor) came into force in 2003 and post-secondary vocational education of firefighters (Skydd mot olyckor) was introduced in 2003. These reforms are supposed to put emphasis on proactive work within an organization that traditionally has been focused on reactive work. This change is essentially an issue of how firefighters' professional role could be broadened. Engaging firefighters in preventive measures is argued to be a prerequisite for implementing management by objectives and developing the emergency services' ability to work proactively in accordance with the new legislation (Dekker and Jonsén, 2007; Johansson-Hidén, 2006). The reformed training is a key structural change that would enhance this process.

The actual content of proactive work varies, but it is in general a matter of meeting the public in circumstances other than accident sites and aims at empowering the local community in fire and risk prevention. The proactive efforts are sometimes delegated by managers, but also initiated and planned by firefighters themselves. One central concern that surfaces in these processes of becoming more proactive is the struggle to make the rescue services more open to the public and firefighters more engaged in their local community. A strong commitment to the local community is maybe not specifically new, as concern of being available and engaged has been put forward as central to firefighters' identity and sense of professional honour (Baigent, 2001; Chetkovich, 1997; Ericson, 2004; Persson, 2013). However, the recent proactive turn

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institutionalises this sense of professionalism within the rescue service. What was once considered a matter of personal engagement is now under scrutiny by legislation, education, management and professionalism. That proactive work and being engaged in the local community should no longer be a personal but an institutional matter is something that not only legitimises this work, but also opens it to critique and auditing.

The training introduced in 2003 requires two years of full-time studies. It is school-based, with one semester of internship. Admission is based on grades from upper secondary school and a basic fitness test. The program is advertised as providing qualifications to work as a firefighter and in other occupations in the risk and safety area. The training is supported by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (SCCA). The agency has strongly defended the broad scope of possible employment, although they frequently use firefighters as a symbol in recruitment advertising. The reformed education is expected to fashion a new type of firefighter who is not set on waiting at the station for the bell to sound but rather is eager to engage citizens and empower their community in safety issues. A customer perspective is assumed as essential to the professional passion of the new firefighter. This also connects to developing a more effective utilisation of firefighters' working hours and to increase self-control in relation to the objectives that are set by management.

Method and Interactive Approach

This chapter draws on a study (financed by SCCA 2010-2014) of how a reformed education for firefighters in Sweden challenges the masculine and homosocial culture in this profession. The reformed education directs that men can no longer actively recruit other men, as was common previously when the rescue service first decided who they wanted to hire and then provided them with training. This is one important factor that finally has brought a number of women into this occupation in Sweden, where the process has been particularly slow in comparison with other countries such as the UK and Northern America (see Baigent, 2001; Chetkovich, 1997). The key question in my study is how the reformed education's emphasis on proactive work, also supported by new legislation, may challenge the traditional distinction between the (masculinised) reactive firefighters and (feminized) proactive engineers as well as the exclusive homosocial commitment developed in the intimate socialisation among firefighters during down times at the station.

To problematise how the educational reform may challenge institutionalised masculinity and homosociality, the study focuses on those considered as 'new' firefighters and who are supposed to become agents of change. I have interviewed fifteen full-time firefighters who have completed the reformed education of firefighters. Interviews were also conducted with one person who had completed the education but no longer worked as an operational firefighter but as a proactive risk manager in the rescue service. Individual follow up interviews were carried out with six of those firefighters and proactive risk

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managers. During the interviews with operational firefighters, I also presented the study to their work teams and, in six cases, members of those teams were interviewed in groups to follow up the initial presentation and to discuss preliminary results of the study. The study also includes two interviews with three firefighters with the previous training. One of those interviews was conducted with two firefighters who had collaborated much in proactive work, although one of them had received the old training and the other had completed the new training. Besides firefighters, I also interviewed two fire engineers, three fire chiefs and one proactive risk manager on their views on changes in the rescue services after the educational reform. Altogether I interviewed firefighters and other staff at ten different stations, mainly in the west of Sweden. The material for the study also includes notes and recordings of other occasions where I have presented the preliminary results to staff in the rescue services, such as at workshops, seminars and conferences.

The study further builds on observations of proactive work done by firefighters. The choice of observations was made in dialogue with the firefighters being interviewed, as I asked during the interviews if it would be possible for me to attend and observe proactive work. I suggested that we could then follow up the interviews and observations with joint discussion with the participants and, if possible, with the rest of their teams. I later came to the conclusion that this approach did not work out in all cases and therefore decided to focus on those firefighters who openly expressed interest in furthering their participation in the study. This part of the study includes four of the ten rescue services. With the help of these contacts, I observed proactive activities such as safety walks in the city centre on summer nights, interaction with pupils at schools and preschools, representations at LGBTI-festivals such as PRIDE, study visits at fire stations and training courses held by the firemen, for example in systematic fire protection. During these observations I took notes and on some occasions added photographs to these.

The design of this study rests on my experiences from previous studies of masculinity construction in the rescue services in Sweden. In my previous study, I did more traditional ethnographic fieldwork with firefighters at work, following them during their work hours (Ericson, 2004; 2011). I conducted interviews with firefighters and observations in all-male work teams in 2003 and 2004, during which time there were almost no female firefighters in all of Sweden and when gender equality was very much debated. By using ethnographic methods, it was possible to challenge and problematise the dichotomy of firefighters as reactionary and managers as progressive that dominated the public debate. Rather I found that the male firefighter I met would resist such a view, and I argued that we needed to consider that it is not enough to change the male firefighter's attitude, since it seemed that the men I met were already invested in dis-identifying with the masculine heroism and machismo that their profession was associated with. In fact, this dis-identification seemed to even strengthen the bonds between men in the profession and should be viewed as part of reproducing homosocial relations (Ericson, 2011). But this

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conclusion was the product of many years of solitary deskwork that, according to Van Maanen (1988), is vital to ethnographic studies. When I was done, I was not sure how or if my conclusions mattered any longer to the people in the organisations that I had spent so much time thinking about.

Based on these experiences, I decided that in this study I wanted to develop a more interactive approach to ethnographic research by including workshops on preliminary results, combined with working out a design for presenting results and reflection seminars with the participants concurrent with the fieldwork. A reason for this was to try and avoid being positioned as a distanced and isolated researcher by insisting that fieldwork is not separated from analysis and text production. But it also had to do with the fact that some of the people I would interview and meet during field observations might know of and have things to say about the conclusions in my previous studies. I anticipated that I would be caught up in discussions about, or even volitional silence on, my previous conclusions and the claims I had made. This led me to the conclusion that the study had to be designed to encourage discussion of preliminary results and elaborations of possible useful research questions with the participants throughout the project and make this the central part of the ethnographic work.

In this chapter I will make some points about my elaboration with a more interactive take on ethnography, discussing how firefighters and other staff responded to preliminary results. That I chose to elaborate on an interactive approach was not because this methodology was more ethical, as is sometimes argued (Aagard Nielsen and Svensson, 2006; Gunnarsson, 2007), but rather I think that this approach may confront the researcher with other kinds of ethical dilemmas (Ali, 2006; Zavos and Biglia, 2009). For me, developing an interactive approach has been a struggle, considering that it may not make research and knowledge production any less violent, since the final account is still in the hands of the researcher (Van Maanen, 1988). But as I will discuss, the interactive approach may have provided me with a more unruly or less tidy material to work with, as well as providing some reflection on how research may be used to make interventions or risk reproducing the very power struggles that it aims to dismantle. In this chapter I will focus on firefighters', team managers' and fire chiefs' expressions of ambivalence in relation to the sexualisation of their profession. This poses questions of how such anxiety could be apprehended by thinking about how research can inform gender equality work and how gender research is made intelligible in the organisation.

Male Role Models

The stories and responses during interviews with firefighters who had completed the new training and who could be expected to represent a new sense of professionalism made it apparent that as 'new' firefighters it was important to make use of, and aspire to live up to, the more traditional and stereotypical figure of firefighters. As one of the firefighters expressed, it was a hindrance in

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the proactive efforts if one should come across as working just proactively and not being a 'real' firefighter:

> It feels like you lose people's attention, they become disappointed if you can't say that 'I am a firefighter'. That is my impression. [. . .] That 'Oh well, she probably doesn't know much about this then. She hasn't got the know-how'. But if you can step out and say 'I am a firefighter', then you get their attention right there [snaps her fingers]. Then it's like 'Oh wow, here is a girl who works as a firefighter. How interesting. Now I really have to listen to what she has to say.' It gives you so much for free, right away. It is always like that, regardless of the situation. If one can say that you are a firefighter you have people's interest.

The paradox of being a professional firefighter and having to mimic the stereotypical figure of a firefighter in order to make that professional identity accountable was also expressed in a talk I had with a female firefighter while observing how the profession was being represented at a LGBTI-festival. She described how she had experienced conflicting thoughts about making use of tools that symbolise the more traditional role of a firefighter when she attended the Swedish Pride Parade. She said that she felt she had to wear a breathing apparatus (BA) throughout the parade just to show that she really was a firefighter. If she had not carried the BA in the parade, people might not have taken any notice of her at all. Or maybe even worse, people might have assumed that she was an engineer or administrator representing the 'other side' of the rescue services, thus confirming the belief that there are still no gay or female 'real' firefighters. But by being noticed for carrying the BA, she would also be taking part in reproducing a certain way of perceiving firefighters that she was highly critical of. She said that she received a lot of attention and admiration for carrying the BA, but that this frustrated her since it silenced the fact that the struggle for her and other women is more about harassment and confronting the very assumption that women would not have what it takes physically. The paradox was that carrying the BA said nothing about her efforts to become a firefighter; yet by being noticed for carrying the BA, she challenged the assumptions that women could not perform this profession.

That firefighters have to respond to and make themselves accountable in relation to the more public, heroic and masculine symbolism of the profession was expressed as a rather prosaic matter, not least when related to the men in the profession. When I presented the research project to managers and/or interviewed them on their thoughts on proactive work and the broader role of firefighters, they sometimes stressed that firefighters need to make sure that they cultivate the good image of the profession and should not be afraid to act as male role models. This obviously androcentric way of claiming that (male) firefighters should rely on such stereotypes when doing proactive work is of course a problematic way of encouraging and legitimising proactive work. It might however be more complex, as these expressions could be viewed as part

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of a rather ambivalent relation to the commonly heroic and masculine figure of the firefighter. After all, the statements were made because I deliberately had asked for reflections on how firefighters handled the heroic shimmer when doing proactive work. It seems farfetched to assume that firefighters could easily choose to do away with this way of perceiving firefighters. Rather we need to consider how it could be subverted and destabilised when being used and invoked by firefighters, for instance, when positioning them as committed to changing and establishing a new sense of less masculine and heroic professionalism. I suggest that the notions of the masculinity and heroism of the profession should be utilised to reformulate and represent how firefighters struggle to position themselves as reflecting modernised champions of social and institutional change.

At two of the rescue services included in the study, I noticed that firefighters and their team managers seemed to be very engaged in establishing and organising preventive activities that relied on collaboration with other officials from school, social work, police and public health. This was an example of a general trend in the rescue service to become more engaged in social issues and to develop rescue services preventing threats to society, urging that school burnings and fire settings in disadvantaged suburbs should be considered a consequence of increasing segregation and weakened social security (see Bartley and Ericson, 2014; Hallin, 2010; Persson, 2013). What intrigued me was that when proposing such collaboration, firefighters would quite successfully invoke the heroic status of their profession in an effort to put themselves forward as a unique resource for other authorities. At one of the rescue services included in the study, firefighters invited social workers and proposed a project targeting young people identified by social workers as being in the risk zone of violent, criminal, antisocial or self-destructive behaviour. At the meeting, the proposal was expressed as a chance for the social workers to use the fascination with firefighters to engage and "attract young people". It was proposed that the social worker could "create a buzz" by offering a project located at the local rescue service, where teenagers would have the chance to get to know what it was like to work as a firefighter, having actual firefighters as mentors.

Such confidence in the symbolic power of firefighters was not just a figment of imagination but based on the experiences of successful projects pursued at this and other rescue services. One of the central lessons learned from these experiences was that the heroic shimmer can be used to establish and promote proactive collaboration. Contributing to this was the fact that firefighters could offer dramatic and action-fuelled practical exercises (see also Ericson, 2011). A later meeting that I attended included presentations from a successful project pursued at another rescue service. Here the firefighter's ability to provide practical and tough exercises was put forward as the key to success. One of the teenagers attending the project stated that "we don't want to sit down and just listen while someone talks. Cause we do that all day long in school. We want to be with the firefighters, the police, the paramedics in their work and see how they manage it and get a glimpse of what it is like [. . .] Entering a smoke

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filled apartment and expose oneself for that risk, at that moment the firefighters became heroes in the eyes of us youngsters". The point made was that, by providing practical challenges firefighters would be appreciated and could establish a trust that was vital for the ability to act as mentors and influence the young people attending the project.

One possible conclusion of these examples is that firefighters have to consider how they benefit from the masculine and heroic shimmer and that this also makes firefighting quite exceptional as a profession. As Donald Schön argues in *The Reflexive Practitioner* (2000), it generally has become more and more troublesome for professionals to claim legitimacy and trust by relying on authoritative approaches, secrecy or formal qualifications. Instead professionalism has increasingly become a matter of ascribing to a more reflexive approach where the relationship between expert and client becomes a site of joint learning and collaboration (Schön, 2000: 299). But while Schön (2000) argues that demystification and increased reflexivity can be a way for professions to regain public trust, it seems that the conditions are different in the firefighter profession. The firefighter profession does not seem to have experienced the same kind of crisis, which is central for the professions that Schön discusses. Rather, there seems to be little support from the public in the demystification of the firefighter profession, even when firefighters strive to achieve it. In fact, it might even be the case that firefighters' very struggle to become more reflective, open and less reactive is put forward as a risk of undermining the public's trust. For instance, there have been debates in the Swedish parliament where politicians from the nationalist party have used firefighters as an example when arguing that gender equality politics have gone too far (Ericson, 2014).

Sexualisation and Performing Proactive Work

When I attended proactive work where firefighters would seek contact with the public, I noticed that the heroic and masculine image was not simply a resource, but could also put the firefighters in an uncomfortable and vulnerable position. At one station the firefighters, all of them male, were engaged in a project for teenagers in a school. This project was directed at all pupils in the classes, unlike the aforementioned projects on social risks that were targeted on chosen individuals. Since the teenagers were participating during school this also meant that they had no choice but to attend, since it was considered part of the curriculum.

The main aim of the project was to engage in dialogues with the pupils concerning issues of harassment of firefighters and other representatives of authority such as police, social workers and teachers. The project was a collaboration between these authorities. One of the methods used in an effort to open up dialogues between teenagers and the authorities was roleplaying. The students were divided into groups that together with the attending firefighters, teachers, police officers and social workers would perform different made up scenarios on a stage in front of the others.

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In one group the pupils were required to act as firefighters putting out a small bushfire while the attending firefighters would act as youngsters attacking those firefighters verbally and physically. In the same vein the other students would act as police officers, teachers and social workers, supposedly at their daily job, being confronted and threatened by youngsters. The main plot of those scenes was dictated beforehand, but the task was to improvise and give the students opportunities to act out how they thought that authorities usually respond and handle situations where they felt threatened and disrespected.

During the preparation for the roleplay it became clear that the firefighter profession has an exclusive capacity to manage and intervene in potentially hostile relations or opposition between young people and the authorities. But this capacity rested to a large extent on the sexualised heroic masculinity that this profession was supposed to represent. The pupils that were picked out to act as firefighters reacted with exhilaration, shouting, making victory gestures and by claiming a lot of space and attention making it clear that they very much looked forward to participating in the roleplaying. This response stood in bright contrast to the reaction by the pupils who got to act as social workers, police officers or teachers. They protested by invoking silence or verbally making complaints, with a body language that expressed that they were now not just bored and tired but also really disappointed.

As the preparation for the roleplay progressed, it became clear that the firefighters' ability to make use of and respond to sexualisation was crucial. Each group of pupils was provided with attributes and instructions to be used in the joint performance on stage. For those acting as a firefighter this meant the disposal of attributes such as hoses, helmets and jackets that make the profession easy to dramatise. But the way the students used these attributes and played out the role of firefighters was also linked to the sexualisation of the profession. As they got dressed and waited for the roleplay to start they would sneak up on stage and striptease in a joking manner. The pupils sought the attention of the attending firefighters by directing the jokes at them. In order to make the firefighters aware of the jokes, the students asked things, as if it was true that firefighters use the pole at the station as a strip pole in the evenings. The sexual banter was quite uninhibited. This caused a stir among the pupils as well as their teachers. Later I noticed that the teachers and other adults who were around during the day also expressed to the firefighters that they were particularly appreciated by the students. It was the firefighters who made the day and were able to establish communication, not least with pupils who were considered by teachers as more 'troublesome'.

This arrangement with roleplay was held four times during a week, each time with a different group of pupils. The attending firefighters also shifted, due to their working twenty-four-hour shifts. As I followed different groups of firefighters on different days I noticed that only some of them targeted gender issues and that this had consequences for the progression of the proactive work and also what the firefighters got out of this experience. For instance the group of students had to be divided since it was not possible to have the whole group

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up on stage. When deciding who would be assigned to participate some of the firefighters did not just leave it up to the students to decide for themselves, but took the opportunity to demand that both boys and girls must participate. This would make some of the boys protest and argue that the task should be assigned to the boys since this profession in Swedish is still gendered, as indicated in the label 'brandmän' (fireman). This simple instruction would initialise central questions of gender leading to interesting discussions about why most firefighters are male, what the job requires and how young men aspire to become firefighters. Other firefighters did not make gender an issue, which probably had a crucial influence on the exclusion of girls acting as firefighters in these groups. I noticed that these firefighters also were more provoked when sexualising jokes appeared and they expressed frustration and anxiety over the situation. At some point girls would flirt with one of the firefighters, who was then silenced and kept contact at a minimum, thus expressing unease. It seemed that the firefighters who were prepared in responding to the sexualisation seemed more likely to gain confidence in this being constructive work. Firefighters who were disturbed or distracted by accusations and provocations, however, returned to the station with the conviction that this kind of work was unimportant and had no relevance to their profession. My conclusion is that sexualisation then contributed to and conditioned the responsibility of performing and making oneself accountable for a new reflecting professional identity.

That sexualisation conditions proactive work and its status also became apparent when I observed proactive work where firefighters participated in safety walks. The safety walks were arranged by social workers and took place on evenings and nights during students' summer vacation. During such occasions, young people and teenagers would gather in the city centre, and many of them would be under the influence of alcohol. The police and social workers had a long history of collaborative proactive work with this kind of issue by engaging adults and parents to be visible and walk around to make the crowd more mixed. By doing this kind of work the police and to some extent also the social workers would try to de-emphasise their repressive obligations in favour of a more supportive approach. The police could describe it as a struggle to show that police officers are people of flesh and blood by "not hiding [. . .] behind the shield of the police truck" (Ericson and Rolandsson, 2010). This approach to proactive work had attracted the rescue service and the team of firefighters that worked these nights was assigned to participate.

Although firefighters and managers put forward such efforts as important aspects of their proactive work, it was obvious during observations that it evoked resistance and unease. On the team of firefighters, the task was assigned to a couple of firefighters while the rest of the team stayed at the station, thereby keeping engagement at a minimum although the idea behind this work was to support the presence of adults. When the attending firefighters met the police and the social workers, they had to respond to questions of where the other firefighters were. They said that they had stayed at the station watching football games on telly and "we work 24 hour shifts so we need our rest and time

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off during evenings". Although they could justify why all firefighters did not attend, this justification and clarification also exposed them to questions of what firefighters actually do at work and if they would rather have stayed at the station. It was obviously awkward who on the teams would be assigned or was supposed to freely choose to do this kind of work. As with other proactive work, it seemed that the task was assigned to new recruits, who also expressed a bit of frustration with this custom. At some points, police officers hinted that they were aware of this informal logic of assigning tasks in the fire service, implying that they knew this kind of work informally had low status and that the assignment was used to stigmatise new recruits.

The firefighters' unease with having to do this job escalated when the firefighters during their walks were confronted with sexual flirtations and banter. They were repeatedly stopped by youngsters who wanted to share some words and this on some occasions included questioning whether firefighters in general are as macho as the stereotype dictates. As the evening wore on the firefighters also tended to get sexual insinuations or even invitations. As we walked passed one of the open-air bars one of the firefighters was stopped by a group of girls at a table. The other firefighter and I noticed this but kept walking. He soon caught up with us and said that it was "too bad we're on duty", leaving it open to imagination how the situation would have evolved under different circumstances. Just a few minutes later we passed another open-air bar where girls were making gestures and calling for their attention. They responded by nodding, thereby acknowledging the response, but kept walking instead of moving up closer to where they were sitting. Finally one of them suggested that: "Maybe it would be better if we would return to the fire truck and circulate in the truck instead?" The other firefighter agreed, stating: "Maybe that would be for the best." We returned to the fire truck and started circulating. As we drove around we yet again passed some open-air bar where girls and some boys started shouting and standing up on the tables calling for attention from the firefighters. One of the firefighters commented something like: "It was just as good that we decided to go back to the fire truck, otherwise we would never be able to move around." We drove around for a while. But it soon became apparent that moving around in the fire truck through the narrow streets where more or less intoxicated people were stumbling around was creating insecurity rather than having a calming and disciplining impact on the social gathering. We would soon return to the station and call it a night.

The observations during the roleplay and the safety walks introduced me to questions of how the sexualisation of firefighters was a resource as well as a distraction in the proactive work. It would enable firefighters to create relations and build trust. But this attraction was a delicate matter that easily could change over to resistance, ridicule and distance imbuing firefighters with a profound anxiety of being stigmatised and professionally out of place. They had a hard time making themselves accountable, to other professionals as well as the public, without relying on sexualisation. Sexualisation seemed to seriously condition the firefighters' ability to do and perform a new sense of professionalism

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through proactive work. For instance, the police might stress the need to step out of the car and assert oneself as vulnerable and human in order to do proactive work (Ericson and Rolandsson, 2010). But the firefighters rather felt obligated to stay behind the screen of the fire truck and show as little flesh as possible, although for very different reasons. For the firefighters it was not so much a matter of being exposed to verbal or physical attacks. Rather, it was a matter of frustration with how one should handle being sexualised and being accounted for as representatives of machismo.

Silencing Ambivalence

The examples of proactive work show that the aura that surrounds the firefighter profession is a resource for outreach and creating possibilities of interaction. But I became aware that this was a touchy and uncomfortable matter to discuss during feedback and follow up interviews. One of the points I made on these occasions was that the examples of confrontations with sexualisation, in these cases expressed either through banter or spontaneous exhilaration, showed that sexualisation had various impacts on proactive work. On the one hand, it supported the idea that gender equality is not just a matter of how women are treated, and the idea that proactivity in itself will not bring about de-masculinisation, and on the other, it revealed that men and women in this profession are shaped by the codes of the professional, gendered identity and that the way individuals respond in such situations is an essential part of ensuring that the proactive turn will enhance gender equality. I also emphasised that we need to consider how such situations would evolve if the firefighters in those specific situations had been women and how this relates to the common assumption that more proactive work would make the occupation more attractive to women. For me, this was a way of suggesting how we could think about gender issues and gender equality as conditioning institutional changes towards a more proactive professionalism rather than just being an effect of such changes. So my first question was if they would agree that the sexualisation of firefighters was both a resource and a hindrance in doing proactive work. My second was how they thought these situations would have evolved if women had been assigned to do this work and if women had received the same responses.

Based on the examples and my previous research, I proposed that this confronts us with a dilemma: could these situations be said to constitute sexual harassment? If not (that is if we do not regard them as sexual harassment), would we admit to a view where (male) firefighters are supposed to accept or even enjoy such responses and situations although they felt unease? But these questions did not seem to work, at least not as I had anticipated. On some occasions it led to storytelling about absurd situations or similar occasions where they had to handle these kind of responses – but without mentioning if this caused any anxiety. These stories confirmed that this was occurring and that it was considered just part of the job. These responses neutralised and resisted the question of what this actually did to the job and if this was supposed to continue being just part of the

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job. At yet other times it led to consensual statements that few firefighters were as masculine as the stereotype dictates, supplemented with noddings, glances or jokes that meant an interpellation of the present firefighter as evidence of what was stated – that it is just a stereotype. The discussion thereby changed into a matter of consensual dis-identification, shifting focus from what they do to what they supposedly are. Or it would also be the case that the presentation at this point led to an awkward silence. All these responses had the effect of silencing and silencing the proposed dilemma. But what made me especially interested in these parts of the presentation was that on some occasions it led to outright verbal resistance and refusal. On at least two occasions, fire chiefs and team managers argued that they could not see any resemblance whatsoever to their experiences and were provoked when having to identify with such situations of sexualisation. They argued that it was shocking and that they felt alienated in relation to my use of examples. I did not present them with a story they could use.

The introduction of sexualisation seemed to disrupt the trust and the comfort zone we were supposed to co-construct in these situations. The rejection of a discussion on how firefighters handle sexualisation during proactive work was perhaps not so much a rejection of the statement that these situations do occur, but a rejection of how these matters were used to relate gender equality to proactive work. The sexualisation of firefighters is in itself a commonplace and prosaic matter. It is evidentially manifested in firefighter calendars and essential to firefighters iconographical status in popular culture (Carroll, 2011; Ericson, 2004; McCarl, 1985). So it was not so much the statement in itself that was rejected, i.e. that firefighters are sexualised. Rather it was a rejection of disputing and challenging what this aura performs and how it disciplines firefighters.

Being able to respond to, talk about or perform silence on sexualisation issues reproduces distinctions between who belongs, and not, in quite subtle but yet violent ways. One of the firefighters included in the study described that during her two-month internship she was stunned by the kind of responses firefighters could get and that this was based on the public assumptions that firefighters are all male. She told me about one occasion when her team was orienting and updating their knowledge about the city streets. They were sitting in the fire truck and, when they stopped at a pedestrian crossing in the city, two girls pulled up their shirts and bared their breasts for the firefighters to see (see also Ericson, 2004; 2011; Tracy and Scott, 2006). She told me that she was shocked at such responses, but also alienated by the awkward silence that followed among the firefighters in the fire truck. She was the only woman there and said that the silence and reluctance to discuss what had just happened left her with a feeling of being the target of that silence. Whatever the intentions or if male firefighters would have responded differently in an exclusively male situation, these situations and silences may still be regarded as performative. The silence sustained the notion that it is only when women are in the position of firefighters that these occasions become awkward, as well as the consensus that only men who would not find these responses awkward would enjoy the same sense of indefectible belonging in the work teams (see also Ericson, 2011).

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However, it seemed that the supposedly comforting silence was not unproblematic for men either. Neither was it simply part of the job for them. But rather it could be that for men it is more risky to confront this silence and talk openly about their ambivalence. During one of the feedback interviews one of the male firefighters stated that men in the profession were ambivalent. We had been talking for about two hours and as the conversation evolved I mentioned that I was struggling with some of the negative responses and rejection of the examples I provided:

> It seems to me that people from the fire service do not want to have any discussion of the sexualisation of their profession? I think that this has to do with both sexualisation and the stereotype. I mean, the stereotype about firefighters helps us in many respects. But could we be able to utilize that advantage while also wanting to crack it? I think we must indeed be prepared to handle that question. How can we change the stereotype while preserving the good reputation? Many people in this profession are probably afraid of that question. If we do away with the stereotype of us we will also do away with our reputation, because you believe that the reputation is based on the image and vice versa. [. . .] There is ambivalence. Everyone who works in the rescue service has ambivalence towards this topic of conversation. There's probably quite a few people who I think are comfortable when you are in a private context and have to say that you work as a firefighter or working on the rescue service and you might get comments about the bar or whatever it is, you know the stereotypical image of the fireman, questions about what firefighters are like and what this work is like and all that. But at the same time you in other situations would like to hold on to that image, knowing that you get many very good things out of it. You are somewhat proud of the image too. So I think that kind of ambivalence is very palpable. For the most part.

It seemed that the negative responses and rejection of discussing sexualisation and how it conditions proactive work and a new sense of professional identity can be viewed as a matter of silencing ambivalence. Talking about the silence or the ambivalence seemed to be risking disloyalty, as it was something you were not supposed to admit to 'others', yet all firefighters supposedly shared it. It was then pointed out that the possible comfort and discomfort was not a matter of the subject of sexualisation in itself, but depended on the context and production of who was regarded as belonging on the teams of firefighters. Thus, talking of this matter was restricted to those positioned as firefighters, which reproduced a distinction between those being close and those being outsiders.

As cognitive sociologists, institutional sociologists and social psychologists have emphasized, social bonding and tight groups are empowered not so much by doing what they are saying or fulfilling idealizations or implementing formal structures, but rather by coping with the inability to live up to such expectations (Festinger et al., 2008; Powel and DiMaggio, 1991; Wenger, 1998;

Zerubavel, 2006). As Zerubavel (2006) points out the "conspiracy of silence" is a central sociological phenomenon that, as with the metaphor of the elephant in the room, prescribes that keeping a secret and keeping silent on a subject may strengthen social coercion even when the awareness of that subject, the fact not to be mentioned, is the very reason for keeping together. It seems that sexualisation and ambivalence on these matters seem to leave those mentioning this subject, be it male or female firefighters or researchers, with a sense of being disloyal. Breaking silence means risking exclusion and being positioned as an outsider. As long as men are socialised into considering sexualisation and being associated with masculine heroism as just part of the job, it seems almost impossible to publicly problematise and voice resistance to this symbolic association without risking exclusion and even being blamed for choosing exclusion by way of not conforming to the silencing ambivalence.

Conclusion

The key subject of this chapter is that masculine heroism and the sexualisation of firefighters is not simply challenged or overthrown by a proactive turn. It may in fact become even more important when firefighters invest in proactive work and a more reflective approach to professionalism. I have discussed that the gendered aura of this profession may become a resource in some situations, as it can make it possible for firefighters to establish relations to the community that would have been impossible for other authorities, for example. But it may also make firefighters uncomfortable and put them in a vulnerable position, as when they are confronted with provoking or explicit sexual innuendos. One conclusion, then, is that the masculine heroism and sexualisation of firefighters is important as both a resource and as a distraction.

The second main conclusion is that it seems paradoxical that masculine heroism and sexualisation are prosaically put forward as valuable resources and as part of the job, concurrent with the firefighters' apparent reluctance to discuss and reflect on the matter. As one of the firefighters put it, the ambivalence towards this subject was something that he thought that all firefighters shared, and he thought that this was just confirmed by the material presented in this study. Even though I provided positive examples showing that firefighters who were prepared to and willing to discuss gender would also be more comfortable doing proactive work, it seemed very hard for them to reflect on or discuss how this could be done and what lessons could be learned from their approach. It seemed that the ambivalence was not a matter of being confronted with negative or un-constructive criticism. Rather it was the subject in itself that brought unease.

This relates to the third conclusion that ambivalence may in itself be an important part of why gendered formations are reproduced. The material from this study supports that the changing gendered formations within this profession are a rather messy and contingent process where men and women professionals make use of or challenge the traditional way of perceiving firefighters.

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It is suggested that in pointing out that men are privileged in this profession, we do not necessarily have to claim that masculine heroism and sexualisation make them comfortable, but rather that their discomfort may be other than that of women. It seems that men experience ambivalence in relation to masculine heroism and sexualisation. It is in silencing this ambivalence that men secure a sense of belonging to a community where you are not supposed to break silence. As suggested in this study, it seems that female firefighters experience ambivalence too, but for them being included in the community that shares and finds comfort in silenced ambivalence is far from a certainty. As the female firefighter's story about the flashing girls at the pedestrian crossing shows, a woman could easily be targeted as someone who disturbs the silence just by being there. Masculinity construction is then not only a matter of defending and nurturing masculine heroism and sexualisation but can also involve sharing a silenced ambivalence towards the firefighter stereotypes.

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2 Masculinity, Emotions and 'Communities of Relief' among Male Emergency Medical Technicians

Morten Kyed

The man has slashed both his wrists and consumed a bottle of ammonium hydroxide. When we arrived at the council housing half a dozen kids run towards the ambulance showering us with questions: Is it true that the man has cut his own throat? Is it dangerous to ride in an ambulance? May I enter and see the ambulance? The emergency-physician quickly declares the man dead and leaves, but we have to wait for the police to come and release the body before we can remove it.

We wait around the apartment for an hour with 4–5 relatives sobbing in the living room. It is my first encounter with a dead body. I am quite surprised how emotionally undisturbing this situation feels, after all the pale white body is lying in a huge pool of blood. The tone among the EMTs and the police officers is relaxed. We walk around the body and discuss how it is even possible to cut that deeply into both wrists, and if he had been drinking the entire bottle of ammonium hydroxide or if the bottle was half empty when he started. . . . The police leave and we spend a while figuring out how to get the body out of the apartment; there is little space. The two young EMTs joke that we need to hurry in order to make the second half of the World Cup semi-final between Spain and Germany.

As we return to the station, after having taken the body to the crematorium, we are received by curious colleagues who want to hear about the call. A young female EMT-assistant I have come to know well asks me directly how I am. I do not feel particularly distressed but recognise it as a caring gesture. Later on several of the male EMTs also make sure I am all right in more subtle ways.

(From field notes, July 7th, 2010)

Introduction[1]

Trauma and tragedies are inherent in emergency work, but usually Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs)[2] do not experience situations involving trauma patients as emotionally disturbing. EMTs learn to consider them part of the job as they become technically and emotionally trained to tackle traumatic situations. Additionally, and contrary to lay people, EMTs have immediate professional tasks to do at emergency sites (Mannon, 1992: 180–192; Palmer, 1983). The instrumental engulfment in emergency situations creates an emotional shield; they usually neither have time nor energy to focus on the human tragedy surrounding them (Mannon, 1981). Moreover, informal evaluations and

'sensemaking' between colleagues take place all the time (Weick, 1995). These informal discussions serve as proactive 'emotional repair work' by processing and debriefing potentially nagging feelings of responsibility, helplessness, guilt, etc., which are always latent for human service workers with responsibility for other people's lives and health. It is exactly such important but informal mundane 'emotional repair work' that helps EMTs to deal with life-and-death situations on a daily basis without burning out emotionally and becoming 'second victims' (Dekker, 2013). From time to time, however, episodes do take an emotional toll on EMTs (Metz, 1981: 105ff).[3]

This chapter explores the strategies and practices that male EMTs in Denmark 'do' to take care of themselves and each other in an emotionally demanding and stressful sharp-end-occupation. The emotional demands in emergency work are particularly interesting as some scholars suggest that men – especially from the working classes – generally suffer from being emotionally inarticulate (e.g. Seidler, 1992: 1–2; 2007: 9). In contrast to such a view, this chapter suggests that doing masculinity and doing emotionality need not be seen as mutually exclusive; informal collective coping mechanisms constitute a fundamental part of the social practice among Danish EMTs. When withdrawn to "back regions" (Goffman, 1959) EMTs informally practice "other emotional management" (Poder, 2010; Thoits, 1996) and process tough experiences by talking through episodes when needed. I have developed the notion of 'communities of relief' to describe these informal ways of coping amongst the male EMTs. This collective caring practice is interesting as it differs from a persistent image of men as emotionally inarticulate. Masculinity and emotions are intimately intertwined in the day-to-day work practice among male EMTs. Traditionally feminine rationalities of mutual care are often communicated or teased out through humor or irony during downtime (see also Ericson, 2011: 112–116; Häyren-Weinestål et al., 2011: 23, 67f; Tracy et al., 2006), while other times through more serious heart-to-heart talks to colleagues.

By demonstrating how the politics of doing masculinity among Danish EMTs is not necessarily at odds with doing emotionality (Shields, 2002), the results reported in this chapter supplement recent studies by demonstrating how male EMTs both do and undo gender as we typically recognize it in their emotional practice. Male EMTs in Denmark challenge stereotypical understandings of masculinity practice by, for instance, forming intimate 'communities of relief' allowing them to share emotions, mutual sympathy and enactment of vulnerability.

Masculinity and Emotion Management in Ambulance Work

Studying emergency workers is interesting from a gender perspective because "the workplace remains the most significant arena for the social construction of masculinity" (McDowell, 2009: 131). Indeed, "occupations doing dangerous work provide especially powerful illustrations of these processes, since

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dangerous work entails physical risk, which is sine qua non of masculinity. Few settings evoke more vividly the dominant cultural image of the ideal man: autonomous, brave, and strong" (Ely and Meyerson, 2010: 4). It is often argued that in western societies "to be a man of character requires one to display courage, cool-headed rationality and disciplined aggressiveness. Femininity on the other hand demands kindness, compassion, and cheerfulness (Illouz, 2007: 3). These ideals produce gendered emotional divisions without which men and women cannot reproduce their roles and identities (Ibid). Such masculine ideals fit well with the quasi-heroic image of EMTs in the public and in the media. However such stereotypical gender ideals are insufficient to encompass the complex masculinity practice in ambulance work; the ability to handle both physical and emotional intimacy emphatically is an essential competence in ambulance work along with cool-headed rationality and disciplined aggressiveness in critical emergency situations.

EMTs are not only professional men of action but also skilled emotional managers (Bolton, 2005). 'Emotional labor' (Hochschild, 2003) is a critical part of the craft. If the EMT is proficient at making patients feel safe and comfortable the medical treatment runs more smoothly and may also be more effective. But in order to succeed at this, the EMTs must manage emotions and emotional signals in tense situations. In a typical day, EMTs engage with many different people in various mental states. They thus need to "change face" (Bolton, 2001) from call to call and perform "dual-sided" (Filstad, 2010: 372) or "double-faced" emotion management (Scott and Myers, 2005: 76; Tracy and Tracy, 1998: 407) – that is handling patients and their relatives as well as their own emotional stress simultaneously. An EMT must also be able to operate in aggravated situations with hostile or overly intrusive public crowds (Campeau, 2008; Palmer, 1983). As professional human service workers, EMTs additionally encounter the challenge of managing a host of potential 'illegitimate feelings' – such as impotence, guilt, embarrassment, sexual arousal, anger, fear, and disgust – frontstage. In contrast to physicians (Goffman, 1974: 35; Smith and Kleinman, 1989: 60f.), EMTs do not have sufficient medical authority to transform the patient's body into a merely mechanical or analytical problem. In many emergency situations, EMTs must take on the roles of both medical treatment provider and companionate caretaker. Hence, the idealized emotional EMT competences entail a rather "androgynous model of emotional conduct" (Illouz, 2008: 15, 240) – at least when being in the public (Boyle, 2002) – and the psychosocial working environment exposes the EMTs to dual-sided emotional strain.

Research Method and Research Site

This chapter draws on qualitative data from a mixed-method research project called MARS – "Masculinity, Accidents, Risk and Safety"[4] – in which I conducted extensive 'participant-as-observer' fieldwork (Gold, 1958) and 'ride-alongs' in two emergency departments in two big provincial cities in

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Denmark. I followed the EMTs both days and nights (575 hours in total). I ate with them, followed them on all kinds of calls in ambulances, socialized at the station, prepared equipment with them between calls, heard the 'war stories' they told each other when hanging out in the station and the ones they found particularly relevant to tell me while we socialized (semi-publicly) in the kitchen or when we talked alone in the ambulance during a long drive. I asked them all kinds of questions to gain further knowledge, and often they likewise found various things important to convey to me as a researcher. I was dressed in the official uniform but carried a yellow cover vest reading 'observer'. I subsequently conducted 20 semi-structured interviews: three with male regional safety representatives, ten with strategically chosen male EMTs from the MARS project's qualitative survey data,[5] interviews with five male EMTs who had been involved in an occupational accident and finally an interview with the male manager of each of the two departments where I conducted the fieldwork.

Culture and 'Downtime'

As the fieldwork began I had a meeting with the national safety director of the company, the department manager and the working environment representative for EMTs at the department. At a meeting, the department manager, a relatively new manager in his late thirties with years of experience as an EMT, told me that I could always go back and take a seat in the ambulance if I witnessed something uncomfortable. He assured me that "there is total appreciation of that among the EMTs". The safety representative explained that they often witness something unpleasant, but the trick is to look at it as little as possible. They also explained that what affects people is different, but it is typically "the things closest to home" and especially awful incidents involving kids. The department manager prepared me that the tone is tough but generally respectful. It did indeed become obvious that behind the horseplay and banter the EMTs feel strong cohesion especially within shift-teams. The social bond among the colleagues, along with the unpredictability of the work, was consistently mentioned by the EMTs as the best thing about the job.

Emergency work involves relatively much 'downtime'. The EMTs spend downtime doing many different types of technical, social, physical and emotional maintenance work, such as preparing their equipment, gossiping, joking around, working out, dining, sleeping, napping, watching TV, reading and re-narrating anecdotal 'war stories' (Orr, 1990; 1996), which are vital for the cultural formation at an emergency-station. Some of the 'war stories' even obtain a mythological character, which is structuring for the cultural formation and organizational learning as they produce and reproduce subcultural ideals and beliefs about what constitutes a good EMT and how he acts in particular situations. 'War stories' are thus vital informal devices for organizational learning and knowledge distribution. But they are also fundamental to the reproduction of the normative order within the occupational community; "public

memory is the storage system for the social order" (Douglas, 1986: 70). This discursive community is consequently an important scene where the legitimate and hegemonic masculinity is negotiated among the EMTs. Such discursive processes exist in all workplaces, but EMTs have comparatively much time to socialize and share stories while waiting for new calls. Moreover, because much of the day is spent around the station or undertaking routine operations such as transporting or removing sick patients from one location to another, exciting 'war stories' aid in reproduction of their professional ethos and preferred identity (Tracy and Scott, 2006). However, these storytelling practices are also vital for the EMTs' informal coping with tough experiences from the pre-hospital field.

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Masculinity, Humor and the Psychological Work Environment

In meetings, formal interviews and in informal conversations during fieldwork, veteran EMTs explained how the organizational culture has changed. They explained that there used to be a 'Tarzan Syndrome' and a 'John Wayne Syndrome' – the former ironizing an overly tough and strength-reliant person, while the later ironized overly independent and self-reliant men. However, this has changed as a regional safety-officer explains in an interview:

> When I started . . . we had 'John Wayne Syndrome' and 'Tarzan-Syndrome'. That is, you did not call for assistance [to carry] up stairs or down stairway. You didn't. You did it yourself. You did not weep about anything you went through. On the contrary, it was turned into 'black humor'. 'Black humor' that could seem somewhat callous to outsiders but which was simply a façade. That has changed tremendously. Back then there was no such thing as psychological counseling, nor was there anything called debriefings. But today we both have debriefings and psychological counseling. Today it is no shame if a straw breaks the camel's back.

But what is also central is that emotionality and vulnerability have become recognized and accepted both at a formal organizational level and informally among the EMTs. Today the 'Tarzan Syndrome' and 'John Wayne Syndrome' have become "abject" (Butler, 1993: xiii, 193) or marginalized and obsolete masculine positions that are used to display (dis)identification (Skeggs, 1997).[6]

As in other masculine occupational communities (e.g. Baigent, 2001: 69 endnote 137; Collinson, 1988: 182; 1992: 103–126; Desmond, 2007; Tracy et al., 2006), Danish EMTs use "black humor" as a quasi-therapeutic emotional "safety-valve" (Coser, 1959: 180) to let off emotional steam informally at the emergency-station, in the ambulance or in other 'back region' settings. Several interviewees revealed that 'black' or even 'grotesque humor' is still common as a method to distance oneself from tough experiences. Besides creating an emotional distance, it may also serve another function. As Smith and Kleinman

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(1989: 63) argue, "humor is an acceptable way for people to acknowledge a problem and to relieve tension without having to confess weaknesses". Humor is effective and emotionally protecting because it "creates the illusion of an unreal communication, yet it is real in its implications" (Nielsen, 2011: 501). Humor is a multidimensional social tool that may be used to push experiences away but also to invite further communication and processing. Humor is indeed a complex social media and "humorous exchanges have different qualities" (Nielsen, 2011: 501). Banter is also used to kill time when EMTs are bored during downtime. But this is a different type of banter – often a more practical kind – with different implicit meanings. The safety-officer continued, proudly I sensed, to give me examples of how he himself had been among the cruelest jokers. He had made all sorts of practical and cruel jokes with colleagues in the past. Such cruel banter signals social recognition and intimacy. A young EMT explained in an interview that: "if you're not included in the banter you're in trouble". Being at the receiving end of the banter thus signals inclusion in the masculine community (Chetkovich, 1997: 33–35; Collinson, 1988; Desmond, 2007: Chapter 3; Ericson, 2011: 105–116).

Storytelling as Informal Debriefings

An illuminating tale about the changing 'emotionology' (Stearns and Stearns, 1985) amongst the EMTs took place one day during fieldwork where I had an unusually candid conversation with two male EMT veterans – and a couple of other veteran EMTs who casually joined and left the conversation – about macho-culture, tough experiences and the special comradeship EMTs develop over time. The following is an excerpt from my field notes:

> This leads to a longer conversation about macho-culture. I ask if it has changed. They believe it definitely has. I ask if it is something that just happened, or if it is something the company has attempted to initiate. The experienced one didn't know, but the aged apprentice says that when he was hired, he was told that it was okay to relieve one's mind to his colleagues. This leads to a long conversation about the special camaraderie among the colleagues, which accompanies the intense job experiences, the reciprocity around these experiences, and the coping with them that only they can do (together). "We almost know colleagues better than our wives", they elucidate.
>
> I ask if there is an unspoken understanding about how to address such sensitive issues, or if it's something colleagues ask about. They reply that you can see it on people. Often it unfolds via jokes, but they also know how to "ask each other the right questions". The veteran EMT continues; "I don't want to say anything bad about someone like you, but it's not always you know how to ask the right questions; we do." They give examples from de-briefings after major accidents where they had much more pleasure from talking to each other than to a psychologist. They are happy

that they are not working at a small station where they would go back to a station alone or home to their wife after a harsh episode.

They continue to talk about harsh experiences. The veteran EMT says that you get more affected with age. It's as if the glass is filled more and more with experiences, he explains. The elderly apprentice adds that with age people become more aware of their own mortality. He tells us a story about when he was driving an ambulance in the army and picked up a dead boy of the same age as his son. This incident led him to see the head of his son on the body of the dead boy whenever he thought of the episode.

Although many have been socialized into a 'John Wayne-culture' and worked in it for years, they have altered practice. Not necessarily deliberately, though. An obvious question is if such change is to be explained demographically by age/life course position, or is it rather the cultural change within the organization that pushed this change? Most EMTs gave an 'isomorphic' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) explanation: the cultural change in the company resembles the general societal changes towards more safety requirements and emotional openness. But what is also important is that humor is no longer the only valve for pent-up frustrations and anxieties. Another productive method has become culturally available; today EMTs can and do use each other to cope with and process emotionally tough experiences. Their use of each other as lay-psychologist is actually experienced as more effective than that of professional psychologists because they share a similar embodied habitus. Crucial field-specific understandings are lost in translation to a psychologist who only has access to an external, verbally mediated, understanding of their embodied experiences. In the field-note excerpt above, one of the EMTs emphasizes that he feels as if his cup is becoming increasingly fuller with age – he is thus feeling more and more emotionally worn out with time. It is, however, not what most of the EMTs I talked to argue. Most argue that they start forgetting or confusing past calls after having been in the ambulance service for a few years. There may of course be a selection bias in this, given that those who are not able to tolerate continuous emotional stress might have quit the job. However, when talking about the emotional stress inherent in the job the Danish EMTs emphasize how rarely a colleague today would quit the job because of mental problems caused by their work.

'Communities of Relief'

Formal debriefing sessions with a psychologist are used but only rarely. No incidences triggered formal debriefing sessions during my fieldwork, nor did I hear of any extraordinarily tough episodes. There is a good chance that I would have heard had there been any during my fieldwork, for EMTs usually discuss their calls when they return to the station. During interviews only a few EMTs could remember having participated in a formal debriefing. When asked how

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they deal with tough experiences one answered "the more you tell a story, the less vehement it becomes". Another EMT explained:

> You talk. And that's allowed. It wasn't 15 years ago. There's a completely different culture today . . . It's often: [simulates a conversation] 'You should have seen a call before; that was something'. Somehow we just know that it is a question of getting our story told a number of times. It may be that I need 50 times to tell a story . . . and others may only need one or two times, if there has been something exceptional.
>
> (Interview, Bernd)

This male EMT seemingly does not have a problem taking on a vulnerable subject position, and once again the emphasized coping mechanism is narration and re-narration of the 'war story' to colleagues, backstage at the department, in what I call 'communities of relief' amongst trusted colleagues. The notion of 'community of relief' is inspired by Korczynki's concept of 'communities of coping', which he defines as "emergent, informal, oral-based, social modes of coping" (2003: 58). Korczynki coined the concept in a study of call-center worker's coping with frustrations from their required emotional labor. I consider 'communities of relief' as a subtype of 'communities of coping' as 'communities of coping' are more general and provide numerous different coping mechanisms (e.g. humor, irony, gossip, knowledge sharing, recreation etc.). 'Communities of relief' are, however, a more specific subtype that metaphorically signals an externalization and ventilation of accumulated experiences (Coser, 1959: 180).

Often EMTs feel an urgent need to retell episodes from the field and thus get it 'out of their system' as Bernd explained above. Another EMT, Rene, explained that "often you [start talking about it] yourself; some cock-and-bull story is told, and that is a beginning. Sometimes it may just *be* a cock-and-bull story. Other times it is because it is good to get things talked through". But the EMTs also share a norm of mutual care, and they frequently told me that they feel an obligation to take care of each other's mental health:

> There is an understanding that there are emotions in this, and there is a coping process in this . . . If someone is walking around not talking to anybody; you know something is wrong. We are used to seeing each other and we know each other's patterns of reactions, so if someone steps out of his usual box then: what's up with you?
>
> (Interview, Mads)

Mutual caring is not seen as a problem or as conflicting with the occupational masculinity of the EMTs. But the particular doings of emotionality are oftentimes evidently masculine (Shields, 2002). I became increasingly interested in how male EMTs do emotionality and how they enter femininely connoted

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emotional spaces where they can share vulnerability. Mads once again had an apt explanation:

> It depends on what you dare, because rumors travel lightning fast if someone has been in an extraordinary situation. [So] you might as well start observing that person, and there is nothing wrong in asking: "last Wednesday, the call you were on, what happened?" Sometimes they may say: "arr that was nothing", but other times it may pour out of them and you get every detail of what happened. They may have been waiting for an opportunity to relieve their mind. Or they may not want to talk about it, it's different with people. But for some it helps a lot if go you to them and poke them, and you don't have to say: "how do your feel about yourself?" It doesn't have to be cozy, cozy let's sit down, just this "what actually happened last Wednesday?" then you have an opening.
>
> (Interview, Mads)

From a gendered perspective, there are several interesting dimensions in this quote. First, Mads strips feminist connotations of emotionality by reformulating the problem into a more masculine connoted question of courage; you must dare to become emotionally intimate. Second, he reformulates a typical feminine cultural script for doing emotionality by suggesting a more indirect technique where the colleague is provided an opportunity to relieve pent-up emotions without having to become too intimate. The question is still framed within a framework of working practice, but it provides space for doing emotion without compromising the masculine 'face' (Goffman, 1967) of the EMTs. Third, the male EMTs know that there are cultural limitations on men's practising of emotionality. Therefore colleagues must sometimes actively provide their colleagues with a relational and emotional space to do emotionality.

Concluding Discussion

> Not only are men far from unemotional, and organizations far from unemotional arenas, but men can be deconstructed as just as emotional as women and organizations can be deconstructed as just as emotional as non-organizational arenas respectively
>
> (Hearn, 1993: 143)

Strong relations and social support are crucial for a good psychosocial work environment (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). It is especially important in highly stressful occupations. There are obvious particularities in emergency work that make EMTs and other emergency workers distinctive cases for studying 'emotionology' and masculinity (Fineman, 2008: 2; Stearns and Stearns, 1985). However, this chapter has tried to demonstrate that researchers should be careful about dismissing men's lacking appreciation of 'relational work' (Fletcher,

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2001) and 'emotional intimacy' (Kerfoot, 2001) as some scholars do. Men are not notoriously emotionally incompetent nor are they notoriously dismissing of emotions and homosocial emotional intimacy as an important aspect of social life either. Most of the male EMTs I have talked to engage in intimate emotional and caring practices with their colleagues as a regular part of their day-to-day working practice. This chapter has given an account of how Danish EMTs share an emotional space fostered by shared experiences and strong social bonds. This permits displays of vulnerability that are perhaps unusual compared to most male-dominated occupational settings. Maree V. Boyle's (2002) interesting qualitative study of Australian ambulance officers concludes that "when officers find themselves in time and space that is not constitutive of frontstage emotional culture, they are required to conform to masculinist cultural edicts. One of the main roles of the backstage emotional culture is to ensure that no slippage occurs from frontstage emotionality and pollutes the wider masculinist culture" (ibid: 140). My empirical findings a decade later from a different national context seem to broaden this perspective.[7] While an unfeeling and emotionally inarticulate culture used to be hegemonic among Danish EMTs fifteen years ago, the hallmarks of a good EMT today are – according to most male EMTs in Denmark – an ability to manage emotions frontstage by remaining calm and thus diffuse peace of mind to the injured, combined with an ability to read and talk to everybody. Moreover when withdrawn backstage, the good EMT takes part in maintaining the social chain he is a part of, or he may himself feel a need to open up to colleagues who know exactly what he has gone through. These informal 'communities of coping' and sometimes 'communities of relief' are situational spaces that emerge and disappear swiftly, often unnoticed as part of normal talk about work, during the daily interaction among the EMTs.

These findings emphasize the need of a flexible epistemological view of the masculinity/emotion dynamic that will allow researchers to observe simultaneous and multidimensional processes of doing, undoing and reconfiguring masculinity and emotionality at work.

Notes

1 I am indebted to all the people who have commented on earlier drafts of this chapter. Among others, Gary Alan Fine, who directed my attention to the semantic difference in the Danish and English use of a proverb, which was originally used in the title of this chapter. I would also like to thank Mathias Ericson and Ulf Mellström for their comments and helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of the chapter.

2 I refer to all ambulance workers as EMTs. I thus deliberately disregard whether they are EMT Assistants (level 1), Treatment Providers (level 2) or Paramedics (level 3).

3 According to health statistics, ambulance work is demanding for both the body and soul. A recent study documented that "ambulance personnel have more anxiety and depression symptoms than the general working population, and they are less likely to seek help than the general population" (Sterud et al., 2008). In addition "ambulance personnel (like police) are more likely to seek help for somatic complaints and are less likely to seek help for mental problems" (Sterud et al., 2008; see also e.g. Bennett, 2004;

Clohessy, 1999; Jonsson et al., 2003; Rodgers, 1998a, 1998b; Sterud et al., 2006). Our comprehensive quantitative data set from the MARS project shows that Danish EMTs experience much higher levels of emotional demand compared to the core workforce, but there are, interestingly, no substantial differences in mental health compared to the core workforce in Denmark, and "despite the higher prevalence of musculoskeletal pain among ambulance personnel a significantly larger proportion still rates their health as better than the general work force" (Hansen et al., 2012).

4 The research project involves five sociologists from Aalborg University, the executive consultant and a psychologist from the Department of Occupational Medicine, Herning Regional Hospital. Besides this qualitative study MARS has also conducted focus-group interviews, register analyses and two large-scale prospective surveys.

5 From a factor analysis of survey answers to two safety-question-batteries I handpicked five of the 20% most 'safe' and five of the 20% most 'unsafe' among all the EMTs. I deliberately chose EMTs of different ages within the two categories.

6 This normative change has, *inter alia*, been underpinned by vast general training boosts and technical specializations, making differently classed masculine identities available to the EMTs (Kyed, 2014).

7 According to Geert Hofstede et al. (2010), Denmark, as the rest of the Scandinavian countries, is characterized by relatively strong cultural values of equality-orientation, collectivism, feminism, uncertainty tolerance, long-term-orientation and indulgence, in comparison to other countries in the world.

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3 Masculinities and the Dynamics of Labour and Power in the Watch

Sarah O'Connor

Introduction

Previous and current literature provides a lucrative site for the analysis of the relationship between the public and firefighting. Within the fire service, popularised research to date has tended to concentrate on the front-line operational sector of the organization, and within this analysis the iconic image of the firefighter has traditionally carried connotations of bravery, danger, courage and physicality (see Baigent, 2001; Desmond, 2007; Ericson, 2011; Thurnell-Reid and Parker, 2008). The axis of Baigent's (2001) thesis centres on constructions of firefighters' masculinity illuminating sites of homosociality and the way new recruits learn to internalise the informal protocols within the watch culture. Thurnell-Read and Parker (2008) build on this to draw parallels between watch culture and working class male shop-floor culture and Tracy and Scott (2006) explore how firefighters manage social, moral and physical 'taint' in order to sustain their heroic image within the public domain and thereby sustain the masculine ideal (see also Hall, Hockey et al., 2007). Discussions around dominant forms of hegemonic constructions of masculinity inhabit much of the literature.

However, as this chapter demonstrates it does not necessarily follow that this conceptualisation is so easily transferred to the managerial positioning of the watch manager within the watch. Rather, analysis suggests that watch managers' have an ambivalent relationship to these constructions of masculinity in fire service emergency work. Within their everyday work, watch managers are dependent in relying on this identification with the dominant construction of masculinity, whilst at the same time in order to carry out the differentials of their role (at the fire station and the fire ground), they also need to distance themselves from it. What my research shows is that the watch managers' subject position in relation to traditional connotations of hegemonic masculinity associated with front-line workers becomes blurred and ambiguous. In this way, they appear to dodge among multiple meanings of hegemonic masculinity according to their interactional needs (see Wetherell and Edley, 1999). Equally, this chapter highlights the ways in which 'what it means to be a man' in any given context and within particular roles within the watch discursively support different positionings and masculinities.

Within the array of literature in this area few, if any, have drilled down to unearth the ranks, roles and dynamics within the watch. Analysis tends to default to the watch operating as a tight knit group without any distinction between the hierarchies within the watch. This is important because it taps into issues of power and resistance, which operationalise a variety of gendered practices and processes, which speak into notions around work identity. One notable exception is the paper of Childs et al. (2004), in which their analysis poised the skill balance of managers on the watch to be critically pressing 'less' in respect of the operational and more towards "political acumen and people management skills" (p.413). Any attempt to gain an in-depth understanding from the watch managers' position of how gender hierarchies operate within the watch and how authority and power is legitimised and operationalised over different contexts (the fire station and the fire ground) has remained a largely unanswered research question. Focusing on these areas, this chapter suggests that at the station, relations between firefighters and watch managers manifest in a very complex way and as such analysis benefits in drawing upon Weber's conceptual tools around notions of authority, including the more subjective spectrum of charismatic influence.

As Collinson and Hearn (2005: 300) point out, "power relations within the workplace are multiple and ambiguous" but the challenges posed for the watch manager appear unusually high insofar as they are expected to be able to sustain their authority within and across two very different locales. Drawing from Goffman's (1959) conceptualisation of 'front' and 'back' regions, we need to understand how watch managers' manage the watch over these two sites and how they balance this geographical symmetry to create and sustain types of authority and respect. This is important to explore as it paves the way to understanding more fully the fluid and adaptable nature of masculinities, how they are negotiated and how forms of hegemonic masculinity become distinguished by and from other forms or stand aside each other as a resource of reciprocal support.

If, as Demetriou (2001) suggests, hegemonic masculinity is in a constant process of negotiation, translation and reconfiguration, by exploring power dynamics through the watch managers positioning, it is possible to begin to analyse the nature of the gender hierarchy in the watch. This allows us to focus in on the ways masculinities discursively operate in relation to each other and observe separations and tensions between forms of masculinity (see Collinson and Hearn, 2005) that demarcate watch managers from the firefighters they manage. Therefore, this chapter offers the first step in trying to dig a little deeper to look for separations and distinctions between the watch as a group by exploring some of the dynamics and drivers surrounding the actual experiences of the watch managers within their role on an individual level. As my research analysis shows, the skills that are 'actually' used and the diverse pool of resources that a watch manager chooses to draw from over and above that imagined within the role specification (bureaucratically defined) are more complex than has previously been imagined. This distinctive boundary between the role and the performance of the role of the watch manager may capture the power play

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and contradictions between formal duties, responsibilities and subjective processes that illuminate sites where negotiations of masculinity occur.

Methods and Research Totals

This research involved five semi-structured interviews with watch managers' over a two-week period and with a mix of two rural and one metropolitan fire service with questions prepared in advance relating to class, bureaucracy, tensions, organisational relationships and management. A research diary was maintained during the research period, which held an account of overriding themes and subjective observations. All watch managers had held their positions for over ten years, and in this instance the only participant who was actively seeking promotion was the watch manager who was not an active member of the union. From an 'outsider' perspective, two semi-structured interviews were also carried out with two local union representatives who maintained regular contact with a wide range of individuals within the service and provided a particular insight into the well-being and interests of members. The union voices were thought likely to provide a lucrative set of experiences to draw from in relation to a wide range of dynamics occurring within watch cultures and in relation to the wider organisation.

Within the methodological approach, there was an intention to present the views of watch managers as insider accounts of working experiences in the preparation and delivery of their daily work on the frontline. Therefore, there was an impetus to gain preliminary insight into how watch managers see their role and explore the dynamic interrelation in the context of the watch they manage. I allowed the watch managers' themselves to dictate their categories within the themes and inform data in a way that is specific to them through their interpretation of questions and the themes that have emerged.

Intentions (Focus) and Contributions of Chapter

I would argue that the importance of the watch managers' role is realised primarily through the way that they take overall responsibility for managing and training the watch as well as first response and the deployment of firefighters at the point of delivery. As other research work has indicated, watch managers' potentially 'make' and have the propensity to 'influence' the watch in a number of ways. For example, Salaman (1986) and Baigent (2001) suggest the role of the watch manager is pivotal to the interpretation and dissemination of management's organisational policy. Equally, Pamah (2005): Wood (2002): Ainge (2010): Ward and Winstanley (2006) suggest that watch managers can potentially wield influential power regarding matters of 'inclusion' and setting or reinforcing prevailing attitudes. Equally, it is within an interpretive framework, which foregrounds the exercise of working class masculine solidarity and power, that both Salaman (1986) and Baigent (2001) suggest that the closeness of the watch to the watch manager can lead to the maintenance of a defensive position towards

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those perceived as 'others'. This includes senior managers and extends in some cases to firefighters other than the predominantly white, working class, heterosexual, male workforce.

However, this default position may benefit from a deliberately focused approach which begins to scratch the surface to test traditional academic inscriptions. This will provide the first step towards evaluating present perceptions of realities from different angles. For example, within the backdrop of traditional constructions of hegemonic masculinity attributed to the watch, how do watch managers' through the differentials of their role 'do masculinity?'

Equally, do watch managers' adopt a purely authoritarian approach to managing or do they find themselves needing to invest in emotional labour to sustain and legitimise their authority in the realities of day-to-day managing? As managers, in what ways do watch managers identify and distance themselves from the work group and specific types of work? In light of these types of questions, this chapter contributes to this anthology of work by providing fresh insight into gendered practices, processes and notions around control and authority. These types of issues have received scarce attention in previous academic contributions and become important to provide subtle clues into ways that working identities form, operationalise and sustain themselves.

Overview of Main Findings

As the narrative in the following sections of the chapter unfolds, what we see emerging is the precarious nature of the authority and power accrued by the watch manager, at least according to their own accounts. First, I would argue that an inordinate amount of the watch manager's time and effort is invested in producing a cohesive and competent watch, which requires weaving together authority and a sense of unity across different locales (time and space) through and against different hierarchical relationships. Although, this is not in itself a surprising finding, initial observations and analysis indicate that much of what the watch manager does to 'build' his/her watch is either unrecognised or, more strongly, appears to necessitate a series of strategies and skills which remain implicit, covert or become the subject of other kinds of distancing procedures. If this is the case then it is worth considering whether these strategies are deemed necessary because significant parts of the watch managers' performance around practices and processes of emotional attachment and division of labour in the watch (see Barrett, 1996; Carrigan et al., 1985) may not conform to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. As I will suggest in my concluding comments, it may well be that this divergence between the values of hegemonic masculinity and effective watch managing could provide the basis for creating a watch culture that allows more openings for change.

The Job

The effectiveness of a watch manager is partially informed by the formal job specification, which outlines their role, responsibilities and operational

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competencies alongside specific personal qualities and attributes (PQA's) and evidences ability and legitimises a certain type of authority as Weber (1964) envisaged. This bureaucratic and formal identification of the watch managers' role is mainly generalizable between UK fire services. However, when it is measured against the informal 'reality' of 'doing the job' and 'managing' on a daily basis, different skills appear within the narrative and begin to provide the means by which separations between men occur that define the need for different types of masculinities to emerge in different contexts in micro-relations with the watch.

The intricacies of the job specification of watch managers can vary from fire service to fire service. As a general summary, watch managers' hold the initial operational responsibility to lead the crew(s) consisting of firefighters and crew manager(s) and are expected to assess the incident on the fire ground and respond with appropriate action, to call for backup if required and at all times to keep a focus on health and safety considerations. After the incident, watch managers' are expected to write a rationale for the decisions made and the outcome and to debrief the team. Daily training sessions to maintain the watch's competence and cohesion take the form of drills on appliances/machinery/policy and may also include areas previously debriefed and any future planning necessary following the debrief.

Emergency calls by their very nature operate within an air of unpredictability and place high levels of responsibility on the watch manager who is first to arrive with their watch at an incident. In 'quick time,' watch managers' assess the situation and implement a plan of action. Responses to certain types of incidents have previously been rehearsed back at the station with the watch where procedure, problem solving and plans of action are discussed. High levels of control are deployed by the watch manager to take command of a situation as a first responder in relation to the team, the victim (s) and the public, on arrival at incidents that are out of control. First, one of the ways that watch managers can be seen to prove themselves then, is by controlling the 'unpredictable'. Second, whilst thinking on their feet, watch managers use their leadership skills and delegate tasks to firefighters. These watch managers' emphasised the value they placed on having the autonomy to make strategic decisions during critical incident management. Thus, in this context they take control by distancing themselves from the watch – seen as an intrinsic part of sustaining a successful watch.

The watch managers' interviewed indicated that the aspects of their role they largely value relate most directly to the managing `of situations directly concerned with firefighting.

> I like the unpredictable nature of the job. . . . gather information about what is going on any registered hazards present then I try if I can to devise a plan with the people I have got or request for more resources to bring the job to a successful conclusion.
>
> (WM3)

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> Debriefing after the incident that continually give you that check so that is quite challenging being expected to perform to you best ability all the time in 101 different aspects but also then it is quite enjoyable because you have got a wide variation.
>
> (WM3)

> Quite a challenging scenarios thrown up and you ask the question after the event about performance or roles there . . . at the time it is very rewarding.
>
> (WM2)

> Having the tools and the skills and the training and the opportunity to do something at an incident is very, very, rewarding.
>
> (WM2)

My data suggest a number of general criteria by which watch managers view the importance of their role. Two respondents talked in the sense of themselves and the watch "being the face of the FRS", highlighting the need to be professional and competent in front of the public. More specifically, there was a tendency by watch managers to highlight the issue of surveillance, as being 'under the spotlight' in relation to the public and between themselves as a team. Watch manager (1) suggests that watch managers' need to operationalize skills on three fronts. First, skills to "be able to manage people" (over both locales); second, "being able to effectively communicate" (with people in the workplace and on the fire ground firefighters and members of the public); and third, on the public front "because you are the first person that they see when you have got an emergency". So drawing from Goffman's (1959) analogy of 'front stage' (representing the public interface) and backstage (in this case at the fire station) here the scene is set between two locations with differing forms of communication operationalizing in different formats. What next unravels in the narrative is a sense of the 'emotion work' and the emergence of emotional labour (see Hochschild, 1983) that takes place when arriving at an incident "they [the public] want you to obviously calm the situation down call the fire service they will come and sort it out" (WM3).

What becomes apparent is the necessity and emphasis on providing cool, calm leadership that was often primarily discussed using the metaphor of distance. The dynamics of space also illuminate sites of power which were articulated in different ways. In the first instance, distance and separations surfaced in the narrative in relation to the differing roles:

> If you are a crew manager then you still play the role of a fire fighter like you still do the job a firefighter would do . . . you still drive a fire engine to a fire, you still wear BA because you are a crew manager.
>
> (WM1)

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In this respect, watch managers are differentiated by expectations and protocols. More specifically, this particular watch manager argues that a crew manager is able to have the best of both worlds in relation to the rank below and above because there are certain times (depending on the incident) that they are able to fulfil both functions (firefighter/manager). He goes on to suggest that some firefighters hold the view that that the rank of crew manager is the "best role in the fire service" (other research work has indicated other roles to be in this category). What this quote intimates is that the mix of both sets of skills allows the space to be able to constantly prove they are able to 'pass the test' (present continuous) of being a good firefighter whilst at the same time it also allows (albeit in a restricted space) to prove managerial competence.

Whilst the crew manager is able to 'balance' notions around distance and proximity and presumably draw dividends from this, watch managers by contrast appear to manage under different conditions dictated by locale, time and space where some energies are invested in creating and sustaining appropriate distance between themselves and the rest of the watch. A watch managers' role at an incident is very different as the following quotes explains:

> Some people don't like the management side of things having to do be in charge of incidents basically because they want to keep their hands on . . . if you're a manager you're not in there . . . so they're the guys that have to get their kit off and cut people out of cars . . . we don't do that because we stand back and manage the incident, they get their hands on with the casualty at the accident or they are rescuing the people from that burning building.
>
> (WM1)

As Baigent (2001) shows, this distance also serves to allow the watch manager to mediate between the wider network of firefighters and the watch. Initial training teaches firefighters about the tools of their job, but once on a watch it is almost inevitable that probationers must turn to experienced firefighters to learn about firefighting. Baigent highlights the part 'watch officers' play in this process, to "act as a channel to share and discuss this knowledge up and down between their wider networks and the watch" (p.44). This homosocial process acts as a vast resource for differing cohorts of firefighters and allows access to "all" the knowledge, past and present, about "The Job" (Baigent, 2001: 44).

Watch managers gain promotion through proving a distinct set of managerial and operational competencies, as a consequence, watch managers to some extent have already passed the test of 'being a good firefighter' in their own eyes and the eyes of the watch. What emerged from the discussions with watch managers were the sites at which differentiations between firefighters and watch managers occur. For example, WM1 talked of the skills needed on the fire ground and the necessity to possess "management skills" in combination with "the ability to talk" in taking charge of an incident. It was a matter of "taking

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responsibility" for leading the team and talking members of the public down from trauma and facilitating the establishment of order in chaos. This watch manager suggests that in order to do this work it is necessary:

> Not to get flustered (not that I want to use that word how can I say it) when you draw up at an incident and everybody is upset you have got to calm them down but you yourself have not got to show them that you are . . . You have got to remain cool, calm and controlled and control the situation.
>
> (WM1)

Manage their emotions and the emotions of 'others' is the primary aim of a watch manager at an incident. While the significance of the links between control and emotion emerge, what is also interesting is the way this watch manager self-corrects the way he expresses himself as a use of language is avoided that identifies with essentialist arguments about the dichotomies that embody perceived gender difference. This gives insight into the minutiae of detail that needs to be adhered to in order to sustain the masculine image.

In order to take control of an incident; authority, operational knowledge and emotional labour simultaneously operationalise through the display of technical and emotional competence at a 'quick time' pace. The 'unknown' nature of the incident becomes a focus of 'instrumental control' by the watch manager. This is one site where sacrifices are made (including the natural self) to convert everything into an "object of control" (Kerfoot and Knights, 1996: 80). In this way, masculinity is operationalised in an explicit and overt fashion where physical strength (put into action by firefighters) and intellectual prowess (put into action by the watch manager) is pitted against a fast moving 'opponent' in the terms of the spatial and temporal emergency at hand.

In this way, a performance is operationalised on the part of the watch manager whose presence before a particular set of observers' influences and attempts to define and impose a 'new reality' into the situation (see Goffman, 1959). The watch manager and the watch work in a symbiotic fashion and the management of personal expressions collude to command authority over a particular situation. The 'front' of the watch managers authority becomes subject to the gaze of the watch and the 'front' produced by firefighters is observed by members of the public, 'other' emergency services and their watch manager. The characteristics of the emergency situation become subject to the segregation of social space that separates the different roles in the watch from each other. Social selves and work identities, which differentiate firefighters from crew managers and watch managers, emerge as a product of the performance (Goffman, 1959: 253). In this way, a pattern of the distribution of involvement occurs, under the allocation of individual participation, which in turn is underpinned by the rules, norms and protocols of the situation. This includes the rules and norms that underpin types of masculinities 'doing gender' that in combination both separate and reinforce each other. The masculinities separated by authority and

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differing roles and performances all invest in emotional labour each dependent on the other to authenticate 'their' front of masculinity. The efforts of the team come together under prescriptive controls that provide the face of masculinity, supported within a framework of 'feeling rules' operating across boundaries and in front of differing audiences.

In some respects the quantification and grading of competences and feeling rules that effect order and control over a situation bring the event and all watch members within the disciplinary gaze of each other and their other audience(s) 'the public' and other public services at the scene. The Foucauldian gaze operates in the quick time of the emergency situation between all members of the watch. All the watch managers interviewed emphasised the extent to which their performance was the subject of continuous assessment by the watch and how they handled their skills and their emotions symbiotically over different sites in front of different audiences.

During the discussions with watch managers an important dynamic emerged as two watch managers' explicitly highlighted the importance of creating a successful reciprocal relationship between themselves and firefighters. What emerged is a view of how a watch manager comes to see their professional competence reflected by a two way dynamic:

> So if I go to an incident it is my responsibility to see what is going on and to devise some plan to deal with that and relay it to my firefighters they're the ones that carry it out at the sharp end if you like so a lot of my reputation it depends on them doing their job properly . . . yunno . . . I'm only as good as the people I work with.
>
> (WM3)

Here we see how the covert aspects of the watch managers masculinity and identity are implicitly laced within the perfomative selves of firefighters within the watch. The watch managers' masculinity is concealed behind the strategy of action, whereas firefighters' masculinities are explicitly carried out as a form of overt masculinity performed through 'hands-on' skill and physical strength. In some ways this suggests the existence of a matrix of learned dependency. The watch manager relies on the strength and quality of the operational skills the firefighters perform (which they have responsibility for), whilst at the same time the firefighters have to rely on the dependability of the watch managers, not only in respect of the strategic responsibility to devise a plan but also to see the emergency situation to a successful conclusion. The watch manager gains status and respect from the skills and competencies of the firefighters and vice versa. In this instance they are inextricably bound together in a two-way dynamic both relying on the other to create, sustain and defend their identities and masculinities. In this way "masculine" identity and subjectivity work together and are always in a state of "becoming" a project "to be constantly worked at to be accomplished and achieved" (see Giddens, 1991) whilst at the same time these symbiotic elements are also exposed to 'risk'.

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Fire Station and Fire Ground

The above discussion suggests that some watch managers' and their watches appear to employ a series of categories relating to the appropriate organisation of proximity and distance to define and assess the performance of the watch manager. S/he must be close enough to the fire ground to lead and manage the team and the public but not too close that their leadership would be compromised. However, my research also provides some evidence to suggest that the watch managers experience far more challenging, if implicit, demands to organise and manage their proximity and distance to the watch. As Collinson and Hearn (2005) point out, power relations within the workplace are multiple and ambiguous, but the challenges posed for the watch manager appear unusually high insofar as they are expected to be able to sustain their authority within and across two very different locales – the station and the fire ground:

> You can't discuss things at a incident you have to make a decision and say that is what that we are going to do get on with it . . . whereas other things you can talk about.
>
> (WM4)

And another watch manager argued;

> I like to think I'm fair, I like a debate and a diplomatic sort of thing but when I'm out on the fire ground that goes completely the opposite end of the scale and you have to be autocratic because you have to get that ladder there and it is not a debate now . . . this is not a time for what about this and what about that this is what we are doing and this is why the buck stops with me and this is where my responsibility is.
>
> (WM4)

Within the confines of the fire ground an autocratic authority exists and whilst emotions and subjectivities are to be rendered invisible, watch managers have the responsibility in this environment to 'do the right thing' and are constantly judged to have done so without fault. By contrast, at the station, negotiations of power and authority are more likely to occur and subjectivities allowed to surface in relation to internal and social aspects of the working environment.

Whilst contrasting types of authority are likely to be employed by watch managers' over the fire station and fire ground, the fire station (back region) presents a different set of responsibilities within their role. For example, at the station the watch manager takes responsibility for maintaining training and competence of the watch. The watch manager also has responsibilities to management as they are expected to implement orders from higher tiers of management and communicate 'change' to their watch. They are also expected to keep up-to-date with all administrative aspects of the running the station including maintaining the building, equipment and supplies. Watch managers' will also

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manage CFS visits and look after the social and professional management of the watch. Thus we can see that the watch manager's role involves the successful integration of operational, managerial and interpersonal dimensions.

What was interesting in the narratives was the way that all the watch managers' distanced themselves from the administrative aspects of their job:

> They expect me to be a brigade servant and the rules in place are about ticking boxes and performance indicators aren't about quality control they aren't about doing the right thing and making a difference . . . they are about can you tick this box . . . can you placate a four year sort of political agenda . . .
>
> (WM4)

> Lot more paperwork now than you did have to do . . . that is taking you away from doing your job and what you are trained to do . . .
>
> (WM2)

> I find working on the computer a bind because if I want to go and drill or do something with the watch everything that comes in seems to tie me to the office.
>
> (WM3)

It seems that the consensus view of these watch managers sees the demands of the office as 'frustrating', and this type of work was overtly distanced from. Not only did this aspect of their work appear to symbolically carry elements of 'taint' but also the outcome of spending so much time in the office served to distance them from the proximity (and presumably control) of the watch.

Whilst critical incident management and managing at the station may appear separate to some extent, they may also be mutually dependent. It may be that attention to detail and training at the station is directly linked to provide an efficient outcome, as it is the site where training in preparation for the next incident takes place. Training is not only physical but includes debriefing sessions – post mortems, where incidents are reflected upon to improve future performance. The watch manager may be in charge of facilitating what firefighters perceive as 'doing' the real job but both they and the firefighters gain kudos when the competencies of their team reflect back on them. This analysis carries notions of a parallel dynamic at work in respect of a dual narrative constituting the watch. Although dividends for watch managers and firefighters may vary they are at the same time mutually dependent on sustaining differing masculine identities.

These performances "on stage" and "back stage" between the two locations are constantly under surveillance and judged for 'authenticity' (see Goffman, 1959). The social patterning that emerges appears to vacillate between rational objective responses at an incident to more arbitrary emotional responses at the station. Whilst the emotional detachment displayed in performing operational

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duty and the emotional attachment in the social aspect of the working environment can be seen to be direct antitheses of each other, the watch manager needs to be able to manage and make meaningful the extremes of emotional engagement and distance both for the watch and between him/herself and the watch.

The variety of skills actually required by the watch manager may range from the need to possess a good emotional memory to the development and maintenance of a highly professional and competent team, and the possession of a very developed set of diverse skills to manage power and tensions. The importance of managing the diversity of emotional demands is indicated in recent research by Hall et al. (2007) which suggests that male firefighters are prone to partnership breakdown, but this is potentially only the tip of an iceberg of emotions that exist within team and that the watch manager has to handle and negotiate. However, the importance of the watch manager's emotional skills is barely acknowledged in the formal definition of their role. Without such recognition and the HR and other managerial support that should accompany it, the precariousness of their authority is increased. For managers who operate at a more senior and distanced level with their teams at a fire station it is far easier to act in a more formal rational action-orientated way.

Charismatic Authority and the Buffer

At the station, power relations between firefighters and watch managers appear to take on a different complexity due to the subjective nature of 'discussions' and 'debate' around the way that authority is legitimised and the more democratic approach to managing by the watch manager. As such, I argue that Weber's concept of charismatic authority becomes a useful analytical tool. This 'force of personality' at the heart of the charismatic authority and leadership stands in stark contrast to the way bureaucratic authority is legitimised. Interestingly, the majority of watch managers tended to describe their relationships with the watch in terms that were highly reminiscent of Weber's (1964) concept of charismatic authority. According to Weber, charismatic power is power legitimised on the basis of the leader's individual qualities; qualities that inspire in his/her followers an often intense sense of loyalty and obedience. However passionate this loyalty, it is also inherently unstable because its existence depends on the leaders being able to continue to inspire their followers. This kind of power then is peculiarly dependent on an individual's legitimacy in the eyes of their followers rather than on a stable tradition or other rational organisational structure. Now, watch managers do, evidently work within a stable bureaucratic structure but my research suggests that in order to be seen to be successful as watch managers they have to distance themselves from the formal bureaucratic authority with which they are institutionally invested and instead produce what appear as a series of bravura and apparently improvised performances of informal and personalised authority through encouraging various kinds of 'give and take'. This officially unsanctioned discretion trades the ritualistic enforcement

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of each and every regulation for a more exciting and potentially disruptive series of exchanges.

> Firefighters will give them the things they need yunno . . . like 'what about this Guv . . . what about that?' yunno . . . I give about how to tackle something and work bloody hard yunno . . . if your watch manager comes in and creates then they are not going to do that but I have to say at that level that you are looking at most of them will be pretty clued up to the fact that if you don't behave like give and take you're gonna have a bit of resistance and that is not really going to work for you.
>
> (UR)

> Coz actually f/f are not lazy and they will do all those things that you need them to do when you are managing a watch, the training, the organising, the going out, the doing the work. They want to be busy but if you give them also the time out you will get the benefit . . . and if they (watch managers) are smart they will recognise that, so there is a two way thing. If they know they're not going to be here that long so they think I am going to play the game and I'm up but I am not going to compromise what I need to do and we're like we know this person is not going to be here very long as long as they treat us ok they'll be fine. If they don't treat you ok then you will respond and it will be negative.
>
> (UR)

> It's down to individuals and how well they manage the station and how well they manage people . . . some things you can have a chat about and be fairly democratic and other things they just have to do . . . you can't discuss things at a incident you have to make a decision and say that is what that we are going to do get on with it . . . whereas other things you can talk about.
>
> (WM4)

These exchanges use several different currencies and operate on a variety of sites. Give and take can occur around how work is organised at the station, it can take the form of humorous banter it can also develop in relation to demands from senior management that watch managers report to the watch before allowing them to have their say. Together these forms of give and take seem intended to support the performance of a watch manager who is both secure and fair-minded enough to allow individual voices within the team to be heard. Given the shared knowledge of formal, rational authority and hierarchy and also given the contrast between this informality and the unquestioned authority displayed at the fire-ground, such democratic tolerance is likely to be perceived as a benevolence born of the watch manager's strength of mind and personality. However, although such give and take may appear to indicate legitimised power, this research suggests that in fact such performances can be motivated by a much more brittle and insecure position.

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One of the pressures that may well push watch managers towards reliance on charismatic authority may be seen to derive from the hierarchical nature of the fire service beyond the immediacy of the watch. Salaman (1986) and Baigent (2001) suggest that at the station (under some circumstances) if watch managers led by imposing formal authority on their watch (and this caused disruption) they may not have the support of senior management and could publicly loose prestige in the eyes of the watch. Likewise, if watch managers asked the advice of senior management before taking action they might find themselves losing credibility in the eyes of senior management. As such, dilemmas watch managers face are represented in the kinds of judgments that they have to make on a daily basis.

Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that watch managers' masculinity is constructed alongside their watch. Both watch managers and firefighters see their roles as important, and both have allegiances and attachments to 'their' particular skills, which they draw from as a signifier of what it means to be a man in the work environment. The watch managers' performances appear to be mutually supported by firefighters as both reciprocally reinforcing each other. Whilst it may also be argued that this dynamic involves notions around competing masculinities – I argue that this is not the case, both forms of masculinities need to exist for either one to perform.

What this research suggests is that in order for the watch manager to maintain a certain level of equilibrium within the working group, authority is reciprocally legitimated and authenticated through dual understandings between the watch manager and the members of the watch. These shared understandings operate through both formal and informal channels within various spatial and situational contexts. Whilst there is a sense that watch managers largely wield uncontested autocratic authority on the fire ground, by contrast, the dynamic between the watch manager and the watch appears more complex when managing at the fire station where power struggles can occur between the watch manager and the watch.

So far, I have also suggested that watch managers' reflection on the nature of their experience of their job shows them to routinely deploy various formal and informal strategies to produce specific kinds of distancing. My research suggests that the tensions and strains watch managers' experience in trying to perform effectively can be made more visible if we distinguish between those forms of distancing that relate to the effective management of firefighting and those that relate to the management of complicated social relations within the context of the station. However, as I suggest above, the real challenge for the watch manager is to produce out of these tension-filled relationships of distance and proximity, of give and take, a sense of trustworthy authority that can charismatically transcend locale and context.

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My research data suggest a complex set of processes and social patterning exist whereby watch managers apparently produce a set of skilled performances that display the hegemonic characteristics set out by Salaman (1986) and Baigent (2001), whilst at the same time they have had to invest a certain amount of time and energy on non-traditional ways of nurturing to maintain competence levels. If we look more closely at the job that they actually perform it does involve counselling, judging psychological competence of individuals in respect of traumatic incidents, possessing strategies for dealing with conflict and tension between the team and with upper management as well as the operational competencies that have to be 'signed off' to be deemed competent. The tensions produced by the disparity between the formal role and the requirements of a competent performance appear to leave the watch manager with a series of complex judgments to make on a daily and context-specific level. These judgments, which I have discussed in terms of different kinds of distancing and different kinds of 'give and take', are not judgments that are adequately recognised or supported by the wider institutional structures of the fire service. This lack of recognition and support, I suggest can lead to the watch manager having little choice but to produce a performance of charismatic authority as if to use the aura provided by such charisma to hide the more ambiguous and prosaic parts of his/her performance.

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4 Institutional Patriarchy, Auto-critique and Resilience

A Comparative Gaze

Dave Baigent

Introduction

Governments, fire services and trade unions around the world have met with limited success in their efforts to increase the amount of women in the fire service. Despite the UK's recruitment of women starting in 1982 and an expectation that levels of recruitment would achieve 14% (CLG, 2008a), women's employment appears to stall at around 4% (DCLG, 2013a)[1]. On a positive note, it is possible to recognise that some men are starting to accept women as colleagues, but this is more often about 'their woman' on their team or 'watch' as firefighters call the groups they work in. Sadly, there is little sign that this acceptance is developing into a cohort of men who will actively challenge sexism. Men who accept 'their woman' can still be found challenging women who work on other watches. This points to two major difficulties when employing women in the fire service – sexism, which leads to high levels of sexual harassment that, in its simplest form, is a constant drip of negativity towards female firefighters, and men's actual failure to challenge, even recognise the sexism in their own ranks.

This book is the outcome of the Swedish Government's project to overcome gender inequality in the fire service and make their service more pro-active (MSB, 2009). Comparative study indicates that the UK, US, Canada and Australia have similar equality initiatives and that there is also a parallel attempt to move the fire service's image away from that of the heroic white male heterosexual firefighter who kicks down doors to save life, towards an image of a pro-active service in which men and women representing a range of ethnicities and sexualities will in the future be seen as arriving before (rather than after) fires and emergencies, and save life by knocking on doors to speak to people about how to prevent emergencies (rather than kicking them down after).

As this whole book and the four-year project that sustained it focuses on gender mainstreaming and change, I am going to take the opportunity to put forward some ideas. Sweden is an advanced Western country at the forefront of gender mainstreaming, but their fire service employs less than 3% women as firefighters (Callerstig et al., 2009). Their fire service is clearly out of step with the national psych and in an attempt to change this the Swedish Government

has established the concept of "En brandstation för alla" (a fire station for all): a centre for excellence for equality, a safe place where resources are concentrated and the results studied (MSB, 2009). Recent work on this project with "brandmän" (as they call their firefighters) indicates a slightly new approach (Baigent et al., 2012) that follows the suggestion that equality work should be research based (Mellström, 2008).

The idea of 'En brandstation för alla' is supported by CFO Per Widlundh in Räddningstjänsten Syd (RSYD). Per is an equality champion keen on changing the image of the fire service. There are many aspects to this work, and I am working with Per and his team on an education programme. This work has developed to indicate that it is not enough to tell firemen to change: brandmän's views on women in the fire service are as difficult as in other countries. Comparative studies show the fire service to be a sexist organisation (Ericson, 2011; Hulett et al., 2008a; Lewis, 2004; Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997) and yet firemen remain very hostile to any suggestion that they could possibly be sexist or harassers. During the Swedish programme we witnessed a similar outcome. At any suggestion that brandmän could be sexist they made the whole concept very personal: a 'standoff' that unhinges the training. This of course is a tactic by firemen that I have experienced everywhere, and it is successful to the extent that it makes it all but impossible to have the sort of conversations needed to bring about change. By working together they use the language of equality to turn themselves into victims who are being stereotyped, even bullied by the trainer/educator. This harsh reaction by firefighters can lead to fire services stopping the type of training needed to bring about change because it upsets their firemen. Ironically some women in these classes also support their firemen and in Australia, women's reaction to an argument that their men were sexist helped the union stop a "Gender Inclusion Action Plan" in its tracks (Baigent, 2010; MFB, 2010; Schneiders, 2010).

This may have been the case in the UK when at the height of equality initiatives proactive training gave way to a more legalistic model that simply points out the rights and wrongs. This was supported by the national development of a list of 'core values' (LGA, 2004) that would presumably bring about change just by being there. At the same time a national policy to only publish good news became a de-facto pretense that harassment was not happening (presumably in the belief that silence would make harassment go away). Research has indicated that at all levels in the fire service very few people even knew the 'core values' existed (Baigent et al., 2008a; 2008b; 2010).

In Sweden, we reacted to brandmän's concerns by adapting the education programme to first identify the hidden arrangements that make harassment possible and second to empower brandmän to speak out against harassment (by the others on their watch). The aim followed the philosophy of pro-feminist auto critique (Hearn, 1994) – an argument for men to work from within to bring about change. Thus the work in RSYD evolved to adopt a theoretical position as a practice in an attempt to get firemen to participate in change. The development became known as 'stopping the drip' (of harassment) and focused

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on persuading brandmän that "you may not be sexist" but when you witness sexism and do not challenge it then you become part of the harassment. This was termed "the Spartacus moment" (Baigent and Granqvist, 2013) and is currently adopted in RSYD as a way to get brandmän to speak and help their colleagues to their sexism.

For me the processes through which the constant drip of sexism continues, sometimes overtly and more often covertly, suggest something far more complicated than a simple failure of a re-socialization process to incorporate women. It is interesting to note that comparative data from working in Sweden, the UK and Australia and secondary data from the US and Canada (Chetkovich, 1997; Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997) are so similar as to indicate that there is a public debate amongst firefighters on an international scale around defending the fire service as a male domain. This is a ludicrous suggestion. However, it makes clear that sexism in the fire service should not be viewed as standalone micro examples of behavior by individuals. Sexism in the fire service should be seen as a macro social behavior based around the notion of heroism as a central value that over time and location continues (Holt and Thompson, 2004): an institutional arrangement that allows men to consciously or unconsciously conspire to act against women and an institutional patriarchy (Walby, 1986) whereby firemen and masculinity interact in theoretically similar terms to Hartmann's conspiratorial argument about capital and patriarchy (Hartmann, 1981).

Taking a somewhat unusual step of revealing so many findings before the main body of work is not a challenge to the academic process – it is my methodology. As an ex-firefighter turned academic using my experiential knowledge alongside the data to actively challenge sexism and seek answers, I practice profeminist auto critique (Hearn, 1994). As part of this I am not trying to prove what is already proven – that firefighters are often sexist and that patriarchal arrangements in the fire service are not accidental or casual but structured and stable (Baigent, 2001; 2004; Baigent et al., 2012; CLG, 2008b; Ericson, 2011; HMCIFS, 1999). I start by accepting that the way that this happens is systemic (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987; 1995).

In this introduction I am offering a view of why employing and keeping women in the fire service is difficult, and how firemen's resistance to the presence of women' is sustained. In the main body of the work, as a platform for my analysis, I shall provide a short history of women's relations with the FBU and some data collected from interviews. This will suggest the actual resilience of masculinity, which after decades of public challenge and suppression in the fire service, manages to stay intact (Ericson, 2004; 2011). I have chosen the word 'resilience' because this is a fire service term meaning the ability to recover from a disaster, to bounce back and to return to the status quo. This work will suggest that although progressive leaders in the FBU in the 1990s were able to assist women in pursuing their specific issues alongside existing FBU structures, over 20 years later, when the leadership changed, sexist agendas bounced back as men took away the very groups that they had previously accepted were needed to represent women (FBU, 2011; 2012).

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Methodology

This research involves pro-feminist auto critique methods through which Hearn (1994) argues for men to use their insider knowledge to make visible the hidden understandings between men through which they construct their masculinity. This politically motivated methodology works for me because I am a retired firefighter and FBU official who served for almost 31 years. I remain a member of the FBU and I am now an academic and consultant who has written, researched, lectured, spoken at conferences, conducted training, networked and supported attempts to change cultural arrangements in the fire service. I have worked on a number of national and local projects to affect change in the UK, Australia and Sweden. I have also had many conversations with others in this field from around the world. For the most part, this work has focused on masculinity in the fire service and how its practice not only is sexist but also restricts cultural change at the same time. This chapter is part of what for me is an on-going process. My focus remains academic, however, my motivation primarily aims at reaching out to practice. Therefore, following Glaser and Strauss (1967), I write in a language and use data in a way that hopefully makes it available to academics, politicians and interested firefighters.

There have been ethical issues that have weighed heavily on my mind that need to be documented and addressed. I am very aware of the vulnerability of female respondents because they work alone with men and are liable to reprisals for talking to me. To protect their identity I have presented their evidence under one name. I have chosen Genie for this name, and it is symbolic to show that women are now in the fire service and cannot be put back (in the metaphorical bottle). Respondents have also commented on early drafts.

Equally, I have also paid extra consideration to my own subjectivity in this research because my daughter is a firefighter and it needs to be understood that no data from her appears in this chapter. My objectivity does not mean that my work is not political. I am aware that an enormous amount of money has been spent and considerable research has taken place on this topic. I am also aware that firemen have ruined many women's lives (IT, 1995) as the victims of harassment (MacKinnon, 1979). New initiatives often raise hopes, but at no time has it ever seemed that a transformation is in progress. My methodology for this chapter therefore has been aimed at acknowledging what is already known, and considering a short history from the FBU and its relations with female firefighters alongside primary data taken from women and my own experiential knowledge to set a scene for my pro-feminist auto critique to look for how theory may help reduce sexism in the fire service.

The FBU

The FBU is an 'adversarial union' (Callinicos, 2004; Segars, 1989; Smith, 2003); despite its far left connections, its approach to equality is chequered. Until the 1980s, FBU leaders reflected the sexism of their members; then, as women

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started to make their voices heard about their own discreet issues, FBU leaders provided structural support to help women to deal with these.

Female Firefighters

The 'first' female firefighters were employed in 1982 after political intervention by London's radical labour leader Ken Livingstone, and yet by 1996 the London Fire Brigade still only employed fifty-six female firefighters amongst over 6,000 men, and over 60% of women experienced harassment (Baigent, 1996). In the UK today, only about 4% of firefighters are women (DCLG, 2013b).

Fire stations are traditionally an all-male workplace and there was an early expectation that female firefighters would simply fit in. Neither employers nor the FBU gave much consideration to just how masculine the fire service was, or how women's employment might challenge the beliefs of the existing workforce. Neither was attention given to the possibility that female firefighters could have separate needs to their established male colleagues (see Krekula et al., 2011), or that a lone woman in an extreme male environment can be vulnerable. There were a number of sexual harassment incidents and a very high profile case at Soho fire station (Hearn and Parkin, 1995: 74; Walby, 1990: 52) which made it very clear that men were unprepared to work with women. High profile cases of harassment are occasionally repeated, but most of this harassment occurs at a very low level, a constant drip that makes women aware they are unwelcome, debilitates them and sometimes destroys their lives.

Organising Women

Concerned about their isolation, some women started to meet up and develop a network to support each other. One female activist spoke to McGhee (2011) about how it was in the 1980s:

> *Genie:* I made it my business to find out where other women were and just phoned them up to talk. I knew how important it was for me to have other women there so to have contact . . . And I disliked the sexism and the culture.

I have also spoken with a number of activists from that time; indeed to some extent I was part of it as a sexist serving firefighter who had considerable doubts about women joining my job. My view at the time was that women were social sexual objects who had no place amongst fire appliances or in firefighting. Nonetheless, there were others more enlightened than I on the FBU's London Regional Committee (LRC) who established the Women's Advisory Committee (22–9–1989). This gave women an avenue to raise their separate issues. Nonetheless, as is so often the case when senior men have supported women, incorporation involves compromise (see Kirton et al., 2010). The independent

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voices of women were in danger of being muted by male committees who required the final say on how to deal with women's separate requirements.

A London EC member who was instrumental in helping to establish the women's section in 1989 explained in an interview with me in 1995:

EC: Vast majority of our members are antagonistic towards equality or retain a very lumpen approach to equal ops in general . . . Levels of prejudice within the union that I am entirely unhappy with and that goes to the highest levels.

During that research (Baigent, 1996) I also interviewed a researcher at the FBU head office. They relayed the General Secretary's views:

Genie: Ken [Cameron] is quite strong about it "we are not having this sort of behaviour in the union and we don't want it in the service either. And whether you like it or not we are going to run with it.

Ken Cameron was a powerful voice for women. His lead was instrumental in getting government support alongside the FBU for the equality agenda. The appointment of Sir Graham Meldrum, who had a track record of supporting women and change in the service, as Chief Inspector of Fire Services gave a clear indication of government support for equality (HMCIFS, 1999).

These were golden days for female firefighters. In 1992 the FBU had its first national seminar for women, started a "Fairness at Work" campaign and withdrew representation from men who were believed to be harassing women. By 1999 a women's section was established that largely paralleled the existing FBU structure. Women's committees acted almost as a branch within each service, and they elected representatives to sit on the brigade and regional committees to serve women's separate issues. There was also a national women's committee with a Chair, Secretary and EC member seconded from their service to work full-time for FBU women. On this tide of change, Ruth Winters, a female EC member, was elected vice-president in 1999 and became president in 2002.

Development of Women's Sections

Cockburn (1985) argues that women's sections are the only way to overcome men's neglect of women's separate interests (see also Heery and Kelly, 1988; Kirton and Healy, 2009a; 2009b; Parker, 2009). Early successes in this area continued as Andy Gilchrist followed Ken Cameron as General Secretary in 2000. Women were now rid of the shackles that had earlier restricted their ability to speak on their own behalf, and women were able to create an environment where they could start to flourish and develop the expertise necessary to represent their own issues directly with fire service managers. It is clear that there were a number of issues to be dealt with.

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Genie: There are four areas of work that continually need addressing. Maternity or matters relating to maternity. Facilities, and I am talking about lack of separate toilets, showers and changing rooms. PPE[2] for women firefighters – ill fitting, not available, men's sizes, that kind of thing. And then there is inappropriate behavior such as bullying and sexual harassment.

The opportunity to shower, change and go to the toilet in privacy would be something that most people would expect as of a right. Not so in the fire service. Fire stations had been built for male occupancy and there was little expectation of privacy. Men's resistance to providing women with privacy was, and remains, a clear example of the difficulties women experience. In a similar vein, patriarchal attitudes towards maternity indicated that firemen resented female firefighters being given the opportunity to give birth (see how Rutherford, 2011: 39–41 indicates that many men have comparable views). Getting a uniform that fits is again an area where men believed women were taking advantage by raising issues that would not occur in an all-male workforce. This particular attitude ignored very important safety issues when women were given a male uniform. In the fire service a uniform is not just to make people look alike, it is an essential safety measure. Gloves, shirts, boots, helmets, leggings and tunics designed for men do not fit most women and issuing ill-fitting equipment is dangerous in a job where agility, dexterity and protection from heat and smoke are lifesaving, not cosmetic measures.

I can remember being part of conversations around mess tables at the fire station in which we condemned our employers for wasting money on women's facilities, uniforms and maternity. Now, a new consciousness allows me to recognise that my agendas were aimed at keeping the fire station male, to stop the feminisation of the fire service and the dilution of masculinity. I suspect many firefighters today exist in a similar world where they appear unconscious of the links between how they justify their masculine cultural arrangements, sexism and the protection of their patriarchal dividend.

Against this backdrop both Gilchrist and Cameron positively campaigned to support women and manage the 'lumpen' (including me) by progressive policies to empower women. The presence of these leaders may also have had a considerable influence on dissenting voices, particularly at conferences:

Genie: [Gilchrist and Cameron were] instrumental in setting up the women's section and been so supportive. . . . The progressive leadership at that time silenced those who resisted and even changed the views of some of the resisters.

When powerful male union leaders support women (as Genie suggests), it becomes very difficult for the lumpen to speak out publicly against them. Silencing the debate at national and municipal levels should have been influential on

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the local. However, if sexual harassment is used as a barometer of acceptance, it is clear that dissent continued in fire stations at that time – there was a 10% drop in recorded harassment levels, but 50% of women were still being harassed (Baigent, 2006; CLG, 2008a; 2008b). Also in 2006, exasperated after a career which in part was founded on undoing sexism, the outgoing Chief Inspector of the Fire Service suggested that the situation was "worse than 20 years ago. Not the bottom of the league but in a different league" (HMCIFS, 2006). This is a real indictment, but it is more than that. It supports a view that despite living in more enlightened environments and with all the support that is provided by FBU leaders, government and employers at a structural level, locally, masculine agendas continued.

Matt Wrack Becomes General Secretary

The election of Matt Wrack as General Secretary in 2005 almost amounted to a palace coup. Sympathetic supporters who swept away the old guard became Assistant General Secretary and national officers. Many view this as a takeover by the left, but Gilchrist and Cameron also had solid left wing credentials. An early warning of what this change meant for women occurred when the palace coup extended to replace the woman President with a male NEC comrade.

In 2007 resolutions were submitted to the Annual Conference to remove women's voting rights. The women's section mounted a significant campaign and overturned the resolution. Winning this battle did not mean that women were going to win the 'war'. The new leadership did nothing to silence the dissenters/ lumpen in the FBU who started to challenge women publicly. What appears now to have been ten years of "surface-acting" (see Hochschild, 1983) gave way to some firemen once again expressing their views against women and leaders in the FBU starting to represent what may have always been their members' views. One woman explained her thoughts to McGhee in the aftermath (2011):

> Our biggest fear is we will no longer be progressive as we will be lucky to keep our heads above water organising and supporting women who are still putting up with all sorts of crap.

There is no suggestion here that Matt Wrack is against women being in the fire service. Nor that he is sexist. Just that he adopted a different view. Some would even argue that it was more democratic to allow the challenge at conference to the women's section. Genie, nonetheless believes this was an end to the progressive politics that allowed women to develop:

Genie: Those with no progressive politics [people] who are middle of the road and sit on the fence get drawn into the mindset of a leadership . . . In order for women to advance there has to be a supportive network.

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Cutting Front Line Services for Women

The working group was established by the FBU to look for cost-saving recommendations to cut front line services for women. For example, the budget for national women's school, the delegation to TUC women's conference, their journal publications, meetings of the women's section and, most importantly, the funding for the national secretary and chair as full-time posts (FBU, 2011). These proposals were threatening to women's ability to organise, represent, defend and promote women. When these cuts were presented at conference, men's support for women dwindled, and the attacks above were implemented. The following year another report recommended the removal of EC membership for women and revocation of voting rights on the various committees that women sat on within the union (FBU, 2012). Although the women rallied significant support, they lost: the men sitting on the fence had made their choice.

These cuts mean that women have once again had to turn to men for help: a situation that has a long history of being problematic (Kirton et al., 2010; Rutherford, 2011). Inevitably robbed of their 'professional' leadership and organisers, and with a reduction of their right to approach managers with their separate issues, women's consciousness and ability to defend themselves will lose momentum.

Some Thoughts

The difficulties associated with patriarchy's resilience is in part explained by how it is handed down (Baigent, 2001; Ericson, 2011). Hidden behind a smoke screen, homosocial processes (Lipman-Blumen, 1976) of bonding and sponsorship amongst like-minded men (Mellström, 1995; 1999) underpin firemen's masculine hierarchies (see Häyrén-Weinestål et al., 2011) and, of course, their sexism. There is evidence that men who join the fire service with little or no prejudice receive training from their peers on masculine agendas (Baigent and Rolph, 2002; Baigent et al., 2003) and research in Merseyside indicating "that the values and attitudes held by new firefighters almost seem predisposed to change from the day that they commence training" Baigent et al. (2008a: 5; see also Ericson, 2004; 2011) suggests this occurs because men fear losing status and respect, what Baigent (2001) recognises as the dividend associated with the heroic male image of a firefighter. Genie may be unaware of the theory but recognises the practice:

> *Genie:* We have seen men come into the fire service joining trainee courses with women, black and LGBT people and they think nothing of it. It's when they get onto a watch, . . . that sexist, racist and homophobic behaviour starts to rear its ugly head. The trainees conform in order to fit in and the vicious circle keeps on going.

From Genie's comment comes the suggestion that the majority of people who join the fire service are not sexist (racist or homophobic). However, it appears

they soon learn this behaviour or at least become party to it by covering it up. Sexual harassment is rarely a private affair on a fire station. Watches are too closely knit for harassment to be hidden, but few speak out against it. By their silence they too become part of the harassment. In an organisation which is 'in another league', where over 50% of women admit that they have experienced sexual harassment, even those men who do not harass women should be aware that they are complicit by their silence. They condone what they do not challenge.

Politicians, fire service managers, FBU officials and firefighters may argue that equality is now an integral part of the fire service, but this argument hides the on-going harassment and marginalisation of women. Baigent (2001; 2004) provides an extensive explanation of how firefighters perpetuate their agendas, particularly their narcissistic image as masculine heroes in their own, their groups and the public's eyes. This involves the already discussed complex homosocial (Lipman-Blumen, 1976) arrangements whereby older men fit younger men in with their understandings about firefighting, trust and a whole host of social arrangements, standards, rules and conservative resistance.

As accomplished actors, firefighters provide a very real grounded example of Goffmanesque dramaturgical loyalty, discipline, circumspection and image presentation (Lemert and Branaman, 1997). For example, new firefighters learn to stay silent when they witness their peer leaders accepting company rules when managers are present, that they know are not privately followed or accepted (Baigent, 2001; 2004). Add "group think" as part of the recipe, (Janis, 1972) and it is easy to understand that teamwork on a fire station is not just about learning to work together in an emergency; it is also about learning the social arrangements on the watch. These include how to act when managers/outsiders are present, and how to keep their actions, agendas and resistance secret.

A further grounded example of this behaviour can be identified from another area, which incidentally forms part of the discussions in this book – the fire service's considerable attempts to undo a masculine image and modernise (Baigent and O'Connor, 2011). Firefighters resist this change, and they are still seen primarily by the public as heroes – there is little mention of their work on fire prevention.

The way that firefighters are marginalising/hiding their preventative role provides another indication of how successfully they can act to hide reality and sustain a heroic imagery. This is of course aided by constant reminders. Fires and rescues are always newsworthy, and when national tragedies occur such as 911, terrorist incidents, wild fires, building collapses, car and train crashes and flooding, it is the fire services that are seen to be in the thick of it. The public is proud of their firefighters. This heroic masculinity is a totem around which men (and women) in the fire service gather as men above other men (Hearn et al., 2012), watched by a public audience who are in awe of their work (Holt and Thompson, 2004). Ask people on the street what a firefighter is and they are unlikely to say "someone who carries out preventative work." The public is far more likely to say "I could not be a fireman or do their job, they are heroes

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and represent the very best of our nation – our firefighters make us proud to be British/American/Swedish/Australian/Canadian."

For at least 20 years I have been trying to understand why it is that men in the fire service harass women. In regard to understanding 'why', I have had a measure of success. I am able to recognise that firemen receive a considerable dividend from the work they do. A status that is even more enhanced when firemen show humility by denying that they are "special" – a "reluctant hero"/ jantelagen (Baigent, 2001). By default this leaves the rest of society to fill in the gaps and to come to the conclusion that firemen are special. This appears as a simple common sense explanation but it is not. Firefighters are able to achieve this because they work so hard at convincing their team, the public and themselves that it is so through the stories they tell and the image they believe in (Baigent, 2001; Mellström, 1995; Olofsson, 2011). It is of course this same acting and dramaturgical loyalty that allows firefighters to work together at a fire *and* to challenge training that may just become part of the agenda to unpack their masculinity.

Conclusion

Like so many other trade unions where women were harassed and women's separate issues were ignored, since the 1980s women in the FBU have developed a network to support their members. In part this occurred because two general secretaries gave their support and 'silenced' a considerable patriarchal body within the FBU. It is also clear that without the women's networks, some women, unhappy with their treatment by firemen, would have continued to see their treatment as personal. It was only after they got together that they realised that most women were subject to similar treatment and that this was sexual harassment.

Therefore what started as a moral stance by the FBU leaders (often against the flow of their male membership's beliefs), should in the 20 years up to 2005 have initiated some change in men's views. Even more so when the other measures by government, local authorities and leaders in the fire service are considered (CLG, 2008a; HMCIFS, 1999; MSB, 2009). But this cultural change has hardly happened. Harassment fell between 1996 and 2006 to around 50%. Clearly the women's section's promotion of women-specific issues around harassment, accommodation, uniform and maternity made a massive difference to the experience of harassment but it still continued at an unacceptable 50%.

One analysis of why harassment remains so high suggests that men in the FBU might only have been biding their time between 1996 and 2005 and that they acted to appear to stop their overt and structural dissent against women whilst all the time it continued underground. If you can recognise the way firefighters work together to deceive their managers and to hide their patriarchal agendas, then you might also recognise that firemen could repeat this behaviour in the presence of their FBU leaders. Accepting that this may happen, might in turn lead to understanding how the lumpen appeared to support progressive

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FBU policies aimed at stopping harassment and at the same time continued to harass 50% of female firefighters. This may be a long time to surface act but given fireman's ability to publicly challenge women's sections so quickly and effectively when 'freedom of speech' returned after 2005, suggests that any change in fireman's attitudes was at best only temporary. Is it possible then to ask if the very high levels of harassment that continued almost unabatedly indicate that there was very little change in firemen's attitudes to women? Men were still learning how to harass women from their peers. There are perhaps clues here that theory may help to develop.

To the Theory

In some areas of employment the work is understood as gendered by its symbols, consciousness, the way people act and interact and the work individuals have to do in their heads to create the "correct gendered persona" (Acker, 1992: 253). In the fire service this leads to society recognising it as masculine (Cockburn, 1985; 1991a; 1991b). This popular belief can lead to an acceptance that only men are suitable for certain types of jobs as institutions reproduce themselves (Lovenduski, 2005). When the public accept that there are men's jobs and women's jobs, and particularly when men's jobs are elevated above women's jobs, men gain a dividend for perpetuating this belief (Connell, 1987). This particularly benefits the men in the fire service, but the dividend extends further than that. It also benefits all men who gain, whether they like it or not, from the hegemony of masculinity (Carrigan et al., 1985). It may also benefit those female firefighters who enjoy, or are being embraced into a dominant cultural hegemony. Some would see this as false consciousness (Connell, 1987; Dworkin, 1982), others as a method of survival in which women act like men at work (Wilson, 1999).

When confronting such a powerful institutional patriarchy, where there is little thought about behaviour and a lack of reflexiveness (Martin, 2006), it is possible to see that the arrangements in the fire service are not accidental or casual but structured and stable. For example, the homosocial handing on of misogynist agendas, the Goffmanesque acting to hide any hint of the fire service as being anything other than a heroic male occupation, and the way the public largely accept this, suggests something far more complicated than a simple socialisation process that can be undone by managers or FBU leaders – particularly if firefighters are actually using these skills to disrupt equality training and forcing managers to promote good news when there is little. When these patriarchal arguments are accepted by society as common sense, then the contingency and politics around them are hidden and the way they reproduce themselves is systemic (Cockburn, 1991b: 220). But is masculinity in the fire service hegemonic?

From the data and analysis in this chapter I introduce the possibility that the image of the heroic firefighter is hegemonic. Comparative studies over time and space from the US (Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997), Australia (Lewis, 2004),

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Sweden (Ericson, 2005; 2011) and the UK (Baigent, 2001; 2004; 2010) all suggest the durability of this image; particularly by the public (see also Cooper, 1986). Whilst it appears as an international conspiracy, the idea of a collaboration between countries is discounted. Gender analysis here (Acker, 1992; Hearn, 1992; Hearn et al., 2012) would probably suggest that firemen are continuing to hold the line as they prioritise and focus gendered practices, processes, identities and symbols towards their conservative aims to be seen as a working class and masculine hero (Holt and Thompson, 2004). In doing this firemen are able to make it appear that the accomplishment of effective firefighting is conflated with the achievement of masculinity and to hide the women that were also doing this (Baigent, 2004). Entering selflessly into buildings on fire and conducting smoke diving operations is a nodal point (see Ericson, 2004) that is kept to the fore in the public's mind particularly through the images of firefighters entering the World Trade Centre as the public retreated. Even then firemen almost hid the fact that women too were firefighters at this tragedy (Baigent, 2008; Faludi, 2008; Lorber, 2002).

As part of this hegemony, firefighters are at the same time hiding and marginalising the proactive caring work that they reluctantly do to prevent fires. In these and so many other ways, firefighters avoid any suggestion that their work is feminised, which in their eyes, and potentially the public's, would lead to a loss of status and the respect that goes with this (see Baigent, 2001; Ericson, 2011). If the public ever recognises the contingency and politics at work here it would likely lead to an undoing of firemen's hegemonic project, but they do not so the hegemony is working.[3]

In hindsight it is also easy to suggest that in terms of changing hearts and minds, the actions of progressive FBU leaders over twenty years were only to unwittingly put a patch over a more entrenched problem – they helped to contain rather than stop the challenge to women. However, at the time there were no statistics to prove what was still happening. Firemen are practised at adapting to challenge, and the heightened challenge to their sexism can make harassers cleverer at doing what they do. The way men disrupt equality training is another clear example of this. From here it is only a short step to accepting the third factor in this equation, which is that the whole gambit of firefighters' considerable acting skills (involving dramaturgical loyalty, discipline, circumspection and image presentation (Lemert and Branaman, 1997) alongside "group think" (Janis, 1972) through which firefighters practice speaking with a single voice to say one thing and act differently is intact. When the eyes of the public, individual firefighters and their group all act to support the belief of the fireman as a hero despite evidence to the contrary, then this is a potential hegemony.

Final Thoughts

As we are reminded in the introduction to this book, there is a gradual transformation of the fire service in Sweden, the UK, the US, Australia and Canada

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to change the gender, ethnicity and sexuality of its staff and its purpose. What this chapter suggests is that these changes may take place but that they are hidden and are precarious, as men, who are often found to be surface-acting to appease their leaders, have not changed their beliefs and are just waiting for the opportunity to continue with their own agendas when their leaders' eyes are averted.

There is a strong argument that equality training should be research-based (Mellström, 2008) and the training in RSYD has focused on what is to follow. First, the evidence suggests that pushing so hard against a group so entrenched is hardly working. Firefighters are used to resisting – in fact their very purpose is to challenge against seemingly impossible situations where walking away is not an option. So why do attempts to change the organisation focus on changing the one issue that pulls firefighters together – firefighting and the subsequent imagery? What would happen if instead of trying to achieve gender mainstreaming and change the organisation's priorities by changing the image of the firefighter, if the tables were turned? Rather than working against the tide, if fire services once again celebrated the dividend that gives firefighters the ability to do their work,[4], is it not possible that firefighters (no longer having to resist attempts to change their image), would find the space to make their own decision that heroes who suppress fires could also be heroes that prevent them.

The next step is bigger, but if firefighters do not have to continually resist their managers' arguments that their image is changing, then there may be space for them to consider that it is the work they do, not masculinity, that provides them with a dividend. We already know that, as individuals, firefighters are less concerned about gender than when they operate as a group (Ericson, 2004). We also know that firemen can support their firewomen. So far there has not been the space for this to upset entrenched and hegemonic masculinity under pressure. If firemen are not pushed together because their belief in themselves is under threat, they may recognise that it is of little consequence if a firefighter is a man or women – their work will still be seen as special in their own eyes, that of the group and of the public (and their managers and employers).

Notes

1 Studies in the US suggest a figure of 17% Hulett, D., Bendick, M., Thomas, S. and Moccio, F. (2008a) "Enhancing Women's Inclusion in Firefighting in the USA", *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations* 8(2): 189–208; (2008b) "A National Report Card on Women in Firefighting": International Association of Women in Fire and Emergency Services.

2 Firefighting uniform

3 Hidden too are the firefighters who are gay, lesbian, bi or transsexual and who come from different ethnic backgrounds.

4 Baigent (2001) argues that it is the image of heroism and the dividend that goes with it that pushes firefighters to do the incredible work that they do. Could an unintended consequence of the project to change the fire service be that firefighters were no longer driven to do their work, with the result that they did not enter buildings that were on fire as people ran away?

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5 "Stray Dogs and Women are Prohibited in the Sentry"

On the Spatial Effects of Firefighters' Homosocial Practices

Jennie Olofsson

Introduction

Drawing on an ethnographic fieldwork of the Swedish fire service, this chapter explores homosociality among firefighters. Coined by Jean Lipman-Blumen (1976: 16), homosociality is a well-known concept in gender research. It is used to describe men's "enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex". Recent research has used homosociality to demonstrate how same-sex focused relationships between male firefighters can work to exclude women (cf. Baigent, 2005; Braedley, 2009; Ericson, 2011). Susan Braedley, for example, discusses how masculinized care within the fire service serves to extend the brotherhood among the firefighters and thus connects to institutions of homosociality. Mathias Ericson points to homosociality as part and parcel of the construction of hierarchies between men and women. Like Braedley, Ericson studies the ways in which intimacy and homosociality are linked together and also compose part of the relationships between firefighters.

In what follows, and in order to further emphasize how men's attraction to and interest in other men might debar women from entering the profession of a firefighter, this chapter specifically explores the ways in which space cuts through, and adds complexity to, homosocial practices. In doing so we can get a better understanding of what will be referred to as the masculinization processes of the profession of a firefighter, i.e., the processes by and through which firefighting activities become, and continue to be, coded masculine. Scrutiny of the firefighters' inhabitation of the fire station discloses homosocial practices, not only as discursively transient, but also as spatially contingent. The intention then, is to provide a revivified understanding of how the profession of a firefighter is open to continuous modifications.

Fire Stations as Gendered Spaces

In the paper *Fitting In: The Conflation of Fire Fighting, Male Domination and Harassment*, the British sociologist Dave Baigent (2005: 61) writes:

> The fire station where firefighters live remains a "secret garden": a place from where a powerful, high-profile group of people emerge amid a

> cacophony of lights and noise, hurry to do their work, and then return to the fire station, closing the doors firmly behind them.

Baigent's comment defines the fire station as a closed and well-protected environment to which only a few have access. Implicit in the above quote is also the fire station as the place where firefighters spend a considerable amount of time: after the mission has been accomplished, the work force returns to the fire station – where they live – something that indicates its status as a point of departure for the firefighters, spatially as well as socially. The prominence of the fire station was also evident during the latter part of my fieldwork as my informants habitually referred to the fire station as 'home', indicating that the fire station provides the backcloth to, and makes intelligible many of the daily activities of the firefighters. A more thorough outline of the particular assignments of my informants will be delineated below. For now, suffice it to say that the stand-by time for a firefighter, i.e., the time spent at the fire station, comprises between 97–98% of the total working time, at least in the northern parts of Sweden. Fire stations then, are crucial to the understanding of the gendered implications of firefighting activities, and, in relation to the purpose of this chapter, the homosocial practices of my informants.

Before outlining the theoretical backdrop, the two following paragraphs briefly discuss the gendered position of a researcher. During my fieldwork, I experienced a sense of double exclusion: as a researcher and as a woman. In the course of my shadowing, the habitual feeling of alienation was followed by a striking awareness of myself as gendered, possibly because my informants were all men. During the first meeting with one of the shifts in Bodö, for example, a short briefing took place in which I was taught how to act in times of turnouts. When the bell rings, the firefighters have ninety seconds to get dressed and approach the fire engines, and since my intention was to observe the daily activities of the operational workforce I too had to adjust my schedule to these rules. No exceptions were made for night shifts: as the bell rang, the respective rooms lit up, and together with the members of the shifts I descended the stairs and, still half asleep, managed to put my clothes on. As the members of the shift explained these routines, one of my informants ultimately turned toward me and laughed: "Now, you really have to put on your make-up quickly". Clearly, the comment had gendered implications, and unsure of how to reply, I smiled back. At the same time, I could not help but wonder if such blatant bantering would have taken place had I been a man.

The double exclusion pervaded the entire fieldwork and affected the collection of material. It also took a spatial turn, something that will be discussed further below. For now, it is worth noting that while my experience of a double estrangement served to distance me from the field, it also facilitated a critical understanding of the activities of my informants. Drawing on the work of Elspeth Probyn (1993: 83), "emotions cannot take the place of theory, [but they] can point us in certain critical directions". Through this, "we can technologize gendered selves and put them to work within a theoretical and critical agenda" (1993: 109).

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Theoretical Backdrop

Recent research in gender studies, particularly in the Swedish context, has engaged extensively with the gendered implications of firefighting activities and more specifically, its male connotations (cf. Ericson, 2004; 2011; Glans and Rother, 2007; Mellström, 2008; 2010; Olofsson, 2009; 2011; 2012). I have already mentioned Mathias Ericson and his outline of the female absence in the Swedish fire service as intimately linked to homosociality. In doing so focus has been on the ways in which constructions of masculinity in the profession of a firefighter are related to specific forms of community among men (Ericson, 2011: 175). In addition, projects within the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (SCCA) have been initiated to resolve the inequalities within the local fire brigades in Sweden. Despite intensified measures, the link between men and the occupation of firefighting activities survives, and this rather sad state of affairs conforms to many of the previous studies on firefighters in America and Britain. In the study *Real Heat: Gender and Race in the Urban Fire Service* (1997), for example, Carol Chetkovich investigates the workplace integration within the Oakland Fire Department. The professional fire service, Chetkovich (1997: 8) concludes, "has been predominantly white and entirely male for most of its history". Baigent (2005: 45–47) too argues that "the work of fire fighting is extremely masculinised", to the extent that the accomplishment of effective firefighting is conflated with the achievement of masculinity. Robert S. McCarl's (1985) ethnographic study of the District of Colombia Firefighters' Association provides another example of both race and gender segregation within the fire service. McCarl's study also indicates how the differences of these segregating practices are manifested. While "Segregated masks and beds were [. . .] maintained for a while as evidence of a strong racist response to the introduction of blacks into the fire service" (1985: 102), "[t]he men in the fire service, white and black, are dubious about the ability of women to physically handle the job" (1985: 108).

The works of Chetkovich, Baigent and McCarl are important in order to understand how same-sex focused relations within the fire service also work to exclude women. Adding to their understanding of the notion of space, the subsequent section presents the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991), with the intention to demonstrate some of the ways in which the occupation of space is subjected to frequent negotiations, and more specifically how homosociality and space affect, and are reversely affected by, each other. While Lefebvre does not mention homosociality in his study (let alone gender), his dismissal of space as a "passive locus of social relations" (1991: 11) requires an understanding of the ways in which space is part of social production, something that equally points toward gendered aspects. For instance, one can note that men and women are expected, encouraged and sometimes even obliged to reside in different spaces, simply because of their gendered belonging. Public restrooms are one example of this. In the now classic study, *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991: 35) notes that "all 'subjects' are situated in a space in which they must either

recognize themselves or lose themselves, a space which they may both enjoy and modify". Lefevbre's remark discloses the reciprocity between space and human activities: in as much as subjects are situated in space, they actively shape and refine that very space. In the case of public rest rooms, it is possible for women to frequent men's restrooms (although this act is most likely to be followed by social stigmatization). The production of space then, is part and parcel of continuous power struggles, and in order to illustrate this, Lefebvre coins the term the spatial code to illustrate the ways in which terms of everyday discourse "correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute" (Lefebvre, 1991: 16). Lefebvre's proposal is intriguing as it takes into account the unremitting co-constitution of activities and space. As activities are rendered adequate or fail to make sense only in relation to a particular spatial setting, Lefebvre's study encourages us to think about the ways in which homosocial practices of firefighters are made intelligible in relation to the space where they occur, in this case the fire station.

Conforming to the work of Lefebvre, recent research has investigated the relation between homosociality and space. Ruth Barcan (2005: 11), for example, explores men's public toilets as gendered spaces that "tacitly divide people into categories". Barcan shows that "men's toilets are one site where the complexities of male-male relations are brought forcefully and corporeally into play" (2005: 13). This occurs through competition as well as bonding. Both competition and bonding are based on the same-sex focused relations that characterize homosocial practices. As such, they also contribute to defining spaces as masculine. Like Barcan (2005: 7f), who explores men's public toilets as a space "where masculinity is defined, policed and struggled over", Mara Viveros Vigoya (2001) acknowledges space as an important factor when it comes to cultivation of homosocial practices. Examining recent literature that has focused on Latin American men as engendered actors, Vigoya (2001: 248) notes that spaces exclusively populated by men inevitably bring forth homosocial practices. While women have entered cafés, bars, places of recreation and sport, workshops and factories – spaces traditionally regarded as masculine – "there has been a tendency to reproduce relations grounded in hegemonic masculinity, that is, to ignore or subordinate women" (2001: 251). In this way, male socialization and homosocial activities tend to proceed, despite (or maybe because of) the presence of women. This is to a large extent the result of the masculinization of spaces such as cafés, bars and factories.

The accounts of Barcan and Vigoya provide a rich breeding ground for the understanding of the ways in which the homosocial practices of my informants affect and are reversely affected by the fire station. Similar to men's public toilets, the fire station "is at once mundane and complex" (Barcan, 2005: 7), mainly due to is status as a gendered space. As women have entered the profession of a firefighter, the same-sex focused relations that characterize the bonds between firefighters have both been disrupted and cemented. The simultaneous disruption and cementation is, as will be shown below, enacted and negotiated on a daily basis and, more importantly, within the spaces of the fire station. Drawing

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on the work of Lefebvre, as well as the accounts of Barcan and Vigoya, fire stations are frequently negotiated areas. In this particular case, the indication is that the homosocial activities that take place within fire stations, however diverse, serve to distance the firefighters from women. In the long run, this is part of the masculinization process of the firefighter profession.

Methods and Material

Empirically, this chapter draws upon ethnographic fieldwork that was intermittently conducted in two towns in the northern parts of Sweden. From the autumn of 2008 until the late spring of 2009, I carried out the first part of the fieldwork as I observed the weekly gatherings of approximately ten retired firefighters, all men. My informants during this period, referred to as the 'veterans'[1] of the local fire brigade of Sundö,[2] met in the basement of the fire station, where they repaired old trucks and fire engines, arranged previously handled instruments on shelves and prepared for computational systematization of the equipment. Most of the retired firefighters arrived at the fire station just before eight o'clock in the morning, and started by drinking coffee on every occasion. As my informants mainly occupied the basement of the local fire station, they could conveniently reach the car park where they pursued many of their activities. They also had access to some of the storage rooms in the basement in which they accumulated and maintained discarded tools and instruments. No formal agenda was set for these encounters, which allowed the informants to come and go as they wanted, but I estimate that we spent three to four hours at the fire station on a weekly basis. A total number of thirteen visits took place, and after each visit, time was spent writing the field notes and summarizing the experiences. Doing so helped me formulate subsequent questions and also identify explicit, recurring themes.

During the coffee breaks I was welcome to a place at the table, and my informants took turns in telling me anecdotes from their previous careers. Most often, two or more stories were told concurrently, which made it rather difficult to decipher the courses of events. The cheerful atmosphere did little to ease this dilemma. Stories were told and retold, more details were added and particular parts dismissed as my informants engaged in acts of commemoration (Olofsson, 2011). My position, possibly both as an outsider and as a woman, spurred detailed accounts: the assembled men took time to explain technical terms and they also engaged in extensive demonstrations of the old fire engines and the collection of equipment, something that for my part resulted in further inquiries. Anders, one of the oldest members among the veterans, repetitively expressed that he was pleased to see that I was interested, but I failed to see whether his satisfaction was because of my position as an outsider or as a woman.

The second part of my fieldwork was carried out in the year of 2011 in another small town: Bodö. During this time I investigated the daily work of approximately twenty-four active firefighters, all men. A total number of

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fourteen visits were conducted in which I had the opportunity to shadow four shifts, each of which comprised five firefighters plus an incident commander. In addition to the twenty-four firefighters that represented the ordinary number of personnel, I encountered three stand-ins. All of my informants were men and I estimate that the average age was between thirty-five and forty years. The different shifts relieved each other in accordance with a rolling schedule, which means that the fire station was manned twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. The working hours during the weekdays ranged between 8 am to 6 pm or between 6 pm to 8 am the following day, and on weekends the firefighters worked twenty-four hours at a stretch, from 8 am to 8 am the following day. The two latter turns required sleeping accommodation, and although on duty, my informants each had one room for rest and relaxation. As I focused on the activities of the operative force, managerial efforts were made to facilitate my fieldwork: in times of turn-outs, for example, I was welcome to accompany my informants in the turntable ladder truck, and when attending night shifts, the rest and relaxation room of the stand-ins was at my disposal.

I mentioned above that the stand-by time for a firefighter comprises between 97–98% of the total working time, at least in the northern parts of Sweden. The fire station of Bodö was no exception to this. An approximate 2% of the working time at the fire service of Bodö was composed of turn-outs (this corresponds to 500 alarms per year, or 1.3 alarms per day), which means that a considerable amount of time was spent at the fire station. My informants then engaged in equipment maintenance, refilled the used fire extinguishers and cleaned common areas of the fire station, such as the depot, the laundry room and the locker rooms. In addition to the shared obligations, one person from each team assumed the responsibility for washing and repairing the hoses. Apart from this, and probably because it is regarded as the very nature of the profession of a firefighter, my informants spent a considerable amount of time engaging in physical exercises such as floorball or weight lifting. During evenings, weekends and late afternoons, time was also spent watching TV and movies.

The following sections give three empirical examples of how the masculinized spaces of the fire station – the entrance, the locker room and the kitchen – cut through, and added complexity to the homosocial practices of my informants. The first example draws on my observations of the veterans of the fire brigade of Sundö and the latter two examples draw on my fieldwork studies at the fire brigade of Bodö. These examples are intended to shed new light on the same-sex focused relation generated by masculinized space and the subsequent exclusion of women.

Stray Dogs and Women

Visiting the weekly gatherings of my informants in Sundö, the staircase was one of the ways through which I could gain access to the basement. Upon walking down the stairs I passed an exhibition case that boasted a 3D model of the old fire station. This model was very detailed and more than once I was

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cordially instructed by my informants to stop and contemplate the delicate work. On one occasion Anders pointed toward the two miniature benches that were placed just outside the entrance, and told me that these seats were popular retreats among the members of the active workforce at that time. From this position the firefighters had a great view, not only of the south harbor of Sundö, but also of the town's female inhabitants. "Since we did not have a TV, we simply surveyed the passing women", Anders laughed, whereupon he smilingly conceded that the women did not always approve of this enterprise: "they were sensitive about these benches, to the extent that they, rather than pass by, took the long route around the fire station". Overhearing our conversation, Torgny, another informant interposed that he believed that many women intentionally flaunted themselves as they passed the old fire station because of the men looking at them.

Saying this, the favorite past times of my informants were componential to the masculinization processes of the profession of a firefighter. These activities also served to reinforce the profession of firefighter as inherently male. Insofar as the women who passed by outside the old fire station were admissible, they were crudely rejected as dwellers inside this building. Consider for instance the written message on one of the signs in the fire station:

> "Stray dogs and women are prohibited in the sentry."

Equated to stray dogs (leashed dogs must apparently have been admissible), women – much approved of as objects to admire from a distance – were at the same time denied entry to the sentry, which in turn reinforced the connection not only between men and firefighting activities, but also between men and the spatial settings of the old fire station. The male bonding activities in which women were disqualified, not only as firefighters, but more importantly as women, can thus be seen as a response to the outsiders, something that in turn reinforced the team spirit. Put differently, the approval of the benches that were placed outside the entrances of the old fire station served to strengthen the firefighter profession as inherently male. Also, as women were denied entry to the sentry, the connection, not only between men and firefighting activities, but also between men and the spatial settings of the old fire station, was reinforced. Homosociality then emerged and was sustained through my informants' shared object of interest, i.e., the women passing by, as well as their simultaneous exclusion of women in the sentry.

Locker Rooms and Acts of Commemoration

The above example shows that the homosocial practices of my informants (at least in the beginning of the 20th century) emerged in close intermingling with the spaces provided by the fire station. Although the contemporary arrangements of the fire service in Sweden might seem relieved from excluding practice comparable to the one above, my observations revealed a slightly

different picture. As opposed to its predecessor, the newly inaugurated fire station of Bodö had a separate locker room for women. The initiative to provide separate locker rooms for women in fire stations in Sweden is a result of an increasing awareness of the importance of gender equality in the Swedish fire brigade. Talking to representatives of SCCA, who worked to increase the number of female firefighters, many of them mentioned the importance of separate locker rooms. Separate locker rooms then, became a measurement of gender equality. As a means of comparison, I was often told of deterring examples of female firefighters who, when they started their career, had to change clothes in the corridors of the fire station, with suspended curtains as the only privacy screen. Saying this, separate locker rooms brought forth new dilemmas, as reflected in the latter part of my fieldwork at least. After exercising, my informants withdrew to the men's locker room where they changed clothes, showered and took a sauna. As a woman, I did not have access to this particular space, something that equally prevented me from gaining access to the comments and discussions, but also the physical positioning of my informants. Hence, while providing separate locker rooms for female firefighters is a most welcome initiative from a gender equality perspective, it is noteworthy that this initiative also reaffirms sexual difference. Similar to the ways in which "[m]en's toilets [. . .] define and police masculinity because they exclude women" (Barcan, 2005: 14), separate locker rooms for men and women indicate a gendered spatial segregation. In agreement with Barcan, I note that sharing locker rooms might actually facilitate the integration of female firefighters, something that in turn serves to challenge homosocial practices.

The ultimate example is interesting as it shows how the physical space of the fire station in Bodö, and more specifically the shared kitchen, interrelates with the space showed on one of the displays. This was mainly due to the firefighters' co-orientation toward, as well as their shared interest in the display. The homosocial practices of my informants, then, were simultaneously performed and viewed.

During one of my first visits to the fire station of Bodö, I noticed a display that was mounted on the wall in the common kitchen area. Repeatedly, and when leaving the kitchen, I passed this display. It presented a continuous slide show of pictures taken of the firefighters as they engaged in sport activities, such as skiing, golfing and driving go-carts, as well as pictures taken at parties, barbecues and other social gatherings. From time to time, I also noted that my informants uploaded new pictures to the slide show, using an USB stick. This triggered comments, laughter and reminiscences among the members of the work force who currently resided in the kitchen. The slide show then, became part of the homosocial practices of my informants, apparently because no women featured in the pictures, but above all, as became clear, because they uploaded pictures in the presence of their colleagues. To a great extent, this seemed to be a social act as they often started to upload the pictures in front of their colleagues during lunches and coffee breaks in particular. This spurred homosocial practices as my informants co-oriented toward the display, forming a semi-circle that sometimes included moving the chairs. Little or no room was

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left to explain the scenarios in the pictures, let alone to make space for me. As a researcher and a woman I sensed a double exclusion: skiing, golfing and driving go-carts seemed to be male activities exclusively. In addition, my informants' spatial occupation, in this case their positioning when looking at the slide show and their joint reminiscences, served to effectively shut me out.

In his study of intimacy and fellowship among firefighters, Ericson (2011: 83f) notes that the rooms in the fire station: the common sauna and living room as well as the individual rest and relaxation rooms, function to reinforce the intimate and familiar atmosphere that is said to characterize the profession of a firefighter. In line with Ericson's work, the continuous slide show was an important part of making the fire station of Bodö homelike as it pointed toward the intimate and familiar atmosphere between my informants. As such, the notion of intimacy and familiarity – conveyed through the loop of pictures – served to reinforce both the homosocial bonds between my informants and the home-likeness of their spatial location. Just as pictures of family members form a standard set-up in any home, the slide show was an important means in thinking about the fire station in terms of 'home'.

Concluding Remarks

Seeking to enlarge upon the masculinization processes of the profession of a firefighter, i.e., the processes by and through which firefighting activities become, and continue to be, masculine, this chapter has explored the ways in which space cuts through, and adds complexity to homosocial practices. Scrutiny of the firefighters' inhabitation of the fire station discloses homosocial practices, not only as discursively transient, but also as spatially contingent, something that adds to previous research investigating homosociality as part and parcel of the construction of hierarchies between men and women, a spatial turn.

In her study of men's public toilets, Barcan notes that "[a]rchitecture can make cultural separations concrete, literally" (Barcan, 2005: 10), a comment that is equally relevant to the purposes of this study. During my fieldwork it was clear that space served to distance the firefighters from women, and thus also sustained the masculinization processes of the profession of a firefighter. For example, while the women who passed outside the old fire station of Sundö were legitimized (as objects of the male gaze), they were crudely dismissed as dwellers within the sentry of this building. Also, the separate locker rooms of the fire station of Bodö prevented me from gaining access to the comments and discussions of my informants. Space then, is explicitly gendered and, in this case, also componential to the homosocial practices of my informants. In the long run, this helped to retain the profession of a firefighter as inherently male. The institutional ordering of the tight bonds among the retired firefighters of the fire brigade of Sundö as well as between the active firefighters in Bodö was thus, to a large extent, accomplished by and through the exclusion of women. Saying this, while "[t]he culture of the fire service [has] been defined largely by white men" (Chetkovich, 1997: 59), homosocial practices are far from set in stone, but contingent upon the spaces where they occur.

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Notes

1 Upon retiring from the profession as a firefighter in Sundö, or actually from the age of fifty, it is possible to join the local community of retired firefighters. Referred to as 'the veterans of the fire brigade', the assembly serves to encourage (and reinforce) the comradeship. During my fieldwork, the community had around 100 members, although the vast majority were absent from the weekly gatherings.
2 In order to retain the privacy of my informants, all the names are altered.

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6 Unpacking the Black Box of IDA

Standardisation and Disappearing Gender

Katherine Harrison

> Instead of black boxing the technical aspects of science and then looking for social influences and biases, we realised (. . .) how much easier it was to be there before the box closes and becomes all black.
>
> (Latour, 1987: 21)

This chapter unpacks the contemporary 'black box' of a rescue services accident database by focusing on the processes of simplification, categorisation and 'tidying-up' that take place when processing data from emergency incidents. As such, I take a critical perspective on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the role that they play in mediating and sharing information between different stakeholders, and I do this here within the particular context of a gender equality project. In this chapter I present findings from a study of a web-based service known as IDA, which was designed to share information on accidents in Sweden with the aim of providing reliable information on risk and safety to the public, businesses and municipal organisations. IDA is a means of publishing online information about accidents that has previously been collected, processed and stored in a large, complex database.

This chapter thus seeks to contribute to and combine insights from two significant bodies of work: i) that concerning gender and ICTs (for example, Archibald et al., 2005; Berg, 1998; Gansmo et al., 2003; Green et al., 1993), and ii) that focusing on gender in the rescue services (please see the Introduction to this volume for an overview). I want to highlight the gender work that takes place around ICTs by examining how standardisation and simplification work within a particular organisation to make gender less visible.

I draw on feminist science and technology studies and Actor-Network-Theory-based approaches to explore how notions of gender are negotiated in this national database and accompanying web interface. In his 1987 book, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society,* Bruno Latour describes artefacts (meaning both facts and tangible objects) as 'black boxes'. Using this term, Latour highlighted how the messiness of artefacts' creation stories and their contingency are obscured by the objectivity and official narratives of science; the creation of these artefacts comes to appear natural or obvious.

This can make it difficult to scrutinise these artefacts in order to understand the social, political, historical or other forces which played a role in their creation. More recently, Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star have drawn particular attention to the processes of 'sorting out' that take place in the creation of artefacts, in which "(e)ach standard and each category valorises some point of view and silences another" (2000: 5).

The rescue services are not alone in their increasing use of ICTs. Michel Callon identifies tools such as this as being increasingly important as a means of information management within all organisations (Callon, 2002). Research on the effects and adoption of ICTs within organisations has covered a wide range of industries, from construction (Adriaanse et al., 2010) to healthcare (Swinglehurst et al., 2010) to land surveying (Sundin, 1998). This study of the rescue services thus also aims to contribute to this body of literature concerning organisations and technology, and, as in the case of Sundin's work on the Swedish National Survey, to consider in particular the relationship between organisations, technology and gender. In the following sections, I will provide some background on the organisation, the ICT in question and the theoretical frameworks underpinning this project as a whole, before presenting findings from fieldwork.

MSB and IDA

This study was part of a wider research project for Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap (MSB) (in English Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency) titled "Gender, Rescue Services and Organisation" (GRO), which aimed to engage actively with MSB and its employees in working towards building a more gender-equal organisation. This particular part of the project focused on ICTs used by the rescue services. In Sweden, the local fire and rescue services are organised and run by the local municipalities. The rescue service duties are both operational work in response to emergencies and emergency preparation work. At the national level, a government agency exists, MSB, with duties related to emergency prevention, preparedness and response in case of emergencies:

> The task of the MSB is to enhance and support societal capacities for preparedness for and prevention of emergencies and crises. When one does occur, we support the stakeholders involved by taking the right measures to control the situation.
>
> ("About MSB", MSB website)

IDA was developed with input from eleven municipal emergency services across Sweden, is now maintained by MSB and is intended to provide information to the general public, municipal organisations and businesses. As such, IDA forms a bridge between MSB, the municipalities and the public and plays an

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important role in supplying information designed to aid emergency prevention and risk assessment, issues which are becoming increasingly important in the work of the municipal emergency services.

The rescue services is a complex organisation functioning on many levels, and with a wide range of responsibilities. IDA is the result of cooperation and information sharing between a number of different groups, a cooperation made possible by developments in information management and distribution via ICTs. IDA is the public face of the information on accidents and safety gathered by MSB, their attempt to make sense of the enormous amount of data and complex calculations required to support emergency planning and preparedness within the municipalities. However, I also suggest that IDA is a 'black box', within which are a number of processes and translations of data, each stage of which is interwoven with organizational and personal dynamics as well as negotiations with the material constraints of the technology. In the following sections I expand on the concept of the black box, and relate this to IDA, before showing how standardisation and transposition of data take place.

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Thinking Tools

The premise of this study is that the design and use of an ICT system involves certain choices about what information to include or exclude, and also how to process this information. These choices are shaped not only by explicit and implicit user representations (Akrich, 1992), but also by the material capabilities of the technologies available at that time. The material capabilities of technologies shape what information can be captured, processed and distributed, and subsequently shape knowledge production and dominant ways of understanding the world (Kittler, 1997). Similarly, user representations contain ideas about not only what designers think or know from research about the users, but also assumptions and notions such as socio-historically contingent beliefs about gender. The information that is processed by a system is shaped by these beliefs and capabilities, with important consequences for the future uses of that information. These choices take place in both the development and use of the technology, but are not always visible to the user.

In *Science in Action*, Bruno Latour suggests that technologies or facts can become 'black boxes', self-contained, opaque entities apparently without history or controversy (1987). This can make it difficult to examine critically a technology. It can be hard to imagine how user representations or material capabilities shaped a technology when one is standing in front of the finished product. IDA is a website that presents data about accidents to the public, municipalities and other agencies. The developers have spent time and effort making the user interface simple and easy to use. As a consequence of this, the processing of the data that takes place after a phone call to the emergency services – but before the neat presentation of statistics – is 'hidden' from the user. In this sense, I find it useful to think of IDA as a kind of black box (see Figure 6.1).

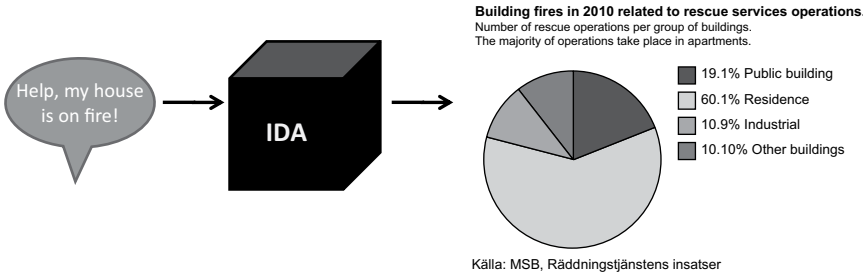

Figure 6.1 IDA as a 'black box'

We have some idea of the kind of data being put into the box (names, addresses, type of accident) and we can see the results (numbers of incidents organised by year/region/type), but the processing is hidden. By the time the data appears on the IDA website, it is impervious, resistant to critique or unpicking. Thus, IDA represents a 'black box'.

I am trying to open this black box in order to examine critically how gender is being done in this part of the rescue services. As such, this chapter works with the idea of gender as a set of actions or practices, as something that is 'done' in everyday interactions (Acker, 1990; Butler, 1990; West and Zimmerman, 1987). This project was concerned with what and how gender norms are being done in the less examined, but increasingly important, aspect of rescue services work that is related to ICTs.

Methods and Methodology

In order to unpack the black box of IDA and take a critical gender perspective on it, I have – inspired by Latour – been trying to "be there before the box closes and becomes all black" (Latour, 1987: 21). In order to think more critically about these boxes, Latour suggests following the people who make knowledge and technical artefacts as they go through the process of making the 'final', cold object, i.e., to follow them when the artefact is being designed or the knowledge tested and validated. With this approach in mind, I identified two ways of thinking about unpacking the black box that is IDA. First, to follow the historical development, from the standardisation of the paper incident report form to the current process of uploading data to MSB via computer (Harrison, 2013). Second, to follow how the information moves from initial emergency call to public presentation via the IDA website. It is this second way which forms the focus of this chapter.[1]

In 2011 I visited several fire stations, an emergency response centre and the MSB headquarters in Sweden, meeting people who work with IDA in different ways. This included representatives from municipal rescue services, SOS Alarm (the agency that responds to emergency phone calls) and MSB itself.[2] The representatives from the municipal rescue services and SOS Alarm provide the

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data that populates the database; they do the 'everyday' work of capturing the basic information about an incident which is then processed at MSB. The project participants from MSB, in contrast, have been involved in the development of the database and web interface from the start, and their work focuses more on revising the database itself or the interface. They also connect with external stakeholders in the municipalities and the wider rescue services organisation.

All of my meetings took the form of semi-structured conversations held mostly at the participants' work places (with the exception of one that took place at Linköping University). The conversations lasted between one and three hours and all were recorded. The purpose of the conversations was to learn about how information was gathered, processed and moved from one place to another before finally being presented on IDA, as well as to learn about how and why the system was developed, and to discuss possible gender perspectives on the system. Participants were identified through a 'snowball' method, with one participant recommending another for their expertise or experience of another part of the process. Following initial email contact, I met with the participants face to face. With the exception of one meeting, all were conducted in Swedish.[3] The material from the conversations was supplemented by an observation in the operations room of an emergency response call centre and various documentation (including previous versions of incident reports, the recent Civil Protection Law and internal reports concerning the development of IDA).

Although I had some ideas about how gender might appear in relation to IDA, I chose to organise my fieldwork as a process of having exploratory conversations with participants (rather than conducting interviews), in order to avoid situating myself as an 'expert' on gender and ICTs in the rescue services. Being aware of a longstanding ambivalence about women as firefighters, I wished to avoid framing gender questions as a problem which I – as an outsider to the organisation – was there to solve. Rather, I hoped that a more equal dynamic between myself and my participants – me asking about IDA and them asking about my work – would produce open, relaxed discussions from which a broader awareness of gender issues in the organisation might emerge. This is particularly important because the widespread awareness of gender issues in relation, say, to the number of firefighters, does not extend to the ICTs, which have more recently been introduced to the organisation. Thus, my aim was primarily to raise awareness that there are also gender issues to be considered in relation to ICTs.

Empirical Material

IDA presents information not only gathered from the municipal fire and rescue services, but also from other agencies such as Trafikverket (the Swedish Transport Administration). Due to reasons of space, this chapter will focus solely on the information gathered from municipal fire and rescue services and, as noted earlier, this chapter discusses only my attempts to follow the information as it

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moves from emergency phone call to fire station to incident report to MSB to IDA, rather than taking an historical perspective on the development.

By meeting with different people who manage the information at different stages of the process, I was able to get a clear idea of how the information moves. Drawing on this material, I created Figure 6.2 showing the information flow.

In many cases, the first stage of the process is a phone call to SOS Alarm (the agency who answers emergency phone calls), who then pass on the information about the emergency to the municipal fire and rescue services who attend the emergency. After the incident, a report is produced by the watch leader, which is then – together with all the other incident reports from the same month – uploaded as one large file to MSB by a specially designated person in the fire station. At this stage the data is checked, processed and fed into a database. This database, and many others like it, provides the information which is then cleaned, simplified and selected to appear in the IDA web interface.

As a member of the public, business owner or employee of a municipal agency, the IDA website offers information which may be useful when doing the required safety and emergency planning and budgeting. The interface has been designed to make it as easy as possible for non-specialists to use and for them to find the information that they need. In order to do this, the source of the data and the processing methods through which it is put before appearing on the website 'disappear' from public view into the black box. In the following sections, I examine two aspects of this: standardisation and transposition/filtering.

Standardisation

In order to develop a national database and information resource, it is necessary to agree what information will be supplied, to whom and how; in other words, smooth running of the database is based on standardisation of data delivery and processing. In this case, the process of developing what was to become the IDA site started with a demand for statistics:

> We were getting questions from journalists and it was taking us a long time to process them and it was taking a long time to work with equality so we invested in a tool that allows you to look at numbers in a database and analyse them very quickly. And then, that tool . . . the suppliers of that tool developed a web interface . . . we could put certain statistics on the web. Parallel with that realisation, we were working with performance indicators. . . .
>
> (Participant 1)

A demand for statistical information about the rescue services from both external groups (journalists) and internal ones (managers working with performance objectives) revealed a need for the efficient collection, processing and

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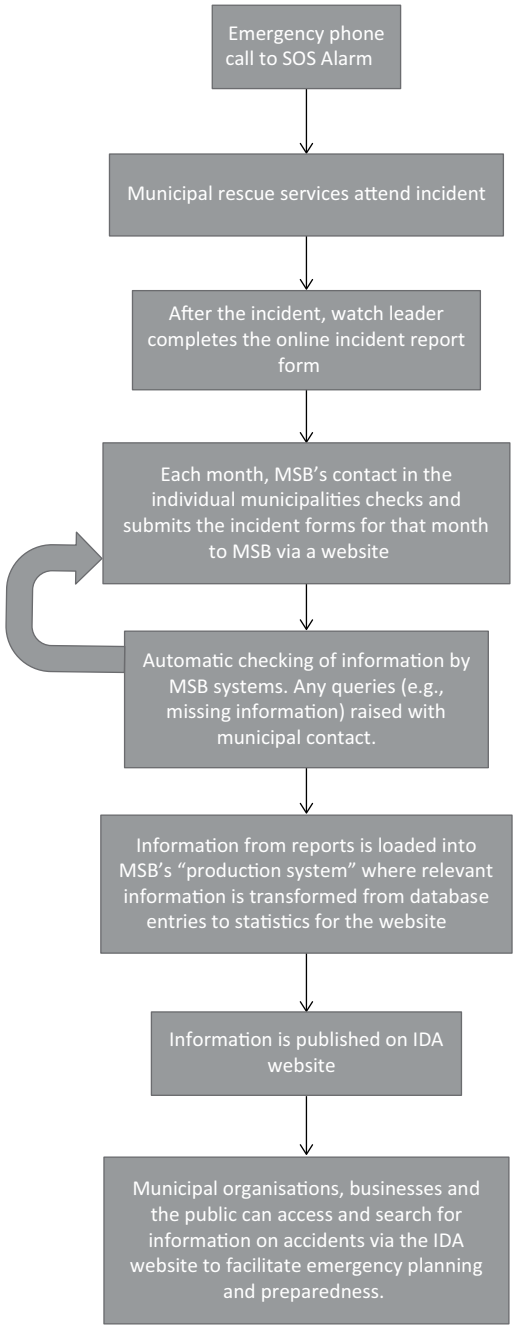

Figure 6.2 Information flow

publication of accident data. This resulted in the creation of a working group tasked with designing the system and addressing the ambitious goal to

> Create a web-based information system to be used to support the planning, monitoring and evaluation of protection against accidents in municipalities, county councils and national authorities. The system should also aim to increase the engagement of citizens by providing follow-up information.
> (Sjölander, 2008: 3)

The service thus required a simple, user-friendly web interface fed by a database that could manage both an information flow and a surrounding organisational structure characterised by complexity. The creation of such a database demanded a standardised information collection procedure in order to facilitate automated processing of the data. The foundations for this had been put in place a few years previously in the form of a separate project to standardise the incident report form so that all municipal rescue services were supplying the same information in the same way. The development of the database (and web interface) thus built on this initiative to create a system for gathering and processing incident report forms quickly and easily. It also marks an important organisational development by requiring all incident data to be reported centrally following a standardised procedure. However, as I discuss in the following sections, the data is also subject to additional procedures in terms of transposing it from one format to another and selecting what should be published on the IDA site.

Transposition and Filtering

During fieldwork, I was able to follow the movement of the incident report information and to learn how it was processed. The collected information goes through a number of stages, including changes to both the material format of the information and the content. In this section, I will consider first the transposition of information from one material format to another. Following that, I will discuss the filtering of information that is reflected in changes to the content.

In discussing changes in material format, I draw on the work of media theorist, Friedrich Kittler, who argues for "transposition" rather than "translation" when following changes in media. He writes:

> A medium is a medium is a medium. Therefore it cannot be translated. To transfer messages from one medium to another always involves reshaping them to confirm to new standards and materials.
> (1990: 265)

Kittler argues that because of the differing limitations and possibilities contained within different media, the movement of information from one medium

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to another requires a transposition rather than a translation. This is to say that the movement of information from one medium to another is a direct, technical exchange (1990: 265). Translation, by contrast, does not involve this direct, piece by piece, exchange, but rather in conveying the overall sense or meaning.

The changes in material format seen in the IDA system can thus be considered as transpositions of the material. Any changes to the information are determined solely by the material limitations of the technology itself. The phone call from the member of the public to SOS Alarm, for example, shows a transposition of information from phone to computer. The information sent from SOS Alarm goes to the fire station system, but also sometimes directly to the GPS units in the fire trucks – yet another transposition of the information. It can take only a few minutes from phone call to dispatch of the fire trucks, during which time the information goes from voice to typed text into a computer to a string of figures in a GPS unit. These are direct exchanges of information transposed through various ICTs. ICTs thus facilitate inter- and intra- organisational information flow and directly address part of the MSB mission statement of supporting stakeholders.

In contrast, the changes in content can be considered as filtering. At each stage of the process what is considered to be the most pertinent information is filtered out and captured, depending on the user and producer of the information as well as the type of technology being used to collect and distribute the information (Akrich, 1992). The incident report form, for example, contains the exact timings of an incident, including what time it was reported, when the rescue services arrived and left the scene, etc. This is useful information for the rescue services (for example, to help monitor their own response times), but this information is not presented on the IDA website because it is considered to be less relevant for municipal organisations or businesses.

Filtering and transposition occurs throughout the process, and the two are often entangled in ways which show intersecting material limitations and user representations. Later in the process, for example, the incident reports are received and processed by MSB. The data in these forms appear in IDA as both summary versions of the data, but also as more interactive webpages where a user can select the variables for comparison, which IDA will then run and present. The number of variables available for selection is determined by the system – the program itself has limits to how much data it can handle and cross reference (a material limitation). However, the number of variables available for selection in IDA is significantly fewer than are captured on the original incident forms. The variables that are available for selection on IDA are also the result of a number of decisions by the project team about what information is most important. These decisions are made within organisational contexts as well as political ones and personal preconceptions about who and how IDA is used (user representations). Whilst these variables can be changed, this is not an uncomplicated process, requiring the team to backtrack to the production systems and run new queries on the database to extract the relevant information, which is then plugged into IDA. This process can take up to half a day, so although it is hypothetically possible to do, it rarely happens.

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Both transposition and filtering reduce the amount of information and aim to produce a standardised model for describing incidents by removing excess or surplus meanings. This removal of excess or surplus meaning, or 'white noise', is a familiar modern phenomenon (Kittler, 1990: 271). Contemporary media endeavour to remove all traces of white noise, often for the sake of a clearer transmission of the message proper. Our demand for clarity can be seen in more pixels, bigger, sharper screens and the spread of digitisation generally. Within organisational contexts, this translates into a demand for standardisation in order to facilitate easier information sharing, faster data processing and manipulation. In the case of the rescue services, the last twenty years has seen a move from a variety of paper-based reporting forms devised and appropriated by different regional rescue services in Sweden to a single, standardised, national online form.

Increased routinisation and standardisation not only promise a crisper message, they also offer some kind of guarantee of consistent quality of the information (Becker, 2004). Procedures, practices and forms create a kind of contract between different stakeholders in these organisational contexts, guaranteeing a minimum level of information or service to be provided. In the case of the rescue services, the incident report form acts as a kind of contract between the local rescue services and the national agency. This contract normalises their relationship (Garfinkel, 1967: 203) by proscribing what and how information should be recorded about each incident and shared with the national agency. Use of ICTs has been central to this process and is likely to dominate future models for information collection and dissemination within the rescue services. Collection of such information contributes to the broader organisational shift towards more proactive rescue services by providing reliable data with which to predict future emergency service needs or to identify opportunities for education and preventative work with local communities.

The reporting process is also being increasingly automated through automatic uploads and checking of data. Human intervention is apparently decreasing while the focus remains squarely on increasing simplification of the web interface itself. Increased automation and simplification gives the impression (even if not the end result) of a reduction in 'white noise'. The information is protected by technology and rigorous standardisation from human error, while the website is tailored to present only 'relevant' information to the audience. In the following section, I look at how these technologised controls of information contribute to the apparent objectivity and gender-neutrality of the process through the trope of standardisation.

Gender

As I have noted elsewhere (Harrison, 2013), there is a general awareness within the rescue services of a gender imbalance in terms of the number of female firefighters. Not only are female firefighters numerically few, there is also a well-documented relationship between masculinity and technology within the

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rescue services. This awareness of particular gender norms and stereotypes was openly discussed by participants during my fieldwork, but primarily in connection with the more physical technologies of firefighting such as using hoses and ladders. None of the participants in my study were unhelpful or resistant to discussing and reflecting upon gender issues within the rescue services. However, there was a lack of awareness about how gender might intersect with ICTs in this particular context. Participants commented, for example:

> For me, gender hasn't influenced any of this. . . . It's a non-question.
> (Participant 1)

> It relates more to education and the position you have than to gender.
> (Participant 2 talking about which factors determine ease of using the system)

> I haven't thought about IDA and gender. . . . For us it is a database, with facts, statistics.
> (Participant 3)

This last comment exemplifies Latour's black box argument by showing how difficult it can be to think critically about an artefact when it is in use. Here the black box is closed to the participant and a powerful impression of objectivity ('with facts, statistics') works to decontextualise the use and development of IDA.

The increasing technologisation (and accompanying standardisation) of the rescue services, as exemplified in IDA, promises decreased chances of human error in emergency preparedness, but simultaneously perhaps also a decreased chance of gender being taken into account. The incident report form and the input process attempt to formalise and standardise an event. However, they seem to leave no room for contextual anomalies or difficulties. The form is an attempt to remove human error and anomaly, but it may also remove details which determine the specificity of human experience, such as gender, age or dis/abilities. The automated and standardised reporting process creates an atmosphere of objectivity which obscures possible gender issues. For example, questions about which information is considered important to capture, and how it is then represented on the website are not raised. Lack of awareness about how gender issues and ICTs might intersect prevents not only discussion around whether more detailed information-gathering would enhance understanding of local communities' needs, but also any internal reflection about the potential effect on organisational gender norms of introducing more ICTs.

Fieldwork participants from municipal fire stations often played down the part of their jobs related to inputting and sending incident report forms. These participants tended to emphasise that only a small part of their job was involved in working with the incident report forms and that the statistics which were then produced were not read by them. They therefore tended to emphasise the distance between the 'real' work of firefighting and the reporting process

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(see also Ericson, 2011). This perhaps hints at a resistance to engaging with the preventative aspects of firefighters' work involving statistics. It also raises the question of how firefighters' identity as a form of heroic masculinity might be reimagined to include a keyboard and mouse.

The increasing routinisation and standardisation of information management (mediated by ICTs) within the rescue services produces an appearance of gender-neutrality in the collection and dissemination of data about accidents. However, off-hand comments during fieldwork and research from other organisational contexts (Swinglehurst et al., 2010) suggest that – despite organisational rules and standards – developments such as these do not prevent local deviations from the rules. The municipal rescue services have a well-established, informal system for peer-to-peer learning, which exists in tandem (and also possibly in tension) with systems such as IDA. This informal system functions as a way for skilled, experienced firefighters to pass on their knowledge to more junior firefighters, whilst simultaneously policing social interactions and gender norms (see Baigent, 2005 on 'fitting in'). Is it possible then that existing gendered notions of rescue work as a masculine endeavour may continue to be reproduced 'under the radar' at a local level during peer-to-peer information sharing about incidents, whilst the public face of MSB presents information about incidents which is so gender-neutral that differences in human experience that may be relevant to rescue work are erased?

Conclusion

When trying to develop gender perspectives on an organisation such as MSB, it is important to consider not only the more obvious, public face of the organisation such as the firefighters themselves, but also the management tools that connect the different parts of the organisation and provide information for future planning. Given the increasing use of ICTs to support, predict and plan rescue services work, it is both relevant and timely to take a gender perspective on ICTs within the rescue services. Examples of previous research, such as the work of Sundin at the Swedish National Survey, suggest that use of these technologies has the potential to change working conditions and identities of employees, for example, ICTs might instigate a shift towards more indoor, desk-based work. What would this mean for an organization where the successful performance of masculinity has been strongly linked to physical strength and outdoor work? The implementation and use of ICTs within the rescue services also means a shift in how 'customers' might be understood and their needs modelled, budgeted for and predicted. As such, tools like IDA can reasonably be understood as central to contemporary organisations, but how might they be shaped by social or organisational influences and biases? And how can these influences be made visible and addressed? In order to answer these questions, I am approaching IDA as a black box: a web portal that provides information on accidents but which obscures the means by which this information is collected, processed and distributed.

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Black boxing an artefact achieves different things. First, it obscures the processes which have been worked through in order to reach the 'end product', making it hard to enquire into social/historical/political contexts surrounding the box's creation. Second, it simplifies or 'tidies up' the end product in question. Finally, it works as part of a categorisation process, in which the end product – once tidied and simplified – can be more easily categorised or put into relation with other products. The process of black boxing something involves categorisation – deciding who or what goes in the box and who or what should be left out.

The creation of the database and IDA web interface required agreement and standardisation about information collection across the organisation. In this chapter, I have unpacked the black box of IDA by tracking the flow of information from emergency phone call to appearance on the IDA website. I have highlighted the changes to the information in both material format and content. In doing so, I have tried to open up the process to scrutiny and to suggest some points where user representations and material limitations may affect the information presented via IDA. Furthermore, I have tried to show how the apparent objectivity of IDA that is created through standardisation makes it hard for participants to 'see' gender in relation to this ICT. As such, it could be said that this chapter makes the provocative suggestion that the Swedish rescue services are not necessarily becoming more gender equal, but rather that discrimination may have moved to other, less visible aspects of the organisation – thus making them easier to discount and, for gender-equality practitioners at least, harder to tackle.

Notes

1 These two approaches are more complimentary and entangled than perhaps this neat separation between development history and contemporary information movement suggests. However, for reasons of space, I am focusing here solely on the informational flow 'unpacking' of IDA.

2 Many thanks go to the participants in this study, both at MSB and in the municipal rescue services, who gave their time to talk about IDA with me, passed on supplementary materials and recommended me to others who had experience of the system.

3 Although great care was taken in translating what the participants said, it should be made clear that any errors in the translation are mine alone.

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7 Collaboration as a Tool for Implementing Equality Politics

Anne-Charlott Callerstig and Kristina Lindholm

Introduction

In this chapter, we are interested in collaboration in the field of gender equality and diversity policies for the purpose of enhancing equity in the workplace and beyond. Based on a study of collaboration aiming to promote equality, we see a possible expansion of the more narrow understanding of the concept of equal opportunities in a workplace to a wider understanding of equality on a national level. The experiences of different organisations and professions make it possible to analyse and discuss equality problems on a more generic level in a collaborative setting. This idea is inspired by Rao and Kelleher (2003), who have suggested that in order to change inequality in organisations, equality and diversity should be seen as integrated parts of how the organisation relates to the whole community. Different forms of collaboration and cooperation between various sub-state-level actors in governmental policies have widely been seen as examples of new modes of governance (Jacquot, 2010; Meehan, 2003). There seems to be an almost universal belief that collaboration between different actors and across sectors is necessary today to address complex and multi-causal societal problems and will increasingly be so in the future (Huxham, 1996). Gender equality and diversity politics are policy areas characterised by inherent complexity, multi-causality and, as a consequence, dependency on cross-sector analysis of policy frameworks (Yuval-Davis, 2006). In various political programs, collaboration has been put forward as a key concept and a way to make policy implementation more effective. Collaboration has, however, in practical application proved to be complicated and not always successful. In this chapter, we explore collaboration efforts with the specific aim to strengthen gender equality and diversity in the context of a local development project. The discussion is based on a case study of a collaborative initiative in Sweden between a local rescue service, a private security business, the Swedish Armed Forces and the County Police and a NGO that promotes the rights of LGBT people (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons). The following questions are addressed: Can collaboration initiatives be a fruitful strategy to enhance gender equality and diversity in the workplace? What experiences do the collaborating parties of firefighters, surveillance staff and trainers from the LGBT- NGO bring forth?

First, we present key concepts. The methodology and research context are then described, and a third section presents the findings in relation to the experiences of earlier research on collaboration and conclusions about governing gender and diversity through collaborative governance. The last section offers some overriding concluding reflections.

Concepts and Analytical Tools

There are several concepts and research fields framing the topic of this chapter. The presentation here is limited to discussing some central concepts of governance and collaboration, the implementation of gender and diversity policies as well as everyday dilemmas.

Governance and Collaboration

The current trend is that governments of today want to address social problems as overlapping and interrelated. This 'new' form of governing the state is what is referred to as governance. Governance is characterised by various forms of inter-organisational cooperation, governance through networks and decentralisation, marketisation and project work (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1988; Huxham, 2000; Peters and Pierre, 1998). Governance has been portrayed as a set of transversal policy instruments aimed at managing multidimensional and complex issues, such as gender equality, through integration both horizontally and systematically at all stages of policy-making and of the governance system (Jacquot, 2010: 119; see also Halpern et al., 2008). New forms of cooperation between public and private actors are part of the development. There are many different interpretations of the concept of collaboration involving public organisations but often with the implicit assumption that collaboration is a positive feature, leading to 'added value' and effects that could not have been achieved from the work of a single organisation (Huxham, 1996; Longoria, 2005).

Himmelman (1996) describes collaboration as a change and learning strategy with the ambition to increase the capacity of the collaborating actors. It refers to various forms of control and actors involved in the process. "The participant organisations are dependent upon one another to achieve tasks that reach beyond the individual capacities of independent organisations" (Gerlak and Heikkila, 2011: 1).

Collaboration between organisations has been studied from many different perspectives, often with a focus on leadership aspects (Huxham and Vangen, 2000). Collaborative approaches have raised issues about the need to understand the management of collaborative projects: the skills, processes, structures, tools and technology needed for working across organisational boarders (Huxham and Vangen, 2000). Learning has been put forward as one important aspect of collaboration (Gerlak and Heikkila, 2011). Even though aspects of collaboration have not been studied to a great extent when it comes to equality initiatives, the gendered aspects of collaboration have been acknowledged

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by some studies. One study by Dekker (2008) of the Swedish rescue services has, for example, indicated that gendered aspects of collaboration may serve as obstacles to inter-organisational collaboration in the context of rescue actions. The effects of collaboration on equality initiatives, however, have hardly been studied (Meehan, 2003). Several aspects are important. An initial point to be made is that new types of governing raise questions about the different forms of power and authority that typify a particular approach to governing (Newman, 2001; Rees and Chaney, 2011). The shift to new forms of governance also relates to changes from 'earlier' forms of equality mechanisms within the realm of the state and consequences such as how new approaches and actors might change the prerequisites for equality policy implementation (Kantola and Squires, 2012). Furthermore, it relates to questions about how equality discourses operate and are operationalised in the public sector, which might be of particular importance when new actors are involved in policy implementation. There is a growing field of literature about the ambiguities of new governing technologies (Newman and Clarke, 2009) and the ambiguities and instabilities that are connected to partnerships and network governance (Huxham and Vangen, 2000).

Research shows that collaboration can be difficult because there may be a variety of goals and constraints that different organisations and individuals have to negotiate (Eden et al., 2000; Huxham and Vangen, 2000a). Drawing on Newman and Clarke (2009), public organisations can serve as a medium of 'publicness', i.e., the combination of things, ideas, issues, people, relationships, practices and sites that have been made public. In the process of making and remaking the public, i.e., the formation of public imaginaries, collective identity and solidarity attachments, the public imaginary is being created. Ambiguities and dilemmas play an important role in the process.

> It is in the everyday dilemmas of public service work that the meaning of concepts associated with the public sphere – openness, tolerance, equality and justice – are being remade and re-inscribed.
>
> (Newman and Clarke, 2009: 4)

Hogget (2006) uses the concept of "dilemmatic spaces" to describe that public service workers constantly have to negotiate the boundaries between general principles, their own values and the requirements from service users and different kinds of communities. The dilemmatic spaces can be understood as public organisations that are sites of continuous value conflicts (Hogget, 2006).

In our own research we have seen that actors promoting equality in public organisations face many difficult-to-solve dilemmas based on the concepts of gender, change and equality (Billig, 1988; Callerstig and Lindholm, 2011). In order to mainstream equality, different strategies for handling the dilemmas are developed in the organisations. New forms, sites and practices of publicness and their results have implications for public service. Public services are a key site for the struggle over the meanings of the alignment of equality and difference

dilemmas (Newman and Clarke, 2009). Public services have mediated "changing norms, values, translating them into new discourses, decision-making templates, job descriptions, training manuals, complaint procedures, customer service units and other technologies" (Newman and Clarke, 2009). Issues such as equal opportunities, managing diversity, community empowerment and multicultural education, all associated with "contested compositions of the public", are not merely imposed on public organisations but have emerged from public service practice. Collaboration projects can thus be seen as dilemmatic spaces where the struggle, negotiations and mediations over meanings take place. One assumption that we make is that the different strategies to handle the dilemmas of equality work will affect the collaboration process and that the result may be new equality discourses and practices in the collaborating organisations.

Implementation of Equality Policies: The Vagueness of Equality Goals and Conflicts and Resistance in and Around Equality Work in Organisations

For the past 30 years, there has been a growing interest in organisational and management issues with a focus on equality issues. However, most of the research being done is still in the traditional fora (Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008). Although substantial contributions have been made from research centring on processes that produces what Acker (2006) has called inequality regimes in organisations, there is still little research on how to use this knowledge in order to change organisations in ways that will challenge and transform existing inequality regimes. Earlier research shows that implementation problems in equality initiatives have been considerable, with common features on an organisational level such as lack of control and resources, low priority, lack of competence and not seldom out-spoken resistance (Callerstig and Lindholm, 2012; Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2008). Good intentions, especially at the top-management level have been noted, but no real actions taken to implement any objectives set. A major obstacle has been defined as a discursive one (Verloo, 2005), where the different actors involved in equality initiatives have very different interpretations of concepts such as gender equality. A second and related thematic problem is that the implementation of equality policies is surrounded by different forms of conflicts, such as the prevalence of active or passive resistance to equality work in organisations. The problem of resistance has been observed and discussed by many scholars linking it to factors such as institutional features of organisational change (Lombardo and Mergaert, 2013; Mergaert, 2012), and individual attitudes, values and processes of stratification and power (Lee-Gosselin et al., 2013).

Confusion as to what and why something needs to be changed might lead to what Halford (1992) has called bureaucratic inertia, i.e., obstacles to organisational change due to limited information and knowledge exchange in hierarchical and fractioned organisational structures. Earlier studies on gender equality initiatives have also suggested that successful initiatives rest on both internal

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support and external pressure (Acker, 2006). Initiatives to improve equality and diversity need to be accompanied by changes in organisational culture and leadership. In order to change the prevailing culture, some studies have indicated that equality and diversity should be seen as integral parts of how the organisation relates to the whole community, not just as internal recruitment and employment issues (Rao and Kelleher, 2003). In order to enhance organisational change that will enable the organisation to challenge gender inequality, change agents must connect organisational change, institutional change and gender equality (Rao and Kelleher, 2003). Organisational and institutional rules (in terms of rules for achieving social and economic ends are seen as interrelated and as operating below the organisational surface, in hierarchies, work practices and beliefs of the organisations (Rao and Kelleher, 2003).

Methodology

The chapter presents a qualitative case study that describes the local organisational context of a collaborative project. Case studies allow the study of a phenomenon in its specific context (Yin, 2006). A critique of the case study method relates to the difficulty in drawing general conclusions from one case to a broader context. A response to this is that case studies contribute theoretical generalisations about a phenomenon but that they do not provide grounds for making statistical generalisations (Yin, 2006). By focusing especially on a case, general questions, challenges and experiences of managing gender and diversity policy efforts through collaboration can emerge. The case can contribute by problematizing and discussing challenges to the implementation of equality policies in the realm of a collaboration project.

The reason for choosing this specific case was that the project was put forward as a difficult but successful project focusing on organisations that had not before been targeted to implement gender and diversity goals. The project focused on training and capacity building to create a platform for equal opportunities and equal treatment in two of the organisations: the local rescue services, which operate fire and rescue services in 10 municipalities, and the security business, which is a Swedish private security company that offers services, such as surveillance, alarm service and consultants. In total, the company employs 2,000 persons in Sweden. The project leader was a national LGBT NGO. It is a non-profit organisation that works with and for the rights of LGBT persons. Among its activities, the NGO develops and conducts training in the field of LGBT issues and equal treatment in the workplace.

The main activities of the project consisted of a training programme, which was developed and conducted in collaboration between the organisations involved. In total, 850 persons were trained in the local rescue services and 900 in the security business. The main goal of the project was to establish a workplace culture in the security business and the fire brigades where persons with different backgrounds and experiences would feel welcome. The project was financially supported by the European Social Fund (ESF). Collaboration is

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one of several criteria for funding from ESF. Besides collaboration in developing and managing the training, a number of joint seminars on different themes were conducted. Other collaborative partners were the Swedish Armed Forces and the County Police, who took part in seminars in order to share experiences. The efforts to promote equality in the local rescue services have been supported by a national agency (MSB, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency) since 1997 with various activities, such as initiating different studies and supporting activities at the local rescue services for women to learn more about the firefighter profession, for example. In recent years, a strategy for implementing equality objectives has been launched and several research studies on the topic have been supported by the government agency.

Eight semi-structured interviews were carried out during 2010 and 2011, documentary studies and the results of the interviews were discussed by the organisations in a joint analysis and reflection seminar, which is a way to validate the results and also a way for the project participants to reflect on and develop new strategies for future work. The interviews involved questions relating to their professional roles, the project and challenges for implementing the project, why they tried to collaborate and what they saw as advantages and difficulties, and relationships with and roles of the different organisations involved. The main collaborating partners were the local rescues services, the private security business and the LGBT-NGO and the interviews were conducted in these three organisations. The documents analysed were a project plan and internal evaluations. The contents of the interviews were organised in themes and tables, which are presented in the findings with quotes that illustrate the discussions. We have described this approach in more detail elsewhere (Callerstig and Lindholm, 2011).

Findings

This section focuses on how collaboration is experienced by the members of the project (firefighters, surveillance staff and trainers from the LGBT-NGO, RFSL), on the basis of which we discuss organisational conditions and objectives for organisational change. We start with a short discussion of the project proposal. When applying for funding, actors in each organisation agreed on some core themes that they thought they shared in the line of work.

In the project proposal, the collaboration between the fires services and the surveillance company was based on the notion of a "uniform profession/occupation" (the LGBT-NGO was excluded). The assumption was that there are strong perceptions of professional values and culture. For example, the uniform is a common denominator, which stands for safety and security, has a strong symbolic value, forcing the wearer to be something that others expect, and is a symbol of power. It was said that both firefighters and security guards are ambassadors for their profession. The problems of "fear, ignorance and lack of knowledge" in relation to legislation on discrimination were discussed and also the problem that the workforce does not reflect the population. There were

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also some differences between the organisations that were highlighted in the project proposal. These were that the security business is a private business in a competitive market and the fire brigade is not. In addition, there is a more homogeneous culture in the fire services, while public confidence in security workers is low and they are often badly treated.

During the interviews, different perspectives emerged on how to look upon the common motivations for collaboration among the firefighters. The first perspective involved the benefits of knowing that another organisation was working with the same questions. Most of the respondents were in favour of the activities that had been done so far between the organisations in the project. Collaboration was described as a chance to learn from others and that it can lend higher status to equality work in the participating organisations.

> We are several professionals doing this, through uniformed professions. There is some kind of affinity there. At the Swedish Surveillance service, they can say that firefighters also work with this, and we can say that the surveillance guards also work with this. It's not just us that are doing it, but also the surveillance guards.
>
> (Firefighter)

At the same time some firefighters did not agree that they belonged to a "uniform profession."

> Regarding uniform professions, firefighters wear protective clothing, there is no uniform. So the project sends the wrong signals. The aim of the project is equality and diversity in the public sector but these are not two public organisations. The security guards are patrolling public agencies, for example hospitals, public transportation, industrial plants, while the firefighters have a very different role.
>
> (Firefighter)

Several respondents brought up differences between the organisations and how these affect the possibilities for cooperation and learning. The differences described are that management ideals are dominant in the surveillance company, and the rescue services are described in terms of being more transparent and democratic.

RFSL project member:

> SSBF is publicly funded and everything is transparent, you can find out things before they happen and so on. An enterprise is closed, if you are outside the organisation you don´t have access to the same information. They find out things when it happens.

The respondents pointed out that the major difference between the organisations is that one is a private business and the other is a public organisation.

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The LGBT-NGO was mentioned to a lesser degree in the comparisons the respondents made during the interviews.

Research has shown that collaboration can be difficult due to the fact that there may be a variety of goals and constraints that different organisations and individuals have to negotiate (Eden et al., 2000). We would agree that different conditions in private and public organisations create differences in both how and why equality work is conducted. For example, some respondents suggested that there is a greater transparency in the work of public organisations and also an easier and more egalitarian access to managers. Work in public organisations is furthermore based on laws and rules and democratic values in contrast to private organisations, where the relationship to customers and market success are crucial components of the work. One conclusion is that the differences between the organisations have led to a situation where collaboration between the organisations primarily has focused on developing and conducting a training programme and to a lesser degree on learning from the change processes itself in the different organisations.

The problem in relation to gender equality and diversity goals differs in the organisations. In the fire department there were discussions on how to change the recruitment process. The discussion could be about how to change the image of their profession in the eyes of the citizens, how to attract underrepresented groups but also about a partly new or expanded professional role for firefighters as a result of the emerging demands for preventive security work.

> We have started to think more strategically in recruitment. We must become better at changing the image of the profession to the public so that we attract other groups to apply [. . .]. It is the operational part; it has been difficult to obtain equality and diversity within the emergency services. We don´t get so many job applications from underrepresented groups either.
>
> (Firefighter)

At the security company the main problem that they needed to deal with was the question of values when meeting the public or a client.

> You may think that the good work environment is when people don't spit on you. That's when you relate questions to real life.
>
> (Security company staff)

The security company employees pointed out that they experienced that the organisations focused on different values or issues.

> For the SSBF the overall issue is gender equality, the female firefighter. It is the overriding issue, the very hot spot. RFSL has of course LGBT people. But I still think that RFSL forgets religion and ethnicity. The most interesting issue is about ethnicity.
>
> (Security company staff)

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In line with Hogget (2006) and our discussion above, the collaboration project can be seen as a dilemmatic space where the negotiation of boundaries between general principles, their own values and the demands of service users and different kinds of communities are manifest. In the next section we want to reflect on what can be learned about the preconditions for and difficulties in collaboration.

Overcoming Difference?

What are the starting points for collaboration in relation to gender equality and diversity? From the interviews it is clear that the actors and organisations involved have similar but also different understandings of the problems to be addressed and the main objectives to be achieved. Table 1 shows an overview of organisational conditions and objectives of the outcomes in terms of equality in the organisation.

Table 7.1 Overview of the collaboration project

	Similarities	*Differences*
Organisational conditions	*Organisation and activities:* Uniform profession Citizen safety Male-dominated *Problems:* Need to improve recruitment Little knowledge of gender equality and discrimination Lack of support from the management Resistance	*Organisation and activities:* The uniform as a power symbol or protection gear Working regularly in public spaces vs. emergency management when necessary Politically managed organisation, rules and laws are driving forces vs private company, profit driven, the customer in focus. *Problem:* The Fire service is a more homogeneous workplace; internal resistance to gender equality; the fire service staff are well respected in society. Security staff enjoy less esteem in the eyes of the public. They have a more heterogeneous workplace.
Objectives of organisational change	To increase knowledge of the legislation on discrimination, improve recruitment	Swedish surveillance services: Improve public response Fire department: Internal representation

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The question is, for example, if the same conditions and change strategy can make collaboration more effective without allowing innovation to be too extensive? A high degree of similarity often means that the participating organisations will continue to work in much the same way as before. When the conditions are more different, the chances of innovation increase, but at the same time make the regular work harder to control. Can differences and similarities be the basis for an exchange of experience and not just function as obstacles?

How can differences and similarities between different organisations be handled in the continuous work for equality in the organisations? Should the differences or the similarities between the organisations be used to guide the collaboration project? We posed this question along with a simple model to the participants of the joint reflection and analysis seminar for a discussion on how differences and similarities can be used as a starting point for a joint learning process between participants in collaboration projects, or at the very least for the differences and similarities to be recognised as such.

Table 7.2 Differences and similarities between the organisations

	LGBT-NGO	*Local fire department*	*Security business*
Organisation	Common-interest association	Public, municipal organisation	Private company
Type of activities	Physical training and public opinion	Firefighting services	Security services
Aim of participating in the project: 'added value'	Promote discrimination issues, increase knowledge of other actors and develop the organisation	Increase knowledge, imbed and create acceptance of anti-discriminatory efforts in the organisation	Increase knowledge, imbed and create acceptance of anti-discriminatory efforts in the organisation
Keywords	New training concepts, target groups.	Competence, new ways of recruiting, representation and democracy.	Satisfied customers, values, codes of conduct, behaviour to colleagues and public.
Gains of collaboration	New knowledge, new types of activities, resistance, work with all types of discrimination	New knowledge, increased awareness, legitimacy.	New knowledge, increased awareness, legitimacy.

Table 7.3 Conditions and change strategies in collaboration

Same conditions Same change strategy	Different conditions Same change strategy
Same conditions Different change strategy	Different conditions Different change strategy

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In the analysis and discussion seminar one of the conclusions was that there was no common work goal but that this was not necessarily a problem. It was clear that both the fire service and the security company wanted to collaborate with the LGBT-NGO.

> Yes, I think so definitely [that cooperation helped] and above all, the expertise of RFSL. It has been really important, they are really good at training. We have been brainstorming and made adjustments to the training in the process. What we have seen, what worked, what did not work. (Security staff)
>
> RFSL in particular, other organisations in general, gave us a new way of thinking. RFSL is extremely skilled in matters of the underrepresented groups among us that are more likely to be discriminated against in society. In this respect, RFSL was good, they are the best collaboration partner. In the future I hope to continue collaborating with RFSL and be able to network. (Firefighter)

What did they think of the choice of collaboration partners? In general they thought that as an organisation they should choose collaboration partners that would contribute to their own progress towards equality, preferably those who are the most advanced, and can relate to their own organisation. One security employee argued that it is important to understand the other organisations' reality and that they are quite similar.

Another and different position in the discussion among the firefighters was that collaboration partners should be chosen on the principle of complementing each other:

> The things you don't have and would like help with, and what you do not have much of, but want more of at the moment.
>
> (Firefighter)

How did the participants think that collaboration had worked out? The majority thought that they did not really collaborate at all. Instead, the experience was that they were more loosely interacting through exchanging experiences.

> Somewhere, initially I thought that this could lead to us interacting, but we don't. [. . .] We are aware that we are different and work best in our own organisations.
>
> (Firefighter)

A great many discussions followed on the differences and similarities of the organisations in the analysis – and in the reflection seminar. Several preconceived beliefs about the different organisations were discussed and questioned, such as the perception of the firefighter profession as a life calling, whereas many firefighters believed they had become firefighters by chance. Also similarities

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between the organisations in relation to equality efforts were discussed, such as lack of active support from the management levels, lack of communication and information exchange within the organisations.

Collaboration as a Tool for Gender Equality and Diversity?

In the final section we will return to the questions initially posed in the chapter. We asked if collaboration initiatives can be a fruitful strategy to enhance gender equality and diversity in the workplace. We also wanted to understand what type of experiences the collaborating parties, firefighters, surveillance staff and trainers from the LGBT- NGO, would bring forth. But first some general conclusions from the case study are discussed and we also reflect on collaboration as a tool for gender equality and diversity. A central question is how collaboration affects the implementation of equality policies, especially against the background of earlier research that has shown that the implementation process is affected by vagueness and different interpretations of equality in terms of objectives and means, as well as the conflicts involved and resistance to equality work in organisations. A second aspect is the potential of collaboration projects to become dilemmatic spaces where different interpretations and meanings can be negotiated.

Collaboration as Diffusion of Difference and Organisational Boarders?

A possible effect of collaboration is that strongly gendered organisational cultures and professional identities might be questioned and re-examined through the interaction with other organisations and professions. In the interviews and in the analysis and reflection seminar we noted several examples of this phenomenon. The uniqueness of the organisations and professions involved was questioned many times both in the interviews and in the seminar discussions. One example is the high degree of resistance to more women in the rescue services, which was something of a surprise to the other participating organisations. The different arguments against women were to some degree questioned by the security business, the police and the armed forces, organisations that have had similar experiences in the past but in which the issue was not very 'hot' anymore. There was a discussion in the analysis and reflection seminar on the different goals of equality efforts in the organisations, for example, where the discussion in the fire brigade rather focused on recruitment and how to create a more diverse workforce, while, the focus in the security business was on how the workforce reflected society at large and how to create acceptable rules and behaviour in a multicultural society. This shows that the participating organisations had different problems in identifying and connecting problems of inequality to a more general societal level.

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The Impact of Collaboration on Organisational Resistance

Collaboration initiatives with partners that have high status are important because they can provide external pressure and lend a higher degree of legitimacy to equality efforts. The results of the case study show that the participants regarded collaboration as a way to increase information exchange not only between organisations but also between different levels of the organisation, which is believed to have a positive impact on the implementation of equality policies in the organisations involved. Collaboration is also believed to increase legitimacy and to limit organisational resistance to equality polices. Collaboration between public, private and non-profit organisations is a complex process. Another conclusion of the study is that different interpretations of organisational and professional roles, equality and organisational change and the objectives of collaboration indicate possibilities for collaboration. Several difficulties – the result of different organisational features and the different equality strategies developed – affected the collaboration process and the initial assumed similarities between the organisations and in relation to equality efforts had to be reconsidered to some degree. This, however, gave new possibilities to learn and exchange experiences. When collaboration partners are chosen for equality initiatives both differences and similarities are important learning opportunities.

The main conclusions of the study indicate that collaborative approaches to the implementation of equality policies can support change initiatives, especially through the increased information exchange that the collaboration efforts lead to between organisations and also within the organisations. Other positive factors were the legitimacy gained by the cooperation with external actors and the support received when the benefits of the efforts were believed to reach beyond organisational borders.

Collaboration as a Way to Mediate and Transform Existing Equality Discourses and Practices in Public Service

Collaboration projects can be seen as dilemmatic spaces where negotiations over meanings take place. In collaboration initiatives, it is important that the participants agree on a clear set of goals. This is difficult to achieve because of the negotiations on conflicting and different agendas that both individuals and organisations are faced with when collaborating with organisations (Huxham and Vangen, 2000a). As we have seen in the case study presented, the participants held somewhat different position on equal opportunities, diversity and multicultural education. During the case study, we discussed different strategies and conditions among the participating organisations. In general, they thought that an organisation should choose collaboration partners that would benefit their own efforts, preferably the most advanced organisations in terms of the issue and those who are easy to relate to in terms of operations. A security employee argued that it is important to understand the other organisations' 'reality' and

to be quite similar. Similarity between organisations was viewed as something positive in relation to achieving shared goals. It was clear that political goals and the reasons for engaging with gender equality and diversity are somewhat different if the organisation is in the private or public sector. In the private security company, the discussion was set in a discourse of corporate responsibility and measurability. The public rescue services had more explicit goals set by the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency to implement equality objectives and increase the number of female firefighters. The process is, however, as we have argued complex and new ideals are contested and negotiated. As Newman and Clarke (2009) emphasise, the present dominant trends are not homogeneous but contradictory and a multiplicity of forces and discourses are conflated when remaking the public sector. Collaboration is from this perspective a way to develop but also learn from new emerging practices both in private and public sector organisation. It is a two-way process that includes all participants in different ways.

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8 Agents for Change?

Gender Equality Efforts in the Swedish Rescue Services

Ulrika Jansson

From Words to Action

Every year, the Swedish Association for Fire Officers (SBB) and the Swedish Fire Protection Association co-organize a national fire conference. The theme of the 2012 conference was *When Words Become Action*, and the aim was to illuminate the work of the Swedish rescue services with a particular focus on success factors for development. According to the conference call, a society in constant transformation, with new values and technological innovations, poses new challenges for the rescue services and their ability to develop and promote change. One such explicit 'requirement' for change is increased gender equality. The conference program also communicates that change in the rescue services, in general, is laden with organizational resistance. As a consequence, it was the means toward the goals that were in focus during the conference. In the present chapter, the emphasis is on the means toward an egalitarian and diverse rescue services organization. Just as in many, if not most, organizations, contradictory conceptions of gender equality (and diversity) as well as gender equality efforts that both promote and hinder a change in existing gender relations can also be located in the Swedish rescue services (Jansson and Grip, 2012). Nevertheless, a common argument is that the rescue services are particularly unique as an organization and that gender equality has to be enhanced "in its own way and on its own terms". What does that mean? Studies of gender equality in the Swedish rescue services are scarce, and scientific scrutiny of problem representations that surface "when words are to be turned into action" are therefore warranted and timely, in particular since previous research has shown that interpretations of gender equality and gender equality efforts tend to be adapted to suit the values that dominate the local context (Ekström, 2012; Jansson, 2010). Specifically, the present chapter deals with how a group of regionally based gender equality and diversity developers interpret a particular action program, the *Action Program for Increased Gender Equality and Diversity in Municipal Safety Work* issued by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (hereafter the MSB),[1] which in turn aims to promote an egalitarian (and diverse) rescue services organization. My analysis is informed by Carol Bacchi's (2009) critical form of policy analysis, and centers on how the 'problem' is formulated. Bacchi argues that policy suggestions

contain explicit or implicit diagnoses of what the problem is – a form of assessment of the state of things. This assessment is always performed on the basis of an interpretation, and results in a suggested solution, indicating what or whom it is that needs to change. Consequently, the overarching research question is formulated as follows: *Which interpretations of gender equality are assumed to be central for the rescue services' efforts to promote development and change*?

The rescue services are particularly interesting as a research site given that the organization is one of the last remaining almost exclusively male-dominated environments in Swedish working life. In addition, the masculine connotations of the firefighter profession are strong (cf. Baigent, 2001; Ericson, 2011). The primary mission of the rescue services is to "ensure that measures are taken to prevent fires and fire-related damage and to work to establish protection against other accidents, without compromising the responsibilities of others" (SFS, 2003: 778, 3rd chapter, §1) [my translation]. On a local level, it is the municipalities that are in charge of organizing the rescue services, usually in collaboration with other principal functions with operative responsibilities across municipal borders. The municipal rescue services employ more than 5,000 firefighters on operative duty on a full-time basis, and a little below 11,000 on part-time (MSB, 2009). Out of the 5,000 full-time firefighters, only a little over two percent are women (MSB, 2012). It is the MSB that has the overriding responsibility for risk and security work in Sweden. The agency operates in close collaboration with municipalities, county councils, other authorities, the private sector and various organizations in its work to enhance and support societal capacities for preparedness for and prevention of emergencies and crises.[2] It is controlled by the government's annual appropriation directions for agencies. Since 2009, the MSB is actively working for increased gender equality and diversity in municipal safety through a particular action program; the *Action Program for Increased Gender Equality and Diversity in Municipal Safety Work* (Axelsson, 2009). The program identifies several 'problems' assumed to hinder increased gender equality, such as stereotypes regarding who can become a firefighter and the psychosocial work environment. Several measures to ensure "a rescue services organization for everyone" are formulated; for example, a network of eight gender equality and diversity developers. All eight developers are active firefighters from different parts of the country. They work with the project on a part-time basis, which involves working to change the stereotypical image of the firefighter in order to increase gender equality and diversity in the municipal fire brigades.

So the present chapter aims to address how the regional gender equality and diversity developers perceive the task commissioned by the MSB by analyzing how the concept of gender equality is filled with meaning, and the type of change made possible through such conceptualizations. Next, and prior to accounting for the MSB action program and the regional gender equality and diversity developers studied, a brief overview of research relevant to the present study is presented.

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Gender Equality Initiatives in Organizations

Today, promoting gender equality is relatively common in organizations, but the efforts to promote gender equality and diversity often display discrepancies between rhetoric and practice; that is, the importance of increased gender equality and diversity is treated as unquestionable, but is not always acted upon as the issues and suggested courses of actions also are perceived as being imposed upon members of the organization. Studies have shown that diverging and sometimes conflicting views on gender (in)equality in organizations play a crucial role for how change can be understood, for the strategies selected and applied and for the results achieved (cf. Benschop and Verloo, 2006; Hearn, 2000; Lindholm, 2011). The complexity of gender equality efforts can be discerned, for example, in the fact that conceptualizations of gender are both challenged and reconstructed (cf. Eriksson-Zetterquist and Renemark, 2011; Höök, 2001; Meyerson, 2008).

Enhancing gender equality in organizations can be described in different ways, for example through a division into internal and external efforts. The external work is perhaps primarily realized through so-called gender mainstreaming. In brief, gender mainstreaming means that the decision-making processes of public organizations should be permeated with gender equality perspectives, where all those who are part of the decision-making process should be equally involved (Åström, 1998). In Sweden, gender mainstreaming is the principal strategy for reaching the political goals of gender equality (Skr. 2011/12: 3) and is also, to a certain extent, applied in the different rescue services organizations. The internal approach on the other hand varies greatly, both in terms of methods and *modus operandi* and steering documents, and different groups can be targeted and/or focus on different aspects of gender equality. A recurrent problem in gender equality and diversity initiatives is various forms of resistance. Several studies have shown how resistance strategies are activated when notions and ideas of women and men are challenged. Both women and men actively perform and encounter resistance. Men, however, exercise resistance to a greater extent and also encounter less resistance than do women (Amundsdotter, 2010; Cockburn, 1991; Pincus, 2002).

On a general level, research on gender equality politics has demonstrated how sense-making processes surrounding gender equality efforts are conditioned by dominant views, values and logics of particular social institutions and organizations. Several studies have shown how promoting gender equality is shaped by governance systems that currently dominate the public sector (Rönnblom, 2008; Tollin, 2011; Wittbom, 2009). In particular, such research has shed light upon how the implementation of local gender equality policies contributes to depoliticizing of the issues at hand. In my own dissertation research, I show how *The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise* [Svenskt Näringsliv] reformulates gender equality politics into something desirable in terms of neoliberal enterprise politics – in the name of women (Jansson, 2010). As such, gender equality is positioned as subordinate to other issues, which in turn

leaves gendered power relations unchallenged and unproblematized. Problem presentations grounded in conflicts of interest between women and men also decrease when gender equality is reformulated as 'methods politics'. According to Katharina Tollin (2011), gender equality politics is often directed at methods, mappings and surveys rather than at social reforms. Similarly, Malin Rönnblom (2011) discusses how gender equality is transformed into administrative routines when different methods and tools become focal to the ongoing gender equality process. Similarly, Sara Ahmed (2012: 11) comments in her study: "it is as if having a policy becomes a substitute for action". In essence, it can be concluded that gender equality (and diversity) are constructed as problems that do not challenge the prevailing order, but rather confirm it.

Within organizational theory, this issue is seen through the lens of a liberal or radical gender equality approach (Jewson and Mason, 1986). Liberal gender equality focuses on visible procedures and processes in order to accomplish equity, usually in terms of representation and body counts. It is a matter of removing conventional and institutional obstacles (Cockburn, 1991) for women. For the rescue services, such obstacles may, for example, be separate locker rooms, or tools that are only as heavy as is absolutely necessary for their effectiveness. In this approach, women are 'adjusted' to fit with the organization and its norms. One common critique launched against the liberal gender equality approach is that it does not question or challenge the taken-for-granted norms and the structurally conditioned inequalities between women and men. Conversely, radical approaches problematize organizational structures and cultural obstacles (Cockburn, 1991) to a greater extent by focusing on outcomes and results. Traditionally, radical approaches are associated with long-term change where affirmative action (positive discrimination) is a common method. Simply put, liberal gender equality centers on improvement, whereas radical change efforts focus on change. By way of summary, it can be concluded that work to promote increased gender equality and diversity is complex and consisting of many components. In addition, gender equality in organizations is conditioned by not only organizational structures and institutional notions and ideas of gender, but also by political claims and external stakeholders. Consequently, and in line with the research accounted for above, my vantage point is that gender equality is 'performed' and filled with content. Research from this perspective has focused on how gender equality discourses make possible and delimit the political space for changing gender relations. Inspired by Michel Foucault's (1993) work on how power is exercised when politics are shaped and negotiated and Beverly Skeggs' (2004) writings on how political rhetoric is enabled through discursive frameworks, my analysis is based on the method described by Carol Bacchi (2009).

From Words to Action – The Program

Since the mid-1990s, gender equality and diversity have been recurrent themes of the annual government directives for MSB, with a particular emphasis on

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increasing the proportion of women as firefighters. On the MSB website, the problem of gender inequality and lack of diversity is described under the heading "A better mix at the fire stations":

> The rescue services need more women and immigrants. The rescue services of today are different from yesterday's fire brigades. Naturally, the rescue services are still sent out to fires, but its mission also includes the prevention of emergencies everywhere. Yet the firefighter of today is almost exactly like the firefighter of yesterday. He is an ethnic Swede and he is male. Only 2.4 per cent of the full-time firefighters and 4% of the part-time firefighters are women. Diversity is more difficult to measure, but it is clear that Sweden has very few firefighters of non-Nordic ethnicity. This is problematic, especially since effective emergency prevention requires insights into and knowledge of all parts of our society [my translation].

A common way of working for increased gender equality is through the deployment of projects for limited periods of time. As mentioned earlier, the point of departure for the regional gender equality and diversity developers is the MSB *Action Program for Increased Gender Equality and Diversity in Municipal Safety,* which was issued in 2009 with a timeframe of five years (2010–2014) (Axelsson, 2009). The action program was formulated after a mapping phase which identified various obstacles for gender equality and diversity (Ericson, 2009), followed by a phase where a number of possible measures to be taken in the identified problem areas were discussed. In a general formulation, "exclusion" is identified as the underlying problem, which refers to the fact that women are underrepresented, and that individuals with a "non-Swedish ethnic background" and "non-heterosexual orientation" probably will be excluded from civil protection duties in the rescue services. Other grounds for discrimination are also mentioned, but are not part of the action plan. The problem formulation rests on equity arguments, with increased representation as a goal. The number of women, individuals with non-Swedish ethnic backgrounds and non-heterosexual orientations should increase, since an imbalanced, unequal, and homogenous rescue services organization is assumed to negatively impact citizen service. A democratic perspective where society is reflected in the composition of the rescue services is, according to the action program, an important foundation for work directed toward 'third parties'. Furthermore, five additional problem areas perceived as constituting particular obstacles for increased gender equality and diversity are formulated: *Perceptions of the mission of the rescue services and who can become a firefighter*, *training, recruitment, psychosocial work environment*, *and physical work environment* (Axelsson, 2009: 8).

The action program contains several measures to be taken; one of them being the network of regional gender equality and diversity developers (hereafter the developers), which constitutes the empirical focus of the present chapter. Other suggested measures that have become central to the work of the developers are raising awareness among politicians (that is, bringing the issue of gender

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equality and diversity in the rescue services to a political level), establishing a routine for supervision of external communication, offering financial support to local activities, hiring a communications specialist, creating a model fire station with gender balance and 'visible diversity' – a fire station for everyone, implementing gender equality and diversity in a review of the education and training system and improving the physical and psychosocial work environment at the 'firefighter schools' Revinge and Sandö, and finally, initiating a development project to examine the pass levels for physical requirements for firefighters (i.e., the physical abilities required to work as a firefighter). During 2012, the action program will undergo revision; however, it is the original version from 2009 that is targeted in the present paper. An additional limitation of the present paper is the focus on gender equality in particular. Even though both gender equality and diversity represent equal parts of the MSB action program, my analysis centers on the developers' conceptualizations of gender equality and advancing gender equality, rather than diversity. The reason behind this limitation is that it is the underrepresentation of women and their inclusion/exclusion in the rescue services that has been most clearly brought forth as a problem. The fact that both gender equality and diversity are constructed as an issue about women is a research finding that I will return to in my final discussion.

Method and Material

The eight gender equality and diversity developers and MSB representatives were informed about the study and gave their consent for participation. I have participated in and observed different meetings and events over the course of a few years. The empirical material consists of ethnographic field notes from about fifteen days of observation. During meetings and seminar days, I have continuously taken notes of what has been said, what has not been said and of who has said what. I have also attempted to capture the atmosphere and embodied conduct in my field notes. Moreover, I have conducted a few semi-structured group interviews (Kvale, 1997) where the developers were asked to discuss why, specifically, work to promote increased gender equality and diversity is important for the rescue services.

The developers represent different age groups and the time they have been with the rescue services varies. The group consists of seven men and one woman from rescue services/associations in different parts of the country. A few of the developers that were initially part of the group have over time been assigned to other duties and have been replaced by others. Some are in leading positions, and a minority of the members has completed the two-year formal training program for firefighters (the Accident Prevention Training course, or, in Swedish, Skydd mot olyckor, SMO). All eight developers are involved in the project at 25% of their regular work time. For ethical reasons, individual statements are generally not quoted; however, a few quotations that were considered to be recurrent and central are presented in the text. Any complete anonymization of

the material would be impossible, as part of the developers' work is to be visible, network and generate debate. Some of the developers could be described as particularly dedicated to their tasks – devotees – and their voices and interpretations are also more explicit. At the same time, most of the developers perceive the mission from the MSB as unclear and intangible, and they feel unsure as to what they are expected to contribute. In my analyses, I have set out to recapture the most central problem representations regardless of the individual developer's level of dedication or other characteristics. It is worth noting that the same types of accounts resurface in the material, which can be seen in a certain degree of overlap in the data presentation. I also wish to emphasize that my analyses do not in any way aim to evaluate the MSB action program as such. It appears to be a commendable project with high-set goals – but also an important one to study for those of us interested in the conditions for gender equality in the rescue services. A final reservation concerns the limitation to this particular network, as there are several other gender equality projects in different rescue services in Sweden, which are not included in the present study.

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Gender Equality Problem Representations

In the following sections, I present the central gender equality problem representations in my data from the MSB and the regional developers. The problem areas identified in the MSB action program constitute the backdrop for the presentation, as the regional developers' interpretations of their mission are closely linked to the program. As I depict the separate problem areas, I also bring in concepts that in my analysis emerged as particularly relevant for how gender equality is done and filled with meaning. The main problem presentations I focus on below are:

- Mission and identification – a matter of enlightenment, organizing and responsibility,
- The accident prevention training course – advocate or avoid?
- Recruitment – a matter of guidelines for physical requirements,
- Work environment – a matter of adjustment and attitude change.

Mission and Identification: A Matter of Enlightenment, Organizing and Responsibility

One of the problem statements in the MSB action program concerns perceptions of the mission of the rescue services and of who is or can be a firefighter. The inequality problem is thus assumed to be linked to prevailing connections between the firefighter profession on the one hand, and qualities that are associated with masculinity and being a man on the other. It is assumed, then, that women refrain from opting for a career as a firefighter because of stereotypical notions of who is or can become a firefighter. In order to attract more women, the traditional firefighter image needs to be challenged. In addition,

it is important that more women apply to the SMO training program. Consequently, the exclusion of women, persons of non-Swedish origin, and with non-heterosexual orientations is assumed to be a consequence of a strongly gender-coded organization. The relationship between the firefighter profession and various constructions of masculinity have also been described in a number of studies (e.g., Baigent, 2001; Chetkovic, 1997; Cooper, 1995; Ericson, 2011; Häyrén et al., 2012). To a great extent, the developers agree with these analyses and formulate the problem as "dispelling the macho structure". The great challenge is assumed to be about "changing the thinking in our organizations" and "make more people fit in". The developers ask themselves questions such as "how do we get our message across?"; "Which methods and approaches are best, or most suitable for dispelling the macho structure?"; and "How should we do it, then?"

In order to change the thinking, the developers have primarily targeted various forms of communication activities. Aside from arranging open house trial days, the developers have engaged in active networking, offered information about local funding from the MSB, and identified ongoing gender equality and diversity projects on the regional level. Furthermore, they have arranged regional inspiration days where contact persons as well as their superiors were invited. Aside from regular networking activities, the developers have given talks, offered theatre plays for children, provided information about the SMO training program to students in upper secondary school and SFI courses (Swedish language courses for Immigrants), participated in the Pride festival in Stockholm and arranged soccer tournaments for girls. Consequently, it is the thinking around gender equality that is assumed to enable change and making more people fit in. The problem with gender equality is shaped as a project of enlightenment, where lack of knowledge of gender equality is what needs to be fixed.

After the initial and information-focused phase of the project, the developers expressed frustration regarding their mission, which they found to be 'fuzzy'. Statements such as "we don't feel that it has been a hundred percent successful" and "what are we supposed to be doing, really?" surfaced. In order to move from pure information-giving activities to action; generating "more action and being able to deliver", several meeting days were devoted to identifying the best strategies and the areas where the developers would be able to "do what we do best" while at the same time "coming across as a unified troop". One matter discussed was specialization, and initially, five 'streams' were formulated: communication, management strategy, role models for women and LGBT persons, recruitment and physical requirements and, finally, information-giving activities and open house days. The problem that gender equality advancement should be solving, then, is represented as a question of how it should be organized, and around the developers' abilities to spur broad involvement.

Yet another problem definition is constructed in perceptions of the division of responsibilities. There were repeated discussions as to where the responsibility lies for working for increased gender equality in the municipal rescue services.

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According to the developers and the MSB, the municipalities ought to step up and assume more of the responsibility. It is also assumed that other stakeholders, such as the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) and the firefighter colleges in Revinge and Sandö, are insufficiently involved in the change and development process. The absence of active and clear responsibilities is constructed as a problem, and as a consequence, the goal becomes to increase the active participation of these groups. Also linked to this problem representation are assumptions regarding the specific responsibility of managers for gender equality and organizational change. As mentioned earlier, studies have shown that gender equality efforts are often met with resistance. In the developers' accounts, a substantial part of the resistance described is attributed to the disinterest and low involvement of managers. The problem is described as a question of how to come to terms' with the resistance displayed. The developers ask themselves how to "reach out to the managers" and "make them interested" and "willing" to work with these issues. The problem to be solved, then, is represented as lacking involvement and interest. As a consequence, the goal becomes a matter of increasing the level of commitment on a managerial level.

As for notions of the mission of the rescue services, it is formulated as a matter of how rescue services work is organized. The problem representation centers on the separation of operative rescue action and preventive work. According to the developers, this separation may create hierarchies where preventive efforts, which are assigned lesser value than rescue action, mainly are attributed to women. By way of example, statements such as "at the stations, women are seen as the designated preventers" were found in the material. However, the developers' position differed with regard to this issue, as some argue that the separation between operative and preventive work is an absolute condition, as it is the operative focus, rather than the preventive tasks, that attracts potential firefighters to the SMO programs, while others emphasize the versatility of tasks that are part of the firefighter profession. Consequently, the problem to be solved becomes a matter of how rescue work is organized and what tasks are considered to be relevant for the job.

The Accident Prevention Training Course: Advocate or Avoid?

An additional explanation of the inequalities in the rescue services brought forth is the firefighter training programs. As mentioned earlier, firefighters receive their formal training in a two-year post-secondary educational program, the *Accident Prevention Training course (SMO),*[3] or, alternatively, in a nine-week-long course titled *Emergency Response Operations* aimed at future part-time firemen. The SMO course, which was established in 2003 and run by the MSB, replaced the previous educational system where the municipalities themselves selected participants for further training. The action program identifies a number of problems with the courses, both in terms of their content and selection procedures and with regard to sexual harassment incidents and gender discrimination

at the training colleges[4] as well as during job training placements at local stations. Despite the MSB's awareness of the problems at the colleges, a central objective in the action program is to increase the number of women applicants to SMO, and thereby increase the recruitment pool for the rescue services.

The training course is a recurrent problem representation among the developers, primarily with reference to the objective of increasing the number of women applicants (i.e., "How can we attract women to SMO?"). However, some of the developers express concerns regarding the centrality of increasing the number of women at the training courses since different rescue services "recruit from the street" anyway. With this, they refer to the fact that some rescue services do not necessarily select applicants with formal SMO training when recruiting new employees, but instead select individuals with other qualifications that are considered relevant. In other words, "if you pick people off the street anyway, then why should we promote SMO training?" Another matter presented as a problem is that the organizations that will be the future workplaces of SMO trainees are macho environments excluding women in practice, which in turn makes efforts to draw women to the SMO course appear pointless. As such, the main problem representation is whether to advocate SMO training for women or not. My interpretation is that the problem analysis presented in the action program is absent from the related problem representation and that this discrepancy reveals how general problem formulations are not necessarily implemented in concrete plans for action (cf. Rönnblom, 2011).

Recruitment: A Matter of Guidelines for Physical Requirements

Yet another inequality problem emphasized in the action program, as well as in discussions among the developers, is recruitment practices in the rescue services. Back when the municipalities were in charge of selecting participants for specialized training, very few women and individuals of non-Swedish ethnicity were accepted to and enrolled in the courses. A report from the Swedish Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (Jämo, 2007) examining the recruitment process of the rescue services with a particular focus on women as firefighters concluded that the recruitment practices of the rescue services were, in fact, discriminatory. When the SMO program was launched in 2003, the proportion of underrepresented groups was expected to increase. Except for the obvious references to physical tests, the action program also pinpoints informal contacts, previous work experience and merit rating as potentially influential factors in recruitment practices.

Of all problem representations in the action program, the matter of physical capabilities assumed to be necessary for the firefighter profession is perhaps the most recurrent topic of discussion among the developers. As part of the action program, the MSB has commissioned Winternet, a testing and development center for sports, health and rehabilitation, to detail new guidelines for the physical abilities of firefighters. The results presented by Winternet have been

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discussed in detail, and several problems with the recommended levels have been brought forth. To put it simply, the recommended levels are assumed to be either 'too easy' to pass and thereby risk becoming a way of 'pushing women past', or 'too tough' for most women to succeed. The developers have agreed to disagree on the degree of importance of the physical requirements, but also argue that what is important is how results are formulated and presented. Furthermore, they feel that the MSB "should lead the way" with regard to this problem. The problem to be solved then is how the guidelines for physical strength should be formulated and presented to the rescue services organizations.

Work Environment: A Matter of Adjustment and Attitude Change

A final problem assumed to hinder gender equality and diversity in the rescue services to be dealt with in the present paper is the psychosocial and physical work environment. In the action program, the rescue services are described as workplaces with a strong sense of camaraderie, and where some individuals 'fit in' whereas others are excluded. Exclusion of individuals or groups is performed through a number of systematic strategies, such as harassment, freezing out and rendering them invisible. An underlying assumption is that women who take up positions in the rescue services will be subjected to such treatment. As for the physical work environment, an assumption is that women are prevented from working for the rescue services since the facilities and the equipment used are not adapted for them. For example, many fire stations lack separate shower rooms and/or saunas as well as work attire of suitable size and fit. In essence, the problem formulated is a question of adaptation of facilities and equipment.

When discussing the psychosocial work environment, the developers primarily bring up prevailing attitudes and jargon among firefighters as a collective as obstacles for gender equality. As mentioned above, the problem of gender equality is represented as an enlightenment project where insufficient knowledge about gender equality is what should be attended to. In the developers' interpretations of the action program, enhanced knowledge is presented as a method that is assumed to lead to change. "This is a battle that needs to be fought again and again"; "we need to have that talk" and "be able to answer questions on what this thing with gender equality is all about" – all these accounts signal an underlying idea that if firefighters understand what it is really like, that is, that women are not provided the same conditions as men in the rescue services, they will want to participate in bringing about change. Knowledge, both about existing conditions and about gender equality as such, is assumed to lead to increased awareness, other (more positive) attitudes and active measures to promote gender equality. However, this knowledge is conditioned in that a few of the developers explicitly state that it must come from within, that is, from people with direct experience of rescue work. Even though external lecturers and inspirational speakers are invited to give talks at seminar days arranged by the developers, an underlying assumption is that personal

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experiences of rescue work constitute a warranty for lasting change in terms of firefighters' attitudes. Only firefighters can talk to other firefighters, and knowledge becomes both a solution and a problem. Ideally, as several developers said, the enhancement of knowledge should be conveyed so that "you feel in your stomach" and that it is "fun". Women are to "be convinced" and "attracted" to the rescue services through well-informed targeted messages that "there are opportunities for everyone in the rescue services". Inequalities between women and men are thus formulated as a matter of lacking knowledge rather than as a consequence of a gendered organization – which in fact is what is stated in the action program. Again, it seems safe to conclude that the practical aim with the action program is turned into an enlightenment project with the purpose of educating employees on what gender equality 'is' and should be. Moreover, the responsibility for change is assigned to individuals, to the developers and to the individual firefighter.

A related problem representation is the perception of time in terms of changing attitudes, as it is assumed that the process of attitudinal change within the rescue services is either too fast or too slow. Some of the developers do not believe in speeding up the process, as this could lead to "contra-productive consequences", while others state that "it can't happen overnight, but it does need to move a little faster". Insisting on change in terms of routines established and practiced for a long time in the rescue services could compromise the gender equality efforts, and besides, "we don't want to force anyone". Liberal principles of gender equality as a voluntary and long-term objective condition the problem representation. Several developers, however, do feel that the process "is too slow" and would prefer more radical measures.

A Gender-Equal Rescue Services Organization: A Matter of How

In my reference to the fire conference of 2012 in the opening paragraph to this chapter, I noted that the roads to change (in the sense of the measures or methods) constitute a central part of achieving change in the rescue services in Sweden. How should development and change projects, such as those in focus here, be conducted in order to be successful and effective? When gender equality was discussed at the fire conference, it was discussed with a focus on gender equality action – whether the practical work has improved, and how. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that action has taken the form of methods and measures, that is, how gender equality action should be productively conducted. The regional developers' interpretations can be viewed in terms of an overreaching problem representation centering on how to address increasing gender equality and diversity in the rescue services. In my analysis, I have presented examples of this 'how dilemma', which all bring about potential solutions to the problem of "how to reach out with our message". Accordingly, the problem of gender inequality is constructed as a problem of methods and about developing strategies for change. During the course of this study, I have asked myself

the question of what it is that needs to be changed. To stretch my observations further, it can be alleged that the problem is not, in fact, the unequal rescue services, but rather, how gender equality should be obtained. In line with Tollin (2011) and Rönnblom (2011), who both claim that when gender equality is to be implemented, the method of implementation is what becomes central, the gender equality approach of the MSB shows the same pattern. However, it is not always clear what problems of gender (in)equality the methods in question are designed to solve. A consequence is that the potentially political questioning of gendered power structures fails to take place. Similarly, the regional developers do not address the problem as a matter of women's subordination and men's superordination to any great extent, even though a certain degree of problematization of gender relations is discernible in the material. In line with Tollin and Rönnblom, I draw the conclusion that it is the methods – the 'how' – that are in focus, and that critical examinations of gendered power relations are marginalized or entirely absent. Exactly 'what' it is that the rescue services should work to change is not always clear. In cases when this what – or who – is, in fact, addressed, it is usually the category of women that, in different ways, is constructed as both a solution and a problem.

Despite the fact that gender equality politics since the 1990s have had an explicit goal of bringing about change, as well as a gender-theoretical point of departure that mentions structures and power orders, gender (in)equality is often formulated as a matter of proportions and numbers of women and men. The under-representation of women, in particular, is assumed to be an obstacle in building equal workplaces or organizations. Quantitative distribution, based on a principle of equity, is also one of the vantage points in the MSB action program. It is taken that more women in the rescue services will lead to increased gender equality. In effect, women are represented as both a problem and a solution, and discussions regarding power relations or conflicts of interest are notably absent. The problem of gender is depoliticized, and moreover, women are viewed as a homogenous group (cf. Eduards, 2007; Rönnblom, 2011). It seems reasonable to conclude that the developers' accounts of getting more people to 'fit in' primarily means that women should be adjusted to the organization and its tasks; an approach that is in line with liberal perspectives on gender equality (Wahl and Linghag, 2013). Efforts targeting visible procedures and processes are assumed to be central, even though certain radical features, such as education and awareness-raising, are treated as important. It is important to emphasize that problem representations focusing almost exclusively on women are common in gender equality projects and are not unique to the MSB program (cf. Jansson, 2010). Furthermore, I have also shown that the analysis of problems to be solved in the action program is not always found in the various problem representations, and that the discrepancy between the two levels reveals that general problem formulations do not necessarily translate into implementation in practice. As for the focus on women, this is not unique to the rescue services either. The organizational values and identities of the rescue services

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condition interpretations of gender equality; however, the gender equality efforts conducted there share many general features with other politically motivated initiatives to promote gender equality.

Notes

1 In Swedish: *Myndigheten för Samhällsskydd och Beredskap* (MSB)
2 Through, for example, supervision of the Civil Protection Act (2003: 778) and the Flammables and Explosives Act (2010: 1011).
3 In Swedish, "Skydd mot olyckor" (SMO).
4 The MSB offers training at the two colleges Sandö and Revinge in Sweden.

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