

Research in Precarious Settings: Topics for Qualitative Research with Mobile Workers

Laura Ryser, Greg Halseth, Sean Markey*

UNBC, *SFU

OTM Symposium – November 2018

Outline

- Politics of method
- Context
- Research study
- Results
 - Permissions
 - Co-production of knowledge
 - Fear and trust
- Reflections

The Politics of Method

Different epistemology lens?

- Static methods in a mobile context
 - Observing transfer points
- Mobilizing methods to experience and critique differently
 - May not capture politics and institutional practice that affect mobilities
 - Power exerted through influence over processes and structural impediments
- Need to understand ‘politics of method’

Context of Research

- Mobile method issues
 - Permission
 - Co-production: research design, access, recruitment
 - Fear / trust
- Methodology issues
 - Subjectivity
 - Capacity of researchers / mobile workers
- To situate the credibility, validity, and reliability of findings in broader context

Research Study



Results

- I. Permissions
- II. Co-production of knowledge
- III. Fear and trust



- REBs influence on academic freedom
 - Process of obtaining permissions from industry
 - May reinforce powerlessness
- Need industry permission to access work sites / camps
 - Submit proposal, consent form, questions, samples of previous work
- Permission conditions
 - One day access to sites
 - Shorter interviews

- Industry engagement / input into research design
 - Limited feedback on questions
 - Feedback: shorten interviews
 - Impacts:
 - Inquiry into breadth / depth of issues
 - Single static method at key transfer points

Co-production: Access

- Key transfer points
 - Work sites, camps, airports, staging areas
 - Microgeographies / triangulation
- Suitability of meeting spaces
 - Confidentiality / anonymity
- Multiple, mobile methods to broaden ‘access’ not possible
 - One day access, short interviews
- Scheduling
 - Align with shift turnovers

Co-production: Recruitment

- Varied logistical support
- Turnover of personnel
 - Community liaisons, camp staff
 - Interrupts relationships
- Length of shift, rotation, transition period
 - Selection bias from convenience sample
 - Limits questions posed
- Need recruitment across boom AND bust periods

Fear and Trust

- Fear and trust
 - Due to controversy and vulnerability of projects
 - Fear of job losses
 - Non-disclosure agreements
- Strategies to get mobile workers onside
 - Face-to-face recruitment and interviewing
 - Communicating permission from industry
 - Focused on mobile worker experiences
 - Interviewing in groups

Reflections

- Requires better understanding of politicized context
 - Power and structural impediments shape credibility / validity
- Conditions to secure permissions shape co-production of knowledge
 - Restricted access
 - Varied logistical support
 - Non-disclosure agreements
- Impacts breadth of methods / depth of issues
- Critical question: *How the politics of method produces different knowledge*

UNBC Canada Research Chair, Rural and Small Town Studies

3333 University Way

Prince George, BC, Canada V2N 4Z9

<http://www.unbc.ca/greg-halseth/canada-research-chair-rural-and-small-town-studies>

The On the Move Partnership is a project of the SafetyNet Centre for Occupational Health & Safety Research at Memorial University. On the Move is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Research & Development Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and numerous university and community partners.

Le partenariat en mouvement est un projet du Centre *SafetyNet for Occupational Health & Safety Research* à l'Université Memorial. En mouvement est subventionné par le Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada, par la *Newfoundland and Labrador Research & Development Corporation*, par la Fondation canadienne pour l'innovation, ainsi que par de nombreux partenaires et universités.