

Research issues related to vulnerable workers

Objectives

- Describe factors which can contribute to vulnerability of workers
- Identify challenges in studying vulnerable workers
- Recognize a variety of research approaches including opportunities to involve workers and communities in reaching vulnerable working populations

Vulnerable

adjective, meaning open to attack or damage

Vulnerable workers

... described in US as “special populations”

- Often defined by personal attributes such as age or ethnicity.
 - ◆ Old/young
 - ◆ Minorities
 - ◆ Immigrants

Vulnerability

- Often created by inequitable power structures
 - ◆ Access
 - ◆ Benefits
 - ◆ Resources

Our focus should not be on who is vulnerable , but rather on why...

- The documentation of hazards in the workplace and their proposed remedies has the potential to adversely affect the profit margin of business creating tension between employers and workers' rights.

Will be felt most acutely by the most vulnerable of workers

- Much of US industry is dependent on cheap labor often acquired through hiring disadvantaged workers who are more likely to accept poorer work conditions, lower wages and are less likely to complain or organize.

Shifting sands of vulnerability



Five presentations

- Health-related quality of life among African American women in low-wage jobs in rural NC
- Work hazard assessment among university housekeepers
- Work organization factors associated with musculoskeletal injury among nurse's aides at a large tertiary care center
- Evaluation of a participatory health and safety intervention with Latino immigrant construction workers
- Factors influencing vulnerability of construction apprentices