

**The Impact of Hegemonic Masculinity on Fort McMurray, Alberta**

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SOCI 463: Advanced Topics in Canadian Society

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November 29, 2017

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Since the beginning of European colonization, Canada has been run under a social system that provides white men with the primary power, leadership, moral authority and social privilege over the country. This is known as patriarchy, and to this day, it remains a dominating force in Canadian society by subordinating minority groups and controlling men through fear. One significant function of this ideology involves gender inequality, as its foundation ultimately enables men to dominate over other groups (Pease, 2016). In every culture around the world, there is a model of masculinity that is held as the *ideal* form. This is known as hegemonic masculinity, in which Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe as being a form of *pure* masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is extremely prevalent in Canadian society and maintains and reinforces patriarchy through complex systems of domination and subordination (Spade & Valentine, 2011). Hegemonic masculinity can be described as the most extreme and dominant form of masculinity and prescribes that any biological male should emulate it to the highest extent he possibly can. This creates a system of socialization that allows for the encouragement of patriarchal cultural messages (Pease, 2016).

Hegemonic masculinity prescribes that men must follow a set of intense criteria that allow them to make a convincing performance of being a *real* man. This includes the male having to be stoic, rational, aggressive, dominant, loud, entitled, sexually predacious, competitive, strong, and most importantly, straight and white (Spade & Valentine, 2011). Men who adhere strongly to this fragile gender construct are in constant need of re-establishing their masculinity for the man to maintain his powerful social status. Spade and Valentine (2011), as well as Pease (2016), express that this is a result of complex social prisms, such as

patriarchy, interacting with gender and ultimately causes difference and inequality. By interconnecting multiple social prisms, Spade and Valentine (2011) investigate how deeply entrenched patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity is in Canadian society. This essay argues that this is especially prevalent in oil communities in Alberta, such as that in Fort McMurray, making it imperative to comprehend the ways in which hegemonic masculinity not only affect oil communities, but the oil industry itself.

As the 2015 federal election map (CBC/Radio-Canada, 2015) demonstrates, Alberta continues to have heavy support for many Progressive Conservative ideologies, which often includes having traditional values about masculinity, as well as having strong support for an oil-based economy. The importance of oil communities in Alberta is evident, as the Government of Alberta website describes oil resources as being “the backbone of the provincial economy [that are] a vital element of Canada’s economy... [as] energy development is the largest contributor to the province’s GDP, capital investments and exports” (Government of Alberta, 2016, para. 1). As oil production continues to shape Albertan and Canadian culture, it is important to investigate the ways in which hegemonic masculinity continue to affect oil communities in Alberta. As a child, I grew up in Fort McMurray, Alberta, known especially for its large oil industry. Having been born and raised there for almost 15 years, I was taught by both my family and other institutions the great importance of an oil-led economy, and the value of being what my father calls “a hardworking, ambitious provider for the Canadian economy” (D. Fortier, personal communication, 2017). Having now studied hegemonic masculinity, I have become aware of the significance this may play in the oil-field workforce as well as in oil-based communities. As my father has worked in various oil companies for over 25 years, I feel as

though I have personally experienced the complex webs of patriarchal systems paired with hegemonic masculinity and conservative values that continue to impact the oil industry in Albertan oil communities, such as that in Fort McMurray.

### **Hegemonic Masculinity in the Workplace**

Canadian patriarchy teaches that men are innately capable of many positive qualities, and through the socialization of hegemonic masculinity, young boys and men are encouraged to aspire to emphasize specific hegemonic traits, such as being tough, a fighter, and aggressive. From birth, children are raised in highly gendered environments, with many institutions teaching them how to behave, what groups he or she may belong to, or what jobs he or she may do (Greenhill, 2012). These teachings not only provide an explanation of the ways in which Canadian men are viewed but reinforce the ways in which men *should* behave. This view of masculinity is especially true for many (primarily conservative) Albertans, who support traditional conservative values, such as individuality, competitiveness, and independence, as well as the privatization of government services and jobs, especially regarding Albertan oil (Harrison et. al., 2015). As hegemonic masculinity shapes many of these beliefs, it becomes important to investigate the ways in which it affects oilfield work and the surrounding community, such as in Fort McMurray.

First, it is important to note the ways in which hegemonic masculinity has historically impacted the Canadian workplace. Throughout time, Canada's patriarchal system highly encouraged that men remain in the social sphere, where they could work and provide for their family, whereas women should remain in the private sphere at home. This encouraged

hegemonic masculinity, as it has continued to provide power and privilege for men in oil communities. For example, from the 1800s to the 1940s, the oil sector was limited almost exclusively to male employees, and women were limited to social functions such as hosting tours and parties for the company (Government of Alberta, 2017). This provided the opportunity for the advancement of homosocial reproduction, described by Loch-Drake (2007) as the enabling of hegemonically masculine men to demonstrate their superiority over each other and the social environment. This has been evident in the development of male-oriented jobs in Alberta throughout time. For example, men working in the Edmonton meat packing facility in the 1940s would perform hegemonic masculinity with other workers to relay their strength through working in the terrible conditions of the factory. This not only strengthens the hegemonic atmosphere of the workplace, but pressures men into conforming to hegemonic masculinity.

Loch-Drake (2007) highlights the importance of recognizing that homosocial reproduction encourages hegemonic masculinity in the workplace and maintains social status. However, this demonstration of power results in forms of harassment, which can often be vicious and persistent. Men who do not conform to demonstrating hegemonic masculinity often face the risk of being teased and mocked. For example, she describes an incident in which a white male was spat on by an attacking co-worker, simply because he was “quiet, unassuming, and gentlemanly [in] nature” (p. 141). Therefore, it is important to investigate the way in which this collective atmosphere maintains hegemonic masculinity, and the way in which hegemonic masculinity imposes anachronistic gender roles.

Hegemonic masculinity prescribes old-fashioned gender roles, supporting the idea that for many men in this industry to financially provide for their family, the man must be hardworking, independent, risk taking, and competitive, while women are expected to remain at home to be wives and mothers. However, it is often forgotten that women play a vital role in the success of the oil industry, as they are often expected to stay at home to maintain the functioning of the household and raise the family (Allain, 2015). However, Spade and Valentine (2011) note that this is out-dated, and because of increased women's rights, women are now able to enter the workforce, including entering into male-dominant jobs such as the oil industry; this results in the creation of crisis masculinity, or the belief that white, straight, working class men are under attack by the educated elite, feminists, and migrant workers who supposedly degenerate the hegemonically masculine world (Allain, 2015).

One key feature of hegemonic masculinity is its relation to the domination of minority groups, including women. This has been pervasive throughout Canadian history, as many jobs were traditionally designed for hegemonic white men. Notions of what it means to be a man have varied across time and space, which is significant when discussing the ways in which oil communities, such as Fort McMurray, have shaped its definition of hegemonic masculinity. Loch-Drake (2007) discusses this in detail, and by noting the traditional hegemonic atmosphere of Edmonton meat-packing companies, explains the ways in which marginalized groups are affected in this work environment. As noted previously, the hegemonic atmosphere in the Edmonton packing companies allow for men to demonstrate their power amongst each other. However, with new technological advancements and the vanishing need for manual physical labour, men began to lose their jobs and social power.

Rather than relating the loss of jobs to the mechanization of industry, many hegemonic men began to relate this to the hiring of more non-white workers and women, and although the marginalized groups made less money and had less desirable jobs, men began to relate this to the degradation of hegemonic masculinity. With the coming of minority workers, employers could find individuals who were willing to work for less money, which ultimately led to disrespect and sexualization by hegemonic males working in the industry. For example, sexual harassment in the workplace became apparent after the rise of women in the workforce, and their work was not only diminished, but the women were also treated negatively, and were often labeled as promiscuous or not feminine (Loch-Drake, 2007). Through men's control of women's reputations, and by engaging in physical aggression, verbal abuse, and harassment, they are ultimately able to retain power in the workplace and community. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity perpetuates a system of inequality.

Women who work in the oil industry are often forced to adjust to the hegemonic atmosphere or are forced to quit. As Williams et. al. (2014) describe in their study, women working in the oil sands often mimic the behaviour of the hegemonic men by "bantering" with them, carrying themselves as men, or dressing in more masculine styles. On the contrary, the authors note that by women engaging in this masculine behaviour and by demonstrating her own strength, she may also be labelled negatively as a *bitch*. This double standard makes women uncomfortable in expressing their opinions in the hegemonically masculine workplace; however, if they choose not to engage in this behaviour, they are sexualized and rejected from the work environment. This ultimately convinces women to conform to this form of peer pressure, and although diversity policies are often implemented in traditionally masculine jobs

as an attempt to prevent discrimination, the study ultimately notes that they are “generally ineffective at remedying the underrepresentation of women in management positions... and these programs can convince women to accept their marginalized status, or worse, to leave the industry altogether” (p. 468).

Miller (1998) expands on this theory and notes that cultural assumptions of gender continue the cycle of gender specific work. At the time of her study, it was noted that the oilmen of Calgary included almost no women and that virtually all the professionals and managers were male, while all the secretaries were female. I suspect that this finding is relatively like that of Fort McMurray, as I have been told by my father that “secretaries are always female and bosses are usually men” (D. Fortier, personal communication, 2017). Noting that males often receive the highest incomes and most respect in the industry as professionals and managers, it becomes apparent that Canada’s patriarchal system fosters hegemonic masculinity, and as a result, women become excluded and marginalized. However, women who work in the oil industry are not the only target of discrimination due to hegemonic masculinity. As migrant workers continue to join Albertan oil-field work, new challenges develop in the workplace, that continue the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity.

Migrant workers are an interesting focal point in the investigation of discrimination because of hegemonic masculinity. Migrant workers are those who work in jobs that were traditionally reserved for individuals, especially hegemonic white males, living within the surrounding community. As Keough (2008) discusses, Fort McMurray is especially well-known for its migrant community, which is made up of primarily of young white males often originating from Newfoundland. Newfoundland migrants are an especially interesting



demographic, as many also demonstrate hegemonic masculinity. These men experience many of the benefits of adhering to their masculinity, such as being able to incorporate aspects of Newfoundland culture, such as having their own radio station, music, institutions, and restaurants. However, this does not come without complications, and although most migrant workers do not plan to stay in the community, many do, or eventually return to the oil community in the pursuit of wealth and to be the provider for their family.

### **Hegemonic Masculinity in the Community**

Hegemonic masculinity is a pervasive force in oil communities and is taught through many institutions such as the family, friends, school, and the media (Spade & Valentine, 2011; Greenhill, 2012). In Canada, a popular form of media is televised hockey, as it stands as a staple for its national identity. The sport itself is highly hegemonic, and through the violence and competitiveness of the sport, as well as through the spread of hegemonic ideals by the broadcasters themselves, Canadian boys are taught the importance of demonstrating hegemonic traits throughout their lives. One individual who exemplifies hegemonic masculinity and crisis masculinity is Don Cherry. By focusing on nostalgia, conservatism, and nationalism, Don Cherry remains a popular Canadian icon who demonstrates normative masculinity, especially in its belief that women, intellectuals, and immigrants destroy *real* men's power in society (Allain, 2015). Normative masculinity fosters hegemonic ideologies, encouraging men to behave in traditionally masculine ways. One of the controversial topics Don Cherry discusses in his broadcasts during *Hockey Night in Canada* is the importance of maintaining social power using hegemonic masculinity through the performance of tough and aggressive masculinity (Allain, 2015). This results in the illusion that men are innately capable of dominating society.

Hegemonic masculinity creates a perceived importance of a male-dominated society. For example, in 2008-2009, approximately 91% of registered hockey players were boys (Hockey Canada, n.d.). This demonstrates not only the inclusion of patriarchy in modern media, but also highlights the creation of gendered institutions. Prior to the contributions of Acker (as cited in Spade and Valentine 2011) in studies of gendered institutions, there was an assumption that social institutions were, in fact, neutral. This is today argued to be false, and it is apparent that through the socialization of individuals in a gendered world, the creation and regeneration of hegemonic masculinity continues to be apparent in the community.

As Majors and Winters (2013) discuss, high wages in oil related jobs well exceed the Canadian average, resulting in complex communities with less apparent class differences than elsewhere, especially in Fort McMurray. This is a result of the oil sands' ability to impose a hegemonic, and ultimately, homogenizing narrative of community despite great differences in, for instance, wages, background, and citizenship status. Being secured to the oil industry, the municipality uses itself, an existing institution, to promote a sense of community, however, this community is not clearly defined. This sense does not need to be defined, because ultimately, community is whatever the largest force, or, in this case, hegemonic masculinity, requires it to be. This results in an increase in social mobility for some, but not others in the community. Hegemonically masculine white men are benefitted by this system, as they are treated as though they are especially useful and irreplaceable for the community and economy.

The power of hegemonic masculinity is evident in the documentary *Blood, Sweat, and Beers* (2009), as the hegemonic white men, who notably worked in an Albertan oil community called Bentley, play a major role in their society through providing monetary support for their

wives and children and by becoming role models for other young boys in the town. As noted by Allain (2015), hegemonic men may engage in crisis masculinity if they feel as though their masculinity and power are being questioned. However, this acts as evidence that although crisis masculinity may continue to exist in Canadian society and in highly hegemonic environments such as Fort McMurray, it is important to note that this supposed crisis of masculinity may be a result of changing Canadian values and norms. In other words, perhaps it is the belief that men's power is coming to an end that is truly in crisis. Hegemonic males continue to defend hegemonic masculinity and men's domination by drawing on popular hegemonic forces, such as Don Cherry, and although crisis masculinity is the belief that their power is in decline, men continue to prosper in Canadian society and to dominate many oil communities. This ultimately perpetuates and recreates the notion of crisis masculinity in Albertan culture (Allain, 2015). It is important to investigate the consequences of hegemonically masculine societies, as crisis masculinity prescribes that hegemonic men reject academic evidence that suggest hegemonic masculinity is not, in fact, in danger by minority groups.

The gendered institution allows for normalized attitudes about gender to strengthen, as individuals assume that people of their gender have similar interests, attitudes and beliefs (Schilt, 2007). This is known as the creation of a homogenous society, and for blue-collar jobs that are primarily male-dominated, minority groups are subordinated, causing, for example, women to be discredited and oversexualized. This reinforces hegemonic masculinity by eliminating the opportunity for heterogeneity. Hegemonic masculinity is often associated with the theory of anti-intellectualism, making views that oppose hegemonic masculinity to be highly scrutinized in the workplace. For example, Dorow and O'Shayghnessy (2013) note that

individuals who used the word “tar sand” to describe the oil field are described by those living in oil communities as “critics, environmentalists, misinformed, radical, and socialist” (p. 125). In contrast, those who used the word “oil sand” were defined using more positive terms such as “supporters, industrial, open-minded, pro-business, and capitalist” (p. 125). This, in turn, results in an anachronistic atmosphere that embodies hegemony, such as being dominant over women, homophobic, competitive, and aggressive.

The use of the term oil community often recalls stereotypes of rugged groups of men, who, among other negative traits, abuse substances, and commit a variety of crimes, yet make large sums of money by working long hours to extract resources from the ground. Although O’Connor (2015) argues that there is much truth in this, he notes that the realities of people in the community are much more complex. The sense of community in oil towns is essential for maintaining and perpetuating hegemonic masculinity, and although it has many benefits, it comes with serious consequences. The oil industry itself provides communities with many opportunities such as high economic growth, high incomes, and job experience, and although it develops a sense of community, there is strong emphasis on hegemonic masculinity and the maintenance of a hegemonic atmosphere, which is not unproblematic for the community itself.

Through the creation of a homogenous society, men can primarily run and inhabit the community, and through the oil related landscape, including businesses such as the Oil Can Tavern and Oil Sands Hotel in Fort McMurray, hegemonic masculinity is able to prosper (Keough, 2008; O’Connor, 2015). Hegemonic ideals are valued in oil communities, and as a result, predominantly young men are subjected to conforming to the harsh and precarious conditions of the work, including working shift and/or contract work, living in camps, and being

excluded from close family ties and the community (O'Connor, 2015). This is problematic, and as hegemonic masculinity prescribes that men engage in hard labour, while remaining stoic, rational, invulnerable and aggressive. This creates a situation in which hegemonically masculine men are prevented from seeking psychological help, which results in the inability to express their emotions, especially distressing emotions. This results in further exclusion of women from not only the workplace, but the community as well.

O'Connor's (2015) study on social change, deviant others, and the sense of community in oil communities, notes that women in the community are also subjected to discrimination. Some of the participants in his study noted a connection between gender and age in considering risks in the city. One woman, for example, noted that although she does not leave her house often, when she does, there are many young men with lots of money fighting. In fact, many of the women suggested that it is unsafe for females to be in the city alone because of "navigating a masculine city" (p. 230). It is interesting to note that this finding was not true for the young men O'Connor spoke to, as many did not express the same concern for their personal safety in relation to their gender. This is a function of the hegemonic workplace and is not only necessary to maintain the gender hierarchy of the workplace, but is also a key to reinforcing patriarchy, which requires inequality to acquire capital. By marginalizing groups that do not fit the criteria enforced by hegemonic masculinity, the dominating group's power is strengthened, which leads to the exclusion and discrimination of other groups. Although there have been developments to counter this, research suggests that they are often ineffective, and one group that experiences the negative repercussions of a hegemonically masculine community is women. Women are not the only group marginalized and subordinated in this

environment. It is important to discuss the ways in which the hegemonic atmosphere of oil production impacts migrant workers and non-white men.

As stated earlier, Fort McMurray is especially well-known for its migrant community. These individuals often have a mutual dependency on the oil sands developments and the secondary industries supported by that development (Keough, 2008). Work in the oil industry provides high wages, and as migrant work in Fort McMurray increases, racism and prejudice also increases. This is common in the face of hegemonic masculinity, and although some blame various levels of government for a lack of planning and regulation of migrant work, Dorow and O'Shaughnessy (2013) note that some individuals equate the societal growth and stress for the dominant group with marginalized groups, who supposedly take oilfield jobs simply for money and do not reinvest it into the community. They note that "such growth, stress, and volatility make for a complex politics of social and environmental responsibility" (p. 127). One group that is especially impacted by this prejudice is Newfoundlanders, who, at a rate higher than any province, migrate to Fort McMurray due to the opportunities presented by chain migration. Although these men often face prejudice in oil communities, it is interesting to note that they also receive benefits from being white, straight, and hegemonic. Because of this, it becomes important to investigate the ways in which non-white individuals are treated in the hegemonic atmosphere of oil communities.

O'Connor (2015) describes the way in which Indigenous peoples are treated by oil companies by stating that there is a perception that Indigenous peoples in Fort McMurray are a significant problem and are inconvenient to oil companies because they are incredibly vocal in opposing future development. This, in turn, creates a negative cycle of racist sentiment in the

oil community, which results in Indigenous peoples becoming strongly discriminated against in the region. As he describes, this is beyond what is normal for other communities, because Indigenous peoples are seen not only as “crack addicts, homeless bums, and prostitutes” (p. 230), but are also degraded by employers in the oil industry for standing in the way of profit, and ultimately, hegemonic masculinity. This ultimately results in the societal belief that hegemonic masculinity is reserved for white men. After investigating the ways in which hegemonic masculinity impacts the workplace and community, it is important to note the ways in which this gender and underlying patriarchy influence workplace and community safety.

### **Hegemonic Masculinity: Health and Safety**

Health and safety is a key topic when discussing hegemonic masculinity, and as patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity continue to be dominating forces in both Canadian culture and business, one must analyse the ways in which they effect the health and safety of both the oil workers and the community. Through the underlying patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity in oil communities, domination is reinforced over individuals of the society through feminizing, mocking and intimidating individuals who do not give a convincing performance of hegemonic masculinity. This ultimately creates a *true* crisis in masculinity that forces hegemonic individuals to often suffer with health problems. The traditional oilfield worker, as described by Filteau (2014), engages in hegemonic masculinity due to difficult working conditions, long hours, shift work, physically demanding labor, transience, geographic isolation, and male dominated assumptions, values and actions. However, by highly demonstrating hegemonic masculinity, workers become valued and are labeled as strong, responsible, and resilient (Stergiou-Kita et. al., 2016). This allows them to advance quicker in the workplace; however, the

expression of hegemonic masculinity does not go without consequence, and as men demonstrate their “tough” masculinity through violence, aggression, competition, and risk-taking behaviours, they become more susceptible to being injured on the job (Filteau, 2014).

As men in hegemonic communities are pressured and encouraged to demonstrate their strength, they become susceptible to behaving in ways that are detrimental to their health. As a result of homosocial reproduction and peer pressure, oilfield workers begin to identify more with their worker roles and hegemonic masculinity, and ultimately become less likely to report injury in the work environment and may return to work too soon after an injury (Filteau, 2014; Stergiou-Kita et al., 2016). This is apparent in the documentary *Blood, Sweat, and Beers* (2009), when one man injures his knee in hockey and continues to play regardless of his physical pain and the risk of causing further damage. This ultimately results in the man reinjuring his knee, and as a result, he is unable to play in the Allen cup. This is common in hegemonic masculinity, as men who strongly adhere to their masculinity have a desire to be viewed as strong, respectable, and tough. I suspect that this is also true in oil communities and believe that this ultimately allows for the reinforcement and recreation of hegemonic masculinity in male dominated communities by encouraging a lack of health and safety practices (Stergiou-Kita et al., 2016).

Out of fear of being terminated, losing their benefits, and/or appearing weak, hegemonically masculine men will often ignore their physical and mental health. This allows for the continuation of the devaluation of safety culture in many oil industries, and ultimately encourages risk-taking behaviour as a demonstration of masculinity (Stergiou-Kita et al., 2016). As social conflict theory notes, one must investigate the ways in which social systems benefit a



dominant group; in this case, hegemonically masculine men (Spade & Valentine, 2011). As Spade and Valentine argue, this is a result of the creation of complex social prisms that interact with gender and results in difference and inequality for those who do not conform this hegemonic masculinity. As stated, hegemonic masculinity is highly encouraged in the oilfield, and those who embody hegemonic masculinity often obtain the most professional success (Filteau, 2014). This is problematic, as it encourages dangerous behaviour in the workplace and community, affecting everyone in the institution, including men, women, migrant workers, and indigenous peoples. This creates the potential for unnecessary injury or even death of an oilfield worker.

By fostering hegemonic masculinity, and ultimately, dangerous activities in the work environment, oilfield employees are subjected to not only decreasing physical health, but mental and emotional health as well. Mental and emotional health is a key concern for oilfield workers, and due to hegemonic masculinity's prohibition of the expression of any feminine traits, such as crying, becoming emotional, or asking for help, men continue to suffer in silence. For example, in the documentary *Blood, Sweat and Beers* (2009), several of the hegemonic men faced extremely difficult experiences that they were unable to express on camera. For instance, one man's wife leaves him, and although it is evident that he is very upset, and although the viewer can see him beginning to cry, he quickly masks his vulnerability by changing his demeanor and laughing instead. This is not only an example of the ways in which hegemonic masculinity prescribes that men disregard physical pain, but emotional pain as well, which serves as a risk factor for suicide and substance abuse (Cleary, 2011).

This creates a significant risk factor for suicide and substance abuse, which not only impacts young men working in the oilfield, but other young men in the community, who, as Spade and Valentine (2011) describe, are being socialized to ignore pain, which ultimately perpetuates the cycle of hegemonic masculinity. This creates, as Cleary (2011) notes, an environment in which men become unable to express emotion and may result in substance abuse (especially alcohol) as a method of coping, which may result in the loss of their job, but in some cases, also results in death. As hegemonic ideologies continue to be encouraged in oil communities, men feel unable to tell family and friends or seek professional help for their problems, out of fear of exposure and because the men were unfamiliar with, or rejected, from a psychological discourse. The emphasis of hegemonic masculinity in the workplace also fosters women being criticized for being perceived as being weak and feeble. This creates problems not only for migrant workers, who often are required to stay to support their families, but for women as well, as hegemonic masculinity objectifies femininity. This ultimately creates an unsafe and uncomfortable work environment for women who do not feel accepted or valued in the industry, and may ultimately result in the sexualization, harassment and resignation of women. However, as a new form of dominant masculinity emerges, women and other minority groups become increasingly more equal with men in the oil industry.

Filteau (2014) argues that as society has changed throughout time, a new form of oilfield masculinity has begun; one that is forced to comply to strict social and governmental regulations and laws. This is known as a mosaic masculinity, and it ultimately enables men to modify their gender to engage in acts of hegemonic masculinity that they are physically capable of doing in a given environment (Liechty et. al., 2014). As discussed, strongly adhering to

hegemonic masculinity is toxic, and as a result, men begin to suffer from significant physical and mental health problems. This often results in the creation of a mosaic masculinity, in which men are forced to deliberately change their masculinity to maintain their physical and mental health, as well as to maintain their relationships with others. Although Legerski and Cornwall (2010) note that this is a slow process, especially for conservative, working-class individuals, Filteau (2014) argues that change is inevitable, and as new laws, policies, and norms emerge in society, masculinity evolves to be accepting of gender differences and societal change. This is not only beneficial to oilfield workers, but to the community as well.

The implementation of mosaic masculinity in the workplace benefits employees not by *undoing* gender, but by *doing* gender differently (Filteau, 2014). New laws ultimately act as a catalyst for workplace safety, and by encouraging and demonstrating this new normative masculinity, men become able to value teamwork and collective goals. This results in the creation of a new identity for male workers that highlights cooperation and rejects the use of violence as a means of validating their masculine identity. This new form of masculinity also rejects unequal gender relations between men and women, which ultimately creates more positive and safe working conditions for women and other minority groups.

As new forms of regulation come into effect in oil communities such as Fort McMurray, traditional hegemonic practices become obsolete and unacceptable. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity is often reduced to “toxic” traits that are viewed as being detrimental to the well-being of men, however, this theory does not account for the variation of masculinities existing in Canadian societies, including those in oil communities. Mosaic masculinity is ultimately beneficial for both men and women of this

institution, and as society continues to lose the need for traditional hegemonic masculinity, it becomes more accessible for men to express feminine traits without fear of consequence. This ultimately enables the breakdown of traditional patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity not only in the oilfield, but in the community as well. However, I suspect that this is especially slow-moving for traditionally conservative oil communities, such as that in Fort McMurray, as homogenous patriarchal societies that highly value hegemonic masculinity are often especially resistant to change (Loch-Drake, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, hegemonic masculinity itself plays a conflicting role in oilfield jobs and the surrounding community. Through the development of hegemonic masculinity in traditional workplaces, such as the oilfield, men are expected to remain stoic, aggressive and tough. This is a result of homosocial reproduction and peer pressure that forces men to dominate their environment out of fear of being punished. Ultimately, this results in several consequences for both the workers and community, including the reinforcement of an ultimately anachronistic gender. Through socialization, homosocial reproduction, and peer pressure, white men reinforce their power over the workplace and community. This ultimately results in several negative consequences, including the subordination of minority groups, including women, migrants, and Indigenous peoples.

Hegemonic masculinity reinforces itself through the creation of a homogenous society with the perceived importance of a male-dominated society. This to the normalization of hegemonic attitudes, which make not only the workplace unsafe, but the community as well. As

a result of social change, crisis masculinity, which rejects intellectualism and fosters the belief that minority groups are taking power away from hegemony, ultimately reproduces hegemonic masculinity itself. However, mosaic masculinity has begun to develop through the implementation of new laws, policies, and social norms, and although change is a slow process in traditionally conservative hegemonic communities and workplaces, hegemonic masculinity is now being challenged and reformed to be more inclusive and accepting of new gender expressions and previously marginalized groups.

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