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An organizational approach to undoing gender: The unlikely case of offshore oil platforms

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Abstract

This case study of two offshore oil platforms illustrates how an organizational initiative designed to enhance safety and effectiveness created a culture that unintentionally released men from societal imperatives for "manly" behavior, prompting them to let go of masculine-image concerns and to behave instead in counter-stereotypical ways. Rather than proving how tough, proficient, and cool-headed they were, as was typical of men in other dangerous workplaces, platform workers readily acknowledged their physical limitations, publicly admitted their mistakes, and openly attended to their own and others' feelings. Importantly, platform workers did not replace a conventional image of masculinity with an unconventional one and then set out to prove the new image—revealing mistakes strategically, for example, or competing in displays of sensitivity. Instead, the goal of proving one's masculine credentials, conventional or otherwise, appeared to no longer hold sway in men's workplace interactions. Building on West and Zimmerman's (1987: 129) now classic articulation of gender as "the product of social doings," we describe this organizationally induced behavior as "undoing" gender. We use this case, together with secondary case data drawn from 10 published field studies of men doing dangerous work, to induce a model of how organizational cultures equip men to "do" and "undo" gender at work.

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The notion that men "do gender" has replaced static conceptions of masculinity (West & Zimmerman, 1987).[1] A man encounters – and learns to anticipate – others' expectations of him as a man; he responds, others react, and through this back-and-forth, he comes to see and present himself *as a man* (Padavic, 1991). Such interactions do not occur *ex nihilo*, but are shaped by cultural conventions about what it means to be a man (Deaux & Stewart, 2001; Goffman, 1977; Ridgeway & Correll, 2000). When men do gender, they take these conventions into account, whether or not they personally endorse them.

Organizations are principal purveyors of conventional gender ideology (Acker & Van Houten, 1974) and thus are an especially potent site for doing gender (Bailyn, 2006; Ely & Padavic, 2007; Martin, 1994; Ridgeway, 1997). Organizations import occupational norms, and most occupations are associated with a gender, envisioned in culturally prescribed forms. Occupations conceived of as masculine require qualities that men ideally possess and that women supposedly lack. The masculine identity of such occupations is further enhanced by men's numerical dominance in them. Organizations conflate masculine characteristics with the skills required to do these jobs, defining competence in part by how well an incumbent fits the desired masculine image (e.g., Acker, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kolb, Fletcher, Meyerson, Sands, & Ely, 2003; Martin, 2001). As an arena for demonstrating competence, the workplace can thus be a proving ground for masculinity.

Organizational ethnographies of a wide range of traditionally male occupations contain vivid descriptions of men asserting masculinity. Professions that lionize members who exhibit prototypical masculine traits, such as assertiveness, decisiveness, control, and risk-taking, are examples. "Rambo litigators" are trial attorneys celebrated for their extreme confidence, forcefulness, and ability to take command of a courtroom (Pierce, 1995); successful managers cultivate images of themselves as confident, in control, and emotionally detached (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Jackall, 1988); financial pit traders engage in survival-of-the-fittest competition, proudly identifying with their role as risk-takers in the pursuit of financial profit (Zaloom, 2006).

Organizations doing dangerous work provide especially powerful illustrations of these processes, since dangerous work entails physical risk, which is a *sine qua non* of masculinity. Few settings evoke more vividly the dominant cultural image of the ideal man: autonomous, brave, and strong. In coal mines, fire departments, police departments, the military, manufacturing plants, construction sites, and elsewhere men go to great effort to demonstrate these attributes in order to prove their worth as workers and as men. Work norms encourage such displays, and organizational practices reward them.

Despite their ubiquity, research has shown that the costs of such displays can be high, and both individuals and organizations pay the price. Men's attempts to achieve or maintain masculine status often entail excessive risk-taking (Barrett, 1996); lead to poor quality decisions (Maier & Messerschmidt, 1998); interfere in recruits' training (Chetkovich, 1997; Prokos & Padavic, 2002); marginalize women workers (Britton, 1997; Gray, 1984; Padavic, 1991;

[1] See Deutsch (2007) and Jurik and Siemsen (2009) for discussions of this view's pervasive impact on the contemporary study of gender.

Prokos & Padavic, 2002); violate civil and human rights (Schultz, 1998); and alienate men from their health, emotions, and relationships with others (Messner, 2005).

While rife with illustrations of men behaving in conventionally male ways, the literature on dangerous workplaces also contains exceptions. Specifically, male workers in "high-reliability" organizations (HROs) – organizations designed to avoid catastrophes despite operating in dangerous, technologically complex environments (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999) – seem to deviate from conventional masculine norms. In place of toughness, these men avoid taking unnecessary risks, seek help, and inquire after failures (e.g., Bierly & Spender, 1995; Roberts, Stout, & Halpern, 1994; Roth, Multer, & Raslear, 2006). These studies focus on how HROs manage complexity and adversity, however, and do not address gender *per se*. Hence, research on HROs offers little insight into the social-psychological processes associated with men's deviations from conventional masculine scripts and speaks only indirectly to how organizations might facilitate such processes. This research thus begs the question of how these organizations, where the work is deemed masculine and the workforce is mostly men, reorient male workers away from proving their masculinity.

Gender scholars recognize how organizational contexts influence people's enactments of gender, but they have tended to focus on organizational features that encourage conformity to conventional gender scripts (e.g., Acker, 1990; Kanter, 1977; Martin, 2003). The small body of work that specifically examines how organizations might alter gender processes addresses gender equity rather than behavior as an outcome (e.g., Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Merrill-Sands, Fletcher, & Acosta, 1999; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002; Reskin & McBrier, 2000; Sturm, 2006) or focuses on women (Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Ely, 1995). The question thus remains: how does an organization equip men to "undo" gender – to take up work roles without regard for the culture's normative conceptions of men (Risman, 2009) – and, in the process, mitigate masculinity's negative effects?

This paper presents a case study of two offshore oil production platforms—high-hazard, male-dominated workplaces that, by all accounts, were high-functioning, high-reliability organizations. We systematically examined how men behaved in these settings and found that company efforts to enhance safety and performance had the unintended effect of encouraging men to deviate from conventional masculine scripts. We then compared this case to 10 published field studies of dangerous workplaces to build theory about how organizations can disrupt conventional masculinity's negative elements.

We turn first to the sociological literature on gender to explain the idea of "doing" gender, which grounds our theoretical approach to masculinity. Next, a systematic review of research on dangerous workplaces provides an empirical backdrop for our findings about platform workers' behavior. We then present our findings and the organizational theory we developed from them. Finally, we spell out the broader significance of this research for understanding how gender operates in organizations.

1. Men "doing" gender

Men's interactions are shaped by cultural beliefs about what it means to be a man (Deaux & Stewart, 2001; Goffman, 1977; Ridgeway & Correll, 2000). Depending on the historical and social context, particular meanings of manliness become dominant. The dominant form, often referred to as "hegemonic masculinity," is the "most honored way of being a man" in a given setting (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). While the particular attributes associated with masculinity are historically and culturally contingent, dominant forms of masculinity invariably confer status (Ridgeway, 1991), are associated with valued attributes required for the legitimate accrual of power (Ridgeway & Correll, 2000), and are geared toward claiming privilege, eliciting deference, and resisting exploitation (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). As Kimmel (1994: 125) notes, "The hegemonic definition of manhood is a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power. We equate manhood with being successful, capable, reliable, in control. The very definitions of manhood we have developed in our culture maintain the power that some men have over other men." In the West, hegemonic masculinity currently includes displays of assertiveness, aggression, competition, autonomy, strength, decisiveness, agency, rationality, a facility with tools and technology, emotional detachment (e.g., Connell, 1987, 1995; Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Kimmel, 1994), and more generally, the reverse of "anything that smacks of femininity" (Kilduff, 2001: 599).

Importantly, while these idealized images of masculinity do not correspond closely to what most men are like, and even exemplary men exhibit contradictions (Kondo, 1990), large numbers of men support and aspire to these ideals and are judged according to them (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Williams, 2010). That is,

hegemonic masculinity is not normal in a statistical sense, but it is profoundly normative (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). Its normativity together with its association with power makes demonstrating masculinity a fundamentally competitive endeavor. At the extreme, masculinity has been described as an identity men strive to achieve by beating "lesser men" in contests of manhood (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993: 672); those seeking it as "preoccupied with... differentiating self by out-performing others [and] validating self by negating others" (Barrett, 1996: 141); and those attaining it as "never secure," dependent on others' confirmation "to affirm and reaffirm to themselves and to others who and what they are" (Barrett, 1996: 141; see also Bird, 1996; Messner, 2005). Although extreme, these characterizations highlight how a man's efforts to *prove* his manliness – to himself and to others – are as central to enacting a masculine identity as the particular traits he displays.

The workplace is a central location where these dynamics play out (Britton & Logan, 2008: 114; Cheng, 1996: xiv). To establish themselves as creditable men, men must master a set of conventional signifying practices (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Signifiers of manhood vary across demographic groups, geographies, jobs, and organizational cultures (Cheng, 1996), and men craft a masculine self strategically adapted to the local context (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Institutionalized systems that conflate job requirements with idealized images of masculinity give advantage to those who conform most closely to those images (Acker, 1990), fueling competition among men in those jobs (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993). On the flip side, men who fail tests of masculinity often receive penalties, further highlighting the organization's masculine standards (Ely & Padavic, 2007; Telford, 1996; for an example of such penalties on an oil platform, see Oncale v Sundowner Offshore Services, 1998). Whether or not men enter the competition, they are aware of these standards and must reckon with them as they go about their day-to-day work (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

In short, conventional masculinity is a social process in which societies, organizations, and other people participate (Deaux & Stewart, 2001). It entails accomplishing a set of conventional practices that others recognize as proof of a masculine self (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Studies of dangerous workplaces provide some clues as to how organizations facilitate this process, as well as some instances of deviance.

2. Men's behavior in dangerous workplaces

In a systematic review of 20 years of empirical research on men doing jobs that pose risks to physical safety, we identified more than 80 studies that reported primary data on men's workplace behaviors (see description of secondary data collection below for the details of this review). These studies spanned a range of industries, from the military, to farming, to aerospace. Nearly three-quarters focused explicitly on gender; the remainder had an organizational or industrial research focus and thus only indirectly addressed gender. We analyzed these studies to identify common themes in men's behavior.

This research rendered two contradictory portraits of men. The predominant one portrayed men enacting conventional masculinity wherein images of invulnerability loomed large and where men went to great lengths to present an image of themselves as physically tough, technically infallible, and emotionally detached. Less common were portrayals of men who readily conceded physical limitations, admitted mistakes, and, more generally, behaved in ways that suggested they were less concerned with conveying a conventional masculine image. These exceptions, found largely in the literature on high-reliability organizations, alerted us to organizational contexts that might prompt deviations from conventional masculine scripts. Below, we summarize how enactments of conventional masculinity surfaced in the physical, technical, and emotional domains of men's daily work and then discuss the exceptions.

2.1. Conventional dangerous workplaces: men doing gender

2.1.1. The physical domain

Demonstrations of physical prowess are an important way men affirm their masculinity (Connell, 1987). They serve as a metric of competence, confer social status, and provide a forum for competition. Workers' tendency to associate this job requirement with masculinity was clear in such statements as "Tough men farm" (Brandth & Haugen, 2005: 150); "It takes balls to play [rugby]" (Schacht, 1996: 557); and "You got to be tough and... take risks.... It takes a real man to work [in a steel mill]" (Livingstone & Luxton, 1989: 252).

The idealization of strength was a pervasive theme, and language that likened weaker men to women was particularly potent. Naval Academy instructors discredited complaining recruits as "girls, pussies, weenies, and

wimps" (Barrett, 1996: 133), police-academy recruits who did not measure up were "pussies" (Prokos & Padavic, 2002: 452), and British soldiers who failed to pass muster were "a bunch of wet tarts" (Hockey, 2003: 17).

Men demonstrated their physical toughness by displaying bravado in the presence of physical danger. Shortly after a fatal crash, a naval pilot dismissed the physical threat of his job: "We're aviators. We laugh in the face of death" (Barrett, 1996: 134). Another commented, "Each time we go out, we never know if we'll be back. So we live for today. We do tend to be wild and take more risks." Other accounts also point to the manly disregard for physical safety. Workers in a virtually all-male power plant shunned the use of face masks as protection from clouds of coal dust (Padavic, 1991), oil refinery operators refused to wear required safety belts (Hirschhorn & Young, 1993), and men doing automotive repairs sometimes withstood electrical shocks instead of using insulated tools (Weston, 1990).

Men also display their physical toughness by projecting an image of sexual potency (Connell, 1987), and accounts of men bragging and joking about their sexual conquests and sexual insatiability were plentiful (e.g., Collinson, 1988). More extreme examples involved talk of sexually harming women (e.g., rape) and, in some instances, children, in order to avoid being seen as vulnerable, weak, or feminine (Schacht, 1996), but these examples were rare.

2.1.2. The technical domain

A second way that men in these studies sought to uphold an image of invulnerability was by putting on a guise of being technically infallible, which means refusing to admit to or reveal evidence of failures, mistakes, or lack of knowledge. Ironically, "training" often encouraged this orientation by providing few opportunities to ask questions without being scorned for not already knowing the answers. Firefighter training, for example, required demonstrating the ability to aggressively handle the nozzle, including fighting to hold onto it. A newcomer who failed this test would be removed from the job rather than receiving coaching in the proper technique (Chetkovich, 1997). Under pressure to prove themselves, typical recruits in these settings hid their lack of knowledge, doubt, and mistakes.

Men prided themselves on their skill in handling tools and machinery – skill widely regarded as coming naturally to "real" men – and went out of their way to demonstrate it. As one farmer explained, "If you're over ten, you'd better be out doing men's work, driving a tractor and that kind of thing" (Courtenay, 2006: 149). Contrasts to women underscored the specifically masculine nature of such competencies. In a study of construction trades, for example, older, experienced tradesmen and builders insisted that women were unsuited to work in carpentry and bricklaying because they "don't have the innate ability to use the tools" and "don't have that natural understanding of building that the men do" (Pringle & Winning, 1998: 223).

Once men were accepted as insiders, they were expected to defend not only their own image of infallibility, but also that of higher-ranking coworkers, which could lead to covering up others' mistakes, a common practice among firefighters (Chetkovich, 1997). Similarly, the decision process that led to the Challenger Shuttle disaster has been interpreted as a case of contract engineers deferring to the judgment – and protecting the masculinity – of the more powerful NASA managers (Maier & Messerschmidt, 1998).

2.1.3. The emotional domain

The final attribute of conventional masculine behavior highlighted in these studies is a presentation of self as emotionally detached, unflappable, and fearless. Firefighters who were lionized, for example, were those who "would face a fire but look almost like [they're] not breaking a sweat" (Chetkovich, 1997: 125). Such men became trusted leaders: "At fires it's like... if you're the guy who goes through the front door and they [other fire-fighters] see well, 'he's not afraid, he'll go in and he'll do it'.... then they'll kind of trust you" (Chetkovich, 1997: 87). Similarly, "real" police work entailed emotional control, and officers who revealed their feelings in the face of danger or injury were viewed as weak or inadequate (Martin, 1999: 117).

Hazing rituals and the use of humor socialized newcomers to the virtue of remaining cool and stoic under pressure (Collinson, 1988, 1992; Martin, 1999; Menzies, 1991; Monaghan, 2002; Yount, 1991). Coal miners, for example, gained status and acceptance by demonstrating their ability to control their tempers when subjected to a variety of degrading, penis-centered "games" (Vaught & Smith, 1980), and in a manufacturing plant, "real men" joked and laughed at themselves when coworkers ridiculed them. "It can hurt deep down," one informant said, "[but] you don't show it" (Collinson, 1988: 188).

The shared experience of danger and unpleasantness fostered bonding among men, but the bonds were tenuous, built on bravado. Mutual displays of fearlessness, fortitude, and sexual potency constituted male bonding in coal mines (Wicks, 2002), the military (Barrett, 1996; Rosen, Knudson, & Fancher, 2003), sports teams (Clayton & Humberstone,

2006; Messner, 1989; Schacht, 1996), and police work (Martin, 1999). Hazing rituals, teasing, and degrading remarks further affirmed loyalty between men (Addleston & Stirratt, 1996; Kaplan, 2005; Vaught & Smith, 1980), and those who complained or who failed to join in risked ostracism. In some instances, men's fear of coworkers labeling them homosexual deterred then from expressing affection or dependency (Anderson, 2005; Kimmel, 1994). As a result, even when men felt close, norms for expressing such emotions generally precluded genuine intimacy.

In sum, men in dangerous, male-dominated work settings typically gained respect and avoided ridicule by demonstrating and defending their masculine image, defined as appearing physically, technically, and emotionally invulnerable, and training and socialization reinforced this tendency.

2.2. *High-reliability organizations: men undoing gender?*

Depictions of male workers deviating from conventional masculine scripts appeared in only a handful of the studies we reviewed. These deviations usually were a by-product of work practices atypical for most of these industries. For example, some stemmed from workers' efforts to promote safety, as when miners developed a buddy system that facilitated offering assistance and emotional support to coworkers when they needed it (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 1980: 143; Vaught & Wiehagen, 1991: 405–407); others derived from organizational initiatives to increase safety, reliability, and effectiveness (e.g., Bierly & Spender, 1995; Klein, Bigley, & Roberts, 1995; Roth et al., 2006).

Particularly illustrative were studies of high-reliability organizations—organizations designed to operate safely and effectively in complex, high-risk environments (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). According to one account, workers in these organizations "don't give in to that silly bravado that says the way we do things around here is to 'gut it out,' 'sink or swim,' or 'dive off a burning platform'... [These workers aren't] scared to ask for help" (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001: 145). These studies routinely portrayed male workers as openly admitting mistakes (Bierly & Spender, 1995; Bigley & Roberts, 2001; Weick and Roberts, 1983) and catching and correcting each other's errors (Bierly & Spender, 1995; Klein et al., 1995; Roth et al., 2006; Weick & Roberts, 1983) – behaviors that run counter to conventional masculine scripts.

While these exceptions demonstrate that gender scripts in dangerous, male-dominated workplaces are not monolithic, research on HROs sheds little direct light on the dynamics of gender in these settings. We studied two off-shore oil production platforms designed for high-reliability to develop theory about how an organization's culture can release men from societal and occupational imperatives for manly behavior. We first identified whether and how men in these settings were "undoing" gender—that is, disregarding conventional masculine scripts in their day-to-day interactions. We then identified how features of the platforms' culture may have supported and sustained men's disregard for such scripts.

3. Methods

3.1. *Research design*

We employed an embedded case study design (see Yin, 1989: 49–50), in which we collected primary data from two off-shore oil production platforms within a single organization. As our case analysis progressed, we turned to analyses of published field study data to further assist in generating theory. Ten field studies of men in dangerous, male-dominated workplaces served as a counterpoint to the platforms on the dimension of men's gender conventionality. This combination of "cases" gave us a set of "polar types" (Eisenhardt, 1989: 537) to compare. Specifically, we were able to link cross-case variation in cultural practices with differences in gender conventionality and thus to assess and further refine our emerging understanding of organizations' role in shaping men's enactments of masculinity (for a similar strategy of combining primary and secondary cases, see Ferlie, Fitzgerald, Wood, and Hawkins (2005). See the description of secondary data collection below for the theoretical sampling method we used to select these cases).

3.2. *Research site*

The two platforms we studied, which we call Rex and Comus, were located in the Gulf of Mexico. Organizational practices on these platforms differed from those found in most of the traditionally male, high-hazard workplaces described in the literature, in part because of cultural and operational changes the company undertook to

systematically increase safety and effectiveness. Rex and Comus, built in the mid 1990s, were designed from the start to reflect the company's new priorities. A senior manager described the company's initiative as follows: "We were more and more frustrated with the fact that people kept getting hurt. In the early nineties we made the commitment [to reduce injuries] that became known as Safety 2000." The corporate-wide changes resulted in an 84% decline in the company's accident rate; in the same period, the company's level of productivity (number of barrels), efficiency (cost per barrel), and reliability (production "up" time) came to exceed the industry's previous benchmark. As top performers on each of these indices of safety and performance, Rex and Comus were exemplars of the company's efforts to create a new kind of offshore operating environment. Hence, these platforms were an ideal site for investigating the cultural conditions in organizations that might give rise to unconventional male behavior.

Rex and Comus are "deep-water" platforms tethered to the ocean floor. Each facility contains space for outdoor work, production facilities, power generation, drilling operations, control rooms, living quarters, offices, a library, a gym, a recreation area, and a cafeteria. Although the number of people on the platform varies from day to day, these platforms can be operated with a skeleton crew of about 15 and are at maximum capacity with 150; on average, about 110–120 employees and contractors are on the installation at any one time. The U.S. Coast Guard-licensed Offshore Installation Manager (OIM) is in charge of the facility. The workforce is about 90% male, with women largely in housekeeping and catering jobs. Most regular workers have at least a high school diploma and are un- or semi-skilled laborers, including painters, deckhands, and roustabouts (the term for a drilling rig employee who performs unskilled, manual labor); about one third are skilled technicians or trades people, such as plumbers, electricians, and mechanics; and about 10% hold advanced degrees, typically in such fields as geology and engineering. Length of contractors' employment on any given platform varies from a few days to several years; longer-term contract employees work alongside and perform in many of the same roles as company employees. Most workers are between the ages of 21 and 55, with an average age of about 38. The annual attrition rate was low by industry standards, at about 3%. Approximately 95% of the company workers originally hired to staff these platforms were remaining at the time of our data collection, and nearly all had begun their careers on other platforms.

Several factors conspired to make these workers a close-knit group, and in this regard, they were similar to workers on traditional platforms. First, regular workers, including company and contract employees, lived and worked together offshore for 2 weeks (called a "hitch") followed by 2 weeks off-duty. Most regular personnel work on one of four crews, and each crew worked a hitch together on a rotating, staggered schedule. Second, in addition to their crewmates, workers also had intimate contact with their counterparts in other crews and shifts because they shared accountability for tasks that required intensive coordination. Finally, the standard work day was long – 12 h – and everyone was on call 24 h a day. The facility was operational 24 h a day, year round.

Operations on each facility involved "drilling" – extracting gas and oil from beneath the ocean floor – and "production and surveillance" – managing its flow to onshore plants and maintaining equipment. The hazards of the job came from working with volatile gasses and liquids under high pressure and from moving equipment, often in rough weather and high seas.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Primary data

Primary data come from interviews and nonparticipant and participant observation gathered during five site visits to each platform over 19 months. The research team was made up of five people (three women and two men), who visited the sites alone or in pairs. All members of the research team conducted informal interviews and non-participant observation during site visits; the two men conducted most of the semi-structured interviews; one of the women was the participant observer. We traveled to the platforms by helicopter alongside employees making hitch changes, and wore regulation steel-toed boots, hard hat, goggles, and ear plugs. At the beginning of each site visit, the OIM introduced us at the regular 6:00 a.m. all-personnel meeting as "researchers interested in diversity" from our respective universities and asked everyone to speak candidly with us, whether in informal conversations or formal interviews. We assured the group of confidentiality, explained how the goal of our project was to advance mutual learning, emphasized our independence from management, and invited questions. During each visit, we ate meals and shared living quarters (sex-segregated) with employees.

The first set of site visits entailed non-participant observation and informal interviews. For 5 days (two and a half on each platform), we observed day-to-day work activities, interacted casually with workers, attended meetings, and

informally interviewed more than 20 employees (including the OIMs, team leaders, deck operators, drilling foremen, and contractors). Handwritten field notes captured our observations and information we gleaned from interviews. The workers seemed at ease during the informal interviews and spoke with candor even about "hot button" issues such as race and gender. The visit to Comus ended just as the September 11, 2001, catastrophe struck, forcing an unplanned evacuation by boat of all but a skeleton crew. The lengthy (8 h) trip and the extraordinary circumstances led four of the men with whom we traveled to reflect with exceptional openness on their jobs and their lives.

The next two site visits on each platform, which lasted 3 days each, entailed semi-structured interviews, averaging 1 h, with a cross-section of employees and contractors. Including contractors in the sample helped us assess selection as a rival explanation for our results. Since oil company personnel had no say in the hiring of individual contract employees – contractor companies hired and deployed these employees – the company could not screen these hires for qualities related to masculinity. In between site visits, we revised the interview protocol to focus on topics emerging as most relevant to our research objectives. In total, we conducted formal interviews with 37 men across both facilities, 9 of whom were long-term contract employees. This sample was representative of the larger workforce on these platforms in terms of tenure, age, job-type, and skill-level. On average, company employees in the sample had been with the company for nearly 16 years (range = 1.5–28 years) and on these particular platforms for 5 years (range = 10 months to 6 years). Long-term contract employees' average tenure on these platforms was 3 years (range = 1–6 years). Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed (see Appendix A for relevant portions of the interview protocols).

The final source of data came from participant observation and interviews conducted by a female member of the research team who worked as a production operator for 4 weeks—a 2-week hitch on each platform. A crew-change in the middle of each hitch enabled her to work in the same capacity with two different crews on each platform, so that in all, she worked with four different crews. Employees were aware of her identity as a researcher studying "diversity" in their work environment. She recorded observations throughout the day on a note pad she kept in her pocket. At the end of each day, she typed up her field notes and sent them electronically to the authors, who debriefed the day with her and made suggestions for following up on particular issues. In addition to participant observation, she conducted informal interviews with coworkers during lulls in the work. Because people live at the work site, there were many opportunities to interview coworkers after hours as well. Such interviews covered a wide range of topics, including what it meant to them personally to be a man.

The gender of the female researchers does not appear to have compromised the validity of the data. Their experiences and observations corroborated data collected by the male members of the research team. Furthermore, male coworkers did not treat the participant observer in the manner reported by female workers or female participant observers in other male-dominated work settings (e.g., Fink, 1998; Padavic, 1991; Prokos & Padavic, 2002) – they neither exaggerated displays of masculinity nor patronized nor harassed her – attesting to the atypicality of this setting with respect to gender.

3.3.2. Secondary data

Using a theoretical sampling strategy (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we selected 10 field studies from a pool of 82[2] published, qualitative accounts of men doing dangerous work to bolster our theory-building efforts. Following standard practice, our sampling strategy facilitated cross-case comparisons on theoretically relevant dimensions, thus maximizing "opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 143). We used several selection criteria. We first chose studies conducted in the oil industry or other industries in which work is organized in teams and

[2] We generated this pool from a systematic review of literature published between 1988 and 2007. Using lists provided by the American Psychological Association and the academic search engines PROQUEST, EBSCO, Sage, and JSTOR, we identified 105 English-language academic journals culled from the fields of sociology, psychology, organizational behavior, and social psychology, and from the subfields of gender studies, policing, sports, military, and interdisciplinary social sciences. We inspected the tables of contents of the gender-related journals (e.g., Journal of Gender Studies, Gender and Society) and searched the remaining journals using two sets of key words ("men or gender or masculinit*" and "military or manufactur* or auto or sport or oil or coal or police or file or mine or high-reliability"). We used these same keywords to search WORLDCAT and a major university library's data bases for relevant books. We supplemented this list by searching books in the sociological book review publication Contemporary Sociology and by iteratively searching the bibliographies in the published works identified. Because the last step was less systematic, book chapters may be under-represented in the final sample. This process yielded 88 journal articles, 17 book chapters, and 10 monographs containing theories of masculinity, empirical research on men doing dangerous work, or both. We narrowed these 115 documents to the subset of 82 that contained primary data bearing on men's workplace behaviors and interactions.

Table 1
Description of secondary cases on dangerous, male-dominated workplaces.

Citation	Industry	Publication type	Method	Focus of study
Barrett (1996)	Armed services (Navy)	Journal Article	Life-history interviews ($N = 27$ male aviators and supply and surface warfare officers)	Gender analysis
Chetkovich (1997)	Firefighting	Book	Ethnography; Interviews ($N = 26$, 19 male firefighters)	Gender and race analysis Recruits' training and entry into field
Collinson (1992)	Manufacturing	Book	Ethnography; Interviews ($N = 64$ male workers)	Gender and class analysis
Collinson (1999)	Oil	Journal Article	Six month observation of two oil platforms interviews ($N = 85$, 81 male workers)	Power and class analysis
Desmond (2007)	Firefighting	Book	Ethnography; Participant observation on one 4-month season; Interviews ($N = 14$ male wildland firefighters)	Gender analysis
Eveline and Booth (2002)	Mining	Book	Interviews and focus groups ($N = 115$, 70 male workers)	Gender analysis
Hirschhorn and Young (1993)	Oil	Book Chapter	Case study of oil refinery, including site visits and interviews	Diagnosis of organizational and group dynamics
Miller (2004)	Oil	Journal Article	In-depth interviews ($N = 20$ women engineers)	Gender analysis
Westley (1990)	Manufacturing	Journal Article	Interviews ($N = 75$)	Formal evaluation of Quality of Work Life intervention
Wicks (2002)	Mining	Journal Article	Secondary analyses of archival data on mine disaster: feasibility studies, reports of mine inspectors, internal memos, newspaper articles, and transcripts from public inquiry	Analysis of mining accident

executed interdependently, such as the military and the fire service. We further narrowed the pool by eliminating studies of high-reliability organizations, since they were unlikely to serve as counterpoints to the platforms. Finally, we eliminated studies containing insufficient data on organizational context, as well as studies with narrow foci, such as men's use of humor (Pogrebin & Poole, 1988). This process yielded 10 studies in five industries – the oil industry (Collinson, 1999; Hirschhorn & Young, 1993; Miller, 2004), coal mining (Eveline & Booth, 2002; Wicks, 2002), military (Barrett, 1996), fire service (Desmond, 2006; Chetkovich, 1997), and manufacturing (Collinson, 1992; Westley, 1990). Table 1 presents a summary of these studies.

3.4. Data analysis

With the help of a research assistant, the two co-authors analyzed the primary case data in multiple stages, following an iterative, inductive process for developing theory from cases (Eisenhardt, 1989). We began the analysis of platform data by reviewing field notes from the initial site visits to identify broad themes relevant to our study. We then designed the interview protocol for our semi-structured interviews to explore these themes in greater depth. Once formal interviews were completed, we independently read through our field notes and a subset of interviews to identify as many potentially relevant categories of analysis as possible. Using a textual analysis software program (ATLAS.ti), a research assistant then categorized the data collected to that point. As field notes became available from the participant observations, we added them to the data set and the research assistant coded them. Throughout this process, the coauthors repeatedly reviewed the coded material to ensure consistent and proper use of codes, continued to develop and refine the coding scheme, and regularly discussed our findings and emerging conceptualizations, cycling back and forth between the data and relevant literatures to identify additional categories, their theoretical properties, and their interrelationships. In this fashion, we arrived at a nested set of macro-, intermediate-, and micro-level codes, as well as a set of theoretical ideas linking them. Once we settled on our final coding scheme, the two coauthors independently read through the data a final time to ensure that our categories had reached theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 111–113). We resolved differences in codes through discussion and ultimately mutual agreement. During coding, we constantly compared the two platforms but detected no systematic differences (see Table 2 for an outline and examples of the coding scheme).

Table 2
Coding scheme and illustrative data.

Macrocodes	Intermediate codes	Microcodes (selected examples)	Data from interviews and field notes
Men's workplace interactions	Physical domain	Looking out for the other's safety	Employee reminds co-worker to wear hard hat outside.
		Receiving help on physical tasks	"All the [other platforms] I've been through are nothing like this platform, man! Everybody watches out for each other here. They really believe in safety. Like if I'm doing something and they see me straying behind, they would stop and help me. They see you putting on anything too heavy, they'll help you. Or they see you doing something wrong – squatting down the wrong way to pick something up – they'll let you know, just bend your knees." (Contract Employee)
	Technical domain	Relying on coworkers for information or guidance	"I'm finding that there's so many things that go on in that control room at any given time that you can't just rely on only yourself. You have to rely on the other people that are in there because you can't remember everything that goes on." (Control Room Operator)
		Publicly admitting and learning from mistakes	"I shared with the team what I did wrong and what I did to mitigate it. And they were glad I told them, because then they developed a procedure and a checklist so it wouldn't happen again." (Installation Manager)
	Emotional domain	Sharing concerns and advice about personal matters	Conversation among men at lunch: "Sent home a tape of that Mozart and Chopin for Joe's baby, because it's real important for them babies to listen to music like that. Real soothing." (Deck Mechanic)
		Expressing emotions openly	Men expressed fear openly during the September 11 evacuation
Cultural conditions	Collectivistic goal	Make coworkers safe	"I guess it's that we all have a common goal out here, which is to keep it as safe and healthy as possible out here for everybody. And we all understand what the priorities are, and we set goals and, we've got targets to meet. And we all sit down and discuss how we're going to do it and make it happen I think you have to keep [the production goal] in perspective. It's out there, but by no means do we jeopardize our integrity with what we're trying to do here—that being safety." (Deck Operator) "The communications you see on the deck, all that is about safety, people knowing what is going on, the process of the paper work, the stuff that goes on the board in the control room, letting you know that some device is out of service – that's a safety thing, because somebody could turn something on and blow something up – [The team leaders and the OIM] and everybody out walking around, seeing what's going on, making sure that everyone's doing everything safe. I mean safety, it's just all around you." (Production Operator)
		Build community	"Recognitions" offered at the beginning of meetings: "In the meetings, it's an opportunity to recognize contractors and others who may have helped you in a previous day, when you couldn't have done the job without them. It's way of showing your appreciation in front of the whole platform." (Utilities Team Leader) Respect for all employees (including contract employees): "Doug's a contract operator. [You heard him] sitting here telling [a long-time employee] what to do and [the long-time employee] listened... When a [contractor] does their work out there in a manner that shows they're capable and they have potential and they have drive, the [company] folks respect them and honor them and value them. That in turn pays dividends from what the contractors provide. They do provide value. They see things that could be done different, and they give that information. So in most places, they may not have that type of treatment, they don't have the ownership in the organization that they would have in a place where they are treated with respect and they're valued." (Utilities Team Worker)
		Advance company's mission	"The business is driving you out here. You're out here working to meet these goals. We do it as one big family, that's the way we want to go." (Deck Operator)

Table 2 (*Continued*)

Macrocodes	Intermediate codes	Microcodes (selected examples)	Data from interviews and field notes
	Aligning definitions of competence with *bona fide* task requirements	Respected qualities	"We developed our own philosophy about work and went from a top-down system to making our own decision. Once you lose the territorial aspect, you see what's best for the group. We can challenge the status quo. It may take longer to make a decision. But if you get buy in, you go farther. If you just want to get your own way, it starts rifts in crews." (Deck Operator)
			"People that are straight forward who have a sense of compassion and awareness of you beyond the job, when necessary." (Mechanic)
		Images of leadership	"Our leaders are people who are open and honest about things and not afraid to admit they've made a mistake." (Production Operator)
			"[Leaders] listen to you. I've worked jobs before where they didn't even want to hear it. So they will listen, and listening makes a whole lot of difference." (Electrician)
	Learning orientation toward work	No one gets blamed for mistakes	Root cause analysis, which systematized the learning approach to mistakes and minimized impulse to blame.
			"We have an investigation and we don't point fingers, it's just, human error. There's nothing you could have done about it. We try a new procedure again. We [want to know] what have you learned from it so it doesn't happen again. But I don't think there's ever been any finger pointing." (Control Room Operator)
		Everyone's input solicited	"You see it best at the morning meetings. Everyone has a chance to speak. They rotate roles every morning; they all have an opportunity to express their opinions. And they all shoulder responsibilities. In the old days, one person would tell others what to do... You don't feel that hierarchy structure that dominated the industry before." (Deck Operator)

Two broad categories served as the basis for our analysis: *men's workplace interactions* and *organizational culture*. We describe our coding and analytic procedures for each theme below.

3.4.1. Men's workplace interactions

Data on men's interactions came from two sources: our direct observations of men working and interacting with one another and with us, and interviews and discussions with informants in which they described their own and others' behavior. We analyzed these data for evidence of behavior that conformed to or deviated from conventional masculinity, as defined in the literature on men and masculinity and illustrated in extant accounts of men doing dangerous work. We first developed a series of descriptive, micro-level codes to capture as concretely as possible what men were doing and saying in this regard, such as "asking for help on a physical task" or "publicly admitting a mistake." As patterns emerged, we cycled back through our field notes and transcripts, seeking evidence of deviants (which, in this setting, were men behaving in conventionally masculine ways) and probing the data for how people reacted to behaviors that breached organizational norms (see Garfinkel, 1967). We found relatively few instances of deviance or cynicism about norms, and we noted them.

This analysis was largely descriptive, focused on determining whether and how these workers disregarded conventional masculine scripts in their day-to-day interactions. To facilitate comparisons between our data and the findings reported in the empirical literature, we parsed our coded data on men's interactions into the three domains – *physical*, *technical*, and *emotional* – we had used to summarize those findings. We remained open to identifying additional domains, but none materialized.

3.4.2. Organizational culture

We defined culture as the set of practices through which "modes of behavior and outlook within a community" are shared (Swidler, 1986: 273). An organization's cultural practices include the informal work practices, norms, policies, rituals, stories, and symbols that shape organization members' actions as they go about their day-to-day work (Fine, 1996; Martin, 2002).

To develop theory about how an organization's culture supports and sustains men's disregard for conventional masculine scripts, we coded cultural practices that seemed to release platform workers from the occupational imperatives for manly behavior. We paid particular attention to how features of the platforms' culture may have led workers to forego the privilege and protection that conventional displays of masculinity have traditionally garnered for men in these settings, by de-privileging such displays, obviating the need for such protection, or reorienting them toward different pursuits altogether. Again, we labeled these features using informants' terms (e.g., "no one gets blamed for mistakes" and "safety is a priority"). Gradually, as categories' theoretical properties became clearer, we combined categories with similar properties into more abstract, theoretical concepts to capture broader components of the organization's culture (e.g., we categorized "no one gets blamed for mistakes" and "everyone's input solicited" as practices that fostered the development of a "learning orientation toward work"). Throughout this process, we consulted the literature on topics, such as psychological strategies of self-enhancement (e.g., Crocker & Park, 2004), sources of workplace meaning (e.g., Podolny, Khurana, & Hill-Popper, 2005), goal-based approaches to the self (e.g., Dweck, Higgins, & Grant-Pillow, 2003), psychological safety (e.g., Edmondson, 1999), and high quality relationships (e.g., Dutton & Heaphy, 2003) to further refine our coding scheme and to help us understand and probe emerging patterns in our data more deeply.

As our analysis progressed, we turned to the set of 10 published field studies of conventional male behavior that served as a counterpoint to the platforms. We searched these studies for evidence of the kinds of cultural practices that we observed in our data (e.g., systemized approaches to learning from mistakes, rituals for showing appreciation) and for any other practices that might create cultural conditions similar to those we had identified on the platforms; we also searched for evidence of practices that would undermine those conditions. At the same time, we searched our data for evidence of the kinds of cultural practices that appeared in those studies (e.g., hazing rituals, informal rewards for conventionally masculine displays).

This analysis was inferential, rather than descriptive, and, together with our analysis of men's workplace interactions, was the basis for our emergent theory. Evidence ultimately converged on three components of organizational culture that prompted men to deviate from conventional enactments of masculinity: *shared goals that advance collective well-being*, *definitions of competence that are tied to* bona fide *task requirements rather than to conventional masculine traits*, and a *learning orientation toward work*.

As our theory-building progressed, we routinely scrutinized transcripts and field notes for data that would help us eliminate alternative explanations. To rule out the notion that selection processes alone accounted for men's behavior, we compared the data from long-term contract employees, whom the company had no hand in selecting, to the data from regular employees. We found no difference, which attests to the likelihood of organizational rather than selection effects. In addition, we noted every contrast men drew between their experiences on Comus and Rex and their experiences on other platforms, as these contrasts provided a link between experiences and organizational context, bolstering confidence in our emergent theory.

4. Undoing gender in a traditionally male workplace

The platforms of 10 years earlier were like the masculine workplaces described in the literature – where men's behavior centered on appearing physically tough, technically infallible, and emotionally detached – but Rex and Comus were different. These platforms, built and staffed in the new, safety-conscious era, presented a stark contrast to the platforms on which many employees had started their careers. An OIM and 27-year veteran of the company reflected on the differences:

> [Then] the field foremen were kind of like a pack of lions. The guy that was in charge was the one who could basically out-perform and out-shout and out-intimidate all the others. That's just how it worked out here on drilling rigs and in production. So those people went to the top, over other people's bodies in some cases. Intimidation was the name of the game. . .. They decided who the driller was by fighting. If the job came open, the one that was left standing was the driller. It was that rowdy. But it's not like that at all now. I mean we don't even horseplay like we used to. There's no physical practical jokes anymore. Most stuff now is just good-natured joking.

An electrician offered the following reflection:

> Ten, twelve years ago I just couldn't imagine sitting down with somebody like you and talking about these kinds of things. It was way more macho then than it is now. It was like, "Hey, this is a man's world. If you can't cut it

here, boy, you don't need to be here." Now there is a little bit more of, "Let's learn what people are about," a little bit more about the personal and interpersonal relationships and that kind of stuff.

A production operator, who described the platform environment of the past as "macho," noted that now "there's room for both the softer side and the other one." He elaborated on the change as follows.

> [We had to be taught] how to be more lovey-dovey and more friendly with each other and to get in touch with the more tender side of each other type of thing. And all of us just laughed at first. It was like, man, this is never going to work, you know? But now you can really tell the difference. Even though we kid around and joke around with each other, there's no malice in it. We are a very different group now than we were when we first got together—kinder, gentler people.

Importantly, these men did not repudiate traditionally masculine traits – in fact, they acted on them when the work demanded it – *but they did not seem focused on proving them.* As one worker noted, "we know what we're doing, but we don't need to prove ourselves, [whereas] guys [in other places] lift their leg and pee on everything." Similarly, another described "machoness" as "something I don't worry about."

Likewise, these men did not abdicate power, but they expressed it without bravado. A 40-year-old production operator described how he and his male coworkers had undergone a change in the way they thought about themselves in this regard:

> I started working offshore when I was 17. Back then, there was much more profanity, much more posturing. If you didn't posture yourself in a position of power, then you set yourself up for ridicule. But over the years, with company training... people have learned that you don't have to present yourself in that fashion to gain power. You don't have to use profanity to make a statement that carries power.

Everyone – workers, managers, contractors – attributed this break from the past to the company-wide initiative to make safety its highest priority: "macho" behavior was unsafe and therefore simply unacceptable. We extend that analysis. Our data suggest that the company's safety initiative was indeed the catalyst that made Rex and Comus different from their predecessors, but our data also suggest that the difference represented more than a behavioral response to prohibitions about acting in unsafe ways: it represented a fundamental difference in orientation toward work, the self, and others.

Our key insight is that cultural practices on Rex and Comus, largely stemming from the organization's safety initiative, directed men away from the goal of proving masculinity and oriented them instead toward goals that were incompatible with upholding a masculine image — the safety and well-being of their coworkers and advancing the company's mission. The pursuit of these goals released men from the performance of masculinity commonly associated with dangerous work: in contrast to other dangerous workplaces, including platforms of an earlier era, platform workers readily conceded their physical limitations, publicly revealed their mistakes and shortcomings, and openly shared their fears and anxieties while demonstrating sensitivity to others'. We call this second set of goals "collectivistic" goals because they involve contributing to the well-being of the whole rather than garnering acceptance or admiration for the self (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Crocker, Moeller, & Burson, 2009). Research shows that people regard these goals as more meaningful than image goals because they satisfy a basic human need for relatedness and thus are inherently more rewarding to pursue (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004; for a review, see Podolny et al., 2005, and Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, in press). When people perceive that efforts to validate their self-image would compromise these goals, they are often willing to risk their self-image – for instance they risk being seen as incompetent or weak – not out of virtue or self-sacrifice, but because they see taking such risks as necessary in order to accomplish higher priority goals (Crocker, Niiya, & Mischkowski, 2008). A mechanic illustrated this rationale, noting that to worry about his image would have undermined his work: "When we need to get to the root cause of a problem or to troubleshoot something, we talk freely to each other rather than worrying about what he thinks of me." In short, our findings suggest that collectivistic goals superseded image goals in men's interactions on Rex and Comus, disrupting men's compliance with societal gender norms.

We use this case, together with 10 published field studies as a point of comparison, to develop theory about how an organization's cultural practices bring about and sustain this disruption. We begin by describing platform workers' interactions in order to establish in this setting the phenomenon we seek to explain and to document it in detail. We then describe the cultural conditions that appeared to facilitate those interactions, based on a comparison of the platforms' culture with the organizational cultures described in the published field studies. Based on these findings, we

propose a theoretical model of how men "do" and "undo" gender, in which organizations can be key sites for intervention and change.

4.1. Men's workplace interactions

We describe platform workers' interactions in three domains: the *physical* domain, comprising situations that posed physical risk or called for physical strength; the *technical* domain, comprising situations that raised questions about technical competence, such as typically occurred when one was a novice, made a mistake, or did not know the answer; and the *emotional* domain, comprising stressful or fear-inducing situations. In other dangerous workplaces, including these platforms' predecessors, men in these situations tended to engage in stereotypically masculine displays—behaving in ways that made them appear strong, infallible, and emotionally detached. In contrast, when workers on these platforms faced risky or uncertain situations, they actively shunned such displays and instead were routinely willing to make themselves vulnerable in service of safety and effectiveness.

4.1.1. The physical domain

Nowhere was workers' willingness to be vulnerable more apparent than in how they approached the physical risks inherent in their jobs. Instead of persevering in the face of physical danger (as is typical in other dangerous work settings), they stopped what they were doing and insisted that others do likewise. Examples were plentiful. When production operators lacked the requisite safety gear for the job they were doing, a mechanic reminded them to don it. When a member of our research team tipped back in his chair during a meeting, a worker politely asked him to stop, explaining, "That's not safe." Notably, safety did not appear to be an arena in which men competed for recognition or sought to be heroes. These men indicated that they were as committed to giving protection as they were grateful to receive it: "It's for the safety of us out here," one explained, "and I appreciate that." Men were equally swift to call attention to situations that jeopardized their own safety. In these situations, such as a helicopter ride that was particularly rough, they did not hesitate to declare publicly, "I don't feel safe." These statements were taken seriously, typically prompting immediate inquiry and a verbal report on the correction.

While many of the workers were large and muscular and many tasks were physically demanding, gratuitous displays of strength were absent, and workers offered help freely. When a heavy lifting task could be accomplished alone but only with a gargantuan effort, men were not reticent about asking for assistance (e.g., "We need three guys on this."). If anyone looked like he was exerting too much physical effort, others automatically stepped in to help. A contractor remarked on the difference in this respect between Comus and other platforms:

> All the [other platforms] I've been through are nothing like this platform, man! Everybody watches out for each other here. They really believe in safety. Like if I'm doing something and they see me straying behind, they would stop and help me. They see you putting on anything too heavy, they'll help you. Or they see you doing something wrong – squatting down the wrong way to pick something up – they'll let you know, just bend your knees.

When workers breeched safety rules, coworkers intervened. One example came from a team leader who described how he handled a new employee's failure to use proper safety equipment when working 30 feet off the ground on top of a methanol tank. He recounted the dialogue, in which the employee had initially gotten defensive, as follows.

> I said, "Explain to me why your [procedure form] says you're supposed to wear a hard hat and face shield, and you don't even have safety glasses on."
>
> And he said, "Well, they're dark. I don't have clear ones."
>
> I said, "I'll get you clear ones. And how come you weren't tied off? I watched you for several minutes, and you were not tied off. I don't want you to get hurt. You got friends and family at home. I want you to go home just like you came out here. Not go home with something in your eye, with a knot on your head. Not go home where you fell off of here and broke your back or your neck or worse."
>
> He said, "You're right. This is my first day out here. And at [company X], they don't do this."
>
> And I said, "You're not at [company X]. Forget everything you know about where you came from. You're here now."

This dialogue illustrates how workers socialized newcomers and how they appealed to a newcomer's broader concerns, such as family and friends, to make the platform's safety rules compelling.

In sum, displays of daring and physical strength – defining features of conventional masculinity, and thus status, in other dangerous workplaces – were not only absent on these platforms, they were actively repudiated. Driven by safety concerns, workers routinely acknowledged their physical limitations while doing their jobs and were grateful when others looked out for their safety.

4.1.2. The technical domain

Rather than hiding limitations or mistakes stemming from a lack of knowledge, as was common in other dangerous workplaces, workers on Rex and Comus brought them to the fore, thus further revealing vulnerability in behaviors anathema to conventional masculinity. When they were new, they welcomed guidance; when they didn't know how to solve a problem, they sought input from others; and when they made mistakes, they analyzed them. Rather than interpreting lack of knowledge, mistakes, and failures as self-image threats to be defended against, these workers saw them as opportunities to learn. As a result they routinely encountered their own and others' limitations as they interacted in the technical domain of their work.

On Rex and Comus, learning behaviors were ubiquitous. Coworkers at all levels routinely sought and offered advice, and even newcomers' input was welcomed. According to one seasoned veteran:

> There's people that I learn from out here that may be below me on a technical level, skill level, but they look at something with a different set of eyes than I do. Even if it's something that I may have a particular expertise in or whatever, they're looking at it from a different angle. So they've got something to teach me about it.

Workers regularly invited feedback on their ideas and generally appreciated being corrected. A team leader, for example, described being corrected by his counterpart on another crew: "I didn't realize I was doing it wrong until he explained it, and that allowed us to do our job better, so I encourage him to give me that type of feedback."

Observational data corroborated these self-reports. We frequently observed people – even highly experienced ones – "putting several heads together" to make sure they were "making the best and safest decision." In one case, a senior mechanic asked a coworker to demonstrate a task that was "easy, but also easy to screw up," and then asked him to watch as he did it to ensure he did it correctly.

Employees viewed mistakes as inevitable and talked about them as occasions for learning: "If you're out doing something, you're going to make mistakes. It's all part of the learning process." When people were proven wrong, they acknowledged it without defensiveness. One informant described a time when a coworker had disagreed with the team's approach, which turned out to have been right. At the next meeting he acknowledged his error and "gave kudos to those he'd argued with the day before." Conversely, when people did something right, others acknowledged it, often by giving "recognition," a formal practice of publicly acknowledging coworkers whose efforts went "above and beyond the call of duty."

Examples of analyzing mistakes instead of locating blame were abundant. Many stories concerned accidental "shut-ins"—that is, a safety valve is accidentally tripped, stopping production and potentially costing the company millions of dollars: One person who had accidentally shut-in the platform explained having learned from the mistake the importance of "going over my work and thinking before I act because it's not good for anybody to rush anything out here." His learning was not just personal; he went on to explain: "I shared with the team what I did wrong and what I did to mitigate it. And they were glad I told them, because then they developed a procedure and a checklist so it wouldn't happen again."

Observational data again substantiated these claims. The following story is illustrative. When a gas alarm went off, a response team investigated. Although the problem was solved, the team was not satisfied with its process, as one of the newer members had failed to bring the gas tester. A discussion ensued about the need to train new people in the procedure. Sharing responsibility for the mistake, a more experienced member countered, "I think we all need to get this training again because I didn't do it either. I ran out, too, and I forgot to grab it, too. We get into bad habits, and we are all guilty."

In short, men routinely breached conventional-male norms, acknowledging their own and others' shortcomings as part of the learning process. These behaviors contrast sharply with those of men in other dangerous work settings, who were bent on proving their infallibility. They also square with previous research: in laboratory studies, when people perceived that something larger than the self was at stake, learning took precedence over image protection (Crocker et al., 2009).

4.1.3. The emotional domain

In contrast to other dangerous workplaces, where manliness required hiding emotions, men on Rex and Comus freely shared them. As one team leader noted, "I don't view this place as being macho, because individuals open up a lot more than they stay closed up. There are lots of things that are shared."

Family problems were a common source of emotional stress, viewed as legitimate reasons for being tense and as legitimate reasons for offering support. When a man was having "a hard time at home," for example, teammates advised each other to not "push him too hard," as the following story illustrates:

> Three nights before [a team member] came to work, his daughter was shot at in a car, and he was struggling with it pretty bad. So when he got here, he says, "This is what I'm dealing with at home. If you all would please keep me focused and understand if I'm a little distracted, I'd appreciate it." And people were very supportive of him for that.

Rather than hiding family problems from people in positions of authority, workers turned to them. According to one interviewee, "if the people have a problem they can always go to the team leader and talk to him about it, and if it's something that the team leader can help them with, he will." Another felt similarly:

> I went through a divorce while I was working in South America [building Rex], and I found out that my wife left me. I called the team leaders to let them know that I may not be working my best and to keep an eye on me in case I drift away. The OIM told me a story about the recent death of his brother in front of his 9-year-old girl (something fell on him and trapped him when he was camping). That helped me put my life into perspective. [The asset manager] used to come down, and we'd talk about it. He convinced me to go work with him [at headquarters] so I could be near my kids during this difficult time.

Family matters were not the only arena of vulnerability. Workers also displayed raw fears in our presence, with no indication of shame. During the September 11th evacuation, as we were lowered by crane from the top of the platform to the deck of a boat 400 feet below, men trembled and prayed aloud in our (two women's) presence and offered no apologies afterwards.

Men also addressed their fears of each other openly and thoughtfully, as revealed in a shut-in investigation. A young, relatively inexperienced worker had precipitated a shut-in by turning a switch upon the advice of a co-worker—a "well-intentioned," 6-foot-4, 300-pound, retired Chicago police officer. In the investigation, the young worker admitted that he had done so against his better judgment because he had felt intimidated by his co-worker's imposing presence, making him reluctant to question his instruction. This exchange led to a larger team discussion about the need to guard against one's potential to intimidate – however unwittingly – or to be intimidated.

When conflict or competition interfered in their work, these men were pushed to address it. In one example, electricians on two crews were "competing against each other over the right way to do things." The OIM explained how he intervened to help them work through it:

> It could have been a safety hazard if it kept happening. So I put them all in a room together and had them talk about the problems we were having. I let them know what the consequences [to the work] would be if they didn't resolve it. That's when they got down to the root causes of the conflict. And I was surprised how open they were with each other. That's when they really started talking about their feelings.

As these data indicate, platform workers were far less reticent about expressing their feelings than were their counterparts in other dangerous work settings. Their openness in this regard suggested that these men had little investment in conveying an image of stoic masculinity. To the contrary, they welcomed such openness because giving and receiving emotional support made them safer and more effective.

These findings are consistent with and extend findings from previous research on high-reliability organizations by placing them in the context of gender: platform workers routinely deviated from conventional masculine scripts. Rather than demonstrating manliness in order to prove competence, claim privilege, or elicit deference, these workers routinely revealed vulnerabilities in order to accomplish work safely and effectively. Based on their seeming indifference to conventional norms for manly behavior, we frame these interactions as "undoing" gender (Risman, 2009). We turn now to the question of how the organization's culture supported and sustained these interactions.

4.2. The role of organizational culture

Three components of the organization's culture, created in large measure by the company's safety initiative, seemed to be key: the primacy of collectivistic goals, alignment between definitions of competence and *bona fide* task requirements, and a learning orientation toward work. ... Below, we describe these components of the platforms' culture, as well as the practices that created and reinforced them, and compare them with the secondary cases from the literature.

Table 3 summarizes the findings from our analysis of the secondary cases. We found little evidence in these organizations of the kinds of practices, policies, and norms we found on the platforms. To the contrary, many of these organizations' cultural practices tended to undermine collectivistic goals, conflate definitions of competence with idealized images of masculinity, and undercut a learning orientation toward work. The table presents the cultural

Table 3
Evidence of cultural conditions in secondary cases.[a]

Dimension	Studies containing evidence	Selected examples of cultural practices
Collectivistic goal: Safety undermined		
Production valued over safety	Collinson (1999) and Wicks (2002)	"An incentive bonus plan was introduced in 1992 that exacerbated the existing tendencies to make production more important than safety. Rather than tie workplace behaviors to safety, a remuneration schedule was implemented that served to increase the instances of risk acceptance and the frequency of safety violations" (Wicks, 2002: 322)
Disincentives for reporting accidents/ safety concerns	Collinson (1999) and Wicks (2002)	"This collective incentive scheme puts me [a medic] under a lot of pressure. There's been two recent cases where people have been injured and they have tried not to report it because they've been worried that the rest of the crew would lose their bonus. It's the same with contractors' own schemes. They might have an accident and not tell us or they'll tell us and say, 'well, we've only got a week to go before we get our body warmers, so don't record it, it wasn't important.'" (Collinson, 1999: 586–587) "... management's attitude towards things like that, like if you would have something that you wanted to discuss, you would be talked to like 'Well, do you have a problem with that? Maybe you'd like to pack your fucking lunch can.' And this is how you would be responded to if you had a legitimate safety concern." (Wicks, 2002: 320)
Unsafe practices the norm[b]	Barrett (1996), Chetkovich (1997), Desmond (2007), Eveline and Booth (2002), Hirschhorn and Young (1993), and Wicks (2002)	"The safety director... noted [that] men often play the 'hero' by taking shortcuts, refusing, for example, to wear safety belts when working over a pit." (Hirschhorn & Young, 1993: 152) "Regulators, foremen and miners routinely ignored safety guidelines." (Wicks, 2002: 315)
Management not interested in safety	Hirschhorn and Young (1993),and Wicks (2002)	"The previous refinery manager had little interest in working with the union to improve safety and working conditions." (Hirschhorn & Young, 1993: 146) "Safety issues were regularly trivialized, with a clear message being sent from managers that miners had better do what they are told to do. Miners routinely consented to these conditions, some out of fear of reprisal, others out of economic necessity, others out of a belief in the ability of safety regulations to protect them from harm. Intimidation was regularly employed to back up these expectations, often by the language used by management." (Wicks, 2002: 319)
Collectivistic goal: Community undermined		
Poor relations with management/ managers intimidate workers[c]	Eveline and Booth (2002), Collinson (1992, 1999), Westley (1990), and Wicks (2002)	"Employees had their own way of describing the control aspect of [the] separated domiciling of management and worker. Employees called managers 'seagulls,' saying 'They fly in from the coast every day, shit on the workers, and fly back home at night.'"(Eveline & Booth, 2002: 562) Managers refer to workers as "animals." (Westley, 1990: 277)
Competition	Barrett (1996), Desmond (2007) and Westley (1990)	"Because crewmembers surround each other day and night, they constantly engage in comparisons of competence and manhood...Every crewmember becomes an overseer by diligently inspecting others, searching out slippages, mistakes, and imperfections, and correcting them through critical public teasing." (Desmond, 2007: 109) "My boys loved to shove [their production numbers] in their (the other shift's) face." (Westley, 1990: 278)

Table 3 (*Continued*)

Dimension	Studies containing evidence	Selected examples of cultural practices
Harassment among coworkers	Collinson (1992) and Desmond (2007)	"Malicious piss-taking" (aggressive banter) can lead to "losing your rag" (snapping); one engineer explains: "You've got to give it or go under. It's a form of survival, you insult first before they get one back. The more you get embarrassed, the more they do it, so you have to fight back." (Collinson, 1992: 110) "Shit-talking," as a form of masculine competition: "it's fun to give your coworkers shit...To piss somebody off is the greatest thing ever out here dude. When you know you're getting under somebody's skin, it's like, yes, I'm there. I love to do it, it's awesome." (Desmond, 2007: 103)
Lack of trust/ collaboration	Collinson (1992, 1999), Desmond (2007), Hirschhorn and Young (1993), and Westley (1990)	"The biggest problem around here is that there is no trust, no one wants to get blamed for anything. So say the sealer goes bad and you know how to fix it, but you do not fix it, what you do is to call maintenance or to call industrial engineering. That way they get stuck with the problem and you do not get chewed up for it. It could be that it was your fault, that you guys screwed up the gun, but you try to cover that up and get it pinned on maintenance and engineering. For example, if you had a big hole, it might be something you could fix, but if you fixed it too many times, then it would become your responsibility, you would pick up the job and you can't hold that job." (Westley, 1990: 278–279) An "organizational ethic" of acting alone that could lead to the death of one of the firefighters: "Trust only one person: yourself. You are responsible for your own safety and actions on the fireline." (Desmond, 2007: 247)
Lack of respect	Collinson (1999) and Wicks (2002)	"In my experience of management, they have always looked down on me, so I look down on them. Management are a shower of bastards. They think we're a load of dumb cunts." (Collinson, 1992: 88) "I [miner] told him [manager] I wasn't particularly happy about coming into a workplace that made me scared to death. I told him on top of being scared to death, men have to come in here and be harassed and be called brain dead and everything else, right? Like, I mean, you don't come to work for that." (Wicks, 2002: 318)
Status differences among workers	Barrett (1996) and Collinson (1999)	"Contract workers were highly critical of various platform status divisions and inequalities. A driller observed: 'We're the poor relations out here. Company men look down their nose at us, they think they're of a higher status'; while a scaffolder argued: 'The idea that we're all one company, that everyone is treated the same is just not true. There's a big division on here between them and us. Their world and our world are completely different.'" (Collinson, 1999: 588)
Retaliation	Eveline and Booth (2002), Hirschhorn and Young (1993), Westley (1990), and Wicks (2002)	"Paybacks are a bitch here and they last forever. A person can make life absolutely hell out there. If you ever let anyone see that anything bothered you, they would pick at that." (Hirschhorn & Young, 1993: 157) Management calls workers derogatory names if they complained too much and assigned them unpleasant jobs if they violate informal rules. (Wicks, 2002: 318)
Collectivistic goal: company's mission undermined		
Compromising quality	Collinson (1992) and Westley (1990)	Workers used a range of tactics to resist and sabotage managerial control including absenteeism, workplace theft and pilfering, "go-slows," and output restrictions. (Collinson, 1992: 127) "It is really incredible how one unit pits itself against another in this place. It is as if there is a wall at the end of each unit, and anything that passes through that wall is no longer a problem for that unit [which ultimately compromises effectiveness]. People pass things along because there is always pressure, there is always pressure to deliver the numbers. Despite all the lip service about quality being most important, if you do not get the numbers, you get nothing." (Westley, 1990: 278)
Definitions of competence: linked to stereotypical masculine traits		
Aggression, toughness[d]	Barrett (1996), Collinson (1992), Desmond (2007), Eveline and Booth (2002), Hirschhorn and Young (1993), Miller (2004), Westley (1990), and Wicks (2002)	"The culture of Company T...positively sanctioned an aggressive 'macho' management style, termed 2 × 4 management, which consisted of reprimands in the form of intensive verbal abuse ('yelling and screaming'), dramatic confrontations, and generally, figuratively, 'beating up' offenders." (Westley, 1990: 276) "Vince never stopped running. He knew that if he violated the crew's norms, even reasonably [i.e., due to shin splints], he would be shamed. And to him that was more painful than the hot daggers that ripped through his legs on the trail each morning." (Desmond, 2007: 111)

Table 3 (*Continued*)

Dimension	Studies containing evidence	Selected examples of cultural practices
Infallible, knowledgeable	Chetkovich (1997), Collinson (1999), Desmond (2007), Miller (2004), and Wicks (2002)	"For an inexperienced newcomer. . .questions. . .had to be answered by the veterans, who weren't always accessible and interested and who might be inclined to harass you for your lack of knowledge." (Chetkovich, 1997: 115–116) "Incompetence. . . served as the most frequent and most potent catalyst for verbal abuse. . .When a crewmember unrolled a hose clumsily, sharpened a tool with an edge crooked, backed a truck into a tree, asked a silly question, or blundered about in any other fashion, he would regularly receive digs from supervisors and crewmembers alike. . .They learned how to avoid ridicule by displaying firefighting competence." (Desmond, 2007: 109)
Emotional detachment, toughness	Barrett (1996), Chetkovich (1997), and Desmond (2007)	"The 'tough ones' learn to deal with these belittling gestures." (Barrett, 1996: 135) Successful pilots are those that can suppress emotions, "emotions are out of place." (Barrett, 1996: 135-138)
Orientation toward work: learning orientation undermined/performance orientation reinforced		
Culture of blame, scapegoating	Collinson (1999), Desmond (2007), Hirschhorn and Young (1993), and Westley (1990)	"I've never seen an accident yet where they haven't blamed the individual. Management scapegoat people" (Collinson, 1999: 586) "By highlighting proximate causes and then pinpointing blame, accident audits become ritualized expressions of the same social defense system that helps create the accident in the first place." (Hirschhorn & Young, 1993: 161)
Avoid blame, cover-up mistakes/accidents	Chetkovich (1997), Collinson (1999), and Westley (1990)	"A bloke cut his finger and had to go for treatment. He was marked down on his assessment. So now, if I cut my hand, I'd patch it up myself rather than go to the medic. I won't tell them, because of the appraisal system. It's the system that has gone wrong. Accidents do happen, but you shouldn't penalise the person. If someone reports an accident they shouldn't lose money." (Collinson, 1999: 586) "I've had it solid, with that 2 × 4 [aggressive management] style, it nullifies you. You just start covering ass and playing your cards close to the vest. You collect a lot of excuses and you are ready to hand them out if anything comes up. So the problems never get solved." (Westley, 1990: 278)
Emphasis on performance over learning	Barrett (1996), Chetkovich (1997), Collinson (1999), and Miller (2004)	"[T]he dominant learning culture of the fire service [is one] in which people are 'chewed out' for mistakes and the veterans often give the impression that, as one Black firefighter put it, "Nobody was ever new. Everybody broke in, they were [snaps his finger] solid. You know, nobody ever made a mistake when they first got in. They were all ready to go." (Chetkovich, 1997: 181) "How I [female engineer] perceived the men dealing with management was they would just say: 'this is the way things are'. They wouldn't say, 'these are the things we know, these are the things we don't know' which is what I tended to do. That didn't go over as well as far as getting money. So I consciously decided that the way to approach management was to be like a man, to just come in and, whether you believed it or not, say, 'this is the way it is and we should drill here'. And the first time I did it, I was stupefied that it worked!" (Miller, 2004: 64)

[a] Studies not cited provided no evidence on the dimension in question.

[b] Exceptions: A manufacturing plant instituted a Quality of Work Life intervention, which encouraged a few managers to hold more democratic meetings and to treat workers with more respect than was the norm (Westley, 1990: 286–287). A mining company created a training center in the mine with the "idea of building a participative organization"; however, the center was devalued by superintendents and male workers who referred to it as "'Fairyland,' the allusion being that its ideas were unrealistic, 'soft'" (Eveline & Booth, 2002: 563).

[c] Exception: Wildland firefighters were reprimanded for engaging in some (but not all) unsafe practices (Desmond, 2007: 104, 146).

[d] Exception: Wildland firefighters "prize competence and control above all other attributes and (contrary to most accounts) view masculine aggression and courage as negative qualities" (Desmond, 2007: 8). This study provides numerous behavioral accounts of these firefighters that contradict this belief, however. A key conclusion of the study is that wildland firefighter competence is bread out of "country masculinity," a particular form of hegemonic masculinity.

dimensions we identified in these cases, lists the studies containing evidence of each, provides illustrations, and notes exceptions. Studies not cited provided no evidence on the dimension in question.

4.2.1. Collectivistic goals

The culture on Rex and Comus consistently oriented men away from the goal of proving masculinity and toward goals that advanced the collective good. Specifically, norms and practices gave priority to workers' safety and emphasized the importance of community, making clear management's concern for workers and reinforcing for

workers their responsibilities to each other; the company's investment in workers prompted them, in turn, to embrace the company's mission.[3] We surmise that by putting safety front and center, the company inspired among workers a positive sense of shared fate or humanity and a willingness to transcend personal image goals in favor of collective purposes. As a result, when demonstrating or protecting one's masculine image would have undermined safety, community, or the company's mission, men were willing to deviate from conventional masculine scripts.

In the past, platform workers perceived the company as indifferent to their welfare, but their experience on Rex and Comus was different. According to one, it used to be that "if you didn't bust your butt 110%, 12 h a day, they sent you home because there were a lot of folks who wanted the jobs. A lot of unsafe things [went on]. You were only a hat and shoes." A mechanic concurred, contrasting his past experiences with those he had on Rex:

> A good day [back then] was a day that you didn't get your ass eaten out for doing something wrong or being perceived as not doing enough. That was a good day. Today, [on Rex] a good day is when nobody gets hurt, we make our production goals – or we make as much as we can based on the limitations of safety and the operating environment – and everybody feels like they've contributed something to that.

Publicly displayed symbols, such as Rex's employee-generated goal statements, conspicuously posted in every meeting room, formalized this worker's sentiment: "no one gets hurt," "people supporting people," "respect and protect the environment," "every drop as fast as possible," and "not a penny more than it takes." While such postings do not necessarily imply employee buy-in, the men we interviewed regularly referred to them as representing the values of the workplace.

Of these goals, the first – safety – was clearly the highest priority, and many features of the platform's culture inspired in workers a sense that they were responsible for others and that the company was taking responsibility for them. Pointing to the list, a production operator noted, "What keeps us together is our goals. Sometimes we have to make trade-offs between them—for example, 'safety' and 'every drop.' But we never compromise safety." To a person, there was consensus on this point: "Safety, that's the number one thing. Priority number one, e-priority, however you want to label it. That's the biggest thing out here."

Policies reinforced the priority on safety, particularly decision rules for making trade-offs that favored safety over production. For example, everyone who entered the facility, including each member of the research team, received instruction on how to shut the platform down – in other words, halt the flow of gas and oil – if safety demanded it. Instructions were clear: at first sight of a potentially hazardous situation – for example, a spark or a flame – shut the platform down; no questions asked and no repercussions for a mistaken judgment, even though shutdowns were costly. The company's socialization of recruits emphasized this policy. As one veteran operator explained, "We set them down at orientation when they first get here, and we tell them that you've got the right to shut down anything if you feel it's unsafe. I think after they're here for a week or two, it kind of sinks into them."

Another described how company employees re-socialized new contractors who were not used to working to the safety standards set on these platforms by consistently holding them accountable to safety procedures:

> In places where these contractors worked at in the past, they'd get the preaching part—"don't get hurt," and then when they'd go outside, all that preaching is aside, and it's "hurry up and do this, I don't care if you cut corners here and there, just get it done." Whereas when we go out there with these guys, we make them follow [the safety procedures]. You don't just give them the talk without the walk. You're talking and walking with them through the whole job.

To further facilitate making the appropriate trade-offs, production goals on Rex were stated in relative terms ("every drop as fast as possible" and "not a penny more than it takes"), rather than absolute numbers (e.g., barrels per day). Workers frequently cited such policies and practices as illustrative of the company's priority on safety, for which they were grateful. As one explained, "It makes you feel good to know that they're more worried about your safety than they are about getting the job done."

[3] The company's mission is to continuously deliver shareholder value by manufacturing and supplying oil products that satisfy the needs of customers, constantly achieving operational excellence, and conducting business in a safe, environmentally sustainable and economically optimum manner.

In contrast, while safety was purportedly valued in many of the cases in our comparison sample, practices and norms directly if inadvertently undermined safety. Management routinely failed to enforce safety guidelines in order to maximize production and profits (Hirschhorn & Young, 1993; Wicks, 2002); bonus incentive systems tied to number of injuries discouraged workers from reporting incidents (Collinson, 1999; Wicks, 2002); and accidents were occasions for blaming and humiliating those deemed responsible (Barrett, 1996; Collinson, 1999; Desmond, 2007; Eveline & Booth, 2002). In the absence of a culture promoting safety, many considered it "sissy to worry about safety" (Collinson, 1999: 584). Workers in these settings ignored safety procedures, took shortcuts, and humiliated those who got hurt. In short, in cultures that failed to give men a viable alternative, conventional masculine norms ruled.

As illustrated above, workers on Rex and Comus deviated from conventional masculine scripts not only to ensure safety but also to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. We suspect that platform workers' willingness to risk their masculine image in service of the company's operational goals may reflect their investment in the company more broadly, likely inspired by the company's investment in them. Contrasting Comus with other platforms, a worker suggested as much:

> The culture at these other places was mistrust and people watching their backs. We went from living in one world to living in a good world. . .. We do things together; people are like a community. . .. You feel part ownership in the company.

Consistent with this sense of ownership, men clearly took pride in the company's mission and in creating value for the company's stakeholders. A drilling foreman, for example, described feeling "great when I drive down the street and see people putting gas in their cars so they can get to work and take their kids to school. It may sound funny, but that just makes me think this a great thing I get to do out here." Similarly, when asked why he went to the trouble to get guidance on a task, a mechanic explained "It gives you that warm, fuzzy feeling to know that you looked at everything [carefully] and ensures you don't lose a half-million dollars in the process." Concern for the environment was also in evidence. Workers proudly reported on more than one occasion how these platforms produced less than one tenth of 1% of the federally mandated allowable level of pollution. As these examples illustrate, workers on Rex and Comus linked the company's operational performance to larger goals of advancing the collective good, thus infusing operational goals with social value. These goals, like safety, may have been sufficiently compelling that men were willing to let go of masculine self-image concerns in order to achieve them.

We found no practices in our comparison sample that roused workers' commitment to the company as a value-creating enterprise. On the contrary, management's punitive response to mistakes and seeming indifference to injuries put workers on the defensive, and self-protection took precedence over advancing the interests of stakeholders. As a worker in a manufacturing plant noted, "we are more concerned with covering ass than quality or quantity" (Westley, 1990: 280). In a more extreme case, oil company workers resorted to acts of sabotage as a strategy for asserting autonomy and resisting their bosses' authority (Collinson, 1992: 127). Again, we surmise that under these conditions, when the need to protect their masculinity arose, the organization had not given men a compelling reason to resist the cultural imperative to defend their masculinity.

In sum, the platform culture consistently, unambiguously, and relentlessly forwarded a set of goals that gave men a collective purpose. Such goals were sufficiently compelling that men were unwilling to compromise them for the sake of appearing masculine.

4.2.2. Definitions of competence aligned with task requirements

Whereas the dangerous workplaces in the comparison sample often conflated masculine traits and competence, cultural practices on Rex and Comus decoupled them, thus undermining the occupation's traditional idealization of masculinity. Displays of masculinity held little currency on these platforms, which instead reinforced skills and behaviors that would enable workers to contribute safely and effectively to the work at hand. Thus cultural practices not only gave workers the motivation to pursue collectivistic goals, they also made clear the qualities required to accomplish them.

Company norms did not esteem workers who were "the biggest, baddest roughnecks," but rather the "mission-driven" people who "care about their fellow workers," are "good listeners," "thoughtful," and "willing to learn," as these were the qualities deemed necessary to perform work safely and effectively. Coworkers who behaved too aggressively failed to move up in the company, we were told, because their behavior made it unsafe for others to express themselves openly. Take Bill, known to have been repeatedly turned down for promotion. "He's an aggressive

guy," a coworker, explained, "and many people have trouble with him. The rumor is that you have to watch [what you say] around Bill." In contrast, employees praised coworkers who took care with their work and care of each other. A production operator described the kind of person who is most respected as one who "knows what he's doing, or if he doesn't, he'll take the time to do the research to understand what he's doing. It doesn't necessarily have to do with knowledge. And they're not worried about how fast they can get something done. They take the time to learn." These characterizations were the antithesis of the conventional masculine ideal.

Leaders, who both symbolize and convey organizational norms (Kunda, 2006: 173; Pfeffer, 1981; Tushman & O'Reilly, 2002), embodied these qualities, reinforcing this image of competence and inspiring others to emulate them. A mechanic attributed the sensitivity with which coworkers treated each other to a leader's "focus on the humanity side" and to his having "raise[d] our consciousness to a person's feelings." An electrician emphasized his leader's clear commitment to listening: "He'll listen to anything anybody has to say... he gets really involved." These leader behaviors represented a change from the past: "Before, they didn't even want to hear [about our problems]," an employee explained, "but [now] they will listen."

Norms and practices that communicated a clear, work-related rationale for expressing vulnerability also helped to decouple stereotypically masculine traits from the organization's definitions of competence. They conveyed that defending one's masculinity could jeopardize safety and effectiveness and that acknowledging fallibility was sometimes necessary to achieve these goals. Training is one practice that imparted this message. An OIM described his insights from a 10-day, experiential, team-building program that showed him how his personal defenses, such as needing always to be right, undermined his effectiveness as a leader. An organizational training program that "put us outside of our comfort zone," taught a team leader to "develop some self-awareness" about how his need to be "in control" sometimes led him to be "very reactionary." These programs not only helped employees learn about their personal defenses and gain skills for managing such reactions; the very fact that the company "spent *overtime*, spent *money* for you to go" also signaled how much it valued these skills. According to a team leader, "They're talking the talk, and walking the talk!"

Again, leaders on Rex and Comus exemplified these qualities by modeling humility and openly acknowledging their own fallibility. As one production operator said with pride: "Our leaders are people who are open and honest about things and not afraid to admit they've made a mistake." This remark was consistent with our observations. Leaders, including the asset manager, the OIMs, and team leaders, routinely sought feedback on their own practice in one-on-one interactions and meetings with coworkers.

The opposite tended to be true of the dangerous workplaces described in the comparison cases, where idealized images of men defined the performance standard. For example, firefighters took "pride in the soot that covers their faces, arms, legs, and even teeth after a full day's work on the fireline" (Desmond, 2007: 172); in a manufacturing plant, "those who were good at 2 × 4 management [a reference to "an aggressive 'macho' management style... which consisted of... figuratively, 'beating up' offenders"] get promoted" (Westley, 1990: 276); and in the "macho culture" and "gung-ho industry" of oil production, a driller who had "not lost two fingers and had two divorces [was] not a 'real driller'" (Collinson, 1999: 584).

In sum, platform practices and norms, including criteria for promotion into formal leadership roles, served to decouple idealized images of masculinity and definitions of competence so that proving masculinity did not render men competent. Instead, practices and norms legitimated the expression of vulnerability as an element of competence by linking such expressions to core work requirements. These practices and norms further equipped platform workers to let go of self-image goals in service of safety, community, and the organization's mission.

4.2.3. Learning orientation toward work

While collectivistic goals and definitions of competence gave men the motive and models for letting go of masculine self-image concerns, the platforms' emphasis on learning gave them continuous practice in doing so. Cultural practices that supported learning routinely put men in touch with their own and others' limitations as they interacted to meet the technical demands of their work. Moreover, cultures that support learning do so in part by creating zones of psychological safety, where people can relax their guard, taking what feels like risky actions while remaining secure in the belief that others will not denigrate or humiliate them (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Mogelof, 2005). The experience of psychological safety enabled platform workers to let go of worries about appearing sufficiently manly and to focus instead on the accomplishment of shared goals. As one worker explained, to accomplish work safely and effectively, "we have to trust each other. There can't be fear of repercussions." Finally,

our data were consistent with research suggesting that learning-oriented cultures impart a more expansive, less stereotypic view of the self (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Molden & Dweck, 2006)—a view that may have further facilitated men's deviations from conventional masculine scripts.

Organizational learning scholars have contrasted cultures that support learning with cultures that reinforce a performance orientation toward work (Edmondson, 2003; Edmondson & Mogelof, 2005)—a contrast that aptly characterizes differences between the platforms' culture and the organizational cultures depicted in the comparison cases (for a discussion of learning versus performance orientations at the individual level, see Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Performance-oriented cultures focus people's attention on proving rather than improving competencies and on avoiding giving evidence of incompetence (Edmondson, 2003). When competence and masculinity are conflated, proving competence and proving masculinity are often one and the same. Hence, cultural practices that reinforce a performance orientation toward work also reinforce compliance with conventional masculine scripts. Below, we describe the learning culture of the platforms as distinct from the performance cultures evident in the comparison cases and in workers' recollections of the past; we then spell out the implications of each type of culture for men's enactments of masculinity.

The platforms' emphasis on learning began with the socialization of newcomers, who were taken under the wing of veterans. One informant gave the following example:

> Take well-testing. I went two or three hitches going with a person [teaching me], learning how to take a well out of test, how to put a well in test, getting all the parameters set on all of the equipment—how to do all those jobs. They just make sure that you know what you're doing. And once they let you do it [on your own], they're going to still be there with you, watching you to make sure that you do it right.

The practice of placing a sticker that says "SSE" (short-service employee) on a newcomer's hard hat reinforced acceptance of inexperience as a natural consequence of being new and legitimated asking for and receiving help. "It's not like putting a dunce cone on his head or saying that he cannot do the job," one worker explained. "It's just telling everybody else that he's never been out here so all the others will keep an eye on him."

Contrast these practices with the treatment a worker had encountered earlier in his career on another platform:

> When I hired on, until you made bones [a Mafia reference meaning "until you kill someone and can be trusted"], you were just the new person. You were a risk to them [coworkers], a hazard to them because you didn't know nothing, and they didn't help you because you were a waste of time.

Learning on Rex and Comus was not restricted to newcomers. Numerous practices and norms created a safe environment for workers at all levels to learn. For example, "root cause analysis," a practice used to investigate the cause of a costly mistake, systematized the "learning approach" to mistakes and minimized the impulse to blame. A production operator explained what happens when an accidental shut-in occurs:

> There's a form or "go-by" of certain things that have to be asked. And let's say I did it. They're not trying to blame me or point fingers at me. Our intent is to get down to the root cause to prevent this from happening again. Was it a lack of knowledge, a lack of skill, or improper equipment? Was it an engineering issue where engineering needs to come in and take a look at this? We go through the whole thing. We have the mechanics in. We have the operators in. Very seldom do we have leadership in.

Other practices also acknowledged human fallibility and made admitting mistakes an accepted fact of life. Comus established the "Millionaire Club" to "honor" workers whose mistakes had cost the company a million dollars, a humorous play on the IBM sales club that recognized salespeople who had earned the company that amount. To become a member was not a source of shame, but rather, a mark of being human. This publicly displayed symbol of fallibility, like the "SSE" hard-hat sticker, likely increased men's sense that they could let go of self-image concerns without fear of ostracism or punishment.

We contrast these practices with the practices in comparison cases that supported a performance orientation toward work. In performance cultures, when people fail, they are discredited; when they make mistakes, they are blamed. An offshore oil refinery employee summed up the culture of blame historically embedded in his platform's practices as follows: "[It's] a witch-hunt, a finger pointing exercise. So we would not admit to anything... if they don't have to report an accident, they won't, because of the finger-pointing exercise" (Collinson, 1999: 586). Likewise, naval academy instructors were often "dicks" who "ask you to do these maneuvers, and if you blow it, they start screaming

at you" (Barrett, 1996: 145). These kinds of practices undermined psychological safety and encouraged workers to adopt defensive, self-protective behaviors.

Leaders on Rex and Comus, who symbolized and modeled the platforms' culture, made the workplace safe for interpersonal risk-taking. Supportive, coaching-oriented leaders who modeled vulnerability and responded nondefensively to questions and challenges – a key element for psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999, 2003) – were everywhere in evidence. Many platform workers commented on leaders' willingness to admit and learn from their own mistakes. One leader, located in corporate headquarters, was known for his bi-weekly "fireside chats"—on-site meetings in which he fielded questions from workers and listened to their concerns. Many spoke admiringly of how he reacted to employees' criticisms in those meetings. "People talk about how brave he is to do this," one worker noted, "because people criticize and gripe, and it rolls off him. He listens to everyone."

Again, the contrast with the other dangerous workplaces was striking. Managers in a coal mine, for example, spoke down to men, calling them derogatory names if they complained too much; as a result, one worker explained, "you just kept your mouth shut" (Wicks, 2002: 318, 320). At the naval academy, a pilot recalled how, just after his son was born, he was "a bundle of nerves," and he performed poorly that day as a result. Rather than inquiring after his mistakes, his training officer broadcast them over the radio; the pilot endured the humiliating insults in silence (Barrett, 1996: 135).

Finally, the platforms' learning orientation made men's learning processes transparent, which led a number of men to think differently about themselves and their coworkers. One worker described how he had become less blaming and more attentive to others' feelings as a result of the platform's emphasis on learning from mistakes:

> I'll be honest with you, when I started here, I wasn't a person who handled mistakes too well—especially if we shut the platform in. Early on, it really bothered me if there was something done that I thought could have been easily avoided. That was one thing I had to work on, and I've gotten a lot better with it. You realize you need to change when you see a look on someone's face after they made a mistake like that—and you see the hurt. Because that's something they didn't want to cause.

A mechanic, John, told the following story about how the platform's value on listening and learning from others had changed him.

> [A coworker] told me that the guys call me Father John, because they say, "he's going to take care of everything." And after I heard that, I got to thinking one night, I said, "OK. Why are they saying that?" And I had to take a look at myself. I said, "Well, they're saying that because that's the way I'm acting. Like I know everything, I have to know everything, I have to be first with the answer, and I'm not giving them a chance to say, 'Hey, look, I know the answer, too.'" So I think it was like a self-realization that hey, you need to change your ways. These reflections suggest that the platforms' emphasis on learning, which continually gave men evidence of their own and others' capacity for growth, enlarged men's view of themselves.

This larger view may have extended to their self-definitions as men. When we asked men to reflect on what being a man meant to them, most described manliness in non- or even counter-stereotypical terms. Being a man, one noted, "doesn't mean I want to kick someone's ass," nor, said another, does it mean "being macho or arrogant," or (from another) "needing to beat someone up" or (from still another) "coming across as superior." One worker elaborated, "I don't want to be a superhero out here. I don't want to know everything." Others answered the question by invoking stereotypically feminine traits, such as the worker who explained that "a man is a man when he can think like a woman," which meant "being sensitive, compassionate, in touch with my feelings; knowing when to laugh and when to cry." Several interviewees corroborated this view, offering definitions of manhood that similarly emphasized humility, feelings, approachability, and compassion. These responses are consistent with research showing that having a learning orientation diminishes reliance on stereotypes (for a review, see Molden & Dweck, 2006).

In sum, cultural practices and symbols that communicated acceptance of fallibility and encouraged learning from mistakes, failures, and setbacks, along with leaders who modeled both, made the platforms safe for men to deviate from conventional masculine scripts. By facilitating interactions in which men routinely experienced each others' vulnerabilities, as well as their capacity for growth and development, the platform's learning orientation may also have imparted more expansive, less gender-stereotypic conceptions of self; these self-conceptions in turn may have given

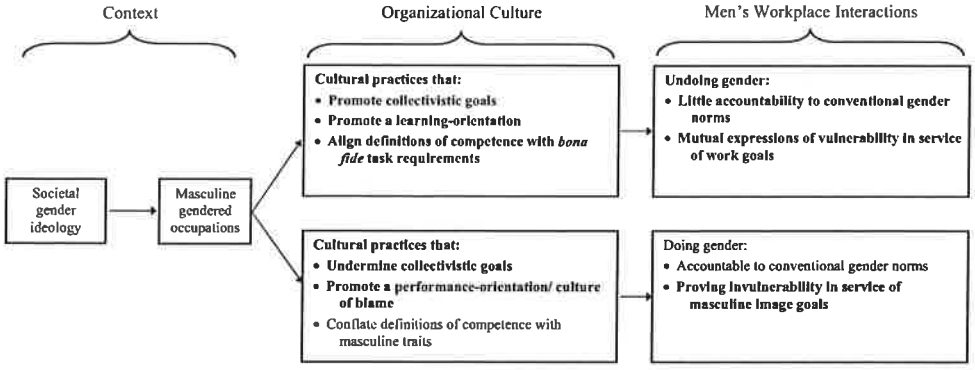

Fig. 1. Organizational conditions underpinning Men's "Doing" and "Undoing" of gender at work. Constructs in bold-face indicate the model's novel contributions to theory.

men more latitude to deviate from conventional masculine scripts, without experiencing such deviations as an indictment of their manhood.

4.3. Toward an organizational theory of undoing gender

Fig. 1 presents the model we induced from this study's primary and secondary case data to explain how organizations' cultural practices equip men to "do" and "undo" gender. This model expands existing perspectives on gender and work by depicting organizations as capable of not only reproducing societal and occupational conceptions of conventional masculinity but also disrupting them. Constructs presented in bold-face indicate our contributions to theory.

We propose that whether an organization reinforces or disrupts conventional masculinity depends on the kinds of goals its culture impels men to adopt in their workplace interactions. The pursuit of masculine self-image goals, we argue, is at the heart of doing gender. When the organization's culture reinforces men's accountability to conventional gender beliefs, threats or social cues that activate worry about one's masculine image trigger efforts to demonstrate and defend that image. When the organization supports men to pursue goals that are incompatible with masculine striving, it holds men accountable to a different set of standards. Men approach their interactions with these alternative goals and standards in mind. In effect, the organization loosens the broader culture's grip on how men enact maleness at work, releasing them to undo gender.

We identified three mutually reinforcing components of organizational culture that can reorient men away from masculine image concerns in interactions with coworkers: collectivistic goals, the alignment of definitions of competence with *bona fide* task requirements rather than with idealized images of masculinity, and a learning orientation toward work. By consistently putting collectivistic goals front and center, cultural practices anchor men to work goals that connect them to others. Men's sense that others' well-being is at stake in how they perform their jobs gives them a compelling reason to deviate from conventional masculinity when the work requires it. In addition, the organization equips men with requisite skills and perspectives to undo gender by including in definitions of competence – communicated through rhetoric, role models, and training – qualities that run counter to conventional masculine images. Finally, policies, practices, and norms that support learning give men a psychologically safe setting in which to practice in these new forms of interacting. We speculate that learning behaviors in turn may broaden men's sense of themselves beyond gender stereotypical constructions. In short, organizations equip men to undo gender by giving them the motivation, a model, and a margin of safety to deviate from conventional masculine scripts.

Our analysis further suggests that the converse of these three cultural conditions reinforces men's accountability to societal gender norms. To establish themselves as creditable men in workplace interactions, men often feel compelled to demonstrate and defend a masculine self-image. While previous research and theory have identified the conflation of competence and masculine traits as an important element in this dynamic (e.g., Acker, 1990), our analysis points to two additional elements that further reinforce it: cultural practices that orient men toward masculine self-image goals and those that promote a performance orientation toward work. Below, we explore the implications of this model and suggest directions for testing and extending it.

5. Implications and limitations

The insight that organizational cultures construct gender is not new to gender scholars, but their focus has been on how organizations reproduce the gender *status quo* (e.g., Kanter, 1977; Ridgeway & England, 2007; Sturm, 2006). This study begins to fill a void in this literature by offering a meso-level theory of how organizations can also disrupt the gender *status quo* through practices that encourage men to let go of conventional masculine scripts. If men's performance of conventional masculinity preserves male dominance (Carrigan et al., 1985; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009), then understanding the organizational conditions that lead men to abandon such scripts is an important contribution to theory about how organizations can reconstruct the gender system. As organizations loosen the culture's grip on men, they call into question a central tenet that holds the current gender system in place – gender's naturalness and inevitability (Lorber, 1994: 5) – potentially making way for less rigid, non-stereotyped views of women as well (Meyerson, Ely, & Wernick, 2007). Future research should assess the implications of our model for advancing gender equality in the workplace.

Our findings also have implications for change at the individual level. A number of men reflected on how their experience of working on the platforms had changed them. For some, the impact was personal, such as learning to be more attentive to "personal and interpersonal relationships," to comport oneself differently when exercising power (e.g., not using profanity), to give others a chance to demonstrate knowledge, and to see others' pain when they make a mistake. Others commented on how the workforce as a whole had changed, becoming "kinder, gentler people," able "to get in touch with the more tender side of each other." We speculate that when men let go of self-image goals, workplace interactions become "micro-contexts" in which they can safely learn about unfamiliar thoughts and feelings as they "acquire, develop, and experiment with... new ways of being" (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003: 274)—ways of being that may be necessary to accomplish other goals. Theories of identity support this idea. If masculine identity is constructed in situated social interactions, then interactions characterized by mutual expressions of vulnerability should reshape men's conceptions of themselves as men, and these conceptions in turn should shape subsequent interactions. Examining the effects of interpersonal risk-taking on men's gender identity is an obvious next step.

These self-reflections may also take us a step deeper into the psychological mediators of men's doing and undoing gender and how organizations can influence such mediators. We were struck by the implicit theory of self that seemed to underlie platform workers' self-reflections. Whereas men in other dangerous workplaces repeatedly identified with a conception of maleness as a set of fixed traits to be demonstrated (e.g., "real men" drive tractors), platform workers described selves that were less gender-stereotypical, more contingent on situational requirements, and thus more easily accommodating of departures from conventional masculinity. Research has shown that holding fixed versus contingent theories of the self predicts the pursuit of performance versus learning goals, respectively (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). At the individual level, people who conceive of the self as a set of fixed traits tend to pursue the performance goal of demonstrating those traits, whereas those who conceive of the self as a set of malleable qualities tend to seek the learning goal of developing those qualities. Extrapolating from these findings, we surmise that when a performance-oriented organizational culture conflates masculine traits with competence, it reinforces a view of the self as a set of fixed-traits to be demonstrated. Our findings suggest that learning-oriented organizational cultures, in contrast, may give people evidence that contradicts such views of the self, paving the way for more malleable self-conceptions. Hence, while people's self-theories clearly promote different goal orientations, it may also be the case that different goal orientations – supported by an organization's cultural practices – promote different self-theories; such theories in turn may prove to be critical mediators of gender-related behavior at work. Future research might expand the study of masculinity to test these ideas in the lab as well as the field.

Our research also contributes to the literature on high-reliability organizations. While high-reliability researchers have ignored the role of gender in the processes they study, our findings suggest that undoing gender may be critical to the achievement of learning and high reliability in high-risk settings. Specifically, this study demonstrates how the transition from high-risk to high-reliability may be accompanied by a parallel transition from gender-stereotypical to counter-gender-stereotypical behavior for men. Thus, we introduce gender as a central element in the functioning of those organizations, a timely insight in light of the recent disaster in which another company's deep-water oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico exploded, taking 11 lives and causing the worst oil spill in history (Zeller, 2010).

Our theory has broad relevance across organizational settings. We focused on masculinity in dangerous workplaces because such settings evoke vivid cultural images of the ideal man, but masculinity is also pursued in other work settings. If it is possible for men to undo gender in quintessentially masculine setting of an off-shore oil platform, then

it should be possible for men to undo gender anywhere. Research has documented how mainstream organizations conflate conventional masculine traits with effective performance in white-collar jobs, such as manager, scientist, and lawyer (e.g., Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Pierce, 1995). Hence, these jobs too can be proving grounds for masculinity. By the same token, mainstream organizations should be able to disrupt such processes by instituting policies, practices, and norms that anchor men in meaningful work, decouple masculine traits from definitions of competence, and give men practice in interacting with coworkers without regard for the culture's normative conceptions of manly behavior, while at the same time providing assurance that others will not penalize or think less of them for it. The particular workplace practices that create the requisite cultural conditions for undoing gender likely vary from workplace to workplace.

Finally, our research speaks to debates about the relative merits of "masculine" versus "feminine" traits. Leadership scholars, for example, have begun to question heroic models of leadership (e.g., Badaracco, 2001), favoring a more relational approach often associated with femininity (Fletcher, 2003; Fondas, 1997). We contend that such debates may be misdirected because the goals people hold in their interactions with coworkers may be more consequential than the traits they display. Specifically, our findings suggest that the problems associated with masculinity lie not in masculine traits *per se* – many tasks require decisiveness, strength, or emotional detachment – but rather, in men's efforts to *prove* themselves on these dimensions, whether in the dirty, dangerous setting of an offshore oil platform or in the posh, protected surroundings of the executive suite. When enacted in service of the work rather than as proof of an identity, masculine attributes can be a valuable resource.

Our study has several limitations. First, our primary data allowed us to generate but not to test theory because they lacked systematic variability from which we could infer relationships between organizational culture and behavior. To make up for this lack of variability, we used secondary data from 10 field studies of other dangerous workplaces, as well as interviewees' accounts of previous experiences on other platforms, as points of comparison. The elements of our theory arose through a process of systematically comparing data across these sources of variability. Hence our model, although tightly linked to data, remains speculative. Future research on masculinity should test the proposed model under different organizational conditions, whether experimentally induced in the laboratory or naturally occurring in the field.

Second, our research design precludes ruling out selection effects entirely. It is possible that the safety initiative and its attendant work policies, practices, and norms may have led to the hiring or selective retention of a different type of male worker—one who was more open to discarding conventional masculine scripts. We have good reason to believe, however, that this was not the case. Several men noted that initially resistant coworkers eventually adapted, and some described having overcome resistance themselves. In addition, no one mentioned in interviews that some men quit or refused jobs as a result of the culture the company instilled on these platforms, and the relatively low turnover rate in these jobs corroborates that such events would have been rare. Finally, we found no systematic differences in expressions of conventional masculinity between company employees, whom the company selects, and contractor employees, whom the company had no say in hiring.

A third limitation concerns the generalizability of our findings to other work settings. Our research site was unusual in three respects. First, platform workers – who live and work together for weeks at a time in a confined space, not unlike a "total institution" (Goffman, 1961) – are captive to their work environments in ways that most workers are not. Hence, while we have no *a priori* reason to believe that the relationships we posit would not hold in other settings, it is likely that the institutionalization of work practices and norms we observed would be difficult to replicate as fully. Second, this setting was overwhelmingly male. Theories of identity (for a review, see e.g., Jenkins, 2004: 93–98) would suggest that in settings with more women, gender might be more salient for men. Greater gender salience could make men less willing to deviate from conventional masculinity. Yet research has not born this out: consistent with the finding that men "place the highest value on their identity in the eyes of other men" (Collinson, 2003: 533), male-dominated workplaces are a breeding ground for conventional masculinity. Even in women's absence, men strive to prove their masculine credentials; hence, women's presence does not appear to be determinative. Nevertheless, we cannot speak directly to how the presence of more women would influence the organizational disruption of conventional masculinity. Third, one of the particular instantiations of collectivistic goals in the setting we studied – safety – was especially compelling. Social psychological research on the power of collectivistic goals relative to self-image goals notwithstanding (Crocker et al., 2008), when the stakes are not so high, it is unclear whether goals less vital to life would be sufficiently compelling to shift men away from the pursuit of masculine self-image goals. To address these questions, research on change processes and in settings with more women and different instantiations of goals is needed.

More generally, it is possible that offshore oil platforms are too exotic to compare meaningfully to "the prosaic world of everyday organizations" (Scott, 1994: 25). We hope this is not the case. We share with other scholars the sentiment that "[t]he study of high-risk organizations needs to be better integrated into the study of organizations in general" (Scott, 1994: 25; see also Perrow, 1984; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). Following their lead, we use these organizations' "distinctiveness as the occasion to see all organizations in a different manner" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999: 104)—particularly, to see that gender is far more malleable and organizations far more influential than organizational scholars have typically understood. In short, dangerous workplaces provide a window on how processes associated with masculinity unfold in organizations, and highly effective dangerous workplaces provide a window on how these processes could be different. Indeed, if men can "undo gender" on offshore oil platforms – arguably one of the most macho work environments in the modern world – then they should be able to undo it anywhere.

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Appendix A. Relevant Interview Questions

I. **Opening and Background Questions**
1. Tell me a little bit about how you got here? How long have you been with the company/contractor? Where were you before? When did you come to Rex/Comus?
2. What do you do on the platform?
3. Describe what it's been like to work offshore and what you see as the positives and negatives of it.
   a. How does it compare with other places you've worked?
4. What is your age, marital status, number of children, where is your home?

II. **Team Processes**
5. One of the areas that we're interested in is how teams work together and solve problems. If you were going to rate Rex/Comus in terms of the effectiveness of the teams on a scale of one to seven, what would you give them?
   a. In what ways are they effective?
   b. In what ways are they ineffective?
6. Think of a time when you needed to work with other people to solve a problem and the team worked really well together.
   a. What happened? What made the team work well together?
7. Think of a time when you needed to work with other people to solve a problem and the team did **not** work so well together.
   a. What happened? What was the problem?
8. What happens when someone makes a mistake?
   a. Can you give me an example?

9. Have you personally ever made a mistake here?
   a. What happened?
   b. How did you feel?

III. **Relationships/Interactions: Presence/Absence of Gender Stereotypical Behaviors**

10. Think about the kinds of relationships you have with the guys you work with here on the rig/platform. How do they compare with the kinds of relationships you have with guys off the rig? Other places you've worked?
11. When I was first thinking of coming out here I had an image of the oil field—that it was full of cowboys, a real rough-and-tumble, play-hard-drill-hard kind of place. To what extent is that an accurate image?
    a. If, "not accurate":
       i. That's counter to the stereotype most people have about what it's like to work on an oil rig—how do you explain that?
       ii. Has it always been this way, or have things changed? Is this different from the way it is on other rigs?
       iii. (If changed/different) Which way is better? Why?
       iv. (If changed/different) Why do you think it's changed/different?
    b. If "accurate":
       i. Can you give me some examples of that kind of behavior?
       ii. Is that a good thing, a bad thing, or does it not really matter?
12. This is an almost entirely male environment. Is it like other largely male workplaces you've been in?
    a. If yes: How so?
    b. If no: What makes it different?

IV. **Safety**

13. [If haven't already covered.] How does your experience on this platform compare to your experiences on other platforms re:
    a. Attention to safety?
    b. How mistakes are handled?
14. [If not yet mentioned] What's your assessment of the safety initiative here?
    a. How would you compare Rex/Comus' emphasis on safety with what you found in other places you've worked?

V. **Leadership and Competence: Presence/Absence of Gender-Stereotypical Traits**

15. Who are the people around here who are considered good leaders?
    a. What makes them good leaders?
16. What kinds of people are most respected here?
    a. What kind of behavior or attitudes earns other people's respect around here?

VI. **Gender Identity**

17. What does it mean to you to be a man?

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