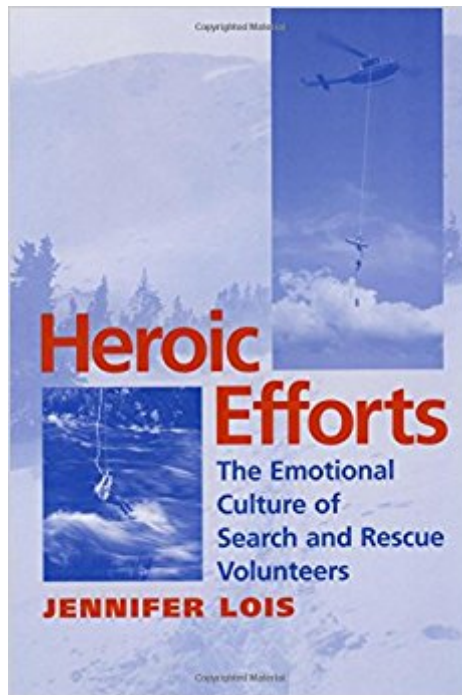


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Heroic Efforts: The Emotional Culture Of Search And Rescue Volunteers



Synopsis

Winner of the 2006 Outstanding Recent Contribution Award from the American Sociological Association, Sociology of Emotions Section Many search and rescue workers voluntarily interrupt their lives when they are called upon to help strangers. They awake in the middle of the night to cover miles of terrain in search of lost hikers or leave work to search potential avalanche zones for missing skiers, snowboarders, and snowmobilers in blizzard conditions. They often put their own lives in danger to rescue stranded, hypothermic kayakers and rafters from rivers. Drawing on six years of participant observation and in-depth interviews, Jennifer Lois examines the emotional subculture of "Peak," a volunteer mountain-environment search and rescue team. Rescuers were not only confronted by physical dangers, but also by emotional challenges, including both keeping their own emotions in check during crisis situations, and managing the emotions of others, such as those they were rescuing. Lois examines how rescuers constructed meaning in their lives and defined themselves through their heroic work. *Heroic Efforts* serves as an easy to understand sociological introduction to the ways emotions develop and connect us to our surroundings, as well as to the links between the concept of heroism and other sociological theories such as those on gender stereotypes and edgework.

Book Information

Paperback: 233 pages

Publisher: NYU Press (April 1, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0814751849

ISBN-13: 978-0814751848

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #185,390 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in Books > Law >

Administrative Law > Emigration & Immigration #50 in Books > Business & Money > Job

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Customer Reviews

"Jennifer Lois's outstanding in-depth ethnography of mountain search and rescue teams yields insight not only into the specific heroic culture of rescue workers, but also more generally into that of other risk-takers such as firefighters, police officers, and ER doctors. Lois

focuses on the way emotions drive some and impede others, how difficult emotions are handled in crisis situations and released afterwards, and the emotional currency or repayment between heroes and those they rescue. She skillfully shows the way heroism intertwines with masculinity, producing an organizational culture stratified by gender. Finally, she discusses the transference of the hero identity from the group to individual members and their subsequent self-effacement in a culture of false modesty when interacting with their support community.

—Patricia A. Adler, University of Colorado at Boulder

“Heroic Efforts began as a dissertation, but ends as one of the best book on emotions I have read in years. If you want a glimpse into the power of really good ethnography and the reason we need both qualitative and quantitative research, this book will provide you with both entertainment and sagacity.”

—Contemporary Sociology

“Lois takes readers inside the social world of search and rescue volunteers, offering sociological insight into topics such as gender, emotions, and identity.”

—American Journal of Sociology

“[Lois] examines how rescuers construct meaning in their lives and define themselves through their risky, demanding work.”

—Seattle Times

Jennifer Lois is Associate Professor of Sociology at Western Washington University.

This ethnography is the analysis of one woman’s 6-yr involvement with a Mountain Search and Rescue Team in Colorado. I recently joined a mountain search and rescue team, and so I wanted to understand what I would face. The book details the ways the team evaluates new recruits, how those recruits become a part of the team by assuming team identities and memes. I found it very helpful in this regard. Also, the sections on the emotions that arise in rescuers, in victims, and in victim’s families --and the analysis of these emotions and the responses to them-- were really insightful and useful. It is a fairly quick read. Recommended for anyone interested in understanding the culture of volunteer search and rescue teams.

A very interesting look at the culture of the search and rescue group. A well written, very descriptive case study.

This book is great! The stories are very exciting to read and Lois writes really well - I couldn’t put the book down! I’ve done search and rescue for years and am currently a professional fire fighter, and I connected to this book through many of my experiences. I also learned a lot in thinking about this stuff! She does a fantastic job talking about the interaction between rescuers and victims and

families. SAR work is very emotional and it's about time someone pointed that out. Heroes can be very affected by the things they experience and they need to realize it for their own emotional health. I thought the stuff about gender was going to be male-bashing, but it wasn't. It did point out the sexism in these risk taking fields, but I thought it was a fair and balanced portrayal of our world. Two thumbs up! A must-read for any EMS worker, but entertaining and informative regardless!

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