

Journal of Rural and Community Development

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Citation:

Husain, M, & Matheson, B. (2017). Relative deprivation vs. transition: Rehabilitating laid-off young oil workers in Kelowna and beyond. *The Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 12(1), 168-180.

Publisher: Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.



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Editor: Dr. Doug Ramsey

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Relative Deprivation vs. Transition: Rehabilitating Laid-Off Young Oil Workers in Kelowna and Beyond

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Abstract

Our paper investigates young and early career mobile workers as well as their home communities in the Okanagan Valley. By using random selection methodology and open-ended interviews, this paper further explores two inter-related objectives: (a) mobile workers' relative deprivation from unemployment and poor financial management planning / skills; and (b) impacts on family/relationships. Initial findings indicate multiple issues ranging from limited or zero savings to lack of awareness in financial management and strain on family life. Building upon that, the findings further offer broader perspectives. For example, rising inflation combined with a stagnant wage could lead to a deepening economic inequality. Finally, this paper also aims to identify measures that can be implemented through public-private initiatives to enable the laid off oil workers to transition into Kelowna's thriving construction and housing sector, among others.

Keywords: oil industry; mobile workers; Kelowna; unemployment; public-private partnerships settlement

1.0 Introduction

Kelowna has reinvented itself from being an agricultural-based economy to one based on tourism, selling itself to the public, based on an ideal lifestyle composed of recreational activities and work-life balance. For example, being able to attract significant outside investment capital from "transnational companies of leisure" to its ski slopes and resort communities has essentially turned the city into an "all year playground" (Aguilar, Tomic, & Trumper, 2005, pp.128-130). Especially, resort-style living in Kelowna has been promoted with the imagery of its natural surroundings, presenting an alternative to far-off exotic destinations. The idealization of Kelowna and its temperate climate attracts a retirement demographic. Thus, Kelowna's infrastructure is shaped to attract an aging population to the "Hawaii of Canada" (Aguilar et al., 2005 p. 129). This "commodification of retirement" in the form of golf courses, retirement communities, and wineries, has further developed the economy

and the rhetoric of Kelowna being a “playground” for those with disposable income. Kelowna’s tourist industry has continued to develop with activities such as skiing, hiking, and boating, attracting younger generations seeking to consume the “lifestyle” it bolsters (Aguiar et al., 2005). However, there is a lack of opportunity in different sectors of the economy, creating a decline in high wage-jobs. Different sectors of business, apart from tourism and service industries, have not had the same opportunity of growth (Aguiar et al., 2005).

However, with a 9.4 percent unemployment rate (national rate being 6.6 percent) as of April 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2016a) as well as approximately 40 percent of the 62,250 workers in Kelowna—Lake Country have literacy skills below the level required by their occupations (Project Literacy, 2017), the outcomes of a slow economy are likely to generate wide-ranging social effects on the economy of Kelowna. Although Kelowna’s construction and housing markets have the potential to substantial growth, courtesy of an expanding world class university as well as temperate winter that mainly brings retirees and new families. Additionally, migrant oilfield workers, among professionals from other sectors, choose Kelowna as a destination to escape their rigorous work schedules. Earlier on, a large proportion of people moved to Kelowna from neighbouring Alberta. In fact, with previous decades of a booming economy, Albertans have purchased a significant amount of BC property and homes, now owning approximately fifteen per cent of Kelowna’s real estate market (Omreb, 2016). In conjunction, over five thousand locals in Kelowna earn their living by working in the oil and gas industry in northern Alberta (Plant, 2014). This internal migration pattern has had a significant effect on Kelowna’s young adult demographic as a result of having a considerably higher income than the local average of approximately \$15/hour for semi-skilled and skilled labor. However, the tractions and frictions caused by a slow economy raise more flags of concerns.

In this context, we investigate young and early career mobile workers as well as their home communities in Kelowna. We also explore mobile workers’ poor financial management skills and their relative deprivation caused by unemployment as well as the initial impacts of these factors on family/relationships. We leveraged kinship ties to access laid-off mobile oil industry workers in Kelowna to conduct open-ended interviews and learn from their experiences - their skill-sets, spending habits and savings patterns, as well as their perspectives on available community and government resources to move on with possible employment opportunities. Our findings indicate that migrant workers that return to Kelowna find themselves looking for work locally at a considerable pay cut. These findings, which we discuss in detail later, help to broaden our perspectives on mobile workers’ issues, and further suggest that stagnant wages combined with rising inflation and unemployment could lead to increased economic inequality in the Okanagan Valley. The long-term outcomes could also lead to increased crime rates and poverty.

We also attempted to find out what measures can be implemented to enable these laid off workers to productively contribute to Kelowna’s economy. The long-term objective of our study is to stimulate the local economy by engaging policymakers from government, academy, and industry and initiating meaningful public-private dialogues. We envisage the lessons drawn from Kelowna can be piloted elsewhere in Canada to generate sustainable development and to strengthen Canada’s position in a changing global market.

2.0 Literature Review

The promotion of investment in Alberta has added to the economy, creating new infrastructure and demand for employment. The available oil work encourages a new renaissance of “go west young man” in provincial migration. The province has boasted high wages for unskilled oil workers, placing formal education as nonessential in the field (Houser, 2010, p. 80). Thus, it is not a surprise that while Alberta has the highest oil production rate it also has the lowest high school completion rate (Campanella & Bower, 2013).

In this context, the role of “relative deprivation” and effects of “alienated youth,” which argues that people tend to compare themselves only with people like themselves, becomes relevant (Lane, 1991; Lewis, 1970; Wegner, 1967). This means that the larger the “gap” between what one has and what some reference person has is a self-limiting property of social comparison that constrains the potential for creating unhappiness (Lane, 1991, p.224; Wegner, 1967, p.14). An acute sense of ‘relative deprivation’ and social alienation can turn humans into consumer-happy entities with a need for material possessions equal to or greater than those in their peer group. While this practice can provide happiness in the short term, it piles up debt in the long term.

For example, prestige and status are commonly displayed through material possessions in the oil and gas social culture—specifically large trucks. This desire to match the material status of the group is reflected in relative deprivation theory, which refers to the feeling of deprivation that can result from comparing one’s situation to that of a group (Morrison, 1971 Singer, 1992). For example, brand-new trucks, quads, motorbikes, snowmobiles, travel trailers, and bigger houses reflect these phenomena, which pertain quintessentially to rig culture. One is not socially satisfied until their situation matches that of the group they belong to (Singer, 1992). A 70 thousand (Canadian) dollar truck with after-market accessories and lift kit attracts attention and communicates a specific culture and status associated with a feeling of power and accomplishment. The problem with this display of status is that it is usually on loan. The majority of workers driving these vehicles are highly indebted, and payments per month can reach into the thousands. Unfortunately, as a result of losing jobs and income while being forced to sustain an upscale lifestyle, these situations can generate poverty and increase crime rates in the local economy.

Through his participant-observation research on a drilling rig in southern Alberta, Houser (2010, p. 118) describes how “the ultimate token of membership is to drive up to the worksite in a brand-spanking-new-truck, impressively fitted with the requisite aftermarket accessories”. Often the first thing a new lease-hand does upon receipt of his first check is to head straight to the nearest preferred dealership. This requirement to fit in with the brotherhood of the crew is one piece of a larger image. In discussing the relationship between prestige and power, Scott (1989, p. 145) states “display of some kind seems to be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the creation and maintenance of prestige”. To truly fit in, prestige must be freely given by others—not solely measured in dollars. Respect must be earned, especially for green hands.

By gaining work with those who have resources (even if it is exploitative) allows a transaction of status to the worker under the pretense of the wage being a “social equalizer” (Houser, 2010, p. 41). This status and prestige is not ensured or lasting in exploitative scenarios, the self-interest of workers can leave them loyal to a system that only offers short-term gain (Mosse, 2010, p. 1169). Torkington, May, Larkins, &

Gupta (2012) explore how fly-in fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in drive-out (DIDO) mining affects the psychosocial well-being of miner resident in a rural north Queensland town in Australia as well as the sources of support miners identify and use in managing these effects. The participants in their study reported positive and negative psychosocial impacts across domains including family life, relationships, social life, work satisfaction, mood, sleep and financial situation (Torkington et al., 2012 p. 135).

The social reality of the mobile oil workers from Kelowna can be compared in this context. McKinzie, McKinzie, & Hoath (2014, p. 430) argue that while much recent literature has focused on the impacts on receiving communities of these long-distance commuters, less attention has been given to the experience of source communities. These researchers used a bottom-up approach to compare the situation between two regional Australian towns in which the families of long-distance mining mobile workers resided. They found that despite the economic reward they attract, the distinctive rhythms of FIFO rosters do generate particular challenges for individuals and for the wider community in which they reside (McKinzie et al., 2014, p. 436). For example, as the families of mobile workers remain separated in internal migration, education opportunities are overlooked in pursuit for financial gain, and the living conditions of rig life can propel spending on unnecessary goods, such as big trucks, alcohol and drugs. Since working on the oil rigs is physically and mentally demanding, constituting long hours separated from family and social networks. This creates a desire for seeking recreational activities and vacations during limited days off. While providing for family remains a big motivating factor, influx of cash often transform these workers and their families into prestige seeking entities (Scott, 1989). Unfortunately, such a lifestyle has deeply affected the debt-ridden laid off oil workers during the recent recession.

Building on literature on fly-in fly-out workers and understandings of emotions as socially constructed, Pini and Mayes (2012) explore the emotional life of fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers and their families, through an analysis of more than 500 postings made on an online chat forum for mining families. Their analyses discovered how posters to the forum, typically women whose male partners are FIFO workers, construct gendered emotional identities for their partners (sometimes referred to as 'Mr Miner'), and for themselves, as 'mining women', 'mining widows' or the 'mining missus' (Pini & Mayes, 2012, p. 71). Essentially, these researchers highlight the creation of gendered emotional subject positions, which is the process of women undertaking emotion work on and behalf of themselves, their male partners and their children. The findings further demonstrate the overarching normative dimensions of women's emotional self-transformations in the service of their mining partners' careers and the attendant reproduction of everyday patriarchal relations in the private lives of mining families (Pini & Mayes, 2012, pp. 72-73).

In addition to emotional crises, high levels of debt, and monthly payments, a "recession-linked reversal [of economy can] threaten many with destitution" (Mosse, 2010, p. 1161). Suddenly jobless and indebted, extreme levels of stress put enormous socio-economic pressure on a family. Mosse (2010, p. 1160) cites the work of Hariss-White and eight key poverty-creating processes of capitalism, one being "the new poor created by the effects of economic crisis and the devastation caused to fragile debt-burdened economies by volatile short-term capital flows". People are vulnerable to the actions of others, and those without agency continually lack authority in their decisions or future (Mosse, 2010, p. 1158). This focus on perpetual poverty translates

to the Kelowna context in regards to the recent economic downturn of the Alberta oil and gas industry.

For example, recession in an export-oriented and booming industry such as oil and gas follows a decrease in real income, an increase in inflation and unemployment, and can drastically affect social stability as so many people heavily rely on this industry. In this context, while we emphasize the agency of people and the consequences of recession, it is important to look at the causes that impede people to survive in difficult times. Dealing with consumer debt and the status of debt among the workers in the oil industry has become a hot topic during a recession.

3.0 Research Methodology and Data Collection

For data collection, we adopted a methodology of random selection. Our data collection was guided by ethical checklists that remain underpinned by data protection policies, to ensure the security and dignity of all participants. We designed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to learn the stories, experiences, and perspectives of the male and female youth early-career oil rig workers that were from Kelowna.

For qualitative data collection, we explored “observed effect” through open-ended and semi-structured interviews to immerse. Mosher, Long, Lee and Harding (2017) draw upon their research experience using Tsing’s (2005) concept of “friction” to consider qualitative research as an essentially collaborative project. In Tsing’s work on the multiple local and global actors and interests embedded in the forests of Kalimantan, Indonesia, friction becomes a way of thinking about how culture can be continually co-produced (Tsing 2005, p. 4). In this context, Mosher et al. (2017) remark how our interlocutors participate (or refuse to participate) deeply affect our work as qualitative researchers. As Tsing writes:

A wheel turns because of its encounter with the surface of the road; spinning in the air, it goes nowhere. Rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick is just a stick. As a metaphorical image, friction reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power. (Tsing, 2005, p. 5)

Mosher et al. (2017) further reflect “observed effect” to consider “how the agency and agendas of our participants and their sense-making of us as social actors and as researchers with specific agendas affect what can be known as the result of our research” (Mosher et al., 2017, p. 146).

To understand the lives of young oilrig workers that were laid off, especially the ones from Kelowna and the vicinity, as well as to achieve “observed effect,” we interviewed nine mobile workers. Out of these, there were six males and three females—all males aged between 18 and 38 years of age, the women were in their mid-20s. With guidance from two research assistants, who leveraged kinship ties to access the interviewees, we accessed our qualitative information. These sources helped to understand the broader perspectives as well as the nuances of mobile oil sector workers from Kelowna. Also, quantified evidence, such as Census Data and the Kelowna Literacy Project, helped us understand the issues involving the young demography in Kelowna and beyond.

At the outset of our research, the authors and their research assistants experienced issues with access and trust with data collection. The impediments we faced had more to do with the concept of positionality, such as the insider/outsider status. Ryan, Kofman, & Aaron (2011, p. 49) analyzed the challenge for academic researchers to gain access, earn trust, and negotiate with community gate-keepers. Central is the importance of establishing rapport and overcoming suspicion. For example, the constructions of difference and sameness and assumptions about positionality mainly impeded my access during data collection despite the presence of volunteers that facilitated my research access.

Maiter, Simich, Jacobson, & Wise (2008, p. 312) consider communities as fluid and on-going constructions. They discovered through in-depth and qualitative studies that ethnically homogenized communities could reveal substantial levels of diversity and heterogeneity arising from, for example, articulation, dialect, and socio-economic status. Additionally, Alexander et al. (2007, p. 798) argue “the recognition of the unfinished, contingent, and occasionally messy boundaries of personal community provides a powerful challenge to the resurgences of fixed and coherent communities”. For example, our initial experience at locating interviewees suffered from complex positionality of both the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ researcher, which impeded our interviewee access and data collection. Once the interviewees learned one of the co-authors and one of the two research assistants had previously worked in the oil industry in northern Alberta, they started to warm up to the data collectors. However, all nine interviewees requested to remain anonymous due to various reasons they did not share. Interestingly, this issue automatically reduced our data collection method and the results from developing generalization as well as interpretation issues. Bolognani (2007, p. 291) explained the danger of “snowballing from one single community organization, with the risk of reproducing a hegemonic point of view, which can claim to be widely representative”. Thus, we are confident that my data portrays the grounded reality faced by my interviewees.

Based on the findings of semi-structured and open-ended interviews, we learned about the lives, journeys, and aspirations of the young and early career mobile oil workers from Kelowna. We felt their answers helped develop a solid understanding of the issues these workers face before and after their journeys. We also gathered additional data through conversations and self-reporting. Despite having access to a relatively small sample size for this research, we sense the interview participants shared comprehensively to help generate insights about future measures that can be undertaken.

The opportunity to work with research assistants substantially facilitated our data collection and analysis. In fact, we somewhat overcame the issue of ‘positionality’ by working with these research assistants. They made the boundaries more permeable thus giving us greater access. Ryan et al. (2011) acknowledge that social scientists employ ‘community’ or ‘peer’ researchers to conduct fieldwork involving hard-to-reach groups. Ryan et al. (2011, p. 51) further remark, “Their ‘insider’ status is often assumed to derive from their ethnic, religious, or linguistic backgrounds or their networks within specific neighborhoods which are then ‘matched’ to the target community”. Brownlie (2009, p. 699) argues that it is difficult to predict how one researcher will be positioned by the interviewees, such as how commonality or differences will be constructed or perceived. Thus, we had to constantly negotiate our positioning to remain as a non-objectionable academic researcher to get on with data collection while nurturing the friendship of our interviewees. We started out with the

following set of questionnaires but frequently we build up more relevant questions as we moved on with each of the interviews:

1. Workers' age and education level.
2. Working tenure at the site/industry.
3. Type and number of training(s) received when they were in the oil patch.
4. What is their wage expectation, if they are looking for new jobs in Kelowna?
5. In their opinion, what can they offer to the economy of Kelowna?
6. Approximate amount of consumer debt as well as savings.

The information obtained from the interviewees helped us understand, from human agency and vulnerability aspects, what the future holds for these people. Regarding policy, we need to understand if any of their skill-sets are transferable or if we should create new programs or training centers at the college, or if the government should offer Employment Insurance (EI) for 12 months instead of eight months. The findings are summarized in a Table 1 below.

Overall, the findings generally show an increase in spending habits along with little or no savings among the mobile old industry workers while they remained employed. Unfortunately, for these workers, their work experience and relevant training have little to no transferability within Kelowna's economy, and wage expectations are less than half of an oil salary. Depending on age and level of skills outside of general labor, employment in construction, truck driving, and service industry are the fields in which many expect to find work. More importantly, as a result of layoffs or severe cuts in salary affected their personal and financial lives in a significant way, further leading to some interviewees moving in with family after losing employment. The findings further reveal that alcohol and substance abuse issues play a large factor in money management. For a few interviewees, they increased alcohol and drug their consumptions as their financial crises deepened.

As skills of the laid-off oil industry workers are non-transferable to the Kelowna area, there exists more competition for construction or skilled laborer positions. For example, Kelowna has recently been listed by a BMO report as one of the worst cities in Canada to find a job (Tencer, 2016). This data alludes to the fall in oil prices and its after-effects, putting more people into a labor market that is already crowded as the population of Kelowna continues to grow. Other local factors impede finding casual jobs more excruciating for the laid-off as well as semi-education mobile workers in Kelowna. For example, a 2016 Statistics Canada study concludes that that one percent increase in literacy would raise national labor productivity by 2.5 percent, which would add approximately C\$32 billion to the Canadian annual gross domestic product (Statistics Canada, 2016b). Alarming, however, approximately 40 percent of the 62,250 workers in Kelowna—Lake Country have literacy skills below the level required by their occupations (Project Literacy Kelowna, 2017).

Table 1: *Interviewee List*

Job Description of the Interviewee	Work Location	Age	Work Tenure (Year)	Amount of Consumer Debt	Long Term Savings	Present Job	Education
#1 Drilling Rig Hand (Floorhand)	AB, SK, and MA	23	4	Over \$35,000	Less than \$10,000	Day Laborer	High school
#2 Welder (Apprentice)	Fort McMurray, AB	21	2	Student loan (est. \$2,000)	Little to no savings	Welder	High school, welding apprentice
#3 Drilling Rig Hand (Floorhand)	AB	23	4	None	Little to no savings	Day Laborer	GED
#4 Electrician (Journeyman)	Fort McMurray, AB	23	3	Credit card debt (undisclosed)	\$60,000 in 3 accounts	Un-employed	High school, journeyman electrician
#5 Drilling Rig Hand (Floorhand)	AB	24	5	Over \$40,000	Approx. \$20,000	Day Laborer	GED
#6 Coil Tubing/Frac (Operator)	AB, SK, and MA	25	4	Approx. \$18,000	Little to no savings	Warehouse worker/driver	High School
#7 Drilling Rig Hand (Derrickhand)	AB	24	4	Undisclosed	Little to no savings	Illegal activities	High School
#8 Fluid Management (Supervisor)	Grande Prairie, AB	23	2	Approx. \$100,000 mortgage	Approx. \$20,000	Day Laborer	High School
#9 Drilling Rig Hand (Leasehand)	Lethbridge, AB	42	9	Undisclosed	No savings remaining	Day Laborer	High School

In conjunction with these issues, “there is a growing mismatch between the skills that employers need and the skills that workers have. This discrepancy leads to high unemployment coupled with a high job vacancy rate. Our provincial government has stressed that if we do not address our skill shortages, BC will face an ever greater labor crisis” (Project Literacy Kelowna, 2017). The site further claims that although 1,126,000 job openings are expected in BC over the next decade, there remains only 607,000 young people in BC’s education system (Project Literacy Kelowna, 2017). Building on these existing issues, our findings indicate that laid-off oil mobile

workers in deeper financial trouble due to their lack of awareness and knowledge in financial management.

For example, seven out of the nine interview interviewees had no significant financial savings from their work in the oilfield. However, six of these seven interviewees worked in the industry for five years or more (see Table 1). The two youngest participants (aged in their early twenties) had the highest paying positions of all interviewees, even though they were less than 24 years of age at the time of the interview (interviewee 4 and 8). These two participants had some of the greatest job security due to their skill level and experience and remarked that by the point they had left their work that they were “okay with having the summer off.” Overall, this attitude characterized a certain interest and preference to be in the Okanagan Valley for the summer months. “I can’t stay away from the Okanagan. Better to be broke here [in the Okanagan] than broke in Alberta,” remarked another participant (interviewee 7).

Two different interviewees shared that their remaining debts on their high-end personal vehicles respectively of more than C\$35,000 and C\$40,000 (interviewee 1 and 5). While interviewee 1 had short-term savings of less than C\$10,000, interviewee 5 claims to have a long-term savings of C\$20,000. With significant bi-weekly vehicle payments—respectively with 3.5 years and 4.5 years remaining, interviewee 1 and 5’s debt-to-savings ratios created accessible savings problems. While both of these participants worked in laboring positions in the Okanagan Valley during the time of the interview, they also cut back significant spending habits.

Although participants 2, 3, 6, and 7 paid off their vehicle debts, they claimed to have little to no savings. The shared consensus among these four interview participants was that they left the oilfield at a economic neutral zone, and have sought out work in laboring, cooking, truck driving, and undisclosed. When asked what he could do for work in the Okanagan, interviewee 7 responded that his certificates were only applicable within the Albertan oil field and some only applicable with his drilling company. “When I come back to BC I’m just an overqualified burger-flipper. It’s hard to find a job that is equivalent,” remarked interviewee 7.

Unfortunately, interview participant 9 was the least financially stable of all interview subjects. This person endured injuries and complications with his worker’s compensation claim shortly before the termination of employment. During treatment for his injury, participant 9 depleted his financial resources. Also, he incurred significant debt subjecting his subsequent missing child support payments and surviving off of income support. He stated, “I thought there would be work here [in the Okanagan] but there isn’t.”

When asked about wage expectations, our interviewees responded that for Kelowna, the hourly wage ranged from C\$15-30/hour. Only participant 8 remarked he had the management skillset to earn C\$40-50/hour in the region. None of the participants mentioned any interest in salary, benefits, vacation time, or anything other than dollars per hour wage as the bottom line. Participant 4 worked as a journeyman electrician in Kelowna making C\$24/hour. However, he shared that despite the housing and construction boom in Kelowna, the wage rate for electricians went down. Thus, he expected to make less in 2016-17 for electrician work in Kelowna than he had made earlier.

When asked about strains on the social relationship and family life, as a result of financial crisis, almost most interviewees remarked that their commitments and responsibilities to family life are often of central importance for migrant oilfield

workers as they look to ensure and sustain a higher income level to support families. The migrant lifestyle is not without its hardships, inevitably translating every relationship into one of long distance. While the younger participants conveyed that the lifestyle did not affect their relationships directly in any immediately negative fashion (these participants did not have spouses and children) there was a shared notion amongst all of the interview participants that the lifestyle was difficult in regards to relationships. The single participants expressed that if they did have partners and children, they would be feeling a lot more pressure financially and emotionally.

Participants who shared insights on how these relationship difficulties affected their personal relationships positively they all seemed to do so in a bitter-sweet manner. Participant 3 stated, "I think I appreciate them quite a bit more. When you're stuck up there you realize who's there for you and who's not." With regards to how the experience affected participant 3 in the long-term, he believed that it made him a better person through greater understanding and appreciation for people in his life. The remaining seven interview participants had more negative insights on how the migrant lifestyle affected their personal relationships.

In specific examples, participant 6 expressed that without the strong family life with his parents to fall back on, he would not know where he would be today. While the positive insights of the migrant oilfield lifestyle enabled him to visit family in Victoria, BC, and Montreal, QC, with the significant income and days off schedule, participant 6 also considered the negative implications to be resounding. He remarked, "My parents were kind of upset. The only thing they told me is that if I'm going to be away for that long I have to have two weeks off at Christmas." This was a specific commitment which participant 6 made to his family, which participant 8 did not, stating, "I'm the guy who works Christmas. I'm the guy who works their birthday. I don't care." When participant 6 was dating while working in the oilfield, he suggested that the relationships lasted around a year at the longest. Initially his companions would like the lifestyle but eventually came to dislike it once they faced the reality that participant 6 was in that specific lifestyle for the long haul. Participant 6 stated, "They were kind of like 'we're in totally different lives and you're not living in the real world yet.'" This acknowledgment separating the "oilfield world" from the real world is caused by irresponsible spending habits, as participant 6 illustrated, "stupid money, people not spending money properly, and people spending money like they're millionaires."

In the case of participant 4, he began a long-distance relationship when he started working as a migrant oilfield worker. For the entirety of the relationship, participant 4 had never been home for any significant period of time, and the relationship ended shortly before the interview had taken place. He stated:

It was super hard for us. She decided she could be living anywhere, she didn't have to live in BC... She would just decide 'I'm gonna live with my mom for 4 months (in Kingston, Ontario). What difference does it make where I am when you can just fly to visit with me on your days off?' I [had] to plan a trip and pay \$800 for a flight, and that was the second year of us dating that she did that. After that, when she finished university, [and] after a half year she decided she would live with her dad (in San

Diego, CA)... I was like, 'you could find a job here and we could buy a house!' But she would say, 'but I don't have to pay any rent at my dad's.'

The statement participant 6 made regarding how people do not consider oilfield workers to be in the real world directly depicts why participant 4's girlfriend had no problem making these drastic changes in her life holding little to no regard for where participant 4 would be situated on his days off with her. It is apparent that in her mind he could afford these flights, and there remained a level of expectation on him that he would (and should) participate and pay for these trips so that they could be together.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to understand the issues involving laid off mobile oil industry workers in Kelowna. The potentially alarming findings of our initial study include mobile workers' relative deprivation from unemployment, their poor financial management planning/skills as well as the impacts on their family/relationships. While these workers search work locally at a considerable pay cut, local and policy makers beyond need to examine how to assist these workers during their critical transition. Meanwhile few would disagree that it requires careful management to mitigate any simmering tensions and resentments between newcomers and established sectors of the community. Existing policy and community management strategies suggest that forums and enhanced community family services are among the initiatives that need to emerge in Kelowna. Additionally, there is an urgent and ongoing need for collaborative approaches to strengthen and maximize existing formal and informal support networks with clear and effective mechanisms to integrate both established residents and newcomers. These measures need to leverage workers' perspectives in coordination with local industry. The findings also highlight the importance of meaningful public-private dialogues and pilot initiatives through industry-academy partnerships to sustainably rehabilitate the stagnant labor's pool. While the dire outcomes and impacts are likely to affect all if the warning signs are dealt with indifference and policy rhetoric, lessons and success stories drawn from the valley can also be piloted elsewhere in Canada to overcome the plights of economic recession.

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