



Infection Risk Along U.S. Highways? The Case of a 'Truckchaser' Cruising for Truckers

Yorghos Apostolopoulos PhD , Sevil Sönmez PhD , Mona M. Shattell PhD, RN , Richard Rothenberg MD, MPH , Rose Weitz PhD & John Smith

To cite this article: Yorghos Apostolopoulos PhD , Sevil Sönmez PhD , Mona M. Shattell PhD, RN , Richard Rothenberg MD, MPH , Rose Weitz PhD & John Smith (2010) Infection Risk Along U.S. Highways? The Case of a 'Truckchaser' Cruising for Truckers, International Journal of Sexual Health, 22:4, 262-271, DOI: [10.1080/19317611.2010.493500](https://doi.org/10.1080/19317611.2010.493500)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19317611.2010.493500>



Published online: 06 Dec 2010.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 290



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

Infection Risk Along U.S. Highways? The Case of a ‘Truckchaser’ Cruising for Truckers

Yorghos Apostolopoulos, PhD
Sevil Sönmez, PhD
Mona M. Shattell, PhD, RN
Richard Rothenberg, MD, MPH
Rose Weitz, PhD
John Smith

ABSTRACT. This article explores potential infection risks linked with trucker cruising along U.S. highways. Specifically, the article delineates the settings and social organization of trucker cruising, examines the structure of sex partnerships of truckers and cruisers, and delves into the unique database of one truckchaser who recorded 4,162 sex interactions with 2,499 different truckers during a 13-year period. Concurrent sexual partnerships of bisexual and particularly straight-identified truckers hold increased potential for amplifying infection risk as they enable pathogens to operate as bridges along disparate geographies, demographics, and epidemiologies.

KEYWORDS. Truckers, truckchasers, cruising, sexual networks, infection risk

American and Canadian truckers often engage in risk-laden sexual encounters and drug exchanges on the road (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2007; Lichtenstein, Hook, Grimley, St. Lawrence, & Bachmann, 2008; Stratford, Ellerbrock, Atkins, & Hall, 2000). Recent investigations in Georgia and New Mexico have attempted to ascertain whether such behavioral patterns

Yorghos Apostolopoulos, PhD, Professor, Department of Public Health Education, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC, and Division of Infectious Diseases, Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA.

Sevil Sönmez, PhD, Professor and Department Head, School of Health and Human Performance, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC.

Mona M. Shattell, PhD, RN, Associate Professor, School of Nursing, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC.

Richard Rothenberg, MD, MPH, Professor, Institute of Public Health, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA, and Division of Infectious Diseases, Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA.

Rose Weitz, PhD, Professor, School of Social Transformation, Program of Women and Gender Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

John Smith, name and location withheld.

Address correspondence to: Mona M. Shattell, PhD, RN, School of Nursing, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, P.O. Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402. E-mail: mona.shattell@gmail.com

Data for this article originated from projects funded by Arizona State University and the U.S. National Institutes of Health (R01-HD042972).

Names of individuals, events, locations, Web sites, and fora have been changed (via the use of pseudonyms) or eliminated to protect their privacy.

render truckers and their sex and drug contacts vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STIs)/HIV (Apostolopoulos et al., 2010; Valway, Jenison, Keller, Vega-Hernandez, & McCree, 2009). Truckers recruited from 2 inner-city truckstops in Atlanta, at 1 urban trucking terminal in Albuquerque, and 10 truckstops throughout New Mexico tested positive for Hepatitis C virus (10%, 8.5%), Hepatitis B virus (1.7%) and anti-Hepatitis B core (anti-HBc) (10.4%), Chlamydia (1.7%, 1.3%), gonorrhea (0.2%; New Mexico only), syphilis (3.3%, 0.2%), and HIV (3.3%, 0.2%), Atlanta and New Mexico, respectively.

Pedal to the Metal (Ouellet, 1994) and *Sweatshops on Wheels* (Belzer, 2000) are two important books that shed light on truckers' work organization, personal and social identities, definitions of masculinity, relationships, and highway "audiences," as well as the repercussions of government deregulation on truckers' lives. Highways frequently operate as a sexual marketplace (Corzine & Kirby, 1977) involving wide-ranging sexual mixing among truckers and various women and men in numerous settings. The combination of these elements has the potential to facilitate infection spread, as sexually transmitted pathogens are disseminated via close contact between infectious and susceptible individuals (Apostolopoulos, Sönmez, Kronenfeld, & Rothenberg, 2006). Truckers' sexual interactions—particularly with men who have sex with men (MSM) who cruise for truckers as well as other men—and their potential exposure to STI/HIV risk have received insufficient attention.

This article focuses on the potential infection risks that are linked with the practice of cruising for truckers along U.S. highways. Specifically, this article delineates the risk-enabling settings and social organization of trucker cruising; examines the structure of sexual partnerships among truckers, those who cruise truckers, and other populations in diverse cruising grounds; and delves into the unique database maintained by one truckchaser who recorded 4,162 sex interactions with 2,499 different truckers during a 13-year period. This article is predicated on the working assumption that the concurrent sexual partnerships of straight-identified and bisexual truckers demonstrate increased po-

tential to amplify infection risk and spread. Due to truckers' occupational mobility, truckers enable pathogens to operate as bridges and travel along disparate geographies, demographics, and epidemiologies.

BACKGROUND

MSM, Trucker Networks, and STI/HIV Risk

When HIV infection rates among MSM in urban epicenters plateaued in the 1990s, complacency abounded. This period was then followed by a resurgence of risky sex resulting in higher rates of syphilis, Chlamydia, gonorrhea, and HIV (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2003a; Koblin et al., 2003; Rietmeijer, Bull, McFarlane, Patnaik, & Douglas, 2003; Rosser & Stanton, 2003). Rising infection rates have primarily been linked to escalating unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) in commercial public sex venues and noncommercial public sex environments, to the growing use of club drugs, and to an increase in Internet sex-seeking (CDC, 2003b; Junge, 2002; Somlai, Kalichman, & Bagnall, 2001). With the Internet having emerged as a high-risk cruising space for MSM (Halkitis & Parsons, 2003) and because sexual cultures are geographically, spatially, and even temporally bound, accurate assessment of various sexual transmission milieus is critical to ascertaining infection risk (Frankis & Flowers, 2009).

Multisite, ethnoepidemiological research on truckers' risk exposures (Apostolopoulos et al., 2010) has expanded an earlier trucker risk typology that included *highway cowboys*, *old hands*, *Christian truckers*, and *old, married men* (Stratford et al., 2000). This work has brought to the forefront a gamut of loosely linked populations, which revolve around the trucker and which are defined based on their roles within a social geography of risk (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2007). Core groups include: (1) *truckers (straight, gay, bisexual, or straight-identified MSM)*; (2) *female sex workers*; (3) *truckchasers* (or "goodbuddies"), who are men who cruise truckers in both physical and virtual milieus; and (4) *drug suppliers* and *pimps*. Peripheral groups include: (1) *polishers* (transient

homeless persons who buff and polish chrome details of trucks) and *lumpers* (individuals who load and unload trucks and sometimes travel with truckers for certain periods); (2) *MSM-Web site moderators and Webmasters*; (3) *employees of trucking and shipping companies, truckstops, and other highway settings*; and (4) *spouses, partners, and lovers of truckers* (Apostolopoulos et al., 2010).

The social, sex, and drug interactions of truckers and the foregoing populations are embedded within wider physical and virtual risk-enabling milieus with conjoined but distinct topographies and sexual cultures (Apostolopoulos et al., 2010). Physical contexts include truckstops, highway rest and picnic areas, weigh and fuel stations, loading docks, and various off-road establishments that cater to truckers (e.g., adult entertainment). Beginning in the 1990s, increasing access to the Internet from trucking terminals, truckstops, and truck cabs, combined with its inherent anonymity, furnished truckers with a new sex-seeking medium as well as public yet private cyberspace for sex partnering (Apostolopoulos, Sönmez, Smith, & Kronenfeld, 2003). Virtual “hook-ups” offer truckers, truckchasers, and other men opportunities to arrange in-person meetings enabled largely by truckers’ wide-ranging mobility (Apostolopoulos, Sönmez, Kronenfeld, & Smith, 2007). Evidence that Internet-dating MSM report higher methamphetamine use, more sexual partners, and higher UAI rates than non-Internet-using MSM (Horvath, Bowen, & Williams, 2006) underscores the grave role of virtual cruising in the context of trucking. The greatest proportion of heterosexual risk exchanges occurs mainly at truckstops and low-budget motels near adult-entertainment establishments in depressed urban locales (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2007); same-sex interactions unfold predominantly at highway rest areas with public toilets and picnic areas surrounded by woodlands and are facilitated by the CB radio and the Internet (Apostolopoulos et al., 2007).

‘Chasing’ Truckers in Physical and Virtual Settings

Within a generally homophobic trucking subculture, the semipublic space where sexual con-

tacts and acts unfold has pushed truckchasers below the radar of most people, in contrast to female sex workers, who work more visibly at truckstops and out of nearby motels (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2007). Truckchasers are generally attracted to truckers who project a masculine image and view them as the personification of manhood. As a result of the attractiveness of the “straight-man image,” many truckchasers are frequently drawn to married or otherwise straight-identified truckers (Apostolopoulos et al., 2007).

The act of cruising truckers unfolds mainly in outdoor spaces such as highway rest areas and truckstops and usually after dark. Particularly at rest areas (often referred to as *pickle parks*), all types of cruisers emerge, including: cross-dressers, parked truckers, interstate travelers, truckchasers, and businessmen seeking a quick sexual release before going home (Hollister, 2003). As with many other social spheres, variations in numbers and demographics at cruising sites reflect work, leisure, and household schedules of individuals that generally reflect the larger social order (Hollister). One truckchaser describes cruising spots in his area, thus:

One of my favorite spots is a picnic area just north of [city] . . . doesn’t have a restroom . . . some picnic tables and a chain-link fence with an opening into the wooded area behind . . . Never have to look for truckers, they know what’s there and always stop and venture back for a quick one . . . Sometimes you might get lucky and they’ll invite you into their truck . . . I’m 56 and have been doing this since I was 24. (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2006)

Conventional cruising venues have greatly expanded as a result of truckers’ increasing use of the Internet. Many sexual encounters along highway settings that otherwise would not materialize are initiated and facilitated by the Internet. Many truckers and truckchasers post personal advertisements on trucker-MSM-specific Web sites and other MSM Web sites, providing driving schedules, suggesting meeting points, and offering other personal or detailed contact

information. As a result, an enormous volume of sexual encounters, involving bisexual and straight-identified truckers who have sex with other men and truckchasers, evolve from virtual hook-ups. One truckchaser's posting exemplifies the planning of an in-person hookup (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2006):

I-95 between [towns] ex-navy chief who services truckers as he did his str8 marine recruits. Misses 'em like hell and needs real men replacements since marine contingent left Sub Base in [town]. Have private quarters near truckstop on I-95 at exit [number] near [town]. Prefer after 9 pm 'til midnight, but you can try days with great discretion. Uncut and/or married a plus. [Name, phone, e-mail]

According to the culture of public sex, sex negotiation takes place according to the rules of cruising and by following certain cruising scripts. Following initial contact in a public sex space (e.g., highway rest area) often involving verbal communication, truckchasers employ diverse strategies to attract the attention of truckers they are cruising. They have developed a complex behavioral etiquette to signal their intentions to truckers. Interactions are carefully scripted and depend mostly on nonverbal communication (eye contact, pursuit, display, and positioning) and shared but usually unarticulated meanings. Initial contact ranges from loitering in public toilets to intermittently tapping the parked car's brake lights, leaving the car door ajar, casting deliberate stares, licking one's lips, suggestively rubbing one's crotch, or initiating a conversation on certain CB channels by using various clicking sounds (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2007). Sex-seeking truckers employ the CB as a vital tool for initial contact and often use two different CB handles—one for work-related communication, the second only for cruising. Once truckchasers catch the attention of drivers by using clicking sounds on the CB, truckers may engage in communication using their second handle.

Seasoned truckchasers are often concurrently sexually involved with several truckers as well as other men; several truckchasers estimate hav-

ing "serviced" from hundreds to thousands of truckers (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2006). The physical location of the sex act between a truckchaser and a trucker influences the nature of the sex act performed. As most available physical spaces (e.g., truck cabs) impose restrictions on movement, types of sex performed include primarily oral sex and secondarily anal sex, mostly unprotected (Apostolopoulos et al., 2007). Sexual encounters between truckers and truckchasers are accompanied at times by the use of substances. Truckers may drink beer or smoke marijuana to relax or reduce inhibition prior to sex and sometimes offer alcohol and drugs to truckchasers. Crystal methamphetamine is known to be prevalent among MSM populations (Halkitis, Parsons, & Stirratt, 2001); however, drug use among the MSM trucker-truckchaser populations is low (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2007).

Sex in a semipublic space, as exemplified by rest areas in particular, can be more exciting due to associated risks, as well as the public element and anonymity. The homophobic nature of trucking exacerbates the inherent risks associated with chasing. Chasers need to be concerned with their personal safety, including fear of *queer bashing*, police entrapment leading to arrests, infection risks, and having their identity exposed (Hollister, 2003). In some cases, despite these risks, the thrill of danger turns into excitement, thereby eroticizing risk within the relative safety of cruising sites (Hollister).

DATA AND METHODS

Data presented in this article are part of a multiyear, multisite ethnoepidemiological investigation, which was approved by the university's institutional review board (IRB), on STI/HIV risks faced by truckers and their sex contacts in North America. In the context of this fieldwork, one of the truckchasers we interviewed shared with us his meticulously kept Excel database with detailed information on the several thousand truckers he interacted with during a 13-year period. Data provide extensive context with e-mail communication and telephone interviews between

the self-defined truckchaser, named John Smith (his pseudonym), and our research team.

The database John kept included details on the social and intimate aspects of his relationships with truckers: (1) truckers' personal demographics; (2) truckers' CB radio handle; (3) geographic location of their first encounter; (4) types of sex performed and other specifics of sexual encounters; (5) condom use; (6) number and dates of sexual encounters with each trucker; (7) A to F rating of truckers' sexual performance; and (8) substance use. As per IRB requirements and to protect the privacy of the truckchaser's sexual contacts, he was asked to remove all identifying information on the men with whom he had sex, including license plate numbers and CB radio handles, from the database before he shared it with the research team.

Although the database is unique in its content, it permits only descriptive statistical analysis. NVivo was employed for textual analysis of our telephone interviews and e-mail communications with John, and underlying recurring themes assisted in extracting select excerpts. The meanings ascribed to events were synthesized with the recorded representation of objective events, as we were interested in both why people talk about things in certain ways as well as in the meanings they attach to things they talk about, in addition to our own interpretation of actions and meanings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Truckchaser: 'A Straight-Acting,' Gay-Identified Man

John Smith, the database owner, is an articulate 51-year-old, white, "straight-acting," gay-identified man, who has never been married. To most of his large extended family and his work environment, he is not "out" because he believes it "would serve no useful purpose" in his conservative community. He resides in a small town in a mid-Atlantic state (17 to 30 miles away from two major highways), holds a bachelor's degree, and currently works for a manufacturing company that uses trucks as a part of its operations. His managerial responsibilities include, among

others, interviewing and hiring drivers, auditing books, consolidating trip sheets, fuel-tax reporting, drug and alcohol testing, and monitoring the Department of Transportation regulations for his company's truck fleet. He is masculine in speech and body language—"Drivers have often commented they would not be embarrassed or afraid to take me into a truckstop or on trips with them, because I don't quite fit the profile of a good-buddy." He smokes cigarettes but does not drink alcohol or use drugs; he is HIV-negative and has gotten "crabs" only twice in the last 13 years (he is almost certain about who gave them to him because of his "list"). He is a sports fan who closely follows the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR); as do many drivers and also holds a commercial driver's license, which he sometimes uses as an "ice breaker" in his initial conversations with truckers.

Attraction to Truckers

John was aware of his sexuality since college but never acted on his particular attraction to truckers until he bought a CB radio. John says the CB "... opened the world of sex with truckers for me ... I have this fetish about truckers ... the type of man that appeals to me is masculine, independent, rough, and the 'afraid of nothing man' ...". Among truckers, John's preference is the masculine and tall *daddy/bear* type, 35 to 45 years of age, married, smoker, and nondrug user. Primarily for health reasons, John prefers drivers who date relatively few other men, who are predominantly "tops" and who prefer to get "serviced" (having oral sex performed on them) rather than doing the "servicing" (performing oral sex on other men). He also prefers "... drivers who don't climax soon and really enjoy the act and let you know it by word and action ...". Furthermore, he is interested in drivers who have the time to spend with him because he does not like "... quickies or anonymous sex ... [he likes] those who can engage in conversation about things other than trucks and sex ... drivers you can become friends with ...". John has never engaged in sex with any of his own company's drivers because he prefers to avoid jeopardizing his post or publicizing his sexual identity and also because his company's drivers

do not fit his preferred type. He started cruising for truckers when he was 36 years old and rarely has sex with anyone but a trucker. During the course of the past 13 years, John has had 4,162 sexual encounters (averaging 320 sexual encounters per year) with 2,499 different truckers. (A sexual encounter is defined as one or more sex acts during one meeting.)

Keeping the Database

John created the database as a way to keep track of the drivers he was intimate with, in terms of their identity, his own enjoyment, and safety, “. . . a way to track who I saw so I would know they were safe and not a cop . . .” The database helps John know what to expect if he met a particular trucker again, and it triggers his memory of truckers’ interests and preferences. In addition, John has collected identifying information about the drivers, such as company name and truck license plate numbers—to spot them on nearby highways and engage them in conversation over the CB, as a method of cruising them. Other data John kept on truckers included drivers’ personal information, such as their birth dates and interests, so that he had a topic of conversation when he interacted with them again. When he spots a driver, John consults his “list” to help decide whether or not to pursue an encounter. In those cases where he knows he will engage in sex with the driver, he approaches the truck prepared with condoms, lubricants, moist towelettes, and mouthwash. The decision to engage in a repeat sexual encounter is often driven by his rating scale (part of his database), “. . . as you can imagine, a few that are on the ‘list’ I would not want to see again for one reason or another . . . if I ran across one that I rated a ‘C,’ I would definitely not want to see them again . . .” John has shared the database with only two close friends, who also engage in sex with truckers, and has only discussed it with a few drivers, who he has been seeing frequently for a long time.

Truckers as Sex Partners

More than 95% of the 2,499 truckers John engaged in sex with were White, and 46% were

married. John’s “list” also included drivers who are involved in relationships with women, married with children, divorced, straight-identified MSM, and openly bisexual men. John notes “. . . few drivers actually wear wedding rings and, if they do, they will, most of the time, take them off before they see you . . .” and explains that he usually looks for the mark of the wedding ring and family pictures in the truck; if he does not see these before going further with a driver, he engages them in conversation. Such conversation—about NASCAR, trucks, a driving destination—usually puts both at ease and allows the men to find some common ground as “. . . in the course of the conversation, they will usually open up and make some reference to wife and kids . . . in most cases, they will even call their wives and kids names.” John uses these conversations to learn if a trucker is married, divorced, or single.

Cruising Rituals

Despite his extensive Internet use, John’s initial contact with truckers is via CB radio. He has never had sex with a trucker without having first spoken with the driver on the CB and indicates that he has met nearly 75% of his truckers over the CB radio. John’s discreet style of cruising appeals highly to drivers, who have praised him for it, primarily because for truckers, “. . . having sex with a guy is not publicly accepted in their world but is definitely a part of their private world.” John explains that truckers highly value discretion and do not want others to know what they are doing.

John first became aware of the value of the CB radio for the purpose of cruising truckers when he met a driver at a rest area years earlier, who advised him to get a CB radio for this purpose and even gave him some pointers. On Channel 19 (designated for truckers), a *typical* conversation for John goes as follows: “. . . ‘Stroker,’ take it to Channel 24.” John indicates that he repeatedly uses the same CB handles and channels and explains, “Using the same handle and channel lets drivers you have seen before know it’s you.” Once John gets on Channel 24, he asks twice: “Did you make it?” If there is no response from a trucker, John requests a radio check to see

if his CB is working. In about 95% of the cases, a driver will respond by telling him, "It's working"; if not, John tries again later. When a driver responds, John asks "... what do they call you ...?" to which the driver replies with a name or handle. John explains "... truckers are very nosy and this type of call plays on that trait ... they want to know what's going on ...". After getting a reply from the driver, John waits for a brief while before asking another question. Interested drivers will stay on the channel, while others will return to Channel 19. To interested drivers who remain on Channel 24, John continues by asking: "... where are you headed to ...?" The driver may answer this and ask John the same question, to which John responds: "... I'm running around in my four-wheeler seeing what comes up ...". This remark: (a) reveals that John is in a car rather than another truck, which is important because most drivers will avoid engaging in sex with another driver due to pervasive homophobia in the sector, and (b) gives drivers an initial clue to what John is seeking. John explains further that his remark may either elicit a response from an interested trucker such as "... I've got something up ...". or indicate that more conversation is needed so that the two men can "feel each other out" further on the CB. The driver might then ask "... where are you at ...?" to which John responds by revealing his general location—without being too specific because he notes that most police cars are equipped with CBs. John then asks the driver for his location, which leads to the trucker's general whereabouts. At this point, the driver might ask John "... do you want to come over ...?" or John might ask if they need any help "... with their problem or headache ...".

Because both men know that sexual activity will unfold in the truck, an exchange ensues of more specific directions without revealing the truck's name or precise location. John continues by asking for additional specifics about the trucker's location, to which the driver then replies: "... in the second row near the end ...". John then asks about the color of his "house" and the last two numbers of the truck's license plate and pushes the driver to reveal a sign—such as the interior light of the cab left on and the driver's side door kept ajar. Armed with this information,

John hones in on the truck. At this point in time, the driver usually prepares for the encounter by moving to the sleeper part of his truck. When John sees a truck fitting the description with the agreed-upon signal, he then walks over to see if the driver's side door is unlocked. If not, he walks away; if it is open as expected, he enters: "... most drivers want you to come to the driver's door and act like you're a driver getting into your truck ...". Unlike most "chasers" or drivers, John never supplies a description of himself over the CB and refrains from stating exactly what he is seeking until he is well inside the truck. John adds, with a hint of exaggeration, "I look at it this way ... if I don't like the driver's looks or appearance and he is not clean, I'm not under any obligation to perform sex on him or vice versa ... I've probably gotten out of as many trucks as I've gotten into."

Geography and Sexual Settings

Truckers' constant mobility through numerous states is directly linked with the risk of bridging or transmitting infections to other locations. In the case of drivers John has engaged in sex with, 49 different states are represented, with the largest numbers based out of Tennessee (17%), North Carolina (9.9%), Ohio (8.8%), Virginia (7%), Alaska (7%), Pennsylvania (4.8%), and Georgia (4.8%). Because John is located in a mid-Atlantic state, it is not surprising that about 47% of his first meetings took place in Tennessee, 22% in West Virginia, and 17% in Virginia—about 85% of all first encounters occurred in a traditionally conservative region. John has met with most of the drivers in rest areas and truckstops located in Tennessee and West Virginia. As for the location of sex acts per se, as John says, "... truckers have a 'bedroom' (sleeper berth) and that makes for an easy place to have sex ...". John has rarely had sex with truckers in his own house. In general, despite where the cruising unfolds, the actual sex takes place primarily in the cab of the truck parked at rest areas and secondarily in the surrounding woods and toilets. Truckstops are clearly avoided for sexual encounters by both truckchasers and truckers due to fears of physical violence by homophobic truckers.

Sex Encounters, Protection, and Substances

Situational constraints define the sex acts that can be performed at highway rest areas, which limit them to predominantly oral sex and masturbation and secondarily to anal sex (Frankis & Flowers, 2009). During his sex encounters, John performed only oral sex 76% of the time, performed oral sex and received anal sex 18.8% of the time, only masturbated the trucker 2.6% of the time, and engaged in mutual masturbation 1.9% of the time. In contrast, truckers performed oral sex on John 14.8% of the time, truckers both performed oral sex and received anal sex from John 1.8% of the time, truckers masturbated John 32.3% of the time, truckers only received anal sex 0.5% of the time, and 48.7% of the time, truckers did nothing. According to John's data, 11.8% of his sexual encounters involved kissing, 12.5% involved inserting fingers into the rectum, and 9% included "rimming" (oral stimulation of the anus). Finally, 78.2% of the time, John met his new sex partners only once, 10.7% he met with his partners twice, 4.5% three times, and 6.6% he met four or more times. John rated more than 90% of his sex encounters as As and Bs, using a five-level grading scale.

John describes the importance of personal hygiene after sex by detailing a routine of always immediately rinsing his mouth out with a strong mouthwash and cleaning his face, hands, and genitals with moist sanitized towelettes. However, in 88.9% of his sexual encounters with truckers, John did not use condoms. More specifically, condoms were used mainly (but not always) for anal sex and rarely for oral sex. Due to limitations of the database, it is impossible to determine specifically the number of occurrences of high-risk UAI with drivers John had sex with only once. Finally, while use of substances including alcohol, pot, crank, speed, crystal meth, and "poppers" is widely prevalent during sex transactions between truckers and female sex workers (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2007; Lichtenstein et al., 2008), during John's sexual encounters with truckers, relatively few drivers used "poppers" (10%) or alcohol (2.5%).

From Impersonal to Intimate Relationships with Truckers

Despite the impersonal nature of most sex-cruising encounters, individuals are known to have formed lasting friendships from their casual meetings (Hollister, 2003). Of the 2,449 different truckers John was sexually intimate with during the 13 years, he has formed a close relationship with 1 trucker and strong friendships with 8 others. While John has met their spouses and children, has visited their homes, and has even hosted 3 drivers and their spouses at his own home, he has always been careful about "... playing it very straight in their territory ..." When the conversation brings up how the men met, the truckers often quickly reply, "... I load/unload at his [John's] company all the time ..."

Out of all his sexual partnerships, John has fallen in love with only one driver and maintained a mutual relationship for about 8 years. As the relationship evolved and the two men became closer friends, sex ceased to be the primary focus and the men enjoyed each other's company in a variety of innocuous public settings. The driver, who John saw as his ideal man, was married and ultimately felt his relationship with John—which he never believed would be a permanent one—would jeopardize his marriage. For this reason, he ended their relationship, which has been difficult for John to get over.

CONCLUSIONS

The examination of this unique database kept by a single truckchaser sheds light on the organization and structure of trucker cruising, the populations involved, risk-enabling settings, as well as potential infection risks, although there are some limitations based on the database (which was a self-report) and a sample of one. In the context of our investigation, however, there were other cases of truckchasers with hundreds and some even with thousands of trucker sex contacts, as one particular truckchaser put it: "... Well, I have three (cruising) categories: dates, husbands, and boyfriends ... dates are people

I've slept with and that's somewhere around 3,500 . . . boyfriends are people I've some sort of a relationship with and that's probably close to 150 . . . and husbands, I've had 8 (Truckchaser, 53 years old; Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2006).

Given the mobility of millions of truckers along thousands of miles of highways, the sex transactions of gay, bisexual, and straight-identified truckers and truckchasers hold significant epidemiological weight. Although this case study does not provide serological evidence on truckers' infection status, truckers' overall sexual partnerships across disparate geographies, demographics, and even epidemiologies—though still not fully investigated—show distinct elements of concurrency, multiplexity, turnover, and discordance, thereby holding the potential to amplify risk exposure and even spread. The delineation of the sex encounters of truckchasers and truckers would benefit greatly from the development of an ecological conceptual framework that integrates structural (e.g., occupational stressors, homophobia), spatial (e.g., trucker itinerary, Internet cruising), network (e.g., concurrency, discordance), psychosocial (e.g., distress, sexual compulsivity), and biological domains (STIs, blood borne infections). These can ultimately lead to the initiation of risk, infection, and transmission tracing and mapping across major highway trucking routes, thereby providing the structural basis for effective risk-reduction interventions.

REFERENCES

- Apostolopoulos, Y., & Sönmez, S. (2006). *Trucker risk networks, drug use, and transmission of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: Preliminary findings from the first epidemiological investigation in North America*. Atlanta, GA: Mobility and Population Health Unit, Emory University School of Medicine.
- Apostolopoulos, Y., & Sönmez, S. (2007). Tracing the diffusion of infectious diseases in the transport sector. In Y. Apostolopoulos & S. Sönmez (Eds.), *Population mobility and infectious disease* (pp. 131–156). New York, NY: Springer.
- Apostolopoulos, Y., Sönmez, S., Kronenfeld, J., & Rothenberg, R. (2006, October). *The geography of disease risk in American inner-city truckstops*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Urban Health, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
- Apostolopoulos, Y., Sönmez, S., Kronenfeld, J., & Smith, D. (2007). Sexual networks of truckers, truckchasers, and disease risks. In G. Herdt & C. Howe (Eds.), *21st century sexualities: Contemporary issues in health, education, and rights* (pp. 112–114). London, England: Routledge.
- Apostolopoulos, Y., Sönmez, S., Shattell, M., Rothenberg, R., Kronenfeld, J., Miller, M., & Stratford, D. (2010). *Sexual mixing, drug exchanges, and infection risk among truckers in North America*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Apostolopoulos, Y., Sönmez, S., Smith, D., & Kronenfeld, J. (2003). Cruising America's highways. *American Sexuality (electronic journal)*, 1(March), 2.
- Belzer, M. H. (2000). *Sweatshops on wheels: Winners and losers in trucking deregulation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2003a). HIV/STD risks in young men who have sex with men who do not disclose their sexual orientation (six U.S. cities, 1994–2000). *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 52, 81–85.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2003b, July). *National HIV Prevention Conference*. Atlanta, GA.
- Corzine, J., & Kirby, R. (1977). Cruising the truckers: Sexual encounters in a highway rest area. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 6, 171–192. doi:10.1177/089124167700600203
- Frankis, J. S., & Flowers, P. (2009). Public sexual cultures: A systematic review of qualitative research investigating men's sexual behaviors with men in public spaces. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 56, 861–893. doi:10.1080/00918360903187846
- Halkitis, P. N., & Parsons, J. T. (2003). Intentional unsafe sex (barebacking) among men who meet sexual partners on the Internet. *AIDS Care*, 15, 367–378. doi:10.1080/0954012031000105423
- Halkitis, P. N., Parsons, J. T., & Stirratt, M. J. (2001). A double epidemic: Crystal methamphetamine drug use in relation to HIV transmission among gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 41(2), 17–35. doi:10.1300/J082v41n02_02
- Hollister, J. W. (2003). *Reflections of social structure in cruising sites*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta, Georgia, August, 2003.
- Horvath, K. J., Bowen, A. M., & Williams, M. L. (2006). Virtual and physical venues as contexts for HIV risk among rural men who have sex with men. *Health Psychology*, 25, 237–242.
- Junge, B. (2002). Bareback sex, risk, and eroticism: Anthropological themes (re-)surfacing in the post-AIDS era. In E. Lewin & W. L. Leap (Eds.), *Out in theory: The emergence of lesbian and gay anthropology* (pp. 186–221). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Koblin, B. A., Chesney, M. A., Husnik, M. J., Bozeman, S., Celum, C. L., Buchbinder, S., Mayer, K., McKirnan, D., Judson, F. N., Huang, Y., Coates, T. J., & EXPLORE Study Team. (2003). High risk behaviors among men who have sex with men in 6 U.S. cities: Baseline data from the EXPLORE study. *American Journal of Public Health, 93*(6), 926–932.
- Lichtenstein, B., Hook, E. W., Grimley, D. M., St. Lawrence, J. S., & Bachmann, L. H. (2008). HIV risk among long-haul truckers in the USA. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 10*, 43–56. doi:10.1080/13691050701582936
- Ouellet, L. J. (1994). *Pedal to the metal: The work lives of truckers*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Rietmeijer, C. A., Bull, S. S., McFarlane, M., Patnaik, J. L., & Douglas, J. M. (2003). Risks and benefits of the Internet for populations at risk for STIs: Results of an STI clinic survey. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases, 30*, 15–19.
- Rosser, B. R. S., & Stanton, J. (2003). Lessons learned, current crises, and new directions in HIV prevention: How Minnesota's new HIV prevention research center is contributing to the fight against AIDS. *Minnesota Medicine, 86*, 49–52.
- Somlai, A. M., Kalichman, S. C., & Bagnall, A. (2001). HIV risk behavior among MSM in public sex environments: An ecological evaluation. *AIDS Care, 13*, 503–514. doi:10.1080/09540120120058030
- Stratford, D., Ellerbrock, T. V., Atkins, J. K., & Hall, H. L. (2000). Highway cowboys, old hands, and Christian truckers: Risk behaviors for HIV infection among long-haul truckers in Florida. *Social Science & Medicine, 50*, 737–749.
- Valway, S., Jenison, S., Keller, N., Vega-Hernandez, J., & McCree, D. H. (2009). Risk assessment and screening for sexually transmitted infections, HIV, and hepatitis virus among long-distance truck drivers in New Mexico, 2004–2006. *American Journal of Public Health, 99*, 2063–2068. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2008.145383

RECEIVED: 10/01/2010

REVISED: 11/05/2010

ACCEPTED: 12/05/2010