

Expressions of gender – in a mono gendered setting

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The local Danish Rescue and Fire Services are characterized by a very low percentage of female fire fighters. A number of initiatives have been launched to increase the obvious imbalance, however a rapid shift in this inequity is not expected due to several circumstances: e.g. a number of cultural constraints and a minimal turn over among fire fighters.

Due to this, male dominance is expected among fire fighters for a period of years from now. In this paper, we will address some of the organizational challenges in a cultural setting that is heavily dominated by men with the point of analytical departure in the question: How is masculinity enacted in a culture of male members?

One of Denmark's largest fire and rescue services, with a large proportion of full time employees (in opposition to part time or voluntary fire fighters) have recently implemented new principles of training, exercises and court examinations of the employees. This has triggered several reactions in the organization: Sceptisime, anxiety, criticism and reluctance among some. One of our preunderstandings is, that the social category of gender is central to understand and learn about the responses to the novel mandatory training courses – and not least for the organization to comply to the negative reactions.

Based on a method of participating observations two researchers have initiated a study that implies an initial analysis of the learning culture that investigate how gendered practices of learning might produce constraints towards the newly implemented practices in the organization. One male researcher who is part of the organization besides being occupied with research, and one female researcher with a very limited experience of operational firefighting.

How differences matter in emergency, risk and crisis management