

Review

Zones of Exception in Extractive Spaces: A Scoping Review of Oilfield Masculinities, Moral Injury, and Gender-Based Violence in the Oilfields

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Abstract

Oilfield worksites and the communities shaped by them are increasingly recognized as gendered spaces in which rotational labor, contractor hierarchies, and production imperatives can reshape norms of accountability and consent. This scoping review synthesizes conceptualizations of oilfield masculinities in scholarship on oil and gas extraction and examines their links to gendered harm, moral strain, and institutional accountability. Following PRISMA-ScR guidance, multidisciplinary databases were searched for English-language publications (2000–March 2024); eighteen sources met the inclusion criteria. A supplementary media scan (2000–2025) was conducted to contextualize cultural narratives surrounding oilfield labor. The synthesis identifies recurring themes, including frontier and breadwinner masculinities, emerging safety-oriented masculinities, gendered workplace exclusion, and the relational impacts of rotational absence and reintegration. Across studies, harms are most consistently described as patterned outcomes of work organization and fragmented governance rather than isolated incidents. Media representations frequently amplify heroism and endurance while minimizing institutional responsibility.

Keywords: gender-based violence; oilfield masculinities; extractive industries; zones of exception; moral injury

1. Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is spatial, political, and dynamic. In extractive economies, oilfield worksites and the communities that orbit around them can operate as gendered zones of exception, i.e., spaces where isolation, rotational mobility, contractor expendability, and fragmented oversight reshape norms of consent and accountability. In this context, the term “zones of exception” refers not to the total absence of rules, but to settings in which regulatory fragmentation, contractor layering, remoteness, and production-first priorities weaken the enforceability of accountability (Destrée 2023).

Research on extractive camps and boomtowns proposes that spatial isolation and mobility intensify homosocial bonding, reinforce hierarchy, and constrain reporting pathways (Filteau 2014; Leonard 2016). While women and gender-diverse people often bear the most direct forms of exclusion, harassment, and violence, oilfield masculinities can also discipline men through humiliation, subordination, stigma around vulnerability, and constrained help-seeking. These patterns suggest that harm in extractive settings is not



Academic Editor: Krista McQueeney

Received: 2 March 2026

Revised: 9 April 2026

Accepted: 15 April 2026

Published: 17 April 2026

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only interpersonal but also structured through work organization, mobility regimes, and uneven accountability systems.

Scholarship on GBV increasingly recognizes that violence is spatially patterned rather than randomly distributed (MacGregor 2010; World Health Organization 2021). Extractive boomtown contexts and remote industrial camps have been associated with shifts in gender ratios, housing precarity, informal economies, and heightened vulnerability for women and gender-diverse people (World Bank 2013). Such conditions can normalize the silence of the oppressed population and weaken accountability for the perpetrators. Simultaneously, these dynamics can produce moral strain and emotional suppression among men, especially where endurance and complicity are culturally rewarded (Destrée 2023; Landry and Willey 2023).

In this manuscript, GBV refers to interpersonal harms enacted because of gendered power relations, including sexual harassment, coercion, assault, and intimate partner violence, as well as workplace intimidation and retaliation tied to gender hierarchy (*Violence Against Women* 2025; UN Women 2023; International Labour Organization 2022). We do not treat all occupational strain as GBV. Rather, we use gendered harm as a broader analytic category that includes institutional practices such as hierarchical silencing, normalized humiliation, and constrained reporting pathways that shape the conditions under which GBV becomes more likely, less visible, or less actionable (International Labour Organization 2022; UN Women 2023). Accordingly, this review distinguishes (a) GBV outcomes described in the literature (e.g., harassment, violence, and commercial sexual exploitation) from (b) structural conditions (e.g., rotational mobility, contractor layering, and production pressure) that intensify vulnerability and reduce accountability in extractive systems (World Bank 2013).

Existing GBV scholarship has examined extractive boomtowns as risk contexts, and masculinities scholarship has traced oilfield identity formation, but these studies have developed largely in parallel. Neither has treated the oilfield as a governance architecture in which masculinities, GBV, and moral injury are co-produced through the same institutional arrangements. This review bridges that gap by synthesizing both bodies of work under a unified analytical frame. This framework guides the synthesis that follows by treating masculinities not as static identities but as adaptive responses to institutional arrangements that shape what is recognized as competence, loyalty, and worth.

This review advances the literature in three analytically distinct ways. First, it integrates two bodies of scholarship, i.e., that of oilfield masculinities and GBV in extractive settings, which have developed largely in isolation. Previous work has examined each separately: masculinities scholarship has traced how oilfield identities are formed and reproduced (Adams 2023a; Filteau 2014; Watt 2022), while GBV scholarship has examined extractive environments as risk contexts (World Bank 2013). Neither has treated the oilfield as an institutional architecture in which masculinity formation and gendered harm are co-produced. Second, by applying a governance lens, this review reframes GBV outcomes of harassment, exclusion, and domestic violence spillover as products of organizational design (contractor layering, rotational compression, hierarchical insulation) rather than individual disposition. This shifts explanatory weight from culture and psychology toward regulatory structure, clarifying where intervention is both possible and necessary. Third, the inclusion of a media scan treats representation as governance: the cultural narratives that frame oilfield labor as heroic sacrifice are not external to accountability structures but are part of the symbolic terrain through which harm is rendered invisible or individualized.

2. Background

2.1. Oilfield Masculinities

Masculinity is defined as a pattern of social practices and cultural representations linked to men's location within the gender order (Connell 2001, 2005, 2017). Masculinities are not fixed or universal but relatively malleable, dynamic, and regional (Rogers et al. 2015). Masculinities exist in multiple, shifting forms, which, by definition, intersect with other social categories such as gender expression, social and economic class, sexuality, race, and ethnicity (Rogers et al. 2015). Oilfield masculinities, a subset of extractivist masculinities, refer to the identities and behaviors of predominantly male individuals who work directly or indirectly in oil and gas extraction (Paulson and Boose 2019). They are culturally and institutionally produced ways of being recognized as competent, durable, and legitimate within oil and gas extraction. They are often associated with toughness, stoicism, self-reliance, competitiveness, risk tolerance, breadwinner expectations, and homosocial bonding, while also evolving in response to safety regimes, fatherhood, and changing labor conditions. They have also been shaped by historical oil spills and disasters, such as the Piper Alpha disaster and the Macondo oil spill, as well as broader industry-wide transformations (Adams 2023a).

Oilfield masculinities encompass shifting ethical relations, expressions of masculinity, and understandings of labor in the oil and gas sector, reflecting the industry's evolving nature and its profound impact on the lives of oil workers, especially men (Leonard 2016). Research on oilfield masculinities has been dynamic, though it has focused only on specific areas of Australia, Canada, North America, the UK, and Norway. Research remains comparatively limited in the Gulf of Mexico and the Middle East.

2.2. Structural Conditions, Moral Injury, and GBV

Oilfield masculinities are formed within labor regimes characterized by rotational mobility, contractor hierarchy, compressed cycles, and production-first priorities that shape authority relations, emotional regulation, and norms of silence (Adams 2023a). Extended and repeated offshore hitches, high-risk exposure, and hierarchical command structures reward endurance, normalize emotional containment, and constrain dissent (Adams 2023a; Filteau 2014; Wright 2022). These harms do not remain confined to offshore settings. Workers move between highly disciplined, male-dominated labor environments and domestic spaces that require emotional flexibility and renegotiation. Under such conditions, moral injury may emerge when workers witness, participate in, or remain silent about practices they perceive as wrong but feel structurally constrained from challenging (Adams 2023a; Connell 2017). Here, moral injury is treated as a distinct occupational harm that can co-occur with GBV risk within the same institutional environment, rather than as a subtype of GBV (Williamson et al. 2023). Only a minority of the studies explicitly used the term "moral injury," perhaps due to a lack of awareness of this terminology. Accordingly, moral injury is used here as a cautious interpretive lens to synthesize descriptions of ethical conflict under institutional constraint, and it is distinguished from general stress or burnout (Connell 2017; Williamson et al. 2023).

The structural dynamics experienced by oilfield masculinities extend beyond the work-site. Rotational schedules and fly-in/fly-out arrangements fracture relational continuity and produce compressed reunification periods marked by the renegotiation of authority, intimacy, and domestic labor (Dorow and Jean 2022). Offshore fatherhood research narrates that workers navigate competing ideals of provision, protection, and emotional presence amid prolonged absence (Adams 2022; Hartmann 2013). Where work cultures privilege hierarchy, stoicism, and frontier toughness (Filteau 2014; Landry and Willey 2023; Miller 2004), reintegration can generate tension, withdrawal, or conflict. Extractive boomtown

and camp contexts have been associated with gendered exclusion, informal economies, and heightened vulnerability to harassment and domestic violence (World Bank 2013).

2.3. *Impacts on the Family and Society*

The social dynamics of oilfield families, particularly those with offshore workers, differ significantly from those of families without an intermittently absent partner or parent. Rotational labor regimes produce bifurcated domestic rhythms in which family life is organized around alternating periods of absence and compressed reunification. This duality creates unique challenges, especially for the spouse or parent who remains at home. Upon return, households must rapidly renegotiate authority, decision-making, intimacy, and domestic labor, often within highly compressed time frames (Destrée 2023).

The cyclical nature of partings and reunions fractures the continuity of family life, requiring family members to constantly readjust to the worker's presence and absence (Adams 2023a). The transition periods during these reunions are particularly complex and often laden with tension for both the returning worker and the partner (Dorow and Jean 2022). These reintegration periods represent structurally intensified moments of relational strain, particularly where workplace cultures valorize hierarchy, emotional suppression, and control (Filteau 2014; Landry and Willey 2023).

3. Methods

3.1. *Research Question*

This scoping review asks: How does the existing literature conceptualize oilfield masculinities within extractive systems, and how are these masculinities linked to gendered harm, moral injury, and institutional accountability? It explores how structural conditions, including rotational mobility, contractor expendability, production imperatives, and fragmented oversight, shape the formation of masculinities and influence patterns of GBV.

3.2. *Data Sources and Search Strategy*

This review followed the five-stage framework outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005): identification of the research question, identification and selection of relevant studies, data charting, and collation and reporting of results. Reporting adheres to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR), with the study selection process summarized in Figure 1. Further details of each article identified in the scoping review provided in Appendix A.

Sources were included if they (1) examined oil and/or gas extraction contexts (onshore, offshore, service corridors, camps, or oil-affected communities); (2) contained explicit analytic attention to masculinities, men, gender relations, or gendered workplace/community dynamics; (3) were published in English between January 2000 and March 2024; and (4) were peer-reviewed articles or targeted gray literature (e.g., dissertations, reports, book chapters) with sufficient methodological detail to support thematic extraction. Sources were excluded if they (1) focused on extractive sectors other than oil and gas without transferable oilfield analysis; (2) addressed environmental, economic, or technical issues without gender/masculinity analysis; (3) focused exclusively on women's experiences without engagement with masculinities or gender relations; or (4) were commentaries lacking empirical or theoretical substance for extraction. After deduplication, titles and abstracts were screened against eligibility criteria. Full texts were retrieved for records that met the screening thresholds or for which eligibility was uncertain. Reasons for full-text exclusion were documented and are summarized in the PRISMA-ScR flow diagram (Figure 1).

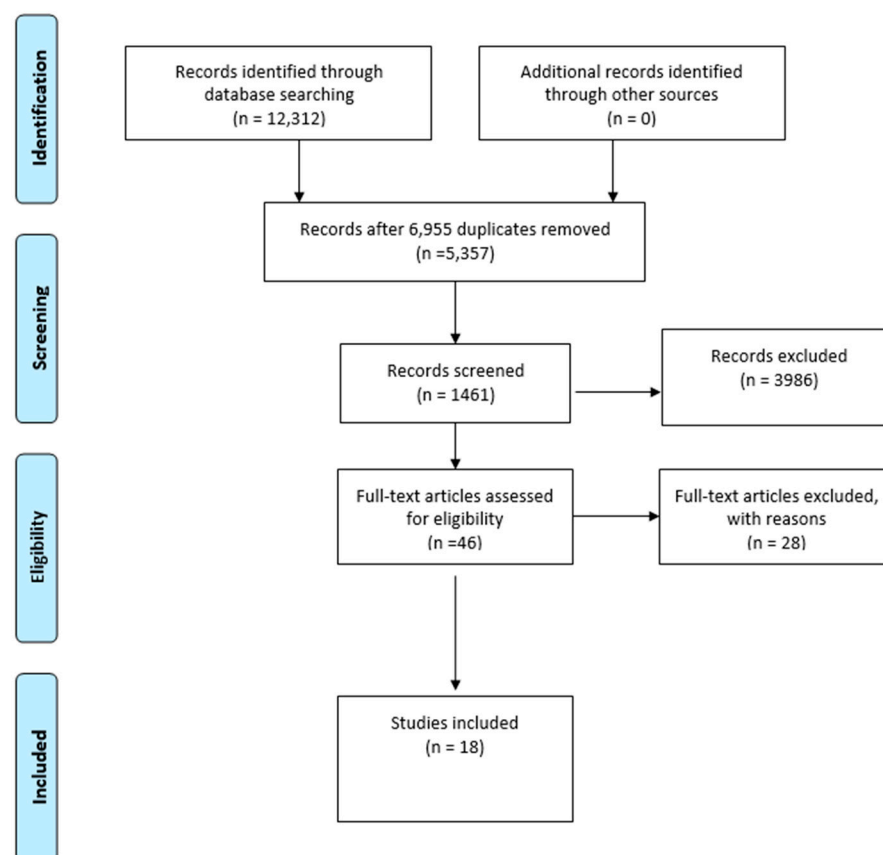


Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR identification of studies.

For each included source, we charted publication type, geography/setting, aims, design/data, sample/corpus, and the masculinity/gender framework used. We also extracted passages describing (a) masculinity constructions and change over time, (b) gendered workplace/community dynamics, (c) reported or implied gendered harms (including GBV outcomes), and (d) institutional conditions shaping accountability (e.g., rotation, contractor layering, safety policy). Extraction was synthesized using an iterative thematic approach, moving between inductive coding of repeated patterns and deductive organization into thematic domains aligned with the research question. Themes were refined through memoing and cross-source comparison until the thematic framework stabilized (Table 1).

Table 1. Thematic framework for oilfield masculinities.

Main Theme	Subtheme	Operational Definition	Indicative Evidence/Examples	Sources
1. Masculinities in Motion	A. Change	Any described shift/variation in masculine norms, identities, or acceptable “manhood acts” in oil/extractive settings over time, across generations, or across organizational roles/crews.	Movement away from “risk-taking” toward “protective/safety” identities; multiple co-existing masculinity cultures rather than a single dominant form.	Adams (2023a); Filteau (2014); Watt (2022); Leonard (2016)

Table 1. *Cont.*

Main Theme	Subtheme	Operational Definition	Indicative Evidence/Examples	Sources
	B. Reasons for Change	Mechanisms proposed to explain change: safety regimes, organizational policy, boom–bust restructuring, mobility/rotation, family demands, political backlash, etc.	Safety policies as catalysts; downturn prompting ethical re-evaluation; fatherhood/return-home imperative.	Adams (2023b) ; Adams (2022) ; Watt (2022) ; Filteau (2014)
2. Women in Oilfield Contexts: Exclusion, Harassment, Assault, and Career Constraint	A. Gender roles in oilfields	Gendered divisions of labor; “men’s work” vs. “women’s work”; exclusion/inclusion; normative expectations for women in oil/extractive workplaces/communities.	Informal male networks; paternalism; women as outsiders; gendered burdens in extractive communities.	Miller (2004) ; World Bank (2013) ; Houser (2018)
	B. Adopting masculinized traits	Women adapt by adopting masculinized dispositions/behaviors (e.g., toughness, banter, risk normalization) or by being evaluated through masculine-coded criteria.	“Fit” assessed via masculine cultural cues; coping strategies in male-dominated oil culture.	Miller (2004) ; Filteau (2014) ; Landry and Willey (2023)
	C. Career limitations	Barriers to advancement/recruitment/retention tied to masculine culture: “cowboy” myth, informal sponsorship, harassment/hostility, motherhood penalties, rotation barriers.	Symbolic barriers and network exclusion; gendered access to benefits/consultation/decision-making.	Miller (2004) ; World Bank (2013) ; Houser (2018)
3. Metaphors of Oilfield Masculinities	—	Metaphoric or mythic language framing oil/extraction and manhood (e.g., cowboy/frontier hero, sacrifice, “working for the devil”, breadwinner duty).	Frontier “cowboy” myth; offshore sacrifice/devil imagery; oil-as-development enabling patriarchal aspiration.	Miller (2004) ; Destrée (2023) ; Leonard (2016) ; Landry and Willey (2023)
4. Governmental and Oilfield Policies	—	Formal policy/regulation/organizational rule shaping gender/masculinity: safety regimes, HR rules, camp policies, diversity rules, compensation schemes, state policy discourses.	Safety policy “blueprints” privilege protective managerial masculinity; policy gender gaps in sector governance.	Adams (2023b) ; Filteau (2014) ; World Bank (2013)

Table 1. *Cont.*

Main Theme	Subtheme	Operational Definition	Indicative Evidence/Examples	Sources
5. Environmental Influences and Impacts	A. Stereotypes of oilfield men	Representations/discourses stereotyping oilfield men (e.g., “old boys club”, frontier tough guy, irresponsible risk-taker) and how these circulate in media/politics/community.	“Old boys’ club”/testosterone talk; family-responsible provider framing; discursive defense of oil.	Landry and Willey (2023) ; Massie and Jackson (2020) ; Adams (2023a)
5. Environmental Influences and Impacts	B. Climate change perspectives	How masculinity is mobilized in climate politics: obstruction, denial, authoritarian desire, “protect our families/jobs” framing, identity backlash.	Petro-masculinity; familism/protection rhetoric; identity-based climate obstruction.	Daggett (2018) ; Massie and Jackson (2020) ; Letourneau et al. (2024)

Peer-reviewed and gray literature on oilfield masculinities were targeted for review. Peer-reviewed sources were identified through searches of Academic Search Complete, Political Science Complete, PsycNET, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, safety and environmental collections, Scopus, SocINDEX, and Web of Science, using database-adapted Boolean strings that combined oil and gas-related or extractive-industry terms with masculinity and gender-related terms. A targeted gray-literature search was conducted in parallel, focusing on dissertations and selected reports, supplemented by Google Scholar searches. Eighteen manuscripts were reviewed at the final stage.

Since most included studies did not explicitly use the term moral injury, we treated moral injury as a secondary, interpretive construct applied only when source materials contained explicit descriptions consistent with contemporary definitions: experiences of witnessing, participating in, or being unable to prevent actions perceived as morally wrong, coupled with felt constraint or lack of power to intervene ([Connell 2017](#); [Williamson et al. 2023](#)). During data charting, we flagged moral-injury-consistent content only when manuscripts reported at least two of the following: (1) ethical conflict or moral transgression (e.g., “this is wrong”); (2) perceived constraint, coercion, or inability to act (e.g., fear of retaliation, hierarchical silencing); (3) enduring psychological, relational, or identity consequences linked to the ethical conflict (e.g., shame, withdrawal, relational rupture) ([Williamson et al. 2023](#)). Where only general stress, exhaustion, or workload strain was described without ethical conflict, we coded these as burnout or strain rather than moral injury. This approach reduced the risk of retroactively imposing the construct.

To situate the scoping review findings within contemporary public discourse, a supplementary targeted scan of media representations of oilfield work and masculinities was conducted. The scan covered the period 2000–2025 to capture both contemporary portrayals and enduring narratives that continue to circulate through streaming, syndication, and digital platforms. Searches were conducted across film databases (e.g., IMDb and streaming catalogs), podcast directories (e.g., Apple Podcasts, Spotify), television listings, documentary archives, and major news platforms. Search terms included oilfield, oil and gas, boomtown, man camp, roughneck, offshore drilling, oil rig, and petro-masculinity. Snowball sampling was used to identify related titles from curated lists, press coverage, and platform recommendations. Media items were included if oilfield work, extractive environments, or oil-industry culture constituted a central setting or narrative element. In

total, 87 distinct media items were identified. Each item was fully viewed or listened to and analyzed for representations of masculinity, gender roles, gender-based violence, and institutional accountability. This media scan was supplementary and interpretive. It was not treated as equivalent to the dataset from the formal scoping review.

Each media item was reviewed in full and summarized in an analytic memo. Memos documented (1) dominant masculinity archetypes (e.g., breadwinner, frontier toughness, safety professionalism), (2) narrative framing of risk and responsibility (individual heroism vs. institutional accountability), (3) portrayals of women and gender relations (exclusion, tokenism, hypersexualization), and (4) whether GBV outcomes (e.g., harassment, assault, domestic violence, commercial sex economies) were explicitly depicted, implied, or absent. Memo themes were compared across media types (scripted, reality, documentary, podcast, investigative journalism) and summarized as cross-cutting representational patterns.

4. Results from the Scoping Review

Five of the 18 (28%) elements of this scoping review were dissertations; one was an industry report, one a book chapter, and 11 (61%) were journal articles. Each study provided unique perspectives on masculinities and their navigation in the oilfield; together, they elucidate several important themes in the literature. Across included sources, masculinities were described as multiple and institutionally mediated, with both frontier/breadwinner identities and safety-oriented masculinities operating simultaneously within extractive settings (Adams 2022, 2023a; Filteau 2014; Letourneau et al. 2024). The transition between two archetypes of masculinity, the hegemonic rugged risk-taking individual and the individual who was more concerned about the well-being of his fellow workers and ensuring safety, was not identified as a dichotomous instant transition among oilfield masculinities (Adams 2023a; Filteau 2014; Letourneau et al. 2024). Other salient themes identified are presented in Table 2. The main themes identified in the media scan are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Key Studies Identified in Scoping Review.

Citation	Geography/Setting	Study Design	Masculinity Framework	Key Contribution
Filteau (2014)	Marcellus shale region, USA	Qualitative case study; interviews and site observations (n = 22)	Dominant–nonhegemonic masculinity	Identifies a safety-oriented dominant masculinity that replaces risk-taking norms without becoming hegemonic
Filteau (2015)	Marcellus shale communities, USA	Conceptual synthesis	Masculine crisis; dominance/subordination	Explains how itinerant workers create community-level masculine hierarchies
Daggett (2018)	Global fossil fuel politics	Critical theoretical analysis	Petro-masculinity	Introduces petro masculinity and links fossil fuels to authoritarian gender politics
Destrée (2023)	Offshore oil frontier, Ghana	Ethnography	Frontier imaginaries; patriarchal kinship	Shows how sacrifice narratives sustain offshore extractive capitalism

Table 2. Cont.

Citation	Geography/Setting	Study Design	Masculinity Framework	Key Contribution
Leonard (2016)	Oilfields and oil town, Chad	Longitudinal ethnography	Breadwinner masculinity; masculine crisis	Demonstrates how oil economies reshape family relations and male identity
Adams (2022)	North Sea offshore platform	Rapid ethnography (n = 35 workers)	Fatherhood, masculinity, safety masculinity	Shows how fatherhood identity encourages safer work practices
Adams (2023a)	North Sea offshore platform	Ethnography	Multiple masculinities; manhood acts	Demonstrates the coexistence of distinct masculinity cultures shaping safety norms
Adams (2023b)	Scottish offshore drilling organization	Policy analysis and interviews	Managerial masculinity	Shows safety policies institutionalize pro-safety masculinities
Landry and Willey (2023)	Alberta oil camps, Canada	Qualitative interviews (n = 5)	Frontier masculinity	Demonstrates how camp conditions normalize sexist discourse and sex economies
Massie and Jackson (2020)	Alberta petro-economy	Media discourse analysis	Familism; frontier masculinity	Shows how family narratives legitimize oil extraction
World Bank (2013)	Azerbaijan, Peru, Papua New Guinea	Multi-site qualitative research	Gendered political economy	Demonstrates gender participation gaps in extractive industries
Wright (2022)	Alberta petroleum industry	Critical ethnography (n = 19 workers)	Embodied masculinity	Documents psychological and social costs of oil work
Miller (2004)	Alberta oil industry	Feminist ethnography (n = 20 women)	Hegemonic masculinity; cowboy myth	Shows symbolic mechanisms excluding women from oilfield careers
Houser (2018)	Northern Alberta oil community	Ethnography	Moral economy of masculinity	Demonstrates community narratives legitimizing extraction
Watt (2022)	Northeast Scotland offshore sector	Ethnography	Skill-based masculine worth	Shows generational shifts in oilfield masculine identity
Hartmann (2013)	Newfoundland offshore workers	Qualitative interviews (n = 19 men)	Performed fatherhood masculinity	Demonstrates how rotational labor reshapes fatherhood identity
Bolsø et al. (2018)	Organizational contexts	Edited theoretical volume	Gendered organizational practice	Provides a theoretical framework for embodied organizational masculinities

Table 3. Media Scan: Oilfield Representation and Gendered Themes.

Title	Year(s)	Type	Setting	Masculinity and Gendered Harm Framing
Landman	2024	Scripted TV series	Permian Basin, Texas	Centers roughneck and corporate fixer masculinities within boomtown oil culture. Emphasizes toughness, loyalty, and breadwinner identity. Family strain and relational tension are present but framed as personal consequences rather than structural outcomes.
Boomtown	2019–2020	Podcast (Texas Monthly)	West Texas oil boom	Documents the oil boom identity formation, regional pride, and economic masculinity tied to extraction. Frames oil work as culturally foundational and morally defensible; gendered strain is implicit rather than explicitly addressed.
Deepwater Horizon	2016	Feature film	Gulf of Mexico offshore rig	Highlights heroism, sacrifice, and stoic endurance among offshore workers. Corporate negligence acknowledged, but masculine bravery foregrounded. Emotional distress is individualized rather than framed as institutional failure.
Black Gold	2008–2012	Reality TV	U.S. oilfields	Reinforces bravado, competitive risk-taking, and crew hierarchy as markers of oilfield masculinity. Gendered harm and domestic strain are absent from narrative framing.
Licence to Drill	2010	Reality TV	North American oilfields	Constructs competence as toughness and endurance. Masculinity framed through technical dominance and crew loyalty; gendered exclusion unexamined.
Disaster at Sea: The Piper Alpha Story	2025	Documentary	North Sea offshore	Revisits catastrophic risk culture and institutional safety failure. Highlights hierarchical command structures and production pressure. Gendered harm is largely implicit through structural failure and moral injury narratives.
Digging in the Dirt	2019	Documentary	Alberta oil region	Explores moral strain, worker identity, and the emotional cost of oil labor. Burnout and psychological burden are acknowledged but framed in terms of resilience and personal endurance rather than through a systemic, gendered analysis.

Table 3. *Cont.*

Title	Year(s)	Type	Setting	Masculinity and Gendered Harm Framing
There Will Be Blood	2007	Feature film	Early U.S. oil frontier	Archetypal portrayal of frontier domination, masculinity, and extractive patriarchal power. Corporate ambition fused with hyper-individualism; gendered power visible through patriarchal control.
How to Blow Up a Pipeline	2022	Feature film	Texas oil infrastructure	Challenges fossil fuel industry through activist farming. Masculinity appears as contested terrain; critiques extractive power structures but does not centrally explore oilfield worker masculinity.
The Devil Has a Name	2019	Feature film	California oilfields	Focuses on corporate corruption and land exploitation. Masculine power embedded in executive culture; gendered harm secondary to environmental critique.
Oilfield 360 Podcast	Ongoing	Industry podcast	North America	Presents leadership and safety professionalism as a modern oilfield identity. Masculinity is reframed around competence, accountability, and productivity; gendered violence is absent from the discussion.
Talking Energy Show	Ongoing	Industry podcast	North America	Frames the oil industry as professional and technocratic. Masculinity normalized within managerial discourse; gender and harm largely invisible.
What the Funk? (Oil & Gas Industry Podcast)	Ongoing	Industry podcast	North America	Highlights industry personalities and career pathways. Masculine identity embedded in entrepreneurial narratives; no explicit discussion of gendered harm.
LNG Canada/Work Camp Investigative Journalism	2021–2023	Investigative news reporting	British Columbia, Canada	Explicitly documents allegations of sexual harassment, assault, and camp-based violence. Connects rotational camps, contractor layering, and weak reporting mechanisms to structural gendered harm.
Man Camp/MMIWG Investigative Coverage	2020–2024	Investigative journalism	U.S. and Canada	Examines extractive corridor camps in relation to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women: links male-dominated camps and jurisdictional fragmentation to heightened gender-based violence risks.

Table 3. Cont.

Title	Year(s)	Type	Setting	Masculinity and Gendered Harm Framing
Petro-masculinity Commentary (e.g., The 19th News)	2024	News feature	United States	Analyzes fossil fuel defense narratives as gendered identity politics. Frames oil support as compensatory masculine assertion tied to climate denial and political polarization.
God Save Texas (oil-themed segments)	2024	Documentary series	Texas	Explores oil's role in shaping regional identity and political belonging. Masculinity is tied to work ethic and regional pride; gendered harm is not foregrounded.
Accidental Texan	2023	Feature film	Texas oil economy	Uses the oil boom setting as a backdrop for male identity development. Masculinity framed through economic aspiration; structural gender issues are absent.

4.1. Masculinities in Motion

4.1.1. Change

Oilfield masculinities are not fixed inheritances, but adaptive formations shaped by institutional design, regulatory change, and the spatial organization of extractive labor (Connell 2005; Filteau 2014). Across the literature, masculinities emerge as negotiated responses to rotational mobility, production pressure, contractor hierarchies, and evolving safety regimes rather than as a singular hegemonic script (Adams 2023a, 2023b; Leonard 2016). Multiple forms coexist and shift in relation to organizational and economic conditions.

Frontier-inflected masculinities have historically emphasized endurance, stoicism, competitiveness, and risk tolerance, reinforced by remote worksites and homosocial bonding (Miller 2004; Filteau 2014; Landry and Willey 2023). Risk-taking was often treated as competence. Regulatory reform and industrial disasters, however, reoriented organizational priorities toward safety and liability (Adams 2023a, 2023b; Wright 2022). In this context, “safety masculinities” link competence to procedural vigilance and collective responsibility rather than bravado (Adams 2022, 2023a, 2023b). While endurance remains valued, overt recklessness is increasingly delegitimized.

Fatherhood has become a key site of masculine negotiation. Offshore workers frequently frame both occupational commitment and safety behavior through provider and protector identities (Adams 2022; Hartmann 2013). Fatherhood masculinity can reinforce breadwinner logics, yet it also legitimizes care-oriented leadership and restraint. Mobility intensifies this negotiation. Rotational regimes produce cycles of hyper-intensive work and compressed domestic reintegration (Dorow and Jean 2022). Workers move between hierarchical offshore environments and collaborative domestic spaces, recalibrating identity across contexts. Such transitions can generate tension and moral strain, particularly where endurance and silence remain culturally rewarded (Adams 2023b; Wright 2022).

Boom–bust cycles and contract insecurity further reinforce breadwinner attachment and status anxiety (Filteau 2015). Recognizing masculinities in motion shifts analytic focus from individual disposition to institutional architecture, clarifying how governance reforms reshape what counts as competence, leadership, and moral worth within extractive systems (Connell 2005; Adams 2023a).

4.1.2. Reasons for Change

The oil and gas industry has experienced significant shifts in masculinity, driven by pressure on existing male populations to adapt to new economic and social realities. In regions like Chad, the introduction of the oil complex brought about new ideas and images of manliness, prompting local men to adopt different practices and forms of identification as they struggled to meet global hegemonic ideals (Leonard 2016). This shift often was associated with anxieties around sexual performance, with some men merely resorting to aphrodisiacs to manage intimate relationships, reflecting how economic challenges have reshaped traditional masculinities (Leonard 2016). Similarly, in Newfoundland's offshore oil industry, fathers had to navigate traditional notions of masculinity while adapting to the demands of their fatherhood roles and the expectations of changing times, balancing safety concerns with the need to provide and be present for their families (Hartmann 2013).

The evolution of masculinities in the oilfield sector has been significantly shaped by stringent health and safety policies at both industry and organizational levels. These policies have promoted the construction of a new dominant, non-hegemonic masculinity, in which traits such as safety, collective goals, and organizational alignment are valued over traditional masculine attributes like physical strength and independence (Adams 2023a). This shift has fostered a workplace culture that marginalizes risky behaviors and legitimizes gender equality, reflecting broader trends in natural resource-based industries. The emphasis on safe, collective actions has also helped redefine masculine behavior, aligning it more closely with the evolving expectations of contemporary industrial environments (Adams 2023a).

Another reason for the shift in masculinity towards a more safety-conscious orientation is societal shifts around the understanding of fathering. This shift has influenced the development of fatherhood masculinity, where workers prioritize self-preservation and ensure their safety to return home to their families. These reimagined identities have replaced outdated, risky workplace norms and have fostered a safer workplace culture that respects men who uphold safety while marginalizing those who continue to engage in hazardous behaviors (Adams 2022; Hartmann 2013). Mentorship of younger men has also been an important part of this shift, particularly where senior workers frame supervision in paternal or care-oriented terms, encouraging safer practices and successful return home. Such relationships can shape both parties, creating patterns of care and kinship in the workplace (Adams 2023a). This evolution of masculinities not only reflects changing norms within the oil and gas industry but also highlights the broader influence of market transformations and environmental concerns on traditional notions of masculinity in resource-based sectors.

4.2. Treatment of Women in the Oilfield

Across the reviewed literature, women in oilfield contexts encounter exclusion, constrained advancement, sexual harassment, assault, and the normalization of violence (Miller 2004). These dynamics are not incidental interpersonal conflicts but patterned outcomes of work design and governance structures. Women frequently report pressure to demonstrate toughness, emotional restraint, and technical competence beyond that of their male peers to secure legitimacy (Miller 2004; Filteau 2014). Harassment and exclusion are often normalized through humor, minimization, or reframing within occupational culture. Where reporting mechanisms are fragmented across subcontractors or embedded within hierarchical chains of command, formal recourse may appear risky or ineffective. In such settings, silence becomes a rational strategy.

These patterns reflect institutional conditions that diffuse accountability and privilege production continuity over relational safety. Rotational labor compresses family life

and limits flexibility, disproportionately affecting those with caregiving responsibilities (Dorow and Jean 2022). Leadership pathways often assume uninterrupted availability and geographic mobility, reinforcing structural barriers to advancement. These organizational expectations are presented as neutral requirements of extraction, yet they are embedded within gendered assumptions about work, authority, and domestic labor.

Importantly, the literature does not portray women as passive subjects within these environments. Many develop informal support networks, document incidents, mentor one another, and seek external regulatory or media channels when internal systems fail. These practices reveal the oilfield as a contested and dynamic terrain rather than a closed system. However, reliance on informal resistance underscores the absence of reliable institutional protection.

4.3. GBV as a Structurally Patterned Outcome of Oilfield Governance

Across the included studies, GBV was most often discussed through workplace harassment and exclusion, gendered intimidation, commercial sex economies, and heightened domestic violence vulnerability rather than as isolated events (World Bank 2013; Landry and Willey 2023). In the included literature, moral injury is rarely measured directly but is instead reported as ethical conflict and constrained dissent in the context of production pressure and hierarchical accountability structures (Connell 2017; Williamson et al. 2023).

4.3.1. GBV Against Men: Masculinity Policing, Subordination, and Moral Injury

For men, GBV manifests primarily through the policing of masculine norms and the institutional disciplining of vulnerability. Oilfield cultures historically valorized risk tolerance, stoicism, and physical endurance, traits reinforced through homosocial bonding in remote, high-risk environments (Miller 2004; Filteau 2014; Watt 2022). Within this framework, deviation from dominant masculine scripts invites sanction. Men who challenge unsafe practices risk symbolic degradation and the loss of social status, sometimes labeled as ‘sissies’ (Adams 2023a). Feminization operates here as disciplinary violence: the accusation of softness becomes a mechanism for enforcing silence (Miller 2004). Similarly, the assertion that “if you have not lost two fingers, and not had two divorces, you are not a real driller” reflects the normalization of bodily harm and relational breakdown as proof of occupational legitimacy (Adams 2023a). These dynamics can be situated within a broader hegemonic gender order in which “real men” legitimize dominance over “lesser men” and femininities (Filteau 2015). Masculinity thus functions not only as identity but also as a stratification regime among men. Subordination is structural, not incidental (Leonard 2016).

Additionally, the economic volatility and oil-led restructuring intensify aggressive and hyper-sexualized masculine performances, leading to ‘aggressive, violent, or hyper-sexualized forms of masculinity’ (Leonard 2016). Economic precarity amplifies the pressure to perform dominance, linking market instability to interpersonal aggression and relational strain.

Rotational regimes and compressed reintegration cycles fracture relational continuity, creating domestic tension and identity strain (Dorow and Jean 2022). Where workplace cultures reward silence and endurance, men may experience moral injury when witnessing practices they perceive as wrong yet feel structurally constrained from challenging (Adams 2023a; Connell 2017). Cumulative strains, including burnout, isolation, and stigmatized help-seeking, become individualized rather than recognized as institutionally organized.

4.3.2. GBV Against Women: Structural Exclusion, Harassment, and Institutional Invisibility

While men are disciplined through hierarchical enforcement of masculine norms, women experience exclusion and harassment structured by the same institutional condi-

tions (Miller 2004). Across extractive contexts, oilfield environments uphold rigid gendered divisions of labor and normalize frontier-inflected ideals of toughness and autonomy (Miller 2004; Massie and Jackson 2020; Filteau 2014). Women “continue to be marginalized from the more lucrative employment opportunities available within the primary resource sector” (Massie and Jackson 2020). Economic exclusion is embedded in hiring pipelines, informal sponsorship networks, and rotational expectations that presume uninterrupted availability (Miller 2004). Masculine bonding practices, entrepreneurial individualism, and engineering rationality create environments in which women are evaluated through masculinized criteria. Many women respond through constrained strategies of assimilation, including minimizing difference, tolerating sexist banter, and performing toughness to gain legitimacy (Miller 2004). Such adaptation reflects constrained negotiation within masculinized governance rather than genuine inclusion.

Camp and boomtown dynamics further intensify vulnerability. Boomtowns perpetuate “camp syndrome” conditions in which liminality, homosocial isolation, and frontier narratives normalize sexist discourse and link extraction to the sex trade (Landry and Willey 2023), leading to gendered exclusion and heightened vulnerability to harassment and domestic violence in extractive regions (World Bank 2013). Fragmented contractor chains and hierarchical reporting pathways reduce confidence in formal recourse, making silence a rational survival strategy (Miller 2004).

4.4. *Metaphors of Masculinity in the Oil and Gas Industry*

Articles identified in this scoping review described several metaphors through which oilfield masculinities are understood and reproduced. One prominent metaphor is the “breadwinner,” which underscores the expectation that men be primary financial providers, often placing an inordinate burden on them (Adams 2023a). The metaphor of “nature” in relation to the oil and gas industry, where the act of resource exploration conjures a social nature, highlights the social environment in which the industry operates and interacts with workers and outsiders (Destrée 2023; Houser 2018). Lastly, the metaphor of oil being the new “frontier” in Alberta’s oil production culture, based on nostalgic imagery of the Wild West, symbolizes traditional ideals of masculinity like whiteness and heterosexuality, and cowboys, being on the edge of civilization and conquering land, bringing back notions of colonialism and whiteness (Miller 2004). These metaphors collectively shape workplace identities, safety-risk practices, and the broader organizational culture, illustrating the influential interconnections between policy, identity, and masculine expression in the oil and gas industry.

The metaphor of invisibility recurs across the reviewed literature, describing how oilfield workers are physically and socially removed from every day public life and often from family/community rhythms, and how this distance can also produce selective ignoring of wider social realities (Filteau 2014; Miller 2004; Adams 2022; Daggett 2018; Letourneau et al. 2024; Wright 2022).

Invisibility also operates at a structural level: broader economic dependence on oil can remain under-acknowledged (Wright 2022), and offshore work keeps workers and incidents such as leaks or accidents outside public scrutiny unless companies disclose them (Destrée 2023; Houser 2018).

4.5. *Governmental and Oilfield Company Policies*

Policies at multiple levels, particularly those related to land acquisition, safety, and communication, significantly influence the construction and expression of masculinities within the oil and gas industry. These policies often reveal the complexities of capitalist aspirations and kinship dynamics within the industry and how they interact (Adams

2023a). In the UK, the evolution of safety policies in response to significant accidents, such as the Piper Alpha disaster in 1988, has been crucial in reshaping workplace identities and masculinities within the oil industry (Adams 2022, 2023a). The 1992 Offshore Safety Act, enacted following industrial action and Lord Cullen's inquiry, introduced limited but critical changes in offshore working practices. Safety policies such as Health and Safety (HAS), Keeping Alive (KAL), and Environment and Group Safety (EGS) represent a shift towards safety-commitment strategies that emphasize collective responsibility over individual accountability (Adams 2022). These policies aim to reduce workplace accidents and promote a safer, more cooperative workplace culture that challenges traditional hypermasculine behaviors, thus influencing the construction of new, safety-focused masculinities (Adams 2023a).

Workplace policies in the oil and gas industry have also shaped masculinities at the local level, particularly in terms of environmental and occupational safety standards. Changes in these standards have altered situational conditions on drilling sites, impacting how men legitimize masculinities locally (Leonard 2016). In developing nations, foreign oil companies often collaborate with governments to create policies that may overlook the long-term welfare of local communities (Hartmann 2013; Watt 2022). For example, in Chad, government policies promoting temporary employment in the oil industry have led to a localized masculine crisis (Leonard 2016). Men who secure jobs can only temporarily fulfill the breadwinner ideal, leading to instability in their social standing and identity once their contracts end. This economic restructuring forces men to redefine previously feminized occupations as masculine during periods of economic growth, a challenge that significantly impacts their identities and sense of worth (Leonard 2016).

Moreover, exploration and expropriation for oil projects disrupt traditional agrarian lifestyles, affecting men's ability to provide for their families and transforming gender relations and person-land relationships through privatization and compensation schemes (Leonard 2016). These policies often exacerbate gender conflicts, as economic restructuring forces men to redefine previously feminized occupations as masculine during periods of economic growth (Filteau 2015).

Despite the significant role of workplace policies, they are not always the primary drivers of masculine reformations in oilfield culture. Masculine identities are often consciously reformulated by oil company executives, independent of policy shifts (Watt 2022; Wright 2022). However, policies, such as those implemented on specific platforms, demonstrate that adherence to industry and organizational safety standards can foster new dominant masculinities that prioritize collective goals and teamwork over traditional hegemonic behaviors (Adams 2023a).

4.6. Environmental Influences and Impacts

4.6.1. Climate Change Perspectives

Only four of the studies provided perspectives on the relationship between oilfield masculinities and notions of climate change. These studies articulated that the perspectives, beliefs, resistances, and actions of oilfield men regarding climate change are shaped by a complex interplay of emotions, identity, masculinity, history, and socio-political factors (Daggett 2018; Houser 2018; Letourneau et al. 2024; Watt 2022). Many fossil fuel workers perceive climate change policies as direct threats to their livelihoods, identities, and social belonging, which are deeply intertwined with their work and the masculine norms they embody (Daggett 2018). The concept of petro-masculinity illustrates how fossil fuel systems and white patriarchal orders are mutually reinforcing, with climate denial and fossil fuel boosterism often interwoven with gender anxieties and authoritarian desires. The entrenched masculine logics within the oil and gas industry, which valorize self-made

men and the physicality of their work, further complicate efforts to shift attitudes towards sustainability (Daggett 2018). These masculinities are deeply resistant to change, as they are tied to notions of working worth and success achieved through “boots on the ground” (Daggett 2018; Letourneau et al. 2024). For example, in rural and resource-based communities, where masculinity is often tied to local labor markets, economic restructuring and environmental politics have altered the conditions under which men perform their gender roles. The decline of traditional industries due to deindustrialization and globalization has created economic hardships, particularly for rural men, exacerbating a sense of vulnerability and loss of identity. This economic displacement is mirrored in the oil industry, where the dominant form of masculinity is shaped by historical and local contexts, such as the frontier myth in Alberta, making it difficult to challenge gender roles in male-dominated settings (Filteau 2014, 2015).

The impact of these dynamics is evident in the public profiles and social media presence of fossil fuel workers, which show strong affiliations with conservative and extreme right-wing values, often aligned with climate obstruction and skepticism about climate science. Fossil fuel advocacy organizations, backed by powerful industry groups, reinforce this defensive posture by framing climate change mitigation policies as direct threats to workers’ livelihoods and identities (Letourneau et al. 2024).

4.6.2. Stereotypes of Oilfield Men

Stereotypes of oilfield men are deeply embedded in the cultural narratives and organizational practices within the oil and gas industry, often reflecting and reinforcing traditional masculine ideals. These stereotypes are based on ethical approaches to oil work that emerged following the discovery of oil, acting as moral boundary markers and situating oil work within a discourse of self-responsibility and appropriateness (Watt 2022). Local stereotypes, particularly in offshore communities, depict young workers as engaging in conspicuous consumption and mismanaging wealth, serving as moral exemplars of what not to do (Filteau 2014). These discourses promote an idealized version of the petro-economy that emphasizes the male oil wage as fundamental to family and community life (Houser 2018; Wright 2022).

Gendered analyses reveal how natural-resource-based development affects men’s sense of masculinity, particularly in rural communities undergoing rapid energy development. Stereotypes related to masculinity in high-risk workplaces, such as the North Sea offshore oilfield, have long been associated with rough, ‘hard,’ and pro-risk characteristics (Houser 2018; Watt 2022). However, the recent literature challenges these stereotypes by highlighting complex, hybrid, and emerging safety-positive masculinities in such environments (Adams 2022, 2023a, 2023b). These shifts are reflected in policy changes that prioritize safety and teamwork, challenging the traditional risky masculine behaviors.

5. Media Framing of Oilfield Masculinities

The media scan was designed as a theoretically informed interpretive exercise, not a systematic empirical study. Its purpose is to map the representational terrain through which oilfield masculinities are publicly framed and to assess whether institutional drivers of gendered harm are rendered visible, minimized, or individualized in cultural production. The corpus does not provide evidence that GBV occurs at particular rates or that specific masculinity types are prevalent; rather, it illustrates how cultural narratives may reinforce or contest the governance conditions analyzed in the scholarly review. Interpretations offered in this section should be read as analytically motivated observations about a purposively selected corpus, not as conclusions about the full universe of oilfield media. Items were selected to represent the range of formats through which oilfield labor is publicly narrated,

from fictional dramatization to investigative journalism, because different formats construct different relationships between audience, worker, and institution. Across the reviewed media corpus, oilfield masculinities are not merely depicted but actively produced through representational practices that shape what forms of harm are publicly recognizable and institutionally actionable. News reporting, documentary film, podcasts, scripted drama, and industry-adjacent programming operate as a parallel governance terrain that amplifies certain masculine ideals while rendering other harms peripheral (Daggett 2018). Scripted series such as Sheridan and Wallace (2024), reality programming including *Black Gold* (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) and *Licence to Drill* (2010), and narrative treatments such as Berg (2016) center on toughness, risk tolerance, and loyalty, reinforcing frontier and breadwinner archetypes.

5.1. Heroism, Sacrifice, and the Breadwinner Frame

Across formats, oilfield men are portrayed as indispensable providers whose endurance sustains modern life. Risk appears as a noble sacrifice rather than as a product of organizational design. Even in Berg (2016), which acknowledges corporate negligence, the narrative foregrounds masculine bravery and loyalty. Long absences and physical strain are recoded as markers of character, stabilizing oilfield masculinities as morally justified and economically necessary. This framing narrows the discursive space in which harm can be named without appearing to undermine masculine worth.

5.2. Selective Visibility and the Invisibility of Gendered Harm

While technical competence and economic contribution are highly visible, gender-based violence and harassment rarely appear as structural features of extractive systems. Women are frequently positioned as supportive partners or exceptional professionals rather than as subjects navigating institutional exclusion. When distress surfaces, such as burnout, injury, or substance use, it is framed as an individual struggle rather than as a predictable outcome of rotational compression and fragmented accountability (Funk 2020; Wallace 2019, 2020). This individualizing logic mirrors broader expectations of stoicism and self-reliance, obscuring structural drivers of moral injury and domestic strain (Connell 2017; Elliott 2016).

5.3. Individualization of Breakdown and Moral Injury

When media portray psychological strain, burnout, or relational conflict, these outcomes are typically individualized. In Berg (2016), emotional distress is depicted through personal courage and sacrifice rather than cumulative exposure to risk, moral compromise, or institutional constraint. Similarly, reality television such as *Black Gold* (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) frames exhaustion, interpersonal breakdown, and injury as inherent occupational hazards rather than predictable outcomes of production pressure and governance design. Documentary and public discussion formats, including Howard and Mouallem (2019), acknowledge emotional toll yet frequently emphasize resilience and personal coping over systemic reform.

6. Discussion

This review conceptualized the oilfield as a contested zone of exception; an institutional environment characterized by remoteness, rotational work, hierarchical command structures, production imperatives, and fragmented oversight. Rather than treating masculinity as an individual disposition or cultural residue, the synthesis suggests how organizational design, regulatory fragmentation, and rotational labor regimes shape which gendered behaviors are rewarded, silenced, or rendered invisible. These harms include moral injury, embodied health strain, burnout, harassment, and the constriction of accountability leading to multiple levels of GBV.

Existing GBV frameworks, including ecological models, situational opportunity theory, and structural violence approaches, share an implicit assumption that harm escalates when risk factors accumulate or when protective factors erode. The zones-of-exception framing does not contradict these models. However, it extends them by specifying the institutional mechanism: regulatory fragmentation, contractor layering, and production-first imperatives do not merely create conditions of risk but actively reorganize what can be seen, reported, and remedied. The oilfield is not simply a high-risk environment; it is a governance architecture that selectively suspends accountability. This distinction matters for intervention: risk-reduction approaches may reduce harm at the margins, whereas governance redesign is required to alter the architecture that systematically produces harm.

In this review, moral injury is used in its sociological sense to describe the experience of witnessing, participating in, or remaining silent about practices that violate one's moral expectations, while lacking meaningful power to intervene. This framing is applied interpretively only when manuscripts describe ethical conflict under constrained capacity to intervene. Moral injury differs from burnout, which refers to chronic occupational exhaustion, and from general psychological distress. In oilfield contexts, moral injury arises when workers perceive safety shortcuts, harassment, or environmental harm as wrong yet face institutional or peer constraints that make dissent costly. This injury is structurally organized, not individually pathological; it is produced by governance arrangements that reward endurance and penalize interruption.

GBV in contested oilfield spaces is structurally produced through organizational hierarchy, gendered stratification, and institutionalized norms that discipline both men and women. Across the reviewed oilfield literature, hegemonic masculinity legitimizes dominance, feminizes safety dissent, normalizes bodily injury as competence, and subordinates "lesser" men while marginalizing women (Adams 2023a; Filteau 2015; Leonard 2016; Massie and Jackson 2020). These patterns closely mirror paramilitary first responder environments, where rigid chains of command, hazing traditions, code-of-silence cultures, and weak reporting systems enable harassment (Angehrn et al. 2021; Kelly 2022; Jasper et al. 2023). Similar dynamics are documented in military and conflict settings, where masculinities structure authority and violence while remaining analytically invisible as gender (Kelly 2022; Jasper et al. 2023). Across these rotational populations, mobility cycles, male-dominated crews, and hierarchical insulation of power amplify interpersonal and structural GBV.

These gendered harms do not remain confined to the worksite. Rotational systems generate abrupt identity transitions between highly disciplined, male-dominated environments and domestic spaces that require emotional flexibility, negotiation, and shared authority (Dorow and Jean 2022). The dispositions rewarded offshore may conflict with the emotional flexibility and shared authority required during reintegration. Upon return, some workers encounter what may be described as displaced or misaligned attachment: difficulty re-engaging emotionally, uncertainty in renegotiating authority, and strain in re-establishing intimacy after prolonged absence. Offshore fatherhood research documents tensions between breadwinner identity and emotional presence, particularly during compressed reunification periods (Adams 2022; Hartmann 2013). Where structured reintegration supports are absent, these transitions can intensify conflict and withdrawal.

Comparable reintegration dynamics are documented in military populations. Research on post-deployment adjustment indicates that abrupt shifts from regimented, hierarchical environments to civilian family life are associated with relational strain, emotional numbing, hypervigilance, and increased risk of intimate partner conflict when reintegration processes are unsupported (Angehrn et al. 2021; Kelly 2022; Jasper et al. 2023). While oilfield labor is not equivalent to combat deployment, both contexts share features of rotational absence,

compressed return cycles, masculine norm enforcement, and institutional valorization of endurance.

The oilfield, however, occupies a distinctive corporate–state nexus. Unlike many informal conflict zones, extraction operates within codified occupational health and safety compliance and performance-monitoring regimes. While production pressures currently obscure accountability (Adams 2023a), the same administrative infrastructure could be mobilized to track and mitigate gendered harm with the rigor applied to physical injury surveillance. Without structural intervention, GBV harms individual well-being through burnout and moral injury and undermines organizational legitimacy. However, the oilfield’s regulatory architecture provides concrete governance mechanisms capable of transforming the gendered conditions that sustain violence.

6.1. Implications for Reducing Gendered Violence in Oilfield Contexts

Reducing gendered violence in oilfield contexts requires institutional redesign rather than individual correction. Contemporary GBV scholarship continues to demonstrate that violence is patterned by structural inequality, organizational norms, economic stressors, and weak accountability systems rather than by individual deviance alone (World Health Organization 2021; UN Women 2023). In extractive environments, prevention must therefore intervene at the levels of governance architecture and cultural signaling. Interventions should be understood not merely as policy reforms but as efforts to reconfigure the spatial terrain of extraction itself by shifting the oilfield from a zone of exception to a zone of accountable care across workplace and domestic domains.

Without independent reporting pathways, transparent enforcement, and cross-contractor accountability, silence becomes a rational survival strategy. International labor standards addressing violence and harassment in the world of work emphasize that credible prevention requires institutional independence, confidentiality protections, and enforceable remedies (International Labour Organization 2022).

Structural reform alone, however, is insufficient without cultural transformation. Prevention research affirms that gender-transformative approaches that engage men in examining norms of power, control, and emotional suppression are associated with reductions in violence-supportive attitudes and behaviors (Jewkes et al. 2023; Heise et al. 2022). In male-dominated sectors, shifting the symbolic meaning of competence from endurance and silence toward intervention and care is central to reducing both workplace harassment and domestic violence spillover. Peer-based support models, particularly those adapted from reintegration programs used with military populations experiencing moral injury, offer a relevant template. It should be noted that there is a meaningful pipeline of oil and gas workers with prior military experience and exposure. Emerging research suggests that structured group processing of moral strain reduces shame, isolation, and relational conflict in high-risk occupational groups (Williamson et al. 2023). Given parallels between deployment cycles and rotational oilfield labor, structured reintegration supports prior to home return may mitigate compressed reunification tensions associated with domestic escalation.

Economic and identity stability are also critical. Recent analyses of post-pandemic economic stress and gender norms underscore the link between financial precarity, threatened masculine identity, and intimate partner violence risk (Obeng 2023). As energy transitions reshape fossil fuel labor markets, policies that provide retraining, wage protection, and identity-affirming pathways into emerging sectors may reduce status anxiety and relational strain. Integrating dialog around caregiving, partnership, and shared domestic authority into transition programming can expand the repertoire of socially legitimate masculinities, reinforcing caring masculinities as skilled and valuable forms of labor (Elliott 2016).

Representation operates alongside policy. Institutional communications and public narratives that repeatedly frame oilfield work as sacrifice, toughness, and emotional containment reinforce norms that stigmatize vulnerability and help-seeking. Violence prevention research increasingly recognizes that norm change requires visible alternatives and sustained signaling (Flood et al. 2023). Diverse representation of workers engaged in caregiving roles can recalibrate what is publicly legible as strength, without undermining occupational dignity.

Despite advances in global GBV prevention science, empirical evaluation of interventions within extractive sectors remains limited. The most recent global reviews continue to call for sector-specific implementation research and rigorous testing of accountability, reintegration, and masculinity-engaged programs (World Health Organization 2021; UN Women 2023). Without such evidence, reforms risk remaining symbolic rather than transformative. Reducing GBV in oilfield systems, therefore, requires coordinated governance reform, masculinity-informed cultural change, support for reintegration, economic stabilization, and sustained research.

6.2. Limitations

Like other scoping reviews, this one has its limitations. Firstly, all the studies included are either qualitative or theoretical, and, to the researchers' knowledge, no robust, generalizable studies using standardized scales have been conducted on oilfield masculinities, focusing mainly on men's attitudes and behaviors over time. Additionally, 28% of the articles reviewed are dissertations, which are not peer-reviewed, limiting the scholarly quality of the review. Most of these are ethnographic, offering valuable insights but limited empirical evidence.

A key limitation is that the zones-of-exception concept is developed here primarily through interpretive synthesis of qualitative and documentary evidence. Future research should develop measurable indicators of accountability fragmentation, such as contractor-to-direct-employment ratios, reporting pathway complexity scores, or GBV incident disclosure rates across jurisdictions to test the governance architecture hypothesis with comparative empirical data. Without such operationalization, the concept risks remaining descriptive rather than analytically generative.

Similarly, since moral injury is applied here as an interpretive lens rather than a measured construct, findings in this domain should be treated as analytically suggestive rather than as established empirical claims.

A significant limitation of this study is its limited geographic and regional scope. Significant gaps exist in the research's geographical scope; for instance, although large-scale offshore oil and gas exploration and drilling occur in regions such as China, the Middle East, and off the coast of Nigeria, there is a lack of research on masculinities in these areas. Furthermore, the review focused explicitly on masculinities and excluded articles that explored women's experiences or the development of oilfield femininities.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, B.G. and D.C.; methodology, B.G.; formal analysis, B.G. and M.R.N.; investigation, B.G.; data curation, B.G.; writing—original draft preparation, B.G.; writing—review and editing, B.G., M.R.N., T.M. and D.C.; supervision, D.C.; project administration, B.G. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Analysis is provided within the manuscript. Further analysis can be provided by request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Characteristics of Included Studies.

Citation	Publication Type	Location	Methodology	Sample	Theoretical Lens	Key Findings
Filteau (2014)	Journal article	USA (Marcellus shale)	Interviews and observations	22 workers	Dominant–nonhegemonic masculinity	Safety-oriented masculinities replacing traditional risk cultures
Filteau (2015)	Journal article	USA (Marcellus communities)	Conceptual analysis	N/A	Masculine crisis	Local men subordinated by itinerant oilfield masculinities
Daggett (2018)	Journal article	Global fossil fuel politics	Critical theory	N/A	Petro-masculinity	Fossil fuel politics tied to gender anxiety and authoritarian identity
Destrée (2023)	Journal article	Ghana’s offshore oil	Ethnography	Expatriate oil workers	Frontier kinship imaginaries	Offshore sacrifice narratives reproduce extractive capitalism
Leonard (2016)	Journal article	Chad’s oil economy	Longitudinal ethnography	120 families	Breadwinner masculinity	Oil development reshapes masculine aspirations and sexuality
Adams (2022)	Journal article	UK North Sea	Rapid ethnography	35 workers	Fatherhood masculinity	Fatherhood identity promotes safety-positive masculinities
Adams (2023a)	Journal article	UK offshore drilling	Ethnography	35 interviews	Multiple masculinities	Several masculine cultures coexist within offshore platforms
Adams (2023b)	Journal article	Scottish offshore industry	Policy analysis	7 managers	Managerial masculinity	Safety policies institutionalize safer masculine norms
Landry and Willey (2023)	Journal article	Alberta oil camps	Interviews	5 workers	Frontier masculinity	Camp culture normalizes sexism and sex economies
Massie and Jackson (2020)	Journal article	Alberta petro-economy	Media discourse analysis	Facebook groups	Familism	Family rhetoric used to legitimize oil development
World Bank (2013)	Report	Azerbaijan, Peru, PNG	Multi-site qualitative research	Focus groups	Gendered political economy	Extractive industries produce gendered economic disparities
Wright (2022)	Dissertation	Alberta oil sector	Critical ethnography	19 workers	Embodied masculinity	Documents mental and physical strain among oil workers
Miller (2004)	Dissertation	Alberta oil industry	Feminist ethnography	20 women	Hegemonic masculinity	Cowboy myth and male networks exclude women
Houser (2018)	Dissertation	Alberta oil community	Ethnography	Long-term fieldwork	Moral economy	Masculine community narratives justify extractive work
Watt (2022)	Dissertation	Scotland’s offshore industry	Ethnography	18 months of fieldwork	Masculinity and ethics	Boom–bust cycles reshape masculine identities
Hartmann (2013)	Journal article/chapter	Newfoundland offshore workers	Interviews	19 informants	Performed fatherhood masculinity	Rotational labor reshapes fatherhood and family roles
Bolsø et al. (2018)	Edited volume	Organizational contexts	Theoretical chapters	N/A	Gendered organizational practice	Provides a theoretical lens for embodied workplace masculinities

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