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Migration, Habitus and the Struggle for Masculinity

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Abstract

This paper explores the masculinity of migrants* and how the experience of migration transforms, challenges, and renegotiates it, ultimately shaping how it is practiced and lived. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and *masculine domination*, as well as R.W. Connell's theory of *hegemonic masculinity*, the paper brings together two key theoretical frameworks for understanding masculinity and the relationships between men* and women*, as well as among men* themselves. By combining these perspectives, the aim is to better grasp the processes through which migrant masculinities are produced, reproduced, and potentially transformed. The research on male migrants* is thus revisited and reinterpreted through a masculinity studies lens informed by Bourdieu's and Connell's work, highlighting how gendered power relations are both maintained and reconfigured in the context of migration.

Keywords: masculinity; migration; habitus; masculine domination; hegemonic masculinity; intersectionality

Introduction

This paper proceeds in three main parts. First, I develop a theoretical framework that combines Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and masculine domination with Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, whereby particular attention is paid to the gendered dimensions of habitus as theorized by feminist scholars who have critically engaged with and revised Bourdieu's original formulations. Second, I examine how this framework illuminates the specific conditions and experiences of male migrants, focusing on processes of marginalization, strategies of remasculinization, and the formation of hybrid masculinities in migration contexts. Third, the discussion section reflects on the limitations of this theoretical synthesis and points to remaining gaps in the conceptualization of migrant masculinities, while also considering directions for future research.

This paper is dedicated to the sociological analysis of the production and reproduction of the male habitus of migrants*, whereby the asterisk* already indicates that this is not about an essentialist understanding of gender, but rather about a theoretical approach that takes seriously and addresses the social construction of masculinity and thus also what plays a central role in the attribution of men* as men*. The asterisk serves throughout this text to

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denote a non-binary, inclusive understanding of gender categories that acknowledges the social construction and fluidity of gender identities while recognizing that individuals may be read, categorized, or self-identify in particular ways within specific social contexts. This notation signals an awareness that the categories "men" and "women" are not natural or fixed entities but rather social positions that are produced, performed, and negotiated in ongoing processes of identification and attribution (West and Zimmerman 1987; Messerschmidt 2009). It is therefore about migrants* who understand themselves as men* or are read as such, who are, from a self- or external perspective, men*. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus (Bourdieu 2001; 2008; Gebauer 2017), the study examines how the experience of migration and the specific challenges faced by migrants* contribute to the development of a male habitus (Brandes 2002; Meuser 2006), which often encompasses particularly marginalized forms of masculinity that are devalued in comparison to hegemonic forms of masculinity in the sense of R.W. Connell (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2019). Bourdieu's concept of habitus describes the deeply internalized dispositions that shape the thinking, feeling, and acting of individuals and are formed through their social experiences in the course of socialization. These dispositions are both product and producer of the social structures in which people operate. Based on this concept of habitus, gender roles and practices can be analyzed in social space (Meuser 2006; McNay 1999; McLeod 2005), especially in the context of migration. In this process, a confrontation may occur between the habitus of the migrant* (whereby this habitus encompasses a dual meaning here, namely on the one hand the respective habitus of the migrant* that they bring with them from their pre-migration situation, and on the other hand the habitus that is produced by the migration experience itself, which is also not essentially fixed but can take on plural forms) and the social norms and expectations of the society into which migrants* immigrate. This leads to a process of negotiation in which migrants* often have to navigate between marginalized conceptions of their male identity as migrants* and the demands of society. With regard to masculine domination, Bourdieu (Bourdieu 2001; Dölling 2014) emphasizes that habitus is both the result and the mechanism through which gender hierarchies and power relations are reproduced, as it makes social inequalities and the gendered habitus that (re)produce them, as well as gender-specific expectations and norms, appear self-evident, normal, and natural. This reproduction takes place particularly through cultural practices and symbolic violence, which legitimize male dominance as a natural order. Into this gender-based social order is also placed the often marginalized masculinity of migrants* and their habitus.

A central focus of this paper is the significance of the migration experience for the construction of a male identity, which arises from the specific social positions and challenges of migrants*. In many cases, migrants* in their new environment face expectations and norms of masculinity that do not align with their previous cultural imprints and disadvantage them due to social, economic, and cultural barriers (Wojnicka 2019; Wojnicka and Nowicka 2022; Scheibelhofer 2014; 2011). This marginalized masculinity represents a form of masculinity that lies outside the dominant social order (what Connell calls hegemonic masculinity) and is therefore often devalued or, in more restrictive institutional and social contexts, actively suppressed through mechanisms of exclusion, sanction, and symbolic violence. The distinction between devaluation and suppression matters insofar as it points to different intensities and modes of marginalization: devaluation refers to the symbolic diminishment of certain masculinity practices without necessarily preventing them, whereas suppression indicates more direct forms of prohibition and punishment that seek to eliminate certain



expressions of masculinity from the social field altogether. The examination of this marginalization and the strategies with which migrants* attempt to form and maintain their male habitus in such a context are at the center of this analysis. Another focal point of this paper is the analysis of the social positioning of marginalized masculinity and the habitus of migrants*. Based on the theory of R.W. Connell, marginalized masculinity is understood as a form of masculinity that is devalued due to social and structural inequalities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2019; Christensen and Jensen 2014). Migrants* are often subjected to double marginalization: on the one hand, due to their ethnicity or migration status, and on the other hand, through the questioning of their masculinity. This paper examines how processes of marginalization affect the construction and reproduction of the male habitus of migrants* and also which strategies, such as hybridization and remasculinization, migrants* develop to meet these challenges.

Since this is a theoretical work, the analysis and discussion of key academic texts and selected empirical studies (Wyss and Fischer 2021; Gärtner and Ergi 2017; Çarpar and Göktuna Yaylaci 2022; Wojnicka and Nowicka 2022; Yurdakul and Korteweg 2021) that deal with the topics of habitus, masculinity, and migration will be used. This paper is best understood as a theoretically oriented contribution that draws predominantly on European – and particularly German-speaking – research to develop a conceptual framework with broader analytical applicability. While the arguments aspire to transferability, readers should bear in mind the European empirical grounding when assessing the generalizability of the claims made. The selection of these particular empirical studies follows specific criteria that warrant explicit articulation. First, these studies represent recent contributions that explicitly engage with the intersection of migration and masculinity, combining conceptual sophistication with rich empirical material. Second, they predominantly (though not exclusively) focus on migration contexts within German-speaking or comparable European settings, which allows for a more detailed and contextually grounded analysis than would be possible with a globally dispersed set of cases. This geographical focus reflects not only the author's own positionality and linguistic competencies but also responds to a relative gap in international scholarship: while Anglo-American literature on migrant masculinities is substantial, German-speaking scholarship on this topic has received less systematic attention in wider debates, despite offering valuable insights into how migration and masculinity intersect under specific institutional arrangements, labor market structures, and integration regimes (Huxel 2014; Scheibelhofer 2011). Third, the selected studies employ qualitative methodologies (biographical interviews, ethnographic observation, discourse analysis) that allow for detailed examination of identity negotiations, habitus transformations, and the micro-level processes through which masculinities are enacted, contested, and renegotiated. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that this geographical concentration represents a limitation, which will be addressed more fully in the discussion section: the predominance of studies from German-speaking contexts raises questions about the generalizability of findings and suggests that future work should expand the analytical horizon to include other European contexts as well as South-South migration patterns and the experiences of highly skilled middle-class migrants, which remain underexamined (Wojnicka 2019). The aim is to develop a comprehensive picture, based on theoretical and empirical works from sociological research, of how the marginalized male habitus of migrants* is shaped and which challenges and adaptation mechanisms play a role. In summary, this paper aims to show that the constructions of masculinity by migrants* are a dynamic process, significantly influenced by the interaction of

habitus, gender, and social structures (legal frameworks, access to and success in the labor market, ethnicized and racialized discrimination). However, rather than simply reiterating what existing research has already established, this paper seeks to push the conceptual conversation forward by interrogating how Bourdieu's framework might be productively combined with Connell's approach while also attending to feminist critiques that have identified limitations in both theoretical traditions. Through the analysis of the production and reproduction of male habitus forms in the context of migration, the potential of intertwining Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and his theory of masculine domination with Connell's approach to hegemonic masculinity for understanding identity and adaptation processes is demonstrated, and a differentiated perspective on the construction and negotiation of gender roles in the context of migration is developed.

Male Habitus and Masculine Domination

In the following section, I outline Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus before turning to feminist revisions of his framework, particularly regarding the gendered dimensions of habitus and the limitations of his approach to gender. The examination of masculine domination in Bourdieu's work, which represents his most sustained engagement with gender, will then be discussed critically in light of scholarship that has both built upon and challenged his formulations.

Bourdieu understands habitus as internalized dispositions that shape perception, thought, feeling, and action (Bourdieu 2008; Gebauer 2017). Habitus functions as both a theoretical and practical hinge between social structures and individual action; it emerges through processes of socialization and appropriation within a specific social milieu and is thus shaped by the family one grows up in, as well as by school and other institutions and what Bourdieu calls social fields. For Bourdieu, a social field is a relatively delimited area of social life (e.g., the labor market, academia, culture) in which specific norms and rules apply (often perceived as "natural" and unquestioned) and in which the appropriation and competition for certain forms of capital (symbolic, cultural, economic capital, etc.) take place. Habitus structures how the world is perceived and how one behaves within it. The central site of the realization of habitus is the body; it becomes visible and recognizable to others through language, movement, voice, facial expression; habitus is what (unconsciously) leads people to think, act, and perceive in certain ways in specific situations. Thus, it is also habitus that reveals whether someone can navigate a social field (such as the labor market in the concrete context of their workplace) in a conforming way or whether they stand out and are recognized accordingly as an outsider, as not belonging, and are possibly sanctioned, marginalized, or even excluded. It is therefore necessary to emphasize the dialectical relationship between habitus and social field: the social field shapes habitus, and in turn, habitus affirms and reproduces the norms that prevail within it.

Gendered Habitus: Feminist Engagements and Critiques

Gendered habitus can thus be understood as the set of dispositions that relate to one's own gender (in other words, to use the still powerful binary coding, how men* think, feel, and act as men*, and how women* do so as women*, how they move through various social fields as men* or women*) and which are acquired and internalized in the socialization process and in the ongoing confrontation with social fields and their gender-specific norms and expectations (Meuser 2006; Krais 2006). However, it is crucial to acknowledge from the outset that



Bourdieu's original theorization of gender and habitus has been subject to substantial feminist critique and revision, and that the relationship between habitus theory and gender analysis remains a contested terrain within sociology (McNay 1999; McLeod 2005; Kraus 2006; Mottier 2002; Wehrle 2019). While Bourdieu's theory of practice offers powerful analytical tools for understanding how people embody social hierarchies through everyday dispositions and how inequalities are reproduced at the level of taken-for-granted bodily schemas and perceptual categories, his framework provides limited clarity on how gender specifically enters into and structures habitus. Critics contend that in much of his work (with the notable exception of *Masculine Domination*), Bourdieu treats gender as a secondary dimension of social inequality, subordinate to class relations, and that when he does address gender directly, he tends to reproduce simplistic binaries of male dominance and female subordination without adequately accounting for contemporary complexity, variation, and contestation in gender relations (McLeod 2005; Mottier 2002). Kraus (2006) argues that while Bourdieu's sociology of practice contains important resources for gender analysis (particularly his attention to the body as the site where social structures are inscribed), he never fully developed a systematic account of how gender operates as a structuring principle within habitus, leaving feminist scholars to undertake this theoretical work themselves.

In *Masculine Domination*, Bourdieu (2001) attempts a more sustained engagement with gender, framing it through the register of familiar masculine tropes (virility, glory, honor, emotional hardness, physical strength) to argue that bodies become sites where gendered social meanings are inscribed through long processes of socialization that begin in early childhood. However, this text has itself become a site of considerable contestation within feminist scholarship. Mottier (2002) argues that Bourdieu's reliance on sexual difference as the fundamental and seemingly transhistorical organizing principle of gender makes his framework ill-suited for analyzing contemporary, more fluid and contested gender dynamics. She contends that by grounding gender in an ostensibly universal sexual dimorphism and by emphasizing the durability and reproduction of gender hierarchies, Bourdieu provides inadequate resources for theorizing resistance, transformation, or the moments of instability and crisis in gender relations. McNay (1999) advances a related critique, challenging Bourdieu's emphasis on the stability and reproductive logic of habitus by arguing that gender norms in conditions of late modernity are characterized by considerably greater uncertainty, reflexivity, and transformation than Bourdieu's framework allows. For McNay, contemporary gender relations are marked by increased reflexive awareness of gender as a constructed and mutable category, which creates possibilities for renegotiation and change that Bourdieu's theory of habitus, with its emphasis on pre-reflexive and durable dispositions, struggles to accommodate. McLeod (2005) similarly notes that while habitus theory has value for understanding how gender inequalities are reproduced through embodied practice, it must be supplemented by attention to agency, reflexivity, and the contradictions that emerge when individuals encounter multiple and conflicting gender norms across different social fields. These feminist interventions suggest that while habitus remains a valuable concept for understanding the embodied and often pre-reflexive dimensions of gendered practice, it requires substantial theoretical revision to account for processes of change, contestation, and the negotiation of gender under conditions of social mobility, cultural dislocation, and institutional transformation (precisely the conditions faced by migrants). In other words, the male habitus that is formed in men* is not simply a natural expression of biological masculinity but a cultural and socially constructed habitus that encompasses specific expectations, norms,

and practices, which vary historically and culturally and which position men* within hierarchical gender relations. This habitus is expressed in behaviors, attitudes, body postures, and forms of communication that are recognized and valued in the respective social field as masculine.

Feminist scholars have undertaken the work of filling the gaps in Bourdieu's gender analysis by integrating gender more explicitly into habitus theory and by developing frameworks that attend to both reproduction and transformation in gender relations. McNay (1999) develops the concept of a "generative habitus" that emphasizes the capacity for innovation and adaptation rather than only reproduction, arguing that contemporary conditions of reflexive modernity create spaces for individuals to critically reflect upon and potentially transform their gendered dispositions. Kraus (2006) examines how gendered habitus is acquired through participation in gender-segregated social fields and argues that understanding gender inequality requires attention to how different fields value different forms of capital in gender-specific ways. Wehrle (2019) explores the embodiment of gender norms as a dynamic process situated between permanence and transformation, suggesting that habitus can be reworked through deliberate practice and changed social conditions. These feminist engagements have often involved hybridizing Bourdieu with other theoretical traditions (Butler's theory of performativity, Fraser's recognition theory, Giddens' structuration theory) to develop more adequate tools for analyzing contemporary gender dynamics (McNay 1999; Wehrle 2019). What emerges from this body of work is a more nuanced understanding of gendered habitus as simultaneously durable and mutable, as reproducing gender hierarchies while also containing possibilities for their transformation.

For the analysis of migrant masculinities, these feminist revisions of habitus theory prove particularly salient because migration constitutes precisely the kind of disruptive biographical experience that can denaturalize previously taken-for-granted gender dispositions and create moments of reflexive awareness and potential transformation (Radogna 2024; Stahl et al. 2024). When migrants encounter new social fields with different gender norms, different valuations of masculine capital, and different structures of opportunity and constraint, their habitus may experience what Bourdieu calls "hysteresis effects" – moments when dispositions formed in one set of social conditions become mismatched with the demands of a new social field. However, rather than viewing this mismatch only as a source of suffering or as a mechanical failure of adaptation (as Bourdieu sometimes suggests), it can also be understood as creating openings for reflexive engagement with gender norms and for the development of hybrid or transformed masculinities (Trąbka and Wojnicka 2017; Stahl et al. 2024). At the same time, the durability of habitus should not be underestimated: bodily dispositions, emotional schemas, and perceptual categories acquired in childhood and youth are not easily shed, and migrants often find themselves navigating between the gendered expectations of their communities of origin and those of the receiving society. This gender-specific habitus contains both conscious and unconscious components, encompasses bodily hexis and behavioral patterns that are often perceived as natural, and structures the possibilities of action in gendered ways. Bourdieu emphasizes that the male habitus serves to legitimize and naturalize male dominance; it is both the product of patriarchal structures and the mechanism through which these structures are reproduced. The masculine domination described by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 2001) refers to the form of power that men* exert over women*, which is naturalized through symbolic violence and made socially invisible. Symbolic violence, in Bourdieu's view, is a gentle, invisible form of violence that is perceived and recognized by its



victims as legitimate and natural. This form of violence does not require physical coercion but operates through the internalization of dominant norms and values, which are inscribed into the habitus of both men* and women*, thereby making hierarchical gender relations appear as natural and inevitable. This naturalization of male dominance is a central mechanism of masculine domination and is expressed in everyday practices, behaviors, and perceptions that affirm and reproduce gender hierarchies. However, scholarship that has taken up Bourdieu's concept of masculine domination in critical studies of men and masculinities has also identified significant limitations. Mottier (2002) points out that by framing masculine domination as an overarching and seemingly universal structure, Bourdieu risks naturalizing precisely what should be denaturalized and analyzed as historically contingent and socially variable. Reddy et al. (2019) argue that while Bourdieu's emphasis on symbolic violence usefully directs attention to the subtle and often imperceptible mechanisms through which gender hierarchies are maintained, his framework tends to present men as unified beneficiaries of patriarchal structures without adequately theorizing differences, conflicts, and hierarchies among men themselves. This is where Connell's framework of multiple masculinities, with its attention to hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalized masculinities, provides a necessary corrective and complement to Bourdieu's work.

Bourdieu sees the reproduction of masculine domination not primarily through direct coercion or formal institutions but through the subtle and often unconscious practices of everyday life, which make hierarchical gender relations appear as natural and self-evident. This insight remains valuable for understanding how gender inequalities persist even in contexts where formal legal equality has been achieved and where overt expressions of male dominance are increasingly delegitimized. However, the concept of symbolic violence has also been criticized for being overly deterministic and for leaving little room for resistance or for theorizing how dominated groups might develop alternative consciousness or challenge existing power relations (Mottier 2002; Wehrle 2019). These practices include not only behavioral patterns and communication styles but also the ways in which spaces, institutions, and fields are organized and structured. In Bourdieu's view, male dominance is thus not only an individual characteristic but a structural property of social fields that is (re)produced through the habitus of individuals. For the analysis of migrant masculinities, Bourdieu's theory of masculine domination is significant because it allows for the examination of how gender hierarchies are maintained or transformed in the context of migration. Migrants* often come from contexts in which they may have occupied positions within patriarchal structures that granted them certain privileges and recognition as men*, even if these were mediated by other axes of inequality such as class or regional origin. In the migration context, however, these structures may be challenged or rendered irrelevant, which can lead to a crisis of the male habitus.

While Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and masculine domination provide valuable tools for analyzing the embodied and often pre-reflexive dimensions of gender inequality, and while his emphasis on symbolic violence illuminates how hierarchies are maintained through subtle everyday practices rather than only overt coercion, his framework requires supplementation and revision to adequately theorize the experiences of migrant men. Specifically, as I will elaborate in the following sections, Connell's theory of multiple masculinities offers resources for analyzing hierarchies and conflicts among men that are largely absent from Bourdieu's work, while feminist revisions of habitus theory provide frameworks for understanding

transformation and agency alongside reproduction. The question that will guide the subsequent analysis is how these different theoretical traditions can be productively synthesized to illuminate the specific dynamics of migrant masculinities while remaining attentive to the critiques and limitations that have been identified in each framework.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Multiple Masculinities

I now turn to R.W. Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity and the theory of multiple masculinities, which has become perhaps the most influential framework within critical studies of men and masculinities over the past three decades (Messerschmidt 2019; Scholz 2019). While this framework has been extensively employed in empirical research on men and masculinity across diverse contexts, it is important to situate Connell's work within ongoing theoretical debates and to consider both its strengths and its limitations for the analysis of migrant masculinities.

While Bourdieu focuses on the overarching structure of masculine domination and the reproduction of gender hierarchies through symbolic violence and habitus, R.W. Connell examines the diversity and hierarchical relationships among different forms of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2019). Connell introduces the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which describes the currently most culturally legitimized and socially dominant form of masculinity that serves to justify and maintain the dominance of men* over women* as well as the dominance of certain groups of men* over other men* (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed or universal category but varies historically and culturally, adapting to specific social contexts and fields. It represents an ideal type that most men* do not fully embody but which nonetheless serves as a normative reference point against which other masculinities are measured and evaluated. Important here is that hegemonic masculinity is not solely defined through force or violence but primarily through cultural ascendancy, the ability to claim and maintain authority, and the power to define what counts as legitimate masculinity within a given context.

Connell distinguishes between different types of masculinities that stand in hierarchical relationships to one another: hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalized masculinities. Complicit masculinities are those that do not fully correspond to the hegemonic ideal but nevertheless profit from the patriarchal dividend (the advantages that men* in general derive from male dominance) without having to bear the full costs of embodying hegemonic masculinity. Subordinated masculinities are those that are devalued or stigmatized within the gender order, often (though not exclusively) related to sexual orientation, whereby gay masculinities are the paradigmatic example that Connell provides. Marginalized masculinities refer to those masculinities that are devalued due to their position in other systems of inequality such as race, ethnicity, class, or migration status. Men* who belong to marginalized groups may perform masculinity in ways that could be considered hegemonic within their own communities but are nonetheless devalued in the broader social context due to racism, xenophobia, class prejudice, or other forms of structural discrimination (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Christensen and Jensen 2014). The concept of marginalized masculinity is particularly relevant for understanding the situation of male migrants*, as they often occupy positions that are simultaneously disadvantaged by their status as migrants or as members of racialized minorities while also participating in gender hierarchies and potentially benefiting from male dominance in other contexts.



Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity offers several advantages for the analysis of migrant masculinities that complement and extend Bourdieu's framework. First, by theorizing hierarchies and conflicts among men, Connell provides tools for analyzing how different groups of men compete for recognition and status within and across social fields, rather than treating men as a unified category. Second, the concept of marginalized masculinity allows for an intersectional analysis that attends to how gender intersects with race, ethnicity, class, and migration status to produce specific forms of disadvantage and exclusion. Third, Connell's emphasis on the cultural and symbolic dimensions of hegemony (rather than only material power or physical violence) resonates with Bourdieu's analysis of symbolic violence while providing a more differentiated vocabulary for describing gender relations among men. However, it is important to note that Connell's framework has also been subject to critique and revision. Messerschmidt (2019) points out that the concept of hegemonic masculinity has sometimes been applied in overly rigid or reified ways in empirical research, treating it as a fixed checklist of traits rather than as a dynamic and contextually variable ideal. Christensen and Jensen (2014) argue that the framework needs further development to adequately theorize processes of change and transformation in masculinities, particularly in contexts of migration and globalization where men navigate between multiple and sometimes contradictory gender norms. Scholz (2019) notes that while hegemonic masculinity has achieved theoretical hegemony within masculinity studies, this very dominance may have limited the development of alternative frameworks and prevented sufficient critical engagement with the concept's limitations.

Despite these critiques, Connell's framework remains valuable for the analysis of migrant masculinities because it provides a vocabulary for describing both the external devaluation of certain masculinities (marginalization) and the internal hierarchies and negotiations within migrant communities and between migrant men and men in the receiving society. When combined with Bourdieu's attention to habitus and the embodied dimensions of gender, Connell's theory allows for a more comprehensive analysis that attends to both structural positioning and subjective experience, both reproduction and contestation of gender norms.

For the analysis of the male habitus of migrants*, both theoretical frameworks (Bourdieu's concept of masculine domination and Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity) can be productively combined, as they illuminate different but complementary aspects of the production and reproduction of masculinity. While Bourdieu directs attention to the embodied and often unconscious mechanisms through which gender hierarchies are internalized and maintained, Connell provides a framework for analyzing the plural and hierarchical forms that masculinity takes and the strategic adaptations that men develop in response to specific social contexts. In the context of migration, this means that male migrants* not only bring with them a habitus formed in their countries of origin (which may include specific conceptions of masculinity, male honor, paternal authority, provider roles, etc.) but that this habitus is confronted with new social fields, norms, and power relations in the receiving society, which may lead to its devaluation, questioning, or transformation. The interaction of these two analytical perspectives allows for a more differentiated understanding of how migrant men* negotiate their position within multiple and often conflicting systems of gender norms and power relations.

Migration, Marginalization, and the Male Habitus

In the following section, I examine how the combined framework of Bourdieu's habitus theory and Connell's multiple masculinities illuminates the specific experiences and challenges faced by male migrants, focusing particularly on processes of marginalization, devaluation, and the strategies through which migrants attempt to negotiate and maintain their masculine identity in contexts that often do not recognize or value the forms of masculinity they embody.

The migration experience represents a profound rupture in the biography of migrants*, as they leave behind familiar social fields (family, community, labor market, cultural institutions) and enter new contexts in which their habitus may no longer function as a taken-for-granted guide for action. This rupture has been theorized in recent scholarship on migration and habitus as producing what might be called a "transnational habitus" (Stahl et al. 2024) or a "cleft habitus" (Radogna 2024), characterized by the coexistence of dispositions formed in different national, cultural, and social contexts. However, the concept of transnational habitus remains contested, with some scholars arguing that it risks reifying notions of bounded national cultures and failing to attend to the ways in which globalization and transnational connections already shape habitus formation prior to migration. For male migrants*, this displacement often has specific gender dimensions: the male habitus that functioned in one context may be devalued or rendered illegible in another. Migrants* who in their countries of origin may have occupied positions that granted them recognition and status as men* (as fathers, breadwinners, protectors, community members, professionals) often find that in the receiving society, these sources of masculine capital are no longer valued or effective. Their educational credentials may not be recognized, their professional experience may be dismissed or considered irrelevant, their language skills may be inadequate, their networks and connections may not exist (Scheibelhofer 2014; Wojnicka and Nowicka 2022). This leads to what can be understood as a crisis of habitus: the dispositions, expectations, and strategies that previously structured their engagement with the world no longer produce the intended effects, and the recognition that they previously received as men* is withdrawn or withheld.

Empirical research on male migrants from the Global South to the Global North has documented how this crisis manifests in various dimensions of social life. It is important to note here that the overwhelming majority of research on migrant masculinities concerns migration from the Global South to the Global North, which reflects both the predominant direction of contemporary migration flows and the research priorities of scholars working in the Global North. This geographical focus, while understandable, means that other trajectories (South-South migration, North-South migration, intra-European mobility of highly skilled professionals) remain underexamined, and that certain groups of migrant men (particularly educated middle-class migrants) receive far less attention than working-class migrants or refugees (Wojnicka 2019). This gap in the scholarship represents a limitation in our understanding of how class, education, and skill levels mediate the experience of migration and the negotiation of masculinity. In the labor market, migrants* often face barriers that prevent them from accessing positions commensurate with their qualifications and that force them into precarious, low-status, poorly paid work (Wyss and Fischer 2021; Wojnicka and Nowicka 2022; Ye 2014). This downward mobility has direct implications for their ability to perform the breadwinner masculinity that may have been central to their self-understanding and that may be expected by their families and communities. When migrants* are unable to provide financially for their families in the way they expected, or when they must accept work



that they consider beneath them or degrading, this can be experienced as an assault on their masculine identity and can produce feelings of shame, inadequacy, and failure. Wyss and Fischer (2021) analyze the experiences of Afghan refugees in Germany and Switzerland, showing how media representations of these men oscillate between threatening figures (potential perpetrators of violence, carriers of backward gender norms) and pitiable victims (traumatized, helpless, needing rescue), whereby both representations deny them the status of full adult masculinity and position them as deficient in relation to hegemonic masculinity in the receiving societies.

Beyond the labor market, marginalization operates through multiple institutional and everyday mechanisms that position migrant men as inferior, suspicious, or problematic. Legal and administrative frameworks may restrict migrants' mobility, access to services, family reunification rights, or pathways to citizenship, thereby limiting their capacity for autonomous decision-making and future planning (aspects of masculine agency that are valued in many contexts). Encounters with bureaucracies, border regimes, and authorities may position migrants in subordinate and infantilized roles, requiring them to demonstrate need, vulnerability, or compliance in ways that contradict normative expectations of masculine independence and self-sufficiency (Wojnicka and Nowicka 2022). In everyday interactions, migrant men may experience various forms of discrimination, stereotyping, and microaggressions that mark them as other and that question their belonging. Racialized and ethnicized stereotypes often portray certain groups of migrant men as threatening (hypermasculine, violent, sexually aggressive) while simultaneously emasculating them (as primitive, backward, unable to adapt to modern gender norms). This contradictory positioning, what Wyss and Fischer (2021) call the "ambivalent representation" of migrant masculinity, creates a double bind: migrant men are simultaneously feared for their supposedly excessive masculinity and devalued for their supposedly inadequate masculinity.

These experiences of marginalization, devaluation, and exclusion shape the habitus of migrants* in complex ways. On the one hand, the habitus that migrants* bring with them (their embodied dispositions, expectations, and practical sense developed in their contexts of origin) may prove misaligned with the social fields they now inhabit, creating the "hysteresis effects" that Bourdieu describes (situations in which habitus lags behind changed objective conditions, producing disorientation and suffering). On the other hand, the experience of migration and marginalization itself produces new dispositions, new ways of perceiving and navigating the world, new strategies for managing stigma and asserting worth. Radogna (2024) argues in her literature review on habitus in migration studies that migration creates conditions for both the reproduction of habitus (through attempts to maintain familiar practices and identities) and for its transformation (through encounters with new social fields and through the reflexive awareness of one's own positioning that marginalization often provokes). However, she also cautions that the concept of habitus should not be reduced to a tool for analyzing individual adaptation, but must remain attentive to the structural constraints and power relations that limit the possibilities for transformation. Migrants* develop what might be called a marginalized male habitus, characterized by the internalization of their devalued position, by strategies for managing stigma and asserting dignity in conditions of subordination, and by the navigation between different sets of gender norms and expectations.

In many cases, male migrants* attempt to reassert their masculinity through various strategies of remasculinization or compensation. These strategies can be understood as attempts to restore the masculine capital and recognition that has been lost through migration, or to find alternative sources of masculine validation in contexts where traditional avenues are blocked. One common strategy involves an increased emphasis on those domains of masculinity that remain accessible or that can be mobilized in the new context. For example, migrants* who are excluded from the labor market or who can only access low-status work may place greater emphasis on their roles as fathers, as moral authorities within their families, or as defenders of cultural traditions and religious practices (Scheibelhofer 2010; Yurdakul and Korteweg 2021). Scheibelhofer (2010) shows in his study of young men of Turkish background in Vienna how notions of honor and family loyalty become central organizing principles of masculine identity precisely in contexts where other forms of masculine recognition (through educational success, career advancement, financial independence) are difficult to achieve. However, this emphasis on honor and family obligation is not simply a "traditional" value carried over from Turkey, but is actively produced and mobilized in response to experiences of marginalization and exclusion in Austria. In this sense, what may appear to outside observers as stubbornly persistent traditional masculinity is better understood as a situated response to blocked mobility and devalued status.

Another strategy involves what has been called "hypermasculinity" or "protest masculinity" (though these terms must be used with caution, as they risk pathologizing the responses of marginalized men and reproducing stereotypes of migrant men as particularly problematic). When legitimate pathways to masculine recognition are blocked, some men* may assert masculinity through exaggerated displays of physical strength, toughness, risk-taking, or sexual prowess. However, it is crucial to recognize that such performances do not emerge from some inherent cultural predisposition toward violence or aggression, but represent strategic responses to structural conditions of exclusion and devaluation. The moral panics surrounding "dangerous foreign men" that have become prominent in European public discourse, particularly following events such as the Cologne New Year's Eve incidents in 2015-2016 (Wigger et al. 2022), construct a figure of the migrant man as inherently threatening to women and to gender equality, thereby justifying restrictive migration policies and intensified surveillance and control of migrant communities. Yurdakul and Korteweg (2021) analyze how such boundary regimes produce racialized and gendered representations of Muslim masculinities as backward, patriarchal, and dangerous, representations that simultaneously justify exclusion and assimilationist demands. Critical scholarship on migrant masculinities must therefore remain attentive to how discourses about gender, integration, and threat function as mechanisms of racialization and as justifications for inequality.

A third strategy, which has received increasing attention in recent scholarship, involves the development of hybrid masculinities (Trąbka and Wojnicka 2017). Hybrid masculinity refers to forms of masculine identity that selectively incorporate elements from different cultural contexts, creating new configurations that do not simply reproduce either the hegemonic masculinity of the receiving society or the masculinity norms of the society of origin, but rather forge something new through the juxtaposition and combination of different elements. Trąbka and Wojnicka (2017) examine how Polish men living in Norway develop hybrid masculine identities that draw on Polish working-class masculinity, Norwegian egalitarian gender norms, and transnational mobility as a source of masculine capital. They argue that rather than viewing migrants as caught between two fixed cultural systems, it is more



productive to understand them as actively constructing and managing masculinity in ways that are strategic, creative, and responsive to the specific opportunities and constraints they face. However, the concept of hybrid masculinity also requires critical scrutiny. Some scholars have argued that it can obscure the reproduction of gender inequality by framing essentially traditional or hegemonic masculine practices as innovative or progressive simply because they incorporate some superficial elements of diversity or reflexivity. The question of whether hybrid masculinities represent genuine transformations in gender relations or merely new strategies for maintaining male privilege remains open and requires careful empirical investigation in specific contexts.

What emerges from this analysis is a picture of migrant masculinities as fundamentally relational and processual, shaped through ongoing negotiations between habitus and social field, between the dispositions migrants bring and the structures they encounter, between the gender norms of different social contexts, and between different sources and forms of masculine capital. This relationality means that migrant masculinities cannot be understood as fixed attributes of individuals or cultural groups, but must be analyzed as situated practices that emerge in specific social fields and that are responsive to the opportunities, constraints, and power relations that structure those fields. At the same time, the concept of habitus reminds us that these negotiations are not purely strategic or conscious, but involve deeply embodied dispositions, practical sense, and ways of being in the world that are not easily transformed through will or reflection alone.

Intersectionality and Multiple Axes of Inequality

While the previous sections have focused primarily on gender as a structuring principle of habitus and social positioning, it is essential to emphasize that gender never operates in isolation but is always articulated with and mediated by other systems of inequality and difference. The experiences of male migrants cannot be adequately understood through gender analysis alone but require an intersectional approach that attends to how race, ethnicity, class, legal status, religion, age, and other dimensions of social location combine to produce specific forms of privilege and disadvantage.

The concept of intersectionality, originally developed by Black feminist scholars to describe how race and gender combine to produce specific experiences of oppression that cannot be reduced to the sum of separate systems (Crenshaw 1989), has become increasingly central to migration research and to critical studies of men and masculinities (Scheibelhofer 2011; Wojnicka and Nowicka 2022). In this sense, intersectional analysis provides a corrective to approaches that would treat migrant masculinity as a uniform category or that would analyze gender in abstraction from the racialized, classed, and legally stratified contexts in which it is enacted. However, intersectionality is not simply a matter of adding together different dimensions of inequality but requires attention to how these dimensions mutually constitute and transform one another. Scheibelhofer (2011) argues that an intersectional approach to migrant masculinities must examine not only how multiple disadvantages accumulate but also how the meanings of masculinity itself are racialized and how racial stereotypes are gendered. For example, stereotypes of Muslim men as particularly patriarchal or as threats to gender equality are simultaneously racist (in that they attribute fixed characteristics to entire religious or ethnic groups) and gendered (in that they construct certain forms of masculinity as

backward or dangerous in contrast to an idealized modern egalitarian masculinity supposedly characteristic of European societies).

Wojnicka and Nowicka (2022) develop a "spatially intersectional lens" for analyzing migrant masculinities, arguing that experiences of marginalization and strategies of masculine identity construction vary systematically depending on the specific spatial contexts in which they unfold. Their research shows how Polish men in different European cities navigate gender norms in ways that are shaped by the specific labor markets, migration policies, ethnic communities, and urban geographies of those locations. This spatial dimension reminds us that the social fields migrants encounter are not abstract or uniform but are concretely located in particular places with specific histories, demographics, institutional arrangements, and cultural norms. A Polish construction worker in London faces different opportunities and constraints than a Polish IT specialist in Berlin, not only because of their different class positions and forms of capital but because London and Berlin constitute different social fields with different gender regimes, different ethnic hierarchies, and different positions within global economic structures.

For male migrants* from the Global South to the Global North, the intersection of gender, race, and migration status often produces specific forms of what might be called racialized emasculation. This refers to the processes through which men of color and migrant men are simultaneously hypermasculinized (constructed as threatening, aggressive, sexually dangerous) and demasculinized (infantilized, rendered dependent on state institutions, denied the attributes of full adult masculinity such as autonomy, authority, and respect). These contradictory positionings should not be understood as simple confusion or inconsistency but as structural features of racialized gender regimes that function to justify control, surveillance, and exclusion. When migrant men are represented as threats to "our women" and to gender equality, this serves to legitimate restrictive migration policies and to position existing gender hierarchies within receiving societies as progressive and worth protecting. Conversely, when migrant men are represented as victims who must be rescued, integrated, and taught proper gender norms, this serves to justify paternalistic interventions and to construct receiving societies as superior and enlightened. Yurdakul and Korteweg (2021) analyze how boundary regimes in Canada and Germany produce gendered racialized categories of acceptable and unacceptable migrants, whereby Muslim masculinity becomes a particular site of contestation and moral panic.

Class represents another crucial dimension of intersectional analysis that has often been undertheorized in research on migrant masculinities. While much scholarship has focused on working-class migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (reflecting both the demographics of contemporary migration and the research priorities of critical scholars), less attention has been paid to the experiences of middle-class, highly skilled migrants whose trajectories and experiences of gender may differ substantially. Wojnicka (2019) notes this gap and suggests that research on skilled migrant professionals and their strategies of masculine identity construction would contribute to a more complete picture of the heterogeneity of migrant masculinities. Class matters not only in terms of economic resources and opportunities but also in terms of the cultural capital, credentials, networks, and forms of embodied habitus that migrants bring with them and that may or may not be recognized and valued in receiving societies.



The intersectional analysis of migrant masculinities also requires attention to age and generation, as the experience of migration and the negotiation of gender norms differ systematically between older and younger migrants, between parents and children, and between different waves of migration. Younger migrants, particularly those who migrate during childhood or adolescence, may develop hybrid forms of masculinity more readily than older migrants whose habitus was formed over a longer period in their countries of origin. Generational differences can also produce conflicts within migrant families and communities, as younger men may adopt gender practices that their parents consider inappropriate or disrespectful, leading to tensions over authority, family loyalty, and the preservation of cultural traditions. These intergenerational negotiations are not simply about "tradition versus modernity" (a framing that should be rejected as overly simplistic and often orientalizing) but involve complex processes of selective adaptation, strategic positioning, and the reworking of gender norms in response to changed social conditions.

In summary, an adequate analysis of migrant masculinities requires an intersectional approach that attends to how gender is always already racialized, classed, legally stratified, and spatially situated, and that recognizes that the category of "migrant men" encompasses enormous heterogeneity in terms of origins, destinations, resources, legal statuses, and life trajectories. This attention to heterogeneity should not, however, dissolve into a pure particularism that denies the possibility of identifying patterns or structural dynamics. Rather, the challenge is to develop theoretical frameworks and empirical research that can account for both commonalities and differences, both structural constraints and agentic strategies, both reproduction and transformation in the construction of migrant masculinities.

Discussion: Limitations and Future Directions

Every conceptual paper, no matter how carefully constructed, must acknowledge its limitations and point to gaps that remain in the analysis. This section problematizes the main arguments made, highlights limitations of the theoretical framework developed, and indicates where key gaps persist in our understanding of migrant masculinities.

A first set of limitations concerns the theoretical framework itself and the particular way in which Bourdieu's and Connell's work have been combined in this paper. While I have argued that these two frameworks can be productively synthesized to illuminate different dimensions of migrant masculinities, it must be acknowledged that this synthesis leaves certain tensions unresolved. Most significantly, the question of capital and field theory, which are central to Bourdieu's overall analytical architecture, has not been systematically integrated into the analysis presented here. This represents a significant omission that future work should address. Capital theory, which examines how different forms of capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) are distributed, accumulated, and converted across social fields, offers crucial tools for analyzing how migrants' resources are devalued or revalued through migration and how this affects their ability to perform hegemonic masculinity. The non-recognition of educational credentials, the loss of professional networks, the diminished value of linguistic and cultural competencies in new contexts can all be theorized as processes of capital devaluation that directly impact masculine identity and positioning. Field theory, which examines how different social spaces are structured by specific rules, stakes, and forms of capital, could illuminate how migrants navigate between different gendered fields (family, workplace, ethnic community, receiving society) that may have contradictory norms and

expectations. The decision not to fully incorporate these dimensions represents a limitation of this paper and suggests that a more comprehensive Bourdieusian analysis of migrant masculinities remains to be developed.

Secondly, while I have attempted to engage with feminist critiques of Bourdieu and with debates within critical studies of men and masculinities about the limitations and revisions of key concepts, this engagement could be deepened further. Scholars such as Mottier (2002), McNay (1999), Kraus (2006), and McLeod (2005) have developed substantial critiques of Bourdieu's gender theory that point to its determinism, its tendency to reproduce gender binaries, and its limited capacity for theorizing transformation and agency. Similarly, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been subject to ongoing debate and revision, with scholars questioning whether it adequately captures the fluidity and multiplicity of contemporary masculinities or whether it risks reifying gender categories. A more thorough engagement with these debates would strengthen the theoretical framework and would allow for a more reflexive consideration of what a Bourdieu-Connell synthesis can and cannot accomplish.

Thirdly, the question of scope and case justification requires critical attention. The empirical references and examples used throughout this paper draw predominantly on work produced in German-speaking academia or on migration contexts within German-speaking or comparable European settings. This reflects both the author's positionality and expertise and a deliberate choice to focus on a body of scholarship that has received less international attention than Anglo-American work. However, this geographical concentration raises important questions about the scope and generalizability of the analysis. Should this paper be read as a general theoretical framework for understanding migrant masculinities that happens to draw predominantly on German-speaking examples, or should it be understood as specifically addressing how migration and masculinity intersect in German (or German-speaking European) contexts, with all their specific institutional features, integration regimes, labor market structures, and cultural norms? The answer to this question matters for how the contributions and limitations of the paper are assessed. If the aim is to develop a general framework, then the narrow empirical base represents a significant limitation. If the aim is to understand German-speaking contexts specifically, then the paper should more explicitly theorize what is distinctive about these contexts and why they matter for wider debates. As it stands, this question remains somewhat unresolved, and future revisions of this work should clarify the intended scope and either narrow the claims or expand the empirical foundation.

Related to this is the question of what the selection strategy was for the literature and empirical material engaged with in this paper. While I provided some rationale for the choice of key empirical studies in the introduction (recent contributions, explicit engagement with migration and masculinity, qualitative methodologies), a more transparent and systematic account of inclusion and exclusion criteria would strengthen the analysis. What bodies of literature were considered and ultimately excluded? Why were certain empirical studies foregrounded while others were mentioned only in passing or not at all? What assumptions about relevance, quality, or geographic scope guided these decisions? Greater transparency about the selection strategy would allow readers to better assess the robustness and boundaries of the analysis and would contribute to the overall rigor of the paper.

A fourth limitation concerns the relative absence of attention to South-South migration, North-South migration, and the experiences of highly skilled middle-class migrants, all of



which remain underexamined in the literature on migrant masculinities. As noted earlier, the overwhelming focus on working-class migration from the Global South to the Global North reflects both migration patterns and research priorities, but it means that we know far less about how class, education, and direction of migration mediate the construction of masculinity. Skilled professionals who migrate from one Global North country to another, or educated middle-class migrants from the Global South who move into professional positions in the Global North, may face very different challenges and opportunities than the working-class migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who have been the primary focus of existing research. Their cultural capital and credentials may be more readily recognized, their economic resources may provide greater autonomy, and they may encounter different stereotypes and racialized representations. Future research that examines these diverse migration trajectories would contribute to a more complete and nuanced understanding of the heterogeneity of migrant masculinities.

Fifth, the question of transformation and change in gender relations requires further theoretical development. While this paper has attempted to move beyond purely reproductive accounts of habitus and has emphasized the possibilities for hybridization, renegotiation, and transformation in migrant masculinities, it remains unclear under what conditions such transformations are more or less likely to occur and whether they represent genuine shifts in gender relations or merely new strategies for maintaining male privilege. The tension between emphasizing structure and emphasizing agency, between analyzing reproduction and analyzing change, runs throughout the paper but is never fully resolved. Feminist scholars such as McNay (1999) have developed concepts such as "generative habitus" to theorize the capacity for innovation and transformation, and scholars of masculinity have examined how migration can create opportunities for more egalitarian gender relations or for critical reflection on taken-for-granted gender norms. However, such transformations are always constrained by structural conditions, by the durability of embodied dispositions, and by the continued power of hegemonic gender ideals. A more adequate theorization of the conditions and mechanisms of transformation in migrant masculinities remains a task for future work.

Finally, this paper has focused on theoretical synthesis and on the interpretation of existing empirical research rather than presenting new empirical findings. While theoretical work has value and is necessary for advancing the field, it remains limited in what it can accomplish without being tested against and refined through engagement with empirical material. The arguments developed here represent conceptual propositions that require validation, specification, and no doubt revision through detailed empirical investigation. Future research that systematically applies the theoretical framework developed here to specific cases, that examines how migrant men in diverse contexts navigate the tensions between different gender norms, that traces processes of habitus transformation over time, and that attends to the voices and experiences of migrants themselves would be essential for moving the field forward. Such research should also be reflexive about power dynamics in knowledge production and should consider how to avoid reproducing problematic representations of migrant men while still attending to the real challenges and inequalities they face.

Conclusion

This paper has examined how Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and masculine domination can be productively combined with R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic

masculinity to understand the production, reproduction, and potential transformation of migrant masculinities. By bringing together these two influential theoretical frameworks and by incorporating feminist revisions and critiques, I have aimed to develop a differentiated perspective on how male migrants* negotiate their gender identity in contexts of social, economic, and cultural displacement. The analysis has shown that migrant masculinities are fundamentally relational and processual, shaped through ongoing negotiations between the habitus migrants bring with them and the social fields they encounter, between the gender norms of different cultural contexts, and between different and often contradictory systems of recognition and devaluation.

The concept of habitus provides valuable tools for understanding the embodied and often pre-reflexive dimensions of gender, the ways in which masculinity is inscribed into bodies through long processes of socialization, and the mechanisms through which gender hierarchies are naturalized and reproduced through symbolic violence. However, Bourdieu's original formulations have been subject to feminist critique for their tendency to reproduce gender binaries, to emphasize stability over change, and to provide limited resources for theorizing resistance or transformation. Connell's framework of multiple masculinities offers a necessary complement by theorizing hierarchies and conflicts among men, by attending to the diversity of masculine forms and their contextual variation, and by providing the concept of marginalized masculinity, which is particularly salient for understanding the experiences of male migrants who face devaluation and exclusion on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, or legal status.

The experience of migration represents a profound disruption of habitus, as migrants encounter new social fields in which their taken-for-granted dispositions no longer produce the expected effects and in which the sources of masculine recognition they relied upon may no longer be available or valued. This can produce what might be understood as a crisis of masculine habitus, marked by experiences of downward mobility, loss of status, inability to fulfill provider roles, and exclusion from the privileges and recognitions associated with hegemonic masculinity in the receiving society. Migrants* respond to this crisis through various strategies, including remasculinization attempts that emphasize those domains of masculinity that remain accessible, the development of hybrid masculinities that selectively incorporate elements from different cultural contexts, and the renegotiation of gender relations within families and communities. However, these strategies unfold within structural constraints and power relations that limit the possibilities for transformation and that continue to marginalize and devalue certain forms of masculinity.

An adequate analysis of migrant masculinities requires an intersectional approach that attends to how gender is always articulated with race, class, legal status, age, and other dimensions of social location. The experiences of male migrants cannot be understood through gender analysis alone but must be situated within the broader context of racialized and classed hierarchies, restrictive migration regimes, labor market segmentation, and cultural representations that construct certain groups of migrant men as threatening or problematic. At the same time, it is crucial to recognize the enormous heterogeneity within the category of migrant men and to avoid essentializing or homogenizing their experiences.

As acknowledged in the discussion section, this paper has significant limitations, including the selective use of Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus (particularly the omission of systematic engagement with capital and field theory), the geographical concentration of empirical



references, and the relative absence of attention to certain migration trajectories and social groups. Future research should address these gaps through more comprehensive theoretical integration, broader empirical scope, and detailed qualitative investigations of how migrant men in diverse contexts negotiate masculinity over time. Such research should also remain reflexive about the politics of representation and should seek ways to amplify the voices and perspectives of migrants themselves rather than only subjecting them to external analysis.

Despite these limitations, this paper has demonstrated that the synthesis of Bourdieu's and Connell's frameworks, when informed by feminist critiques and intersectional analysis, offers valuable resources for understanding the complex dynamics of migrant masculinities. By attending to both structure and agency, both reproduction and transformation, both external positioning and subjective experience, this approach allows for a nuanced analysis that neither reduces migrant men to passive victims of structural forces nor ignores the very real constraints and inequalities that shape their lives. The hope is that this theoretical work can contribute to ongoing efforts to develop more adequate frameworks for understanding gender, migration, and inequality, and that it can inform both future research and practical interventions aimed at creating more just and equitable conditions for all migrants.

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The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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