

Trucks as “toys”: Masculinity, work and mobility in Newfoundland and Labrador

Lachlan Barber

Hong Kong Baptist University

AAG 2016, San Francisco





OUTLINE

1. Employment-related geographical mobility, masculinity and automobility
2. Trucks and Toys
3. Research context – Newfoundland and Labrador
4. Research findings
 - i. Changing status of trucks in relation to work
 - ii. Generational differences
5. Concluding thoughts

EMPLOYMENT-RELATED GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY



labour
geographies

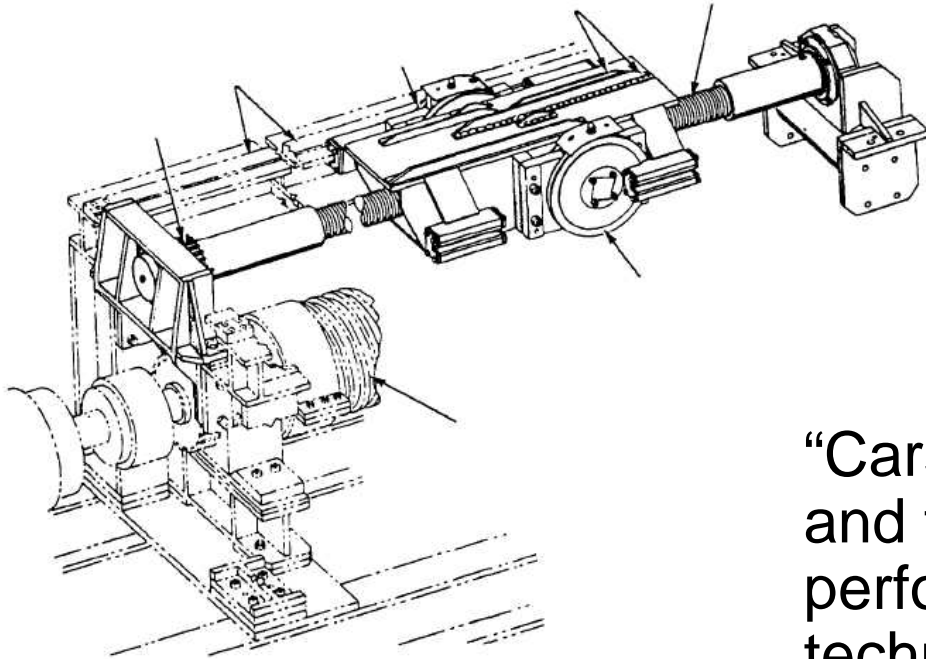
migration
studies

“new
mobilities”

on the move
partnership 

Driving = freedom?

People killed each year around the world by cars: 1.3 million (ASIRT)
Cost per month to own and run a car in North America: \$6-8000



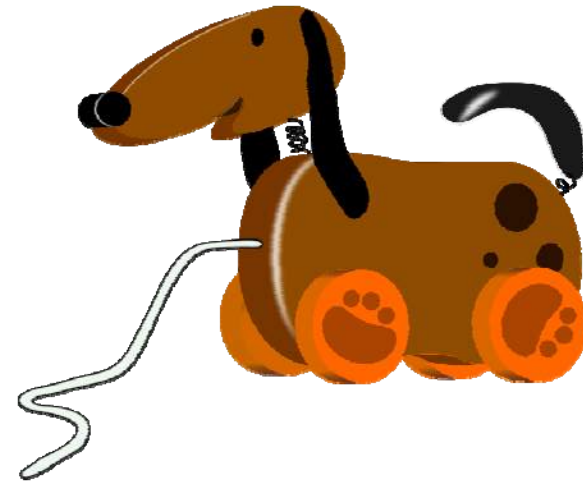
“Cars are a medium for male admiration and the expression of competitiveness, performance, power, control, technique/skill and aggression.”

Hydraulic masculinity (Linley Walker)

MASCULINITIES

- Hegemonic
- Multiple
- Hierarchical
- Situated (locally, regionally)

(Connell 1995; Halberstam 1998; Berg & Longhurst 2003; Brandth & Haugen 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Hopkins & Noble 2009; Aure & Munkejord 2015)



TOYS





TRUCKS (including SUVs)

- ~50% of vehicles owned in most Canadian provinces in 2013
- 42% of vehicles owned in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2000
- 59% of vehicles owned in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2013





Research focus

mobility in the industrial construction sector

Provincial mobility

>> “Special Projects” – construction for off-shore oil and nickel processing

Interprovincial mobility

>> Newfoundland and Labrador – Alberta (and other provinces)



“A car wouldn’t be much good to me.” (TI #1)

“Everybody’s got a truck”
(KI interview #14)



Burin, Newfoundland and Labrador

Jacks of all trades, masters of one

“We’re electricians but we’re carpenters. We can build a fence, we can bolt stuff together. We’re all pretty well handy in everything we do. **So whatever it is, we do it. The neighbours need something done, well, we’ll do it.”**

“Those guys grew up learning from their dads, right? Because back then you had to do everything yourself. **You weren’t going paying somebody to do it.** You know what I mean? And then for my generation, I guess... Like **I learned a lot from my old man, right? It’s probably dying out now though.”**

“I mean if you **take a lot of young fellas** they’re not so handy as the older guys, right? **They’re not so well-versed in so many things.”**
(TI #2)



HIBERNIA (first oil in 1997)

NEW TRUCKS

\$ DOWN
PAYMENT



“Some guys are okay with the \$30,000 dollar truck, right? Some guys want something a little bit nicer. You know what I mean?”
(TI #2)

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

“Those people that are making this big money, I mean they’re building houses around here (and mine is only a shed for those houses), \$400 and \$500,000. I wouldn’t want to have their mortgage. Then they’ve got trailers, they’ve got boats, they’ve got ski-doods, big trucks, big cars. If it ever fails out west, and all this stuff here [...] goes down, let me tell you there’ll be a lot of repossessing of gear around. It’s fine while you’re making the big money: you’re not looking ahead to tomorrow. I always looked ahead to the day come where I could say, “I’m going to retire and I’m going to enjoy what life I got left.” Those young people today, they’re not thinking ahead. Work for the day.” (KI #10)

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

“Young people are buying houses and they’ve got two cars in the driveway, and **they’ve got all their toys**, and they’re taking trips ... I saw that out west as well but **it’s a very fragile way of living.**”

(KI #14)

“**I came from a world where, like, a dollar was the most important thing and that’s even as a young person. Because our parents didn’t have much to give us, right?** They survived day to day and did what they could. But when I got a chance to make a dollar, I went to make a dollar. **Whereas the kids now, lifestyle is the thing.** What they do, and how they have fun.” (KI #3)

“YOU’VE GOTTA WORK...”

“You could pay your house off doing what we do, pretty quickly... if you didn’t spend it on trucks and cars and quads and ski-doods” (TI #3).

“You’ve gotta work. If you’ve got a mortgage and you’ve got a sixty thousand dollar truck, and you’ve got the toys everything like that, that’s not for free. You’ve got to be able to pay for it” (KI #3).

Young people **“do some things that EI just will not cover... You have to go work if you lose your pick-up or you lose your house or whatever, right? They spend a lot of money.” (KI #3)**

CONCLUDING REMARKS



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

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.