Från ideal till ideologi
Konstruktioner av kön och etnicitet inom socialtjänsten

av

Marcus Herz

Akademisk avhandling

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Opponent: docent Mats Hilte
Lunds Universitet
Lund

Örebro universitet
Institutionen för juridik, psykologi och socialt arbete

701 82 ÖREBRO
Abstract


This dissertation examines how social workers handle and understand gender and ethnicity in their work with clients. Social work has in previous research been criticized for strengthening rather static notions on gender and ethnicity. One point of departure is that because of its position as an authority, social work needs to be examined through a power perspective. The way that gender and ethnicity is handled in social work can both affect individuals and make an impact in society in general. Another area of interest is the impact of and implementations of an evidence-discourse, namely the adaptation towards a so called evidence-based practice and how this might affect how gender and ethnicity are handled and understood. The aim in this study is to examine how social workers in a social services office handle and understand gender and ethnicity in conversations about clients and cases. In the social services office, gender and ethnicity are treated as categories based upon difference between men and women or based upon different origin. However, the aim articulated by the social workers is to treat people as ‘individuals’. Because of this ideal, gender and ethnicity are often treated as if they do not matter in relation to the work performed. At the same time, as this ideal is articulated, the work carried out by the social workers gets impregnated with conceptions, knowledge and praxises regarding both gender and ethnicity. This often manifests itself through static categorization on the basis of gender and ethnicity. Many of the social workers in the study are aware of and able to reflect upon how they themselves are part of the production and reproduction of certain discourses. However, regardless the ability to reflect, the ideal tends to shift towards becoming an ideology in the sense of notions regarding gender and ethnicity are in practical social work being taken for granted and unquestioned. This way of dealing with gender and ethnicity is also reproduced within the different tools used as part of an evidence-discourse, in this study exemplified through BBIC and Ester.

Keywords: gender, ethnicity, social work, evidence, evidence-based practice, ideology, discourse, ethnography, BBIC, Ester.

Marcus Herz, Institutionen för Juridik, Psykologi och Socialt arbete Örebro University, SE-701 82 Örebro, Sweden, marcus.herz@oru.se