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# It's how people act out there that counts: examining linkages between emerging and protective organisationally desirable managerial masculinities and a reimagining of formal safety policies in the offshore oilfield.

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# “It’s how people act *out there* that counts”: Examining linkages between *emerging and protective* organisationally desirable managerial masculinities and a reimagining of formal safety policies in the offshore oilfield

Nicholas Norman Adams

Robert Gordon University, Garthdee Road, Aberdeen, Scotland, AB10 7QB, UK

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## ABSTRACT

The male-dominated occupations comprising North Sea offshore oilfield work have long been stereotyped as attracting rough, ‘hard’ and pro-risk identities. However, stereotyping of male identities in high-risk workspaces are challenged by recent literatures citing complex, hybrid and emerging notions of safety-positive masculinities. Industrial policies are often highlighted as the catalyst for rapidly reshaping men’s masculinities towards identities interlinked with performances of safety. Despite claims, few studies conduct structured policy analysis of safety-risk policies and pair this with interviews with policy makers. This study contributes to a body of existing literatures examining *how* formal oilfield safety policy influences construction of oilmen’s institutional masculinities. Structured Document Analysis (DA) of three core safety policies was conducted at a major Scottish oilfield drilling organisation. Semi-structured interviews with seven policy-maker-supervisors were also conducted onshore; exploring contents, construction, and formal-informal goals of policy. DA uncovered two distinct blueprints influencing workplace identity; a **dominant** blueprint promoting ‘traditional’ oilfield masculinities, and a secondary blueprint promoting **emerging** oilfield masculinities. Policy makers revealed complex, informal processes of managerial reimagining, reframing, and selective policy interpretations, leading to prioritisation and promotion of motifs from *only* the secondary policy blueprint in the worksite; upholding **emerging** protective and pro-safety workplace masculinities. This downplayed, minimised, and overrode the ‘traditional’ -more prevalent- dominant policy motifs. The importance of findings are discussed, as is a pathway for future organisational masculinities, policy and energy-safety research to take advantage of the methodological approach and learnings developed from this scholarship.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The offshore oilfield environment

Offshore oilfields are recurrently considered one of the most high-risk and safety critical industrial operational contexts in the world. Offshore platforms often drill for both natural hydrocarbons; oil and gas resources. Platforms are frequently connected to other drilling sites, and transfer hydrocarbons to a mainline terminal, resulting in a ‘chain’ of high-risk and safety-critical environments and workspaces that are inexorably linked together. Thus, a compound risk exists where an incident at one site causes manifold -knock-on- effects for others. Offshore oilfield environments are heavily mechanised, involving multiple -often overlapping- heavy machinery processes relied upon for various aspects of drilling: manipulating and manoeuvring heavy

equipment, pipes, fluids and assembling and dismantling tools, in addition to the required logistics of re-supplying food, water and essential materials from boats. Platforms also represent isolated and ‘closed’ institutional spaces. While industrial risk is compounded by the above factors, human risk is also intensified by the ‘inescapable’ nature of platforms; which, by design, require lengthy helicopter travel from the mainland to facilitate access and egress. On top of these considerations, work undertaken on platforms. Both the drilling and production labor is high-risk, representing and requiring high levels of skill, situation awareness and knowledge of energy acquisition processes to navigate management of well-pressures, a dynamic and heavily mechanised environment, and predict, mitigate and respond safely to risks from weather, technology and environment challenges (Adams, 2019; Gardner, 2003).

E-mail address: [N.adams5@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:N.adams5@rgu.ac.uk).

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## 1.2. Workplace identities, safety culture and organisational oilfield policies

Recent literatures have discussed a sea-change within high-risk industries towards performing safety, literatures acknowledging safety focus as exponentially increasing in late modernity compared with relatively 'lax' safety attitudes in early industrial operations (Nygren et al., 2017; Renecke et al., 2021; Hollnagel, 2018; Silbey, 2009). Poor past safety-focus has been explored as resultant from a lack of primary awareness of the potentially catastrophic nature of errors, a workforce preoccupation with task completion and progress -as opposed to prioritising risk-awareness-and-understandings- and collective perceptions that many high-risk workspaces are naturally hazardous and dangerous, and that, therefor, developing (or adhering to) extensive risk-mitigation strategies for these work locales was historically challenging and of lower priority, given the inherently risky nature of work (Laurence, 2005; Derdowski and Mathisen, 2023). For this final point, a multitude of organisational culture-focussed evidence exists, linking historical (and current) high-risk work to a high presence of organisational identities in safety critical work locales that uphold 'risky' and 'dangerous' notions of personhood and identity-typing (Hecht, 1997; Stergiou-Kita et al., 2015; Perrott, 2019; Barrett, 1996; Hinojosa, 2010; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Collinson, 1999; Lyng and Matthews, 2007; Nemoto, 2020).

For example, seminal work by Barrett (1996) discusses in-depth the interconnections between organisational structuring and traditions of the US Navy as constructing and nurturing specific dominant constructs of masculinity linked to risk-taking behaviours. Similarly, Hinojosa (2010) explores the institutional construction of men's masculinities within a variety of different US military contexts, roles, divisions and occupations, drawing connections between different aspects of organisational cultural norms, and risk-taking behaviours; prioritisation of physical toughness and resilience. Hinojosa identifies different and complex processes of masculine domination by those subscribed to notions upholding the above practices, and systemic subordination of those resisting them; these men not connected with or enacting accepted 'military masculinities' that represent accepted -dominant- behavioural stereotypes.

Scholarship more closely linked to the industrial energy and oilfield focus of this research also exists. For example, a fascinating research study by Filteau (2015) explores a "masculine crisis" (p. 1) of identity in the Marcellus Shale Region in Pennsylvania's Northern/North-eastern Appalachian Basin involving contradictions between established and new -incoming- male identities. Filteau examines the results of an influx of natural resource extraction workers newly operating within the locale, highlighting a new prevalence of largely negative, competitive and temporal resource-industry focussed masculinities. Rather than worker influx representing a boon for local industry, their presence instead constructed a local masculine crisis of identity, disrupting the established local structure of masculinities, leading to identity conflicts; subordination of the previously dominant masculinities that populated the local region and existed independent of the new 'oil identities'. As such, practices most connected with the identities of newly arrived resource extraction workers rapidly rose to dominance, becoming enacted as a new normal and subordinating the existing -and previously dominant- identities governing this region.

Direct evidence of identity challenges as interlinked with risk-taking and poor safety in high-risk oilfield work also exist. Studies by both Collinson (1999), and Miller (2004) discuss gendered divisions of labor in male-dominated oil and gas extraction industry between dominant and emerging notions of masculinity, these divisions reinforcing workplace practices that support toughness, self-interest, and resilience.

Collinson's ethnographic research work; taking place on a North Sea oil installation in 1990, demonstrated oilmen voicing concerns surrounding safety faced subordination; labelled as "sissies" (p. 584) due to their anti-risk and pro-safety leanings (Collinson, 1999). Further,

Collinson uncovered linkages between the performance of risk and danger, and workplace legitimacy and competence. For example, one oilman citing the "heavily macho culture" as underpinning thinking that "if you've not lost two fingers, and not had two divorces, you're not a real driller" (p. 584). Importantly, Collinson found that due to a combination of organisational surveillance and newly introduced safety pressures - oilmen were more likely to hide and minimise injuries and downplay safety, as opposed to conform to organisationally encouraged practices of 'speaking up' about safety concerns and engaging in safety practices to a greater degree. This conflict occurred because oilmen felt the new safety and surveillance policy mandates -representing a new *emerging* cultural identity- clashed with their *established* notions of what it meant to be an oilman.

Miller's work (Miller, 2004) discusses similar connections and conflict regarding the notion of *Frontier Masculinity*: exploratory motifs present in male-dominated natural resource extraction operations; her studies showing specific patterns of *established* masculine thinking and behaviours are interconnected with a collection of beliefs surrounding a dominant identity linked to natural resource extraction practices.

Similarly also, Stergiou-Kita et al. (2015), conducted a review of literatures highlighting connections between men, masculinities and health and safety within high-risk industries. They present a compelling block of arguments, delineating a variety of linkages between dominant *established* notions of male identities linking to uptake and normalisation of workplace risk-taking, downplaying of safety, toughness, normalisation of workplace injuries and discomforts, resistance to authority, and promotion of self-reliance. Importantly, they conclude by outlining the importance of considering men's *established* workplace masculinities and the issues with displacing these stable and ingrained patterns of workplace practice when developing and designing policies for improving safety and health.

Numerous other studies have connected established notions of specific workplace identities to low perceptions of risk and danger and the reframing of safety as inconsequential in a variety of high-risk contexts. Morioka (2014) presents a fascinating deconstruction of the role of a specific depiction of worker identity underpinning low risk perceptions of radiation and health risks following the Fukushima disaster. Similarly, Tyler and Fairbrother (2013) - in their research *Bushfires are men's business* discuss the role of some bushfire masculinities as defining a "stay and defend" (p. 114) stance towards bushfires, constructed by conceptualisation of men's responsibilities, motifs of fighting and resisting, physical strength and prowess, and notions of protection and independence.

Contrasting with the above studies, some research linking notions of masculinities and risk-taking, suggests that institutionally *established* masculinities governing high-risk workspaces can be rapidly transformed towards *emerging masculinities* following changes in formal organisational policy. Findings are important; running contrary to much established safety research highlighting policies in high-risk locales frequently struggle to generate meaningful cultural and behavioural change and impacts within work-sites. Considerations such as dissonance between the content of policy and the practicalities of work in a high-risk locale, and policy interfering with practical and established processes of work, and -as with Collinson's work- policies clashing with established workplace notions of identities, have all been noted as significant detractors from policy operating as a stand-alone mechanism of successful organisational change (Laurence, 2005; Collinson, 1999; Sasangohar et al., 2018; Hale, 1990; Hale and Borys, 2013; Hale et al., 2003; Reason, 1995; Gordon, 1998). Additional to these considerations, ethnographic research in high-risk locales has also demonstrated introductions of new safety policies, that challenge established pro-risk and anti-safety notions of workplace masculinity, are often met with circumvention, rejection and the development of 'work around' strategies to avoid engaging in policies propagating safety attitudes and practices (Collinson, 1999; Miller, 2004; Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018). While some studies suggest hybrid notions of masculinity

incorporating components of safety, these are frequently included into workers' sense-making in ways that undermine the influence of policy and prioritise personal factors as a catalyst for behavioural changes, such as care of the physical body and -importantly- preservation and maintenance of the physical ability to continue 'risky' work (Collinson, 1999; Somerville and Abrahamsson, 2007; Hanna et al., 2020; Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018).

Regarding literature that demonstrates positive identity and organisational change, Ely & Meyerson (Ely and Meyerson, 2010) present an engaging article exploring the "undoing" of gender upon two US-based offshore oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. The authors cite a safety initiative comprising operational and cultural changes implemented by the platform's owning and operating company. This initiative was undertaken to "systemically increase safety and effectiveness" (p. 7). Importantly, authors found implementation resulted in an "undoing" [a reversal of] previously pro-risk and low-safety practices linked to collective organisational dominant identity, as well as "a fundamental difference in orientation toward work, the self, and others" (p. 15). Scholarship presents a detailed deconstruction of masculinities in high-risk industries; history and explanation of the sites under study, and draws connections to salient masculinities literatures. Ely & Myerson's present evidence from oilfield workers highlighting the past *established* 'masculine' culture nature of the oilfields. This is positioned as "macho" (p. 15), with cultural preoccupations for establishing dominance, conflict, posturing, and a collective tendency to look down and isolate new 'unestablished' workers (p. 23). The authors discuss this culture as interlinked with risk-taking; high-rates of accidents and injuries. Following historic unhappiness and frustration with the state of operations on the two platforms under study, company management implemented a safety strategy: "Safety 2000" (p. 9). Ely & Myerson explain the benefits of this strategy and rationale for selecting the sites of investigation [14, p. 9]. The authors present collective workplace masculinity as a historical singular, describing this as being "undone" when traversing towards a singular, more 'positive' and pro-safety collective notion of identity as facilitated by policy-shifts. Oilfield workers are depicted as discussing masculinity in more collective, open, and accepting terms following 'Safety 2000', largely -and rapidly, without resistance- accepting new safety rules and standards, and demonstrating safety integrity, collective empathy, team-working mutual care-giving and humility (see p. 18 for key examples).

While Ely & Meyerson present transitions from *established* to *emerging* notions of identity as influenced by policy to be relatively resistance-free, studies by other scholars have highlighted the juxtapositions between conflicting notions of masculinities and how identity notions come together, clash and operate in tandem to develop hybridised notions of workplace identities.

For example, Ashcraft (2005) highlights the importance of exercising care when suggesting identity shifts linked to policy, without first -and like Collinson- defining and exploring resistance, and establishing the pathway by which identity shifts are mediated by policy. To illustrate this point, Ashcraft presents a case of "resistance through consent" (p. 79) in commercial aviation pilots, where new mandatory safety initiatives challenged aviators' risky notions of 'pilot masculinities' via the introduction of CRM (Crew Resource Management) training.<sup>1</sup> Pilots described CRM as "a joke among most pilots" (p. 79). Pilots revealed during training: "the guys will usually break into some 'camp' song to make fun of it" (p. 79). If pilots were supportive of CRM they faced subordination, with the suggestion that their identities did not conform with *established* 'approved' notions of pilot masculinities. However, anxieties surrounding the potential for pilots to be grounded (i.e.

prevented from flying) due to safety non-compliance led them to outwardly embrace CRM, depicting a hybridised display of institutional identity marrying *established* and *upgraded* masculine understandings. However, within this hybridisation, pilots found ways to resist safety; reframing safety mandates in ways that sustained normative risky *established* flight practices, integrating these in subtle ways into pilots' performance of CRM safety processes. This preserved -and upheld- notions of risky masculinities the CRM initiative sought to eradicate (see page 80).

Similarly, Wasserman (Wasserman et al., 2018) analysed the debriefing practices of Israeli air force pilots; like Ely and Meyerson (2010) initially adopting the notion of "undoing" gender. This 'undoing' term is used to describe men's 'top-down' adoption of new safety standards displacing a risky established workplace pilot masculinity, with risk -apparently- being eradicated following debriefing processes that prioritised safety. However, limitations became evident when men's 'bottom-up' masculine practices were examined. Like Ashcraft (2005), aviators constructed hybrid identities that resisted safety. Pilots outwardly complied with new "soft" (p.1) safety protocols. However, they retained competitiveness, rationality, and patronizing behaviours, performing these in ways that permitted -and justified- their inclusion into the new policy processes. Wasserman concludes conflicting identity processes are merged into a single "upgraded" institutional identity. Referencing Ely & Meyerson, Wasserman refers to this as a "redoing" as opposed to an "undoing" of hegemonic masculinity. Research examples suggest resistance practices are more complex than refusing or leaving work. Instead, men may construct hybrid identities. These masculinities allow workers to retain employment, yet practise resistance against new policy mandates covertly.

### 1.3. Goals of this research

The above studies demonstrate much research has been conducted linking policy with masculinities. However, the picture of a policy-masculinities relationship is somewhat blurred. Collective organisational resistance to new institutional safety policies, where these contravene existing established practices and require the reformulating of established workplace masculinities, is well established in existing studies, alongside emerging research demonstrating the power-struggles between *established* and *emerging* notions of male workplace identities. Conversely, rapid and significant reformations in identity and practices occurring following the introduction of organisational initiatives appears to have little evidence for support. Appraising literatures collectively, little functional information about the processes by which policies become practice is known when attempting to link policy-masculinities-cultural change. In all studies, little is known about the structure of policies, how these are connected to practice in the work site and the timeline of masculine shifts, negotiations and resistance that occurs within the context of policy consistencies and contradictions. Developing a more in-depth, nuanced picture of the structure of policies, and within-policy contradictions and consistencies relating to identity production is a salient next step for building upon existing literatures. This perspective examines how policy becomes practice and develops a deepened understanding of the production of hybridised workplace masculinities, where these can be identified.

This study represents an in-depth deconstruction of three key organisational policies for a major UK-North Sea Drilling organisation. Seven interviews with policy makers were conducted to understand the aims, goals, and content of policy and how this translates from paper to practice and from onshore policy to offshore actions. The following section presents the methods used for this research. Then follows a deconstruction of policy documents developed from policy analysis and a distillation of how the contents of policy relate to the promotion of two distinct notions of workplace masculinity. Following this, delineation of the pathway whereby policy becomes workplace practice is presented and discussed, as informed by interviews with policy makers. Then

<sup>1</sup> CRM is an organisational psychology initiative that many airlines adopted from the late 1980s. It consists of a set of behavioural norms and standards that have been shown to improve safety performance and interpersonal communication (Flin et al., 2008).



follows a discussion and conclusion of the work that raises some important findings with regards to the mediums and mechanisms by which policy becomes linked to male workplace identities and the practices linkages underpin. Comparisons are made with existing research and a pathway for future policy research and implementation is presented to proactively build on findings of this scholarship.

## 2. Methodology

Access to a major North Sea oil and gas organisation was secured by the author. This organisation will be referred to by the pseudonym DMC. Permission to analyse policies – as well as to interview policy makers, was granted by DMC. A research access agreement was co-developed by DMC and signed by the researcher (and DMC representatives). Three central policies governing offshore oilfield safety and risk were provided. To maintain confidentiality of DMC and their practices, policies will be referred to by alternative titles: Policy 1: *Health and Safety*, Policy 2: *Keeping Alive*, and Policy 3: *Environment and Group Safety*. Policies were provided in digital format following a meeting with a HSE [Health, Safety, Environment] team.

Where required, policies were extracted from their native file format and converted to plain text. These were imported into the software programme NVivo. Document Analysis was selected to analyse policies. DA is a structured, qualitative, analytical process that prioritises identifying and extracting prominent themes and frameworks from formal documents and has shown success analysing formal industrial policies (Bowen, 2009; Oczkowski et al., 2018). DA provides a systematic framework for sense-making of document content and is well-demonstrated as a means of qualitative data triangulation when combined with semi-structured interviews (Bowen, 2009; Oczkowski et al., 2018; Tracy, 2019).

An in-depth staged coding process for DA was utilised in accordance with Tracey et al. (Tracy, 2019) Policy documents were iteratively and repeatedly reviewed to dissect and establish overt -and covert- themes within structure and language. Emerging motifs were identified and initial start codes developed and refined over repeated readings. Texts were coded for emphasis on specific instruction and intention using the high-level emerging frame codes: 'Safety', 'Risk', 'Actions', and 'Suggestions'. Over time, sub-themes developed (e.g. collective vs. individual focus, ownership vs. accountability) and data were coded into new high-level categories of 'Safety', 'Risk', 'Overt', 'Covert' and 'Positive Intention' (organisationally desirable) and 'Negative Intention' (organisationally undesirable). Penultimately, extracted document language was reanalysed and themes and codes were re-arranged and networked to highlight differences between disparate policies and policy-sections, their language and symbolism, and their overt and covert priorities. Finally, each sub-theme was then appraised against the formal and intended messages of the document as overtly stated in policy text.

Following DA of formal policies, seven semi-structured interviews with policy makers were conducted, to establish congruence and resistance with analysed policy narratives. Further, interviews were conducted to hear, *in policy maker's own words* the purpose and intention of formal policies, how this may differ from the overt content and focus of policies, and how policies translate from onshore, paper-based construction, to become meaningful intentions and actions in the worksite. Above all, interviews asked policy makers about oilfield safety, risk, and institutional masculinities to hear -again, in policy maker's own words- how *they felt* policies tangibly affected safety, risk, and shaped -or did not shape- offshore oilfield identities, and whether identity shifts were an intended or unintended goal of policies.

Each interview lasted at least one hour, some vastly exceeding this. In several cases, follow-up interviews were conducted with policy makers, where participants advised they wanted to elaborate on things they had said following a first interview, or got in touch to advise they had more to discuss. Interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder and transcribed by this researcher. Raw text was imported into

NVivo. Interviews were coded using the six-stage thematic content analysis method popularised by Braun and Clarke (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun et al., 2022). Coding began inductively, beginning with start codes generated from thematic analysis. As analysis progressed, emergent themes were mapped to a network of emerging codes, these were then cross-matched to the structured codes developed from DA of policies, to identify congruencies and dichotomies between policy contents, language, structure and intentions, and the discussions, explanations and intentions of policy as explained and expanded upon by policy makers. Utilising this dual -interconnected- framework approach is supported in other literatures, particularly Bowen's works highlighting combined content and thematic analysis of formal policies and interview data (Bowen, 2009). This approach presented a blended, thorough, and balanced analysis for interrogating correlations and contradictions between prevalent policy themes and the core research topics of safety, risk and organisational identity change. All materials were stored on an encrypted network drive, and only the author had access. All participants signed consent forms, agreeing to the anonymised use and publication of their interview data.

## 3. Policy analysis

### 3.1. Overview of key policy documents

DA was conducted on three policies: Policy 1: *Health and Safety* (HAS), Policy 2: *Keeping Alive* (KAL), and Policy 3: *Environment and Group Safety* (EGS). Policies represented an overarching safety commitment strategy entitled "The DMC way"; reflecting six core DMC values and goals. These were "Health and Safety, Valuing all People, Performance Improvement, Environmental Stewardship, Business Integrity, and Sustainable Growth". Policies governed all UK offshore drilling platforms. Interviews with policy makers clarified safety policies as a relatively 'recent'<sup>2</sup> mandate. Policies were (re)developed in the wake of the Piper Alpha disaster of 1988.<sup>3</sup> Prior, safety policies existed, but were "less followed" and "less of a priority". Policy makers described the historic oilfield culture of this time as: "a bit wild west" and "more tolerant of risk-taking". Creation dates of policies were difficult to estimate. This was due to practices of developing new mandates from the frameworks of established policies - additions occurred as new hazards became highlighted. Despite this, each policy document was certified as current by an HSE officer and contained a "last reviewed" date. Policies were stored and accessed electronically as part of an intranet-based safety system that all staff had access to. Additionally, policies were available in paper-based form on offshore platforms.

Policy 1: The HAS policy, began by outlining DMC's belief that all accidents are preventable. For this to be achieved, individual commitment from each employee to subscribe to this belief is mandatory. Commitment represented a transactional relationship: DMC "invest in equipment, systems of work and personal training" and employees and contractors "agree to use equipment as intended, work in compliance with safety standards, procedures and safe systems of work, and actively

<sup>2</sup> Safety policies, were referred to recurrently as 'recent' but this term is used uniquely in the oilfield. For example, 'recent' was also used to describe safety improvements and interventions developed over thirty-five years ago. Similarly, 'recent' was used to refer to advances in oil extraction mechanics and automation. The use of the term to reflect changes occurring many years ago is contextualised by the history of 'modern' oil extraction practices originating in the 15th century.

<sup>3</sup> Piper Alpha was a North Sea oil and gas production platform. An explosion on the platform occurred on the 6th of July 1988. 167 workers died during the disaster with sixty-one surviving. It has been recognised as the worst offshore disaster recorded globally. Investigation led to the publication of The Cullen Report: a document detailing 106 improvements; many highlighting requirements for improved safety practices and an increasing governance by new safety policies.

commit to available training". Upon entering this relationship, employees must take responsibility for their own and others safety as the number one priority of operations. Those in leadership positions are tasked with additional priorities. Supervisors are "entrusted with the health and safety of the people who report to them". To be "fully effective in their role" supervisors and management must provide "positive leadership for their people". Finally, all DMC employees must "operate and maintain equipment in a condition most likely to ensure the health and safety of the team". Through commitment to these policy stipulations, DMC professed "Safe, effective and trouble-free operations" as 100% achievable.

Policy 2: The KAL policy, focussed on the importance of adhering to five -key- safety dimensions when working offshore. The first element was to hold pre-shift briefings before every operation, regardless of how complex or straightforward tasks appear. Policy focus emphasised understanding task-scope, and engaging in effective task-planning to minimise possible risks. A second policy element mandated "area safe" inspections, highlighting all staff must routinely check the condition; equipment and work environment on a weekly basis for any possible irregularities or faults. A third policy element focussed on safe lifting operations and the importance of "getting lifting operations right the first time". All lifting operations, regardless of how simple they appear, must be planned and risk-assessed. A fourth policy element introduced the concept of "tool-box talks" (TBT)<sup>4</sup>: "one of DMC's last defences against incidents". A final, fifth policy element mandated ongoing, active monitoring of tasks. Self-supervision, and formal managerial supervision of individual actions, were highlighted as ensuring tasks are *always* conducted in congruence with DMC policy and procedures.

Policy 3: The EGS policy, focussed on protecting the natural and human-made environments where work is conducted. Policy mandated that workers "[understand the] hazards offshore operations represent to the physical environment, and work together to minimise any adverse impacts". Policy dictated that **all personnel** will ensure contractors and sub-contractors have the necessary training and competencies to "recognise their responsibility, and to conform with policy". Every individual offshore is responsible for "designing equipment and procedures to ensure protection of the environment is addressed as daily business" and "[to] avoid the creation of uncontrolled discharge of waste, emissions and effluents to the environment".

### 3.2. Key themes in formal DMC policies

Three prominent policy themes were identified using DA: individual responsibility and accountability; monitoring and surveillance; and mitigating risk through teamwork. Overt mentions of masculinity; interactions between masculinity, safety, and risk were absent in policies. Upon asking policy makers why this was the case, they all advised DMC did not explicitly recognise a link between workplace identity, safety and risk-taking. PA, a maintenance superintendent and policy maker who had worked offshore for fifteen years explained:

*"I don't think [DMC] recognises any link between masculinity and risk. There is no policy guidance on it. Should there be? ... yeah, possibly ..."*

<sup>4</sup> Toolbox Talk (TBT) refers to a pre-work safety initiative. TBTs comprise a meeting bringing together all workers involved in planning a task to ensure everyone knows their required role, safety measures are in place, and all risks are assessed and recorded. Each TBT results in a detailed Toolbox Risk Identification Card (TRIC); documenting all agreed risks and risk-solutions. It is signed by all staff present for the TBT. Following a TBT, a "time out for safety" (ToS) or "stop the job" (StJ) may be called at any time -by any worker- who feels task requirements and scope have altered from those discussed at the TBT meeting, or if they feel the task has become unsafe in any way.

#### 3.2.1. Individual responsibility and accountability

Fourteen references to policy imparting risk as an individual responsibility were coded. This theme was prevalent, with numerous duplications across all three policy documents. Phrases such as "individual commitment", "personal responsibility" and "individual ownership" exemplify policy as speaking directly to individual workers as singled-out micro entities within a larger work system. However, this wording was typically followed by references clarifying that individual responsibility extends to preserving the collective safety of the macro workforce. For example, "[DMC] workers ensure health and safety of the whole team" and "maintain a safe environment for all [DMC] employees and contractors".

Within DMC policy, references to risk as an individual responsibility were rarely documented without subsequent reference to individual accountability. Eleven references to accountability were coded, including in the HAS policy, which opened with: "Our firm belief is that all incidents are preventable and our activities can be incident free every day, 365 days a year, in all our locations worldwide". This was echoed in elements of other policies, particularly the KAL policy, which stated the importance of "getting [...] operations right the first time", and "all [DMC] employees and contractors work in compliance with our standards, procedures, safe systems of work and core values". Applying DA, linguistically, each section outlining a policy requirement represents a statement constructed in the certain present tense. For example, "workers ensure safety policy is adhered to at all times" (p.1 of the EGS policy). The linguistic imperative of DMC policies presents safe operations as more than an organisational goal. Incidents and accidents are not expected. If they occur, policy constructs this breach of acceptable practice as an individual violation, which shifts the risk-burden from the organisational to an individual level. By default, the individual ceases to operate in compliance with acceptable institutional behaviours dictated by policy, and may be held accountable. DMC's written policy formally promotes the anchoring and internalising of institutional risk burdens as an individual responsibility.

#### 3.2.2. Monitoring and surveillance

Within combined policies, nine explicit references were made to monitoring and surveillance. For example, "monitoring allows [DMC] to ensure we operate safely and effectively by checking we correctly follow the company's policies and procedures", and "managers and supervisors will be visible on the work-site asking questions about how the task has been planned and conducted". Linguistic structure and presentation maintain the imperative tone and stress the importance of collective responsibility in monitoring. Policies are clear in communicating enforcement of policy as the justification for surveillance and monitoring. Four almost identical passages proclaim this. For example, "task monitoring is essential to ensure safe operations", and "active monitoring is necessary to promote safety". These justifications interlink with individual responsibility and accountability. This presents as a support structure to ensure all workers remain policy compliant through peer-surveillance. However, policy is absent of any consequences that may arise should individuals become non-compliant with policy. Despite this, coded texts contain sporadic acknowledgements that policy may not always be correctly followed. For example, "monitoring task completions allows [DMC] to check that safe and effective safety policy and practice is being followed".

Importantly, policy references are made to the formal hierarchy in the workplace. Four separate categories of workers were coded, in addition to the standard category of "employee". These include: manager, senior supervisor, supervisor and line supervisor. Each worker designation has a different level of authority and increased acceptance of responsibility and accountability for others. Authority is reckoned by the complexity of the task supervised, volume of people under supervision, and the seniority of those under supervision. For example, "Inspections by managers reaffirm safety standards and help supervisors understand the standards they are expected to maintain" and

“Supervisors must make sure all staff are familiar with work activities planned. This is essential for safe operations”. Policy positions monitoring to occur at all levels in the workplace hierarchy. Supervisory and subordinate work divisions are suggested as a naturalised and formally sanctioned hierarchy, with hierarchical position determined by the volume of responsibility and accountability workers assume over others.

### 3.2.3. Mediating risk through teamwork

Seven references to teamwork were coded in policies. For example, “Only through the collective effort of all DMC employees and contractors can we create safe work-sites, and deliver safe, effective and trouble-free operations” and “Everyone must be involved in completing tasks together”. In this theme, linguistic presentation differs from the previous two themes. Coded language discussing teamwork represents less aggressively polarised statements and departs from certain or assumptive present tense. Instead, policy language includes the worker. Offshore staff are here considered an equal party necessary to achieve organisational goals. The term “collective” is used multiple times. This contrasts to previous instructive and authoritarian language.

Policies impart teamwork as the primary mechanism by which risk is mitigated. Teamwork represents a functional tool to combat risk. This departs from nondescript instructions to simply follow and monitor policy to avoid risk and remain policy compliant. Instead, policy proffers instructions as to how to work as a team. For example, each section of the KAL policy contained a small “how” section on teamwork, highlighting instructional statements. These include: “**New workers can be used as a fresh pair of eyes**” and “**Communication between all members of a team is essential to ensure a task is completed safely**”. Policy serves to promote inclusivity by highlighting the function of potentially marginalised groups in team activities; ensuring new workers are included by demonstrating the unique functions they serve in achieving the collective goal of safety. Similarly, policy promotes contact between all workers engaged in a task regardless of any positioning in formal workplace hierarchies or informal social divisions – contrasting with the individualistic and ownership-based motifs of the first two policy themes. In this theme, employees are *asked* for their commitment, are presented individual policy compliance as a transactional relationship, and are recognised for their importance and commitment in practically demonstrating the functional role of teamwork, in realising overarching DMC organisational goals of safety.

### 3.3. Two blueprints for oilfield masculinity

The below sections discuss the contents of formal DMC policies. Following distillation of the contents of policies using DA, I employ the term *Blueprint* to refer to the ideal social conditions and behaviours upheld and enforced by each policy theme; encouraging workers to behave and enact their workplace performances of ‘an oilman’ per the rules and norms set by policy.

#### 3.3.1. Blueprint one: the primary dominant and established masculinity of formal policy: resilience, individualisation, hierarchies and competitiveness

Via practical instruction and policy language, the two policy themes of individual responsibility and accountability, and monitoring and surveillance promote specific organisational motifs. Themes are correlative with depictions of undesirable behavioural practices linked to masculinities in high-risk locales (Somerville and Abrahamsson, 2007; Hanna et al., 2020; Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018). Formal hierarchies also encourage specific notions of masculinities in male-dominated and dangerous workplaces, that have been shown to be linked to risk-taking and competitive hierarchies (Stergiou-Kita et al., 2015; Perrott, 2019; Barrett, 1996; Hinojosa, 2010; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Collinson, 1999; Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018). Further, policy supports individualisation via language suggesting workers internalise responsibility and accountability for risk. This is achieved by using authoritarian, instructive and assumptive language. Concurrently,

policy demands workers accept responsibility for their own safety, yet simultaneously positions workers as equally accountable for the safety of others. The actions of others carry the potential to locate individual workers culpable outside their own behaviours. Such liability may promote a position of competitive surveillance anchored by accountability avoidance, which Collinson (1999) notes constructs tensions between different organisational notions of oilfield masculinities; the established norms and practices of ‘traditional’ oilfield identity cultures, and a new ‘enforced’ notion of collective safety and monitoring, which contravenes and threatens established oilfield identity culture. Beyond this thinking -and considering DMC policy- competitive surveillance also encourages stratified inward and outward safety gazes. Each worker is oriented to view their own position in the workplace as an individually responsible and accountable entity, yet view other workers as united members of a collective that must be monitored for indications of risk-taking. Policies set-out individualisation, peer-surveillance and hierarchies as exhibiting a symbiotic relationship. Legislation imparts surveillance and monitoring as promoting a pathway for workers to move upwards within a formally defined hierarchy. Individualisation is presented as a rational product of established formal hierarchies where resilience and self-reliance are valued. Hierarchical status is determined by workers’ responsibility over others. As workers climb the formal hierarchy they assume responsibility for larger volumes of individuals who themselves are responsible for others. Scaling with responsibility, supervisors spend more time outwardly surveying the work of others than internally monitoring their own activities.

Despite the above, policy positions supervisor’s surveillance activities as naturally co-occurring with increased individual responsibility and accountability for others’ actions. This concentrates individual responsibilities for supervisors. Policy language such as “ensure”, “entrusted”, “responsible” and “verify” are used to anchor accountabilities to the individual supervisor responsible for monitoring hierarchically subordinate workers for risk. In contrast, language such as “collective”, “everyone”, “all others” and “group” are used to describe the collective group of workers over whom supervisors assume safety responsibilities. Pressures on supervisors are thus two-fold. Firstly, the higher supervisory oilmen rise within the institutional hierarchy, the more isolated and less connected they become from the teams they supervise. Secondly, the more responsibility supervisors assume, the greater their exposure to risks of being held accountability for the actions of others they are formally distanced from. Policy constructs motifs of individualisation, pressure-coping resilience and self-reliance as desirable traits by which individuals move upward within a formally defined hierarchy. Considering the studies discussed linking specific notions of institutional-organisational forms of masculinities with risk-taking, competitive masculine hierarchies, notions of hypermasculinity and negative behavioural practices (Hinojosa, 2010; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Collinson, 1999; Lyng and Matthews, 2007; Nemoto, 2020; Somerville and Abrahamsson, 2007; Hanna et al., 2020; Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018), this policy blueprint appears to develop ideal institutional-social conditions for the flourishing of these identity forms.

#### 3.3.2. Blueprint two: the secondary emerging masculinity of formal policy: teamwork, inclusivity, mutual support and flat structures

The third theme from DMC policy is *mitigating risk through teamwork*. This theme builds a narrative contradicting the first two policy positions; promoting organisational motifs in opposition to descriptors of undesirable and pro-risk notions of organisational masculine identities. Policy reframes the terms within which safety was bounded by the dominant policy themes. Instead of individuals assuming accountability, safety represents collective responsibility divided between all workers and contractors. Policy anchors this notion to workers’ individual thinking, by professing risk-free operations are dependent on workers conceptualising safety collectively. Policy also departs from concentrating on how risk is internally framed as the responsibility of individual workers. Reversely, policy language refers to workers completing



tasks in collaboration instead of isolation. Collaborative work practices are introduced to foster connections and understandings between workers. Communication, working together and inclusivity between all employees are prioritised. Where previous policy themes develop distinct formal hierarchies dividing individuals by resilience and accountability, these are retrospectively downplayed in this theme. Saliently, and opposite to the policy findings highlighted by Collinson (1999), and in the established DMC policy blueprint, references to surveillance and monitoring are recontextualised from embedding in formal, competitive hierarchies. Surveillance is repositioned as belonging to a flat organisational structure - a natural component of workers looking out for each other, and caring for each other's wellbeing (as opposed to structured modes of supervisory and organisational surveillance and monitoring). Language such as "collective responsibility", "team work", "looking out for each other" and "working safely together" frame surveillance and monitoring as helpful, non-competitive, collectively protective and anti-risk. Language promotes equality in worker relations and mitigates requirements for employees to assume greater risk and responsibility to climb formal hierarchal levels, as demonstrated in some masculinities-industry studies (Stergiou-Kita et al., 2015; Perrott, 2019; Barrett, 1996; Hinojosa, 2010; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Lyng and Matthews, 2007; Nemoto, 2020; Somerville and Abrahamsson, 2007; Hanna et al., 2020; Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018). Inclusive language is concentrated when policy discusses that all individuals hold equal authority to stop work and discuss safety concerns if they perceive any risks. This is regardless of their individual status in formal and informal hierarchies, with policy language reminding workers they have a right to remain safe within the workplace.

Some existing research upholds formal policies as containing a single theme that guides workplace behaviours and identities (Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Filteau, 2014). Few studies demonstrate contradictory themes in policies (Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018). The Document Analysis of DMA policies reveals two contrasting themes suggesting different, and antagonistic blueprints, that may lay the organisational foundations for oilfield workers to develop stratified and -possibly contradictory- forms of masculinities. To qualify this: the dominant blueprint prioritises motifs correlative with undesirable organisational identity practices (Collinson, 1999; Lyng and Matthews, 2007; Nemoto, 2020; Miller, 2004; Morioka, 2014). The less dominant, secondary blueprint prioritises themes most frequently correlated with desirable workplace practices and identities (Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Filteau, 2014, 2015; Miller, 2004; Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018). At this stage, it is unclear how oil workers offshore select which components of policy to enact, and how policy notions link to the construction and upholding of specific notions of oilfield identity.

#### 4. Formal policy: from paper to practice

##### 4.1. Policy maker interviews: downplaying formal policy narratives and the importance of supervisors in policy delineation

Interviews with policy makers clarified how DMC policies translate from onshore paper-based documents, to tangible practices in the offshore worksite. The interview group consisted of two maintenance superintendents, a global safety manager, a group policy authority, a maintenance manager, and two offshore rig managers.<sup>5</sup> These individuals were all involved in the construction and creation of policy; splitting responsibilities between supervisory roles on offshore platforms and senior policy roles in office locations. All participants were male, except one participant.

Most crucially, all policy makers interviewed recognised that the

explicit content of policies carried **minimal influence** over the actions of the offshore workforce. This was a key discovery. For example, one participant: CH<sup>6</sup> - an engineer by background - who had worked offshore for twelve years and on over fifty platforms across the globe, explained:

*"The written policies ... Yeah [breathes out, as if exasperated]. It's all well and good having bits of paper, but it's how people act out there that counts. And that's what we [supervisors] teach you when you get there: how to keep safe, how to keep others safe. That's all learned on the job. You'll be buddied up, part of a team and you'll learn it as you go. It's a dangerous environment and it can be very dangerous. You need to stay aware; the policies can't show you that"*

Notably, the above quote highlights the importance of supervisor's role; that supervisors prioritise teamwork and keeping people safe. Language indicates written policies are perceived as separate constructs from the practicalities of imparting safety in the oilfield. This was supported in narratives from all other policy interviews. Another policy maker: RO - who had worked offshore for five years, in a variety of global positions, stated:

*"As offshore organisational climate, environment, work and practicalities constantly shift, there are just so many variables that you don't see until you get out there, you can't know, all these eventualities aren't going to be effectively communicated or encompassed into a single written policy package. [...] We have the policies, yes. But that's all they are: bits of paper. The supervisors out there, they know what to take from them in order to keep the guys safe. They trust them [the supervisors] and we trust them to look after the guys"*

RO's comment: that supervisors "know what to take from" policy is crucial. This provided the first indication that supervisors serve as an intermediary medium by which policy is translated from paper into practice; a narrative replicated consistently in all interviews.

Another interviewee: MI - provided an in-depth account of how policy reaches the offshore environment. MI had worked in the North Sea for over twenty years; recently making the change into primarily office-based work. He explained:

*"Written policy can be quite onerous, you will do this, and that. You might not take everything in, that's why the average guy offshore might not have much contact with it. But, when you go offshore you get your Part B [offshore induction, upon first arrival to the oilfields], and this is where things really matter. That's when you learn safety"*

He elaborated that written policy represents a "formal paper exercise" distinctly different to how offshore workers are practically induced into offshore life. His explanation of the "Part B" suggested practical performances of safety are valued higher than demonstrating understanding -or adhering- to formal policy. This suggested a devaluing of written policies in favour of the way these are *practiced*. MI went on:

*"Once on board [the platform] [...] you're buddied and you do your familiarisation ... and this is all part of our policies. So, when you get new people coming offshore it's all about making sure that they get practically on-boarded to [The DMC Way]. That they get every opportunity to understand that we don't want them to be this macho, risky offshore-type"*

Salient for investigating links between policy, safety and workplace identities, narratives explained oilfield inductions as functioning to reduce machismo and risk-taking. Inductions represented newly arriving personnel offshore being taken through a tour of the platform, being given a 'site safety standards card' to sign; indicating they understood the mandatory safety protocols offshore and the possible risks, and being given an informal lecture and pointers regarding possible risks and the best ways to stay safe offshore by established oilfield workers in

<sup>5</sup> I have chosen to provide minimal information about these participant's job roles, to maximise protection for their anonymity.

<sup>6</sup> These initials are all pseudonyms, constructed for this publication - they are not the interviewee's real initials.



supervisory roles. This is important given that there are two blueprints in formal policy, the more dominant of which suggests negative masculine motifs. This was explicitly discussed with the same participant (MI), including an overview of the differences between the two policy blueprints. However, MI dismissed the influence of any negative policy themes, instead placing emphasis on informal inductions offshore prioritising safety motifs. He said:

*“OK, look: we communicate written policy via offshore supervisor inductions. [...] It's up to the supervisors to interpret, communicate and enforce policy down to the teams”*

He continued:

*“Yeah, maybe there are two sets of different encouragement [in policies]. But that macho, competitive, every-man-for-himself thing, we don't really want that out there. [...] It's much more about teamwork and keeping everyone safe”*

Policy maker narratives all position policies as informally communicated -and enforced- to oilfield workers via supervisors. Supervisors selectively prioritise themes from formal policies, devaluing others. References to downplaying are notable of negative motifs matching -and referencing- the dominant blueprint of formal policy, such as competition, individualisation, and formal hierarchies. Opposite to this, themes of teamwork and collective responsibility were prioritised in discussions with policy makers. Importantly, policy makers position that oilfield inductions clarify desirable and undesirable forms of masculinity, linked to specific practices selected from formal policy documents. Narratives highlight macho organisational motifs as undesirable, and “not what [DMC] wants”, with policy makers suggesting masculinities are inferred from supervisory interpretations of policy; positioning masculinities -and practices- in the oilfield as inverse to notions of risky -undesirable- notions of identities that may typically be expected going by existing research, and are often depicted to govern dangerous workplaces (Stergiou-Kita et al., 2015; Hinojosa, 2010; Collinson, 1999). This suggests -as others have positioned- inclusive and emerging ‘new’ forms of oilfield masculinities are correlative with safety practices, and that desirable oilfield identities; institutional masculinities, and safety identities may be prioritised -hybridised- by supervisors as a required -yet selective- way to enact formal DMC policy locally in the offshore workplace (Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018; Filteau, 2014).

#### 4.2. Emerging, protective, and organisationally desirable managerial masculinities and reimagining formal oilfield safety policies

Supervisory policy makers were asked directly what led them to prioritise themes from the non-dominant blueprint of written policy. Policy makers painted a complex picture of institutional and organisational oilfield identity shifts recently occurring, and the structural changes in the oilfield with regards to changing identities and the process of identity negotiations between *established* and *emerging* notions of masculinities.

Policy makers maintained that prioritisation of protective, anti-risk; organisationally desirable themes from formal policy was a -largely collective, cultural workforce- reaction to prevent a resurgence of a dominant, past masculine ‘high-risk’ oilfield culture. However, change was neither immediate or total in effect, and was not directly influenced by written, formal policy. Instead, masculinities aligned with safety and anti-risk notions of workplace practices and enactments were upheld as most accepted and organisationally desirable offshore. Conversely, undesirable identities aligning with risk-taking were demonised. This was because these identities reflected a past outdated culture that previously reigned with dominance in the oilfield. This was referred to as the culture of “The North Sea Tigers”.

CH, the offshore maintenance supervisor provided an explanation of The Tigers. “Tigers” referred to most oilmen in UK North Sea during the “golden age of oil”. This period stretched from the inception of North Sea

drilling in the 1960s, when things were “very gung-ho” until the late-1990s where “safety became more of a priority”. He positioned this masculinity as representing the most subscribed notion during this time. CH explained:

*“Drilling then was about The Tigers. The North Sea Tigers. Traditionally that's someone who works hard, parties hard. They go offshore and work the drilling room floor. It's a guy who'll be flinging his equipment about, right up near the drill-pipe in the danger zone and just slap you on the back. The kind of guy who doesn't need a break. He'll be like: no, I'll just work through it. That kind of tough guy”*

CH's language exemplifies that portraying toughness was important for Tigers. This was achieved by displays of strength and confidence, encapsulated by the casual carelessness of “flinging” dangerous equipment around; these motifs match with much existing research of identities and risk in high-hazard industry (Stergiou-Kita et al., 2015; Barrett, 1996; Collinson, 1999; Miller, 2004).

Another policy maker, MI - the male rig manager, recounted a similar explanation of Tigers:

*“Oh yeah, Tigers. That was there when I first started. There was a lot of: I can lift more than you, I can do this more than you, I can drink more than you. I can fight ten guys, and yes, I remember occasions where: I'll take you round the back and I'll kick the hell out of you. I remember all that”*

MI elaborated on how risk displays encouraged competition and one-upmanship. Tigers competed on an individual basis for who could be the most masculine, who could perform the most “manly feats”. Competition was predicated on physical capabilities of endurance, resilience, domination and strength, which sometimes escalated into physical threats.

‘Tiger culture’ echoes themes from the dominant masculine blueprint extrapolated from DMC policies. Like policy, the culture of the Tigers was built around individualisation and informal hierarchies. Displays of risk, strength, and resilience generated respect and facilitated local social mobility. Like in formal policy, Tigers appear to maintain an inward gaze to police themselves for safety behaviours. Akin to some existing studies (Barrett, 1996; Hinojosa, 2010; Collinson, 1999; Miller, 2004) safety motifs left oilmen vulnerable to subordination and loss of local status. Concurrently, workers outwardly survey the behaviours of all others to direct subordination and affirm their own hierarchical status.

Supervisors played a pivotal role in maintaining historic Tiger rule. Importantly, all policy makers made clear that their accounts of Tiger dominance represented a historic oilfield culture. However, when asked about oilfield shifts towards a more inclusive, emerging and protective culture of workplace identities connecting to safety practices, policy makers all asserted this shift was *gradual* and linked to supervisory interpretation of policy and how this was imparted to workers in the oilfield, versus a result of influence from the explicit content of formal policy. Change was linked to *new oilmen* entering the oilfield who brought their own masculine identities with them, resisting the rule of Tigers. As these oilmen resisted the pro-risk, hypermasculine culture of Tigers through continued performances of safety, and gradually rose to positions of authority offshore, they began to selectively prioritise and impart themes from policy – but **only** these that aligned with their own inclusive, desirable and pro-safety masculinities, that clashed with the pro-risk, hypermasculine motifs of Tigers. For example, speaking of this gradual process of oilfield culture change, RO stated:

*“It's been a gradual change, the culture-shift to safety values, and away from Tigers. It definitely hasn't been overnight. I think that you've had a lot of new people coming into the oil industry and they're like: oh, what am I taking this risk for? So, people have changed and adapted new attitudes”*

GE - a global safety manager supported RO's comments. He said:

*“Let’s face it. The original offshore workforce, The Tigers, they had a very men are men attitude. The main barrier to acting safely was stigma at the time. But then you get someone like me, who’s come from a managerial environment to totally change his career and go offshore as a roustabout. When I first came off I looked around and was like: wow ... what a place. Clients were already supplying good PPE [Personal Protection Equipment], good safety products. People like me were straight in there: I’ll use them, I don’t care if it’s not the norm, I don’t care if it’s stigmatised. People would see that, see you promoting their use, and that started everything, started it moving away from this real macho world [...] Everything started to change then”*

MI - the rig manager, also explicitly clarified this change, by exemplifying his own journey:

*“I remember coming up the ranks. I was a roustabout-roughneck and I wanted to become a driller. But I could see the driller, he was shouting and screaming. Like that every day at us. And I thought I’m not going to be like that. I’ll never be like that. [...] with all that shouting and screaming, you didn’t know what they were saying. It was dangerous, you could end up doing anything ...”*

*“When I was promoted to driller [...] I made sure that [the guys] knew that we were going from A to B as a team. You’re going to do this, then you’re going to do that, and if something changes and you know, let us [the drillers] know what the issue is and we’ll get back on to it once again when we know what’s happening. Teamwork. That’s safety, that’s doing it safe”*

The above narratives evidence the triggering of a gradual displacement of Tiger oilfield culture, as influx of new oilfield identity norms overtook and diluted Tiger rule. GE - the global safety manager, recounted the point at which displacement was total:

*“Over time, it [our identities and practices] evolved greatly to take away any macho Tiger behaviours, to turn it right around. It’s both the procedures and culture that’s evolved. Probably since early nineties, after Piper [The Piper Alpha disaster]. When I first went offshore there was too many of them [Tigers] and not enough of me. Now it’s [swung] round, there are more of me and not enough of them. You can see that now offshore, you don’t get pigeonholed into: that guy’s strange, looked down upon, he uses the safety tools. It’s because that’s the norm now”*

Saliently, policy makers revealed they universally prioritised motifs from the secondary, pro-safety and protective blueprint of written policy. Interestingly, they downplayed - but also reframed and reinterpreted - themes from the dominant policy blueprint that supported notions consistent with Tiger culture. This finding is similar -yet represents an inverse position- to the notions of hybridised masculinities identified by Ashcraft (2005) and Wasserman (Wasserman et al., 2018). Policy makers recognised an association between behaviours the first policy blueprint encouraged, and the undesirable behaviours they endured under Tiger rule. This was framed as the “wrong” way to enact policy offshore. In contrast, the second policy blueprint was supportive to new oilfield masculinities and was therefore emphasised as the “correct” -desirable- way to perform policy as oilfield practices.

Evidence of policy reframing was plentiful, for example, MI, the rig manager, explained teamwork as a necessity to group individual personalities together to reduce risk-taking. This occurs via emphasising corrective monitoring motifs from policy, however this was done in ways that reframed peer surveillance motifs to downplay individual accountability and competition, occurring in a way that removes the motifs encouraging resistance highlighted in Collinson’s work (Collinson, 1999). MI explained:

*“For us, policy is really about [MI leans forward and closes his hand to indicate what he says is important] getting everyone to work as a team. Yes, we say everybody is responsible for their own safety, and it can be individual that way, but it’s a buddy system we really want, [emphasis is*

*evident in MI’s voice] grouping people together, because you do get some people who ... well, their thought process is slightly different, and I don’t mean horseplay. I mean just how they work on a job ...”*

MI’s language demonstrates how he reframes the individual accountability focus of the first policy blueprint; acknowledging the formal contents of written policy. He qualifies a reinterpretation of this narrative by stating an intention to reimagine formal legislation. A new policy meaning of ‘collective teamwork and safety’ is then put forward. Reformulation is justified by MI’s comments that a literal interpretation of formal policy increases group vulnerabilities and thus contravenes the overarching policy goal of “safety”.

RI - a group authority provided a more direct perspective. His reframing strategy was dependent on downplaying the validity of Tiger-congruent themes of individuality from written policy. This was in favour of prioritising teamwork. He stated:

*“Teamwork. It’s how we do offshore safety culture that binds people together. People used to say if you just adhere to what’s in the written policies you will be safe ... but ... if you have got a cohesive team that works well together, how many bits of paper you have won’t make a blind bit of difference. We [supervisors] impart teamwork offshore as the priority because the workers will look after one another, watch one another and keep each other right. They will do a good job, whereas if you have a slightly more fragmented team, things quickly get shaky”*

RI functionally discourages individualistic behaviours typical of Tigers, and typical of dominant themes in DMC policy. Individual accountability is refashioned to “represent a responsibility for workers to support each other as equals within work teams”. Workers are encouraged to make sense of safety as a collective responsibility which workers all share. When oilmen support each other as a collective, they support themselves towards keeping safe.

MI - the rig manager, provided a similar, direct example of how policy is enacted by supervisors. He explained:

*“The way we [supervisors] do policies offshore now have changed to help move us in the right direction [towards safety]. Say we were offshore and I was doing a job where I didn’t agree with it? I could now go time out for safety. In the past, the rig super could say: No. You will do that. Now I could say: No, because I know that’s not the policy, it’s not the way I was taught what policy means ...”*

MI’s account encapsulates the different roles supervisors and safety policy play offshore in the contemporary vs. historical oilfield. By emphasising safety, teamwork, and inclusivity themes, workers in non-supervisory positions utilise policy as a legitimate defence against attempts to reinstate any lingering Tiger attitudes or behaviours. Oilmen may actively -and readily- resist risk-taking and uphold safety. Opportunities for local subordination and domination of pro-risk hypermasculine forms of workplace identities are muted. This is because supervisors attempting to uphold ‘outdated’, undesirable and dangerous oilfield practices place themselves at risk of disciplinary actions. In addition, risks performances increase the chance of oilmen facing informal subordinations arising under the majority oilfield-rule of safety masculinities. Oilmen actively subordinate practices of risk due to the incongruence of risk against their established pro-safety workplace identities.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

Literatures exploring identities, safety and risk in high-risk workspaces, including oilfields, have discussed the interplay between policy and identity; highlighting conflicts and contradictions between formal policies and workplace identity practices (Collinson, 1999), policy as reformulating and reshaping workplace identities towards safety (Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Filteau, 2014) and conflicts and contradictions with how policy influences inclusions and rejections of specific

behavioural motifs as a product of changing workplace identities (Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018).

While all studies discussed earlier are highly relevant and important literatures, many do not examine the mechanisms by which policy becomes practice, or explore the specifics and particulars of policy before developing a policy-identity-practice triangulation. Research that relies on examinations of written policy, management perspectives or interviews alone, may construct complex policy-masculinity relationships. However, without exploring: the content of policy, the ways by which policy is locally conveyed, and the interconnections between policy and identity -as explained by policy-making workers themselves- there is no guarantee theoretical policy-identity-practice connections play out in practice.

This research has explicitly explored this perspective by conducting a DA of DMC policy documents, interviewing policy makers -who also operate as offshore oilfield workers- to incorporate a lived-experience approach to understanding policy-as-practice, and questioning workers on their own understandings of policy influence, the contents of policy, and links between shifting industrial identity negotiations in the local oilfield worksite.

Findings highlight policy makers (who were also offshore supervisors) did not directly place importance upon adherence to dominant themes within formal DMC policy, where this policy contradicted their *emerging* identity notions linked with worksite safety identities, even when directly prompted or questioned. Instead, interviewees made references to the practicalities of “treating people as individuals”, “working as a team” and “keeping people safe” as key metrics for measuring “policy success” and “policies functioning correctly” – all themes linking to the secondary *emerging* narrative, as opposed to the dominant organisational identity blueprint within policy. Crucially, policy makers conceptualised safety by embodying a different, practical perspective to the narratives within their written policies; anchored by their practical and *lived experience* knowledge of what works to keep people safe in the offshore oilfield. Policy makers were concerned more with achieving the end goal of safety than upholding any formal policy process by which safety *might* be achieved.

On paper, DMC formal safety policy constructs two different blueprints for conditions that link with different cultures of institutional masculinities. A dominant blueprint prioritises themes typical of risky masculine behaviours in high-risk workspaces. A secondary policy blueprint promotes motifs more linked to *emerging*; open and novel institutional masculine identities. Importantly, interviews revealed policies are interpreted and imparted to ordinary workers by offshore supervisors. Supervisors select specific themes from policy and impart these as normative oilfield practices, interlinking with these *emerging* and ‘progressive’ workplace identities that resist -and maintain suppression of- a previously risky and ‘hypermasculine’ Tiger oilfield identity stereotype. This model dictates the current configuration of masculinities in the oilfield. Importantly, supervisory interpretation of formal policy is not a new occurrence. Narratives of shifting dominances between a past ‘Tiger’ culture and the identity norms of a new oilfield culture reveal supervisors as pivotal agents of influence in both (undesirable) historic and (desirable) contemporary contexts. Contemporary oilfield supervisors prioritise organisationally and culturally desirable pro-safety, anti-risk and protective masculine themes offshore; upholding safety as of utmost importance. Saliently, supervisors engage in creative ways to reimagine otherwise individual, hierarchical and exclusionary dominant policy themes in ways that promote safety; inclusion and flat-organisational-hierarchies, and -above all- align with supervisor’s pro-safety workplace identities. Supervisors uphold the lesser but more organisationally desirable motifs of formal policies. This is because these themes maintain the existing masculinities-safety status quo of the oilfield, and resist returns to a past -undesirable- Tiger dominance. Thus, the most dominant narratives in DMC policy were -in fact- the least enacted in the worksite; demonstrating power attributed to policy is tenuous, where this power is -in actuality- dependent upon

policy interpretation and the mechanisms and mediums by which policy is imparted upon a workforce. Some studies explicitly highlight resistance to policy (Collinson, 1999), others signal the influence of policy as charting change (Ely and Meyerson, 2010), and others highlight resistance in subtle ways that develop hybridised notions of identities (Ashcraft, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2018). This study builds on these bodies of research by providing an in-depth examination of contents of written policies, and the process and interpretation of policy-as-practice through the lens of offshore supervisors, which allows for a nuanced and deeper understanding of the influential interconnections between resisting a past dominant identity of the offshore oilfield, the influence of supervisor’s own masculinities over how they interpret and translate policy to the worksite, and how these combined interpretations play out in practice to develop and maintain cultures of *emerging* masculinities as locally dominant in a high-risk and safety critical oilfield location.

Future studies would benefit from incorporating findings present in this study, in tandem with the methodological approach presented; utilising a combined structured analysis of core policy materials, and clarifying emergent themes with policy makers. This allows for a more in-depth picture to emerge examining the mechanisms by which policy exerts power to shift local identities and safety-risk practices, how this power is dependent upon processes of interpretation and delineation to conjure tangible impact, and the motivations behind selective interpretations of policy. Further research should continue to grow scholarly perspectives examining linkages between policy, workplace identities, and connections between identity notions and safety-risk practices.

#### Author statement

All components of the research and authorship in this publication were developed by the author (Nicholas Norman Adams).

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#### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

#### Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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